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THE ROYAL ACADEMY.

VII.

THE sculpture galleries continue to show the steady decadence of the English school. On the Continent, the French, the Italians, even certain of the Germans, display distinctive manners indicative of intelligently pronounced nationalities; and leading foreign sculptors prove by their works the advantage of early and persistent training. The French, who take the lead in the plastic arts of Europe, do not betray shakiness or indecision in anatomical articulations; the Italians, supreme in sentiment and in smoothness of surface, have the advantage of seldom deviating from ideal standards; while the Germans, by their broad generalizations, demonstrate what may be done by means of a well-considered eclecticism. But the English, in comparison, labour under the disadvantage of being nowhere—or, what comes to pretty much the same thing, of being everywhere. They are by turns soft and sentimental as Canova, spasmodic as Bernini, realistic as Teniers, rugged in surface texture as the portraits of Denner. As to technique, there prevails such uncertainty and vacillation that they are alternately strong as iron and weak as water. Nevertheless, the impartial spectator, in glancing round the three galleries of our Royal Academy, may possibly find some consolation in that law of compensation which in art as in human life strives ever to sustain a just balance. English sculpture is here seen, as to morals, the pink of propriety; as to taste, at the standard of the drawing-room; as to beauty, on the scale and elevation of an album or an illustrated pocket-almanack; and as to execution, painstaking as a schoolboy's copybook.

Mr. Armstead, A.R.A., is one of the few sculptors who stick to strict principles, and therefore he stands prepared to encounter exceptional difficulties in a bas-relief of "The Dead Leander" (1237). After the manner of the Greeks, the composition rests on one plane; there is no attempt at illusive and perilous perspective. Leander, having, according to the well-known story, perished during a storm in the waves of the Hellespont, lies at full length as when washed ashore, and Hero mourns her loss. The strict principles of bas-relief are here carried out with singleness of purpose, which is saying a great deal, inasmuch as the temptations to high-relief have in all times been so irresistible that the Elgin friezes stand not only paramount, but well nigh alone. The work before us might almost be taken as a translation from a Greek vase, so symmetric are the lines and so complete the surrender of accidents and details to essential truths. Mr. J. Bell has, on the contrary, absolutely lost himself in a terra-cotta relievo, "The Struggle of Good and Evil" (1240); this is a medley of discordant,

almost dissevered, legs and arms, provoking the censure passed on Correggio's too notorious "Hash of Frogs." We cannot pronounce the relievo, "A Family Group" (1238), by Count Gleichen, to be successful; these portraits in their hard cold outlines too much recall silhouettes cut out from flat pieces of metal, card, or wood. Erring in the opposite way of high and obtrusive relief are the alti-relievi of "Mrs. Rowcliffe" (1241), by Miss M. Grant (who is however an amateur), and the one of "The Sons of Edward Baring, Esq." (1243), by Mr. Boehm; of "The Swing" (1239), by Mr. E. Davis; and "The Angel of the Resurrection" (1244), by Mr. Adams-Acton. It has been our privilege, and sometimes our penalty, to see sundry angels of the Resurrection, including designs by the late Mr. Alfred Gatley and by Signor Tenerani. Of all such productions this by Mr. Adams-Acton has the advantage of being the most pretentious; the massive figure is made to sink, not to soar; the immense wings are merely for show; the trumpet is guiltless of a single note; it is by way of novelty perhaps that on a marble tablet have been inscribed thirty-eight verses from the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians, which, however, it might have been imagined most Christians held in memory. This blatant figure has slender claims to art; it may, however, obtain its reward from the large number of persons who delight in size and grandiloquent sentiment. Our Academy unfortunately furnishes too many examples of imperfectly trained sculptors who seize on showy effects which lie within the easy reach of tiros and amateurs.

The style of pleasing romance, which of late years has been the refuge of English sculptors, finds many representatives. Mr. Marshall, R.A., again takes the lead; his "Marguerite" (1275), though sketchy, has motive and movement. Mr. Durham, A.R.A., serves up a pretty conception for "A Double Drinking-Fountain" (1300); three playful boys are gracefully composed, with a growth of foliage betwixt and frogs and urns around. The same artist is far less successful in a group, nerveless in form and sickly in sentiment, "The Siren and the Dead Leander" (1336). We have never seen the chief centres of these sculpture galleries occupied by works so impotent. Take, for example, a girl lying prostrate as in a harem, modelled by Mr. Percival Ball, who absurdly makes the lady exclaim, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem!" (1338). The figure has nothing more to do with Jerusalem than with Jericho. Equally inane is "Innocence Triumphant" (1363), by Mr. Müller, an artist who, residing in Rome, has fallen into that inarticulate modelling, that affectation of sentiment, which has long been the bane of the modern Italian school. Nothing can betray more piteously the poverty of resources at the command of the Academy than the prominence given to this and still inferior works.

