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THE BEST PORTRAITS IN ENGRAVING.

BY

CHARLES SUMNER.

\_Fifth Edition.\_

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THE BEST PORTRAITS IN ENGRAVING.

Engraving is one of the fine arts, and in this beautiful family has

been the especial handmaiden of painting. Another sister is now coming

forward to join this service, lending to it the charm of color. If, in

our day, the "chromo" can do more than engraving, it cannot impair the

value of the early masters. With them there is no rivalry or

competition. Historically, as well as æsthetically, they will be

masters always.

Everybody knows something of engraving, as of printing, with which it

was associated in origin. School-books, illustrated papers, and shop

windows are the ordinary opportunities open to all. But while creating

a transient interest, or, perhaps, quickening the taste, they furnish

little with regard to the art itself, especially in other days. And

yet, looking at an engraving, like looking at a book, may be the

beginning of a new pleasure and a new study.

Each person has his own story. Mine is simple. Suffering from

continued prostration, disabling me from the ordinary activities of

life, I turned to engravings for employment and pastime. With the

invaluable assistance of that devoted connoisseur, the late Dr. Thies,

I went through the Gray collection at Cambridge, enjoying it like a

picture-gallery. Other collections in our country were examined also.

Then, in Paris, while undergoing severe medical treatment, my daily

medicine for weeks was the vast cabinet of engravings, then called

Imperial, now National, counted by the million, where was everything

to please or instruct. Thinking of those kindly portfolios, I make

this record of gratitude, as to benefactors. Perhaps some other

invalid, seeking occupation without burden, may find in them the

solace that I did. Happily, it is not necessary to visit Paris for the

purpose. Other collections, on a smaller scale, will furnish the same

remedy.

In any considerable collection, portraits occupy an important place.

Their multitude may be inferred when I mention that, in one series of

portfolios, in the Paris cabinet, I counted no less than forty-seven

portraits of Franklin and forty-three of Lafayette, with an equal

number of Washington, while all the early Presidents were numerously

represented. But, in this large company, there are very few possessing

artistic value. The great portraits of modern times constitute a very

short list, like the great poems or histories, and it is the same with

engravings as with pictures. Sir Joshua Reynolds, explaining the

difference between an historical painter and a portrait-painter,

remarks that the former "paints men in general, a portrait-painter a

particular man, and consequently a defective model."[1] A portrait,

therefore, may be an accurate presentment of its subject without

æsthetic value.

But here, as in other things, genius exercises its accustomed sway

without limitation. Even the difficulties of a "defective model" did

not prevent Raffaelle, Titian, Rembrandt, Rubens, Velasquez, or

Vandyck from producing portraits precious in the history of art. It

would be easy to mention heads by Raffaelle, yielding in value to only

two or three of his larger masterpieces, like the Dresden Madonna.

Charles the Fifth stooped to pick up the pencil of Titian, saying "it

becomes Cæsar to serve Titian!" True enough; but this unprecedented

compliment from the imperial successor of Charlemagne attests the

glory of the portrait-painter. The female figures of Titian, so much

admired under the names of Flora, La Bella, his daughter, his

mistress, and even his Venus, were portraits from life. Rembrandt

turned from his great triumphs in his own peculiar school to portraits

of unwonted power; so also did Rubens, showing that in this department

his universality of conquest was not arrested. To these must be added

Velasquez and Vandyck, each of infinite genius, who won fame

especially as portrait-painters. And what other title has Sir Joshua

himself?

[Sidenote: Suyderhoef.]

Historical pictures are often collections of portraits arranged so as

to illustrate an important event. Such is the famous PEACE OF MÜNSTER,

by Terburg, just presented by a liberal Englishman to the National

Gallery at London. Here are the plenipotentiaries of Holland, Spain,

and Austria, uniting in the great treaty which constitutes an epoch in

the Law of Nations. The engraving by Suyderhoef is rare and

interesting. Similar in character is the Death of Chatham, by Copley,

where the illustrious statesman is surrounded by the peers he had

been addressing--every one a portrait. To this list must be added the

pictures by Trumbull in the Rotunda of the Capitol at Washington,

especially the Declaration of Independence, in which Thackeray took a

sincere interest. Standing before these, the author and artist said to

me, "These are the best pictures in the country," and he proceeded to

remark on their honesty and fidelity; but doubtless their real value

is in their portraits.

Unquestionably the finest assemblage of portraits anywhere is that of

the artists occupying two halls in the gallery at Florence, being

autographs contributed by the masters themselves. Here is Raffaelle,

with chestnut-brown hair, and dark eyes full of sensibility, painted

when he was twenty-three, and known by the engraving of Forster--Julio

Romano, in black and red chalk on paper,--Massaccio, called the father

of painting, much admired--Leonardo da Vinci, beautiful and

grand,--Titian, rich and splendid,--Pietro Perugino, remarkable for

execution and expression,--Albert Dürer, rigid but masterly,--Gerhard

Dow, finished according to his own exacting style,--and Reynolds, with

fresh English face; but these are only examples of this incomparable

collection, which was begun as far back as the Cardinal Leopold de

Medici, and has been happily continued to the present time. Here are

the lions, painted by themselves, except, perhaps, the foremost of

all, Michael Angelo, whose portrait seems the work of another. The

impression from this collection is confirmed by that of any group of

historic artists. Their portraits excel those of statesmen, soldiers,

or divines, as is easily seen by engravings accessible to all. The

engraved heads in Arnold Houbraken's biographies of the Dutch and

Flemish painters, in three volumes, are a family of rare beauty.[2]

