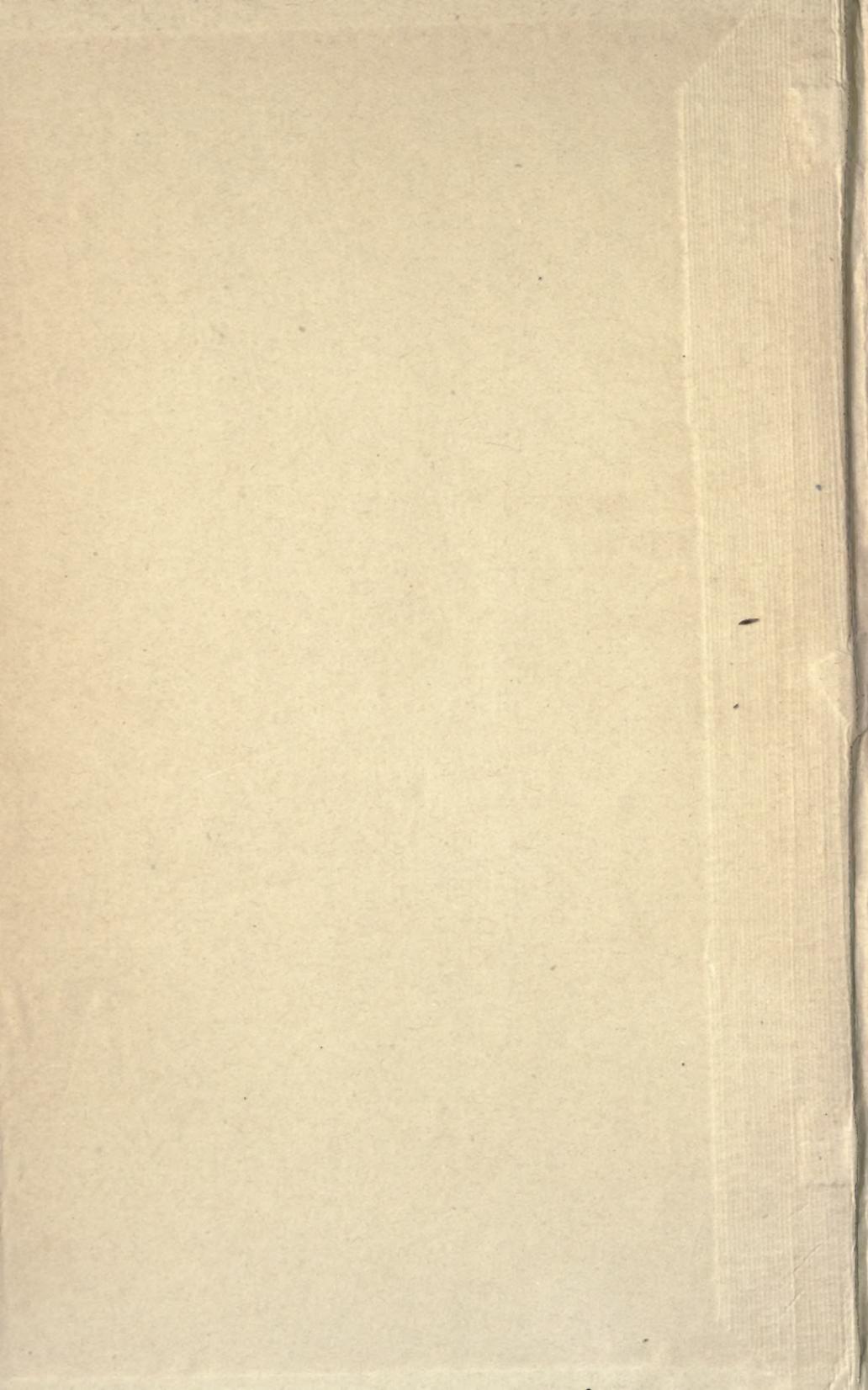
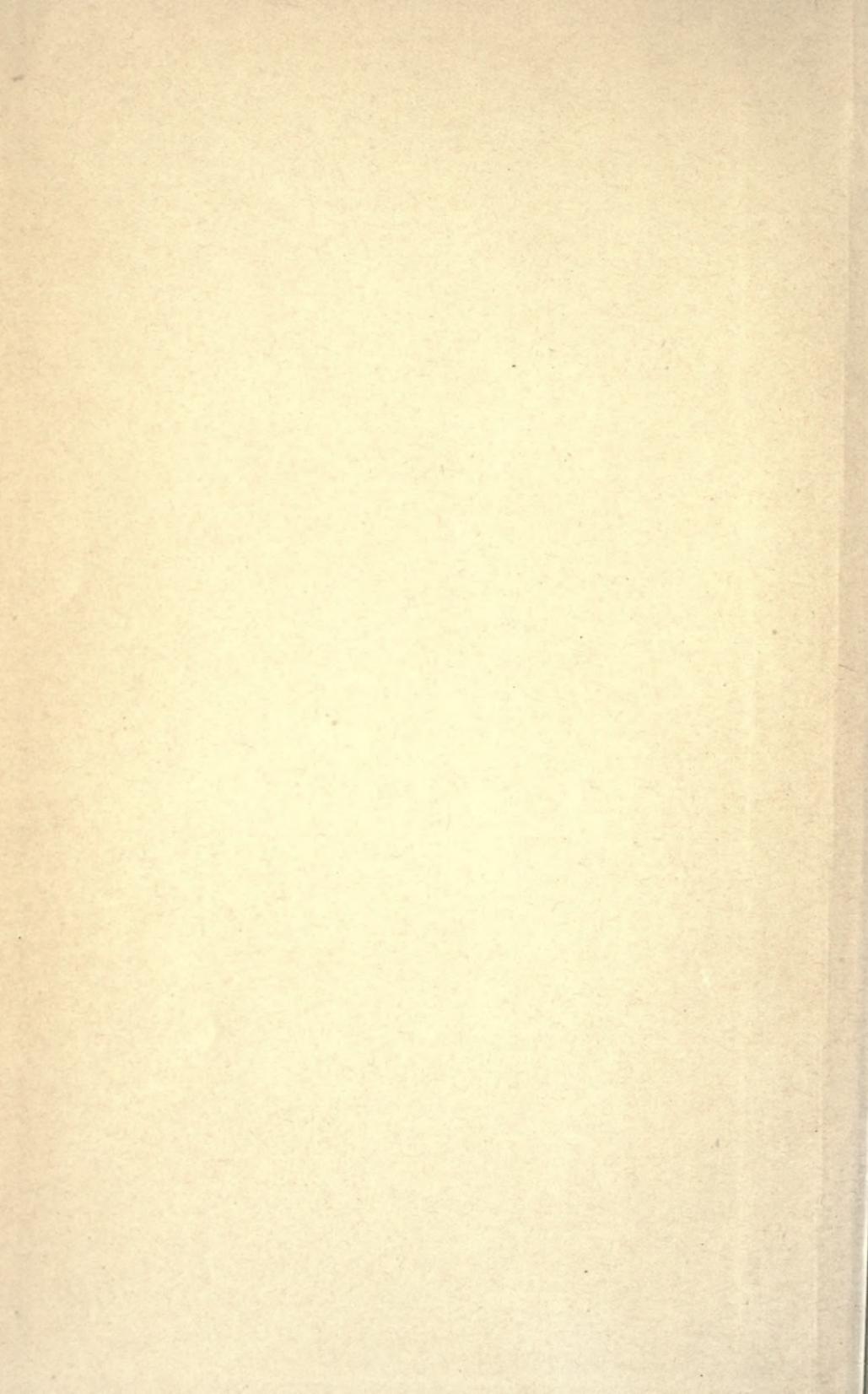


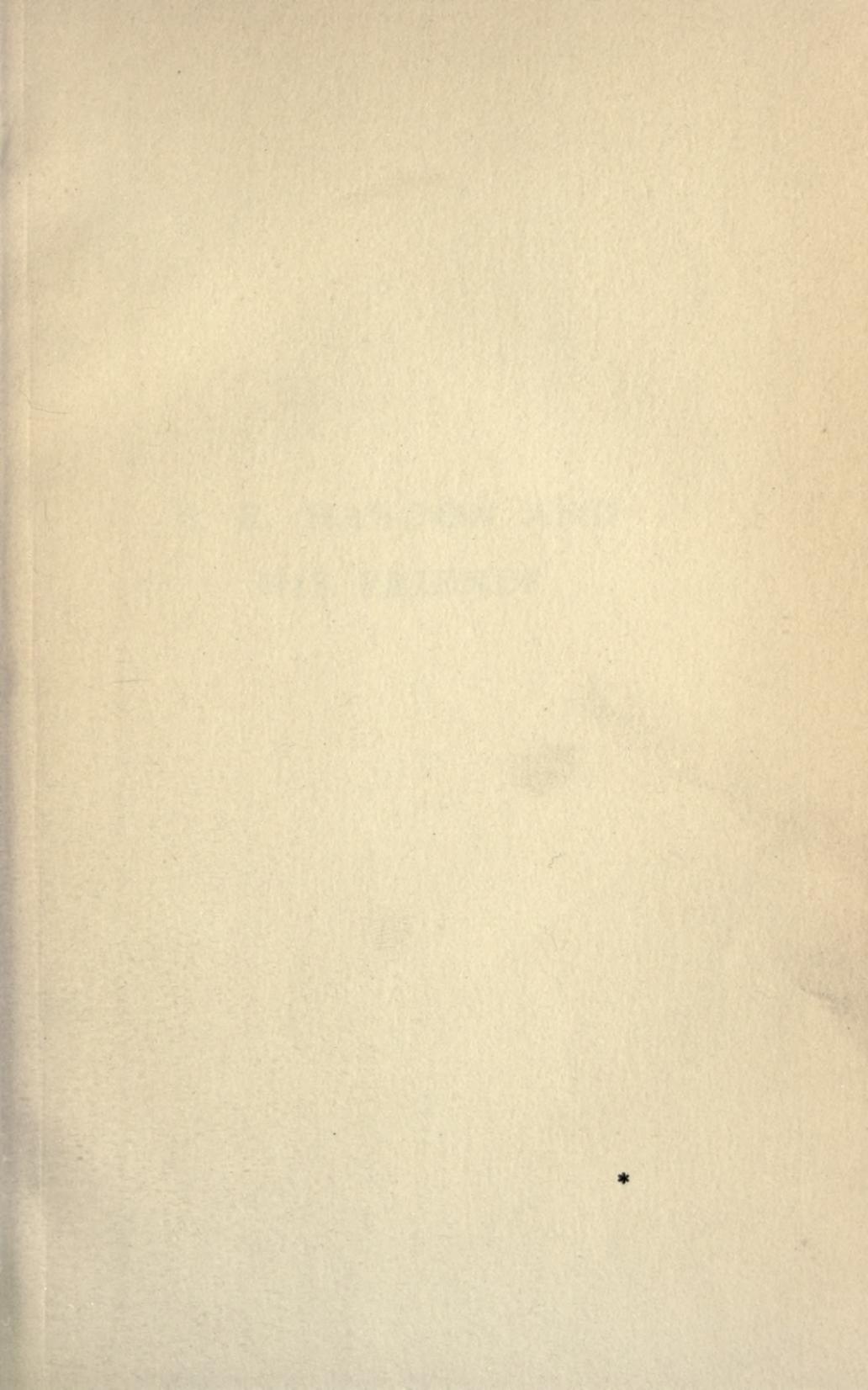
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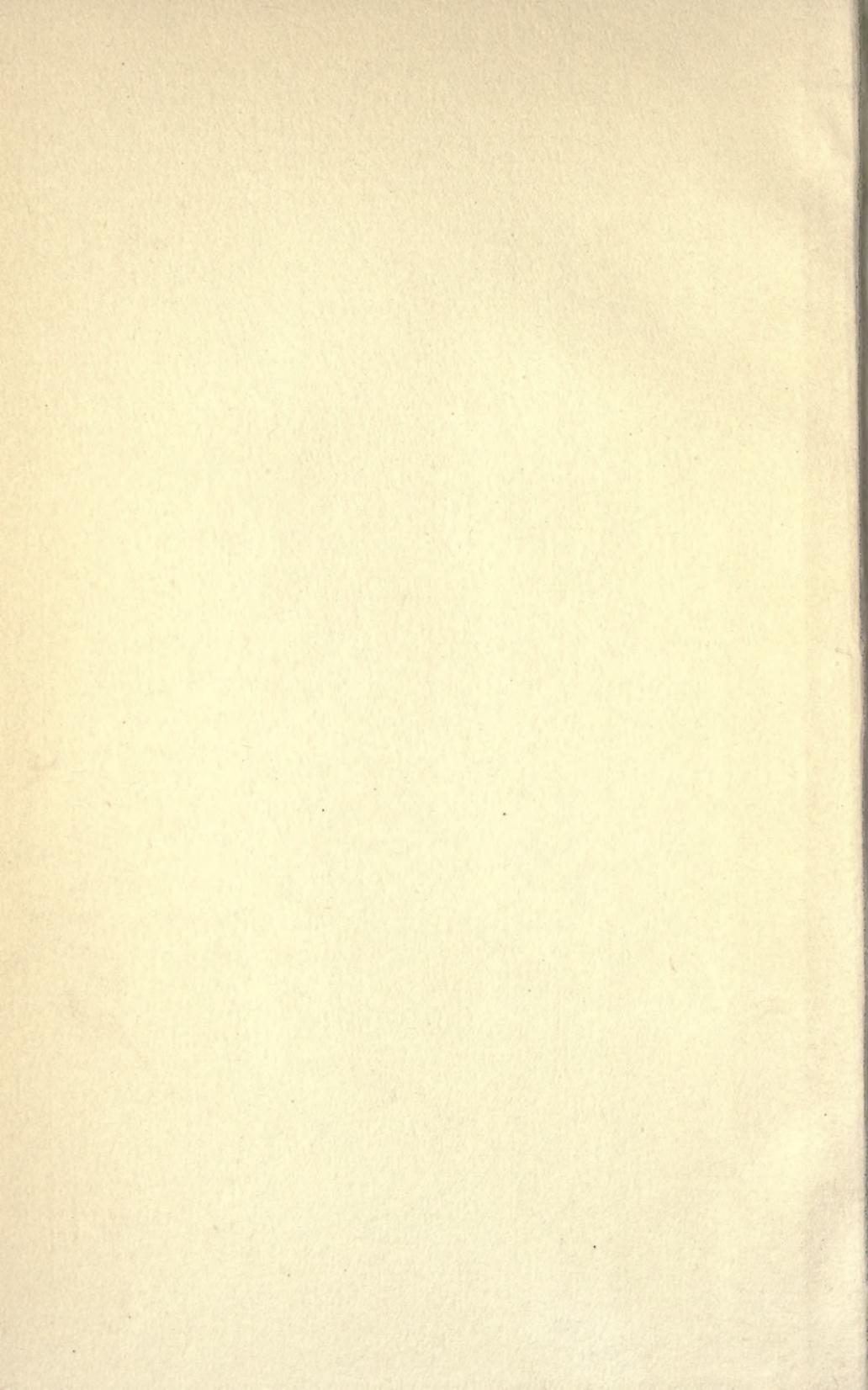
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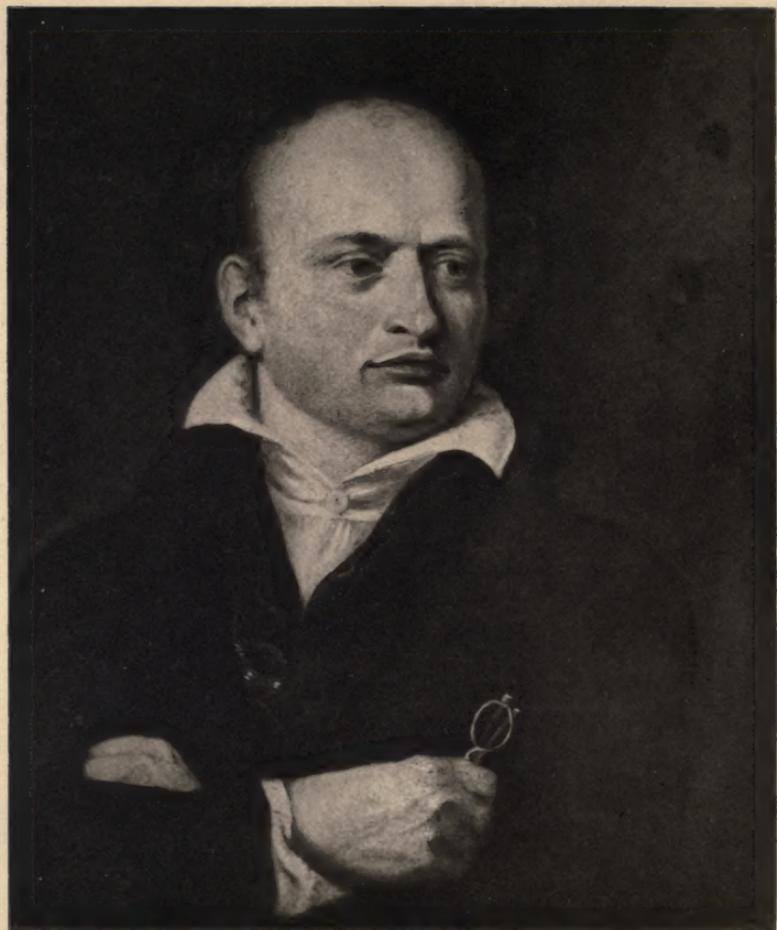




B. R. HAYDON AND  
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**B. R. HAYDON**  
**AND HIS FRIENDS**  
**BY GEORGE PASTON**  
AUTHOR OF "LITTLE MEMOIRS OF  
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY," Etc.

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# B. R. HAYDON AND HIS FRIENDS

## CHAPTER I

BENJAMIN ROBERT HAYDON, Historical Painter, as he was accustomed to sign himself, was born at Plymouth on January 26, 1786. His father, he tells us, in his brief account of his childish days, was the lineal descendant of one of the oldest families in Devon, the Haydons of Cadhay. "The family was ruined by a Chancery suit; and the children were bound out to various trades. Among them was my grandfather, who was bound out to Mr. Savery of Slade, near Plymouth. In a few years he saved money, and set up a bookseller's shop in Plymouth, where he died in 1773. My grandfather (who was very fond of painting) married Mary Baskerville, a descendant of the great printer.<sup>1</sup> At my grandfather's death, my father succeeded to the business,

<sup>1</sup> John Baskerville (1706-1775). Elected printer to Cambridge University in 1758. Regarded as one of the finest printers of modern times.

and married a Miss Cobley, the daughter of a clergyman, who had the living of Ide, near Exeter. . . . Both on my father's and mother's side I am well descended and well connected; the families always residing on their own landed property. The only estate, however, remaining to us, is a small one near Ide. Such are the consequences of folly, extravagance, and law-suits."

The elder Haydon is described as a veritable John Bull, a worthy man who loved his Church and King, believed England to be the only great country in the world, swore that Napoleon won all his battles by bribery, refused to believe that there was a poet, painter, musician, soldier, sailor, or statesman outside England, and would have knocked down any man who dared to differ from him. Mrs. Haydon, between whose character and that of her son there was a strong resemblance, was a handsome lively woman of quick understanding and equally quick temper. She was warm-hearted and passionately attached to her children, but not over-judicious in their management. Benjamin, the only son, was alternately petted and scolded, allowed to have his own way and then punished for taking it. He attributed many of his mistakes in after life to the fact that he had never learnt self-control in boyhood.

The elder Haydon was hardly the man to look with favour upon the artistic tendencies which his son displayed at a very tender age. The boy's earliest recollection of drawing was the attempt to copy a print representing Louis the Sixteenth (in his shirt-sleeves) taking leave of his people. Benjamin was seven years old when the tragedy of the French Revolution culminated in the execution of the King and Queen of France, and he well remembered the furious discussions which used to arise at meal-times on the exciting events of the period. "Nothing was talked of but the Duke of York, the Siege of Valenciennes, Robespierre and Marat. French prisoners crowded Plymouth. Guillotines made by them out of their meat-bones were sold at the prisons; and the whole amusement of children consisted in cutting off Louis the Sixteenth's head forty times a day with the playthings their fathers had bought them."

The boy was sent to the local grammar school, then kept by a Dr. Bidlake, an amiable dilettante who painted, played the organ, patronised talent, and wrote poems which nobody ever read. He also dabbled in natural history and physical science, but classics were neglected and discipline was so lax that a change of school became necessary.

At thirteen Benjamin was sent to Plympton Grammar School, where Sir Joshua Reynolds had been educated. But although he had already begun to fancy himself a genius, and had dreams of historical painting, the artistic associations of the place availed him little, his father having stipulated that he was not to learn drawing or to be encouraged in his predilection for a painter's career. However, the boy spent his allowance on caricatures, which he copied in pen and ink, drew upon the whitewashed walls with burnt sticks, and tried to print off etchings in the school table-cloth press.

At sixteen Benjamin was bound apprentice to his father for seven years, and then his troubles began. "Now that I was bound by law," he writes, "repugnance to my work grew daily. I hated day-books, ledgers, bill-books, and cash-books; I hated standing behind the counter, and insulted the customers. I hated the town and the people in it. Once after a man had offered me less than the legitimate price for a Latin Dictionary, I dashed the book on the counter, and walked out of the shop." At this juncture matters seem to have come to a deadlock. Benjamin stoutly refused to enter the shop again, while his father was naturally anxious to hand

on his lucrative business in the course of time to his only son. Friends were called in, uncles and aunts appealed to, but neither authority nor persuasion could alter the youth's decision to adopt an artistic career. Yet even nature seemed to be on the side of the opposition, for while his fate was yet undecided, the rebel was attacked by an illness which brought on inflammation of the eyes, and for six weeks he was totally blind. Although his sight gradually returned, it never again became normal, and thenceforward he was obliged to wear glasses.

It now seemed certain that his future must be spent in keeping accounts and posting the cash-books. "How can you think of becoming a painter?" cried his relations. "Why, you can't see." "See or not see," was his reply, "a painter I'll be; and if I am a great one without seeing, I shall be the first." It would have been quite natural, he admits, for an ordinary mind to think blindness a sufficient obstacle to the practice of an art the first essential of which seems to consist of perfect sight, and forty years later he wrote, "It is curious to me *now* to reflect that my dim sight never occurred to me as an obstacle—not a bit of it. I found that I could not shoot as well as I used to do, but it

never struck me that I should not be able to paint."

Shortly after his recovery, our hero's resolution was strengthened by the first sight of some plaster casts of the Discobolos and Apollo, which he bought out of a two guinea piece given him by his godfather; and still more by his first reading of Sir Joshua Reynolds' "Discourses," picked up accidentally in a friend's library. In this book so much reliance was placed on honest industry, so strong a conviction expressed that all men were equal, and that application made all the difference, that the boy felt his ambition justified, his destiny fixed. With the consciousness of Sir Joshua's support he demolished all the family arguments and announced his intention of going to London to become a historical painter. He hunted the shops for anatomical works, and bought a copy of Albinus at a sale, leaving his father to pay for it. "Oh, the delight of hurrying it away to my bedroom, turning over the plates, copying them out, learning the origin and insertion of the muscles, and getting my sister to hear me. She and I used to walk about the house with our arms round each other's necks—she saying, 'How many heads to the deltoid? Where does it rise? Where is it inserted?' and

I answering. By these means, in the course of a fortnight, I got by heart all the muscles of the body."

Remonstrances, quarrels, scoldings, made the house miserable ; the determination of the son and heir had thrown the whole family into confusion and anxiety. At length, seeing that opposition was useless, the parents agreed to let their Benjamin take a trial flight, and gave him twenty pounds to start with. "I collected my books and colours," he tells us, "packed my things, and on the 13th of May, 1804, took my place in the mail for the next day. The evening was passed in silent musing. Affection for home was smothered, not extinguished in me. I thought only of London—Sir Joshua—Drawing—Dissection—and High Art."

## CHAPTER II

ON arrival at his lodgings, 242 Strand, in the early hours of a May morning, Haydon barely allowed himself time to dress and breakfast before he started for the Royal Academy Exhibition, then held at Somerset House, the scene, as he fondly hoped, of future triumphs. Raw country lad though he was, he seems to have been by no means impressed by his first view of the works of his most distinguished contemporaries. To quote his own words :—

“I mounted the stairs to the great room, and looked about for historical pictures. Opie’s ‘Gil Blas’ was one centre, and a shipwrecked sailor-boy (by Westall)<sup>1</sup> was the wonder of the crowd. These two are all that I remember. I marched away, saying, ‘I don’t fear you,’ inquired for a plaster-shop, bought the Laocoön’s head, with some arms, hands, and feet, darkened my window, unpacked my Albinus, and before nine the next morning was hard at work drawing from the round, studying Albinus, and breathing aspirations for High Art, and defiance to all opposition. For

<sup>1</sup> Richard Westall (1765–1836), historical painter. R.A. in 1794. Painted chiefly in water-colours.

three months I saw nothing but my books, my casts, and my drawings. My enthusiasm was immense, my devotion to study was that of a martyr. I rose when I woke, at three, four, or five, drew at anatomy till eight, in chalk from my casts from nine till one, and from half-past one till five; then walked, dined, and to anatomy again from seven till eleven. I was once so long without speaking to a human creature that my gums became painfully sore from the clenched tightness of my teeth. I was resolved to be a great painter, to honour my country, and to rescue the Art from that stigma of incapacity which was impressed upon it."

Haydon has been described at this time as a slim, handsome, inquisitive lad, with aquiline features, a fierce blue-grey eye, and black curly hair. At this time, and indeed throughout his whole life, his artistic ambition was strengthened and elevated by religious fervour. His conviction that he was regarded with the most direct and personal interest by his Creator, to whom he daily offered up the most passionate appeals for success in his chosen calling, may have been partly the result of his strongly developed egoism; but there is no reason to doubt that his piety was as sincere as it was demonstrative.

On the Sunday after his arrival in London he had gone to "the new church in the Strand," and had prayed for "the protection of the great Spirit to guide, assist, and bless my endeavours, to open my mind and enlighten my understanding. I prayed for health of body and mind, and on rising from my knees felt a breathing assurance of spiritual aid which nothing can describe. I was calm, cool, illuminated, as if crystal flowed through my veins."

The early years of the nineteenth century were not a favourable period for a crusade on behalf of historical painting. The artistic ideals of the public, the patrons, and many of the professors, had fallen so low that the artist who aspired to produce large imaginative works seems to have been regarded in the light of a lunatic who desired to commit suicide by slow starvation. It was commonly believed that Englishmen were incapable of producing great historical works; consequently the patrons imported old masters from the Continent, and neglected native artists, who were only thought worthy to paint family portraits. The Royal Academy was almost entirely in the hands of the portrait-painters, Lawrence and Hoppner being the fashionable artists of the day. Only a man in the exceptional position of Ben-

jamin West, who enjoyed royal patronage and a pension of a thousand a year, could safely devote himself to what was then understood by the term High Art.

After a few months of solitary study, Haydon bethought himself of a letter of introduction that had been given him to Prince Hoare,<sup>1</sup> who, having failed as an artist, was supposed to have qualified as a critic. Hoare was chiefly occupied in writing farces and adapting pieces for music. He was intimately associated with the artists and writers of his day, and being a kindly though disappointed man, he received his young visitor cordially, and gave him introductions to Northcote, Opie, and Fuseli. To Northcote,<sup>2</sup> as a fellow-townsmen, Haydon went first, and the result of his interview may best be described in his own words:—

“ I was shown into a dirty gallery, then upstairs into a dirtier painting-room, and there, with

<sup>1</sup> Prince Hoare (1755–1834), son of William Hoare, the portrait-painter. He exhibited at the Academy in early life, and later was made Hon. Foreign Secretary of the Academy. He published one or two volumes on painting. The most successful of his plays was “No Song, no Supper.”

<sup>2</sup> James Northcote (1746–1831), historical and portrait-painter. He was a pupil of Sir Joshua Reynolds, whose Life he wrote. He was one of the artists employed by Boydell for his Shakespeare Gallery. Northcote was elected A.R.A. in 1786; R.A. in 1787. He published several essays on artistic subjects, while his views and reminiscences may be found in Hazlitt’s “Conversations with Northcote.”

the light shining on his bald grey head, stood a diminutive wizened figure in an old blue-striped dressing-gown. Looking keenly at me with his little shining eyes, he read the letter, and said in the broadest Devon dialect, 'Zo, you mayne to be a painter, doo-ee? What zort of painter?' 'Historical painter, sir.' 'Heestoricaul painter! Why, ye'll starve with a bundle of straw under yeer head. . . . I zee,' he added, 'Mr. Hoare zays you're studying anatomy; that's no use—Sir Joshua did not know it; why should you want to know what he didn't?' 'Michael Angelo did, sir.' 'Michael Angelo! What's he tu du here? You must paint portraits here.' This roused me, and I said, clinching my mouth, 'But I won't.' 'Won't!' screamed the little man, 'but you *must*. Your vather is not a monied man, is he?' 'No, sir, but he has a good income, and will maintain me for three years.' 'Will he? He'd better make 'ee maintain yeself.'"

A beautiful specimen of a brother artist, thought Haydon, but he took his leave, not a whit disconcerted, and marched off to Berners Street, where Opie then lived. Here he was shown into a clean gallery, full of masculine and broadly-painted pictures. "After a minute down came a coarse-

looking intellectual man.<sup>1</sup> He eyed me quietly, and said, 'You are studying anatomy—master it—were I your age I would do the same.' My heart bounded at this. I said, 'I have just come from Mr. Northcote, sir, and he says I am wrong.' 'Never mind what *he* says,' said Opie. 'He doesn't know it himself, and would be very glad if he could keep you as ignorant.' I could have hugged Opie. 'My father wishes me to ask you if you think I ought to be a pupil to any particular man?' With an eagerness I did not like, he replied, 'Certainly, it will shorten your road. It is the only way.'"

Haydon came to the conclusion that he would take the advice of neither of these distinguished men. He would continue to study anatomy, and he would not put himself under the tutelage of any one artist, though he proposed to attend the Academy School. Haydon was introduced by Northcote to Smirke, a fine handsome portly man, who was interested in his enthusiasm, lent him drawings, and gave him good advice. Smirke<sup>2</sup> had been elected Keeper of the Academy, but George

<sup>1</sup> John Opie (1761–1807), a native of Cornwall. He painted domestic and historical subjects, as well as portraits. Elected Professor of Painting at the Academy in 1806. Became R.A. in 1788.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Smirke (1752–1845), R.A. in 1793. Father of Sir Robert Smirke, the architect.

III., having been told that he was a democrat, refused to sign his appointment. The choice then fell upon Fuseli,<sup>1</sup> who sent a message to Haydon through Prince Hoare, that he would like to see his drawings. Fuseli had a great reputation for the terrible, and, says Haydon, "Prince Hoare's apprehensions lest he might injure my taste or my morals excited in my mind a notion that he was a sort of gifted wild beast. My father had the same feeling, and a letter received from home concluded with the words, 'God speed you with the terrible Fuseli.'"

Arrived at the great man's house in Wardour Street, the young student, already worked up into a state of nervous excitement, was shown into a gallery, the contents of which were enough to frighten anybody by twilight. "Galvanised devils—malicious witches brewing their incantations—Satan bridging Chaos—Lady Macbeth—Paolo and Francesca—Falstaff and Mrs. Quickly—humour, pathos, terror, blood, and murder, met one at every look! I expected the floor to give way—I fancied Fuseli himself must be a giant. I heard his footsteps,

<sup>1</sup> Heinrich Fuseli (or Fuessly), born at Zurich in 1741. Settled in England in 1779. Painted several works for Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, and in 1799 opened a Milton Gallery containing forty-seven of his own works. Elected R.A. in 1790, appointed Professor of Painting at the Academy in 1799, and Keeper in 1804, which posts he held till his death in 1825.

and saw a little bony hand slide round the edge of the door, followed by a little white-headed, lion-faced old man in an old flannel dressing-gown, tied round his waist with a piece of rope, and upon his head the bottom of Mrs. Fuseli's work-basket. 'Well, well,' thought I, 'I am a match for you at any rate, if bewitching is tried.' But all apprehension vanished on his saying in the mildest and kindest way, 'Well, Mr. Haydon, I have heard a great deal of you from Mr. Hoare. Where are your drawings?' In a fright I gave him the wrong book, with a sketch of some men pushing a cask into a grocer's shop. Fuseli smiled, and said, 'By Gode, de fellow does his business at least with energy. . . . You are studying anatomy,' he went on; 'you are right. I am Keeper of de Academy, and hope to see you dere de first nights.' I went away, feeling happy that my bones were whole and my breathing uninterrupted."

Fuseli took up his duties as Keeper in January 1805, and at the same time Haydon made his first appearance at the Academy School, when he discovered to his dismay that at a distance of fifteen feet he could not distinguish a feature of the model. He was able to correct his defective sight in a measure with strong glasses, but it handicapped him heavily throughout his whole career. Haydon's

earliest friend among his fellow-students was John Jackson,<sup>1</sup> in later life a Royal Academician, and a portrait-painter of considerable reputation. Jackson was eight years older than Haydon, and had already exhibited at the Academy. The son of a Yorkshire tailor, he had been apprenticed to his father's trade; but some of his early sketches having been shown to Lord Mulgrave, that gentleman, a patron of the old school, sent the boy to London to study art, and maintained him until he was able to support himself. Jackson, who was an enthusiastic Wesleyan Methodist, is described by Haydon as a most amiable, sincere, unaffected creature, with a fine eye for colour, but a weakness in drawing. The acquaintance proved a useful one, for the two earnest students criticised each other's work, and Jackson, being commendably free from jealousy, introduced Haydon to Lord Mulgrave, and also to Sir George Beaumont,<sup>2</sup> who not only practised art, but patronised struggling artists, and shone in the reflected glory of his early friendship with Sir Joshua Reynolds.

<sup>1</sup> John Jackson (1778-1831). Elected A.R.A. in 1815, and R.A. in 1817. Among his best works are portraits of Canova, Flaxman, and Lady Dover.

<sup>2</sup> Sir George Beaumont, Bart. (1753-1827), an amateur landscape-painter and a liberal patron. He entertained the literary and artistic celebrities of the day at his place, Coleorton in Leicestershire. He presented a valuable collection of pictures to the National Gallery.

Haydon worked during his first Academy term with an untiring industry that at last attracted the attention of the Keeper. "When the devil *do* you dine?" asked Fuseli one day. The question was followed by an invitation to dinner, and Haydon was permitted to inspect the drawings which had brought the Keeper more reputation than his finished work. But the young man refused to be dazzled, and criticised his instructor in drastic fashion. "'Beware of Fuseli,' was in every one's mouth," he tells us, "but having higher authorities in the great Italians and Greeks, I was fearless. I adored his inventive imagination, but saw his mannered style. . . . Evil was in him; he knew full well he was wrong as to truth of imitation, and he kept palliating it under the excuse of the 'Grand Style.' He said a subject should interest, astonish, or move; if it did none of these, it was 'worth noding, by Gode.' He had a strong Swiss accent, and swore roundly, a habit which he told me he had contracted from Dr. Armstrong. He was about five feet five inches high, had a compact little figure, painted with his left hand, and being very near-sighted, and too vain to wear glasses, used to dab his brush into the oil, and sweeping round the palette in the dark, take up a great lump of white, red, or blue, and plaster it over a shoulder

or a face. . . . All of a sudden he would burst out with a quotation from Homer, Tasso, Dante, Ovid, or perhaps the Nibelungen, and thunder round to me with 'Paint dat!' I found him the most grotesque mixture of literature, art, scepticism, indelicacy, profanity, and kindness. Weak minds he destroyed. They mistook his wit for reason, his indelicacy for breeding, his swearing for manliness, and his infidelity for strength of mind; but he was accomplished in elegant literature, and had the art of inspiring young minds with high and grand ideas."

While Haydon was indulging in artistic day-dreams, and working twelve or fourteen hours a day at his studies, he was suddenly summoned home by the news that his father was dying. In two days he was back at Plymouth, where he found the invalid out of danger, but much exhausted. His immediate anxiety relieved, Haydon procured bones and muscles from a friendly surgeon, and was soon hard at work again. He firmly believed that the Greeks had studied anatomy, and, holding that the radical error of the English masters lay in their neglect of dissection, he determined to make the knife accompany the pencil. But these new and eccentric theories, as they were then regarded, were hardly likely to

lessen the prejudices of his family against his chosen calling. "Though I had been a year studying," he observes, "I had nothing attractive to flatter the vanity of parents. No patron had yet come forward, and all I had to show were correct drawings of dry bones and drier muscles."

Then began another period of family opposition. His mother watched him day and night, incessantly imploring him not to leave them again; aunts and cousins, friends and uncles were scolding, advising, reproaching, or appealing the whole day through. Worn out at length, the unhappy youth gave up the unequal struggle. "I told my father that if he wished it I would stay, but only on a principle of duty, as I should certainly leave him in the end. He was very much affected, and said that he also had made up his mind—to gratify my invincible passion; that I should be tormented no longer; that he could not well afford to support me, but would do so until I could afford to support myself." At once all was sunshine again, and Haydon began to prepare for his return to London, where the Academy Schools would shortly re-open. His pleasure in the prospect was slightly dashed by a letter from Jackson containing the following sentence: "There is a raw, tall, pale,

queer Scotchman come, an odd fellow, but there is something in him." "Hang the fellow," said Haydon, who feared no rival among his elder contemporaries; "I hope with his 'something' he is not going to be a historical painter."

### CHAPTER III

IN his return to town Haydon found that all his colleagues were talking of the new student, David Wilkie.<sup>1</sup> One said he drew too square, another thought his style was vulgar, but all agreed with Fuseli that "dere was someting in him." Though only a year older than Haydon, Wilkie had already studied for five years at the Edinburgh Academy, and had painted his first important subject picture, "Pitlessie Fair," as well as a number of portraits. With the proceeds of his works he had come to study in London, where he had found a patron in the person of Lord Mansfield.

Haydon had brought back with him a series of anatomical drawings, and these novel studies attracted the attention, not only of his fellow-students, but also of his acquaintances among the established artists. Northcote said that they were

<sup>1</sup> David Wilkie (1785-1841), elected A.R.A. in 1809, and R.A. in 1811, appointed Painter in Ordinary to the King in 1830, and knighted in 1836. His earlier works, "The Blind Fiddler," the "Rent Day," the "Chelsea Pensioners," &c., rendered him famous, but a residence in Italy and Spain changed his style, and his later work is loose and mannered.

of no use except for a surgeon, Opie rewarded them with sober praise, while Fuseli swore that he learnt by looking at them. Wilkie, on his first meeting with Haydon, asked questions about these studies which led to discussion, disagreement, dinner at the same table, and a lifelong friendship. There were other promising students at the Academy this term, Mulready,<sup>1</sup> Collins,<sup>2</sup> and Hilton,<sup>3</sup> but Haydon's chief intimates were Jackson and Wilkie, the three criticising each other's work, passing on useful "tips" about colour and glazing, and, when other subjects failed, abusing the Academy and all its works. Jackson did Haydon good service by taking him to some of the private galleries in London, Mr. Angerstein's, Lord Carlisle's, and Lord Stafford's, and infecting him with some of his own enthusiasm for the glories of Venetian colouring. The good-natured little Yorkshireman also talked to his patron of his two clever friends,

<sup>1</sup> William Mulready (1786-1863), born in County Clare. First exhibited at Academy in 1804. Elected A.R.A. in 1815, and R.A. in 1816. He began by painting in imitation of the Dutch School, and his best work in his first manner is "The Fight Interrupted." Later he adopted a more individual style, as in "The Whistonian Controversy," and "Choosing the Wedding Gown."

<sup>2</sup> William Collins (1758-1847), painter of rustic life and landscape. Elected A.R.A. in 1814, and R.A. in 1820. Father of Wilkie Collins.

<sup>3</sup> William Hilton (1786-1839), historical painter. Elected R.A. in 1819, and appointed Keeper of the Academy in 1827. Painted chiefly classical subjects.

and Lord Mulgrave declared that he would give Haydon a commission as soon as he began to paint. Wilkie's picture, "The Village Politicians," was the sensation of the Academy Exhibition of 1806, though so great was his diffidence that he had only yielded to his friends' persuasions at the eleventh hour, and sent in his work. The effect produced by that youthful effort is a matter of history. The Academicians, forgetting their intrigues and jealousies, hung the picture in the place of honour, crowds collected in front of it, and the critics trumpeted forth its merits. Haydon and Jackson, on reading the first notice, rushed to Wilkie's rooms, where, after the flattering paragraph had been declaimed aloud, the three joined hands, and danced round the table. Then they marched off to the Exhibition together, but found that there was no getting near the picture, sideways or edgeways. The triumph was complete, and Wilkie, pale as death, could only repeat over and over again, "Dear, dear, it's just wonderful!"

