

Paris possessed for me, since it brought me in frequent contact with friends such as those I have just described.

"But if it is unwise to remain long away from Paris, it is not well, on the other hand, to live there constantly.

"Do not the continual opportunities offered by the great city for the interchange of ideas interfere with their complete assimilation? Do not those constant conversations, in which each one shines or seeks to shine, occasion a useless expenditure of energy?

"Might not the ardor dissipated in often sterile words, if concentrated and employed in work, produce more serious results?

"Thoughts, to prove fertile, require to be concentrated, and not scattered to the winds. Condensation increases their force a hundred-fold.

"The boulevard alone can develop that brilliant but superficial faculty which we call *esprit*, but the ambition of the artist should go further than this. Without the prudence of the fox, it may be said that *esprit* is dangerous in art.

"I am of the opinion that historical painters would gain greatly by living occasionally in the country, in the midst of the primitive inhabitants. I think by doing so they would often obtain an insight into past ages, for, to my mind, in order to make past ages live upon the canvas, something more is needed than to rummage among heaps of documents and sneeze among the dust of old papers. . . .

"Emerging from the whirlpool of Paris I experienced, every time I returned to Courrières the supreme delight of the intense peace of the country, and enjoyed the solitary walks in which I could again follow the changes of Nature, and study their causes in simple subjects, in which are more plainly manifested her great and immutable laws.

"At such times the thousand problems discussed in Paris with my fellow artists returned to my mind. They presented themselves to my reason more clearly in this solitude, and I sought then to solve them." . . . (Pp. 237, 238.)

Altogether, this autobiography offers us a most attractive and dignified artistic portraiture; harmonious, decisive, and of the finest impressionability to beauty. The book is of a convenient and tasteful sort, as to size, typography and plain external dress.

THE LIFE OF AN ARTIST.*

THIS autobiography is a singularly charming one, among all the hundred and one books in which men of art have taken us into their confidence. There is a personality expressed in it that it would be a distinct satisfaction to know even if it were less a practically artistic one. One is not surprised at Breton's writing his little book so well, for his literary talent and practice are important elements of his equipment, and it is highly probable that if he had not taken to his brush with such absorbing assiduity he would have been a fairly conspicuous figure among artistic belles-lettres writers in France. He begins his story at the very beginning—his childish, indeed, his infantile days in the home at Courrières, recording with an astonishing faculty of memory the growth of his artistic sense, the delicate, vague impressionism of a youth, and the continual increase of the highest sort of perceptiveness for form and color. By easy transition he passes on to his school and student life, his days of Parisian study and artistic, not to say Bohemian life. Then succeed the incidents that, one by one, gave him honor and success, to which he alludes with no affectation, but with modesty and good taste; and so we leave him, as his book closes, serene in the consciousness of having worked diligently during a long and favored life, conscious of having developed a special sense and talent to its fullest degree, and yet, perhaps best of all, we find his last words about art and the art-works of other men rather than about himself and his own career. There is in Breton a breadth of true sentiment for classic painting outside of his own rationality which is somewhat distinguished among French artists. To him France is not everything. His sensitiveness to Nature, it need hardly be said, is beautifully fine and unaffected. Indeed, the quality of unaffectedness, the absence of all the conventional attitudinizing of an artist are things very noticeable in the Autobiography. A simple and sincere character, a charmingly refined artistic sense, a kindly heart, and a really surprising memory—such is the book in sum. Occasionally he theorizes in some side issue in an interesting way, if not an original one, nearly always from the standpoint of an experience; as in speaking of life in Paris:

"It will be seen how great an attraction

* THE LIFE OF AN ARTIST: An Autobiography. By JULES BRETON. Translated by MARY J. SERRANO. New York: D. Appleton & Co.