The relation of engraving to painting is often discussed; but nobody

has treated it with more knowledge or sentiment than the consummate

engraver Longhi in his interesting work, \_La Calcografia\_.[3] Dwelling

on the general aid it renders to the lovers of art, he claims for it

greater merit in "publishing and immortalizing the portraits of

eminent men for the example of the present and future generations;"

and, "better than any other art, serving as the vehicle for the most

extended and remote propagation of deserved celebrity." Even great

monuments in porphyry and bronze are less durable than these light and

fragile impressions subject to all the chances of wind, water, and

fire, but prevailing by their numbers where the mass succumbs. In

other words, it is with engravings as with books; nor is this the only

resemblance between them. According to Longhi, an engraving is not a

copy or imitation, as is sometimes insisted, but a translation. The

engraver translates into another language, where light and shade

supply the place of colors. The duplication of a book in the same

language is a copy, and so is the duplication of a picture in the same

material. Evidently an engraving is not a copy; it does not reproduce

the original picture, except in drawing and expression; nor is it a

mere imitation, but, as Bryant's Homer and Longfellow's Dante are

presentations of the great originals in another language, so is the

engraving a presentation of painting in another material which is like

another language.

Thus does the engraver vindicate his art. But nobody can examine a

choice print without feeling that it has a merit of its own different

from any picture, and inferior only to a good picture. A work of

Raffaelle, or any of the great masters, is better in an engraving of

Longhi or Morghen than in any ordinary copy, and would probably cost

more in the market. A good engraving is an undoubted work of art, but

this cannot be said of many pictures, which, like Peter Pindar's

razors, seem made to sell.

Much that belongs to the painter belongs also to the engraver, who

must have the same knowledge of contours, the same power of

expression, the same sense of beauty, and the same ability in drawing

with sureness of sight as if, according to Michael Angelo, he had "a

pair of compasses in his eyes." These qualities in a high degree make

the artist, whether painter or engraver, naturally excelling in

portraits. But choice portraits are less numerous in engraving than in

painting, for the reason, that painting does not always find a

successful translator.

[Illustration: PHILIP MELANCTHON.

(Engraved by Albert Dürer from his own Design.)]

[Sidenote: Dürer.]

The earliest engraved portraits which attract attention are by Albert

Dürer, who engraved his own work, translating himself. His eminence as

painter was continued as engraver. Here he surpassed his predecessors,

Martin Schoen in Germany, and Mantegna in Italy, so that Longhi does

not hesitate to say that he was the first who carried the art from

infancy in which he found it to a condition not far from flourishing

adolescence. But, while recognizing his great place in the history of

engraving, it is impossible not to see that he is often hard and

constrained, if not unfinished. His portrait of ERASMUS is justly

famous, and is conspicuous among the prints exhibited in the British

Museum. It is dated 1526, two years before the death of Dürer, and has

helped to extend the fame of the universal scholar and approved man of

letters, who in his own age filled a sphere not unlike that of

Voltaire in a later century. There is another portrait of Erasmus by

Holbein, often repeated, so that two great artists have contributed to

his renown. That by Dürer is admired. The general fineness of touch,

with the accessories of books and flowers, shows the care in its

execution; but it wants expression, and the hands are far from

graceful.

Another most interesting portrait by Dürer, executed in the same year

with the Erasmus, is PHILIP MELANCTHON, the St. John of the

Reformation, sometimes called the teacher of Germany. Luther, while

speaking of himself as rough, boisterous, stormy, and altogether

warlike, says, "but Master Philippus comes along softly and gently,

sowing and watering with joy according to the rich gifts which God has

bestowed upon him." At the date of the print he was twenty-nine years

of age, and the countenance shows the mild reformer.

[Sidenote: Caracci.]

Agostino Caracci, of the Bolognese family, memorable in art, added to

considerable success as painter undoubted triumphs as engraver. His

prints are numerous, and many are regarded with favor; but out of the

long list not one is so sure of that longevity allotted to art as his

portrait of TITIAN, which bears date 1587, eleven years after the

death of the latter. Over it is the inscription, \_Titiani Vicellii

Pictoris celeberrimi ac famosissimi vera effigies\_, to which is added

beneath, \_Cujus nomen orbis continere non valet\_! Although founded on

originals by Titian himself, it was probably designed by the

remarkable engraver. It is very like, and yet unlike the familiar

portrait of which we have a recent engraving by Mandel, from a

repetition in the gallery of Berlin. Looking at it, we are reminded of

the terms by which Vasari described the great painter, \_guidicioso,

bello e stupendo\_. Such a head, with such visible power, justifies

these words, or at least makes us believe them entirely applicable. It

is bold, broad, strong, and instinct with life.

This print, like the Erasmus of Dürer, is among those selected for

exhibition at the British Museum, and it deserves the honor. Though

only paper with black lines, it is, by the genius of the artist, as

good as a picture. In all engraving nothing is better.

[Sidenote: Goltzius.]

Contemporary with Caracci was Hendrik Goltzius, at Harlem,

excellent as painter, but, like the Italian, pre-eminent as engraver.