Though Wilkie's head was slightly turned by this sudden success, his heart seems to have been in the right place, and Haydon tells a pleasant anecdote about some project of vast importance that appeared to be brewing in his friend's mind about this time. "I feared a large picture before

I was ready," he writes. "But at last I, as his particular friend, received an invitation to tea, and, after one of our usual discussions on art, he took me into another room, and there—spread out in glittering triumph—were two new bonnets, two new shawls, ribbons and satins, and Heaven knows what, to astonish the natives of Cults, and enable Wilkie's venerable father, like the Vicar of Wakefield, to preach a sermon on the vanity of women, while his wife and daughters were shining in the splendours of fashion. . . . Then came the packing, the dangers by sea and the dangers by land. The landlady and her daughters and all her friends were in consultation, and profound were the discussions how to secure those sweet bonnets from being crushed, and those charming ribbons from the sea-water. All the time Wilkie stood by, eager and interested beyond belief, till his conscience began to prick him, and he said to me, 'I have just been very idle,' and so for a couple of days he set to work, heart and soul, at 'The Blind Fiddler.'"

Wilkie had already received commissions from Lord Mulgrave and Sir George Beaumont, and his extraordinary success, while it roused some natural feelings of envy in his friends, stimulated their ambitions, and filled them with high hopes

for the future. For them there was nothing daunting in the fact that the picture of the year had been bought for thirty guineas, that modest sum being twice as much as the artist had originally asked. Haydon says that Wilkie's reputation disturbed his peace of mind. He became so restless that he could hardly sleep at night, and he determined to begin painting at once. He engaged a model, and began making studies of heads and hands. The season came to an end before much progress had been made, and Haydon went into the country, where he fell desperately in love, forgot his ambitions, and let his brush lie idle, while he read Tasso and Shakespeare to his lady love in grassy nooks beside the sea. A letter from Wilkie, dated Mulgrave Castle, woke him from his delirium, and turned his thoughts from love to fame. "Lord Mulgrave," wrote Wilkie, "has desired me to transcribe a few lines from a subject which he seems to wish to have painted, as he admires it for its grandeur. He wishes also to know if you think it would suit your ideas, although he would not wish to put any restraint upon your inclinations. The subject has seldom or never been painted; which his Lordship thinks an advantage."

The transcribed passage was from the description of the assassination of Dentatus in Hook's

“Roman History,”<sup>1</sup> an ambitious subject to set before a young untried artist. But the suggestion roused Haydon like the blast of a trumpet. He had received his first commission for a grand, historical picture, and he imagined that his fortune was now secure. “It was a triumph for me,” he exclaims, “a reward for all I had suffered. I wrote home, and Plymouth was quite pleased. I was really a public character, and all my aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends came and congratulated my parents, and declared they had always said it would be so, and only thought a little wholesome opposition a very necessary thing.”

Haydon had already decided that his first picture should be a representation of “Joseph and Mary resting on the Road to Egypt.” Lord Mulgrave’s commission would have made too great demands on his immature technique, and it is probable that he desired to try his ’prentice hand at a comparatively simple subject. As soon as he was established in town again he ordered his first canvas (six feet by four), and on October 1, 1806, he records:—

“I set my palette, and taking brush in hand, knelt down and prayed to God to bless my career,

<sup>1</sup> Sicinius Dentatus, assassinated at the instance of the Consul Fabius, 450 B.C.

to grant me energy to create a new era in art, and to rouse the people and patrons to a just estimate of the moral value of historical painting. I poured forth my gratitude for His kind protection during my preparatory studies, and for early directing me in the right way. I arose with that peculiar calm which in me always accompanies expressions of deep gratitude, and looking fearlessly at my unblemished canvas, in a species of spasmodic fury, I dashed down the first touch. I stopped, and said, 'Now I have begun; never can that last moment be recalled.' Another touch—and another—and before noon I had rubbed in the whole picture."

Now began what Haydon always regarded as the happiest period of his student life—a period of hard work, lightened by high enthusiasm and superb self-confidence. Nevertheless, the difficulties of this first attempt were at times overwhelming, as he frankly admits. Joseph's head was rubbed out over and over again before the desired expression could be caught, and in order to get his colouring right Haydon used to mix his tints and carry them down to Lord Stafford's gallery on a piece of cardboard in order to compare them with the colouring of the Titians. But whatever his struggles with the technical difficulties

of the work, nothing could exceed his satisfaction with the result. The subject, if we may believe his own criticism, was poetically treated, the colour harmonious, and the drawing correct.

Sir George Beaumont came to see the picture, which, he declared, was very poetical, and "quite large enough for anything." An invitation to dinner followed this remarkable bit of criticism, and Haydon, in an agony of nervousness, made his first appearance in "high life," for so he regarded the Beaumont's circle. "God only knows how I shall go into the room," he said to himself. "I will keep behind Wilkie; at any rate I am a match for him."

His innate self-confidence came to his rescue, however, and in five minutes he was sitting beside Lady Beaumont on an ottoman, more at ease than he had ever been in his life before. At dessert Lady Beaumont leant forward and said, "When do you begin Lord Mulgrave's picture, Mr. Haydon?" Immediately all eyes were fixed on Mr. Haydon, who was going to paint a picture for Lord Mulgrave. "Who is he?" was asked, and as nobody knew, that was more interesting still. On the whole, however, Haydon felt that the evening had been unsatisfactory, since he had been treated with over-eager attention,

as a novelty, before he had done anything to deserve it.

When the time for sending in to the Exhibition drew near, Haydon, who had rejected the advice of Sir George Beaumont and Wilkie not to exhibit his first picture, fell a prey to all the torturing anxieties, which were the natural result, in his opinion, of this mode of introducing a work to the public—"a mode the most absurd, unjust, despotic, and ridiculous ever invented by the most malignant in art." While the fate of the picture hung in the balance, the young artist wandered about in hopeless misery, unable to eat, drink, sleep, or paint. At length his anxiety was relieved by Fuseli, who roared out, "Well, you are hung, be Gode, and d—d well too, though not in chains." Although Northcote had tried to "sky" the picture, it was finally placed in a good position in the Great Room, and seems to have been regarded as a promising work for so young a student. It was bought the following year by Mr. Thomas Hope, and hung in his gallery at Deepdene, where Haydon saw it again a quarter of a century later, and was "astonished at its excellence."

## CHAPTER IV

THE Exhibition of 1807 brought Haydon "before the world," to use his own phrase. Sir George Beaumont wrote him letters of good advice, while Lord Mulgrave frequently invited him to dinner at the Admiralty, and, when marshalling his guests used to say (as soon as all of superior rank had gone in), "Historical painters first—Haydon, take so and so." The young man started a *chapeau bras*, played the dandy and the buck, and did not hesitate to contradict his host when Lord Mulgrave expressed a foolish opinion on any subject of art or literature. It is probable, however, that Haydon enjoyed himself more completely in the semi-Bohemian society to which he had also obtained an *entrée*. He became well acquainted with Hoppner, between whom and old Northcote open war was maintained. Hoppner is described as a man of fine mind, great nobility of heart, and exquisite taste for music, but bilious from hard work and the "harass of high life," and with no

<sup>1</sup> John Hoppner (1758-1810), the celebrated portrait-painter, elected R.A. in 1795.

strength for originality. Hoppner used to say, "I can fancy a man fond of his art who painted like Reynolds, but how a man can be fond of art who paints like that fellow Northcote, Heaven only knows!" While Northcote, in his turn, would growl out: "As for that poor man milliner of a painter, Hoppner, I hate him, sir, I ha-a-ate him."

Haydon had now set to work upon his picture of Dentatus for Lord Mulgrave, but he found the difficulties so great that he determined to go home for a few months and practise portrait-painting. He obtained plenty of employment in painting friends at fifteen guineas a head. "Execrable as my portraits were," he observes, "I rapidly accumulated money, not because my efforts were thought successful, even by my sitters, but because my friends wished to give me a lift, and thought that so much enthusiasm deserved encouragement. However, I improved so much by my short practice that people began to come in from the country to sit; but as I had my commission in London, I resolved to bring my provincial labours to a close."

Haydon's return to town was delayed by the illness and death of his mother, to whom he was devotedly attached, though his obstinacy had cost her many bitter tears. As soon as the funeral was over, he rushed back to London, and threw

himself eagerly into his work. Once again he attacked Dentatus, but still Dentatus refused to "come." "I felt," he writes, "that the figure of Dentatus must be heroic, and the finest specimen I could invent. But how could I produce a figure that should be the finest of its species? I had Nature, of course, but if I copied her my work was mean, and if I left her it was mannered. How I puzzled, painted, rubbed out, and began again."

In the midst of this critical period of anxiety Wilkie called, and suggested a visit to Park Lane, to see the Elgin Marbles, which had just been brought over. "The first thing I fixed my eye on," relates Haydon, "was the wrist of a figure in one of the female groups, in which were visible the radius and ulna. I was astonished, for I had never seen them hinted at in any wrist in the antique. I darted my eye to the elbow, and saw the outer condyle visibly affecting the shape, as in nature. My heart beat. If I had seen nothing else, I had seen sufficient to keep me to nature for the rest of my life. But when I turned to the Theseus, and saw that every form was altered by action or repose—when I saw that the two sides of his back varied as he rested on his elbow; and again, when in the figure of the fighting Metope, I saw the muscle shown in one armpit in the instantaneous action

of darting out, and omitted in the other armpits ; when I saw, in short, the most heroic style of art, combined with all the essential detail of every-day life, the thing was done at once and for ever. . . . Here were the principles which the great Greeks in their finest time established, and here was I, the most prominent historical student, perfectly qualified to appreciate all this by my own determined mode of study. I felt as if a divine truth had blazed inwardly upon my mind, and I knew that the marbles would at last arouse the art of Europe from its slumber in the darkness."

On returning to his painting-room, Haydon surveyed with disgust his own attempt at the heroic, dashed out the whole "abominable mass," and breathed like one relieved of a nuisance. Through the influence of Lord Mulgrave, he obtained permission to draw from the marbles, and spent the next three months in mastering their secrets, and bringing both hand and mind into subjection to the principles they displayed. For fourteen or fifteen hours at a stretch he drew at his classic models, remaining often till twelve o'clock at night, and going home benumbed with cold and damp, but gloriously alive in the spirit. When not occupied with his pencil, he read Homer and Virgil, pondered on the change of empires, and

reflected that he had been contemplating what Plato and Socrates had gazed on ; then "lifted up with my own high urgings of soul, I have prayed God to enlighten my mind, and have had inward assurances of future glory."

"Dentatus" made but slow progress, the young artist "dashing out" heads, figures, and drapery, as he realised that to obliterate was the only way to improve. The picture and its painter began to be talked about in the great world. Haydon dined with his patron, Lord Mulgrave, two or three times a week, and his studio was filled with "people of rank and fashion," who came to see the extraordinary picture by a young man who had never enjoyed the advantages of foreign travel. "We look to you, Mr. Haydon," said a lady of the highest rank, "to revive the Art." Discussions would take place on the merit of "Dentatus." Lord Mulgrave prided himself on the choice of the subject, and Sir George Beaumont declared that he had always said a great Historical Painter would arise, and Haydon was the man.

Believing all this flattery to be gospel truth, our hero anticipated all kinds of glory, and fondly imagined that the Academy would hail with equal enthusiasm the work of so extraordinary a student. In March, 1809, the picture was finished, and sent



THE ASSASSINATION OF DENTATUS

*From a Wood-cut by WILLIAM HARVEY of the Picture by B. R. HAYDON*



to Somerset House, where it was hung in a "dimly-lighted ante-room."<sup>1</sup> Haydon felt that no such injustice had been committed since the world began, and believed that the whole body of the Academicians was leagued against him. "The production of this picture," he remarks, "must and will be considered as an epoch in English Art. The drawing was correct and elevated, and the perfect forms and system of the antique were carried into painting, united with the fleshy look of everyday life. The colour, light and shadow, the composition and the telling of the story, were complete." On the other hand, a contemporary critic described "Dentatus" as "an absurd mass of vulgarity and distortion."

Lord Mulgrave sent a hundred and sixty guineas for the picture, a price that compares favourably with the sums received by Wilkie for his early works. But Haydon was not consoled. He fancied that his patron had lost faith in him; he found that the "people of fashion" were forsaking his studio, and he felt that he was a marked man. A trip by sea to Plymouth, in the company of Wilkie, helped to restore his health and spirits, and after some pleasant weeks in Devonshire, the holiday ended with a visit to Sir George Beaumont

<sup>1</sup> Leslie tells us that the position was a very good one.

at Coleorton. "Here," says Haydon, "we dined with the Claude and Rembrandt before us, breakfasted with the Rubens landscape, and did nothing, morning, noon, and night, but think of painting, talk of painting, dream of painting, and wake to paint again."

## CHAPTER V

BEFORE Haydon quitted Coleorton Sir George had given him a commission to paint a picture on a subject from Macbeth. He seems to have agreed that the figures should be "whole length," which Haydon interpreted as meaning the full size of life. When the work was well advanced Sir George called to see it, and, horrified at the huge canvas, requested that his commission should be painted on a smaller scale. Haydon, who, throughout his whole career, detested painting cabinet pictures, argued the point by letter and word of mouth till he worried his patron into a somewhat vague agreement to withhold his final decision until the work was completed. If he still objected to the size, the artist engaged to paint him another picture on any scale he pleased.

The controversy being temporarily settled, Haydon set to work again with his customary energy, straining every nerve to do more than his best. Macbeth's head was painted and repainted, limbs and torsos were moulded, innumerable studies were made from the antique, and models were kept sit-

ting from morning till night. "My want of money was now great," he records. "My father's help had continued near six years, and I was anxious to relieve him, yet could not, though I might have done so by painting paltry things. But I was iron-minded."

While at work upon "Macbeth" Haydon competed with "Dentatus" for a prize of one hundred guineas offered by the Directors of the British Gallery for historical painting. "Dentatus" won the prize, but this piece of good fortune was discounted by a letter from the elder Haydon to say that he could no longer afford to support his son. This was a serious blow; but the young artist, after turning over every difficulty in his mind, came to the conclusion that if "Macbeth" was the masterpiece that he hoped to make it, Sir George could not refuse to take it; while, after the success of "Dentatus," there was clearly no reason why the new work should not win the premium of three hundred guineas offered by the Directors of the British Gallery for the next competition. "Thus reasoning, I borrowed, and praying God to bless my exertions, went on more vigorously than ever. *And here began debt and obligation, out of which I have never been, and never shall be extricated, as long as I live.*"

This forecast proved only too correct. Haydon deliberately exchanged independence for an ever-increasing load of debt, which had a far more disastrous effect upon his career than the painting of occasional "pot-boilers." He firmly believed, however, that he was justified in following his lofty aims, and depending for subsistence upon the generosity of his friends, or the forbearance of landlords and tradespeople. "I was a virtuous and diligent youth," he records. "I never touched wine, dined at reasonable chop-houses, and cleaned my own brushes like the humblest student." He goes to inspect Sebastian del Piombo's "Raising of Lazarus," which had recently been added to the Angerstein Gallery, and after writing a long and detailed criticism of the work in his journal, he concludes, "It is a grand picture, a great acquisition to the country, and an honour to Mr. Angerstein's taste and spirit in buying it; yet if God cut not my life prematurely short, I hope I shall leave one behind me that will do more honour to my country than this has done to Rome. In short, if I live, I will—I feel I shall. (God pardon me if this is presumption. June 21, 1810.)"

It was about this time that Haydon and Wilkie made the acquaintance of the Hunts, Leigh and John, whose writings they had admired in the pages

of *The Examiner*. Haydon speedily became intimate with Leigh, who, with his black eyes, bushy hair, pale face and "nose of taste," was as fine a specimen of a London editor as could be imagined. "He was unassuming yet moderate, sarcastic yet genial," writes Haydon, "with a smattering of everything and mastery of nothing; affecting the dictator, the poet, the politician, the critic, and the sceptic, whichever would at the moment give him the air to inferior minds of being a very superior man." Although Haydon despised Hunt's effeminacy and "Cockney peculiarities," he admired the fearless honesty of the young editor's opinions, the unhesitating sacrifice of his own interests, and the unselfish perseverance of his attacks upon all abuses. The two young men—there were only three years between them—became close intimates. Haydon, throughout his life, loved literary society and literary discussion, and Leigh Hunt's lively wit made him one of the most delightful members of a brilliant circle.

Towards the end of 1811 "Macbeth"<sup>1</sup> was finished, after a hard struggle not only with the difficulties of technique, but also with the difficulties of

<sup>1</sup> The subject was taken from the scene where Lady Macbeth has disturbed her husband as he was stepping in between the grooms and the bed to murder Duncan.

life. No pains had been spared in the work. Haydon's friends regarded it as a wonderful proof of his conscientiousness that he had taken out the figure of Macbeth in order to raise it higher in the picture, having decided that such an alteration would improve the composition. "The wonder in ancient Athens would have been if I could have suffered him to remain"—so comments the painter. Sir George Beaumont came up to see the work, for which Haydon asked five hundred guineas. Sir George, who had evidently intended to help a young man by giving him a modest commission, shrank from saddling himself with this white elephant. He offered Haydon a hundred guineas to be quit of his bargain, or the alternative of painting another picture on a smaller scale, the price to be settled by arbitration. "Foreseeing that any further connection would bring me nearer to ruin than I was already," writes Haydon, "I resolved to decline both offers. . . . Thus, after three years' hard work the picture was thrown on my hands, and my situation was truly deplorable."

"Macbeth" was sent to the British Gallery in the hope that it would win the premium, but though it was well hung, and regarded as a creditable piece of work, it gained no further success. No patron came forward to buy the picture, and the

premium was not awarded to it. Exasperated at the failure of all his hopes, and tormented by the consciousness of debt (he owed £600), Haydon lost his head, and vented his feeling in a fierce attack upon the Academy. This took the form of a series of letters to *The Examiner*—a paper that was always open to the exposure of abuses, imaginary or otherwise. In vain Fuseli stormed and Wilkie dissuaded; Haydon persisted in his impolitic course, the idea of being a Luther or John Knox of art having got the better of his reason. Leigh Hunt urged him on to the controversy, but then, as Wilkie observed, "Hunt gets his living by such things; you will lose all chance of it. It is very fine to be a reformer, but be one with your pencil and not with your pen."

In the course of this newspaper warfare, Haydon, under the pseudonym of "An English Student," declared that whereas the chief use of an Academy is to regulate, direct, and aid pupils, the Academicians had failed in their duty by reason of their deplorable ignorance of drawing, and their utter want of sincerity and feeling for art. He gave numerous instances of their stupidity and abuse of power, ridiculed their annual exhibitions, and asserted that the few experts among the

Hanging Committee were invariably outvoted by the representatives of mediocrity. Not content with this scathing indictment, Haydon pointed the way to certain reforms, chief among these being an improved method of election, the establishment of schools of design, a reduction in the power of the Council, and an annual grant of public money for the purposes of art.

The identity of the "English Student" was soon disclosed, and from that moment Haydon was convinced that the destiny of his life was changed. "I was looked at like a monster," he complains, "abused like the plague, and avoided like a maniac. My picture was caricatured, my name detested, my peace harassed. . . . 'By Gode,' said Fuseli, 'the fellow is mad or punishable.' Lawrence did me justice, saying that there were grounds for my severity; that I would be the victim, and the Academy in the end would be benefited. But Wilkie shrank back terrified, and, to exculpate himself, joined in the abuse of me." There was probably some characteristic exaggeration in all this; but it is possible that Haydon estranged certain of his friends by the violence of his attack upon established authority, a revolutionary attitude towards art being popularly supposed to argue a revolutionary attitude

towards politics and religion. "You have certainly got plenty of work on your shoulders," wrote Wilkie at this time, "and I should advise you to get out of it in the best way you can. But is this the way an artist should be engaged? Why not follow up the reputation your painting might gain you, and let that carry you through? It will lessen the respect people would have for your talents as a painter, when they find them employed disputing in a newspaper. I shall be miserable till I hear you are going on with your picture. I shall then be assured that you have regained your peace of mind."

Haydon admits that in moments of depression he often wished that he had taken Wilkie's advice, and eschewed all further controversy, but then, he reflects, "I should never have acquired that grand and isolated reputation, solitary and unsupported, which, while it encumbers the individual with a heavy burden, inspires him with vigour proportioned to the load."

## CHAPTER VI

To a man of Haydon's spirit unpopularity and condemnation only served as a stimulus to higher exertion. He determined to paint a series of sacred historical pictures and exhibit them at the Academy, believing that if he produced works of undeniable merit the public would rally to his support. He decided to begin with the somewhat stereotyped subject of the Judgment of Solomon. His friend, Prince Hoare, urged that Raphael and Rubens had already treated it. "So much the better," retorted Haydon; "I will tell the story better." "But how are you to live, and who is to pay your rent?" "Leave that to me," was the reply. "I trust in God." "Send for me if you are arrested," concluded Hoare, who seemed to doubt the security. On April 3, 1812, Haydon records, "My canvas came home for 'Solomon,' twelve feet ten inches by ten feet ten inches—a grand size. God in heaven grant me strength of body and vigour of mind to cover it with excellence. Amen—on my knees."

When Haydon entered on this ambitious pro-

ject, he was not only without means, but hampered, as has been seen, by a load of debt. His father had died and left him nothing, while his patrons had temporarily deserted him. But he was convinced that the labourer in the field of High Art was worthy of his hire, or at least of unlimited credit. He explained to his landlord (to whom he already owed £200) that he was about to paint a great picture which would occupy him for two years, during which period he would be unable to pay any rent. The man rubbed his chin, and deliberated ruefully over the desperate case. "I'll leave you if you wish it," said the lodger magnanimously. "But will it not be a pity not to finish such a beginning?" "It's a grand thing," muttered the landlord. "I shouldn't like ye to go—it's hard for both of us. But what I say is this, you always paid me when you could, and why should you not again when you are able? Well, sir, I'll give you two years more, and if this does not sell, why then, sir, we'll consider what's to be done."

A roof thus comfortably provided, there was still the necessity for a daily dinner, also at some one else's expense. "I went to the house (John o' Groat's) where I had always dined," relates Haydon, "intending to dine without paying for that day. I thought the servants did not offer me

the same attention. I thought I perceived the company examine me—I thought the meat was worse. My heart sank, as I said falteringly, ‘I will pay you to-morrow.’ The girl smiled, and seemed interested. As I was escaping with a sort of lurking horror, she said, ‘My master wishes to see you.’ ‘My God,’ thought I, ‘it is to tell me he can’t trust.’ In I walked like a culprit. ‘Sir, I beg your pardon, but I see by the papers you have been ill-used. I hope you won’t be angry—I mean no offence, but I just wish to say, as you have dined here so many years, and have always paid, if it would be a convenience during your present work to dine here till it is done—so you may not be obliged to spend your money here when you may want it—I was going to say that you need be under no apprehension—hem—for a dinner.’”

The offer was graciously accepted, and we are told that the good man seemed quite relieved. “These are the men that honour human nature!” exclaims Haydon. “And these form the bulk of the middle classes. Glorious old England! While such hearts exist never shall foreign hoof trample down the flowers of our native land!”

In accordance with his usual custom Haydon concluded his housekeeping arrangements and entered upon his new work with heartfelt prayer.

It is with no desire to scoff at his pious faith that we quote a clause or two from the petition he composed before beginning "The Judgment of Solomon." Without intruding upon Haydon in his devotions—and he makes it clear that he had no desire for privacy—it would be impossible fully to understand his character, and the various motives that inspired him in his art. "O God Almighty!" so runs his prayer, "who so mercifully assisted me during my last picture; who enabled me to combat and conquer so many difficulties, and gave me strength of mind superior to all, desert me not now, O Lord. . . . My difficulties are again accumulating, and will yet accumulate. Grant that I may be able to proceed unchecked by sickness with my present great picture, and conclude it as it ought to be concluded. Let not the progress of this picture be disgraced by the vice which disgraced the last. Let me be pure, holy, and virtuous—industrious, indefatigable, and firm. Enable me to conceive all the characters with the utmost possible acuteness and dignity, and execute them with the utmost possible greatness and power. O God, in pecuniary emergencies Thou hast never deserted me; still in such moments stretch forth Thy protecting hand. Amen. Amen."

. . . . .

Throughout this year (1812) Haydon was working at his big canvas, now with furious industry, now with the fitful languor that was the natural result of divided interests. Wilkie, though he had wounded Haydon deeply by refusing to lend him money, still remained a true friend, interested in the progress of the turbulent painter, anxious only that he should live peaceably with his colleagues, and refrain from newspaper controversy. "The Hunts, always generous, helped me as far as they could," writes Haydon. "Leigh, poor fellow, could not spare his money long enough to be of service, but he did his best. But what did Lord Mulgrave? Nothing. What Thomas Hope? Nothing. The whole of 1812 I never saw one single person of fashion. I was as forgotten as if I had never been. But I had a light within which 'made the path before me ever bright.'"

Despite the superb self-confidence, one might say the abnormal vanity, that supported him through forty years of struggle and disappointment, Haydon was not without his moments of depression and self-reproach. Such a mood is recorded under the date of October 7, 1812: "The wasteful idleness of this last year I shall repent to the day of my death. Had I exerted

myself as I ought, my picture would have been well advanced. After attacking the Academy, I should instantly have applied myself, but I loitered, got entangled with an infernal woman, which shattered my peace of mind before I could extricate myself, and though I came off, thank God! without actual falling, yet it was with my habits so broken, and my mind so agitated, that till now I have not had command of myself. . . . With the exception of attacking the Academy, which I shall glory in to my last gasp, my conduct has been abandoned, negligent, irresolute, contemptible! I nauseate myself. I have never had such a contempt for any human being. I can never now look at the bust of Michael Angelo without a detestation of myself. Such was not my feeling two years ago."

However deep his absorption in his art, Haydon followed with a lively interest the events of his own times, more especially those which concerned his two heroes-in-chief, Napoleon Buonaparte and the Duke of Wellington. Thus on November 18 he notes, "My colours in a delightful state. Everything floated on so exquisitely, I would not have exchanged my situation for Buonaparte's at Moscow without a handsome remuneration, nor yet then." On the last day of

the same month a ticket from Lord Mulgrave enabled him to go to the House of Lords to see the Prince open Parliament. "The Prince read admirably," he observes, "with the greatest perspicuity and without the slightest provincialism—pure English. I went down again in the evening to hear the debates. Lord Wellesley made a fine energetic speech, enough to create a soul under the ribs of death. He affirmed in a strain of energy, almost amounting to fury, that Lord Wellington's means were inadequate; that before the battle of Salamanca he was in full retreat, and that it was entirely owing to an error of Marmont that the battle was gained. 'But, my Lords, is this a ground to calculate upon? My Lords, if your hopes of success are grounded on the errors of the French generals, I fear they have a very shallow foundation.' I observed that Lord Wellesley, in the heat of debate, put himself repeatedly into the attitude of St. John preaching at Athens, which proves the truth of Raphael's feeling."

It was on this night that Haydon conceived what may be described as his *idée fixe*, an idea that he preached in season and out of season for some thirty years, and that he actually lived to see carried out, though too late to benefit by it. This

idea was the decoration of our national buildings, and more especially the Houses of Parliament, with grand historical paintings.

“While listening to Lord Wellesley,” writes Haydon, “and surveying the miserable tapestry that surrounded him, I conceived a grand series of designs to adorn the ample sides of the House. I became gloriously abstracted, and settled that an illustration of the best government, to regulate without cramping the energies of men, would do—first to show the horrors of anarchy; then the injustice of democracy; then the cruelties of despotism—the infamies of revolution—the beauty of justice; to conclude with limited monarchy and its blessings. This conception I explained to Wilkie, who was delighted, and said, ‘If ever you live to see that wished!’ I have lived to see it wished, and hoped for, and proposed. I have lived to lay my plans before every Minister down to Lord Melbourne and Sir Robert Peel, secretly to influence the Government and publicly the people, and I shall yet live to witness its execution, under the blessing of that God who has blessed me so often and through so many calamities.”

## CHAPTER VII

WHILE "Solomon" was slowly progressing, Haydon spent his leisure in literary rather than artistic circles. At Leigh Hunt's he became intimate with Keats, Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, and John Scott.<sup>1</sup> On January 29, 1813, he notes: "Spent the evening with Leigh Hunt at West End. Hunt's society is always delightful. I do not know a purer or more virtuous character, or a more witty or enlivening man. We talked of his approaching imprisonment.<sup>2</sup> He said it would be a great pleasure to him if he were certain of being sent to Newgate, because he should be in the midst of his friends." Haydon declares that he spent many pleasant evenings with the Hunts during their period of incarceration, and used to go away through the clanking of chains and clashing of bolts to splendid receptions at the British Gallery, where he contrasted the luxury about him with the surroundings of his friend,

<sup>1</sup> The Scotch journalist, Editor of *The Champion*, who was killed in a duel with Christie in 1821.

<sup>2</sup> For libelling the Regent in *The Examiner*.

locked up for an attack upon a Prince who amply deserved it.

The first meeting with Hazlitt took place at Northcote's, when the critic's praise of "Macbeth" led to an invitation to Haydon's studio, and an intimacy, though hardly a friendship, sprang up between the two. Haydon describes Hazlitt as "That interesting man, that singular mixture of friend and fiend, radical and critic, metaphysician, poet, and painter, on whose word no one could rely, on whose heart no one could calculate, and some of whose deductions he himself would try to explain in vain. With no decision, no application, no intensity of will, he had a hankering to be a painter, guided by a feeble love of what he saw, but the moment he attempted to paint, his feeble hand refused to obey through want of practice. Having no moral courage, he shrank from the struggle, sat down in hopeless despair, and began to moralise on the impossibility of Art being revived in England—not because the people had no talent, not because they had no subject-matter, not because there was no patronage, but because he (William Hazlitt) did not take the trouble which Titian took, and because he was too lazy to try. Mortified at his own failure, he resolved that as he had not succeeded, no one else should, and he

spent the whole of his after-life in damping the ardour, chilling the hopes, and dimming the prospects of patrons and painters."

Haydon admitted, however, that Hazlitt was not without his good points, and admired the devotion that he displayed for his little son. This devotion led to a christening dinner, of which ceremony Haydon has left an amusing account. After taking the precaution to lunch heartily, he arrived at Hazlitt's house at the hour named—four o'clock. He found that his host, having forgotten to engage a parson, had gone out to look for one; while Mrs. Hazlitt had apparently forgotten the dinner, since there was no sign of any preparation for a meal. "On my life," says poor Haydon, "there is nothing so heartless as going out to dinner, and finding no dinner ready." Presently Hazlitt came home in a rage, having been unable to find a parson; and at length, after "all sorts of odd people had dropped in," the dinner arrived. It consisted of a great bit of beef, with a bone like a battering-ram, and a dish of potatoes, cold, waxy, and yellow. Hazlitt and Lamb set to work helping each other, while the baby tried to baptize himself in the gravy. But neither Lamb's jokes nor Hazlitt's disquisitions could reconcile the fastidious Haydon to what he

regarded as "a violation of all the decencies of life."

By the beginning of 1814 "Solomon" was nearing completion, but Haydon had sold his watch, his books, and even some of his clothes, and had been living for a fortnight on potatoes. He had been able to borrow £30 of his fellow-student, Hilton, who had sold a picture to the British Gallery for £500, while Benjamin West, though he had just been mulcted of his pension of £1000 a year, sent the struggling artist £15. His health injured, his eyesight failing, Haydon found himself without money to buy a frame for his finished picture. He contrived to persuade a frame-maker that it was his duty to assist a promising young man, and supply a frame on credit. He also introduced a wine-merchant to "Solomon," and demanded whether an artist, after such an effort, should be left without the glass of wine which his doctor had ordered him. "Certainly not," said the merchant, hypnotised like the landlord and the restaurant-keeper by Haydon's "magnetic personality." "I'll send you two dozen. Pay me as soon as you can, and drink to the success of 'Solomon' with the first glass."

It was decided, after long deliberation, to send the picture to the Water-Colour Society, which then admitted oil-paintings. To the private view

came Caroline, Princess of Wales, accompanied by Payne Knight,<sup>1</sup> who, still smarting under Haydon's attack upon his critical judgment, declared that the "Solomon" was "distorted stuff." The Princess agreed, and observed that she was sorry to see such a picture there. The general public passed a different verdict. They vowed it was one of the finest works England had yet produced, while even the more critical of Haydon's colleagues waxed enthusiastic over its merits. "Before half-an-hour a gentleman opened his pocket-book and showed me a £500 note," relates the painter. "'Will you take it?' My heart beat, my agonies of want pressed—but it was too little. I trembled out, 'I cannot.' This gentleman invited me to dine; and when, as we were sitting over our wine, he agreed to give me my price (six hundred guineas), his lady said, 'But, my dear, where am I to put my piano?' The bargain was at an end."

On the third day Sir George Beaumont and Mr. Holywell Carr<sup>2</sup> came to the Exhibition, having been deputed to buy the picture for the British Gallery. While they were discussing its merits,

<sup>1</sup> Richard Payne Knight (1750-1824), the numismatist and antiquarian and art critic. He was one of the persons attacked in Haydon's *Examiner* articles for his scepticism about the Elgin Marbles.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. William Holywell Carr (1758-1830), art connoisseur and amateur painter.

one of the officials went over, and put "Sold" on the frame. The work had been bought, at the price asked, by two Plymouth bankers, Sir William Elford (the friend and correspondent of Miss Mitford) and Mr. Tingecombe. Sir George shook hands with the lucky painter, exclaiming, "Haydon, I am astonished. You must paint me a picture after all. Lady Beaumont and I will call." Lord Mulgrave swore the picture was as fine as a Raphael, and added, "Haydon, you dine with us to-day, *of course*." When the artist went home, he found that his table was covered with the cards of people of fashion—those people of fashion whose defection had grieved him so bitterly.

Haydon was now £1100 in debt, but £500 paid away during the first week re-established his credit. It is satisfactory to know that the model landlord, "whose honest joy was exquisite to see," and John o' Groats, "who almost cried," were each paid something handsome on account. Many private friends forebore to press their claims, among them the generous and long-suffering Hunts.

It was now May, 1814, and Paris was the most interesting place on earth. All the nations were gathered together there, and the Louvre was crammed with treasures. Wilkie proposed

a jaunt to Paris, where he hoped to establish a connection for the sale of his prints, and Haydon, with £130 still in his pocket, gladly fell in with the suggestion. So absorbed were the two young painters by the actual life of the city, that they seem to have taken comparatively little interest in the works of art there collected. Yet their first visit was to the Louvre, and Haydon describes with what impetuosity he bounded up the steps, three at a time, and how he scolded Wilkie for trotting up with his usual deliberation. "I might as well have scolded the column," he observes. "I soon left him at some Jan Steen, while I never stopped until I stopped before the 'Transfiguration.' My first feeling was disappointment. It looked small, harsh, and hard. This, of course, is always the way when you have fed your imagination for years on a work you know only by prints. Even the 'Pietro Martyre' was smaller than I thought to find it; yet after the difference between reality and anticipation had worn away, these great works amply repaid the study of them, and grew up to the fancy, or rather the fancy grew up to them. . . . It will hardly be believed by artists that we often forgot the great works in the Louvre in the scenes around us, and found Russians and Bashkirs from Tartary more attractive than the 'Trans-

figuration' ; but so it was, and I do not think we were very wrong either. Why stay poring over pictures when we were on the most interesting scene in the history of the earth."

On his return to town Haydon was greeted by the news that his fellow-townsmen, George Eastlake (whose son Charles<sup>1</sup> had come to him for instruction in 1808) had carried a motion that the painter of the "Judgment of Solomon" should be presented with the freedom of his native city, as a testimony of respect for his achievement as an historical painter. Moreover, the British Institution had voted him one hundred guineas in recognition of his work. But not a single commission, large or small, followed this *succès d'estime*, and the exhibition of the work in several provincial towns proved a failure.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Eastlake (1793-1865) spent many years in Italy, and painted Italian subjects and scenery. First exhibited at the Academy in 1823. Elected A.R.A. in 1827, and R.A. in 1830. In 1841 he was appointed Secretary to the Royal Commission for Decorating the New Houses of Parliament. In 1842 he was made Librarian of the Academy, and in 1843 Keeper of the National Gallery. In 1850 he was elected President of the Royal Academy and knighted. He became a Trustee of the National Gallery in 1855. He published several volumes on art.

## CHAPTER VIII

BEFORE leaving for Paris Haydon had ordered another and a vaster canvas, and had begun a representation of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, a picture which, with intervals of illness and idleness, occupied him for nearly six years. Before the work was far advanced, he was again at the end of his resources. On February 25, 1815, he records in his Journal, "I am once again without a farthing. I have paid off the greatest part of my debts. The price of 'Solomon' was so inadequate that my models and journey have swept off most of the rest. I have £200 to pay on the 21st of next month, and as yet I have not a sixpence towards it." Fifty guineas were advanced him by Sir George Beaumont, who had now commissioned a picture at two hundred guineas, and Mr. (after Sir George) Phillips of Manchester gave a commission of five hundred guineas for a sacred work, paying one hundred down. Sir George Beaumont wrote a letter which Haydon has endorsed as "very, very kind," suggesting that he should sacrifice some portion of his time

to work which might afford immediate profit. Both Raphael and Titian, he pointed out, occasionally painted portraits, and, he continues: "Suppose now you were to give two mornings a week to this study, I really think you would forward yourself in art, and enable yourself to proceed in comfort."

Haydon did not take this well-meant advice; he preferred borrowing money to painting pot-boilers. His own tradesmen gave him full credit, as we have seen; for the rest he went to the money-lenders, who assisted him at the rate of sixty per cent. He paid this interest by the simple method of incurring a fresh debt, till at length, his punctuality becoming known, his patronage was sought, and offers were made to accommodate him at forty per cent., which remained his normal rate for the remainder of his life.

The year 1815 was too full of stir and excitement for a man like Haydon to devote himself to steady work. The news of Waterloo almost turned his brain. On the evening of June 23, he was coming home to his lodgings in Great Marlborough Street, after an evening spent with John Scott, when in crossing Portman Square he met a messenger from the Foreign Office, who said, "Which is Lord Harrowby's? The Duke has beaten

Napoleon—taken one hundred and fifty pieces of cannon, and is marching on Paris.” In his excitement Haydon directed the messenger to a wrong house, then ran back to John Scott, to whom he told the great news, and the two huzza’d together. There was no work next morning. The model was a Life Guard’s man and drunk with excitement. “I read the *Gazette*,” says Haydon, “the last thing before going to bed. I dreamt of it, and was fighting all night. I got up in a steam of feeling and read all the papers till I was faint. . . . ‘Have not the efforts of the nation,’ I asked myself, ‘been gigantic?’ To such glories she only wants to add the glories of my noble art to make her the grandest nation in the world, and these she shall have if God spare my life.” Leigh Hunt, though not too well pleased at the victory, took a just and liberal view of the situation, and Haydon prides himself on not worrying him to death about the news. “As for Hazlitt,” he writes, “it is not to be believed how the destruction of Napoleon affected him. He seemed prostrated in mind and body; he walked about unwashed, unshaven, hardly sober by day, always intoxicated by night, literally for weeks; until at length, awaking as it were, from his stupor, he at once left off all stimulating liquors, and never touched them after.”

It is in this year that we find the first mention in the Journal of Wordsworth, who, throughout his life, was one of Haydon's most appreciative admirers. On April 13 the artist records, "I had a cast made of Wordsworth's face. He bore it like a philosopher. . . . When he was relieved, he came into breakfast with his usual cheerfulness, and delighted us by his bursts of inspiration. We afterwards called on Hunt, and as Hunt had previously attacked him, and had now reformed his opinions, the meeting was interesting. Hunt paid him the highest compliments, and told him that as he grew wiser and got older, he found his respect for his powers and enthusiasm for his genius increase. . . . I afterwards sauntered with Wordsworth to Hampstead. Never did any man so beguile the time. His purity of heart, his kindness, his soundness of principle, his knowledge, and the intense and eager feelings with which he pours forth all he knows, affect, interest, and enchant one. I do not know any one I should be so inclined to worship as a purified being."

Towards the close of the year Haydon's health began to suffer from over-work, his sight weakened, and he was unable to paint for weeks at a time. "I had never recovered the bitter sufferings I had endured during the painting of 'Solomon,'" he writes.

“As I tottered into my old painting-room again, I saw my Elgin drawings. ‘Ah,’ I thought, ‘those were glorious times. I could then sit twelve hours at it—no weak eyes then.’ I had torn up my strength by my paroxysms of application; I was so deranged by fasting that my whole frame seemed going to pieces.” Under these afflictions he was consoled by receiving permission to take casts of the Elgin Marbles, which had recently been discredited by Payne Knight, who declared that they were not Greek at all, but Roman of the time of Hadrian. In consequence of this adverse opinion from a man who was regarded as both critic and connoisseur, the Marbles went down in public opinion, the Government hesitated to buy them at the price demanded by Lord Elgin, and they were left neglected in a damp shed. Haydon was furious at this insult to the objects of his idolatry, but at the critical moment he found himself supported in his estimate of their merits by Canova, who had just arrived in England. “Canova’s visit was a victory for me,” rejoices Haydon. “What became now of all the sneers at my senseless insanity about the Marbles? I, unknown, with no station or rank, might have talked myself dumb; but for Canova, the great artist of Europe, to repeat word for word what I have been saying

for seven years! His opinion could not be gainsaid."

In a letter to Wordsworth dated November 27, 1815, Haydon writes: "Canova has arrived in town; and last Sunday week he honoured me by a visit. He staid long and was affected by my picture. I feel convinced he is the only thoroughly grounded artist I ever met in my life. Of the Elgin Marbles he speaks with affection; he told me they were '*amply worth a journey from Rome to see,*' and that '*they would produce a change and revolution in the art!*' . . . I took him to see a painter [Northcote] who once painted some fine things, but who, from love of money, deserted his post, and has sunk into a portrait painter. I could not help watching his miserable mortification as he brought forth his wretched affairs. At last, and with a face of painful despair—an air of withered littleness—he said, 'We must all paint portraits here, sir.' What would he not have given to have made a better impression? In that moment he would have parted with all his wealth. It was quite a lesson to me."