The forms of romance which are endemic in Burlington House have become almost inevitably forced up into spasmodic action. Take, as an example, a figure, "Forsaken" (1299), for which we have to thank Mr. Bruce Joy. All the buttons on the lady's bosom are about to burst, so swelling is the passion within her heart; while agony, torturing torso and limb, finds an exit at the toes. As for the woman's cataract of back hair, there has perhaps been nothing quite equal to it since the time when Coleridge, in the "Vale of Chamouni," described wild Alpine "torrents fiercely glad," unceasing in their thunder and eternal in their foam. Such art is much more easy than it seems; what is really difficult is moderation and reticence, the power which resides in repose, the reserve of strength beneath external action, so as to give the idea of a power greater than that put forth. Classic sculpture owes much of its nobility to a sense of omnipotence in repose. Mr. Warrington Wood, in "St. Michael and Satan" (1314), strives to redeem a trite theme by the intervention of four wings, two of angel and two of demon; his execution affects the smooth surface of Canova. Mr. Papworth, in "A.D. 33" (1316), essays the perilous problem of putting into marble the half-spiritual and half-bodily form of one of the saints who rose from the grave at the time of Christ's resurrection. The effort shows more sentiment than knowledge; the outstretched hand is not unlike a spade. "Cupid and Psyche" (1317), by Mr. E. Davis, belongs to the prevailing style of nerveless romance; this and other groups rely for their appeal to the multitude on the inherent beauty of marble when fresh from the chisel. Miss Grant has studiously thought out the figure of "Lady Macbeth" (1307), though the conventional classicism of the style is not quite in accord with a Scotch character. It is a great pity that our British sculptors do not work out national subjects, past and present, in a truly national spirit; in Northern latitudes—for example, in Scotland and Scandinavia—there lie rich veins of poetic thought yet unwrought in plastic art. The eternal harping on one Italian string becomes wearisome. Danish and Swedish sculptors have done well to embody local myths; they have modelled Odin and Thor; and Professor Molin of Stockholm, in "The Wrestlers," became great when inspired by the impetuous passion of Northern races. There are two or three of our native sculptors, however—Mr. Leifchild, for example—who gain vigour by converse with Michael Angelo. This year the only instance of this heroic manner is the figure of "Philosophy" (1318), by Mr. Armstead, A.R.A. Also to be commended for vigour, though not free from plagiarism, is "A Bowler" (1323), by Mr. Stephens, A.R.A.; the figure has evidently been adapted from one or more of the Discoboli. "Ione" (1328), by Mr. MacLean, though rather juvenile in manner, has promise; it shows obedience without servitude to the antique.

Pictorial and picturesque modes of treatment, though universally popular, are usually so pitiable as to lie beyond the possibility of redemption. "The Fishwoman of Boulogne" (1361), by M. Lormier, is chiefly distinguished by her bonnet, an article essentially pictorial, and in no way sculpturesque. Also under the class of mere *genre* falls "'Tis *My* Mamma!' 'No; *Mine!*'" (1334). Mr. Ruddock, in such a tittle-tattle title, writes the character of his art. "The Twin Naturalists" (1366), by Mr. Junck, necessarily suggests a naturalistic treatment. It is a maxim that each art is best when it maintains intact its specific character; "pictorial sculpture" is a hybrid destructive to the plastic species.

It is strange how ill has always been the fate of Christian sculpture, at least since the time of the Pisani, of Donatello, Ghiberti, and a few others in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Even the lives of the Saints have shone less honourably in marble than on canvas. But it sometimes happens in these eclectic and servile times that sculpture borrows or steals from her sister painting, as, for example, in "The Group of S. Vincent de Paul and Orphan Children" (1319), by Mr. Ruddock. This composition, perhaps slightly varied, may be bought in the form of a modern German print at the price of about a halfpenny. Thanks to Mr. Ruskin, there have been rescued from oblivion three frames of diminutive terra-cottas, representing the Entry into Jerusalem, Christ Blessing Little Children, &c. (1293-5), by Mr. Tinworth. The figures are puppets, and the drama, which degenerates into rant, is about on a level with the action in a marionette theatre. Mr. Ruskin, in his "Notes" on the present Academy, with accustomed condescension and kindness, first lifts the artist to the skies, only to drop him into the abyss; he discovers the sculptor to be a genius, and then concludes that, "for all Mr. Tinworth has learned of his business, he might as well have lived in South Australia."

Terra-cottas still increase in number; we wish it could be added that they advance in merit. The French artist, M. Dalou, who has in our Academy appeared at his best, is now at his worst. He has subjected "Miss Heseltine" (1351) to vivisection in the eyeballs, and "Mr. Hodgson, A.R.A." (1358), after like torture, appears as the spectre of the person once known to his friends and admirers; the hair is plaster and the drapery rags, but, as some compensation, the beard, though apparently of sea-weed, assumes the magnificence of a river god. A terra-cotta bust (1405) by Mr. Ball also affects slovenliness; indeed the drill has been so recklessly turned into the beard of "Robert Leake, Esq.," as to give the idea of a worm-eaten block of rotten wood. Mr. Lawson is little better in a terra-cotta of "John Burr, Esq." (1372). Miss H. Montalba models her father (1359) in a style which by its breadth and quietude contrasts favourably with the surroundings. The terra-cottas seen in Belgium, though not faultless, are better than any yet produced in London.