His prints show mastery of the art, making something like an epoch in

its history. His unwearied skill in the use of the burin appears in a

tradition gathered by Longhi from Wille, that, having commenced a

line, he carried it to the end without once stopping, while the long

and bright threads of copper turned up were brushed aside by his

flowing beard, which at the end of a day's labor so shone in the light

of a candle that his companions nicknamed him "the man with the golden

beard." There are prints by him which shine more than his beard. Among

his masterpieces is the portrait of his instructor, THEODORE

COERNHERT, engraver, poet, musician, and vindicator of his country,

and author of the national air, "William of Orange," whose passion for

liberty did not prevent him from giving to the world translations of

Cicero's Offices and Seneca's Treatise on Beneficence. But that of the

ENGRAVER HIMSELF, as large as life, is one of the most important in

the art. Among the numerous prints by Goltzius, these two will always

be conspicuous.

[Illustration: JAN LUTMA.

(Etched by Rembrandt from his own Design.)]

[Sidenote: Pontius.]

[Sidenote: Rembrandt.]

[Sidenote: Visscher.]

In Holland Goltzius had eminent successors. Among these were Paul

Pontius, designer and engraver, whose portrait of RUBENS is of great

life and beauty, and Rembrandt, who was not less masterly in engraving

than in painting, as appears sufficiently in his portraits of the

BURGOMASTER SIX, the two COPPENOLS, the ADVOCATE TOLLING, the

goldsmith LUTMA, all showing singular facility and originality.

Contemporary with Rembrandt was Cornelis Visscher, also designer and

engraver, whose portraits were unsurpassed in boldness and picturesque

effect. At least one authority has accorded to this artist the palm of

engraving, hailing him as Corypheus of the art. Among his successful

portraits is that of a CAT; but all yield to what are known as the

GREAT BEARDS, being the portraits of WILLIAM DE RYCK, an ophthalmist

at Amsterdam, and of GELLIUS DE BOUMA, the Zutphen ecclesiastic. The

latter is especially famous. In harmony with the beard is the heavy

face, seventy-seven years old, showing the fulness of long-continued

potation, and hands like the face, original and powerful, if not

beautiful.

[Illustration: THE SLEEPING CAT.

(Engraved by Cornelis Visscher from his own Design.)]

[Sidenote: Vandyck.]

In contrast with Visscher was his companion Vandyck, who painted

portraits with constant beauty and carried into etching the same

Virgilian taste and skill. His aquafortis was not less gentle than his

pencil. Among his etched portraits I would select that of SNYDERS, the

animal painter, as extremely beautiful. M. Renouvier, in his learned

and elaborate work, \_Des Types et des Maniéres des Maîtres Graveurs\_,

though usually moderate in praise, speaks of these sketches as

"possessing a boldness and delicacy which charm, being taken, at the

height of his genius, by the painter who knew the best how to idealize

the painting of portraits."

Such are illustrative instances from Germany, Italy, and Holland. As

yet, power rather than beauty presided, unless in the etchings of

Vandyck. But the reign of Louis XIV. was beginning to assert a

supremacy in engraving as in literature. The great school of French

engravers which appeared at this time brought the art to a

splendid perfection, which many think has not been equalled since, so

that Masson, Nanteuil, Edelinck, and Drevet may claim fellowship in

genius with their immortal contemporaries, Corneille, Racine, La

Fontaine, and Molière.

[Illustration: THE SUDARIUM OF ST. VERONICA.

(Engraved by Claude Mellan from his own Design.)]

[Sidenote: Mellan.]

The school was opened by Claude Mellan, more known as engraver than

painter, and also author of most of the designs he engraved. His life,

beginning with the sixteenth century, was protracted beyond ninety

years, not without signal honor, for his name appears among the

"Illustrious Men" of France, in the beautiful volumes of Perrault,

which is also a homage to the art he practiced. One of his works, for

a long time much admired, was described by this author:

"It is a Christ's head, designed and shaded, with his crown

of thorns and the blood that gushes forth from all parts, by

one single stroke, which, beginning at the tip of the nose,

and so still circling on, forms most exactly everything that

is represented in this plate, only by the different

thickness of the stroke, which, according as it is more or

less swelling, makes the eyes, nose, mouth, cheeks, hair,

blood, and thorns; the whole so well represented and with

such expressions of pain and affliction, that nothing is

more dolorous or touching."[4]

This print is known as the SUDARIUM OF ST. VERONICA. Longhi records

that it was thought at the time "inimitable," and was praised "to the

skies;" but people think differently now. At best it is a curiosity

among portraits. A traveler reported some time ago that it was the

sole print on the walls of the room occupied by the director of the

Imperial Cabinet of Engravings at St. Petersburgh.

[Sidenote: Morin.]

Morin was a contemporary of Mellan, and less famous at the time. His

style of engraving was peculiar, being a mixture of strokes and dots,

but so harmonized as to produce a pleasing effect. One of the best

engraved portraits in the history of the art is his CARDINAL

BENTIVOGLIO; but here he translated Vandyck, whose picture is among

his best. A fine impression of this print is a choice possession.

[Illustration: CARDINAL BENTIVOGLIO.

(Painted by Anthony Van Dyck, and Engraved by Jean Morin.)]

[Sidenote: Masson.]

Among French masters Antoine Masson is conspicuous for brilliant

hardihood of style, which, though failing in taste, is powerful in

effect. Metal, armor, velvet, feather, seem as if painted. He is also

most successful in the treatment of hair. His immense skill made him

welcome difficulties, as if to show his ability in overcoming them.