The Elgin Marbles question was referred to a Government Commission, which refused to call Haydon as a witness on Lord Elgin's side, but the artist embodied his views in a paper which

appeared in *The Examiner*. This article contained another attack on Payne Knight, and was said by Sir Thomas Lawrence to have saved the Marbles and ruined Haydon. The end of the matter was that the Government bought the treasures for £35,000, considerably less than the sum Lord Elgin had spent on bringing them to England.

Haydon's letter to Wordsworth, describing Canova's visit and his own aspirations, brought a reply from the poet, enclosing three sonnets, one of which had been directly inspired by Haydon's eloquence. However familiar this sonnet may be, it seems well to transcribe it here, since it serves to illustrate the relations that existed between poet and painter :—

“ High is our calling, Friend ! Creative Art  
 (Whether the instruments of words she use  
 Or pencil pregnant with ethereal hues),  
 Demands the service of a mind and heart  
 Though sensitive, yet in their weakest part  
 Heroically fashioned to infuse  
 Faith in the whispers of the lonely Muse,  
 While the whole world seems adverse to desert.  
 And oh, when Nature sinks, as well she may,  
 From long-liv'd pressure of obscure distress,  
 Still to be strenuous for the bright reward,  
 And in the soul admit of no decay,  
 Brook no continuance of weak-mindedness—  
 Great is the glory, for the strife is hard.”

“Now, reader,” exclaims the delighted recipient, “was not this glorious? And you, young student, when you are pressed down by want in the midst of a great work, remember what followed Haydon’s perseverance. The freedom of his native town, the visit of Canova, and the sonnet of Wordsworth.”

To the poet Haydon wrote in the same enthusiastic strain. “This year,” he declares, “has been to me a year of glorious retribution. Without any effort on my part, my miseries have been redressed, my talent acknowledged, and my great object advanced. And now, at the winding up, comes a sonnet from you to carry me to the conclusion of it with glory. You are the first English poet who has ever done complete justice to my delightful Art. Never was so true and just a compliment paid to it in English verse before, as—

“ ‘ Whether the instrument of words she use,  
Or pencil pregnant with ethereal hues.’

This is the truth ; every other poet has shown a thorough ignorance of its nature, seeming not to know that the mind was the same, the means only different. For this you will have the gratitude of every painter. I let Scott see them, and he was

exceedingly affected, and thought them what they are—some of your finest, and worthy of Milton. A heart—

“ ‘Though sensitive, yet in the weakest part  
 Heroically fashioned, to infuse  
 Faith in the whispers of the lonely Muse.’ ”

This went to my heart-strings. How often have I, leaning over a fire nearly out, with my picture before me, untouched for the day from want of money to pay a model; how often, for a short time, have misgivings made my heart sink, and then I have felt as if a Superior Being had reflected a beam of light upon my brain, and a sensitive ring through my frame echoed, ‘Go on.’ ”

By the conclusion of the year Haydon declares that the Academicians were silenced and put to utter confusion. “All classes were so enthusiastic and delighted that, though I had lost seven months with weak eyes, and had only accomplished the ‘Penitent Girl,’ the ‘Mother,’ the ‘Centurion,’ and the ‘Samaritan Woman,’ yet they were so decidedly in advance of all that I had done, that my painting-room was crowded with rank, beauty, and fashion, and the picture was literally taken up as an honour to the nation.”

But neither the tributes of poets nor the homage of the great could put bread into the artist’s

mouth. Though helped from time to time by Mr. Coutts, Mr. Dawson Damer, and other patrons, Haydon could only live by renewed borrowing. Once in the clutches of the money-lenders, he confesses that "the fine edge of honour was dulled. Though my honourable discharge of what I borrowed justified my borrowing again, yet it is a fallacious relief, because you must stop sooner or later; if you are punctual, and if you can pay in the long run, why incur the debt at all? Too proud to do small modest things that I might obtain fair means of subsistence as I proceeded with my great work, I thought it no degradation to borrow, to risk the insult of refusal, and be bated down like the meanest dealer. But ought I, after such efforts as I had made, to have been left in this position by the Government or by the Directors of the British Institution? Under any other Government in Europe, after what I had done I should not have been allowed to remain one moment in necessity."

## CHAPTER IX

HAYDON was now (1816) thirty years of age, and the position that he had won for himself may be illustrated by the elder Landseer's<sup>1</sup> question, "When do you let your beard grow, and take pupils?" "If my instructions are useful or valuable, now," replied Haydon. It was arranged that Charles and Thomas Landseer should come every Monday, when Haydon was to give them work for the week. Edwin took home some dissections of a lion, and received some good advice on the necessity of anatomical studies. This incident roused in Haydon the desire to form a school, and he resolved, as he perceived the rapid progress which the Landseers made, to impart his system to other young men. William Bewick<sup>2</sup> was one of his earliest and most promising pupils, and

<sup>1</sup> John Landseer (1769-1852), the line-engraver. His son Thomas (1795-1880) became a still more famous engraver, and engraved some of Haydon's works. Charles (1799-1879) became a subject painter. The more celebrated Edwin does not seem actually to have studied under Haydon.

<sup>2</sup> William Bewick (1795-1866). Painted portraits, and copied Michael Angelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel for Sir T. Lawrence. His Life was written by Thomas Landseer.

Bewick was followed by William Harvey,<sup>1</sup> Lance,<sup>2</sup> and Chatfield.<sup>3</sup> "All these young men," writes Haydon, "looked up to me as their instructor and their friend. I took them under my care, taught them everything I knew, explained the principles of Raffaele's works, and did the same over again as I had done for Eastlake, without one shilling of payment from them any more than from him. The gratitude of themselves and their friends knew no bounds."

Whether a boy were rich or poor mattered little, we are assured, to Haydon, who was always ready to share his food, his clothes, and his scanty means with his pupils. Bewick, in a letter to his brother, says: "I wish I could describe my feelings at receiving such friendship from this great man. He has even gone so far as to lend me money, and when I offered it to him again, he would not take it. I told him I really did not know I should be able to recompense him for all he had done for me. His answer was: 'Only be industrious, and succeed

<sup>1</sup> William Harvey (1796-1866), wood-engraver, one of Thomas Bewick's apprentices. He executed a large woodcut of Haydon's "Dentatus," and may be considered to have helped to revive the art of wood-engraving.

<sup>2</sup> George Lance (1802-1864). Painted fruit and flower pieces, and a few subject pictures. He studied under Haydon for seven years.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Chatfield (1802-1839). Painted portraits and a few not very successful historical pictures.

in your Art. That is all I require.' Think what must be my feelings to be thus honoured by such a man, while his acquaintance is sought by all the noble in the land." Years afterwards Charles Eastlake wrote to Haydon: "Your early kindness to me is among those obligations I am least likely to forget"; while the Landseers sent him a joint letter in 1818, when the students' copies of Raphael's cartoons were to be exhibited, begging him to accept their drawings as an acknowledgment of the instruction they had received at his hands.

It is only fair to record these tributes of regard, because the so-called school came to a disastrous end. Some years later (in 1823) Haydon contrived to involve two or three of his former pupils in his own embarrassments, by inducing them to sign accommodation bills, which in the course of time they found themselves obliged to meet. The school was broken up, and the whole incident left an indelible slur on Haydon's reputation. But in these early days of discipleship all seemed bright and promising. Two of Raphael's cartoons had been brought up at Haydon's instance to the British Gallery, and the students were set to copy them. Later, when the cartoons and copies were exhibited, the public came in such crowds that the doors had to be closed for fear of damage. Some ridicule

was cast on these proceedings by rival artists, and one or two caricatures appeared on Haydon and his wonderful students. In one of these, "A Master in the Grand Style and his Pupils," the students are represented as drawing with the aid of large compasses. A later one, "St. James' Street in an Uproar," showed Haydon in his favourite blue coat and broad-brimmed hat, surrounded by young ducks excitedly quacking, while the street, where the cartoon exhibition was held, was crowded with carriages, fine ladies, and footmen. "The fools," comments Bewick. "They cannot see that the more they talk about us, the better for our works; they cannot caricature our drawings, so they show their jealousy in this way."

Haydon, at this period of his career, was the poets' painter, and it is doubtful whether any other English artist has received so many poetical tributes. We have seen how Wordsworth admired his art, and sympathised with his aspirations, and the correspondence between the two was continued this year with an interchange of letters on the subject of the character of Buonaparte. About this time Haydon's acquaintance with Keats ripened into intimacy, and we get from him two or three pen-sketches of the poet. Keats is described as below the middle size, with a low forehead, and

an eye that had an inward look perfectly divine. "Keats was the only man I ever met who seemed and looked conscious of a high calling, except Wordsworth. Byron and Shelley were always sophisticating about their verses; Keats sophisticated about nothing. He had made up his mind to do great things, and when he found that by his connexion with *The Examiner* clique he had brought upon himself an overwhelming outcry of unjust aversion, he shrunk up into himself; his diseased tendencies showed themselves, and he died a victim to mistakes alike on the part of friends and enemies."

On November 19, 1816, after an eager interchange of thoughts, Haydon received from Keats the following sonnet, in the seventh and eighth lines of which is an allusion to the painter:—

"Great spirits now on earth are sojourning,  
 He of the cloud, the cataract, the lake,  
 Who on Helvellyn's summit, wide awake,  
 Catches his freshness from the Archangel's wing :  
 He of the rose, the violet, the spring,  
 The social smile, the chain for freedom's sake :  
 And lo ! whose steadfastness would never take  
 A meaner sound than Raffaele's whispering  
 And other spirits there are standing apart,  
 Upon the forehead of the age to come ;  
 These, these will give the world another heart  
 And other pulses. Hear ye not the hum  
 Of mighty workings?—  
 Listen awhile, ye nations, and be dumb."

In his letter of thanks for the sonnet, Haydon says that he should like to send it to Wordsworth. Keats replied, "Your letter has filled me with proud pleasure, and shall be kept by me as a stimulus to exertion. I begin to fix my eye on one horizon. . . . The idea of your sending it to Wordsworth puts me out of breath. You know with what reverence I should send my well-wishes to him." Haydon fulfilled his promise, and in the letter to Wordsworth (Dec. 31, 1816) quotes Keats' remark, and adds, "He is quite a youth, full of eagerness and enthusiasm, and what greatly commends him to me, he has a very fine head! He is now writing a longer sort of poem, of 'Diana and Endymion,' to publish with his smaller productions, and he will send you a copy as soon as it is out. . . . I have been getting on furiously and successfully with my picture. Hourly and daily, in the morning and in the evening, does my hope to shine in my glorious Art get more vivid and intense. If my life and eyes are only spared till I can inoculate a sufficient number of daring youths with true principles, I shall have no fear for the Art of my glorious country. We must be great in painting, and we *will* be great in spite of all the obstructions on earth.

"I am about to put your head into my picture

as a believer by the side of Newton. I cannot quote your ideas, therefore I must do so with your face."

Haydon gives a curious account of his first meeting with another poet—Shelley—which took place at the house of James Smith, Keats and Horace Smith being also among the party. "I seated myself," he writes, "right opposite Shelley, as I was told afterwards, for I did not know what hectic, spare, weakly, yet intellectual-looking creature it was, carving a bit of broccoli as if it had been the substantial wing of a chicken. In a few minutes Shelley opened the conversation by saying in the most feminine and gentle voice, 'As for that detestable religion, the Christian'—I looked astounded, but casting a glance round the table, I easily saw that I was to be set at that evening *vi et armis*. . . . I felt like a stag at bay, and resolved to gore without mercy. Shelley said the Mosaic and Christian dispensations were inconsistent. I swore they were not, and that the Ten Commandments had been the foundation of all the codes of law on earth. Shelley denied it. I affirmed they were, neither of us using an atom of logic." Shakespeare was cited as a witness on both sides, and the controversy continued until all parties grew extremely warm, and said unpleasant things to each

other. After this evening Haydon made up his mind to subject himself no more to the chance of these discussions, and gradually to withdraw from the free-thinking circle.

In this eventful year Haydon fell in love—for the first time, as he declares, but perhaps it would be more exact to say for the last time. He was of a susceptible temperament, and a favourite with women, whom he contrived to inspire with his own invincible belief in himself. He had long been acquainted with Maria Foote,<sup>1</sup> for whom he entertained an admiration qualified by a disapproval of her profession, and by her he was taken one day to the house of a friend, where "In one instant the loveliest face that was ever created since God made Eve, smiled gently at my approach. The effect of her beauty was instantaneous. On the sofa lay a dying man, and a boy about two years old by his side. I never spoke a word, and on seeing M—— home, returned to the house, and stood outside in hopes she would appear at the windows. I went home, and for the first time in my life was really, heartily, thoroughly, passionately over head and ears in love. I hated my pictures. I hated the Elgin Marbles. I hated books. I

<sup>1</sup> Maria Foote (1797–1892). Played at Covent Garden and Drury Lane. Married the fourth Earl of Harrington in 1831.

could not eat, or sleep, or think, or write, or talk. I got up early, examined the premises and street, and gave a man half a crown to let me sit concealed and watch for her coming out. Day after day I grew more inextricably enraptured till resistance was relinquished with a glorious defiance of constraint. Her conduct to her dying husband, her gentle reproof of my impassioned air, riveted my being. But I must not anticipate. Sufficient for the present purpose, O reader, is it to tell thee that B. R. Haydon is, and for ever will be, in love with that woman, and that she is his wife."

## CHAPTER X

HAYDON had promised Sir George Beaumont that he would refrain in future from controversial writing, and "paint down" his enemies. But his friend Elmes, the architect, started a periodical, called *The Annals of the Fine Arts*, about this time, and he could not resist the temptation thus opened to him of airing his views and theories in print. Elmes<sup>1</sup> republished Haydon's original attack upon the Academy, together with fresh onslaughts, and the Art, we are told, was soon in an uproar, the quarterly appearance of the *Annals* being watched for with the same anxiety as a shell in the air during a siege. Haydon considered that his best contribution was an article called "Somniator's other Vision," in which he imagined a deputation from the members of the French Academy to the English Academy, in order to discuss the principles of Greek Art. Each of the English Academicians was made to talk nonsense, according to his own method of dialect, while Sir Thomas

<sup>1</sup> James Elmes (1782-1862), Vice-President of the Royal Architectural Society from 1809 to 1848.

Lawrence is represented as saying "Exactly so!" at stated intervals, with great politeness. At a particular period in the discussion, Michael Angelo's ghost appears, and after lecturing the delinquents, turns them into animals or objects expressive of their characters. Lawrence is transformed into a bottle of sweet oil, Phillips into a vinegar cruet, West into a chameleon, Shee into a magpie, and Northcote into a gilded viper, while Fuseli is sent to hell, as a place congenial to his genius. Turner and Wilkie are allowed to retain their own forms, though they are severely admonished. Turner is asked why he does not define the limbs of his trees and vary the character of his plants, as Poussin and Claude had done. He is further informed that he knows nothing of the anatomy of nature, and that he is a pernicious power in English Art. Wilkie is told that he is the soundest genius in the Academy, but is asked what business he has in that body. "Depart," concludes the ghost of Michael Angelo. "Join your friend H—yd—n, with my best wishes to him; tell him he will succeed in all his noble views and plans if he remember not

"to heat a furnace for his foe so hot  
That it do singe himself."

A more justifiable crusade was that against the notorious *Catalogue Raisonné* (*sic*), which Hazlitt

described as the most extraordinary publication that had ever appeared in a country making pretensions to civilisation. This pamphlet, which was supposed to be inspired by the Royal Academicians, contained an attack upon the Directors of the British Institution for their winter Exhibitions of the Old Masters, which were begun in 1815. Haydon says that on the occasion of the first Exhibition: "Lawrence was looking at the 'Gevartius' when I was there, and as he turned round his face was boiling with rage, and he grated out between his teeth, 'I suppose they think we want teaching.' I met Stothard<sup>1</sup> in my rounds, who said, 'This will destroy us.' 'No,' I replied; 'it will certainly rouse me.'" The writer of the *Catalogue Raisonné*<sup>2</sup> observes that the first resolution framed by the founders of the British Institution was as follows: "The object of this establishment is to facilitate, by a Public Exhibition, the sale of the productions of British artists;" and he asserts his belief that these foster-parents of British Art would never have suffered such an Exhibition to take place if they had not satisfied themselves that, instead of promoting unfair and invidious comparisons, it would produce abundant matter

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Stothard (1755-1834), R.A. in 1794. Better known as a book-illustrator than as a painter.

<sup>2</sup> Neither the author nor the publishers put their name to this work.

for exaltation to living artists. He further attributes to them the desire of holding up the Old Masters to ridicule, estranging the silly and ignorant collector from his false and senseless infatuation for the Black Masters, and teaching the living painters that becoming confidence in their powers which an acknowledgment of their merits entitles them to.

“Who does not perceive,” continues the writer, “that Vandyke’s portraits, by the brilliant colour of the velvet hangings, are made to look as if they had been newly fetched home from the clear-starcher, with a double portion of blue in their ruffs? Who does not see that the angelic females in Rubens’ pictures labour under a fit of the bile, twice as severe as they would do if they were not suffering on red velvet? Who does not see that the landscapes by the same master are converted into brown studies, and that Rembrandt’s ladies and gentlemen of fashion look as if they had been on duty for the whole of last week in the Prince of Wales’ new sewer? And who that has any penetration does not see, in all this, the anxious and benevolent solicitude of the Directors to keep the Old Masters under?”

Hazlitt declared that the *Catalogue* ought to have been burnt the day after it came out by the common hangman. It asserted, he points out,

in so many words, that the knowledge of High Art in England was inconsistent with the existence of the Academy, and that their success as a body instituted for the promotion of the fine Arts required the destruction or concealment of all works of acknowledged excellence. "The Academicians hereby avow their rankling jealousy, hatred, and scorn of all Art, and the great names in Art, and require the keeping down of the public taste as the only way to keep up the bubble of their reputation."

In the course of 1817, Haydon's health broke down again, and he was obliged to lay aside his brush for a time. He was strongly advised to change his rather cramped quarters, and thanks to a loan of £300 from Mr. Harman and £400 from Mr. Coutts, he was enabled to remove from the lodgings in Great Marlborough Street, where he had lodged for ten years with the most forbearing of landlords, and take a small house in Lisson Grove, the property of Rossi<sup>1</sup> the sculptor. Here he quickly regained his health, and before the end of the year, the picture was three parts finished. Hazlitt was introduced into the work as an investigator, and Voltaire as an unbeliever. Keats occupied a place in the background, and

<sup>1</sup> John Charles Felix Rossi (1762-1839), R.A. in 1802. Sculptor to the Prince Regent.





Emery Walker, pinxit

James Heath, sculpsit

Leigh Hunt.

From the Portrait by R. A. Haydon on the National Portrait Gallery.

Wordsworth was represented bowing in reverence and awe.<sup>1</sup>

At this time Haydon was out of conceit with some of his *Examiner* friends, notably Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt, but his friendship for Wordsworth and Keats had grown proportionately warmer. The Lake poet, in a letter dated April 7, 1817, says: "The miscreant Hazlitt continues, I have heard, his abuse of Southey, Coleridge, and myself, in the *Examiner*. I hope that you do not associate with the fellow; he is not a proper person to be admitted into respectable society, being the most perverse and malevolent creature that ill-luck has ever thrown in my way." In his reply, Haydon observes, "With respect to Hazlitt I think his motives are easily discernible. Had you condescended to visit him when he praised your 'Excursion,' his vanity would have been soothed, and his virulence softened. . . . But Leigh Hunt's weather-cock estimation of you I cannot account for, nor is it worth while to attempt it. . . . When first I knew Leigh Hunt, he was really a delightful fellow, ardent in virtue, and perceiving the right thing in everything but religion—he now perplexes himself, and pains his friends. His great error is inordinate personal vanity, and he who pampers it

<sup>1</sup> In imitation of the deliberate anachronisms of the Old Masters.

not is no longer received with affection. I am daily getting more estranged from him, and indeed all his old friends are dropping off."

In his Journal for March 1817, Haydon notes, "Keats has published his first poems, and great things indeed they promise. . . . He is a man after my own heart. He sympathises with me and comprehends me. We saw through each other at once, and I hope are friends for ever. I only know that if I sell my picture, Keats shall never want till another is done, that he may have leisure for his effusions; in short, he shall never want all his life while I live." In this same month Keats had addressed another sonnet to Haydon on the subject of the Elgin Marbles, beginning—

"Haydon! forgive me that I cannot speak  
Definitively of these mighty things;  
Forgive me that I have not eagle's wings,  
That what I want I know not where to seek."<sup>1</sup>

Haydon made the best return in his power by giving the young poet good advice.

"I love you like my own brother," he writes on one occasion. "Beware, for God's sake, of the delusions and sophistications that are ripping up the talents and morality of our friend!"<sup>2</sup> He will

<sup>1</sup> This sonnet was published anonymously in the *Annals of the Fine Arts*.

<sup>2</sup> Leigh Hunt.

go out of the world the victim of his own weakness and the dupe of his own self-delusions, with the contempt of his enemies and the sorrow of his friends, and the cause he undertook to support injured by his own neglect of character. I wish you would come up to town for a day or two that I may put your head in my picture. I have rubbed in Wordsworth's, and advanced the whole. God bless you, my dear Keats. Do not despair. Collect incident, study character, read Shakespeare, and trust in Providence, and you *will* do, you must."

Keats replies somewhat rhapsodically: "I am very sure that you do love me as your very brother—I have seen it in your continual anxiety for me—and I assure you that your welfare and fame is and will be a chief pleasure to me all my life. I know no one but you who can be fully sensible of the turmoil and anxiety, the sacrifice of all that is called comfort, the readiness to measure time by what is done, and to die in six hours, could plans be brought to a conclusion—the looking upon the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Earth and its contents as materials to form greater things—that is to say, ethereal things—but here I am talking like a madman—greater things than our Creator Himself made!"

At the close of the year Haydon gave a notable house-warming, the party consisting of Wordsworth, Keats, Charles Lamb, and Monkhouse. "Wordsworth," we are told, "was in fine cue, and we had a glorious set-to. Lamb got exceedingly merry and exquisitely witty; and his fun in the midst of Wordsworth's solemn intonations of oratory was like the sarcasm of the fool in the intervals of Lear's passion. He made a speech and voted me absent, and made them drink my health. 'Now,' said Lamb to Wordsworth, 'you old Lake poet, you rascally poet, why do you call Voltaire dull?' We all defended Wordsworth, and affirmed there was a state of mind when Voltaire would be dull. . . . He then abused me for putting Newton's head into my picture, 'a fellow who believed nothing unless it was as clear as three sides of a triangle.' And then he and Keats agreed that Newton had destroyed all the poetry of the rainbow by reducing it to the prismatic colours. It was impossible to resist him, and we all drank 'Newton's health, and confusion to mathematics.' It was delightful to see the good-humour of Wordsworth in giving in to all our frolics without affectation, and laughing as heartily as the best of us."

After dinner other friends joined the party,

including an unfortunate gentleman, a Comptroller of Stamps, who having had some correspondence with Wordsworth, was anxious for a personal introduction. Unluckily, his conversation consisted solely of such questions as "Don't you think, sir, that Milton was a great genius?" and "Don't you think, sir, that Newton was a great genius?" Lamb, who had been dozing by the fire, woke up to request permission to examine the gentleman's phrenological organs, greeted his platitudes with snatches of nursery rhymes, and finally had to be hurried away to the painting-room, while the Comptroller was soothed down, and invited to stay to supper. Although the specimens of wit recorded no longer seem inspired, we can believe Haydon's assertion that "It was an immortal evening. Wordsworth's fine intonation as he quoted Milton and Virgil, Keats' eager inspired look, Lamb's quaint sparkle of lambent humour, so speeded the stream of conversation, that in all my life I never passed a more delightful time. It was a night worthy of the Elizabethan age, and my solemn 'Jerusalem' flashing up by the flame of the fire, with Christ hanging over us like a vision, all made up a picture which will long glow upon—

"That inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude."

## CHAPTER XI

IN 1817 Haydon had made the acquaintance of Miss Mitford,<sup>1</sup> and the pair, by dint of mutual admiration and flattery, speedily became friends. "The charm of the Exhibition," she wrote during a visit to town in May 1817, "is a chalk drawing by Mr. Haydon, taken, *as he told me*, from a mother who had lost her child. It is the very triumph of expression. I have not yet lost the impression which it made upon my mind and senses." The lady's feelings found vent in a sonnet, which duly appeared in what may be described as Haydon's official organ, *The Annals of the Fine Arts*. The opening lines of this effusion will probably be found sufficient.

"Tears in the eyes, and on the lips a sigh,  
Haydon, the great, the beautiful, the bold,  
Thy wisdom's King, thy mercy's God unfold;  
These art and genius blend in unison high,  
But this is of the soul."

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Russell Mitford (1789-1855). She had published poems and articles in 1810 and the following years, but "Our Village" did not appear till 1819. At this time she was anxious to write for the stage, and one or two of her tragedies were acted. There are many allusions to Haydon in her correspondence.

Miss Mitford was taken to Haydon's studio by their common friend, Harness, and she tells us that she shed tears over his unfinished picture, and was charmed with the *bonhomie* and *naïveté* of her host. She declares that he is "quite one of the old heroes come to life again — one of Shakespeare's men, full of spirit, endurance, and moral courage," but she concludes her account with an expression of regret that he should be "such a fright." By his masculine contemporaries Haydon seems to have been regarded as rather a good-looking man, with fine dark eyes, aquiline features, and an antique head.

Miss Mitford's enthusiasm does not prevent her from relating with gusto an anecdote illustrative of Haydon's sublime self-conceit. Leigh Hunt, it appears, was in the habit of keeping the birthdays of celebrities, and other anniversaries. On one occasion the birthday of Haydn the composer was being celebrated by a dinner, at which his bust was crowned with laurel, and appropriate speeches were made, and toasts drunk. "Some one told Mr. Haydon that they were celebrating *his* birthday. So off he trotted to Hampstead, made a speech to the company, thanked them for the honour they had done him, but explained that they had made a little mistake in the day!"

Early in 1818 a considerable sum was voted

by Parliament for the building of new churches, rendered necessary by the growth of the population. Haydon tried to induce the building committee to approve of one altar-piece being painted for each church, a percentage of the money being set aside for that purpose. Letters to members of the committee meeting with no encouragement, Haydon set forth his proposals in a pamphlet which he sent to Southey, with an appeal for support. Southey replied: "In matters of art I am entirely ignorant; for although I should never be pleased with a bad picture, and can feel, I believe, the full merits of certain pictures, as far as relates to their conception and effects, other works which are acknowledged to be of the highest excellence have little or none to me. This, however, is in my power. I can take your pamphlet for my text, repeat its arguments, and enforce them as much as I am able, and then cast the bread upon the waters. Furnish me, therefore, with the needful facts, and no time shall be lost.

"The light you have followed has been a light from heaven, and let happen what will, you are on the summit. Oh, never let us doubt the elevation of this glorious country in art as well as in arms, and in general happiness as well as in the arts, if we can but preserve it from the bestial rule

which would involve everything in one common destruction."

"Southey got excited," Haydon tells us, "wrote a capital article in the *Quarterly*, and brought in my pamphlet on churches in a very good manner; but he complained that Gifford cut out all the best parts (as editors always do)."

In the autumn of this year Haydon was asked by his friend W. Hamilton (then of the Foreign Office) if he would care to go to Italy free of expense, as he could be accommodated with a bag of despatches as far as Naples. "My imagination," he writes, "fired up at the thought. I was tortured with conflicting feelings, and could not make up my mind. I had suffered much for the cause of High Art in England. The public was interested. The Landseers, Harvey, and my other pupils had proved the capacity of Englishmen to draw largely. My picture was coming to a close, though there was much to do. After pacing my painting-room till long after midnight, I made up my mind, on a principle of duty, not to leave my country at such a moment. I wrote to Hamilton to tell him so; and I believe he thought my conduct unintelligible and myself cracked."

At this time Haydon was in correspondence with his friends Eastlake and Kirkup, who were

both in Rome. A few months earlier Kirkup<sup>1</sup> had written: "When I wrote to you last I thought you were coming. . . . You will not travel because 'your post must not be quitted and the cause endangered for any *private pleasure* of your own.' Pleasure! I think you right. Delightful indeed it must be for you to visit objects so much endeared to you by long and close acquaintance. The being surrounded by them what a stimulus to your enthusiasm? But your temperament is not one that stands in need of stimuli, and I think with you a visit to Italy would be a greater pleasure to you than benefit. What is there in Raphael you are ignorant of? It is useless, vain to talk to you of Raphael's majestic dignity, animated expression, and so on. I have now seen a great deal of him, almost everything. Some of his heads are finely drawn; turn, air, grace, action, everything which regards expression seems perfect. I think you will like his drawing better than that of Carracci; but you have certainly effected a fastidiousness in the eye of an English student which will save him from studying the Italians. Your scrupulous and deep-studied adherence to the old canons *at first*; *your discovery* of the matchless

<sup>1</sup> Seymour Stocker Kirkup (1788-1880). He lived chiefly in Rome and Florence, and though interested in all matters connected with painting, made no great success as a painter.

new ones, and the research and proper use of nature in your pictures, have *given us all new views*. One proof is that we have lost some of the old ones for coming here. The English will not make so many cartoons here as formerly, and Rome will not be considered as the first Academy in the world."

The flattery contained in Kirkup's letter probably helped to confirm Haydon in his idea that he would profit but little from a visit to Italy and a study of the Old Masters. In the *Annals of the Fine Arts* had it not been asserted that the "Judgment of Solomon" ranked Haydon as the equal of Raphael, and that in his treatment and conception of this picture he had shown himself superior to Poussin and Rubens? But the success of his so-called "School," and the brilliant promise shown by his pupils, was probably the chief reason for his determination to remain in his native land. Scarcely were the copies of Raphael's cartoon completed than the students were sent to the Museum to draw from the Elgin Marbles. "The astonishment of the people was extraordinary," comments Haydon, upon what would now be considered a very ordinary proceeding. "They would not believe that they [the pupils] were Englishmen, but continually asked if they were Italians. Their cartoons (drawn the full size) of the Fates, the

Theseus, and the Ilissus, literally made a noise in Europe. An order came from the great Goethe at Weimar for a set for his own house, and the house being kept up as it was in Goethe's time, the cartoons of my pupils are thus preserved, whilst in England the rest are lying about in cellars and corners." In a letter to Miss Mitford, Haydon declared that his pupils' drawings were an honour to England and to the age. They were not copies, but translations, with the feeling, the power, and the truth of the originals. "Oh Italy!" he concludes with rhapsodical fervour. "Thou art great and glorious, with thy exquisite Art, thy blue sky, thy inexhaustible ruins; but give me England, fresh, vigorous, and inspiring, where everything in Art is to do, and not where everything has been done. The very fogs here make me grasp my hands, and say we will do it in spite of this."

The "School" was not, as we have seen, without its detractors. The Academicians set their faces against the whole scheme, abused and nicknamed it. *Blackwood* also assaulted it, and called the master and his pupils by every species of offensive epithet. Haydon suffered at this time from his connection with Leigh Hunt, upon whom the attacks in *Blackwood* and other Tory periodicals were incessant. Hunt had addressed a sonnet to

Haydon. "This was enough. We were taken to be the same clique of rebels, rascals, and reformers who were supposed to support that production [*The Examiner*] of so much power and talent. On Keats the effect was melancholy. He became morbid and silent, and would call and sit while I was painting without speaking a word."

Haydon's friendship with Keats seems to have grown warmer as his intimacy with Leigh Hunt diminished. On January 10, 1818, Keats wrote to Haydon: "Your friendship for me is now getting into its teens, and I feel the past. Also, every day older I get, the greater is my idea of your achievements in Art; and I am convinced that there are three things to rejoice at in this Age—'The Excursion,' your Pictures, and Hazlitt's depth of Taste." In March Haydon wrote to the poet, then travelling in Devonshire, in a state of the wildest excitement over a new Shakespearean "discovery." "I shall go mad," he exclaims. "In a field near Stratford-on-Avon that belonged to Shakespeare they have found a gold ring and seal, with the initials W. S. and a true lover's knot between. If this is not Shakespeare's, whose is it? I saw an impression to-day, and am to have one as soon as possible; as sure as that you breathe, and he was the first of beings, the seal belonged to him. O Lord!"

Keats, less enthusiastic or less credulous, replies from Teignmouth: "In sooth I hope you are not too sanguine, in sooth I hope it is not Brummagem, in double sooth I hope it is his, and in triple sooth I hope I shall have an impression." The poet encloses a couple of lyrics, inspired by the charms of Devonshire—bits of doggerel, he calls them, and concludes: "It has been a mystery to me how or where Wordsworth went. I can't help thinking he has returned to his shell with his beautiful wife and his enchanting sister. It is a great pity that people, by associating themselves with the finest things, spoil them. Hunt has damned Hampstead with masks and sonnets and Italian tales; Wordsworth has damned the Lakes; Milman has damned the old dramatists; West has damned wholesale; Peacock has damned satire; Hazlitt has damned the bigoted and the blue-stockinged—how durst the man? He is your only good damner; and if ever I am damned, I should like him to damn me."

After reading Haydon's resolution that Keats should never want for anything as long as he lived, it is something of a shock to find him pestering his friend for money. In his reply to one of these appeals, Keats writes:—

"(Dec. 23, 1818.) . . . Believe me, I never

rhodomontade anywhere but in your company. My general life in society is silence. I feel in myself all the vices of a poet—irritability, love of effect and admiration; and, influenced by such devils, I may at times say more ridiculous things than I am aware of, but I will put a stop to that in a manner I have long resolved upon. I will buy a gold ring and put it on my finger; and from that time a man of superior head shall never have occasion to pity me, or one of inferior numskull to chuckle at me. . . . I value more the privilege of seeing great things in loneliness than the fame of a prophet, so I will turn to a thing I have thought on more—I mean your means till the picture be finished. Not only now, but for this year and a half I have thought of it. Believe me, Haydon, I have that sort of fire in my heart that would sacrifice everything I have to your service. I know you would do so for me. I open my heart to you in a few words. I will do this sooner than you shall be distressed, but let me be the last stay. Ask the rich lover of Art first. I will tell you why. I have a little money that may enable me to study and to travel for three or four years. I never expect to get anything by my books, and, moreover, I wish to avoid publishing. . . . Try the long purses first, but do not sell your draw-

ings, or I shall consider it a breach of friendship."

"I have no reason to complain of the lovers of Art," wrote Haydon in return. "I have been liberally assisted; but when a man comes again with a tale of his ill-health they don't believe him. Can I bear the thousandth part of a dry hesitation; the searching scrutiny of an apprehension of insincerity; the musing hum of a *sounding* question; the petty, prying, paltry, whining doubt that is inferred from a request for a day to consider! Ah, Keats! this is sad work for one of my soul and ambition. The truest thing you ever said of mortal was that I had a touch of Alexander in me!"

The money difficulty put an end to the friendship, at least as far as Keats was concerned. If the painter disliked the ordeal of borrowing, the poet loathed the ordeal of going into the City to arrange for a loan. To stand in the bank for an hour or two was worse, he declares, than anything in Dante. Besides, he had less chance with the people round him than Orpheus had with the stones. That he had been from the first a too clear-sighted friend, we learn from a letter to Bailey, in which he says: "Before I felt interested in either Reynolds or Haydon, I was well

read in their faults; yet knowing them, I have been cementing gradually with both." The end came in September 1819. Keats had lent Haydon thirty pounds, but "In this see-saw game of life," to use his own words, "I got nearest the ground, so that I was sitting in that uneasy position where the seat slants abominably. I applied to him [Haydon] for payment. He could not—that was no wonder; but, goodman delver, where was the wonder then? Why, marry in this—he did not seem to care much about it, and let me go without my money with almost nonchalance, when he ought to have sold his drawings to supply me. I shall perhaps still be acquainted with him; but for friendship, that is at an end."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Haydon's cast of Keats' face is in the National Portrait Gallery. Keats made a sketch of Haydon, a "vile caricature," he calls it, which is reproduced in Frederick Haydon's Memoir of his father.

## CHAPTER XII

IN January 1820 the great picture, "Christ's Entry into Jerusalem," was finished, after costing the painter nearly six years' toil. Haydon showed his confidence in his own work by taking a large room at the Egyptian Hall for a year, at a rent of £300, though at that time he was without a penny in his pocket. Money had to be borrowed to buy fittings for the room, but all difficulties were at length overcome, and tickets of admission to the private view were sent out to ministers, ambassadors, bishops, beauties, and geniuses. The world of rank and fashion responded nobly. By half-past three Piccadilly was blocked with carriages, and the entrance-hall was full of servants, with all the bustle and noise of a rout at noonday. Lord Mulgrave, in his character of patron, was receiving congratulations, Sir George Beaumont was anxiously awaiting the verdict of the great, Keats and Hazlitt were rejoicing in a corner, Wilkie was trying to appear enthusiastic, while Jackson was openly startled at his fellow-student's success. The only 'doubt expressed by the polite throng

was on the subject of the head of Christ. It was not traditional, not orthodox, not the expected type. Miss Mitford tells us that Haydon had been his own model, and it is clear that he himself was not altogether satisfied with his performance, though he had repainted it seven times.

The amateur critics had just begun to "hesitate dislike," when in swept Mrs. Siddons with all the dignity of her majestic presence. A silence fell on the crowd as she contemplated the picture. At length Sir George Beaumont timidly inquired, "How do you like the Christ?" Everybody listened for her reply. After a moment she said in a deep, loud, tragic voice, "It is completely successful. The paleness gives it a supernatural look." The word had gone forth, and everybody was heard repeating that the paleness gave the head of Christ a supernatural look.

When the Exhibition was opened to the general public, the rush was so great and the success so decided that the Academicians, if Haydon may be believed, "got into a fury, and crept to see it, one at a time, holding forth to their friends, and damning it by saying that it had good parts. Notwithstanding the feeling displayed in its favour, the abuse was so great that it was the subject of a positive battle. Money kept pouring in, and I

kept paying away; but my receipts became so palpable that a base appetite was raised in some to whom I was indebted."

The Editor of the *Annals of the Fine Arts* renewed his efforts to boom his friend and contributor. "For four years," he writes, "we have run a perpetual gauntlet for asserting the right of Haydon to the title of an historical painter of the highest order. We presume the most fastidious enemy of Haydon will no longer deny us the right of saying that his appearance in the Art will certainly form an era in its history, that he is a man of undoubted genius, the first painter in the country, and that his works have raised the reputation of the English school." Wordsworth declared that the picture was a masterpiece of colour, character, and expression, and that it was worth waiting fifty years to get so complete a work; while Southey wrote that though he missed the traditional countenance, on every other point the picture fully equalled his highest expectations. Haydon seems to have been completely satisfied with the praise of poets, journalists, or actors—unfavourable criticism from an expert he was accustomed to attribute to professional jealousy. Charles Leslie,<sup>1</sup> a friend

<sup>1</sup> Charles Leslie (1794-1859). Born in London of American parents. He painted historical and genre pictures, making a

as well as a fellow-artist, tells us that at the time the "Judgment of Solomon" appeared, he was captivated with Haydon's art, then at its best, and vainly tried to imitate the richness of his colour and impasto. He thought that "Christ's Entry" was not equal to the "Solomon" as a whole, though there were fine things in it. "It seemed to me," he adds, "that there was an almost regular decrease of excellence in his pictures, from the 'Solomon' to the end of his life, parallel with his increasing troubles."

Early in the year Wordsworth had written to Haydon from Rydal Mount to congratulate him on the completion of his picture, and to thank him for his valuable drawing,<sup>1</sup> which had been much admired as a work of Art, though in general it was not deemed a striking likeness. "Now that you have recovered your eyes," continues the poet, "paint, and leave writing to the dunces and malignants with which London swarms. How is Keats? he is a youth of promise, too great for the sorry company he keeps. . . . If I could see your picture, I think it would inspire me with a sonnet; and, indeed, without seeing it,

*spécialité* of subjects from the account of Sir Roger de Coverley and from Don Quixote. He was elected R.A. in 1826. He published the Memoirs of Constable, and his own Autobiography was edited by Tom Taylor.

<sup>1</sup> A portrait of the poet.

I do not lack matter for so slight a tribute to your merit."

Haydon wrote on April 28 to announce the complete success of his Exhibition. "Last night," he continues, "I received your volume of 'Duddon River,' &c., for which, and for all your kind remembrances of me, accept my sincere thanks. There are things in it as fine, perhaps finer, than in any of your other works:—

" ' We men, who in our morn of youth defied  
The elements, must vanish. Be it so!  
Enough if something from our hands have power  
To live and act and serve the future hour.'

" This is my favourite bit in the whole volume, which I have been thundering in my painting-room, and in the fields, ever since I read it.

" I met Walter Scott in company once, and I found him a very delightful man; but still there is some imposition in the influence that surrounds him. You are aware he is suspected as being a concealed author; you fear, from delicacy, to allude to the subject; and yet you find him continually alluding to it; and thus he has something of the air of a magician, with whom certain things are forbidden to you, but granted to him. I feel as if it were a species of quackery; and cannot but think all this has its

effect in society. There are some deep things in these novels, but yet the power is exclusive and national, and the mystery of the publication, the influence of reviews, and determination of all parties to forgive the grossest absurdities, have contributed as much as their inherent merit, perhaps more, to extend their fame.