Italian sculptors have never so abounded, but the majority are emasculate; their graceful though nerveless figures stand on a par with the shop goods in Rome, Florence, and Carrara. A pleasing incident, however, comes from the colony of sculptors at Carrara. Signor Lazzarini sends "Innocence" (1322); the young girl clasps in her hands a bird; the drapery is remarkably delicate in its folds, and has a pretty finesse in its playful flutter. The Milanese sculptors have long made their profit by dexterous manipulation of fancy dress which in its tucks, hems, and fringes, emulates "the stitch, stitch" of the milliner's needle. Scarcely the best of the kind are "Blind Man's Buff" (1329), and "A Bit of Vanity" (1331), by Signor Barzaghi, and "You're Jealous" (1327), by Signor Zannoni. But by far the most noteworthy Italian product is "Le Génie de Franklin" (1384), by Signor Monteverde. A spritelike figure, emblematic of Franklin, brings lightning from heaven to earth. Each nerve and muscle is animated as by electric fire. The modelling in its pulsations responds to the conceiving thought. The whole composition is characteristic of the school of Milan. The figure, in fact, would be well fitted for one of the thousand pinnacles of the great cathedral which owes its protection against thunderbolts almost as much to science as to saints.

Portrait sculpture prospers for the same reasons as portrait-painting. The most prominent effigy is the seated "Thomas Carlyle" (1301), by Mr. Boehm. The character is the reverse of exalted. We have here, not the Chelsea philosopher who, assuming the mission of a Hebrew prophet, pronounces an oracular "Woe! woe!" but we are rather reminded of the disguise of "Christopher North," who aired his literary wares in a dressing-gown or shooting-jacket. Mr. Boehm, after his habit, has scarcely escaped caricature. A tub only is needed for the personification of a modern Diogenes. Yet Mr. Ruskin, with a felicity peculiar to himself of pitchforking praise into wrong places, exclaims, "For this noble piece of portraiture I cannot trust myself to express my personal gratitude."

Busts, as usual, abound. Among the best are "The Rev. John Barlow" (1271), by Mr. Durham, A.R.A.; "Professor W. A. Miller" (1272), by Mr. Butler. Also may be commended "Alan Grant, Esq." (1249), by Miss Grant, and "Mdlle. de Breton" (1250), by the late Mr. Fuller. We may mention, not without regret, the increasing practice of marking by lines, often incised deeply, the pupil of the eye. This has always been a sign of decadence, and is one of the melancholy symptoms that sculpture nowadays descends from high abstractions and takes refuge in realism and picturesqueness. We cannot leave this pantheon without tendering to "The Rev. Charles H. Spurgeon" (1395), and "Sir Henry Cole, K.C.B." (1402), our best thanks for enlivening the rather dull assemblage by the broadest comic character. In these rude blocks, which embody brains, coats, collars, and whiskers, it is hard to tell where nature ends and

art begins; but Mr. Adams-Acton can vouch for his ideal in the shape of the Rev. Charles H. Spurgeon, while Mr. Gamble holds himself responsible for literal truth in Sir Henry Cole, K.C.B.

Death has of late been cruel to plastic as well as pictorial art. Mr. Fuller, of Florence, pupil of Mr. Power the American, will be remembered by "Rhodope," &c. He was romantic in conception, though rather amateurish in execution. The bust before noticed (1250) exemplifies his tender and beauty-seeking style. Mr. Stevens cannot be measured till what he may have left of the "Wellington Monument for St. Paul's" is brought to light. His friends held faith in him to the last, and if their kindly verdict can be accepted, the nation may not be doomed to ultimate disappointment. The loss of Mr. Foley is more serious. Sketch models of his principal works collected at the Burlington Fine Arts Club show clever facility, especially in throwing a figure into attitude, with the further advantage of effective costume. In the Academy the best-considered portrait statue is that of "The Late Sir Benjamin Lee Guinness" (1305). The bronze full-length of "General Stonewall Jackson" (1325) has a rather interesting history, as it is the result of a subscription spontaneously organized in England, on the news of Jackson's death, to show respect for his memory. It has been executed for outdoor exhibition; and will, in fact, as soon as the Academy closes, be set up in a conspicuous place in the City Park of Richmond, in Virginia, the Legislature of which State has, we understand, made a liberal appropriation for its erection and the attendant ceremonies. The marble statue of Prince Albert, for the University of Cambridge (1330), is the third contribution which Mr. Foley's representatives have sent.