His print of HENRI DE LORRAINE, COMTE D'HARCOURT, known as \_Cadet à la

Perle\_, from the pearl in the ear, with the date 1667, is often placed

at the head of engraved portraits, although not particularly pleasing

or interesting. The vigorous countenance is aided by the gleam and

sheen of the various substances entering into the costume. Less

powerful, but having a charm of its own, is that of BRISACIER, known

as the GRAY-HAIRED MAN, executed in 1664. The remarkable

representation of hair in this print has been a model for artists,

especially for Longhi, who recounts that he copied it in his head of

Washington. Somewhat similar is the head of CHARRIER, the criminal

judge at Lyons. Though inferior in hair, it surpasses the other in

expression.

[Sidenote: Nanteuil.]

Nanteuil was an artist of different character, being to Masson as

Vandyck to Visscher, with less of vigor than beauty. His original

genius was refined by classical studies, and quickened by diligence.

Though dying at the age of forty-eight, he had executed as many as two

hundred and eighty plates, nearly all portraits. The favor he enjoyed

during life was not diminished with time. His works illustrate the

reign of Louis XIV., and are still admired. Among these are portraits

of the KING, ANNIE OF AUSTRIA, JOHN BAPTISTE VAN STEENBERGHEN, the

Advocate-General of Holland, a heavy Dutchman, FRANÇOIS DE LA MOTTE LE

VAYER, a fine and delicate work, TURENNE, COLBERT, LAMOIGNON, the poet

LORET, MARIDAT DE SERRIÈRE, LOUISE-MARIE DE GONZAGUE, LOUIS HESSELIN,

CHRISTINE OF SWEDEN--all masterpieces; but above these is the POMPONE

DE BELLIÈVRE, foremost among his masterpieces, and a chief masterpiece

of art, being, in the judgment of more than one connoisseur, the most

beautiful engraved portrait that exists. That excellent authority, Dr.

Thies, who knew engraving more thoroughly and sympathetically than any

person I remember in our country, said in a letter to myself, as long

ago as March, 1858:

"When I call Nanteuil's Pompone the handsomest engraved

portrait, I express a conviction to which I came when I

studied all the remarkable engraved portraits at the royal

cabinet of engravings at Dresden, and at the large and

exquisite collection there of the late King of Saxony, and

in which I was confirmed or perhaps, to which I was led, by

the director of the two establishments, the late Professor

Frenzel."

And after describing this head, the learned connoisseur proceeds:--

"There is an air of refinement, \_vornehmheit\_, round the

mouth and nose as in no other engraving. Color and life

shine through the skin, and the lips appear red."

It is bold, perhaps, thus to exalt a single portrait, giving to it the

palm of Venus; nor do I know that it is entirely proper to classify

portraits according to beauty. In disputing about beauty, we are too

often lost in the variety of individual tastes, and yet each person

knows when he is touched. In proportion as multitudes are touched,

there must be merit. As in music a simple heart-melody is often more

effective than any triumph over difficulties, or bravura of manner, so

in engraving the sense of the beautiful may prevail over all else, and

this is the case with the Pompone, although there are portraits by

others showing higher art.

No doubt there have been as handsome men, whose portraits were

engraved, but not so well. I know not if Pompone was what would be

called a handsome man, although his air is noble and his countenance

bright. But among portraits more boldly, delicately, or elaborately

engraved, there are very few to contest the palm of beauty.

[Illustration: POMPONE DE BELLIÈVRE.

(Painted by Charles Le Brun, and Engraved by Robert Nanteuil.)]

And who is this handsome man to whom the engraver has given a lease of

fame? Son, nephew, and grandson of eminent magistrates, high in the

nobility of the robe, with two grandfathers chancellors of France,

himself at the head of the magistry of France, first President of

Parliament according to inscription on the engraving, \_Senatus Franciæ

Princeps\_, ambassador to Italy, Holland, and England, charged in the

latter country by Cardinal Mazarin with the impossible duty of

making peace between the Long Parliament and Charles the First, and at

his death, great benefactor of the General Hospital of Paris,

bestowing upon it riches and the very bed on which he died. Such is

the simple catalogue, and yet it is all forgotten.

A Funeral Panegyric pronounced at his death, now before me in the

original pamphlet of the time,[5] testifies to more than family or

office. In himself he was much, and not of those who, according to the

saying of St. Bernard, give out smoke rather than light. Pure glory

and innocent riches were his, which were more precious in the sight of

good men, and he showed himself incorruptible, and not to be bought at

any price. It were easy for him to have turned a deluge of wealth into

his house; but he knew that gifts insensibly corrupt,--that the

specious pretext of gratitude is the snare in which the greatest souls

allow themselves to be caught,--that a man covered with favors has

difficulty in setting himself against injustice in all its forms, and

that a magistrate divided between a sense of obligations received and

the care of the public interest, which he ought always to promote, is

a paralytic magistrate, a magistrate deprived of a moiety of himself.