“Keats is very poorly, and I think in danger.”

While the popularity of the picture was at its height, Sir Walter Scott came to town to stay with Atkinson, the architect of Abbotsford, and Haydon was invited to meet him. “One talk,” he observes, “satisfied me who was the author of ‘Waverley.’ His expression denoted a keen, prudent, deep man. His conversation showed great relish of what is Nature, and for no part of her works so much as where vice and humour are mingled. . . . He paid me high compliments; said he was anxious to see a picture the world was talking of, and the next morning, when Sammons [the caretaker] came down to open the gallery, who should be sitting on the stairs outside the door, with simple patience, but the mysterious author of ‘Waverley.’ He had called before the room was open, and hearing the man would not be long, quietly, as if on a bank, sat down and waited. This always appeared to me a

beautiful trait of the natural character of this great genius."

Directly after the private view, Haydon had written the following letter to Mrs. Siddons:—

"MADAM,—I hope I may be pardoned for venturing to express again my gratitude for your unhesitating decision on Saturday. I have ever estimated you, Madam, as the great high priestess at the shrine of Nature;—as the only being living who had ever been, or was worthy to be admitted within the veil of her temple;—as one whose immortality was long since decided. You will then judge of my feelings at having been so fortunate as to touch the sensibility of so gifted a being. The whole evening I could not avoid believing I had held converse with a spirit of my own imagination, whom for years I had pictured in solitude as the organ of Nature herself, in whose immediate impressions I would place more confidence, and bow to them with more deference, than to the united reasoning of the rest of the world.

"By this liberty, I know I risk all prospect of any future notice from you, yet I rely on your goodness to pardon the indelicacy as well as rudeness of the intrusion."

Mrs. Siddons replied :—

“SIR,—In answer to your very flattering note, I can no otherwise reply than in the words of Hamlet, that the suffrage of one so great genius ‘o’er-weighs a whole theatre of others.’ Your time must of course be so completely devoted to your divine art, that I scarcely hope you will find leisure to gratify me by calling here when it may not be out of your way to do me that favour ; yet I doubt ; I will not despair, and I remain,

“With the utmost admiration,

“Your most obliged servant,

“S. SIDDONS.”

Immediately after this stately exchange of compliments, Haydon called upon his divinity, and was gloriously received. “It was like speaking to the mother of the gods. I told her when a boy I had crept below the orchestra door at Plymouth theatre, and squeezed up underneath the stage with my legs hanging into the orchestra, to see her perform the Mother in Lillo’s ‘Cornish Tragedy.’”

The Exhibition remained open till November, the total profits amounting to close on £1300. But no patron offered to buy the picture at

the price demanded—two thousand pounds. Sir George Beaumont proposed that the British Institution should buy it, but Payne Knight opposed him, and the proposition was thrown out. A subscription was then started to purchase the picture and present it to a church, but only £200 was subscribed. Every penny of the money taken at the Exhibition had been paid away to hungry creditors, and as winter approached, Haydon thought of a “dash upon Scotland,” the camp of the enemy, as he regarded it, owing to the attacks that had been made upon himself and his friends in *Blackwood*. By dint of further borrowing the picture was shipped to Edinburgh, where it was exhibited with great success, bringing in another £500 to the artist's exchequer.

The first of the Edinburgh celebrities to whom Haydon was introduced was Lockhart, who seemed rather nervous at this unexpected encounter with his victim. “He had assaulted me as one of the Cockney clique,” writes Haydon, “and he seemed surprised to find that I was human. In Lockhart's melancholy and Spanish head there was evidence of genius and mischief. I dined with him. His reception was open and frank. He treated me then, and ever since, as if I was a man he had unwittingly injured. The next man I dined with

was Sir Walter. I called on him, and heard him stumping down. At the head of his first landing he waved his stick and cried 'Hurrah! welcome to Scotland, Haydon!' He then came down, and gripped my hand. 'How d'ye like Edinburgh?' 'It is the dream of a great genius,' said I. 'Well done,' said Sir Walter; 'when will ye dine with me?'"

A day was soon fixed, but we hear little about the dinner, except that Haydon in a letter to Miss Mitford, says that he was delighted with the unaffected simplicity of Scott's family. He goes on to contrast the characters of Scott and Jeffrey in a manner that shows considerable acuteness of observation. "Jeffrey has a singular expression, poignant, bitter, piercing—as if his countenance never lighted up but at the perception of some weakness in human nature. Whatever you praise to Jeffrey, he directly chuckles out some error that you did not perceive. Whatever you praise to Scott, he joins heartily with yourself, and directs your attention to some additional beauty. The face of Scott is the expression of a man whose great pleasure has been to shake Nature by the hand; while to point at her with his finger has certainly, from his expression, been the chief enjoyment of Jeffrey."

Haydon considered that Wilson<sup>1</sup> was the man of most powerful mind that he encountered in Edinburgh. "He looked like a fine South Sea Islander, who had been educated in the Highlands. His light hair, deep sea-blue eye, tall athletic figure, and hearty hand-clasp, his eagerness in debate, his violent passions, great genius and irregular habits, rendered him a formidable partisan, a furious enemy, and an ardent friend. His hatred of Keats, which could not be concealed, marked him as the author of all those violent attacks on my poor friend in *Blackwood*."

No allusion was made to *Maga* in Haydon's presence, and as he had been treated by the principal contributors with great respect, he felt that it would be beneath him to think of what had passed. Lockhart made amends by a notice of the picture in *Blackwood*, in the course of which he says:—

"It is probable that the absurd style of language in which this picture has been lauded by the critics of Cockayne, may have inspired many of our readers with doubts and suspicions, but in order to do away with them, we are quite sure nothing more can be necessary than a single glance at

<sup>1</sup> Professor Wilson (1785-1854), better known as "Christopher North," the leading spirit of *Blackwood's Magazine*, and author of the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*.

this wonderful performance itself. . . . It is quite evident that Mr. Haydon is already by far the greatest historical painter that England has as yet produced. In time, those that have observed this masterpiece can have no doubt he may take his place by the side of the very greatest painters in Italy.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In an article on the “Cockney School of Poetry” which appeared in *Blackwood* for April 1818, Haydon was called the “Cockney Raphael.” The writer adds, “Mr. Haydon enjoys every day the satisfaction of sitting before one of the cartoons of Raphael, with his own greasy hair combed loosely over his collar, after the manner of Raphael—hatted among his hatless disciples—a very god among the Landseers.”

## CHAPTER XIII

ON his return to town, Haydon finished a picture—"Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane,"<sup>1</sup> a commission from Sir George Phillips, who had already advanced the price agreed upon—five hundred guineas. This work seems to have been a disappointment to all concerned. It was severely handled by the critics of the day, and Haydon himself admits that it was the worst picture that ever "escaped his pencil." An offer of a thousand pounds for "Christ's Entry" had been refused, and not only had the proceeds of the Exhibition all been paid away, but the artist was still deeply in debt. "I now see," he notes in his Journal, "that difficulties are my lot in pecuniary matters, and my plan must be to make up my mind to meet them and fag as I can. If I can float, and keep alive attention to my situation through another picture, I will reach the shore. I am

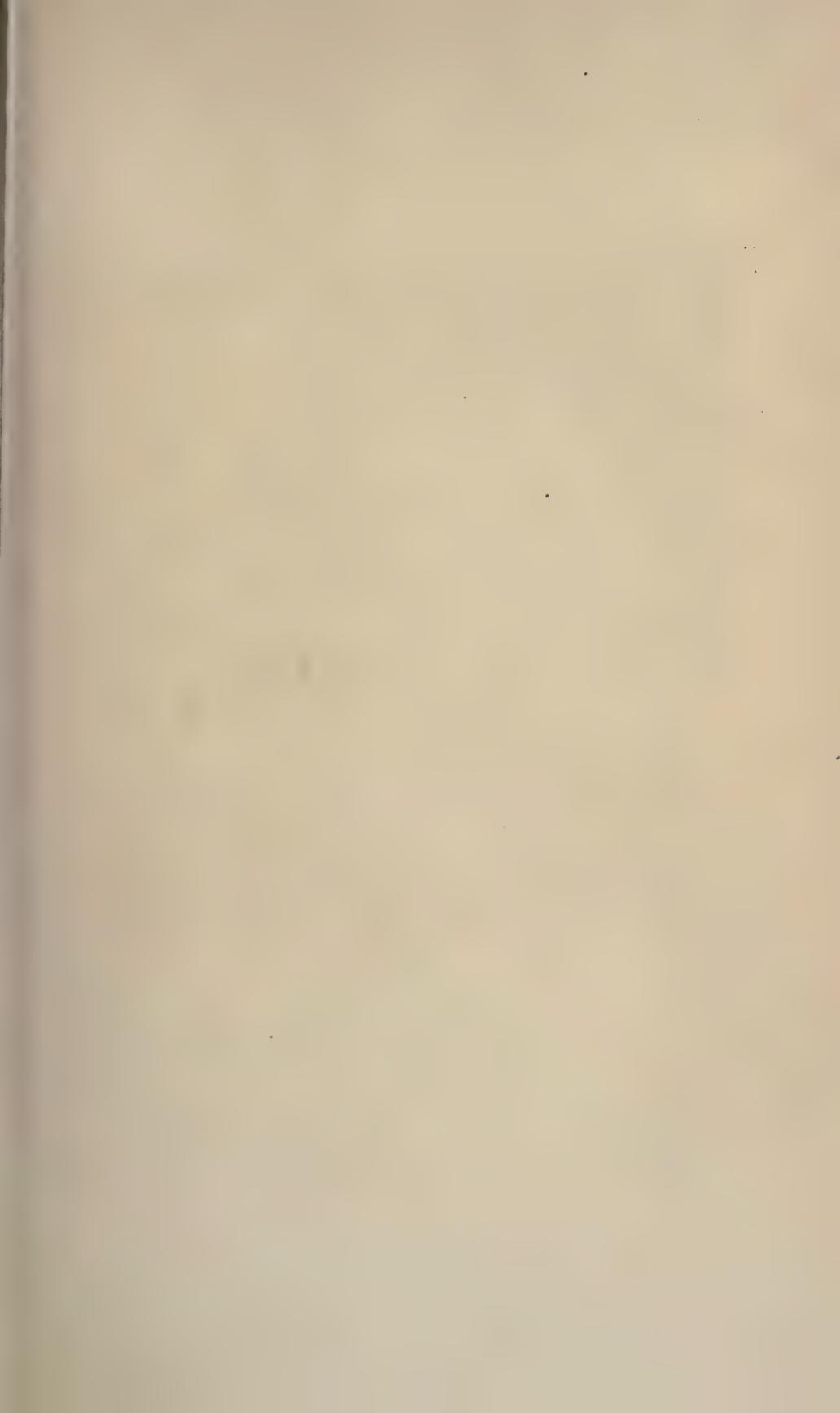
<sup>1</sup> The canvas is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, stowed away in a lumber room, but it can be exhumed for the benefit of any visitor who desires to see an inferior example of B. R. Haydon's work.

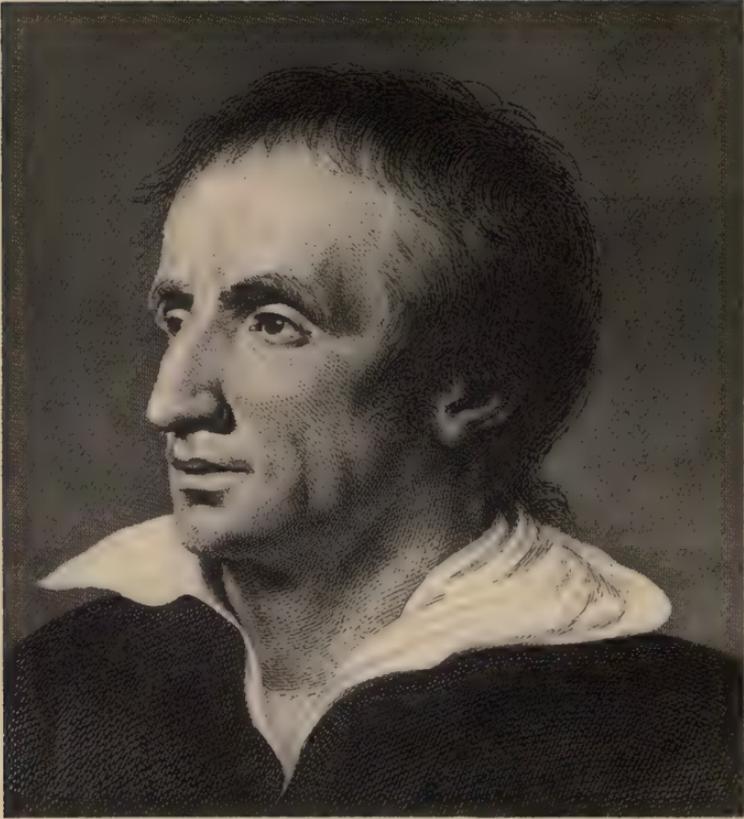
now clearly in sight of it, and I will yet land to the sound of trumpets and shouts of my friends."

While looking over some prints at the British Museum about this time, Haydon saw a proof of some picture of the Raising of Lazarus in such a state that a space was left vacant for the head of Lazarus. His imagination filled the vacancy, and he tells us that he trembled at his terrific conception of the head. He went home, determined to paint a picture of the Raising of Lazarus which should be his largest and grandest work. "I always filled my painting-room to its fullest extent," he explains; "and had I possessed a room 400 feet long and 200 feet high and 400 feet wide, I would have ordered a canvas 399-6 long by 199-6 high, and so would have been encumbered for want of space. My room was thirty feet long by fifteen high. So I ordered a canvas nineteen feet long by fifteen high, and dashed in my conception, the Christ being nine feet high."

Haydon seems to have had some idea of painting a subject from Scottish history, and Sir Walter Scott, who warmly encouraged the project, sent a list of authors, Hailes, Laing, Pinkerton, and others, who might be studied with advantage. He complains that "in general there is a great

error in dressing ancient Scottish men like Highlanders, who wore a dress, as they spoke a language, as foreign to the Lowland Scottish as to the English." Sir Walter proceeds to relate in his own inimitable fashion, a tale of his own country which struck him as a not unfit subject for the pencil. Briefly this was the story of a Border Champion of the Clan of Armstrong, called the Laird's Jock. He wielded an immense broadsword which no one on the west border could use but himself. After living many years without a rival, Jock-of-the-Side became old and bedridden. His family consisted of a son and daughter, the first a fine young warrior, the last a beautiful girl. About this time an English Champion named Foster challenged any man on the Scottish side to single combat. Jock's son accepted the challenge, and his father presented him on the occasion with the two-handed sword. The old man insisted on witnessing the combat, and was carried to a place called Turner's Holm, just on the frontiers of both kingdoms, where he was placed under the care of his daughter. The champions met, and young Armstrong was slain. Foster, seizing the sword, waved it in token of triumph. The old Champion never dropped a tear for his son, but when he saw his famous weapon in the hands of





*Engraving by H. B. Hall*

*Engraving by H. B. Hall*

*William Wordsworth*

*From an Engraving of a Portrait by R. H. Boydell*

an Englishman, he set up a hideous cry, which is said to have been heard at an incredible distance, and exclaiming, "My sword! my sword!" dropped into his daughter's arms, and expired. "I think," observes Scott, "that the despair of the old giant, contrasted with the beautiful female in all her sorrow, and with the accompaniments of the field of combat, are no bad subject for a sketch *à la mode* of Salvator, though perhaps better adapted for sculpture."

In March Sir Walter was in town, and he, Lamb, Wilkie, and Proctor spent a morning with Haydon—a "delightful morning," as we hardly need to be assured. "Scott operated on us," says Haydon, "like champagne and whisky mixed. It is singular how success and the want of it operate on two extraordinary men, Walter Scott and Wordsworth. Scott enters a room, and sits at table with the coolness of conscious fame; Wordsworth with a mortified elevation of the head, as if fearing he was not estimated as he deserved. Scott can afford to talk of trifles because he knows the world will think him a great man who condescends to trifle; Wordsworth must always be eloquent and profound, because he knows that he is considered childish and puerile. . . . I think that Scott's success would

have made Wordsworth insufferable, while Wordsworth's failures would not have rendered Scott a whit less delightful."

Haydon had taken care to cultivate his acquaintance with Mrs. Siddons, in whose artistic perception he seems to have had more faith than in that of all the Academicians put together. On March 10, 1821, he notes that he has spent an evening at her house to hear her read "Macbeth." "She acts Macbeth herself," he remarks, "better than either Kemble or Kean. It is extraordinary the awe this wonderful woman inspires. After her first reading the men retired to tea. While we were all eating toast and tingling cups and saucers, she began again. It was like the effect of a mass bell at Madrid. All noise ceased; we slunk to our seats like boors, two or three of the most distinguished men of the day with the very toast in their mouths, afraid to bite. It was curious to see Lawrence in this predicament, to hear him bite by degrees, and then stop for fear of making too much crackle, his eyes full of water from the constraint, and at the same time to hear Mrs. Siddons' 'Eye of newt and toe of frog,' and to see Lawrence give a sly bite, and then look awed, and pretend to be listening."

On February 23 Keats died at Rome, and

though his friendship for Haydon had cooled, as we have seen, during the last years of his life, the artist sincerely deplored his loss. "Keats too is gone," he writes in his Journal. "A genius more purely poetical never existed. In fireside conversation he was weak and inconsequent, but he was in his glory in the fields. . . . He was the most unselfish of human creatures; unadapted to the world, he cared not for himself, and put himself to any inconvenience for the sake of his friends. He was haughty, and had a fierce hatred of rank; but he had a kind heart, and would have shared his fortune with any one who wanted it. He had an exquisite sense of humour, and too refined a notion of female purity to bear the little sweet arts of love with patience. . . . He began life full of hopes, fiery, impetuous, and ungovernable, expecting the world to fall at once beneath his powers. Unable to bear the sneers of ignorance nor the attacks of envy, he began to despond, and flew to dissipation as a relief. For six weeks he was scarcely sober, and—to show what a man does to gratify his appetites when they get the better of him—once covered his tongue and throat as far as he could reach with cayenne pepper, in order to appreciate the 'delicious coldness of claret in all its glory'—his own expression."

On the 22nd of June, 1821, there is an ominous entry in the Journal: "A remarkable day in my life—I am arrested." Arrest for debt became, unfortunately, too frequent an incident in after days to seem at all remarkable; but on his first acquaintance with the sheriff's officer, Haydon relieved his soul with angry criticisms of the iniquitous laws against debtors. His initial experience, however, was flattering to his artistic vanity, for the officer was so much impressed by the figure of Lazarus that he exclaimed, "Oh, my God, sir, I won't take you! Give me your word to meet me at twelve at the attorney's, and I will trust you." At the interview with the lawyer Haydon appointed the same evening for the payment of his debt. He was told that he must remain in custody the while. "Not he," interposed the chivalrous bailiff. "Let him give me his word, and I'll take it, though I am liable to pay the debt." Haydon pledged his word, was left free till night, and contrived to settle the debt. This incident has been compared to the story of the bravo arrested in their murderous intent by the organ-playing of Stradella; and, more aptly, to that of the soldiers of the Constable, who, when sacking Rome, broke into Parmegiano's studio, but were so struck by the beauty of his

pictures that they protected him and his property.

With the reckless daring of the impecunious, Haydon was married on October 10, 1821, to the lady with whom he had been in love for five years—Mary Hyman. She was now a widow, with two children and a jointure of fifty pounds a year. His Journal at this period is full of raptures over his blissful condition, as are also his letters to his friends. To Miss Mitford he wrote from Windsor, where the honeymoon was spent: "Here I am, sitting by my own dearest Mary, with all the complacency of a well-behaved husband, writing to you, while she is working on some unintelligible part of a lady's costume. You don't know how proud I am of saying *my wife*. I never felt half so proud of 'Solomon' or 'Macbeth' as I am of being the husband of this tender little bit of lovely humanity. Mary smiles, and says you must not believe one half of what I write now. You must believe *all*. My understanding never loses its perspicacity, however agitated are my feelings, or tenderly disposed is my heart, therefore you will believe it, I feel sure. . . . There never was such a creature; and although her face is perfect, and has more feeling in it than Lady Hamilton's, her manner to me is perfectly enchanting, and more

bewitching than her beauty. I think I shall put over my painting-room door, 'Love, solitude, and painting.'"

In spite of the clamouring of creditors, of which by this time familiarity must have shorn some of its terrors, the early months of married life were spent in hard work and almost unclouded happiness. On the last day of the year Haydon reviewed his position in accordance with his usual custom, and thus describes his enviable lot, and the change that his marriage has wrought upon him :—

"I don't know how it is, but I get less reflective as I get older. I seem to take things as they come without much care. In early life everything being new excites thought. As nothing is new when a man is thirty-five, one thinks less. Or perhaps, being married to my dearest Mary, and having no longer anything to hope in love, I get more content with my lot, which, God knows, is rapturous beyond imagination. Here I sit sketching, with the loveliest face before me, smiling and laughing, and 'solitude is not.' Marriage has increased my happiness beyond expression. In the intervals of study, a few minutes' conversation with a creature one loves is the greatest of all reliefs. God bless

us both! My pecuniary difficulties are still great, but my love is intense, my ambition intense, and my hope in God's protection cheering. Bewick, my pupil, has realised my hopes in his picture of 'Jacob and Rachel.' But it is cold work talking of pupils when one's soul is full of a beloved woman! I am really and truly in love, and without affectation I can talk, write, or think of nothing else!"

## CHAPTER XIV

THE "Raising of Lazarus," which has been described as "the most awful representation of death just awakening into life that has ever been put upon canvas," was painted under conditions of great distress and harassment. Just as Haydon was beginning the central figure, he was arrested at the suit of his colour-man. He obtained bail from his former landlord, and once more, presumably by the help of the money-lenders, the affair was arranged. The artist returned to his interrupted work, and for a few minutes his mind, hurt and wounded, struggled to regain its power. "At last," he tells us, "in scrawling about the brush, I gave an expression to the eye of Lazarus; I instantly got interested, and before two I had hit it. My pupil Bewick sat for it, and as he had not sold his exquisite picture of 'Jacob and Rachel,' he looked quite thin and anxious enough for such a head. 'I hope you get your food regularly,' said I. He did not answer; by degrees his cheeks reddened and his eyes filled, but he restrained his feelings. This

is an illustration of the state of historical painting in England. A master and his pupil—the one without a pound, the other without bread.”

Bewick has left his own account of the sitting, and it is no wonder he looked pale and anxious, considering that he was perched upon a box, placed upon a chair, which in its turn was placed upon a table, a seat that was at once uncomfortable and insecure. “It was painful,” he observes, “to be pinned to one confined spot for so many hours, the head, hands, and drapery being all painted off at once, in one day, and never touched afterwards, but left as struck off. The head has never even been softened, so successful and impressive it appeared to both artist and pupil, and so much was it the emanation of a wonderful conception, executed with a rapidity and precision of touch truly astonishing. I think I see the painter before me, his palette and brushes in his hand, returning from the sheriff’s officer in the adjoining room, pale, calm, and serious, mounting his high steps, and continuing his arduous task, and as he looks round to his pallid model, whispering, ‘Egad, Bewick, I have just been arrested; that is the third time; if they come again I shall not be able to go on.’”

Perhaps Haydon took his money troubles the

more coolly from the knowledge that many of his colleagues were in the same predicament. He was complimented by one sheriff's officer on not "denying himself," and told that Sir Thomas Lawrence made a point of never denying himself. On March 18, 1822, Haydon reviewed his position, and laid the hopeless nature of his situation before some of his more turbulent creditors. "Having relieved my mind," he continues, "I walked furiously home, borne along on the wings of my own ardent aspirations. I never felt happier, more elevated, more confident. I walked in to my dear wife, kissed her, and then to my picture, which looked awful and grand. 'Good God!' I thought, 'can the painter of that face tremble? Can he be in difficulty?' . . . I am born to be the sport of fortune, to be put up in one freak and bowled down in another, to astonish everybody by being put up again. God grant me a spirit that will never flag—a mind not to be changed by time or place. I shall yet have a day of glory to which all my other glories shall be dull! I write this without a single shilling in the world—with a large picture before me not half done, yet with a soul aspiring, ardent, confident; trusting on God for protection and support. . . . I shall read this again with delight—and others will read it with wonder."

It is not unusual to find Haydon assisting other strugglers, sometimes by lending small sums out of the money that he borrowed at such high interest, but generally by giving time and trouble. In October Charles Lamb wrote to ask for help for William Godwin, who had been turned out of his house and business. "Shelley had engaged to clear him of all demands," writes Lamb, "but he has gone down to the deep, insolvent." A subscription was raised, and Haydon asked Sir Walter Scott for a contribution. Scott sent ten pounds, but desired that his name should not be made public as a subscriber, "because I dissent from Mr. Godwin's theory of politics and morality as sincerely as I admire his genius, and it would be indelicate to draw such a distinction in the mode of subscribing. I was much amused with Mr. Godwin's conversation some years ago, when he spent a day at this place. I beg my respects to Mr. Lamb, whom I should be happy to see in Scotland, though I have not forgotten his metropolitan preference of houses to rocks, and citizens to wild rustics and highland men."

At this time another old acquaintance, William Hazlitt, was in trouble, though of a different kind. The love affair which is described in his *Liber Amoris*, was then (September 1822) in full swing,

and Haydon, an impartial witness of the affair, wrote to Miss Mitford: "Hazlitt at present gives me great pain by the folly with which he is conducting himself. He has fallen in love, to a pitch of insanity, with a lodging-house hussy, who will be his death. . . . He talks of nothing else, day and night. He has written down all the conversations without colour, literally as they happened; he has preserved all the love-letters, many of which are equal to anything of the sort, and really affecting; and, I believe, in order to ease his soul of this burden, means, with certain arrangements, to publish it as a tale of character. He will sink into idiotcy if he does not get rid of it.

"Poor Hazlitt! He who makes so free with the follies of his friends is of all mortals the most open to ridicule. To hear him repeat, with solemn tone and agitated mouth, the things of love he said to her (to convince you that he made love in the true gallant way), to feel the beauty of the sentiment, and then look up and see his old, hard, weather-beaten, saturnine, metaphysical face—twitching all sorts of ways—is really enough to provoke a saint to laughter. He has a notion that women have never liked him. Since this affair he has dressed in the fashion, and keeps insinuating his improved appearance. *He springs*

*up to show you his pantaloons!* What a being it is! His conversation is now a mixture of disappointed revenge, passionate remembrances, fiendish hopes, and melting lamentations. I feel convinced his metaphysical habits of thinking have rendered him insensible to moral duty, &c. . . .”

On December 7 the “Lazarus” was finished, and on December 8 a grand picture of the “Crucifixion” was projected, and the blessing of Heaven demanded for it, with the additional modest request that it might be the grandest Crucifixion ever painted. Four days later Haydon entered in his Journal: “At half-past eleven in the forenoon was born Frank Haydon, whom I pray God to make a better man than his father. God bless him! and grant him life and virtue, and dauntless energy and health, and, above all, genius! Accept my unbounded gratitude for the safety of my love, my only rapture in this dim spot, the sunbeam of my life.”

Once again the large room at the Egyptian Hall was hired, and during the early days of February Haydon was hard at work toning his picture. He was divided at this time between his pride in his latest work of art and his delight in his first-born. “The dear boy grows apace,” he writes on February 11, when the child was only

eight weeks old, "and seems to be more pleased with colour than anything. . . . God grant that he may have genius for the Art, that he may complete what I have unfinished. [19<sup>th</sup>.] I took the child to Raphael's 'Cupid in the Galatea,' and he laughed with ecstasy. If he should be a painter, this was his first impression. The boy continues to look at nothing but pictures and busts; and, what is curious, he pays no attention to noises or singing. A fragment of three horses' heads from the Elgin Marbles riveted him; and he kept talking for half-an-hour in his own way."

The private day of the Exhibition opened well, the success being complete and immediate. "No picture I have ever painted has been so applauded," writes Haydon. "The approbation was universal, and 'Lazarus' affected everybody; high and low, learned and ignorant." The receipts increased daily, amounting at last to as much as £200 a week. Haydon should now have called his creditors together, and tried to come to some arrangement with them. But the only expedient that seems to have occurred to him was a petition to Parliament on the subject of State encouragement of Art, which he persuaded Brougham to present for him. Meanwhile an impatient creditor paid a visit to the Exhibition, and was so dazzled

by the sight of the crowds, that he determined to kill, or rather cage, the goose that laid the golden eggs. On April 13 an execution was put in, and the picture was seized. A few days later, Haydon was carried off to the prison that so long had threatened him, his house was taken possession of, and his property advertised for sale.

The entry in the Journal for April 22 is dated "King's Bench," and runs, "Well, I am in prison. So were Bacon, Raleigh, and Cervantes—Vanity! vanity! Here's a consolation!" Haydon put forth a curious letter to his creditors, in which he explained that his earnest and eager desire was that, by acceding to some arrangement, they would spare him the dishonour of claiming the protection of the Act. He pointed out that he was still in the prime of life, his practice, talents, and fame in full vigour, and that he only needed freedom to obtain resources, and make gradual liquidation. If he were released from prison, he would undertake in two years' time to lay before them the produce of his labour. The creditors, however, were obdurate, and Haydon was obliged to face the Insolvent Court, where, as not one appeared against him, he obtained his discharge (on July 25), and what he regarded as "honourable acquittal."

Meanwhile his personal friends had rallied round him. Scott, Lord Mulgrave, Lord Brougham,

and Sir George Beaumont sent him timely help, or bought his casts and painting materials at the enforced sale. His big pictures were sold to creditors at nominal prices, the "Lazarus" for £300, and "Christ's Entry" for £240.

Miss Mitford wrote to her friend while he was still in the King's Bench: "I have no words to say how deeply we feel your situation. It is a dishonour to the age and to the country, as well as a grief to you and those who love you. But it cannot last. Parliament or the King or the public must do the duty which they owe to the great artist, the excellent man, whose pure and excellent character has never given them an excuse for the neglect of his genius. Have you thought of my proposal of an appeal to the King. It can do no harm, and eloquently as you write, I am sure would touch him. It is terrible to think of you among these men, bearing, as you say, the mark on their countenance. It is like an imprisoned antelope—a caged eagle."

Sir Walter Scott wrote a long and friendly letter, in which, after expressing his regret for the position in which Haydon found himself, he proceeds: "There is one advantage, however, in your situation which others cannot experience, and which ought to give you patience and comfort under your severe affliction. What real means of

eminence and of future success you possess lie far beyond the power of the sheriff's writ. An official person is ruined if deprived of his shop, a merchant if his stores and credit are taken from him, but no species of legal distress can attack the internal resources of genius, though it may for a time palsy his hand. If this misfortune had happened in Scotland, where our laws in such cases are of a mild and most equitable character, I could without trouble put you upon a plan of extrication. But the English laws are different, and I am unacquainted with them. . . . An appeal to the public would doubtless raise a considerable sum, but I should be sorry any part of it went into the pockets of those hard-hearted men of Mammon. I should rather endure a little buffeting, and keep this as a resource under my lee to run for, as soon as I was my own man again.

"I have now to make many apologies for the trifling amount of an enclosure which may be useful, as a trifling matter will sometimes stop a leak in a vessel: truth is I have been a little extravagant lately, and mean this only as a small *on account*, for which you shall be my debtor in a sketch or drawing when better spirits and more fortunate circumstances enable you to use a black lead pencil or a bit of chalk."

## CHAPTER XV

WHEN Haydon came out of prison he proposed to return to his dismantled house, and paint his gigantic picture of the Crucifixion, but his wife and friends persuaded him to abandon the idea, to retire to modest lodgings, and to paint portraits or small saleable pictures till better fortune dawned. Although he yielded, he never ceased to regret what he regarded as artistic degradation.

In the following ironical note<sup>1</sup> to his autobiography he showed the bitterness of his heart: "Shortly after the 'Lazarus' was finished this remarkable man, B. R. Haydon, died. He always said it would be his last great work. Another, John Haydon, painted in imitation of the former, a few small works; but he was a married man—had five children—sent his pictures to the Academy, asked a patron or two to employ him, and in short did all those things that men must do who prefer their own degradation to the starvation of their children."

On September 8 he began his "portrait

<sup>1</sup> Written some years later.

career" by painting a gentleman. "Before he came," says Haydon, "I walked about the garden in sullen despair. After I had got his head in, when he was leaving, he told me he was sure I must want money, and slipped a note of considerable amount into my hand. He does not come again till Thursday, and to-morrow with a light and grateful heart I will begin the sketch for my next picture. . . . Ah, my poor lay figure! He who bore the drapery of Christ and the grave-clothes of Lazarus, the cloak of the centurion and the gown of Newton, was to-day disgraced by a black coat and waistcoat. I apostrophised him, and he seemed to sympathise, and bowed his head as if ashamed to look me in the face."

Haydon's detestation of portrait-painting was probably inspired in great part by the secret consciousness that he was a failure in this branch of his art. His taste for the grandiose led him to depict his sitters larger than life, if not "twice as natural." He could dash in heads on a large scale in a frenzy of inspiration, but he disliked the drudgery necessary for careful and elaborate finish. It is admitted that he was wanting in tact, for he never concealed a defect or embellished a beauty, but seized upon the most striking feature or characteristic, and by exaggerating it,

often rendered his victim ridiculous. Consequently his sacrifice to the popular taste was ill rewarded, commissions being few and sitters dissatisfied. The record for the last months of this year is a record of struggle against actual privation. On December 10, Haydon pawned his books, which had cost him £20, for £3, and entries like the following are of frequent occurrence: "Obliged to go out in the rain, I left my room with no coals in it, and no money to buy any, with little chance of returning with a shilling. But my case was desperate, and desperate was my remedy. I went to my sitter, and told him my situation. He felt deeply for me, and assisted me. Here am I at this moment ready to do anything, to the portrait of a cat, for the means of an honest livelihood, without employment, or the notice of a patron in the country."

Still there were compensations even in this, the year of acutest misery, as Haydon describes it, that he had known from his birth. Brougham had presented his petition to the House of Commons, there had been a short but lively debate, and then the subject had dropped. This was certainly not very encouraging, but Brougham had promised to try and induce the House to grant a Committee for the Arts. The Angerstein Collection had just

been bought as the nucleus of a National Gallery, and this Haydon considered the greatest step in advance since the purchase of the Elgin Marbles. While he was still in prison, he had received a diploma from the Imperial Academy at St. Petersburg, which had elected him a Member in recognition of his great and public services to Art. Another tribute reached him in the form of a sonnet from Miss Mitford, which opens in the accustomed strain of high and sounding flattery :—

“ Haydon ! this dull age and this northern clime  
 Are all unripe for thee ! Thou should'st have been  
 Born 'midst the Angelos and Raphaels, seen  
 By the Merchant Prince of Florence ; sent to climb  
 The flowery steep of Art, in Art's young prime,  
 By Leo.”

In the intervals of portrait-painting Haydon made numerous sketches for the great works of which his mind was still full, and finished one or two cabinet pictures : a “ Silenus Reproving Bacchus and Ariadne,” “ Juliet at the Balcony,” and “ Puck Bringing the Ass's Head to Bottom,” which were sold for small sums. His dislike to painting pictures of this size may probably be accounted for by the defects of his eyesight, which necessitated a peculiar method of working. “ His natural sight,” writes his son, who frequently acted as his model,

“was of little or no use to him at any distance, and he would wear, one over the other, two or three pairs of large, round, concave spectacles, so powerful as greatly to diminish objects. He would mount his steps, look at you through one pair of glasses, then push them all back on his forehead, and paint by the naked eye, close to the canvas. After a few minutes he would step down, walk slowly backwards to the wall, and study the effect through two or three pairs of spectacles; then with one pair only, look long and steadily in the looking-glass at the side to examine the reflection of his work; then mount his steps and paint again. How he ever contrived to paint a head or limb in proportion is a mystery, for it is clear that he lost his natural sight in boyhood. He is, as he said, the first blind man who ever successfully painted a picture.”

Early in 1824 a commission for a large picture of “Pharaoh Dismissing Moses,” put fresh heart into the struggling painter. He now moved from his lodgings to a house in Connaught Terrace, for which he paid, or undertook to pay, a hundred and twenty pounds a year, a heavy rent for a man in his circumstances. Fortunately he acquired along with the house another landlord of surpassing benevolence, who accepted pot-boilers in lieu of rent, and

meekly submitted to abuse when nothing else was forthcoming. It was while he was engaged upon this picture that he was sketched by Borrow in the pages of "Lavengro." Lavengro and his brother, it may be remembered, go together to visit a certain heroic painter, whom they are to commission to paint an heroic portrait of a very unheroic Mayor of Norwich. After some difficulty in obtaining admission to the studio, being mistaken by the servant for duns, they find the painter of "Lazarus," a man of about thirty-five, with a pleasant intelligent countenance, sharp grey eyes, and hair cut à la Raphael. He was broad-chested, and would have possessed a very fine figure if his legs had not been too short. He was then painting his "Moses," whose legs, in Lavengro's opinion, were also too short. His eyes glistened at the mention of a hundred pounds for the Mayor's portrait, and he admitted that he was confoundedly short of money. The painter was anxious that Lavengro - Borrow should sit to him for his "Pharaoh," an honour which that gentleman asserts that he firmly declined.

Years afterwards Borrow saw the portrait of the Mayor, "a mighty, portly man, with a bull's head, black hair, a body like a drayhorse, and legs and thighs corresponding. To his bull's

head, black hair and body, the painter had done justice; there was one point, however, in which the portrait did not correspond with the original—the legs were disproportionately short, the painter having substituted his own legs for those of the Mayor, which, when I perceived, I rejoiced that I had not consented to be painted as Pharaoh, for, if I had, the chances are he would have served me in exactly the same way as he treated Moses and the Mayor.” A curious comment on this passage is afforded by the following note to Haydon from George Borrow, dated from 26 Bryanstone Street, Portman Square :—

“DEAR SIR,—I should feel extremely obliged if you would allow me to sit to you as soon as possible. I am going to the south of France in little better than a fortnight, and I would sooner lose a thousand pounds than not have the honour of appearing in the picture.—Yours sincerely,

“GEORGE BORROW.”

Since his marriage, and more especially since his misfortunes, Haydon seems to have been almost entirely neglected by his acquaintance in “the world of rank and fashion,” and to have seen but little even of his literary friends. With Leigh Hunt

there had long been a coolness, partly owing, as we learn from a letter of Keats', to Haydon's request for the return of some loose silver which Mrs. Hunt had borrowed of him from time to time. The loose silver was of considerable importance to poor Haydon, but Leigh Hunt probably remembered the many occasions on which he and his brother had assisted the struggling artist without thought of repayment.

In the spring of this year, 1824, Haydon made the acquaintance of Tom Moore, and thus records his impression of the Irish Anacreon: "Met Moore at dinner, and spent a very pleasant three hours. He told his stories with a hit-or-miss air, as if accustomed to people of rapid apprehension. It being asked at Paris who they would have as a godfather for Rothschild's child, 'Talleyrand,' said a Frenchman. 'Pourquoi, monsieur?' 'Parcequ'il est le moins Chrétien possible.' Moore is a delightful, gay, voluptuous, refined, natural creature; infinitely more unaffected than Wordsworth; not blunt and uncultivated like Chantrey, or bilious and shivering like Campbell; but a true, delicate, frank poet, with sufficient air of the world to prove his fashion, and sufficient honesty of manner to show that fashion has not corrupted his native taste; never talking of his own works, from the

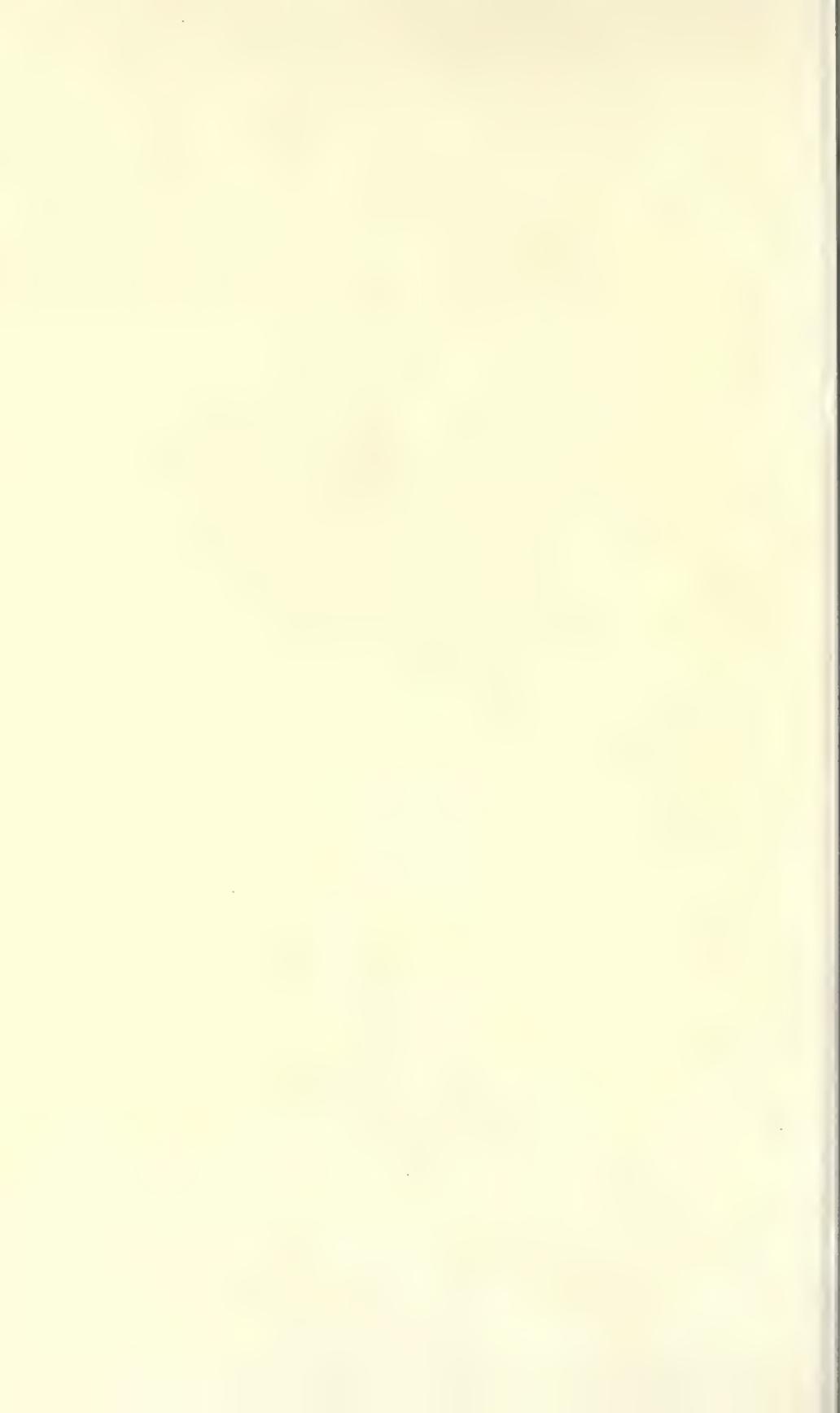
intense consciousness that every one else did, while Wordsworth is always talking of his own productions from apprehension that they are not enough a matter of conversation."