So spoke the preacher, while he portrayed a charity tender and prompt

for the wretched, a vehemence just and inflexible to the dishonest and

wicked, with a sweetness noble and beneficent for all; dwelling also

on his countenance, which had not that severe and sour austerity that

renders justice to the good only with regret, and to the guilty only

with anger; then on his pleasant and gracious address, his

intellectual and charming conversation, his ready and judicious

replies, his agreeable and intelligent silence, his refusals, which

were well received and obliging; while, amidst all the pomp and

splendor accompanying him, there shone in his eyes a certain air of

humanity and majesty, which secured for him, and for justice itself,

love as well as respect. His benefactions were constant. Not content

with giving only his own, he gave with a beautiful manner still more

rare. He could not abide beauty of intelligence without goodness of

soul, and he preferred always the poor, having for them not only

compassion but a sort of reverence. He knew that the way to take the

poison from riches was to make them tasted by those who had them not.

The sentiment of Christian charity for the poor, who were to him in

the place of children, was his last thought, as witness especially the

General Hospital endowed by him, and presented by the preacher as the

greatest and most illustrious work ever undertaken by charity the most

heroic.

Thus lived and died the splendid Pompone de Bellièvre, with no other

children than his works. Celebrated at the time by a Funeral Panegyric

now forgotten, and placed among the Illustrious Men of France in a

work remembered only for its engraved portraits, his famous life

shrinks, in the voluminous \_Biographie Universelle\_ of Michaud, to

the seventh part of a single page, and in the later \_Biographie

Généralle\_ of Didot disappears entirely. History forgets to mention

him. But the lofty magistrate, ambassador, and benefactor, founder of

a great hospital, cannot be entirely lost from sight so long as his

portrait by Nanteuil holds a place in art.

[Sidenote: Edelinck.]

Younger than Nanteuil by ten years, Gérard Edelinck excelled him in

genuine mastery. Born at Antwerp, he became French by adoption,

occupying apartments in the Gobelins, and enjoying a pension from

Louis XIV. Longhi says that he is the engraver whose works, not only

according to his own judgment, but that of the most intelligent,

deserve the first place among exemplars, and he attributes to him all

perfections in highest degree, design, chiaro-oscuro, ærial

perspective, local tints, softness, lightness, variety, in short

everything which can enter into the most exact representation of the

true and beautiful without the aid of color. Others may have surpassed

him in particular things, but, according to the Italian teacher, he

remains by common consent "the prince of engraving." Another critic

calls him "king."

It requires no remarkable knowledge to recognize his great merits.

Evidently he is a master, exercising sway with absolute art, and

without attempts to bribe the eye by special effects of light, as on

metal or satin. Among his conspicuous productions is the TENT OF

DARIUS, a large engraving on two sheets, after Le Brun, where the

family of the Persian monarch prostrate themselves before Alexander,

who approaches with Hephæstion. There is also a HOLY FAMILY, after

Raffaelle, and the BATTLE OF THE STANDARD, after Leonardo da Vinci;

but these are less interesting than his numerous portraits, among

which that of PHILIPPE DE CHAMPAIGNE is the chief masterpiece; but

there are others of signal merit, including especially that of MADAME

HELIOT, or \_La Belle Religieuse\_, a beautiful French coquette praying

before a crucifix; MARTIN VAN DER BOGAERT, a sculptor; FREDERIC

LÉONARD, printer to the king; MOUTON, the Lute-player; MARTINUS

DILGERUS, with a venerable beard white with age; JULES HARDOUIN

MANSART, the architect; also a portrait of POMPONE DE BELLIÈVRE which

will be found among the prints of Perrault's Illustrious Men.

The PHILIPPE DE CHAMPAIGNE is the head of that eminent French artist

after a painting by himself, and it contests the palm with the

Pompone. Mr. Marsh, who is an authority, prefers it. Dr. Thies, who

places the latter first in beauty, is constrained to allow that the

other is "superior as a work of the graver," being executed with all

the resources of the art in its chastest form. The enthusiasm of

Longhi finds expression in unusual praise:

"The work which goes the most to my blood, and with regard

to which Edelinck, with good reason, congratulated himself,

is the portrait of Champaigne. I shall die before I cease to

contemplate it with wonder always new. Here is seen how he

was equally great as designer and engraver."[6]

[Illustration: MARTIN VAN DER BOGAERT.

(Painted by Hyacinthe Rigaud, and Engraved by Gérard Edelinck.)]

And he then dwells on various details; the skin, the flesh, the eyes

living and seeing, the moistened lips, the chin covered with a beard

unshaven for a few days, and the hair in all its forms.

Between the rival portraits by Nanteuil and Edelinck it is unnecessary

to decide. Each is beautiful. In looking at them we recognize anew the

transient honors of public service. The present fame of Champaigne

surpasses that of Pompone. The artist outlives the magistrate. But

does not the poet tell us that "the artist never dies?"

[Sidenote: Drevet.]

As Edelinck passed from the scene, the family of Drevet appeared,

especially the son, Pierre Imbert Drevet, born in 1697, who developed

a rare excellence, improving even upon the technics of his

predecessor, and gilding his refined gold. The son was born engraver,

for at the age of thirteen he produced an engraving of exceeding

merit. He manifested a singular skill in rendering different

substances, like Masson, by the effect of light, and at the same time

gave to flesh a softness and transparency which remain unsurpassed. To

these he added great richness in picturing costumes and drapery,

especially in lace.

He was eminently a portrait engraver, which I must insist is the

highest form of the art, as the human face is the most important

object for its exercise. Less clear and simple than Nanteuil, and less

severe than Edelinck, he gave to the face individuality of character,

and made his works conspicuous in art. If there was excess in the

accessories, it was before the age of Sartor Resartus, and he only

followed the prevailing style in the popular paintings of Hyacinthe

Rigaud. Art in all its forms had become florid, if not meretricious,

and Drevet was a representative of his age.

Among his works are important masterpieces. I name only BOSSUET, the

famed eagle of Meaux; SAMUEL BERNARD, the rich Councillor of State;

FÉNELON, the persuasive teacher and writer; CARDINAL DUBOIS, the

unprincipled minister, and the favorite of the Regent of France; and

ADRIENNE LE COUVREUR, the beautiful and unfortunate actress, linked in

love with the Marshal Saxe. The portrait of Bossuet has everything to

attract and charm. There stands the powerful defender of the Catholic

Church, master of French style, and most renowned pulpit orator of

France, in episcopal robes, with abundant lace, which is the perpetual

envy of the fair who look at this transcendent effort. The ermine of

Dubois is exquisite, but the general effect of this portrait does not

compare with the Bossuet, next to which, in fascination, I put the

Adrienne. At her death the actress could not be buried in consecrated

ground; but through art she has the perpetual companionship of the

greatest bishop of France.

[Illustration: JACQUES BÉNIGNE BOSSUET, BISHOP OF MEAUX.

(Painted by Hyacinthe Rigaud, and Engraved by Pierre Imbert Drevet.)]

[Sidenote: Balechou.]

[Sidenote: Beauvarlet.]

[Sidenote: Ficquet.]

With the younger Drevet closed the classical period of portraits in

engraving, as just before had closed the Augustan age of French

literature. Louis XIV. decreed engraving a fine art, and established

an academy for its cultivation. Pride and ostentation in the king and

the great aristocracy created a demand which the genius of the age

supplied. The heights that had been reached could not be maintained.

There were eminent engravers still; but the zenith had been passed.

Balechou, who belonged to the reign of Louis XV., and Beauvarlet,

whose life was protracted beyond the reign of terror, both produced

portraits of merit. The former is noted for a certain clearness and

brilliancy, but with a hardness, as of brass or marble, and without

entire accuracy of design; the latter has much softness of manner.

They were the best artists of France at the time; but none of their

portraits are famous. To these may be added another contemporary

artist, without predecessor or successor, Stephen Ficquet, unduly

disparaged in one of the dictionaries as "a reputable French

engraver," but undoubtedly remarkable for small portraits, not unlike

miniatures, of exquisite finish. Among these the rarest and most

admired are LA FONTAINE, MADAME DE MAINTENON, RUBENS and VANDYCK.

[Sidenote: Schmidt.]

[Sidenote: Wille.]

Two other engravers belong to this intermediate period, though not

French in origin: Georg F. Schmidt, born at Berlin, 1712, and Johann

Georg Wille, born in the small town of Königsberg, in the Grand Duchy

of Hesse-Darmstadt, 1717, but attracted to Paris, they became the

greatest engravers of the time. Their work is French, and they are the

natural development of that classical school.

[Sidenote: Schmidt.]

Schmidt was the son of a poor weaver, and lost six precious years as a

soldier in the artillery at Berlin. Owing to the smallness of his size

he was at length dismissed, when he surrendered to a natural talent

for engraving. Arriving at Strasburg, on his way to Paris, he fell in

with Wille, a wandering gunsmith, who joined him in his journey, and

eventually, in his studies. The productions of Schmidt show ability,

originality, and variety, rather than taste. His numerous portraits

are excellent, being free and life-like, while the accessories of

embroidery and drapery are rendered with effect. As an etcher he

ranks next after Rembrandt. Of his portraits executed with the

graver, that of the EMPRESS ELIZABETH OF RUSSIA is usually called the

most important, perhaps on account of the imperial theme, and next

those of COUNT RASSAMOWSKY, COUNT ESTERHAZY, and DE MOUNSEY, which he

engraved while in St. Petersburgh, where he was called by the Empress,

founding there the Academy of Engraving. But his real masterpieces are

unquestionably PIERRE MIGNARD and LATOUR, French painters, the latter

represented laughing.

[Illustration: L'INSTRUCTION PATERNELLE, (THE "SATIN GOWN.")

(Painted by Gerard Terburg, and Engraved by Johann Georg Wille.)]

[Sidenote: Wille.]

Wille lived to old age, not dying till 1808. During this long life he

was active in the art to which he inclined naturally. His mastership

of the graver was perfect, lending itself especially to the

representation of satin and metal, although less happy with flesh. His

SATIN GOWN, or \_L'Instruction Paternelle\_, after Terburg, and \_Les

Musiciens Ambulans\_, after Dietrich, are always admired. Nothing of

the kind in engraving is finer. His style was adapted to pictures of

the Dutch school, and to portraits with rich surroundings. Of the

latter the principal are COMTE DE SAINT-FLORENTIN, POISSON MARQUIS DE

MARIGNY, JOHN DE BOULLONGNE, and the CARDINAL DE TENCIN.

[Sidenote: Bervic.]

[Sidenote: Toschi.]

[Sidenote: Desnoyers.]

[Sidenote: Müller.]

[Sidenote: Vangelisti.]

[Sidenote: Anderloni and Jesi.]

Especially eminent was Wille as a teacher. Under his influence the art

assumed a new life, so that he became father of the modern school. His

scholars spread everywhere, and among them are acknowledged masters.