Though Wordsworth still remained a faithful friend and admirer, Haydon was inclined at this time to be rather hard on the poet, whose sonnet tribute he had once regarded as so high an honour. In a letter to Miss Mitford, who had criticised Byron's taste, he compares that poet with Wordsworth, much to the advantage of the former. "You are unjust, depend upon it," he writes, "in your estimate of Byron's poetry, and wrong in ranking Wordsworth beyond him. There are things in Byron's poetry so exquisite that fifty or five hundred years hence they will be read, felt, and adored throughout the world. I grant that Wordsworth is very pure, very holy, very orthodox, and occasionally very elevated, highly poetical; but oftener insufferably obscure, starched, dowdy, anti-human, and anti-sympathetic. He will never be ranked above Byron, nor classed with Milton. . . . I dislike his selfish Quakerism, his affectation of superior virtue, his utter insensibility to the beautiful frailties of passion. I was walking with him once in Pall Mall; we darted into Christie's. In a corner of the room was a beautiful copy of the



MISS MITFORD

*From an Engraving of the Portrait by B. R. HAYDON*



Cupid and Psyche (statues) kissing. Cupid is taking her lovely chin, and turning her pouting mouth to meet his, while he archly bends down, as if saying, 'Pretty dear!' . . . Catching sight of the Cupid, Wordsworth's face reddened, he showed his teeth, and then said, in a loud voice, '*The Dev-v-vils!*' There's a mind! Ought not this exquisite group to have softened his heart as much as his old, grey-mossed rocks, his withered thorn, and his dribbling mountain streams? I am altered very much about Wordsworth, from finding him too hard, too elevated, to attend to the voice of humanity. No, give me Byron with all his spite, hatred, depravity, dandyism, vanity, frankness, passion, and idleness, rather than Wordsworth with all his heartless communion with woods and grass."

## CHAPTER XVI

HAYDON seems to have had better success with his portrait-painting during 1824, and admits that he enjoyed unusual tranquillity, and was able to maintain his family with respectability and credit. But inwardly he chafed against his restrictions, and yearned for the good old days when he worked at a huge canvas in the intervals of evading writs and pacifying bailiffs. "I candidly confess," he writes on October 6, "that I find my glorious Art a bore. I must have a great subject to excite public feeling. In portrait I lose that divine feeling of inspiration which I always had in history. I feel as a common man, think as a common man, execute as the very commonest of all. . . . Alas, I have no object in life now but my wife and children,<sup>1</sup> and almost wish I had not them that I might sit still and meditate on human ambition and human grandeur till I died. . . . I am not yet forty, and can tell of a destiny melancholy and rapturous, bitter beyond all bitterness, afflict-

<sup>1</sup> A daughter had been born in March of this year.

ing beyond all affliction, cursed, heart-breaking, heart-burning, maddening. Merciful God! that Thou shouldst permit a being with thought and feeling to be so racked!"

It was just when the clouds seemed darkest that help came. Haydon's lawyer, a Mr. Kearsey, was also a zealous friend, and, it may be surmised, something of a character. He now (October, 1824) came forward with a well-meant, if oddly expressed, offer of assistance. In a long and sternly business-like letter, he proposed to advance £300 for one year, in order that Haydon might be freed from money anxieties during that period, and thus be in a position to ask a fair price for his work. He was to undertake to paint either portraits at specified prices, or small saleable pictures on historical or fancy subjects. The advance was to be secured on a life-assurance, and to be repaid out of the sale of the pictures, with interest at four per cent. "If the year's advance does not answer my or your expectations," concludes Mr. Kearsey, "your honour must be pledged not to make any further request to me, so that I shall have a proper virtue exercised by you, and my feelings not harrowed." This offer was accepted, though not without

reluctance, and the year that followed was one of comparative peace and security.

Haydon was persuaded, much against his will, to send his portraits to the Academy, and he was deeply incensed at the adverse criticism they received. He fancied that the "attacks" were due to a deep-laid conspiracy to injure him in the more lucrative branch of his calling, and he was with difficulty withheld from a counter-attack upon his supposed enemies. "I do not believe any portraits ever made more uproar," he says in a letter to Miss Mitford. "There has been a regular yell, but it is dying off. Poor 'Juliet' had it too, dreadfully. But all this will pass like the wind." It seems to have been at this time that Haydon persuaded Miss Mitford to sit to him for her portrait, which was not an unmitigated success. Writing to Sir William Elford in May, 1825, she says: "As to myself, it seemed a strong unflattered likeness—one that certainly would not be calculated to feed a woman's vanity, or to cure the public of the general belief that authoresses are and must be frights. But really I don't think it much uglier than what I see in the glass every day. . . . I entreat you not to mention to any one what I say. I would not have Mr.

Haydon know it for worlds. It was a present in the first place; and in the second, my personal feelings for him would always make the picture gratifying to me for his sake, were it as ugly as Medusa." In a letter to William Harness written a few months earlier, the kindly author of "Our Village" said she had but three moderate wishes that she desired to see realised. She wished to see Harness<sup>1</sup> a bishop, Talfourd<sup>2</sup> Attorney-General, and Haydon President of the Royal Academy.

Haydon was too happy in his home life to care much for the semi-Bohemian society in which he had formerly moved, and he seems to have fallen out of touch with many of his early friends. "My domestic happiness is doubled," he writes. "Daily and hourly my sweet Mary proves the justice of my choice. My boy Frank gives tokens of being gifted at two years old, God bless him! My ambition would be to make him a public man. . . . I have got into my old delightful habits of study again. The mixture of literature and paint-

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. William Harness (1790-1869). At this time incumbent of Regent Square Chapel. He published editions of some of the Elizabethan dramatists, and a *Life of Miss Mitford*.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd (1795-1854). Became Justice of the Common Pleas, but best known for his tragedy of "Ion," and his edition of Charles Lamb's Letters.

ing I really think the perfection of human happiness. I paint a head, revel in colour, hit an expression, sit down fatigued, take up a poet or historian, write my own thoughts, muse on the thoughts of others, and hours, troubles, and the tortures of disappointed ambition, pass and are forgotten."

One literary gathering Haydon did attend during the season—a *conversazione* at Mr. Soane's<sup>1</sup>—where a new sarcophagus was the object of interest. "The first person I met, after seventeen years," he writes, "was Coleridge, silver-haired! He looked at my bald front, and I at his hair, with mutual sympathy and head-shaking. It affected me very much, and so it seemed to affect him. I did not know what to say, nor did he; and then in his chanting way, half poetical, half inspired, half idiotic, he began to console me by trying to prove that the only way for a man of genius to be happy was just to put forth no more power than was sufficient for the purposes of the age in which he lived. As if genius was a power one could fold up like a parasol. At this moment up came

<sup>1</sup> John Soane (1753-1837), architect and founder of the Soane Museum. He rebuilt the Bank of England, was elected R.A. in 1802, and appointed Professor of Architecture to the Royal Academy in 1806. He was knighted in 1831, and in 1833 presented his house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and his collections, to the nation.

Spurzheim,<sup>1</sup> with his German simplicity, and, shaking my hand, 'How doe you doe? Vy, your organs are more parfaite than eaver. How luckee you lose your hair. Veel you permit me to ein-trowdooze you to Mrs. Spurzheim?' I was pushed against Turner, the landscape painter, with his red face and white waistcoat, and, before I could see Mrs. Spurzheim, was carried off my legs and hustled to where the sarcophagus lay."

Hazlitt was back again in town after his travels, his new wife having remained in Paris, and already made up her mind to separate from him. Haydon paid his old acquaintance a long visit, and says that he spent three hours with great delight. "We talked of Michael Angelo, Raphael, and—the greatest of all is behind—Leigh Hunt, till we roared with laughter, and made more noise than all the coaches and wagons in Piccadilly. From what Hazlitt has told me of Hunt in Italy, I do think that he is the most extraordinary character I ever met with in history, poetry, tragedy, comedy, or romance. Hazlitt found him moulting near Florence, and offered to take him to Venice free of expense. No. He never went to Rome, Bologna, or Naples. He passed through

<sup>1</sup> The German savant (1776-1832), who founded in 1820 the Phrenological Institute in London.

Paris, and never went into the Louvre. He was annoyed that Venice, Rome, Naples, &c., should contain anything more attractive than Mr. Leigh Hunt; and, consequently, he stuck to his house, expecting a deputation from each town to welcome him to Italy; and because no deputation came, he would not honour them with a visit. . . . Sorry I am to write so much of a man in whose acquaintance I can no longer feel any pride. He ruined Keats; he has injured me; he perverted Byron. Poor Shelley was drowned in going back from visiting him."

By the middle of January, 1826, the picture of "Pharaoh" was finished and sent to the British Gallery. Haydon felt that on its success depended his subsistence and his power of educating his children, yet he remarks upon the curious mixture of apathy and anxiety with which he awaited its fate. "After all," he adds, "it is little better than 'Dentatus,' painted eighteen years ago. The background has more air, but it is not a bit better painted. Fuseli said, 'You will never paint better as long as you live.' On the whole, eighteen years have done little for my talents." The picture was fairly well received, and Haydon set to work with renewed hope upon a commission for Sir John Leycester, a cabinet painting of Venus appearing

to Anchises. Meanwhile he had drawn up yet another petition to the House of Commons, in which he asked that a sum of £4000 per annum should be set aside for the encouragement of historical painting, in order that the newly-founded National Gallery might not be entirely composed of the works of foreign masters.

It was perhaps the most unfavourable time that could have been chosen for the presentation of such a petition, since the year 1826 was a year of commercial panic, when ruin was scattered broadcast. The general depression and uncertainty bore hardly on the solvent, and it was no wonder that a man like Haydon, who lived on the brink of a precipice, found his position almost intolerable. One of the most notable victims of the panic was his good friend, Sir Walter Scott. Haydon notes on February 27: "What a picture of life are my Journals! Two volumes ago Scott sent me £10 for Godwin, then £20 for myself, and now he writes that he has lost a fortune, and is in distress, though with a handsome competence." Sir Walter had written in his usual manly and philosophical strain.

"I have received your kind letter, and have little to say in answer but what is reasonably indifferent to myself, and will be agreeable to you. I

have lost a large fortune, but I have an ample competence remaining behind, and so I am just like an oak that has lost its leaves and kept its branches. If I had ever been a great admirer of money, I might have been at this moment very rich, for I should have had all I have lost and more. But I knew of no mode of clipping the wings of fortune, so I might also have lost what I set my heart upon, and I should then have been like a man who had lost his whole clothes, whereas at present I only feel like one who has forgot his great-coat. . . . It would be a gross affectation to say I am glad of such a loss, but many things make it more indifferent to me than I believe it would be to most people. I will feel delighted by receiving your mark of kindness.<sup>1</sup> I only hope it has not taken up too much of your valuable time."

<sup>1</sup> Apparently the offer of a drawing.

## CHAPTER XVII

By March 1826 the picture of "Venus and Anchises" was finished, and Haydon was advised to send it to the Academy. After a severe struggle, in which pride warred with self-interest, he yielded, with a half-hearted attempt to justify his inconsistency. The Academy, he told himself, had greatly changed since the days when he attacked it. "I consider it materially modified, and why should I keep up a senseless hostility for the sake of gratifying the malignant and discontented, who have clapped their hands while I have been the victim? Young men of talent have been admitted, and its whole condition is improved. So thinking, I resolved to send my pictures there, which intention I hope will conciliate and destroy the angry feeling, and the notion that I have kept aloof from contempt." As soon as the pictures were gone, a reaction set in. "Have I not violated a great principle?" he asks himself. "Have I not gone on my knees? Have I not put myself into the hands of men I have treated with utter contempt, and could I

expect anything but contempt in return? God knows!"

These doubts and questionings were soon forgotten in preparations for another picture, "the finest subject on earth," Alexander taming Bucephalus. This work was not a commission, but it was the means of introducing the artist to one of the most generous patrons of the day, Lord Egremont,<sup>1</sup> to whom he had previously appealed for help or employment. The appeal was backed by Haydon's friend and neighbour, Carew,<sup>2</sup> the sculptor, who persuaded Lord Egremont to call and see the sketch for "Alexander." There is a pathetic touch in Haydon's account of the visit on which so much depended. The patron called at Carew's house on his way, and Haydon, who saw him go in, says that "Dear Mary and I were walking on the leads, and agreed that it would not be quite right to look too happy, being without a sixpence; so we came in, I to the parlour to look through the blinds, and she to the nursery."

Lord Egremont was pleased with the "Alex-

<sup>1</sup> Francis, third Earl (1751-1837). He patronised Romney, Turner, Flaxman, and Constable, and brought together a splendid collection of pictures at Petworth.

<sup>2</sup> John Edward Carew (*c.* 1785-1868). He was assistant to Sir Richard Westmacott, and was a protégé of Lord Egremont's, who gave him work at Petworth.

ander," which, he said, was the cleverest thing Haydon had yet conceived, and agreed to buy it when finished for £600. In order to pay his models the artist was obliged to pawn one of his lay-figures, since he could not bring himself to part with any more books. "However," he writes, in a more cheerful strain, "I am not now as during 'Solomon.' I am high in the world, in a good house, have my food, a dear wife, a sweet family, and good credit; but it is hard to part with materials like these. I looked at Vasari, at Lanzi, Homer, Tasso, Shakespeare, but my heart was firm. The very back of a book containing the works of a celebrated genius is enough, if you know the contents well, to fill the mind with crowds of associations. I kept them. I may do without a lay-figure for a time, but not without old Homer. The truth is, I am fonder of books than of anything else on earth. I consider myself a man of great powers excited to an art which limits their exercise. In politics, law, or literature, they would have had a full and glorious swing, and I should have secured a competence. It is a curious proof of this that I should have pawned my studies, my prints, my lay-figures, but have kept my darling authors."

The commission was followed, later in the year,

by an invitation to spend a few days at Petworth. Haydon records his appreciation of the treatment he received during his visit with Pepys-like naïveté. "I never saw such a character as Lord Egremont," he exclaims. "He has placed me in one of the most magnificent bedrooms I ever saw. It speaks more for what he thinks of my talents than anything that ever happened to me. The bed-curtains are of different coloured velvets let in on white satin. . . . What a destiny is mine! One year in the Bench, the companion of gamblers and scoundrels—sleeping in wretchedness and dirt, on a flock-bed low and filthy—another reposing in down and velvet, in a splendid apartment in a splendid house, the guest of rank and fashion and beauty. God in heaven grant my future may now be steady! At any rate a nobleman has taken me in hand, whose friendship generally increases in proportion to the necessity of its continuance. The very flies at Petworth seem to know there is room for their existence. Dogs, horses, cows, deer and pigs, peasantry and servants, guests and family, all share alike his opulence, bounty, and luxuries. At breakfast, after the guests have all breakfasted, in walks Lord Egremont; first comes a grandchild, whom he sends away happy. Outside the window moan a dozen black spaniels, who

are let in, and to them he distributes cakes and comfits. After chatting with one guest, and proposing some scheme of pleasure to another, his gaiters are buttoned on, and away he walks, leaving everybody to take care of themselves, with all that opulence and generosity can place at their disposal entirely within their reach. At dinner he meets everybody, and then are recounted the feats of the day. All principal dishes he helps, never minding the trouble of carving; he eats heartily, and helps liberally. There is plenty, but not absurd profusion; good wines, but not extravagant waste. Everything solid, liberal, rich, and English. At seventy-four he still shoots daily, comes home wet through, and is as active and looks as well as many men of fifty."

Haydon contrived to persuade himself that his exhibiting with the Academy had given great satisfaction to everybody concerned, and that the Academicians no longer regarded him with gloomy dislike. "I heartily wish," he adds, "that they may become as they seem—cordial—and that in the end all animosities may be forgotten in our common desire to advance the Art." His belief that he had only to hold out the olive-branch in order to be welcomed to the bosom of the Institution he had so ferociously attacked, led him to

make an attempt at reconciliation by means of a round of calls upon the Academicians. He was afterwards deeply ashamed of this proceeding, which he describes as "the disgrace of my life." It is probable, however, that if it had led to the hoped-for result—admission into the once despised body—he would have regarded it in a very different light.

Haydon called first on Callcott,<sup>1</sup> who looked grave and important, and observed that if his visitor wished for reconciliation with the Academy, he would have heavy work, but ended by wishing him success in his endeavour. Beechey<sup>2</sup> was hearty and sincere; Sir Martin Archer Shee<sup>3</sup> discussed the whole quarrel, and declared that a public body was invulnerable, and could afford to laugh at the attacks of individuals. Phillips<sup>4</sup> "kind" but irritable; Howard,<sup>5</sup> clever and gentlemanly, whose style was "the beau-ideal of

<sup>1</sup> Sir Augustus Wall Callcott (1779-1844). Painted English and Italian scenery. R.A. in 1810. Knighted in 1837.

<sup>2</sup> Sir W. Beechey (1753-1839), portrait-painter to Queen Charlotte. R.A. in 1798, and knighted in the same year.

<sup>3</sup> Sir M. A. Shee (1769-1850). Painted portraits and a few historical pieces. R.A. in 1800, and President of the R.A. in 1830.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Phillips (1770-1845), portrait-painter. R.A. in 1808, and Professor of Painting at the Academy in 1824.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Howard (1769-1847). Painted classical subjects and landscapes. R.A. in 1808. Appointed Professor of Painting at the Academy in 1833.

Historical Art formed on the Roman antique"; Flaxman, who depreciated Wilkie for his miniature-painting, and Fuseli for his want of principle; and Sir Thomas Lawrence, well-bred though waspish, were called upon in turn, and each received the visitor with external cordiality. Haydon complains of the lack of intelligence displayed by the majority of the Academicians. Cooper<sup>1</sup> was a brilliant exception. "With Cooper," he writes, "I spent an intelligent, argumentative, and instructive half-hour; so much so that I almost forgot my object, and at last it came in incidentally, and was again swallowed up in the discussion of matters more important. I have been used all my life to literary men or men of genius. The portrait-painters are really so buried in self, and so occupied with individuality, that, except Lawrence, they are abroad on subjects of general interest. In the houses of Phillips and Shee there was not a bust of antiquity or work of Art, while Lawrence's house is filled with them."

Haydon put down his name for election to the Academy in this and the following year, but did not receive a single vote, which would hardly

<sup>1</sup> Abraham Cooper (1787-1868). Painted horses, dogs, battle-scenes, &c. R.A. in 1820.

have surprised any one of a less optimistic temperament. He was somewhat consoled for this disappointment by the interest shown by Lord Egremont and his friends in the progress of the "Alexander." Among the "persons of distinction" who came to inspect the picture before it was sent to the Exhibition was Charles Lamb, who set down his impressions in the following characteristic letter :—

"DEAR RAFFAELE HAYDON,—Did the maid tell you I came to see your picture, not on Sunday but the day before? I think the face and bearing of the Bucephalus tamer very noble, his flesh too effeminate and painty. The skin of the female's back kneeling is much more carnous. I had small time to pick out praise or blame, for two lord-like Bucks came in, upon whose strictures my presence seemed to impose restraint. I plebian'd off therefore.

"I think I have hit on a subject for you, but can't swear it was never executed—I never heard of its being—'Chaucer beating a Franciscan Friar in Fleet Street.' Think of the old dresses, houses, &c. 'It seemeth that both these learned men (Gower and Chaucer) were of the Inner Temple; for not many years since Master Buckley did see

a record in the same house where Geoffrey Chaucer was fined two shillings for beating a Franciscan Friar in Fleet Street.' Chaucer's Life, by T. Speght, prefixed to the black-letter folio of Chaucer, 1598.—Yours in haste (salt fish waiting),

“C. LAMB.”

It may here be mentioned that Leslie believed Haydon to be the prototype of Lamb's pen-portrait of Ralph Bigod, Esq., that noble example of the great race of men—"the men who borrow." Lamb declared that the portrait was sketched from Fenwick, but Leslie says that all the traits were Haydon's. Bigod, it will be remembered, had "an *undeniable* way with him. He had a cheerful, open exterior, a quick jovial eye, a bald forehead, just touched with grey (*cana fides*). He anticipated no excuse, and found none. . . . When I think of this man—his fiery glow of heart—his swell of feeling—how magnificent, how *ideal* he was, how great at the midnight hour! And when I compare with him the companions with whom I have associated since, I grudge the saving of a few idle ducats, and think that I am fallen into the society of *lenders* and *little* men."

Haydon did not make any use of the subject suggested to him by Lamb, preferring to work

upon incidents from Grecian rather than English history. He now began a small picture of the "Death of Eucles."<sup>1</sup> "Rubbed in 'Eucles' in the cabinet size," he writes on May 14, 1827. "Now I will try my hand on the darling size of England. It is curious that I have at this moment a positive passion to try my hand at the cabinet size—to work it up like Rembrandt's small works—rich, gemmy, and beautiful. If I had begun in this size I should have made my fortune. I offended the nobility of England by standing out against their predilections. I advanced the art—ruined myself—but when my larger works are again a novelty, out I will bounce." Lord Egremont promised to take the "Eucles" if no one else bought it, and still seemed disposed to help his protégé, though he declared that his style was too bold for this country, and asked why he did not finish more. Haydon observed that "a love of finish argues an early or decaying taste; where character, form, expression, colour, and drawing are not coveted because the mode is not finished, it argues a sorry fastidiousness and a weak understanding."

Haydon seems to have been comparatively free from petty anxieties during this year, owing partly

<sup>1</sup> Eucles, running from Marathon to Athens, with the news of the victory, dropped dead at his own door.

to Mr. Kearsey's loan, and partly to the discovery of a butcher whose respect for genius predominated over his love of gain. An amusing account of this character is given in a letter to Miss Mitford. It appears that the butcher had long displayed an excessive desire that the impecunious painter should become his customer. At last his wish was gratified. Mr. Sowerby—his name deserves to be immortalised—declared that he had “a fancy for genius,” but observed that the “Alexander” would never have been painted if the artist had not eaten *his* meat. It appears that he also supplied Mrs. Siddons, and “*never was such a woman for chops!*” Mr. Sowerby was of opinion that it was all owing to the virtues of his chops that Mrs. Siddons was able to frighten the people as Lady Macbeth. “You see, sir,” said the genius-loving butcher, “I have fed John Kemble, Charles Kemble, Stephen Kemble, Madame Catalani, Morland the painter, and *you*, sir. Madame Catalani was a wonderful woman for sweetbreads; but the Kemble family—the gentlemen, sir—rump-steaks and kidneys in general was their taste; but Mrs. Siddons, sir, she liked chops as much as you do, sir.”

## CHAPTER XVIII

THE chief events of the year 1827, from the artistic point of view, were the death of Sir George Beaumont and the *début* of Lough<sup>1</sup> the sculptor. Of his early friend and patron Haydon writes: "Sir George was an extraordinary man, one of the old school formed by Sir Joshua—a link between the artist and the nobleman, elevating the one by an intimacy that did not depress the other. Born a painter, his fortune prevented the necessity of application for subsistence, and of course he did not apply. His taste was exquisite, not peculiar or classical, but essentially Shakespearean. Painting was his great delight. He talked of nothing else, and would willingly have done nothing else. His ambition was to connect himself with the art of the country, and he has done it for ever. For though Angerstein's pictures were a great temptation, yet without Sir George's offer of his own

<sup>1</sup> John Graham Lough (1806–1876), son of a farmer near Hexham, Northumberland. He exhibited a bas-relief at the Academy in 1826, which brought him commissions from the Duke of Wellington for "Milo" and "Samson." He went to study in Italy in 1834, and on his return executed statues of the Queen, the Prince Consort, and other important works.

collection, it is a question if they would have been purchased. He is justly entitled to be considered the founder of the National Gallery."

Haydon took a deep interest in the work and prospects of Lough, the youthful sculptor, the story of whose struggles and privations reminded him of his own early experiences. Lough's "Milo" he considered the most extraordinary thing in modern sculpture, and he describes the young man as being modest, docile, simple, and of high feeling. "From his earliest boyhood," so ran his story, "he was always making figures in clay with his brother. In his father's window lay an old Pope's 'Homer.' His brother and he were so delighted with it that they used to make thousands of models, he taking the Greeks and his brother the Trojans. An odd volume of Gibbon gave an account of the Colosseum. He and his brother, after reading it, built up a Colosseum of clay in the kitchen, and made hundreds of fighting gladiators. A gentleman I know was returning from fox-hunting, and saw in a garden hundreds of models of legs and arms lying about. He alighted, walked in, and found the ceiling of the kitchen drawn all over. Lough was sent for, and invited to this friend's house, who showed him Canova's and Michael Angelo's works. He used

to follow the plough and shear the corn ; and in this obscure Northumbrian spot the only artist they had heard of was Haydon."

Haydon was profoundly moved when Lough told him that he had eaten no meat for three months before the "Milo" was finished. "He had only one bushel and a half of coals the whole winter, and used to lie down by the side of his clay model of this immortal figure, damp as it was, and shiver for hours till he fell asleep. He is a most extraordinary being. The gaunt and lustrous splendour of his eyes have a darkened fire, as if a god was shrined within his body. Lough," adds Haydon, "is the only man I have ever seen who gave me an idea of what people used to say of *me*. In short, he is the only man I have ever seen who appears to me a genius. . . . To-night he said to me, as if half afraid he should be laughed at, 'Mr. Haydon, I fancy myself in the Acropolis sometimes, and hear a roaring noise like the tide.' 'My dear fellow,' said I, 'when I was at my great works, I saw, with the vividness of reality, the faces of Michael Angelo and Raffaele smiling about my room.'"

Haydon helped to organise Lough's Exhibition, which was held in May, persuaded Mrs. Siddons to come (he seems to have regarded her as an

artistic Mascotte), and made himself quite ill with excitement and anxiety. He compares Lough with Chantrey,<sup>1</sup> much to the disadvantage of the latter, whom he had visited at Brighton, and found grown corpulent, indolent, and pompous, after eight years of popular success. He describes, with his customary graphic touch, how Chantrey sat lazily in the sun, and talked of the wonderful poetic subjects he would execute when he was perfectly independent. "To see a man of Chantrey's genius so impose upon himself was affecting. Here he was, for that day at least, quite independent, gazing at the sun, sure of his dinner, his fire, his wine, his bed. Why was he not at that moment inventing? Good God! if I had waited till I was perfectly independent, what should I have done?"

The result of Haydon's own method of proceeding was another execution in the House, and a second visit to the King's Bench, where he remained during June and July. As before, his friends rallied to his support. Lockhart suggested that a subscription should be raised for the purchase

<sup>1</sup> Sir Francis Legatt Chantrey (1781-1842). The famous sculptor was the son of a carpenter. He practised wood-carving and portrait-painting in Sheffield till 1802, in which year he settled in London, and devoted himself thenceforward chiefly to sculpture. He was knighted in 1835.

of one or more pictures, finished or unfinished, and a public meeting of sympathisers was held, with Lord Francis Leveson Gower in the chair. It was then stated that Haydon's debts amounted to over £1700, while his only available asset was his unfinished picture of "The Death of Eucles." Upwards of a hundred pounds was subscribed in the room, and it was decided that when the subscriptions reached £500, the "Eucles" should be raffled in ten-pound shares. The result of these efforts was the release of the prisoner at the end of July.

During his term of incarceration, Haydon witnessed the so-called "mock election" by his fellow-prisoners, and resolved to paint the scene, which seemed to offer unique opportunities for both humour and pathos. In his own description of the incident, he says, "I was sitting in my apartment, melancholy but not despairing at the darkness of my own prospects, and the unprotected condition of my wife and children,<sup>1</sup> when a tumultuous and hearty laugh brought me to the window. I laughed out heartily myself when I saw the occasion. Before me were three men marching in solemn procession . . . two others,

<sup>1</sup> A third son, Frederick Wordsworth, was born to Haydon in September of this year.

fantastically dressed, came immediately behind, and these were followed by characters of all descriptions, with flags and staffs, all in perfect merriment and mock gravity, adapted to some masquerade. I asked what it meant, and was told it was a procession of burgesses, headed by the Lord High Sheriff and the Lord Mayor of the King's Bench Prison going in State to open the poll, in order to elect two members to protect their rights in the House of Commons. . . . As I approached the unfortunate but merry crowd, to the last day of my life I shall remember the impression I received—baronets and bankers, authors and merchants, painters and poets, dandies in silk and velvet, and dandies in rags and tatters; idiotism and insanity, poverty and affliction, all mingled in indiscriminate merriment, with a spiked wall twenty feet high above their heads!”

A pleasant letter from Miss Mitford, written while the new picture was in progress, contains a prophecy, which, unfortunately, was not destined to be fulfilled. “I was quite certain when we parted,” she writes, “that the ‘Mock Election’ would be done, and more than half converted to the belief of its being an excellent subject. The hold that it has taken of your fancy is almost a pledge of your

success. I have liked my little garden better ever since you honoured it by your presence—you came among the flowers quite like a sunbeam. I never can see you without feeling assured that you are born to good fortune—born ‘to leave many people in your debt,’ as the gipsy woman said. If both the ‘Eucles’ and the ‘Mock Election’ sell as they ought, you will have the comfort and blessing of money beforehand—the greatest happiness I should think that there is in the world. How large is the ‘King’s Bench’ picture to be? Finish very highly. Humour depends almost entirely on things being clearly made out—and don’t care about morality and pathos—stick to fun.”

The “Mock Election” was finished by the end of the year, and exhibited at the Egyptian Hall with fair success, though no purchaser seemed inclined to come forward. When Haydon began a new volume of his Journal on March 1, 1828, he was in a state, sufficiently rare with him, of deep depression. He confesses that he has ceased to make great attempts, and has gradually sunk to the taste of those on whose caprice he depends. “I can’t pray now,” he continues, “to the great God to aid and foster me in my attempts for the honour of my great country, for I am making no attempt at all. I

am doing that only which will procure me subsistence, and pander to the prejudices of my countrymen. Even that does not succeed. I have no orders—no commissions.”

But an unexpected stroke of good fortune brought fresh hope and encouragement just when matters seemed at their worst. On March 18 the King sent for the “Mock Election,” having been told that it contained some remarkable portraits of well-known prisoners. The picture was moved to St. James’s Palace, and that eminent critic, George IV., declaring that it was “a d—d fine thing,” agreed to buy it, and promptly paid the price—five hundred guineas. A companion picture in the same genre, “Chairing the Member,” already begun, was finished by the end of July, and exhibited together with “Solomon” and “Christ’s Entry.” The King did not buy the companion work, but it found a purchaser at £300, the net receipts from the two pictures and the Exhibition amounting to close upon £1300. This sum, observes Haydon, in better circumstances and with less expense, would have afforded a comfortable independence for the year!

Among the many letters of congratulation received by the artist upon the success of his

new departure is the following from Haydon's old friend, Charles Lamb:—

“DEAR HAYDON,—I have been tardy in telling you that your ‘Chairing the Member’ gave me great pleasure;—’tis true broad Hogarthian fun, the High Sheriff capital. Considering too that you had your materials imposed on you, and that you did not select them from the rude world as Hogarth did, I hope to see many more such from your hand. If the former picture went beyond this, I have had a loss, and the King a bargain. I longed to rub the back of my hand across the hearty canvas that the two senses might be gratified. Perhaps the subject is a little discordantly placed opposite to another act of Chairing, where the huzzas were Hosannas,—but I am pleased to see so many of my old acquaintances brought together notwithstanding.”

## CHAPTER XIX

As soon as "Chairing the Member" was off his hands Haydon set to work again at his long-neglected "Eucles." Once again he devoted his leisure hours to the composition of letters and pamphlets on his darling project—the decoration of public buildings with historical paintings. A correspondence on this subject with the Duke of Wellington was temporarily closed by the Duke's explicit statement that he objected to the grant of public money for the purpose suggested by his correspondent. He also refused to allow a pamphlet published by Haydon, which dealt with the same subject, to be dedicated to himself, though he promised to "peruse and attend to the work" if it were sent to him. The Government had this year refused the Directors of the National Gallery the sum of £3000, which was urgently needed to purchase a piece of ground for the extension of the Gallery, and the Museum authorities had been informed that they would have to go without their usual grant.

This year (1829) saw a renewal of intercourse

between Haydon and his old friend, David Wilkie, who had lately returned from Spain. There had been a coolness between the pair since the year 1821, when Haydon had been arrested for debt, and Wilkie had shown a reluctance to bail him without sufficient security. But now the quarrel was forgotten, and the two indulged once again in long, delightful discussions on their beloved art and its technique. Wilkie said that when he went to Madrid English art had never even been heard of, and he had to make his reputation anew. "He began his 'Council of War,' which the King had bought. The artists called, and could make nothing of his system. At last they began to be interested, and old Gomez (Ferdinand's painter) said to a friend of Wilkie's, 'Depend on it the English don't know what they have got in Signor Vix.' He never could pronounce Wilkie's name. . . .

"Wilkie is quite altered in his views of art, and has got a large canvas up, to my great delight. When I remember the rows we used to have about my painting large, and to hear him say now, 'Ah dear—dear—I wish my pictures were larger,' it is impossible to help laughing. For eight years I battled with him about painting to please the Academicians. He

now says they nearly ruined him; in fact he finds that I am right in attacking the whole subject of British Art. . . . Wilkie strenuously advised me to get to Italy, family and all. One can't depend on his sincerity. I have got a character, and made a hit in satire; got ground in a style he cannot touch without being considered an imitator. God knows;—he may be sincere."

Haydon was still painting portraits from time to time, and had got the length of exulting over his own failure in this branch of his art. On April 15 he notes: "Finished one cursed portrait; have only one more to touch, and then I shall be free. I have an exquisite gratification in painting portraits wretchedly. I love to see the sitters look as if they thought, 'Can this be Haydon's—the great Haydon's—painting?' I chuckle. I am rascal enough to take their money and chuckle more. When a man says 'Paint me a historical picture,' my heart swells towards him. He seems at once to have turned the key to my cabinet of invention, for I teem instantly with thoughts. Yesterday, when I rubbed in the 'Punch,' my thoughts crowded with delight. At such moments no silence is great enough, but I am never let alone. Good

God! what I should have produced had I been let alone in a palace, and saved from distracting embarrassments!"

The "Punch," also known as "May-Day," was another effort in the Hogarthian style. It contained a great variety of figures and incidents, including a performance of *Punch*, a revel of May-Day sweeps with Jack in the Green, and numerous spectators of these entertainments. Wilkie greatly admired the work, declaring, "If that picture were in Italy, you would see it surrounded by students from all parts of Europe engaged in copying it." Haydon hoped that the King might buy the picture, but though it was sent down to Windsor, it came back unsold. The King's criticism was that "There was too much in 'Punch,' and the capering chimney-sweep was too much like an opera-dancer."

Haydon had now seven children, including his two step-sons, and he seems to have been an anxious and affectionate father, though he admits that he was not always just or consistent in his treatment of his family. "It is hard work to *think*," he complains, "through the agitation of a large family. My children begin to be noisy and restless, and I am occasionally on the point of demolishing the whole set with my maul-stick.

Dearest Mary devotes herself to train and check them, but it is all of no use. They never pass my painting-room without calling 'Papa' through the key-hole; and if they hear my footstep in any part of the house, I am assailed with 'Papas' from the nursery-stairs in all the tones of harmony and discord." Haydon compares his own lot with that of Wilkie, who, he says, had sunk down into an emaciated old bachelor. "There was I," he writes, "rosy, plump, and full of difficulties, harass and trouble, with a large family, and a dear wife. I could not help thinking of our occasional conversations in early life on marriage. 'When I marry,' Wilkie used to say, 'it will be a matter of interest.' 'When I marry,' I always said, 'it will be for love, and for nothing else.' See the result. He has no household anxieties, no large family to bring up. But he has no sweet affections, no sympathies. Would I exchange my situation for David Wilkie's? No, no; not if I had ten times the trouble, the harass, the torture."

The death of Sir Thomas Lawrence in January 1830 was commemorated in the *Journal* by lengthy reflections and criticisms on his style of painting. "Lawrence was suited to the age and the age to him," observes Haydon. "He flattered its vanities, pampered its weaknesses, and

met its meretricious taste. His men were all gentlemen, with an air of fashion and the dandyism of high life ; his women were delicate, but not modest, beautiful but not natural. They have not that air of virtue and breeding that ever sat upon the women of Reynolds. . . . As an artist he will not rank high in the opinion of posterity. He was not ignorant of the figure ; but he drew with great incorrectness, because he drew to suit the fashion of the season. . . . He had no eye for colour. His tint was opaque, his cheeks were rouged, his lips like the lips of a lay-figure. Of composition he knew scarcely anything. His great excellence was in expression, and perhaps no man that ever lived contrived to catch the fleeting beauties of a face to the exact point better than Lawrence. . . . As a man, Sir Thomas was amiable, kind, generous, and forgiving. His manner was elegant, but not high-bred. He had smiled so often and so long that at last his smile had the appearance of being set in enamel. He indulged the hope of painting history in his day, but as Romney did and Chantrey will, he died before he began ; and he is another proof that native genius is not a passive quality that can be laid aside or taken up as suits the convenience of the possessor."

The election of Sir Martin Archer Shee as President of the Royal Academy in succession to Lawrence infuriated Haydon, who had a personal quarrel with Shee, and held, moreover, that Wilkie's claims to the honour were obvious and indisputable. Though ready enough himself to find fault with his old friend, he could not endure that the Academicians should put any slight upon Wilkie. The election of Shee he regarded as one of the most fatal blows ever inflicted on the dignity of the Academy. "Here was David Wilkie," he exclaims, "the greatest genius in his walk that ever lived, the only living artist who has a picture in our National Gallery—the only English painter who has a great European reputation—honoured by his Sovereign, respected by the nobility, modest, discreet, diligent, upright, and highly gifted, from whose existence an epoch in English Art must be dated—David Wilkie had two votes. And Martin Archer Shee, the most impotent painter in the solar system—a man who for forty years has never painted any human creature without making him stand on tip-toes from sheer ignorance—had eighteen."

Haydon was now at work upon a large canvas, "The Retreat of the Ten Thousand," from the fourth book of Xenophon's *Anabasis*. He had

now no commissions, and his difficulties were greater than ever, but when employed upon his big picture he was rapturously happy. Once more he storms heaven with his prayers—begging petitions to the Almighty—as they have been aptly termed. “Let no difficulties obstruct me,” he pleads, “no ill-health impede me, and let no sin displease Thee from its [the picture’s] commencement to its conclusion. Oh! save me from prison, on the confines of which I am hovering! I have no employment, no resources, a large family, and no hope. Grant that the education of my children, my duties to my love and to society, may not be sacrificed in proceeding with this great work (it will be my greatest). Bless its commencement, its progression, its conclusion, and its effect, for the sake of the intellectual elevation of my great and glorious country.”

The clause in the above petition relating to imprisonment was not granted. On the 29th of May Haydon was again arrested, and carried off to the King’s Bench, where by this time he must have felt quite at home. He had old friends among the inmates, and used to spend pleasant evenings in discussing the Battle of Waterloo with the military heroes who seem to have abounded within the Rules. He also amused himself with

the preparation of another of his periodical petitions to Parliament, this particular one being presented by Mr. Agar Ellis. Towards the end of July he passed through the Bankruptcy Court, and returned to his family. During the period of his detention George IV. had died, and Haydon has the following comment on the event: "Thus died as thoroughbred an Englishman as ever existed in this country. He admired her sports, gloried in her prejudices, had confidence in her bottom and spirit, and to him alone the destruction of Napoleon is owing. I have lost in him my sincere admirer; and had not his wishes been perpetually thwarted he would have given me ample and adequate employment."

## CHAPTER XX

IN October of this year (1830) Haydon renewed his attack upon that very unlikely subject the Duke of Wellington, with a letter in which he called the Duke's attention to the fact that Guizot had recommended the King of France to employ the historical painters to commemorate the late events in that country. Haydon asked whether his Grace would suffer England to be inferior to France in artistic enterprise. By return of post the Duke replied: "It is certainly true that the English public give but little encouragement to the art of historical painting. The reason is obvious. There are no funds at the disposal of the Crown or its Ministers that are not voted by Parliament upon estimates, and applied strictly to the purposes for which such funds are voted." Haydon returned to the charge, and a few days later the Duke wrote: "The Duke is convinced that Mr. Haydon's own good sense will point out to him the impossibility of doing what he suggests." This would have been rather crushing to the average man; but Haydon comments com-

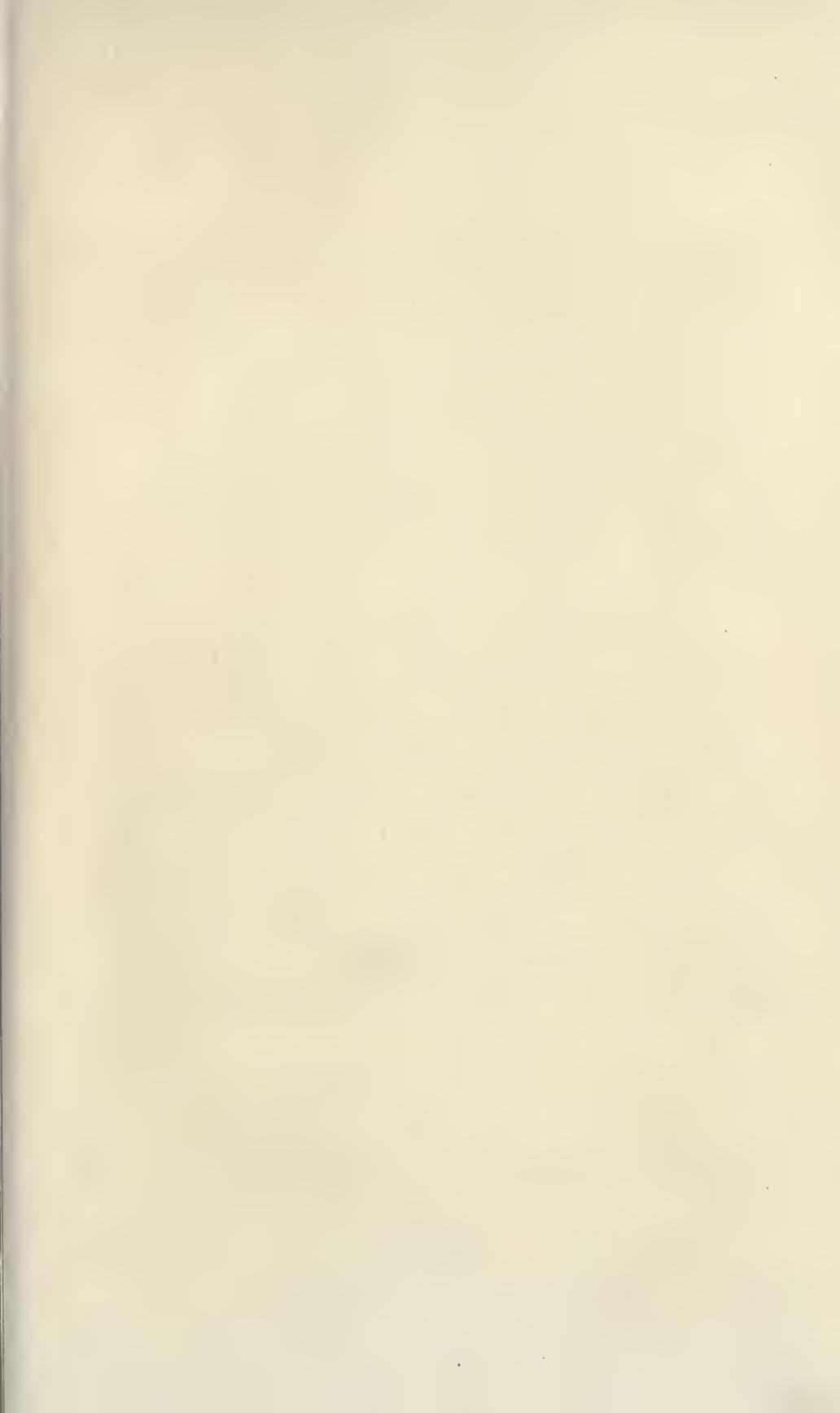
placently : "Impossibility from Wellington's mouth must be impossibility indeed. He can't answer my letter. It is evident that he is worried about finance. At any rate, it is a high honour to hear from him in this way. And his letters this time show more thinking on the subject than the last. At it again at a future time."

It was not only on the subject of National Art that Haydon approached the Duke. In the same month he wrote a piteous appeal which shows him tried beyond his strength, beaten, and almost despairing. "This perpetual pauperism," he pleads, "will in the end destroy my mind. I look round for help with a feeling of despair that is quite dreadful. At this moment I have a sick house without a shilling for the common necessities of life. Indulged by my landlord, indulged by the Lords of the Treasury for my taxes, my want of employment or want of means exhaust the patience of my dearest friends, and give me a feeling as if I were branded with a curse. For God's sake, for the sake of my family, for the sake of the art I struggled to save, permit me, my Lord Duke, to say, employ me. I will honour your patronage with all my heart and soul."

There was no response from the Duke, but the sale of some prints from a small picture of

“Napoleon at St. Helena,” a trifling commission from Lord Stafford, and a donation of fifty pounds from the Directors of the British Gallery, enabled Haydon to procure the necessaries of life for his family, which was now increased by the birth of another boy. It does not appear that he often lost heart, or that his periods of depression were of long duration. Before the end of the month he was able to record, with renewed cheerfulness: “Provided shoes for my dear Mary, and a dinner for my family. What an extraordinary, invisible sort of stirring is the impulse of genius. You look at your picture and think it will not do. You walk for air—your picture haunts you. You cannot sleep; up you get in a fever, when all of a sudden a great flash comes inside your head, as if a powder-magazine had exploded without any noise. Then ideas come by millions;—the difficulty is to choose. Xenophon cheering on the point of a rock came flashing into my head. It is a hit. Everybody says it will do. The world will echo it. It is the finest conception I ever saw. O God! grant me life and health to complete this grand work!”

In December Sir Robert Peel, with whom Haydon had had some correspondence about





NAPOLEON MUSING AT ST. HELENA

*From an Engraving of the Picture by B. R. HAYDON*

arrears of taxes, called at the studio, and, after submitting to a lecture on High Art, gave a commission for a life-size picture of "Napoleon at St. Helena." There appears to have been some misunderstanding about the price. Sir Robert asked what Haydon was accustomed to receive for whole-lengths, and was told a hundred guineas, a price that applied to portraits. Sir Robert, however, paid only a hundred for the picture of "Napoleon," which the artist thought well worth £500. Haydon made frequent allusions to this disappointment in subsequent letters to Peel, who sent him another thirty guineas, but, not unnaturally, never gave him a second commission. The picture was exhibited in April 1831, but the dissolution of Parliament and the agitation for Reform distracted the public attention, and the Exhibition was a failure, though the new work brought the artist another poetical tribute. On April 12 Haydon notes: "Wordsworth called after an absence of several years. I was glad to see him. He spoke of my 'Napoleon' so highly, with his usual straightforward intensity of diction, that I wrote and asked him to give me a sonnet. If he would or could he'd make the fortune of the picture."

On June 12 Wordsworth wrote:—

“I send you the sonnet, and let me have your ‘Kingdom’ for it. What I send you is not warm but piping hot from my brain, whence it came in the wood adjoining my garden not ten minutes ago, and was scarcely more than twice as long in coming. You know how much I admired your picture both for the execution and the conception. The latter is first-rate, and I could dwell upon it for a long time in prose, without disparagement to the former, which I admired also, having no objection to it but the regimentals. They are too spruce, and remind one of the parade, which the wearer seems to have just left. . . .

“I think of Napoleon pretty much as you do, but with more dislike, probably because my thoughts have turned less upon the flesh and blood man than yours, and therefore have been more at liberty to dwell with unqualified scorn upon his various liberticide projects, and the miserable selfishness of his spirit. Few men of any time have been at the head of greater events, yet they seem to have had no power to create in him the least tendency towards magnanimity. How then, with this impression, can I help despising him? So much for the idol of thousands. As to the Reformers, the folly of the Ministerial leaders is only to be surpassed by the wickedness of those who

will speedily supplant them. God of mercy, have mercy on poor England! To think of this glorious country lacqueying the heels of France in religion (that is *no* religion), in morals, government, and social order! It cannot come to good, at least for the present generation. They have begun it in shame, and it will lead them to misery. God bless you.—Yours, W. M. WORDSWORTH.

“You are at liberty to print the sonnet with my name when and where you think proper. If it does you the least service the end for which it is written will be answered. . . . Would it not be taken as a compliment to Sir Robert Peel, who, you told me, has purchased your picture, if you were to send him a copy of the sonnet before you publish it?”

Haydon's comment on the receipt of the poem is characteristic. “I received to-day the news of my son's being rated,<sup>1</sup> and another great pleasure, Wordsworth's sonnet, and fancied myself the greatest of men when I was returning from my walk, after indulging in anticipation of a certain posthumous fame. As I entered my hall I found

<sup>1</sup> This was his second step-son, rated on board the *Prince Regent* for good behaviour.

a man sitting and waiting. He told me what he wanted, and, because I refused to consent, he abused me excessively, and called me 'a shabby fellow, a d—d shabby fellow.' This is life—a sonnet in the morning, and damned as a shabby fellow in the evening. One does not like to be called shabby, and it made me uneasy all the evening."

The sonnet is inscribed to "B. R. Haydon, Esq., composed on seeing his picture of 'Buona-parte on the Island of St. Helena'" :—

"HAYDON ! let worthier judges praise the skill  
 Here by thy pencil shown in truth of lines  
 And charm of colours ; *I* applaud those signs  
 Of thought that give the true poetic thrill,—  
 That unincumbered whole of blank and still—  
 Sky without cloud—ocean without a wave—  
 And the one man that laboured to enslave  
 The world, sole standing high on the bare hill,  
 Back turn'd—arms folded, the unapparent face  
 Tinged (we may fancy) in this dreary place  
 With light reflected from the invisible sun,  
 Set—like his fortunes ! but not set for aye  
 Like them—the unguilty Power pursues his way,  
 And before *Him* doth dawn perpetual run."

In October Sir Walter Scott passed through town on his way to Italy, and Haydon, who paid his old friend a last visit, was much affected by the alteration that illness and worry had worked

in him. "Though he was much heartier than I expected to find him," he records, "his mind seemed shaken. He said he feared he had occasionally done too much at a time as we all do. We talked of politics of course. Though grateful to the King, he was 'too old a dog,' he said, to forget George IV. . . . We chatted about Shee having the Presidency. 'An accomplished gentleman,' said Sir Walter, 'whom naebody ever haird on,' affecting more Scotch accent than he has. This was d—d fine. Sir Walter said he never saw any one so pleased with a picture as the late King was with my 'Mock Election.' After a quarter of an hour I took my leave, and as I arose he got up, took his stick with that sidelong look of his, and then burst forth that beautiful smile of heart and feeling, geniality of soul, manly courage, and tenderness of mien, which neither painter nor sculptor has ever touched. It was the smile of a superior creature, who would have gathered humanity under the shelter of its wings, and, while he was amused at its follies, would have saved it from folly and sheltered it from pain. Perhaps it may be the last time I am ever to see him, as he sails in a day or two; and if it be, I shall rejoice that this was the last impression."

The close of this year was a period of mourn-

ing. Haydon lost his younger daughter, Fanny, and it became apparent that his third son, Alfred, was gradually fading away. "Began my family picture," he writes on November 21, "with dear Alfred's head, who is dying too. I went on painting and crying. There he sat, drooping like a surcharged flower; as I looked at him, I thought what an exquisite subject a dying child would make. There he dozed, beautiful and sickly, his feet, his dear hands, his head, all drooping and dying." Out of eight children born to Haydon, five died in infancy from suffusion of the brain, due, it was supposed, to the constant anxiety and distress of their mother. "I can remember," writes Frederick Haydon, "the roses of her sunken cheeks fading away daily with anxiety and grief. My father, who was passionately attached to both wife and children, suffered the tortures of the damned at the sight before him. His sorrow over the deaths of his children was something more than human. I remember watching him as he hung over his daughter, Georgiana, and his dying boy Harry, the pride and delight of his life. Poor fellow, how he cried! and he went into the next room, and beating his head passionately on the bed, called upon God to take him and all of us from this dreadful world. The

earliest and most painful death was preferable to our life at that time."

By dint of borrowing in every quarter, and inducing his patrons to subscribe for shares in the picture from Xenophon, Haydon contrived to get through the winter, though his children were often without stockings. William IV. consented to place his name at the head of the subscribers' list, and Haydon, who had grumbled at the proposed vote of £100,000 a year for the Queen—"as if £5000 was not enough for any woman's splendour," remarks with characteristic naïveté, "Upon reflection I shall certainly vote for her Majesty having £100,000 a year after this. What can a Queen do with less? It is impossible." To do him justice he was more flattered by the addition of Goethe's name to his list, than by the Royal patronage. On December 31 he writes: "The following letter of Goethe's is an immortal honour. Think of this great man saying his soul is elevated by the contemplation of the drawings of my pupils from the Elgin Marbles—drawings which were the ridicule and quiz of the whole body of Academicians:—

"MY DEAR SIR,—The letter which you have had the kindness to address to me, has afforded

me the greatest pleasure ; for as my soul has been elevated for many years by the contemplation of the important pictures formerly sent to me, which occupy an honourable station in my house, it cannot but be highly gratifying to me to learn that you still remember me, and embrace this opportunity of convincing me that you do so. Most gladly will I add my name to the list of subscribers to your very valuable painting, and I shall give directions to my banker here to forward you the amount of my ticket. Reserving to myself the liberty at a future period for further information as well about the matter in question and the picture that is to be raffled for, as concerning other objects of Art, I beg to conclude the present letter by recommending myself to your friendly remembrance.

“ ‘ W. VON GOETHE.’ ”

## CHAPTER XXI

THE air at this period was full of the fever of Reform, and Haydon, old Tory though he regarded himself, caught the infection. He painted a small picture bearing on the subject, called "Waiting for the Times," and he wrote two letters to the *Times*, signed "A Reformer," which he considered the most wonderful compositions of the kind that had ever been penned. After the passing of the Bill he congratulated himself upon having contributed to the grand result, and adds: "When my colours have faded, my canvas decayed, and my body mingled with the dust, these glorious letters, the best things I ever wrote, will awaken the enthusiasm of my countrymen. I thanked God I lived in such a time, and that He gifted me with talents to serve the great cause."

If Haydon prided himself on having done something for Reform, he was rewarded for his zeal, since Reform did much for him. It brought him an important commission, which kept him

busily employed for nearly two years, during which period he was relieved from pressing pecuniary anxiety. The idea of a great Reform picture was suggested to Haydon, in the first instance, by the monster gathering of the Trades' Unions at Newhall Hill, near Birmingham, when the vast concourse had joined in the sudden prayer offered up by Hugh Hutton. The Birmingham leaders were attracted by the proposal that the incident should be portrayed upon canvas. The project fell through through lack of support, but Lord Grey, who had encouraged the idea of a picture dealing with Reform, suggested that Haydon should paint for him the great Reform Banquet that was to take place at the Guildhall on July 11, and promised to sit for his portrait.

This proposal was accepted with rapture, and Haydon describes the 11th of July, 1832, as the most splendid day of his life. "I breakfasted and dined with the Committee," he writes, "who treated me with the greatest distinction, and assigned me the place I had chosen to paint from. The confusion of the day is not to be described, but what was that to the roar of the night? I painted all the morning, and got in the room and window, and by night, the instant the room filled, I dashed away. It was a lesson in colour I shall

never forget. The nobility treated me with great distinction. The Duke of Argyll sent to take wine, and so did others. I was obliged to sip, or I should have been more inspired than was requisite. It was a splendid sight, a glorious triumph, and a curious fact in my curious life that I should have been employed to paint it in the hall. I was an object of great attention without 5s. in my pocket—and this is life.”

A few days later Haydon called on Lord Grey with his sketches, and received a definite commission for a picture of the Banquet, at five hundred guineas. The kindly patron paid half the price at once, and thus saved the painter from the difficulties that once more threatened to overwhelm him. He was able to take his children to the sea for a fortnight, and to pacify his more pressing creditors.

Haydon felt that the Reform picture would be of great use to him, since it would compel him to study the detested art of portrait-painting. There is a touch of self-revelation in his confession that “I am perfectly convinced that if I could bring my mind for one whole year to a proper study of portrait it would be of essential use to my work in history as long as I live. Then

why not do it? It is a weakness and disgrace to me. Shall I put up with this imputation on my own character, or shall I make a resolute struggle to vanquish the difficulties which have hitherto vanquished me? I'll make no vows, but set quietly to work, and daily report progress. My attacks on the Academy do not do the good to me they do to the Art, because they give the idea of my being sore, as I certainly am—most dreadfully so, for that is the truth—sore at their perversion of Art—sore at my humiliations, my loss of property, my ruin—sore at being supposed to be unable to paint portraits.”

Haydon thoroughly enjoyed the privilege of access to the leading men of the Liberal party, and made the most of his opportunities to impress upon his sitters his own views on the public encouragement of historical painting. Lord Melbourne he found the most delightful of companions, and it is tolerably obvious that Melbourne was amused with the artist's conversation, and did not allow himself to be bored by his theories. “Lord Melbourne relished my stories,” records Haydon on October 12, “and was extremely affable and amiable. He has a fine head, and looked refined and handsome. I was very much delighted with

his exceeding good-humour, and I hope I have hit his expression. He asked about Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Keats, and Shelley, and seemed much amused at my anecdotes. I never had a pleasanter sitter—a delightful, frank, easy, unaffected man of fashion. There's nothing like 'em when they add intelligence to breeding."

We hear much as time goes on of Lord Palmerston's good-humoured elegance, Lord Lansdowne's amiability, and Lord Jeffrey's brilliant conversation, but the great men, though they listened sympathetically, gave Haydon little encouragement in his schemes for the furtherance of National Art. "On the whole," he decides, "public men shrink from discussion. They are so occupied with the fate of nations, and their political relations, that truth, even on other points, seems unworthy investigation. Metaphysical inquiry they detest. Matters of taste they skim. Religion they consider only as an engine of State, and I do not think much extension of knowledge on *general* principles is to be acquired by intercourse with them. They are interesting from their rank and occupation, but a habit of having such mighty interests hanging on their decisions generates a contempt for abstract deduction, and an indisposition to enter into matters of

literature, art, and morals. Men like Lord Grey — old politicians — are too wary to give you a clue by any hint or look as to what is going on."

A curious contrast to the great Whig statesmen was Daniel O'Connell, who rolled into the room on the occasion, of his first sitting dressed in a morning-gown, "a loose black handkerchief tied round his neck, God knows how, a wig, and a foraging cap bordered with gold lace. He was hilarious and good-natured, but had a cunning look, and an eye like a weasel." Haydon begged for the history of his early life, and O'Connell "explained their first meeting to consider the grievances of Catholics, and their being interrupted by a company of soldiers. The poetical way in which he described the crashing of the muskets on the stones at 'Order Arms' was characteristic. I said, 'It is somewhat ungrateful, after getting Emancipation, to turn round and demand Repeal.' 'Not in *me*,' said O'Connell, 'I always said Repeal would be the consequence of Emancipation, and I always avowed such to be my object.' 'If you get Repeal, what will you do?' 'Have an Irish Parliament directly.' 'But an Irish Parliament,' said I, 'was always corrupt.' 'Yes,' said he,

‘in borough-mongering times; but now there is a constituency.’”

The picture of the “Reform Banquet” was exhibited in April 1834, but the public was not interested, and the Exhibition was closed at a loss. “Here I am again,” writes Haydon on April 24, “after nineteen months of fashion and prosperity, in necessity, with the chance of poverty and ruin. It is really lamentable to see the effect of success and failure on people of fashion. Last year all was hope, exultation, and promise with me. My door was beset; my house besieged; my room inundated. It was an absolute fight to get in to see me paint. Ah, that was curiosity. Well, out came the work; it failed, and my door is deserted; no horses, no carriages. I said to Edward Ellice,<sup>1</sup> ‘I hope they won’t let me sink.’ ‘You may depend,’ said he, ‘you will not be let sink.’”

On April 14 Haydon records a heavier blow than any disappointment about the failure of a picture: “Five minutes before two, dear Harry died. God bless him. This boy was

<sup>1</sup> Edward Ellice the elder (1781-1863). He was Secretary to the Treasury and Whip in Lord Grey’s Government, 1830-1832, and helped to found the Reform Club in 1836.

my favourite child. His character was noble, his talents great, and he was quick as lightning. . . . The death of this beautiful boy has given my mind a blow I shall never effectually recover. I saw him buried to-day, after passing four days sketching his dear head as he lay in the coffin—his beautiful head! What a creature! With a brow like an ancient god! His heart was noble, his intellect extraordinary, and his sensibility deep and touching, with a figure and form as fine as his head—

“ ‘His day without a cloud was passed,  
And he was lovely to the last.’ ”

Haydon had been given some reason to hope that the City of London would employ him to paint a replica of his Reform picture, but this commission was not forthcoming. In May he began a picture of Cassandra meeting Agamemnon, as he returns victorious from Troy, and prophesying his fate. It seemed more than doubtful whether he would be able to proceed with this work, since the prospect before him consisted of “executions, misery, insult, and wretchedness.” On June 7 he notes: “Mary and I in agony of mind. All my Italian books, and some of my best historical designs, are gone to a pawn-

broker's. She packed up her best gown and the children's, and I drove away with what cost me £40, and got £4. The state of humiliation, degradation, and pain of mind in which I sat in the dingy hell of a back-room is not to be described. The Duke of Bedford had sat in the morning. I was in the House of Lords last night, the companion of princes, to-day in a pawn-broker's parlour. Came home in exhausted spirits and found £50 from the Duke of Sutherland for a small commission. Such is life!"

The Duke agreed to buy "Cassandra" when finished for £400, while Lord Althorpe bought the chalk drawings for the "Reform" picture for £200, but these sums seem to have had little or no effect upon Haydon's ever-recurring embarrassments. On October 8 an execution was put in for the taxes. Haydon made the man in possession sit for "Cassandra's" hand, and put on a Persian bracelet. "When the broker came for his money he burst out laughing. There was the fellow, an old soldier, pointing in the attitude of 'Cassandra'—upright and steady, as if on guard. 'Lazarus' head was painted just after an arrest; 'Eucles' finished from a man in possession; the beautiful face

in 'Xenophon' after a morning spent in begging mercy of lawyers; and now 'Cassandra's' head was finished in an agony not to be described, and her hand completed from a broker's man."

## CHAPTER XXII

ON October 16, 1834, the Houses of Parliament were burnt down. This catastrophe seems to have been regarded by Haydon as a blessing in disguise, since there would be a chance of public employment for artists in decorating the new buildings that would in time be erected. "Good God!" he exclaims on October 16, "I am just returned from the terrific burning of the Houses of Parliament. Mary and I drove in a cab over the bridge. From the bridge it was sublime. We alighted, and went into a room of a public-house, which was full. The feeling among the people was extraordinary; jokes and radicalism universal. If Ministers had heard the shrewd sense and intelligence of these drunken remarks! I hurried Mary away. Good God! and are that throne and tapestry gone, with all their associations? The comfort is there is now a better prospect of painting a House of Lords. Lord Grey said there was no intention of taking the tapestry down—little did he think how soon it would go."

Haydon seized the opportunity to prepare yet another petition on his darling subject, which he sent in, in due course, to the Building Committee that sat to consider plans for the new Houses of Parliament. With Lord Melbourne, who was now back again in power, and who seems to have enjoyed teasing the enthusiastic artist, he had some further arguments and discussions. Lord Melbourne asked what historical painters were then living worthy of encouragement. Haydon replied by putting forward the claims of Hilton, Etty, and himself. On one occasion he found Lord Melbourne lounging over the *Edinburgh Review*. "He began instantly, 'Why, here are a set of fellows who want public money for scientific purposes, as well as you for painting: they are a set of ragamuffins.' 'That's the way,' said I; 'nobody has any right to public money but those who are brought up to politics. Are not painting and science as much a matter of public benefit as political jobbing? You never look upon us as equals; but any scamp who trades in politics is looked on as a companion for my Lord.' 'That is not true,' said he. 'I say it is,' said I; and he then roared with laughter, and rubbed his hands."

Haydon began the year 1835 with a big

picture of "Achilles at the Court of Lycomedes," but he was soon obliged to turn his attention to more saleable works. He got a commission from a printseller to paint the Duke of Wellington musing on the Field of Waterloo as a pendant to his "Napoleon at St. Helena," and wrote to ask the Duke for a sitting, and leave to make a chalk sketch of the sword and uniform he wore at Waterloo. The Duke replied briefly that he had no leisure to sit, and Haydon took the note as conveying tacit permission to borrow his cloak and hat. Unluckily, he wrote to thank the Duke for the supposed favour, and also invited him to inspect the picture before it went to the engraver. The Duke replied with rather a sharp rebuke for the liberty that had been taken with his clothes, and continued:—

"I have no objection to any gentleman painting any picture of me that he may think proper; but if I am to have anything to say to the picture, either in the way of sitting or sending a dress, I consider myself, and shall be considered by others, as responsible for it. I must say that I by no means approve of the subject of the picture which you have undertaken to paint. Paint it, if you please, but I will have nothing to say to it.

"To paint the Emperor Napoleon on the

rock of St. Helena is quite a different thing from painting me on the field of the Battle of Waterloo. The Emperor Napoleon did not consent to be painted. But I am to be supposed to consent; and, moreover, I on the field of the Battle of Waterloo am not exactly in the situation in which Napoleon stood on the rock of St. Helena. But a painter should be a historian, a philosopher, a politician, as well as a poet and a man of taste. Now if you will consider the subject of the picture to which you desire me to be a party in the year 1835, in any one of these characters, you will see full reason why you should not choose that subject, and why I should not consent to be a party to the picture."

Haydon was ready, as usual, to argue the point. After explaining that he had been under the impression it was with the Duke's permission his valet had lent the clothes, he proceeds:—

"Your Grace says, 'a painter should be a philosopher, a historian, a politician, a poet, and a man of taste.' It really appears to me, your Grace, that imagining a great general visiting the field of his greatest battle after many years, is both natural and poetical; that the musings that must occur to him there would be philosophical; and though it would not be strictly historical if

it had not happened, yet there is surely no bad taste in contrasting the conqueror with the vanquished, or in showing the one in his deserved desolation, and the other in his deserved triumph.

“‘I on the Field of Waterloo am not exactly in the same situation as Napoleon on the rock of St. Helena,’ your Grace adds. Certainly, I reply. It is because your Grace is in a different situation that I glory in placing you there, and that the public and the army will glory in seeing you there. With respect to the subject, it occurred to me at the time I painted Sir Robert Peel’s picture of ‘Napoleon.’ I had always resolved to do my best to honour, as far as my pencil could honour, that man who dared in face of the world to break the chain of an imagined invincibility, who returned to his own country encircled by a splendour of fame which will last as long as the earth he inhabits; who came back from the command of a victorious army a simple citizen, subjecting himself to the same laws and paying allegiance to the same sovereign as the humblest individual in the land he saved.

“Ah, your Grace, you were wanted, and your genius had full scope, because you were necessary; but it is not impossible to imagine a genius in another way, who loves his country with equal

devotion, and feels equally conscious of being able to honour it, but whose talents are not in demand, and who is only aware of the extent of his power from the torture of suppression, who passes his life in vain aspirations for opportunities which will never be granted him, and who will go out of the world pitied, disappointed, ruined."

Haydon concludes by explaining the circumstances connected with the commission, offers to obliterate a large picture that he had already begun of the same subject, and expresses a hope that he will now regain the Duke's opinion as a gentleman. In a later letter he offers to destroy the small picture as well if the purchaser would give consent. The Duke replied: "I have already told you that I have not the smallest objection to you painting and engraving a picture of me in any way you please, and in any costume. It is impossible for me to have any feeling on the subject, provided it is clearly understood that I am no party to the picture."

In consequence of this correspondence the publication of the print was delayed for a time. Haydon, with unusual practicality, painted a member of the Imperial Guard, musing at Waterloo, over the figure of the Duke, and sold it for thirty guineas. In spite of his troubles he went more into society

during this year than he had done at any period since his marriage. His "dearest Mary" seems to have been content to remain quietly at home with her children. A typical day is described on February 27. "Went into the city in a state of misery not to be expressed. Called on Moon the printseller, and told him of my dreadful situation. I had written to Lord Egerton, offering to paint the fire of the Houses of Parliament for £50. He answered he had not room for pictures, and sent twenty guineas. Horrid work, this perpetual charitable assistance. This is only additional evidence of what I have always said: when a house is full of old works there is no room for existing talent. Came home in better spirits. Went to Lady Blessington's in the evening. Everybody goes to Lady Blessington. She has the first news of everything, and everybody seems delighted to tell her. No woman will be more missed. She is the centre of more talent and gaiety than any other woman of fashion in London."

Haydon was less given to Boswellising in these days than in the years when he spent most of his time in literary society, but he retails one of Lady Blessington's anecdotes about Lord Abercorn and his mode of life at Stanmore Priory, which seems worth reproducing here.

“Lady Blessington said the Priory was the most singular place on earth. The moment anybody became celebrated they were invited. He had a great delight in seeing handsome women. Everybody handsome he made Lady Abercorn invite; and all the guests shot, hunted, rode, or did what they liked, provided they never spoke to Lord Abercorn except at table. If they met him they were to take no notice. At this time ‘Thaddeus of Warsaw’ was making a great noise. ‘Gad!’ said Lord Abercorn, ‘we must have those Porters. Write to them, my dear.’ An answer came from Jane Porter<sup>1</sup> that they could not afford the expense of travelling. A cheque was sent, and they arrived. Lord Abercorn peeped at them as they came through the hall, and running to Lady Abercorn, exclaimed, ‘Witches, my lady! I must be off,’ and immediately started post, and remained away till they were gone.”

An important event in Haydon’s career was his first lecture on art, which was given at the London Mechanics’ Institute under the auspices of Dr. Birkbeck. In spite of his fluency and self-confidence, he was a little doubtful of success in speaking before a crowded audience, and con-

<sup>1</sup> Jane Porter (1776–1850). Her most popular novels were “Thaddeus of Warsaw” and “Scottish Chiefs.”

fesses that he felt nervous under the ordeal. But on the evening of the day he records with satisfaction, "The audience paid me keen and intense attention, and ultimately were enthusiastic. One man said my delivery was perfect; another, who was deaf, said my delivery was the only thing wanting. Dr. Birkbeck said, as we went out, 'You have got 'em; it is a hit,' and I think it was. I laid down principles which must reform English Art, and I had an audience who gloriously comprehended them."

As the year drew to a close, the web of debt and difficulty tightened round the unfortunate painter once more. He pawned his dress-clothes, his tea-urn, and even raised five shillings on a pair of spectacles. In October he called his creditors together, and persuaded them to grant him an extension of time. On the 31st of December he notes: "The last day of 1835. On reviewing the year, though I have suffered bitter anxieties, I have cause for the deepest gratitude to my great Creator in raising me up such a friend as my dear landlord [Newton], who has helped me when the nobility forsook me. He employed me to paint the 'Widow's Son' and 'Achilles,' paying me five guineas weekly to the amount of a hundred guineas, and then striking

off 400 guineas for each from the gross debt. . . . I close this year apprehending an execution, but I despair not. A star is always shining in my brain, which has led me on, and ever will."

The most remarkable trait about Haydon, as his son observes, was his sanguine buoyancy of spirits. "Nothing ever depressed him long. He was the most persevering, indomitable man I ever met. With us at home he was always confident of doing better next year. But that next year never came. . . . Blest as he was with the peculiar faculty of genius for overcoming difficulties, he might have found life tame without them. I remember his saying once, he was not sure he did not relish ruin as a source of increased activity of mind." But the struggle had begun to tell upon his powers, if not upon his spirits. He was now painting pictures for bread, repeating himself, finishing a work in a few weeks that he would formerly have spent years over, "fighting misery at the point of the brush, and obliged to eke out a livelihood by begging and borrowing, in default of worse expedients, such as bills and cognovits. A less elastic temperament and a less vigorous constitution would have broken down in one year of such a fight. Haydon kept it up for ten."

## CHAPTER XXIII

“*Jan. 1st.*—Prayed to God to bless us through the year, and went into the City to beg money from a lawyer till Monday, though I have no more chance of paying then than now. To-day I had another sum due. I must beg money to-morrow for that.” In this characteristic fashion opened the year 1836.

The most important event of this period, from Haydon's point of view, was the appointment of Mr. Ewart's<sup>1</sup> Committee of Inquiry into the means of extending the arts and principles of design, including an inquiry into the constitution of the Royal Academy, and the effects produced by it. In the course of its proceedings the Committee examined Academicians, connoisseurs, manufacturers, and picture-dealers. Haydon, among other artists, was called to give evidence, and once more aired his views on the iniquity of Academies, and the damage done to the cause of

<sup>1</sup> William Ewart (1798-1869), M.P. for Liverpool for several years. He was instrumental in bringing in an Act for the restriction of capital punishment, and he introduced a Bill for the establishment of Free Libraries in 1850.

High Art by the undue encouragement given to portrait-painting. Though he thoroughly enjoyed seeing Shee, Phillips, Howard, and other of his old enemies heckled by the Committee, he was dissatisfied with the results of the inquiry, the failure being due, he considered, to the pusillanimous conduct of the artists who remained outside the Academy, but had not the courage to attack its abuses.

In the course of its report, the Committee expressed the opinion that the principles of free competition in Art will ultimately triumph over all artificial institutions, and dwelt upon the ambiguous, half-public, half-private character of the Academy, though without directly recommending any modification of its constitution. With respect to the National Collections, the Committee recommended the purchase of the works of living British artists, after they had stood the test of time and criticism; the deposit in the National Gallery of the cartoons from Hampton Court; and the admission of professional critics among those entrusted with the duty of purchasing works for the National Gallery. In conclusion, they submitted that, in the completion of great public buildings, the arts of sculpture and painting might be called in for the embellishment of architecture,

and expressed their belief that the contemplation of noble works in fresco and sculpture was worthy of the intelligence of a great and civilised nation.

Several of these suggestions, it will be noted, had been urged by Haydon on Ministers and the public for the best part of a quarter of a century. Haydon dealt with these topics in the series of lectures which he delivered during the early part of this year at the Mechanics' Institute. We are told that he was a most effective lecturer, his confident, energetic, earnest manner carrying his audience cheerfully along with him. "His power of rapid and vigorous drawing stood him in good stead, and the masterly effect with which he dashed down on his blackboard a figure or a limb, or illustrated the leverage of a bone, always commanded interest and applause. Then he was never afraid of his audience; he ruled them sternly enough sometimes, and never shrank from a reprimand when he thought they deserved it. On one occasion, when he had got up two wrestlers on the platform to demonstrate the laws of muscular action, the audience having laughed at some contortion of the pair, Haydon fiercely addressed the laughers as 'You fools!' and ordered his hearers to observe and admire, with more respect for God's handiwork."

In the early part of the year Haydon was filled with false hopes by Lord Audley,<sup>1</sup> who seems then to have been a lunatic at large. He gave the artist two handsome commissions—one for a picture of the Black Prince thanking James, Lord Audley for his valour after the battle of Poitiers—declared he was the richest of all the noblemen, and, after praising the beauty of Haydon's daughter, said that if his son liked her, and she would marry him, he would give them £50,000. Haydon set to work cheerfully on the commissions, thinking that he was once more afloat, and was bitterly disappointed when he discovered that Lord Audley was a poor man, and was not responsible for his actions.

The picture of "Xenophon" was raffled in April, the subscriptions amounting to £840, and was won by the Duke of Bedford, who presented it to the Russell Institute in Great Coram Street. The family got through the summer in their usual hand-to-mouth fashion, but on September 9 Haydon was taken in execution, and carried off to the King's Bench. His landlord, the inestimable Newton, offered to pay him out, but he refused, preferring once more

<sup>1</sup> George, 19th Baron Audley. He died in 1837.

to pass through the Court. He remained in prison until November 18, amused himself as usual with the study of character, and declared that the rest did his brain a great deal of good. Still, he had missed his constant occupation, and on entering his painting-room again, observes that he relished the oil, could have tasted the colour, rubbed his cheeks with the brushes, and kissed the palette.

In the course of the following year Haydon gave a number of lectures in London, Edinburgh, and the principal northern towns, earning a small but regular income by this means, and making new friends, some of whom were to be of great use to him in the future. He published two volumes of these lectures, which included addresses on the state and prospects of British Art, the Elgin Marbles, Fuseli, Wilkie, fresco painting, the standard figure of the Greeks, and a competent tribunal in Art.

On the accession of the young Queen, Haydon, after many affected doubts and scruples, applied to be appointed her historical painter. "Felt degraded in my own estimation," he writes on July 9, "in condescending to ask the Duchess of Sutherland to interfere with the Queen to appoint me her historical painter,

with an income like West. If I succeed, what will become of my liberty? I do it for dear Mary's sake, as her health is feeble, and any more shocks would endanger her life. If the Queen were to say, 'Will he promise to cease assaulting the Academy?' I would reply, 'If her Majesty would offer me the alternative of the block, or to cease assaulting, I would choose the block.' *Nous verrons*. Nothing will come of it, and secretly, I hope nothing may. I have not played my cards well with the Duchess and the Queen. I had a fine moment which I did not press." Needless to say the application was unsuccessful, and Haydon seems to have attributed his failure to the fact that the Queen had never forgiven him for sending her a ticket of admission to the raffle for "Xenophon."

In the course of the year Haydon painted a small Falstaffian subject for Mr. Hope of Deepdene, advanced his "Poitiers," and began a large picture of the "Maid of Saragossa," for which he invited his patrons to take shares, as he had done with "Xenophon." In September another piece of good fortune befell him. During his lecturing tour he had made the acquaintance of a Mr. Lowndes, a wealthy art

patron of Liverpool. Through Mr. Lowndes he received an offer from the Committee of the Asylum for the Blind at Liverpool for a picture of "Christ Blessing Little Children," at a price of 400 guineas. This commission and another lecturing tour kept him busy and in funds for the remainder of the year. He was too much occupied apparently to devote much time to his Journal; at any rate the entries are of little general interest, save the following, dated November 4:—

"Met Rogers in the Park. I told him I had just been to the Duke of Sutherland's to see Delaroche's<sup>1</sup> picture of Strafford. I said it was a fine work, but still a French work. There is no life in French pictures. The basis of all French art is the theatre and the lay-figure. The flesh is smooth and bloodless. Rogers touched me in the side, and said, 'Give us something better of the same sort—you could.' I went to the Velasquez afterwards. It was a ripe peach after currier's leather. The Duke has given a high price [for the "Delaroche"]. It is large, and yet, such is the perversity, that he objects to my painting large. I ask any impartial person if my

<sup>1</sup> Hippolyte (or Paul) Delaroche (1797–1856), the eminent French historical painter, to whom was entrusted the decoration of the amphitheatre of the *École des Beaux Arts*.

'Solomon,' 'Jerusalem,' and 'Lazarus' are not greater works than Delaroche has ever done. Yet where are they all? 'Solomon' in a hayloft, 'Lazarus' in a bazaar, and 'Jerusalem' out of the country."

The early part of 1830 was spent in lecturing and in work upon the Liverpool picture. The delay of a remittance from the Committee brought a temporary renewal of his difficulties. Thus on April 26 he was compelled to pawn his dress clothes for 12s., but on the 28th he records the receipt of a hundred and fifty guineas. These little vicissitudes of fortune seem to have been regarded with amusement, rather than the customary "agony of mind," but there is a very natural expression of personal feeling in the entry for August 17. "The session has ended, and nothing has been done for High Art. But the law which enabled a reptile to enter your house without notice, and drag you from your bed, is abolished. This is only a step to the final abolishment of arrest even in execution. I have helped to this desired object. Hume read my Catalogue on the 'Mock' Election in the House, which was a feather in the scale."

Haydon took a deep interest in the scheme for erecting a monument to Nelson, which re-

sulted in the Trafalgar Square column and statue. He sent in a design to the competition consisting of a Greek temple with a simple statue of Nelson in the cella, and pictures of the four most remarkable incidents in his life on the walls. Though the Nelson attempt was unsuccessful, the first Liverpool commission was followed by a second, which was completely after the painter's own heart. On December 5 Haydon records with exultation :—

“Lowndes came to me the other night and proposed to me to paint a grand historical picture of the Duke of Wellington [for the Town Hall]. The very thing I have been thinking of for two years. . . . The success of my lectures, and the success of the asylum picture, and the victory of a public commission, are really so glorious that no gratitude to God can be great enough. I prayed sincerely for a successful end of this labour, and it has ended successfully. I now pray to Him to bless this new commission of the Duke, that Liverpool may possess the best historical picture and my grandest effort of the pencil in portrait. Inspired by history I fear not making it the grandest thing.”