He was teacher of Bervic, whose portrait of Louis XVI. in his

coronation robes is of a high order, himself teacher of the Italian

Toschi, who, after an eminent career, died as late as 1858; also

teacher of Tardieu, himself teacher of the brilliant Desnoyers,

whose portrait of the EMPEROR NAPOLEON IN HIS CORONATION ROBES is the

fit complement to that of LOUIS XVI.; also teacher of the German, J.

G. von Müller, himself father and teacher of J. Frederick von Müller,

engraver of the SISTINE MADONNA, in a plate whose great fame is not

above its merit; also teacher of the Italian Vangelisti, himself

teacher of the unsurpassed Longhi, in whose school were Anderloni and

Jesi. Thus not only by his works, but by his famous scholars, did the

humble gunsmith gain sway in art.

[Illustration: NAPOLEON I.

(Painted by François Gérard, and Engraved by Auguste Boucher

Desnoyers.)]

Among portraits by this school deserving especial mention is that of

KING JEROME OF WESTPHALIA, brother of Napoleon, by the two Müllers,

where the genius of the artist is most conspicuous, although the

subject contributes little. As in the case of the Palace of the Sun,

described by Ovid, \_Materiam superabat opus\_. This work is a beautiful

example of skill in representation of fur and lace, not yielding even

to Drevet.

[Sidenote: Longhi.]

Longhi was a universal master, and his portraits are only parts of his

work. That of WASHINGTON, which is rare, is evidently founded on

Stuart's painting, but after a design of his own, which is now in the

possession of the Swiss Consul at Venice. The artist felicitated

himself on the hair, which is modelled after the French masters.[7]

The portraits of MICHAEL ANGELO, and of DANDOLO, the venerable Doge of

Venice, are admired; so also is the NAPOLEON, AS KING OF ITALY, with

the iron crown and finest lace. But his chief portrait is that of

EUGENE BEAUHARNAIS, VICEROY OF ITALY, full length, remarkable for

plume in the cap, which is finished with surpassing skill.

[Sidenote: Morghen.]

Contemporary with Longhi was another Italian engraver of widely

extended fame, who was not the product of the French school, Raffaelle

Morghen, born at Florence in 1758. His works have enjoyed a popularity

beyond those of other masters, partly from the interest of their

subjects, and partly from their soft and captivating style, although

they do not possess the graceful power of Nanteuil and Edelinck, and

are without variety. He was scholar and son-in-law of Volpato, of

Rome; himself scholar of Wagner, of Venice, whose homely round faces

were not high models in art. The AURORA, OF GUIDO, and the LAST

SUPPER, OF LEONARDO DA VINCI, stand high in engraving, especially the

latter, which occupied Morghen three years. Of his two hundred and one

works, no less than seventy-three are portraits, among which are the

Italian poets DANTE, PETRARCH, ARIOSTO, TASSO, also BOCCACCIO, and a

head called RAFFAELLE, but supposed to be that of BENDO ALTOVITI, the

great painter's friend, and especially the DUKE OF MENCADA on

horseback, after Vandyck, which has received warm praise. But none of

his portraits is calculated to give greater pleasure than that of

LEONARDO DA VINCI, which may vie in beauty even with the famous

Pompone. Here is the beauty of years and of serene intelligence.

Looking at that tranquil countenance, it is easy to imagine the large

and various capacities which made him not only painter, but sculptor,

architect, musician, poet, discoverer, philosopher, even

predecessor of Galileo and Bacon. Such a character deserves the

immortality of art. Happily an old Venetian engraving reproduced in

our day,[8] enables us to see this same countenance at an earlier

period of life, with sparkle in the eye.

[Illustration: GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO

Firenze presso Luigi Bardi e C'Borgo degli Albizzi N^o 460]

Raffaelle Morghen left no scholars who have followed him in portraits;

but his own works are still regarded, and a monument in Santa Croce,

the Westminster Abbey of Florence, places him among the mighty dead of

Italy.

[Sidenote: Houbraken]

Thus far nothing has been said of English engravers. Here, as in art

generally, England seems removed from the rest of the world; \_Et

penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos\_. But though beyond the sphere of

Continental art, the island of Shakespeare was not inhospitable to

some of its representatives. Vandyck, Rubens, Sir Peter Lely, and Sir

Godfrey Kneller, all Dutch artists, painted the portraits of

Englishmen, and engraving was first illustrated by foreigners. Jacob

Houbraken, another Dutch artist, born in 1698, was employed to execute

portraits for Birch's "Heads of Illustrious Persons of Great Britain,"

published at London in 1743, and in these works may be seen the

æsthetic taste inherited from his father, author of the biography of

Dutch artists, and improved by study of the French masters. Although

without great force or originality of manner, many of these have

positive beauty. I would name especially the SIR WALTER RALEIGH and

JOHN DRYDEN.

[Illustration: MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS.

(Painted by Federigo Zuccaro, and Engraved by Francesco Bartolozzi.)]

[Sidenote: Bartolozzi.]

Different in style was Bartolozzi, the Italian, who made his home in

England for forty years, ending in 1807, when he removed to Lisbon.

The considerable genius which he possessed was spoilt by haste in

execution, superseding that care which is an essential condition of

art. Hence sameness in his work and indifference to the picture he

copied. Longhi speaks of him as "most unfaithful to his archetypes,"

and, "whatever the originals, being always Bartolozzi." Among his

portraits of especial interest are several old "wigs," as MANSFIELD

and THURLOW; also the DEATH OF CHATHAM, after the picture of Copley in

the Vernon Gallery. But his prettiest piece undoubtedly is MARY QUEEN

OF SCOTS, with her little son James I., after what Mrs. Jameson calls

"the lovely picture of Zuccaro at Chiswick." In the same style are his

vignettes, which are of acknowledged beauty.