Haydon decided to paint, on a large scale, his former conception of the Duke musing at

Waterloo twenty years after the battle. But a commission from a body of Liverpool magnates for a municipal painting was a very different matter from a private speculation. The Committee wrote to the Duke, asking him to give sittings for the picture. The Duke replied: "I am much flattered by the desire of the gentlemen of Liverpool to possess a picture of me by Mr. Haydon. I will, with great pleasure, see Mr. Haydon, and will endeavour to fix a time at which it will be in my power to give him sittings to enable him to finish the picture. It is not in my power at the present moment."

## CHAPTER XXIV

HAYDON bombarded the Duke with letters on the subject of the proposed picture, to say nothing of requests for interviews, sittings, and the loan of clothes and equipments. But the Duke refused to be drawn, though he replied as usual to every letter. On June 27 he wrote more curtly than usual:—

“The Duke of Wellington presents his compliments to Mr. Haydon. He hopes that he will have some cessation of note-writing about pictures. The Duke knows nothing about the picture Mr. Haydon proposes to paint. At all events, he must decline to lend to anybody his clothes, arms, and equipments.”

In some dismay Haydon inquired of Wilkie how *he* had managed the Duke. “Let him have his own way,” was the reply. “He is fidgety about lending his things. I never got them but just a day before he came, and he preferred coming in the regimentals to lending them to be painted.” Wilkie observed that though the Duke complained of the loss of time occasioned by

sitting, he would be mortified if he were not asked to sit, and consoled his friend with the assurance that if the Duke had promised the Committee a sitting, he would certainly keep his word.

Haydon worked steadily at his picture with the assistance of Lord Fitzroy Somerset, Lady Burghersh, D'Orsay, and the Duke's saddler and tailor. On July 10, he notes, "D'Orsay called, and pointed out several things to correct in the horse, verifying Lord Fitzroy's criticism of Sunday last. I did them, and he took my brush in his dandy gloves, which made my heart ache, and lowered the hind-quarters by bringing over a bit of the sky. Such a dress! white great-coat, blue satin cravat, hair oiled and curling, hat of the primest curve and purest water, gloves scented with eau-de-Cologne, primrose in tint, skin in tightness. In this prime of dandyism he took up a nasty, oily, dirty hog-tool, and immortalised Copenhagen by touching the sky. I thought, after he was gone, this won't do,—a Frenchman touch Copenhagen! So out I rubbed all he had touched, and modified his limits myself."

In August, thirty pounds having come in unexpectedly, and there being for the moment no hope of trapping the Duke, Haydon took a ten

days' trip to Belgium, in order to sketch the field of Waterloo, and to see Rubens' masterpieces at Antwerp. "The sight of Rubens' abode," he writes, "the quiet seclusion of his summer-house, the silence of Antwerp, the golden splendour of its altars, the power of its pictures, affected me deeply. I think I will settle there. I begin to feel a yearning for the Continent, with all its risks of war."

On October 9 the Duke wrote to invite Haydon to spend a few days at Walmer Castle, when he would be prepared to sit "for a picture for certain gentlemen at Liverpool." Considering how Wellington had been pestered by Haydon for many years past with petitions to encourage National Art, to employ this particular artist, to give sittings, and to lend clothes, the invitation was certainly a proof of a magnanimous nature. There was probably no prouder or happier man in England than B. R. Haydon as he journeyed down to Walmer on October 11, 1839. His Journal gives a long and minute account of his visit, portions of which are worth quoting. The other members of the party were Sir Astley Cooper, Mr. Arbuthnot, and Mr. Booth. The first evening the conversation turned, among other topics, upon the Peninsular War.

“The Duke talked of the want of fuel in Spain — of what the troops suffered, and how whole houses, so many to a division, were pulled down regularly and paid for to serve as fuel. He said every Englishman who has a home goes to bed at night. He found bivouacking was not suitable to the character of the English soldier. He got drunk and lay down under any hedge. Discipline was destroyed. But when he introduced tents every soldier belonged to his tent, and, drunk or sober, he got to it before he went to sleep. I said, ‘Your Grace, the French always bivouac.’ ‘Yes,’ he replied, ‘because French, Spanish, and all other nations lie anywhere. It is their habit. They have no homes.’ The Duke said the natural state of man was plunder. Society was based on security of property alone. It was for that object men associated, and he thought we were coming to the natural state of society very fast.”

When bed-time came the Duke showed Haydon to his room, but the guest was too excited by the situation in which he found himself to sleep. “Here am I,” he reflected, “*tête-à-tête* with the greatest man on earth, and the noblest—the conqueror of Napoleon—sitting with him, talking to him, sleeping near him. His mind is unim-

paired, his conversation powerful, humorous, witty, argumentative, sound, moral. Would he throw his stories, fresh from nature, into his speeches, the effect would be prodigious. He would double their impression. I am deeply interested, and passionately affected. God bless his Grace!"

The next morning, on his return from hunting, the Duke gave a first sitting of an hour and a half. "I hit his grand, upright, manly expression," continues Haydon. "He looked like an eagle of the gods who had put on human shape, and had got silvery with age and service. I found that to imagine he could not go through any duty roused the lion. 'Does the light hurt your Grace's eyes?' 'Not at all!' and he stared at the light as much as to say, 'I'll see if you shall make me give in, Signor Light.' 'Twas a noble head. I saw nothing of that peculiar expression of mouth the sculptors give him, bordering on simpering. His colour was beautiful and fleshy, his lips compressed and energetic." There is no record of the conversation at dinner that night, and we are told that the Duke read the *Standard* the whole evening. Haydon, who saw everything *couleur de rose*, observes: "It was most interesting to see him reading away. I believe he read every iota."

The next day being Sunday, there was no

sitting, but Haydon was charmed at sharing the same pew with his hero, to whose demeanour he seems to have paid much more attention than to the service. "The Duke came into the presence of his Maker," we are told, "without cant, without affectation, a simple human being. . . . I got deeply affected. Here was the greatest hero in the world, who had conquered the greatest genius, prostrating his heart and being before his God in his venerable age, and praying for His mercy. However high his destiny above my own, here we were at least equal before our Creator; and I looked at this wonderful man with an interest and feeling that touched my imagination beyond belief. . . . Arthur Wellesley in the village church of Walmer this day was more interesting to me than at the last charge of the Guards at Waterloo, or in all the glory and paraphernalia of his entry into Paris. I would not have missed seeing him, for this will be the germ of some interesting work of art—perhaps his youth, his manhood, and his age in a series."

In the evening the Duke read the *Spectator* while Haydon studied Lardner's "Life" of his host. On coming to the passage, "He rode in front of fifty pieces of artillery, but God protected his head," he looked up, and gazed upon the

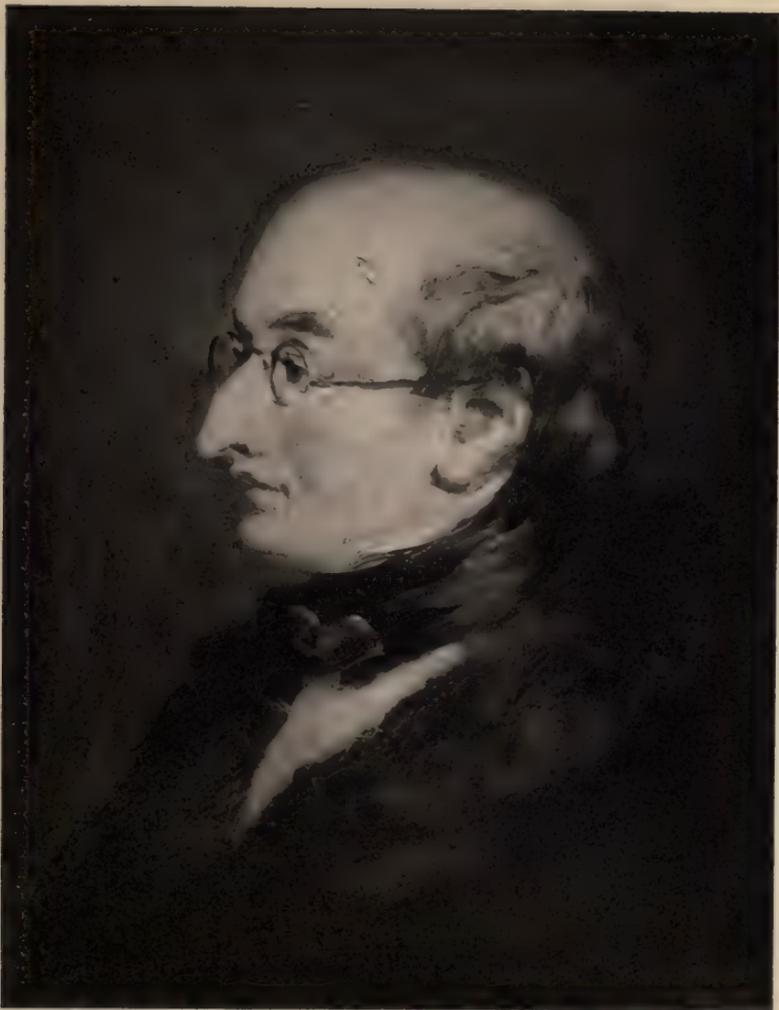
venerable white head that God still protected. "There he was, contented, happy, aged, but vigorous, enjoying his leisure in dignity; God knows as he deserves. After reading till his eyes were tired, he put down the paper, and said: 'There are a great many curious things in it, I assure you.' He then yawned, as he always did before retiring, and said: 'I'll give you an early sitting to-morrow at nine.'" Punctually at nine next morning he walked the hero, looking extremely worn, his skin drawn tight over his face, his eye watery and aged, his head nodding a little. "How altered from the fresh old man after Saturday's hunting!" observes Haydon. "It affected me. He looked like an aged eagle beginning to totter from his perch." A second sitting in the afternoon concluded the business, and early next morning Haydon left for town. From first to last the Duke refused to glance at the sketch, thus adhering to his determination not to be in any way responsible for the picture. It is probable that he was afraid of being attacked upon one of those burning questions of Art, about which he had received and answered so many letters, for we hear nothing of any conversation during the sittings, and it has been shown that he carefully entrenched himself behind a newspaper

each evening. However, Haydon was more than satisfied, and remarks that of the two great heads of the two great parties, the Duke and Lord Grey, he prefers the Duke infinitely. "He is more manly, has no vanity, is not deluded by any flattery or humbug, and is in every way a grander character, though Lord Grey is a fine, amiable, venerable, vain man." A curious comment upon the above passage is to be found in a letter addressed by Miss Mitford on October 27, 1839, to John Lucas,<sup>1</sup> the young artist, who was patronised by the Duke of Wellington:—

"Poor Haydon! What you will be, he, with prudence, steadiness, good sense, and modesty (for conceit has been his worst enemy) might have been. He had power, and with the cultivation of higher and better intellectual and moral qualities, he might have had taste—for taste is a moral quality. But he surrounds himself with flatterers, he becomes hopelessly involved, and how can he paint then? That is the secret of his failure. And yet, remembering what he was, and what he might have been, one still says, Poor Haydon!"

Haydon seems to have concluded this year in

<sup>1</sup> John Lucas (1807-1874), portrait-painter. First exhibited at the Academy in 1828.

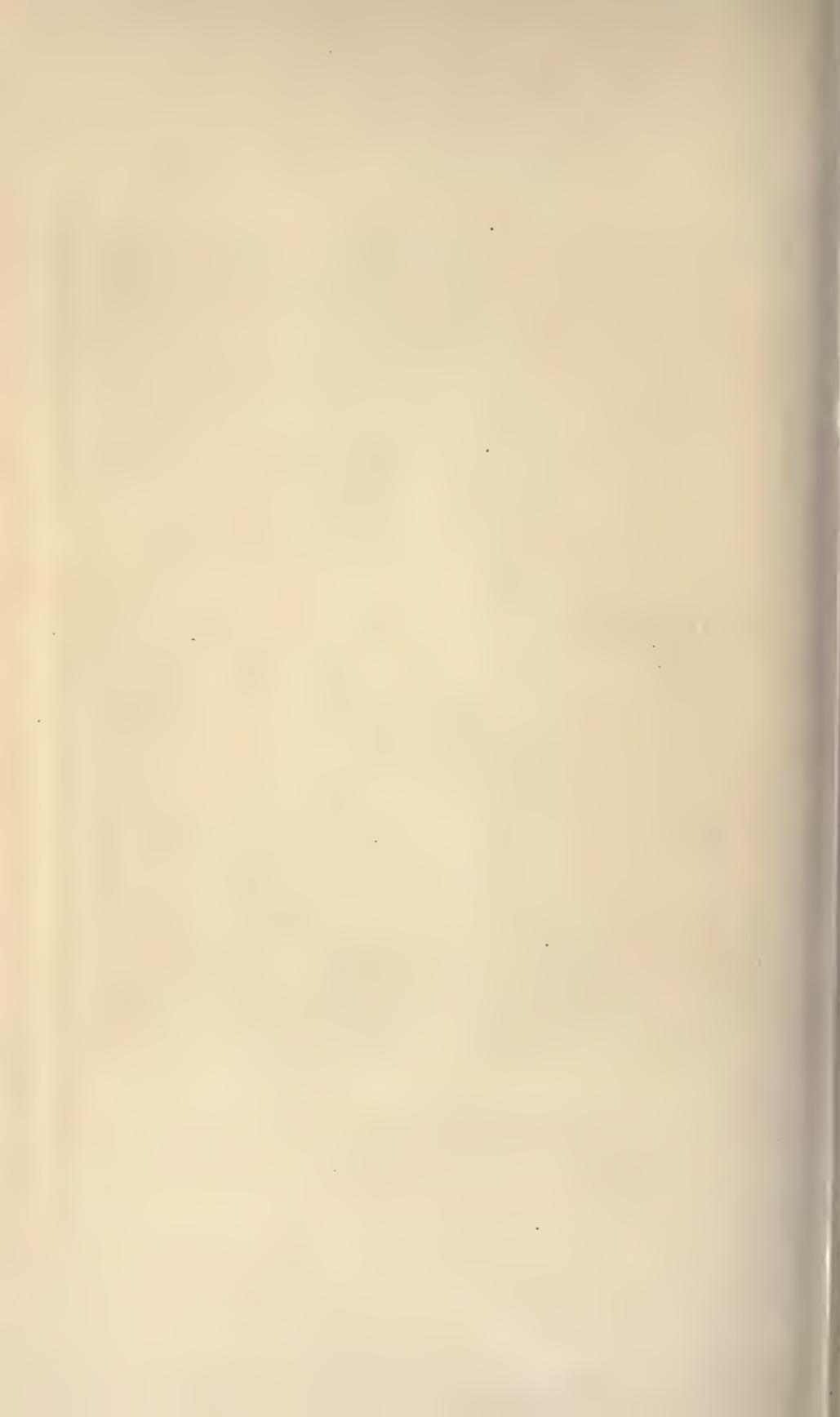


*Emory Walker, photo*

*Susan Weston, engraving*

*B. R. Haydon.*

*From the Portrait by Himself in the National Portrait Gallery*



what was, for him, a state of comfort and security. It is worthy of note that his pious dependence on heavenly support diminished with his freedom from care, and he notes in a Sunday entry: "Went to church, but prosperity, though it makes me grateful, does not cause me such perpetual religious musings as adversity. When on a precipice, where nothing but God's protection can save me, I delight in religious hope, but I am sorry to say my religion ever dwindles unless kept alive by risk of ruin. My piety is never so intense as in a prison, and my gratitude never so much alive as when I have just escaped from one."

The picture of the "Duke" was finished before the end of the year, and seems to have been much admired—admiration in which the artist himself heartily joined. The poet Rogers called to see the new work, and said he wished Haydon would paint another "Napoleon" without making him as fat as he really was. This led to a small commission for a *thin* replica of the "Napoleon," for which Rogers offered thirty guineas. A stronger feeling for Art was being aroused throughout the country, and Haydon was gratified by a demand for casts of the Elgin Marbles for local schools of Art. Reviewing his situation on December 2, he writes with more than

usual complacence: "It is now twenty-seven years since I ordered my 'Solomon' canvas. I was young (twenty-six). The world was against me. I had not a farthing. Yet how I remember the delight with which I mounted my deal table, and dashed it in, singing and trusting in God, as I always do. When one is once imbued with that clear heavenly confidence, there is nothing like it. It has carried me through everything. I think my dearest Mary has not got it. I do not think women have in general. Two years ago I had not a farthing, having spent it all to recover her health. She said to me, 'What are we going to do, my dear?' I replied, 'Trust in God.' There was something like a smile on her face. The very next day came the order for 400 guineas from Liverpool, and ever since I have been employed."

## CHAPTER XXV

IN January 1840 Haydon lost one whom he had always regarded as a rival—William Hilton. It has been averred that Haydon was generous in his recognition of brother artists, but this seems to have been true only of young students, or those whose line was entirely outside his own. His jealousy of Wilkie is constantly cropping up, and now he writes to his wife concerning his dead colleague: "Poor Hilton is gone. All my life they puffed the poor fellow against me, and what has he done? Now they will puff him once more, and for the last time. There is nothing mean men take such delight in as pretending great admiration for an inferior man in order to run down a man whose talents they cannot disprove. Hilton was a delicate, amiable, weak creature, who had no invention, and who pilfered from everybody living and dead. Fuseli used to call him the 'bold thief.' . . . He not only had no invention, but he did not draw finely. But the Academicians pushed him against me just as they pushed Bird against Wilkie. Where is Bird now?

And where will Hilton be in a few years? Yet I will be bound to say we shall have a great hue and cry over poor Hilton, and we shall be told that the Art has sustained an irreparable loss."

In February of this year Haydon was enabled to carry out one of the long-cherished dreams of his life, namely, the delivery of a series of lectures on art in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, under the patronage of the Vice-Chancellor. The experiment was a success, the audiences numerous, and the lecturer thoroughly enjoyed his reception by various University Dons. In his delight at being, in his own estimation, the first to break down the barrier which had kept art begging to be heard at the Universities, he wrote to his old friend Wordsworth:—

"There are four honours in my life, first, the sonnet of Wordsworth, second, the freedom of my native town, third, the public dinner in Edinburgh, and fourth, my reception at Oxford. The first and the last are the greatest. But the first is the first, and will ever remain so, whilst a vibration of my heart continues to quiver. Who said 'High is our calling!' when all the world was adverse to desert? There was the foresight—there the manliness—there the energy and

affection which have marked the poet's career from beginning to conclusion.

"You are a glorious creature, and is not our calling high? Would all the crowns and kingdoms and jewels on earth have bribed you to say that of a man if you had not felt it? And why did you feel it? Because you saw it! After the distinction of yesterday my mind instinctively turned to you. Fancy my reception here, and fancy those fellows at the London University conceiving a man of my misfortunes would have injured the religious and moral purity of their character, if I had lectured there. If I was to die this moment, my dear friend, I would thank God with my last breath for this great opportunity of doing my duty. Hurrah! with all my soul.

"Your affectionate old friend,

"B. R. HAYDON."

Wordsworth replied promptly :—

"Though I have nothing to say but merely congratulation, hearty congratulation, I cannot forbear to thank you for your letter. You write in high spirits, and I am glad of it; it is only fair that, having had so many difficulties to encounter, you should have a large share of triumph. Never-

theless, though I partake most cordially of your pleasure, I should have been still more delighted to learn that your pencil (for that, after all, is the tool you were made for) met with the encouragement it so well deserves. . . . Allow me to mention one thing on which, if I were qualified to lecture on your art, I should dwell with more attention than, so far as I know, has been bestowed upon it—I mean perfection in each kind as far as it is attainable. This, in widely different minds, has been shown by the Italians, by the Flemings, the Dutch, the Spaniards, the Germans, and why should I exclude the English?

“Now, as a masterly, a first-rate, ode or elegy, or piece of humour even, is better than a poorly or feebly executed epic poem, so is the picture, though in point of subject the poorest that ever came from an easel, better than a work after Michael Angelo or Raffaele in choice of subject, or aim of style, if moderately performed. All styles, down to the humblest, are good, if there be thrown into the choosing all that the subject is capable of; and this truth applies not only to painting, but in degree to every other fine art.

“Ever, my dear Haydon, faithfully yours,

“W. WORDSWORTH.”

On June 12, 1840, Haydon notes in his Journal—

“Excessively excited and exhausted. I attended the great Convention of the Anti-Slavery Society at Freemason’s Hall. Last Wednesday a deputation called on me from the Committee, saying they wished for a sketch of the scene. The meeting was very affecting. Poor old Clarkson was present, with delegates from America and other parts of the world.”

A few days later Haydon breakfasted with Clarkson,<sup>1</sup> and sketched him with “an expression of indignant humanity.” In less than a week fifty heads were dashed in, the finished picture containing no less than a hundred and thirty-eight; in fact, as the artist remarked, with a curious disregard of natural history, it was all heads, like a peacock’s tail. Haydon took a malicious pleasure in suggesting to his more distinguished sitters that he should place them beside a negro delegate, this being his test of their sincerity. Thus, he writes on June 30, “Scobell called. I said, ‘I shall place you, Thompson, and the negro together.’ Now an abolitionist, on thorough principle, would have

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846). He had published an anti-slavery pamphlet as early as 1786, and had worked untiringly ever since for the abolition of the slave trade.

gloried in being so placed. He sophisticated immediately on the propriety of placing the negro in the distance, as it would have much greater effect. Lloyd Garrison comes to-day. I'll try him, and this shall be my method of ascertaining the real heart.

"Garrison sat, and I succeeded, and hit him. I asked him about the negro, and he met me at once. George Thompson<sup>1</sup> said he saw no objection. But that was not enough. A man who wishes to place the negro on a level must no longer regard him as a slave, and feel annoyed at sitting by his side."

Haydon worked steadily at his "Anti-Slavery" picture through the summer and autumn, and observed that such a number of honest heads were never seen together before. In August he published an etching of his "Wellington at Waterloo," a copy of which he sent to Wordsworth, apparently with a request for another sonnet.

"We are all charmed with your etching," replied the poet. It is both poetically and pictorially conceived, and finely executed. I should have written immediately to thank you for it, but I

<sup>1</sup> George Thompson (1804-1878), an active worker in the Abolitionist cause. He had helped to organise the movement in America in 1834, but being denounced by President Jackson, was obliged to fly the country.

wished to gratify you by writing another sonnet. I now send it, but with an earnest request that it may not be put into circulation for some little time, as it is warm from the brain, and may require some little retouching. It has this at least remarkable attached to it—which will add to its value in your eyes—that it was actually composed while I was climbing Helvellyn. . . .”

The first reading of the “Sonnet suggested by Haydon’s Picture of the Duke of Wellington upon the Field of Waterloo Twenty Years after the Battle,” runs as follows:—

“By art’s bold privilege, warrior and warhorse stand  
On ground yet strewn with their last battle’s wreck.  
Let the steed glory, while his master’s hand  
Lies, fixed for ages, on his conscious neck.  
But, by the chieftain’s look, tho’ at his side  
Hangs that day’s treasured sword, how firm a check  
Is given to triumph, and all human pride!  
Yon trophied mound shrinks to a shadowy speck  
In his calm presence. Since the mighty deed  
Him years have brought far nearer the grave’s rest,  
As shows that face time-worn. But he such seed  
Has sowed that bears, we trust, the fruit of fame  
In heaven; hence no one blushes for thy name,  
Conqueror! ’mid some sad thoughts divinely blest.”

The “Anti-Slavery” picture was finished and exhibited in the spring of 1842, but it was not a commercial success. On the top of this disappointment came the news of Wilkie’s death in the Bay

of Gibraltar, and his burial at sea. "Poor dear Wilkie!" exclaims Haydon, "with all thy heartless timidities of character—with thy shrinking, cowardly want of resolution, looking as if thou hadst sneaked through life pursued by the ghosts of forty Academicians—thy great genius, our early friendship, our long attachment through thirty-six years, thy touching death and romantic burial, brought thy loss bitterly to my heart. . . . Poor Wilkie! I miss the consciousness of his existence. Our friendship began in a dispute, continued in long arguments, and ended in a sarcasm. Yet we were attached to each other. Nothing can compensate for the loss of Wilkie in the Art—though latterly, owing to my views about the Academy, we were not together so much. We never met but we lingered, unwilling to part. While he lived, there was something natural, sound, and solid in the Art. Now there is nobody—nothing."

In June of this year the Fine Arts Committee appointed to consider the question of the decoration of the new Houses of Parliament sat to examine witnesses, but Haydon was not summoned before them, a slight which he deeply felt. With an anxious heart he set about making experiments in fresco, and was astonished at what he regarded as his success in this new line of endeavour. His old

friend Hamilton told him that he had no chance of being employed to adorn either House, but that if he had gone to Italy twenty years before, it would have made all the difference. Haydon writes on the last day of 1841: "A great moment is come; and I do not believe any one so capable of wielding it as myself, when from circumstances and the prejudices of men, I have the least chance of any." In a strain of mournful irony he enumerates what he believes to be the reasons of this public neglect. Among these "reasons" are his unselfish devotion to Art, the evidences of his genius in his three great pictures, his founding of a School, his defence of the Elgin Marbles, his four periods of imprisonment "for persevering to improve the people," and the fact that he had put a plan for the decoration of the House of Lords before each successive Ministry during the past twenty-five years. "I have lost all my property," he concludes, "have been refused the honours of my country, have had my talents denied, my character defamed, my health injured, my mind distracted for my invincible devotion to the great object now about to be carried. And therefore I cannot be, ought not to be, and have no right to hope to be rewarded by having a share in its emolument, its honour, or its glory."

## CHAPTER XXVI

DURING the year 1841 the Anti-Slavery picture and one or two smaller commissions had kept Haydon's head above water; but now the clouds were beginning to gather again, his difficulties being increased by the fact that he had two sons to start in the world. The eldest, Frank, had been apprenticed to an engineering firm, but tiring of his profession, desired to take orders, and, as a university career seems to have been considered indispensable, he was entered at Caius College, Cambridge. The second son, Frederick, was fitted out for the navy, and in order to meet these heavy extra expenses, Haydon was compelled to part with his copyright of the "Duke at Waterloo," which promised to be a valuable property, for the inadequate sum of two hundred guineas.

In the spring of 1842 the Fine Arts Commission issued a notice of the conditions of the cartoon competition, intended to test the capacity of native artists for the decoration of the House of Lords. The joy with which Haydon wel-

came this decisive step towards the object for which he had been working his whole life, was marred by his painful misgivings that he would not be allowed to share the fruits of victory. When he had first begun his crusade he had felt himself without a rival in historical art, not one of his contemporaries being able, in his opinion, to compete with him in a knowledge of anatomy, in strength of imagination, or in the power of working on a grand scale. But now he was in his fifty-seventh year, there were younger men coming on who had been trained in the principles of his own school, while his technique had been coarsened by the hasty painting of innumerable replicas and pot-boilers. But in spite of all forebodings, he continued his experiments in fresco, and wrote vehement letters to the papers, protesting against the suggested employment of Cornelius and other German artists.

During this year Haydon was working intermittently at two or three large canvases, "Alexander Conquering the Lion," "Curtius Leaping into the Gulf," and the "Siege of Saragossa." In May Wordsworth came to town, and Haydon, who regarded the old poet as his own special Laureate, persuaded him to sit for his portrait. The previous year Wordsworth had

written to Professor Reed of Philadelphia: "Haydon is bent on coming to Rydal next summer with the view of painting a likeness of me, not a mere matter-of-fact portrait, but one of a poetical character, in which he will endeavour to place his friend in some favourite scene of these mountains. I am afraid, I own, of any scheme of this kind, notwithstanding my high opinion of his abilities; but if he keeps in his present mind, which I doubt, it would be in vain to oppose his inclination. He is a great enthusiast, possessed also of a most active intellect; but he wants that submissive and steady good sense which is absolutely necessary for the adequate development of power in that art to which he is attached."

The visit to Rydal Mount did not take place, but the portrait painted in 1842 represents the poet ascending Helvellyn, and in the act of composing his sonnet on the picture of the "Duke at Waterloo." Wordsworth considered it the best and most characteristic likeness of himself that had ever been painted, and Matthew Arnold was of the same opinion, though he thought that the head was out of drawing.<sup>1</sup> This seems to have been the third occasion on which Wordsworth sat

<sup>1</sup> The portrait was etched for Mr. Knight's "Life of Wordsworth."

to Haydon. In 1817, as we have seen, a sketch had been made of his head for insertion in the picture of "Christ's Entry." Of this, Hazlitt said: "Haydon's head of him (the poet) is the most like his drooping weight of thought and expression." Crabb Robinson, on the other hand, declares that "The group of Wordsworth, Newton, and Voltaire, is ill executed. The poet is a forlorn and haggard old man; the philosopher is a sleek well-dressed citizen of London; and Voltaire is merely an ugly Frenchman." A second portrait was drawn in 1818, when Haydon paid a visit (unrecorded in his Journal) to Rydal Mount. In this, which was engraved by Thomas Landseer, there was said to be "too much Haydon and not enough Wordsworth."<sup>1</sup>

During the progress of the Helvellyn portrait, the two friends had many a talk of old times, and Haydon observes: "Wordsworth's knowledge of Art is extraordinary. He detects errors in hands like a connoisseur or artist. We spent a very pleasant morning. To ascertain his real height, I measured him, and found him, to my wonder, eight heads high, or 5 ft. 9 $\frac{1}{8}$  in., and of very fine heroic proportions. He made me write them down in

<sup>1</sup> A fourth portrait of Wordsworth by Haydon is in existence, which represents the poet seated on Helvellyn.

order to show Mrs. Wordsworth my opinion of his proportions."

The pair went to church together on Sunday, and then called on Lockhart, who is described as handsome, lively, malicious, and melancholy. They talked of Cunningham's "Lives of the Painters," and Wordsworth said, "I could have told him something about Gainsborough." The poet then related, with the air of an apostle, an anecdote of Gainsborough's kindness in secretly painting for a sick friend the portrait of his little girl, who was going to school, and presenting it to him as a surprise. "Wordsworth told this in so beautiful and poetical a way," says Haydon, "that Lockhart for a moment forgot his sarcasm and his melancholy, his evil and his mischief, and in casting my eye I saw him looking at Wordsworth, and smiling at the purity of his nature, with something like the look of the Devil at Adam and Eve."

"Wordsworth on Helvellyn" was sent to Miss Barrett, afterwards Mrs. Browning, with whom Haydon had recently begun a correspondence. He was never personally acquainted with Miss Barrett, but he knew her well through her poems, and the many allusions to her in the letters of Miss Mitford. The paper friendship flourished

for a time, and Haydon recognised that here was a little Donna Quixote on whose chivalry he could depend in time of trouble. More than once, when threatened with an execution, he sent her paintings and manuscripts, which she took charge of, in sublime indifference to the fact that by so doing she might be offending against the majesty of the law. Miss Barrett acknowledged the receipt of Wordsworth's portrait with the following letter, enclosing, at the same time, the inevitable sonnet:—

“MY DEAR SIR,—My intention was to return by your messenger, when he should come for the picture, some expression of my sense of your very great kindness in trusting it with me, together with this sonnet; but having since heard from my sister that it may be almost as long as I wish (no! it can't be so long) before you send such a messenger, I cannot defer thanking you beyond to-day, lest you should fancy me either struck dumb with the pleasure you conferred, or still worse, born an ungrateful person. Pray, dear sir, believe how different is the reality from the last supposition.

“I have indeed looked at your picture till I lost my obligation to you in my admiration of

your work, but in no other way have I been ungrateful. How could I be so? I have seen the great poet who 'reigns over us' twice, face to face, and by you I see him the third time. You have brought me Wordsworth and Helvellyn into this dark and solitary room. How should I not thank you? Judge for yourself, Mr. Haydon. But you will judge the Sonnet too, and will probably not acquit it. It confesses to speaking unworthily and weakly the feelings of the writer, but *she* is none the less your obliged

“ELIZABETH BARRETT.

“*P.S.*—A letter from our mutual dear friend, Miss Mitford, says that Mr. Lucas has been talking to her rapturously of your cartoon, *the cartoon* which I have seen with my ears.”

SONNET ON HAYDON'S PICTURE OF WORDSWORTH, 1842.

“Wordsworth upon Helvellyn! Let the cloud  
 Ebb audibly along the mountain wind,  
 Then break against the rock, and show behind  
 The lowland valleys floating up to crowd  
 The sense with beauty. He with forehead bowed  
 And humble-lidded eyes, as one inclined  
 Before the sovran thoughts of his own mind,  
 And very meek, with inspirations proud;  
 Takes here his rightful place as Poet-Priest  
 By the high altar, singing praise and prayer

To the yet higher heavens. A vision free  
And noble, Haydon, hath thine art releast.  
No portrait this with academic air!  
This is the poet and his poetry."

As soon as his two big pictures were off his hands, Haydon set to work again at his competition cartoons, "The Curse of Adam and Eve," and "The Entry of Edward the Black Prince and King John into London." He felt that it was beneath his dignity as a painter of recognised standing to compete with young unknown men who had nothing to lose; but the chance of winning one of the money prizes was not to be neglected. In the absence of commissions he was again compelled to raise money on his lay-figure and his spectacles, and to borrow of his buttermilk. Small wonder that he exclaims: "The greatest curse that can befall a father in England is to have a son gifted with a passion and a genius for High Art. Thank God with all my soul, all my nature, my children have witnessed the harassing agonies under which I have ever painted; and the very name of painting—the very name of High Art—the very thought of a picture gives them a hideous and disgusting taste in their mouths. Thank God, not one of my boys, nor my girl, can draw a straight line,

even with a ruler, much less without one. And I pray God on my knees, with my forehead bent to the earth, and my lips to the dust, that He will, in His mercy, afflict them with every other passion, appetite, or misery, with wretchedness, disease, insanity, or gabbling idiotism, rather than a longing for painting—that scorned, miserable art — that greater imposture than the human species it imitates.”





*By permission of Carlo Gatti*

CURTIUS LEAPING INTO THE GULF

*From the Picture by B. R. HAYDON*

## CHAPTER XXVII

IN February 1843 Haydon exhibited his "Curtius Leaping into the Gulf," which found a purchaser at £200, but being paid for with a bill at six months, brought no immediate help to the painter. A typical day in his life at this time is described on February 3: "Out early to glaze my picture of 'Curtius.' Found Etty<sup>1</sup> in the hall, waiting like myself to go up. Chatted with Etty, who said my example and Hilton's in early life had greatly influenced him. . . . I toned the picture like lightning. In one hour and a half I had £10 to pay upon honour, and only £2 15s. in my pocket. I drove away to Newton, paid him £2 15s., and borrowed £10. I then drove away to my friend, paid him the £10, and borrowed £5 more, but felt relieved I had not broke my honour. Then home, took out all my proofs [of his prints], called on all my subscribers, and saw them left. Thus I have done my duty to everybody to-day; and what is life but a struggle of duty, to

<sup>1</sup> William Etty (1787-1849). Elected R.A. in 1828.

your God, your country, and your species, day and night, till death."

As the time for the competition drew near, Haydon wrote to Eastlake: "I am delighted, because being a permanent plan it has broken the ice, and will ultimately end in decoration. I depend on yours and the Commissioners' judgments; it was doing the thing rightly and with energy; no mincing the matter. Go on, and God prosper us all. I appeal to the Royal Commission, to the First Lord, to you the secretary, to Barry<sup>1</sup> the architect, if I ought not to be indulged in my hereditary right to do this, viz. that when the Houses are ready, cartoons done, colours mixed, and all at their posts, I shall be allowed, *employed* or *not employed*, to take the *first* brush, and dip into the *first* colour, and put the *first* touch on the *first* intonaco. If that is not granted, I'll haunt every noble Lord and you, till you join my disturbed spirit on the banks of the Styx. Keep that in view if you regard my peace of mind, my ambition, my pride, and my glory."

On June 1 Haydon placed his two competition cartoons in Westminster Hall, and prayed

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Barry, R.A. (1795-1860). He won the first premium in the Houses of Parliament competition, and was employed in building them from 1840 to 1860.

with unconscious blasphemy: "Spare my life, O Lord! until I have shown Thy strength unto this generation, and Thy power unto that which is to come." A few days later his mood has changed, and he fears lest "God may punish me as He did Napoleon for pursuing a great object—with less regard to moral principle than became a Christian—that is, raising money to get through, careless of the means of repaying, though I had reason to hope the aristocracy would have helped me by purchase to keep my word. . . . I have made up my mind to a reverse. Though I trust in God with confidence, yet I am not sure I am sufficiently cleansed by adversity not to need more of it. For the sake of my boys and my only daughter—above all, for the sake of my dear Mary—I hope not."

The opening of the Cartoon Exhibition was fixed for the 3rd of July. On June 27 Haydon heard from Eastlake that his cartoons were not among those chosen for reward. There is no entry in the Journal till June 30, when he writes: "I went to bed in a decent state of anxiety. It has given a great shock to my family, and revived all the old horrors of arrest, execution, and debt. It is exactly what I predicted, and it is, I think, intentional. I called on William

Hamilton, and found he had adopted, with exquisite tact, the tone of society. He told me Sir Robert Peel felt annoyed at my restless activity about the Arts; that I interfered in everything I had no business to do. . . . (*July 1*).—A day of great misery. I said to my dear love, ‘I am not included.’ Her expression was a study. She said, ‘We shall be ruined.’ I looked up my lectures, papers, and Journals, and sent them to my dear Æschylus Barrett,<sup>1</sup> with two jars of oil twenty-seven years old. I burnt loads of private letters, and prepared for executions. Seven pounds was raised on my daughter’s and Mary’s dresses.”

The three money prizes in the competition were awarded to Armitage, Cope, and Watts; but it was announced that another competition, in fresco, would be held the following year, when the successful competitors would be entrusted with the decoration of the House of Lords. On September 4 Haydon removed his cartoons from Westminster Hall with the comment: “Thus ends the cartoon contest; and as the very first inventor and beginner of this mode of rousing the people when they were pronounced incapable of relishing refined works of art without colour, I

<sup>1</sup> Miss E. Barrett.

am deeply wounded at the insult inflicted. These Journals witness under what trials I began them—how I called on my Creator for His blessing—how I trusted in Him—how I have been degraded, insulted, and harassed. O Lord! Thou knowest best. I submit.”

The failure of the cartoons may be said to have marked the beginning of the end. There are still flashes of the old self-confidence and optimism, but it is evident that the spring of Haydon's actions was broken, and that at bottom he was losing faith, not only in the future, but in himself. This year had brought the consummation of what he had fought for with such courage and pertinacity through so many weary years, but with a victory for the cause of National Art came the most bitter disappointment of his life, and he was at an age when such a disappointment is final. “In all his struggles up to this point,” observes his biographer, “Haydon had the consolation of hope that better times were coming. But now the good time for Art was at hand, and he was passed over. The blow fell heavily—indeed, I may say, was mortal. He tried to cheat himself into the belief that the old hostile influences to which he attributed all his misfortunes had been working here also, and that he should yet rise

superior to their malice. He would not admit to himself that his powers were impaired—that he was less fit for great achievements in his Art than he had been when he painted ‘Solomon’ and ‘Lazarus.’ But if he held this opinion he held it alone. It was apparent to all, even to his warmest friends, that years of harass, humiliation, distraction, and conflict had enfeebled his energies, and led him to seek in exaggeration the effect he could no longer attain by well-directed force. His restless desire to have a hand in all that was projected for Art had wearied those in authority. He had shown himself too intractable to follow, and he had not inspired that confidence which might have given him a right to lead.”

That his disappointment was partly his own fault he seems to acknowledge in a letter to the Duke of Sutherland, who had assisted him from time to time.

“Be assured,” he writes, “I have broken a hard shell, and found more ashes than fruit. Different treatment when I was a diligent and obedient pupil would have made me a different man. My education was imperfect; I was never taught the properties of self-command, and I flung myself from my home on the world ready to avenge insult and keenly alive to oppression.

I am now at work on 'Alexander Killing a Lion,' as the only subject likely to make me bear up under a cloud of mental tortures which make me wonder my faculties remain clear. I believe I am meant to try the experiment how much a human brain can bear without insanity, or a human constitution without death."

Work proved his best consoler, and he seemed to recover temporarily from the shock he had received. His depression returned when it became necessary to remove the cartoons from the hall at the beginning of September. On the 6th he writes: "Awoke again physically depressed. I got up saying, 'Is this Benjamin Robert Haydon? I'll see if I'll be conquered by cartoons.' I resolved to do some violent bodily exercise; so I moved out all my plaster casts, cleaned the windows myself (I don't wonder servants have good appetites), dusted and got smothered; lifted till my back creaked, and rowed the servant for not cleaning my plate (2 forks, 1 table-spoon, 6 tea-spoons, 1 pepper-box, and 1 salt-spoon). In fact, by perspiration and violent effort I cleared out the cobwebs and felt my dignity revive. Now I am safe."

During the remainder of the year Haydon worked at his "Alexander and the Lion," which

he considered one of his greatest works, though the British Gallery refused to hang it, and no patron offered to buy it. He kept his creditors at bay by painting innumerable replicas of Napoleon and Wellington musing on every possible occasion. He was able to extract some pleasure even from this mechanical order of work, and on January 4, 1844, he writes almost in his old vein: "Another day of work, God be thanked! Put in the sea—a delicious tint. How exquisite is a bare canvas, sized alone, to paint on; how the slightest colour, thin as water, tells; how it glitters in body; how the brush flies—now here, now there. It seems as if face, hands, sky, thought, poetry, expression, were hid in the handle, and streamed out as it touched the canvas. What magic! What fire! What unerring hand and eye! What fancy! What power! What a gift of God! I bow and am grateful."

Disheartened by his former failure, Haydon took no part in the fresco competition held this year at Westminster Hall. Unfortunately, he came to the fatal decision to paint his own original designs for the House of Lords in a series of six large pictures, and exhibit them separately. This idea was the result, as he believed, of supernatural inspiration.

"Awoke this morning," he writes on March 24, with that sort of audible whisper Socrates, Columbus, and Tasso heard: 'Why do you not paint your own six designs for the House on your own foundation and exhibit them?' I feel as if there was no chance of my ever being able to paint them else, without control also. I knelt up in my bed and prayed heartily to accomplish them, whatever might be the obstruction, as I had got through my other works. I will begin them as my next great works; I feel as if they will be my last, and I think I shall then have done my duty. O God! bless the beginning, progression, and conclusion of these six great designs, to illustrate the best government to regulate without cramping the energies of the world. Grant me health of mind and body, vigour, perseverance, and undaunted courage; let no difficulty or want obstruct me; but let me put forth to their full intensity the powers of mind with which Thou hast blessed me, to Thy glory, and the elevation and innocent pleasure of my country."

In July of this year the Commission for Building the Royal Exchange made inquiries of their architect, Mr. Tite, as to the cost of decorating the panels of the merchants' area with

fresco. Mr. Tite wrote to ask information of Haydon, who promptly replied with a letter giving estimates of the expense of decorating a whole or part of the room. The final paragraph, in which he sums up his suggestions, may be quoted: "To conclude, my dear sir, £3500 would prevent any man who undertook the whole from losing; £4000 would put £500 in his pocket; and £5000 would enable him to lay by in the funds for old age and decrepitude. I respectfully, without presuming to suppose your letter had any reference to myself, offer to undertake one, or two [frescoes], or a whole end, as experiments, or I respectfully offer myself—perfectly delighted to do so—to undertake the whole for £3500." Unfortunately, the estimate was so high as to frighten the Commission, and the decoration scheme was indefinitely postponed.

In July six artists were commissioned to execute the frescoes in the House of Lords—Maclise, Redgrave, Dyce, Cope, Horsley, and Thomas. Haydon, who had once urged the advantages of open competition in art matters, now changed his opinion. "The whole system of competition will be a failure," he writes. "It is not the way. It was not the way great men in former days were selected. It may do for

young men, but selection among the established is the principle, and they will then form the youth. One commission to an established man is worth all the competition that ever was and ever will be."

Although he was now at work upon a large picture of "Uriel and Satan," and had begun the first of his series of decorative designs, "Aristides Hooted by the Populace," he was still turning out replicas in his spare hours, and there is evidence in the Journals that he was frequently depressed in spirit, and dissatisfied with himself and his situation. "The art with me is becoming a beastly vulgarity," he complains on October 4. "The solitary grandeur of historical painting is gone. There was something grand, something poetical, something touching, something inspiring, something heroic, something mysterious, something awful, in pacing your quiet painting-room after midnight, with a great work lifted up on a gigantic easel, glimmering by the trembling light of a solitary candle, 'when the whole world seemed adverse to desert.' There was something truly poetical in devoting yourself to what the vulgar dared not touch—holding converse with the Great Spirit; your heart swelling, your imagination teeming, your being rising."

However, this period of depression was only temporary, for on reviewing his situation at the close of the year, he congratulates himself on the fact that, though his position is still solitary and precarious, by him the sublimity of High Art is yet maintained. "What a pity it is," he observes naïvely, "that a man of my order, sincerity, perhaps genius [in the Journal a private note is here inserted, "not perhaps"], is not employed! What honour, what distinction would I not confer on my great country! However, it is my destiny to perform great things, not in consequence of encouragement, but in spite of opposition, and so let it be."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

THE picture of "Uriel and Satan" was finished and exhibited in the spring of 1845. After twenty-two years of what he regarded as "abuse" Haydon received a flattering notice in the *Times*. "The figure of the angel," observed the critic, "is drawn with a boldness which some might call exaggerated, but with the simplicity and anatomical effect of sculpture; every muscle looking hard and unbending as iron. The face is noble and ideal, and a fine effect is produced by the golden colour of the hair. This huge commanding figure is backed by limitless space, represented by a very dark positive blue, and the whole conveys the impression of a simple vastness. There is a certain crudity about the picture, but the impress of genius is unmistakable." For this work Haydon received £200, but five other pictures remained on his hands, and he was left to work at his "Aristides" with barely ten shillings for current expenses, and not a single commission in prospect. In the latter part of the year, however, came one or two minor pieces of good fortune. The

King of Hanover bought a replica of the "Napoleon at St. Helena," a pupil paid a substantial sum as premium, and Sir Robert Peel gave Haydon's eldest boy, who had again changed his mind about his profession, a post in the Record Office.

The spring brought Wordsworth, now poet-laureate, to town again, and Haydon was much annoyed at his old friend's determination to attend a *levée*. This was perhaps partly jealousy, but he recalls the old days at Coleorton in 1809, when Sir George Beaumont said, "Wordsworth may walk in, but I caution you against his democratic principles." Haydon relates the now familiar anecdote of Wordsworth borrowing Rogers' Court suit, and the difficulty with which he was squeezed into this unaccustomed finery. The poet was irritated by Haydon's avowed disapproval of his proceedings, and the following note, dated May 22, 1845, is a reluctant apology for certain unwarrantable criticisms:—

"MY DEAR WORDSWORTH,—I wish you had not gone to Court. Your climax was the shout of the Oxford Senate House. Why not rest on that? I think of you as Nature's high priest. I can't bear to associate a bag-wig and a sword, ruffles and buckles, with Helvellyn and the

mountain solitudes. This is my feeling, and I regret if I have rubbed yours the wrong way. Talfourd thinks it was a glory to have compelled the Court to send for you, but would it not have been a greater glory for you to have declined it. Perhaps he is right, however. I have not been able to suppress my feelings.

“ Believe me, ever your old friend,

“ B. R. HAYDON.”

In October Haydon paid a visit to Plymouth to examine some of Sir Joshua Reynolds' memoranda relative to his quarrel with the Academy. The papers were then in the possession of Mrs. Gwatkin, *née* Palmer, Sir Joshua's niece, who was in her eighty-ninth year. He describes Mrs. Gwatkin as still alert and active, though obliged to use an ear-trumpet like her uncle. She produced a bundle of papers docketed “ Private papers relative to my resignation of the Presidency ”; and also a trunk full of other documents. But Haydon was too much absorbed in the presidential papers to pay any attention to the contents of the trunk, for which his readers may feel inclined to owe him a grudge. However, after making certain extracts, he had a chat with Mrs. Gwatkin, and

heard from her one or two anecdotes of the Johnson-Goldsmith circle, which, slight though they be, are interesting as first-hand reminiscences of that wonderful society.

“Mrs. Gwatkin said she came to Sir Joshua as quite a little girl,” relates Haydon, “and at the first grand party Dr. Johnson staid, as he always did, after all were gone; and that she, being afraid of hurting her new frock, went upstairs and put on another, and came down to sit with Dr. Johnson and Sir Joshua. Johnson thundered out at her, and scolded her for her disrespect to him in supposing he was not as worthy of her best frock as the fine folks. He sent her crying to bed, and took a dislike to her ever after. . . .

“She said that after Sir Josephs Banks<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Solander<sup>2</sup> came back from their voyage, at a grand dinner at Sir Joshua’s Solander was relating how in Iceland he had seen a fowl boiled in a few minutes by the hot springs. Dr. Johnson broke up the whole party by roaring

<sup>1</sup> Sir Joseph Banks (1743–1820), the celebrated naturalist, who accompanied Cook in his voyage round the world. He visited Iceland in 1772; created a Baronet in 1781; President of Royal Society, 1778–1820.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Charles Solander (1736–1782), Swedish botanist. Secretary to Sir Joseph Banks, and in 1773 Keeper of Private Books at the British Museum.

out, 'Sir, unless I saw it with my own eyes I would not believe it.' Nobody spoke after, and Banks and Solander rose and left the dining-room.

"The most delightful man was Goldsmith. She saw him and Garrick keep an immense party laughing till they shrieked. Garrick sat on Goldsmith's knee; a tablecloth was pinned under Garrick's chin and brought behind Goldsmith, hiding both their figures. Garrick then spoke, in his finest style, Hamlet's speech to his father's ghost. Goldsmith put out his hands and made burlesque actions—tapping his heart, and putting his hand to Garrick's head and nose all at the wrong time. . . . She remembered the first party with Fanny Burney. She said she and her sister plagued Miss Burney in the garden at Streatham to know who was the author of 'Evelina,' never suspecting *her*. As they rode home Sir Joshua said, 'Now you have dined with the author—guess which she is?' They could not guess, whereupon Sir Joshua said, 'Miss Burney.'"

Relieved for the moment of his more pressing necessities, Haydon set to work on the second picture of his series, "Nero playing the Lyre while Rome was burning." The effect of his conception, as he foresaw it in his mind's

eye, was so terrific that he “fluttered, trembled, and perspired like a woman, and was obliged to sit down.” Under all the anxiety and disappointment of Haydon’s life, it must be remembered that there were enormous compensations in the shape of days and hours of rapturous absorption, days and hours such as seldom fall to the lot of the average good citizen and solvent householder. The following entry alone is sufficient proof that Haydon, even in his worst straits, was almost as much an object of envy as of compassion :—

“Worked with such intense abstraction and delight for eight hours that, though living in the noisiest quarter of all London, I never remember hearing all day a single cart, carriage, knock, cry, bark, of man, woman, dog, or child. When I came out into the sunshine I said to myself, ‘Why, what is all this driving about?’ though it has always been so for the last twenty-two years—so perfectly, delightfully, and intensely had I been abstracted. If that be not happiness, what is? . . .

“My notion of supreme happiness is a splendid lot of drapery splendidly set on your lay figure; a large picture which shuts you in, just close enough to leave room to paint it; a delicious light, and conscious power of imitation. You go

on like a god, spreading your half tint, touching in your lights and your darks. There is hardly an effort—no anxiety, no fear, no apprehension.”

It is well to keep the above passage in mind as we approach the catastrophe in what seemed from the outside a lifelong tragedy. Already a shadow is thrown before in the ominous entry for December 30: “Good heavens! Gurwood has cut his throat. The man who had headed the forlorn hope at Ciudad Rodrigo—the rigid soldier—the iron-nerved hero, had not morale enough to resist the relaxation of nerve brought on by over-anxiety about the Duke’s despatches. Where is the responsibility of a man with mind so easily affected by body? Romilly, Castle-reagh, and Gurwood.”<sup>1</sup>

The new year opened amid mingled hope and anxiety. On January 1, 1846, Haydon notes: “The ‘Nero’ looks well to-day; but I am very uneasy. I cannot keep my word for want of means. I paid away too rapidly, and left myself bare; and have now to struggle, paint, conceive, borrow, promise, and fly at my picture—get enchanted—and awake out of a delicious dream

<sup>1</sup> Sir Samuel Romilly committed suicide in 1818, and Lord Castlereagh in 1822. Colonel Gurwood (1790-1845) was wounded at the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo, and again at Waterloo. He was Wellington’s secretary, and edited his despatches.

to think of the butcher. But in God I trust. At sixty men are not so bold as at twenty-five ; but why not ? If Napoleon had behaved with the same spirit in 1815 as on the 18th Brumaire, he would not have died at St. Helena."

Haydon had resolved to take a room at the Egyptian Hall for the exhibition of his two large pictures, "Aristides" and "Nero." On the success of this venture, on the support of the public, rested all his hopes for the future. Failure at this period would mean final and conclusive ruin. His family regarded the plan with anxiety, and he himself was doubtful of the prudence of the enterprise, but he felt that it was necessary to act with courage and energy, since "I shall never again have the opportunity of connecting myself with a great public commission, and interesting the public by contrast. If I miss it, it will be a tide not taken at the flood."

Once again Haydon was reduced to flying hither and thither pacifying creditors, appealing to his long-suffering friends for loans to pay the interest on debts of long standing, and working spasmodically in scanty intervals of comparative peace. His strong will and eager temperament enabled him to exercise a kind of hypnotic influence over tradesmen, landlords, bankers, and even

lawyers. Coutts & Co. had refused, according to their custom, to permit an over-draft, but he went to plead in person. "I saw Mr. Marjoribanks. I said, 'Sir, do help me.' He is humane. 'You know it is against all rule. I regret to see a man of your eminence so hard run. Shall it be for the last time?' I gave him my honour. I signed a promissory note for two months, and he placed the amount to my account. . . . I fear nothing on earth but my banker when I have not five shillings on account, have a bill coming due, and want help. The awful and steady look of his searching eyes; the quiet and investigating point of his simple questions; the 'hm' when he holds down his head, as if he had Atlas on his shoulders, and his solemn tone when he declares it is against the rules of the house; the reprieve one feels as the tones begin to melt and give symptoms of an opening to let in light to the heart, are not to be described, and can only be understood by those who have been in such predicaments. Marjoribanks is always kind at last. The clerks seem to be wonderstruck at the charm I seem to possess in this house among the partners. The fact is, Coutts' house have always had a great deal to do with men of genius, and they

have a feeling for them, and seem to think it is a credit to the firm to have one or two to scold, assist, blow up, and then forgive. This is the way I have gone on with them for twenty-nine years."

But even the kindness of Coutts could not save this struggler, though money was scraped together somehow for the initial expenses of the Exhibition, and on April 1 the arrangements were completed. A long and rather flamboyant advertisement had already been issued, in which the pictures are described and the artist's views and purpose set forth for the last time.

"This Exhibition," he explains, "will open in no spirit of opposition to the Government plan about to be put in force, but with the view of letting the public see that works endeavoured to be executed on the principles of the great masters of the British School, are perfectly consistent with the decoration of any building, Grecian or Gothic, and that there is no necessity for endangering the practice of the British School by the adoption of the wild theories of a sect of foreigners,<sup>1</sup> who have considered the accidental ignorance of an earlier age as a principle fit to guide an enlightened one. The British School was progressing to excellence five

<sup>1</sup> An allusion to the German painters of the Munich School.

years ago, and would have attained it, had not the weak recommendation of absurd fancies thrown the young men off the right road, and the whole school into confusion. Backgrounds are now considered a vulgarity, rotundity of imitation the proofs of a debased mind; nature a nuisance, and the necessity of models evidence of no poetry of soul; portraits are beginning to appear with coats of arms sticking to their noses; the petty details of decoration take place of expression and features; and all those great doctrines which the experience of centuries established are now questioned with a dandy air of infinite superiority. . . . Mr. Haydon was the first to petition the House for State support to High Art—he was the first to petition for schools of design—he was the first to plan the decoration of the old House of Lords, and to keep up the excitement till it was resolved to decorate the new—he has devoted forty-two years, without omission of a day, to simplify the principles of the art for the instruction of the people; and having been utterly neglected when all his plans have been adopted, he appeals to the public to support his Exhibition, that he may be able to complete the series he has planned.”

The private view was on April 4. Haydon  
S

records: "It rained the whole day. Nobody came except Jerrold, Bowring, Fox Maule, and Hobhouse. Twenty-six years ago the rain would not have prevented them. But now it is not so. However, I do not despair." The omens, he notes, had all been bad. His cab horse had tumbled down, a picture had fallen, he had dropped a quantity of letters containing tickets for the private view. "After this," he asks, "what success can come? Do I believe this or don't I? Half inclined." The Exhibition was opened to the public, but there was only an average attendance of about twenty people a day. Haydon went on hoping against hope that matters would improve, and that John Bull would support him at last. But Tom Thumb was exhibiting next door, and the painter had no chance against the pigmy. "They rush by thousands to see Tom Thumb," writes Haydon. "They push, they fight, they scream, they faint, they cry help and murder! and oh! and ah! They see my bills, my boards, my caravans, and don't read them. Their eyes are open, but their sense is shut. It is an insanity, a rabies, a madness, a *furor*, a dream. I would not have believed it of the English people. . . . Tom Thumb had 12,000 people last week; B. R. Haydon 133½

(the  $\frac{1}{2}$  a little girl). Exquisite taste of the English people!"

By the 16th of April he realised that his situation was now one of extreme peril. Involved in debt, mortified by the indifference shown by the public to his work, his thoughts still fondly turned to his next picture, "Alfred and the First British Jury." Once again he calls on his Creator for succour and support. "On my knees," he exclaims in passionate supplication, "I ask for Thy blessing on this the third of my series; grant that I may bring it to a glorious and triumphant conclusion, in spite of any difficulty, any obstruction, earth can oppose. Grant me eyes, intellect, and health, and under Thy blessing, leave the rest to me."

On May 18, Haydon closed his Exhibition, having lost £111, 8s. 10d. "No man," he writes on the same day, "can accuse me of showing less energy, less spirit, less genius than I did twenty-six years ago. I have not decayed, but the people have been corrupted. I am the same, they are not, and I suffer in consequence. . . . Next to victory is a skilful retreat, and I marched out before General Tom Thumb, a beaten but not conquered exhibitor." In defiance of this shipwreck of all his hopes, and the heavy liabilities

that hung about his neck, this indomitable spirit began the third picture of his unappreciated series. He had large sums to pay in the coming month, and only a few shillings in the house, while there were no commissions in prospect. Appeals for help to Lord Brougham, the Duke of Beaufort, and Sir Robert Peel brought only one response, fifty pounds from Peel, which was merely a drop in the ocean. Haydon began to lose confidence in himself, he was out of health, and unable to sleep at night, but he refused to see a doctor. Every post brought him angry demands for the settlement of bills, or threats of execution, and there was an immediate prospect of arrest, imprisonment, and ruin.

“I sat from two till five staring at my picture like an idiot,” he writes on June 16, “my brain pressed down by anxiety, and the anxious looks of my dear Mary and the children. I dined, after having raised money on all our silver, to keep us from want in case of accidents. . . . Dearest Mary, with a woman’s passion, wishes me at once to stop payment, and close the whole thing. I will not—I will finish my six, under the blessing of God; reduce my expenses, and hope His mercy will not desert me, but bring me through in health and vigour, gratitude and grandeur of soul, to the

end. Let my imagination keep Columbus ever before my eyes."

The end was nearer than he thought, for even Haydon's sanguine spirit could not battle for ever against adverse fate, or rather the consequences of his own headstrong folly. The last two or three entries in the Journal are the concluding lines in a long-drawn tragedy:—

"*June 18th.*—O God, bless me through the evils of this day! My landlord, Newton, called. I said, 'I see a quarter's rent in thy face, but none from me.' I appointed to-morrow night to see him, and lay before him every iota of my position. 'Good-hearted Newton,' I said, 'don't put in an execution.' 'Nothing of the kind,' he replied, half hurt. I sent the Duke, Wordsworth, dear Fred and Mary's heads to Miss Barrett to protect. I have the Duke's boots and hat, Lord Grey's coat, and some more heads.

"*20th.*—O God, bless us through all the evils of this day! Amen.

"*21st.*—Slept horribly. Prayed in sorrow, and got up in agitation.

"*22nd.*—God forgive me! Amen.

FINIS

OF

B. R. HAYDON.

'Stretch me no longer on this tough world.'

## CHAPTER XXIX

THE last entry in Haydon's Journal was made between half-past ten and a quarter to eleven on the morning of June 22. Before eleven the unhappy man had destroyed himself. It appears from the account published by his son that Haydon had been suffering for some days before the catastrophe from depression and nervous irritability consequent upon his inability to sleep. During the night of the 21st he was heard walking about his room, apparently in great agitation. He was up early the next morning, and walked before breakfast to a gunmaker in Oxford Street, where he bought a pistol. He came home, breakfasted alone, and then went to his painting-room, where he wrote his will and "his last thoughts." His wife was going to visit a friend at Brixton that morning at his special request, and before she left he took an affectionate leave of her, asking her pardon for some irritable words. About twelve o'clock his daughter entered the painting-room, and found her father lying dead upon the floor, a blood-stained razor and a small pistol at

his side. A bullet-wound in his head and two gashes in his throat proved the terrible resolution with which he had brought about his end. The unfinished picture of "Alfred and the First British Jury" stood on the easel, and was sprinkled with the painter's blood. On a table were his Journal, open at the last entry, letters to his wife and children, his will (unwitnessed) and a paper headed "Last thoughts of B. R. Haydon, half-past ten." These last few lines with their allusions to Wellington and Napoleon are characteristic of the man who had painted the two great warriors a score of times, and had looked up to them as his heroes and exemplars.

"No man should use certain evil for probable good, however great the object," so they run. "Evil is the prerogative of the Deity. Wellington never used evil if the good was not certain. Napoleon had no such scruples, and I fear the glitter of his genius rather dazzled me; but had I been encouraged nothing but good would ever have come from me, because when encouraged I paid everybody. God forgive me the evil for the sake of the good! Amen." In his will Haydon appointed Sergeant Talfourd, Dr. Darling, and another old friend as his executors. The document contained a list of his assets, consisting solely of

unsold pictures, an estimate of his debts, amounting to nearly £3000, and acknowledgment of the help he had received from many friends and patrons. It concludes with an apology for his last act. "In the name of my God," he writes, "I hope for forgiveness for the step I am about to take—a crime, no doubt; but if I am judged immediately hereafter, I have done nothing all my life that will render me fearful of appearing before the awful consciousness of my invisible God, or hesitate to explain my actions. I know my innate sin, my tendencies to evil as a human being; but I have tried hard to subdue it, and I am sure He will be just, however awfully displeased at the wickedness of my conclusion."<sup>1</sup>

Directly after Haydon's death a public meeting of his friends was held, at which a considerable sum was subscribed for the benefit of his widow and daughter. Sir Robert Peel, besides sending immediate help, recommended the Queen to bestow a small pension on Mrs. Haydon. This tragic conclusion to a still more tragic career created a profound sensation, and large crowds followed the historical painter to his grave. Haydon's old friend and correspondent, Miss Mitford,

<sup>1</sup> The post-mortem examination proved the existence of disease of the brain.

was greatly affected by his terrible end, and, writing to a friend on July 3, 1846, says: "Haydon was so brilliant, so animated, so full of life, so young in mind and manner, that the death itself, set aside the frightful manner of it, had something that took me by surprise—like the death of a young bride. Now people will remember that some five-and-thirty years ago he was considered the most promising artist of England; that although he never quite kept that promise, he yet gave a great impulse and impetus to art; that he was a man of high accomplishment, and that he was an excellent husband, excellent father, excellent friend. I am certain that he calculated upon the interest which this deplorable event would excite for his wife and family, and that that feeling mingled with the weariness of a long, hopeless struggle in prompting him to the fatal act. His wife was a most beautiful woman. She quite realised the beauty of the Rebecca of 'Ivanhoe.' I am told that few events of our times have made so great a sensation as this tragedy of real life."

Miss Barrett, though she had never seen Haydon, was no less affected than Miss Mitford by the manner of his death. "Could any one—could my own hand even have averted what has happened?" she wrote to Robert Browning on June

24, 1846. "My head and heart have ached to-day over the inactive hand. But for the moment it was out of my power, and then I never fancied this case to be more than a piece of a continuous case, of a habit fixed. Two years ago he sent me boxes and pictures precisely so, and took them back again—poor, poor Haydon!—as he will not this time. . . . Also, I have been told again and again (oh, never by *you*, my beloved) that to give money *there*, was to drop it into a hole in the ground. But if to have dropped it *so*, dust to dust, would have saved a living man—what then? . . . Some day, when I have the heart to look for it, you shall see his last note. I understand now that there are touches of desperate pathos—but never could he have meditated self-destruction while writing that note. He said he should write six more lectures—six more volumes. He said he was painting a new background to a picture which made him feel as if his soul had wings . . . and he repeated an old phrase of his, which I had heard from him often before, and which now rings hollow to the ear of my memory—that he *couldn't and wouldn't die*."

It is probable that Elizabeth Barrett, with her clear sight and passionate sympathy, understood, appreciated, and made allowances for poor Haydon

more completely than was possible to the great majority of his contemporaries. Writing to her friend, Mrs. Martin, a few days later, she observes: "No artist is left behind with equal largeness of poetical conception. If the hand had always obeyed the soul, he would have been a genius of the first order. As it is, he lived on the *slope* of genius, and could not be steadfast and calm. His life was one long agony of self-assertion. See how the world treats those who try too openly for its gratitude." And, again, in a letter to Miss Mitford, she says: "I did not suppose that in this storm he was to sink—poor, noble soul! And be sure that the pecuniary embarrassment was not what sunk him. It was a wind still more east; it was the despair of the ambition by which he lived, and without which he could not live. In the self-assertion which he had struggled to hold up through life, he went down into death. He could not bear the neglect, the disdain, the slur cast upon him by the age, and so he perished. The cartoon disappointment, the grotesque bitterness of the antagonism of Tom Thumb: these things were too much—the dwarf slew the giant."

In Haydon's will was a clause to the following effect: "I have manuscripts and memoirs in the possession of Miss Barrett, of 50 Wimpole Street,

in a chest, which I wish Longmans to be consulted about. My Memoirs are to 1820; the Journals will supply the rest. The style, the individuality of Richardson, which I wish not curtailed by an editor." Miss Mitford was asked to edit the work, but she declined, feeling, to use her own words, that it would be a most difficult task, "that he would write much which would be painful to others, and much about himself which no friend would wish published. Whenever he put his own portrait into one of his pictures, he always so exaggerated the points he thought good, as to turn them almost into deformities; and of course he would do the same in pen and ink."

The task was finally undertaken by Tom Taylor, and the book appeared in 1852, about the same time as Lord John Russell's "Life of Thomas Moore." To the great astonishment of both critics and public Haydon's story proved the more interesting of the two. "Haydon's book is the work of the year," writes Miss Mitford, "and has entirely stopped the sale of Moore's, which really might have been written by a Court newspaper or a Court milliner." The *Athenæum*, a more impartial witness, asks: "Who would have thought that the 'Life of Haydon' would turn out a more sterling and interesting addition

to English biography than the 'Life of Moore?' Haydon had set out with the laudable intention of writing the exact truth about himself, holding that 'every man who has suffered for a principle, and would give his life for its success—who in his early days has been oppressed without ever giving the slightest grounds for such oppression—who has incurred the hatred of his enemies exactly in proportion as they became convinced they were wrong—every man who, like me, has eaten the bitter crust of poverty, and endured the penalties of vice and wickedness where he merited the rewards of virtue and industry—should write his own life.'"<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Taylor's work was supplemented in 1874 by Haydon's "Correspondence and Table-Talk," edited by his second son, Frederick Wordsworth Haydon, who is also responsible for a "Memoir" of his father, written in a tone of querulous complaint. Frederick Haydon was dismissed from the public service for publishing a letter to Mr. Gladstone, entitled "Our Officials at the Home

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Asquith, who describes Haydon as the most tragic figure in the history of art, observes that his Autobiography, though less known, is not less remarkable than the Confessions of St. Augustine, and adds, "He discloses to us his own personality with a freedom of reticence not unworthy of Rousseau, though one will look in vain to Rousseau or any of his imitators for Haydon's simplicity and sincerity."

Office," and died in the Bethlehem Hospital in 1886. His elder brother, Frank Scott Haydon, committed suicide in 1887.

Haydon's widow, his "dearest Mary," worn out by the sorrows and anxieties of her life, only survived him a few years, while his only daughter, a beautiful girl, never wholly recovered from the shock of her father's death, and died before reaching middle life. There is a touching allusion to her in a letter of Miss Mitford's, dated December 1, 1852: "If you know of any one who wants a thoroughly good and charming young woman as companion," she writes to her friend, Miss Goldsmid, "I can most thoroughly recommend poor Miss Haydon. She is now teaching as a daily governess at eight shillings a week! She is very accomplished and intelligent, and has learned truth and goodness from her many trials."

## CHAPTER XXX

ON the question of Haydon's merit as a painter the opinion of his contemporaries swung from one extreme to the other, while posterity has been allowed little chance of judging of his talents. It is certain that he was considered a youth of extraordinary promise by Sir George Beaumont, and by his friends Wilkie and Jackson. His early pupil, Bewick, believed that he had great genius and intellectual power, inasmuch that he might have astonished the world if only he had been free to devote himself to the great task to which he was fitted. Bewick maintained that the historical paintings of Barry, West, Northcote, and even Reynolds, could not compare with Haydon's "Solomon" for composition, breadth, mastery of light and shadow, drawing, colour, and handling of details. "If to Mr. Haydon had been granted such a pension as was enjoyed by Mr. West," pursues Bewick, "how differently, in my belief, would he have repaid his country! What works of grandeur and historical interest he would have executed!"

Wordsworth, to whom Haydon's imaginative power made such strong appeal, is reported to have said: "He is the first painter in the grand style of art that England, or any other country, has produced since the days of Titian. He may be disregarded and scorned now by the ignorant and malevolent, but posterity will do him justice. There are things in his art that have never been surpassed; they will be the text-book of art hereafter." On the other hand he was described by a leading critic (in the *Quarterly*) as one of the most defective painters of the day, who had received more pecuniary indulgence, more liberality, and more charity, than any other artist ever heard of.

A humorous portrait of the painter and his work, towards the close of his career, is to be found in John Poole's "Little Pedlington." The hero goes to see Daubson's grand picture, "The Grenadier," and observes: "Daubson certainly is an original genius; unlike Reynolds, Lawrence, Phillips, or Pickersgill. Neither did his work put me *much* in mind of Titian or Vandyck—least of all of Rembrandt. Perhaps a military critic might object that the fixed bayonet is rather longer than the musket, and the scabbard one-third the length of the sword. . . . Legs con-

siderably thicker than the thighs—grand idea of stability—characteristic of a grenadier standing sentry. Upon the whole a work worthy of its fame, notwithstanding its rejection by that envious and exclusive, that much and justly censured body the Royal Academicians. Took my leave, resolving to put in for a chance of immortality by having my profile done in black by the unrivalled hand of the Pedlingtonian Apelles.”

Probably the best and most impartial criticism of Haydon's powers is that contributed to Mr. Taylor's "Life" of the artist by the late George Watts, R.A., from which one or two extracts may be quoted:<sup>1</sup>—

“The characteristics of Haydon's art appear to me to be great determination and power, knowledge and effrontery. I cannot find that he strikes upon any chord that is the basis of a true harmony. . . . Haydon seems to me to have succeeded as often as he displays any real desire to do so; but one is struck with the

<sup>1</sup> Writing to Kirkup at Florence, on April 5, 1844, Haydon says: “The boy Watts, I understand, is out [*i.e.* in Italy], and went out as the great student of the day. Though he came out for High Art, the first thing the English do is to employ him on *Portrait!* Lord Holland, I understand, has made him paint Lady Holland! Is not this exquisite? Wherever they go, racing, cricket, trial by jury, fox-hunting, and portraits, are the staple commodities first thought of. Blessed be the name of John Bull!”

extraordinary discrepancy between different parts of his work, as though bored by a fixed attention that had taken him out of himself, yet highly applauding the result, he had scrawled and daubed his brush about in a sort of intoxication of self-glory. Indeed, his pictures are himself, and fail as he failed. . . . In Haydon's work there is not sufficient forgetfulness of self to disarm criticism of personality. His pictures are themselves autobiographical notes of the most interesting kind; but their want of beauty repels, and their want of modesty exasperates. Perhaps their principal characteristic is want of delicacy of perception and refinement of execution. . . . To particularise, I should say that his touch is generally woolly, and his surface disagreeable; that his draperies are deficient in richness and dignity, and his general effect much less good than one would expect from the goodness of parts, which I think arises from the coarseness of the handling; that his expressions of anatomy and general perception of form are the best by far that can be found in the English School, and I feel even a direction towards something that can only be found in Phidias."

Haydon had looked forward in cheerful con-

fidence to the favourable verdict of posterity, and to a position in the National Gallery for the big pictures that had been neglected in his life-time. It is not the least of life's little ironies that while not a single work of his now hangs in the National Gallery, his picture of "Curtius Leaping into the Gulf" occupies a prominent position in the billiard saloon of Gatti's Restaurant. Several of his pictures, however, have become the property of the nation. The "Lazarus" and the "Punch" belong to the National Gallery, but have been lent to provincial art museums, while his "Christ in the Garden" is in a lumber-room of the Victoria and Albert Museum. The Anti-Slavery picture—a dismal work—hangs in the entrance-hall of the National Portrait Gallery, which also contains his portraits of Leigh Hunt and of himself in old age. Here, too, under a glass case, is his cast of Keats' face. In the print-room at the British Museum is a large volume containing chalk studies—chiefly of hands and feet—by Haydon and his pupils, together with some interesting marginal notes. Of the more important pictures, the "Solomon" was bought by Edwin Landseer after Haydon's death, and later passed into the possession of Lord

Ashburton. The "Christ's Entry into Jerusalem" was sold in 1831 by its then possessor to a Philadelphian firm, and found its way into the Art Gallery of that city. Haydon paid it a last visit in June of that year, and says: "It was melancholy thus to look, for the last time, at a work which had excited so great a sensation in England and Scotland; the progress of which had been watched by all the nobility, foreign ministers, and people of fashion, and on the success of which all prospect for the historical art of the country at that time appeared to hang. I trust in God that it will be preserved from fire and ruin, that He will be pleased to grant that it may cross the seas in safety, and do that good in America it has failed to do here. . . . God bless it, and the result of its mission! What a disgrace to the aristocracy!"

It is as a lecturer and populariser of his art that Haydon has most claim to remembrance. He was an original thinker, and a vigorous, though "rough-and-ready" writer, but his judgment, on points in which his own interests were concerned, was essentially unsound. His vanity, as Mr. Taylor observes, blinded him to the quality of his own work, the amount of influence

he could wield, and the extent of public influence that was accorded to him; while his efforts to advance the art were inspired, in great part, by his hope of the glory that would result to him, the artist. He failed to realise, or perhaps purposely ignored, the work that other men had done, and were doing along the same lines. He was not the first who had attacked the Academy or who had tempted Providence by painting historical pictures, nor was he the first who had advocated the public encouragement of High Art with both tongue and pen. His dealings with the Academicians show that on occasion he could pocket his principles and subdue his passions; while on the question of public competition he could blow hot or cold according as he feared or despised his rivals. But however mingled his motives with alloy, he deserves full credit for the genuine services he rendered to his art. He was among the first to recognise and acclaim the transcendent merits of the Elgin Marbles; he was ever ready to help promising students with advice and instruction; he attacked the abuses of his profession with a ferocity that too frequently recoiled on his own head; he not only advocated, but assisted in the establishment of

local schools of design ; and, through his lectures and writings, he undoubtedly helped to raise and educate the taste of the people.

Haydon has painted his own character and temperament in such vivid colours that little needs to be added to the portrait. We have ample testimony to the fact that he was exceptionally good company, and could hold his own, even among the wits and poets with whom he chiefly foregathered in his bachelor days. Hazlitt said to Bewick, "Haydon is a fine, frank, clever man, and albeit the *best painter* England has produced, I find him well read up in the literature of the day ; never at a loss for subjects of conversation, whether of books, politics, or men and things. He talks better indeed than any painter I have met. One enjoys his hearty, joyous laugh ; it sets one upon one's legs better than a glass of champagne, for one is delighted to meet such a cheering spirit in the saddening depression that broods over the heartless despotism and hypocrisy of the world." Bewick adds that when he first knew Haydon he was very joyous and frolicsome ; "he delighted in fun, and would roll on the carpet at the facetious drollery of Charles Lamb, whose quaint humour

was to him irresistible. His hilarity and high spirits never flagged, even in times of difficulty and pecuniary straits—he seemed buoyed up by the conviction that he should overcome all his troubles.”

Wordsworth and Talfourd equally admired Haydon’s conversational powers, while Miss Mitford, writing to a friend after his death, says: “If you had known Haydon personally, his great power of conversation and constant life of mind would have carried you away. He was a sort of Benvenuto Cellini; or rather he was like Shakespeare’s description of the Dauphin’s horse—‘all air and fire—the duller elements of earth and water never appeared in him.’ Anything so rapid, so vigorous, and so brilliant as his talk I never heard.” Always inclined to be opinionated, it is probable that Haydon grew less popular with his fellows as he advanced in years. Among his juniors, we are told, his talk was chiefly anecdotal. He was unready in argument, rather resenting a strongly expressed difference of opinion, as tending to “disturb his ideas.” As early as 1825, we find in the *Journal* the naïve reflection: “I do not think I am liked in company, except by women. When I know, I

talk; when I am ignorant, I listen. Is not this fair? When I can talk, I talk better than others; but I listen to others who talk better than I. . . . I find the artists most favoured by the great are those of no education, or those who conceal it. 'Great folks,' said Johnson, 'don't like to have their mouths stopped.' I believe it, and how often have I had occasion to curse my better information when my love of truth induced me to prove I knew more than a man of rank."

At fifty years of age Haydon (as described by his son) was a handsome, fresh-coloured, robust little man, with a big, bald head, a peculiarly short upper lip, and a very keen, restless, blue-grey eye. "He was a very active man; motion was his repose. He lived in a hurricane, and fattened on anxiety and care. He carried himself uprightly, and stamped his little feet on the ground as if he revelled in the consciousness of his own existence. . . . The range of Haydon's interests was very wide. I know nothing that did not interest him, except mathematics, which he detested, and the political economists, and these he confessed he could not understand. He knew more about

ships, forts, guns, and the movements of troops than most naval and military amateurs; but he had no knowledge of science, and never pretended to it. He had a great love of dogs and horses, and was a sound judge of the points of each. I believe that he kept greyhounds, and coursed them under an assumed name. But he never betted, gambled, played cards or billiards, and had a perfect horror of club-life."

Haydon was essentially religious in temperament, though his religion was of a self-assertive, egotistical type. Almost from the outset of his career he took up the attitude of a missionary of High Art in England, and therewith the expectation of being crowned and rewarded as its Priest and King. His impassioned prayers read as though they were offered up to some omnipotent President of a celestial Academy, who demanded oblations in the shape of historical pictures. Haydon daily implored his Creator to grant him success in his chosen calling, promising in return to raise the standard of national taste, and to produce works which should redound to the glory of his God and the honour of his country. He lived in an atmosphere of extraordinary interferences and miraculous inspirations, intima-

tions, and presentiments, believing himself to be a man to whose fate some mysterious importance was attached. When reading prayers to his family, he invariably left out the clause in the Litany for endowing the Lords of the Council with grace, wisdom, and understanding, and interpolated a petition for his own health and strength—“*for the sake of the Art of my country.*”

Though they play so large a part in the story of his life, Haydon's financial difficulties were not the bitterest of his trials, and it was not they that drove him to despair. As has been seen, he had fallen into the hands of the money-lenders in early youth, and he had never been able to extricate himself from their clutches. But so many of his friends and colleagues were in the same position, that he must have felt he was insolvent in excellent company. As long as he was able to keep himself out of prison and the bailiffs out of the house, he considered that his affairs were positively flourishing. With the intuition of a woman and a genius, Mrs. Browning, after reading the Autobiography, thus analysed the causes that drove the artist to self-destruction :—

“The more I think, the more I am inclined to conclude that the money irritation was merely an additional irritation, and that the despair, leading to revolt against life, had its root in disappointed ambition. The world did not recognise his genius, and he punished the world by withdrawing the light. . . . All the audacity, bravery, and self-calculation which drew on him so much ridicule, were an agony in disguise: he could not live without reputation, and he wrestled for it, struggled for it, *kicked* for it, forgetting grace of attitude in the pang. When all was vain he went mad and died. . . . Poor Haydon! Think what an agony life was to him, so constituted! His own genius a clinging curse! the fire and clay in him seething and quenching one another! the man seeing maniacally in all men the assassins of his fame! and with the whole world against him struggling for the thing that was his life; struggling, stifling, breaking the hearts of the creatures dearest to him, in the conflict for which there was no victory, though he could not choose but fight it. Tell me if Laocoön’s anguish was not as an infant’s sleep compared to this.”

The epitaph that Haydon wrote for himself,

an accurate summary, as he fondly imagined, of his misfortunes and their cause, may fitly close the story of his troubled life:—

“HERE  
LIETH THE BODY  
OF  
BENJAMIN ROBERT HAYDON,

An English Historical Painter, who, in a struggle to make the People, the Legislature, the Nobility, and the Sovereign of England give due dignity and rank to the highest Art, which has ever languished, and until the Government interferes, ever will languish, in England, fell a victim to his ardour and love of country, an evidence that to seek to benefit your country by telling the Truth to Power, is a crime that can only be expiated by the ruin and destruction of the man who is so patriotic and so imprudent.

“He was born at Plymouth, 26th of January, 1786, and died on the [22nd of June] 18[46], believing in Christ as the Mediator and Advocate of Mankind.

“ ‘What various ills the Painter’s life assail,  
Pride, Envy, Want, the Patron and the Jail!’ ”

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