[Sidenote: Strange.]

Meanwhile a Scotchman honorable in art comes upon the scene--Sir

Robert Strange, born in the distant Orkneys in 1721, who abandoned the

law for engraving. As a youthful Jacobite he joined the Pretender in

1745, sharing the disaster of Culloden, and owing his safety from

pursuers to a young lady dressed in the ample costume of the period,

whom he afterwards married in gratitude, and they were both happy. He

has a style of his own, rich, soft, and especially charming in the

tints of flesh, making him a natural translator of Titian. His most

celebrated engravings are doubtless the VENUS and the DANAË after

the great Venetian colorist, but the CLEOPATRA, though less famous, is

not inferior in merit. His acknowledged masterpiece is the MADONNA OF

ST. JEROME called THE DAY, after the picture by Correggio, in the

gallery of Parma, but his portraits after Vandyck are not less fine,

while they are more interesting--as CHARLES FIRST, with a large hat,

by the side of his horse, which the Marquis of Hamilton is holding,

and that of the same Monarch standing in his ermine robes; also the

THREE ROYAL CHILDREN with two King Charles spaniels at their feet,

also HENRIETTA MARIA, the Queen of Charles. That with the ermine robes

is supposed to have been studied by Raffaelle Morghen, called

sometimes an imitator of Strange.[9] To these I would add the rare

autograph PORTRAIT OF THE ENGRAVER, being a small head after Greuze,

which is simple and beautiful.

[Illustration: JOHN HUNTER

(Painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Engraved by William Sharp.)]

[Sidenote: Sharp.]

One other name will close this catalogue. It is that of William Sharp,

who was born at London in 1746, and died there in 1824. Though last in

order, this engraver may claim kindred with the best. His first essays

were the embellishment of pewter pots, from which he ascended to the

heights of art, showing a power rarely equalled. Without any instance

of peculiar beauty, his works are constant in character and

expression, with every possible excellence of execution; face, form,

drapery--all are as in nature. His splendid qualities appear in the

DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH, which has taken its place as the first of

English engravings. It is after the picture of Guido, once belonging

to the Houghton gallery, which in an evil hour for English taste was

allowed to enrich the collection of the Hermitage at St. Petersburgh;

and I remember well that this engraving by Sharp was one of the few

ornaments in the drawing-room of Macaulay when I last saw him, shortly

before his lamented death. Next to the Doctors of the Church is his

LEAR IN THE STORM, after the picture by West, now in the Boston

Athenæum, and his SORTIE FROM GIBRALTAR, after the picture by

Trumbull, also in the Boston Athenæum. Thus, through at least two of

his masterpieces whose originals are among us, is our country

associated with this great artist.

It is of portraits especially that I write, and here Sharp is truly

eminent. All that he did was well done; but two were models; that of

MR. BOULTON, a strong, well-developed country gentleman, admirably

executed, and of JOHN HUNTER, the eminent surgeon, after the painting

by Sir Joshua Reynolds, in the London College of Surgeons,

unquestionably the foremost portrait in English art, and the coequal

companion of the great portraits in the past; but here the engraver

united his rare gifts with those of the painter.

[Sidenote: Mandel.]

In closing these sketches I would have it observed that this is no

attempt to treat of engraving generally, or of prints in their mass or

types. The present subject is simply of portraits, and I stop now just

as we arrive at contemporary examples, abroad and at home, with the

gentle genius of Mandel beginning to ascend the sky, and our own

engravers appearing on the horizon. There is also a new and kindred

art, infinite in value, where the sun himself becomes artist, with

works which mark an epoch.

CHARLES SUMNER.

WASHINGTON, 11TH DEC., 1871.

[Illustration]

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 1: Discourses before the Royal Academy, No. IV.]

[Footnote 2: De Groote Schonburgh der Nederlantsche

Konctschilders en Schilderessen.]

[Footnote 3: This rare volume is in the Congressional

Library, among the books which belonged originally to Hon.

George P. Marsh, our excellent and most scholarly minister in

Italy. I asked for it in vain at the Paris Cabinet of

Engravings, and also at the Imperial Library. Never

translated into French or English; there is a German

translation of it by Carl Barth.]

[Footnote 4: Les Hommes Illustres, par Perrault, Tome ii., p.

97. The excellent copy of this work in the Congressional

Library belonged to Mr. Marsh. The prints are early

impressions.]

[Footnote 5: Panégyrique Funébre de Messire Pompone de

Bellièvre, Premier Président au Parlement, pronouncé á

l'Hostel-Dieu de Paris, le 17 Avril, 1657, par un Chanoine

régulier de la Congrégation de France. The dedication shows

this to have been the work of F. Lallemant of St. Geneviève.]

[Footnote 6: \_La Calcografia\_, p. 176.]

[Footnote 7: \_La Calcografia\_, pp. 165, 418.]

[Footnote 8: Les Arts au Moyen Age et à l'Epoque de la

Renaissance, par Paul Lacroix, p. 198.]

[Footnote 9: Longhi, \_La Calcografia\_, p. 199.]

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