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WATTS (1817-1904)

by

W. LOFTUS HARE

Illustrated with Eight Reproductions in Colour

[Illustration: PLATE I.--DEATH CROWNING INNOCENCE

(Frontispiece)

A little child lying in the lap of the winged figure of Death.

Death, ever to Watts a silent angel of pity, "takes charge of

Innocence, placing it beyond the reach of evil." It was first

exhibited at the Winter Exhibition of the New Gallery, 1896,

and was given to the nation in 1897. It is now at the Tate

Gallery.]

MASTERPIECES IN COLOUR

EDITED BY T. LEMAN HARE

"MASTERPIECES IN COLOUR" SERIES

ARTIST. AUTHOR.

VELAZQUEZ. S.L. BENSUSAN.

REYNOLDS. S.L. BENSUSAN.

TURNER. C. LEWIS HIND.

ROMNEY. C. LEWIS HIND.

GREUZE. ALYS EYRE MACKLIN.

BOTTICELLI. HENRY B. BINNS.

ROSSETTI. LUCIEN PISSARRO.

BELLINI. GEORGE HAY.

FRA ANGELICO. JAMES MASON.

REMBRANDT. JOSEF ISRAELS.

LEIGHTON. A. LYS BALDRY.

RAPHAEL. PAUL G. KONODY.

HOLMAN HUNT. MARY E. COLERIDGE.

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BURNE-JONES. A. LYS BALDRY.

VIGÉE LE BRUN. C. HALDANE MACFALL.

CHARDIN. PAUL G. KONODY.

FRAGONARD. C. HALDANE MACFALL.

MEMLINC. W.H.J. & J.C. WEALE.

CONSTABLE. C. LEWIS HIND.

RAEBURN. JAMES L. CAW.

JOHN S. SARGENT. T. MARTIN WOOD.

LAWRENCE. S.L. BENSUSAN.

DÜRER. H.E.A. FURST.

MILLET. PERCY M. TURNER.

WATTEAU. C. LEWIS HIND.

HOGARTH. C. LEWIS HIND.

MURILLO. S.L. BENSUSAN.

WATTS. W. LOFTUS HARE.

INGRES. A.J. FINBERG.

Others in Preparation.

The Publishers have to acknowledge the permission of Mrs.

Watts to reproduce the series of paintings here included.

[Illustration: IN SEMPITERNUM.]

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At the Manchester Art Gallery

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I

A BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

In July of 1904 the eighty-seven mortal years of George Frederick Watts

came to an end. He had outlived all the contemporaries and acquaintances

of his youth; few, even among the now living, knew him in his middle

age; while to those of the present generation, who knew little of the

man though much of his work, he appeared as members of the Ionides

family, thus inaugurating the series of private and public portraits for

which he became so famous. The Watts of our day, however, the teacher

first and the painter afterwards, had not yet come on the scene. His

first aspiration towards monumental painting began in the year 1843,

when in a competition for the decoration of the Houses of Parliament he

gained a prize of £300 for his cartoon of "Caractacus led Captive

through the Streets of Rome." At this time, when history was claiming

pictorial art as her servant and expositor, young Watts carried off the

prize against the whole of his competitors. This company included the

well-known historical painter Haydon, who, from a sense of the

impossibility of battling against his financial difficulties, and from

the neglect, real or fancied, of the leading politicians, destroyed

himself by his own hand.

The £300 took the successful competitor to Italy, where for four years

he remained as a guest of Lord Holland. Glimpses of the Italy he gazed

upon and loved are preserved for us in a landscape of the hillside town

of Fiesole with blue sky and clouds, another of a castellated villa

and mountains near Florence, and a third of the "Carrara Mountains

near Pisa"; while of his portraiture of that day, "Lady Holland" and

"Lady Dorothy Nevill" are relics of the Italian visit.

[Illustration: PLATE II.--THE MINOTAUR

In this terrible figure, half man, half bull, gazing over the

sea from the battlement of a hill tower, we see the artist's

representation of the greed and lust associated with modern

civilisations. The picture was exhibited at the Winter

Exhibition of the New Gallery, 1896, and formed part of the

Watts Gift in 1897. It hangs in the Watts Room at the Tate

Gallery.]

Italy, and particularly Florence, was perpetual fascination and

inspiration to Watts. There he imbibed the influences of Orcagna and

Titian--influences, indeed, which were clearly represented in the next

monumental painting which he attempted. It came about that Lord Holland

persuaded his guest to enter a fresh competition for the decoration of

the Parliament Houses, and Watts carried off the prize with his "Alfred

inciting the Saxons to resist the landing of the Danes." The colour and

movement of the great Italian masters, conspicuously absent from the

"Caractacus" cartoon, were to be seen in this new effort, where, as has

been said, the English king stands like a Raphaelesque archangel in the

midst of the design.

In 1848 Watts had attained, one might almost say, the position of

official historical painter to the State, a post coveted by the

unfortunate Haydon; and he received a commission to paint a fresco of

"St. George overcomes the Dragon," which was not completed till 1853.

In this year he contributed as an appendix to the Diary of Haydon--in

itself an exciting document, showing how wretched the life of an

official painter then might be--a note telling of the state of

historical and monumental painting in the 'forties, and of his own

attitude towards it; a few of his own words, written before the days of

the "poster," may be usefully quoted here:

ON THE PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT OF ARTISTS

Patriots and statesmen alike forget that the time will come

when the want of great art in England will produce a gap sadly

defacing the beauty of the whole national structure....

Working, for example, as an historian to record England's

battles, Haydon would, no doubt, have produced a series of

mighty and instructive pictures....

Why should not the Government of a mighty country undertake

the decoration of all the public buildings, such as Town

Halls, National Schools, and even Railway Stations....

... Or considering the walls as slates whereon the school-boy

writes his figures, the great productions of other times might

be reproduced, if but to be rubbed out when fine originals

could be procured; for the expense would very little exceed

that of whitewashing....

If, for example, on some convenient wall the whole line of

British sovereigns were painted--were monumental effigies

well and correctly drawn, with date, length of reign,

remarkable events written underneath, these worthy objects

would be attained--intellectual exercise, decoration of space,

and instruction to the public.

The year 1848 was a critical time for Watts; his first allegorical

picture, "Time and Oblivion," was painted, and, in the year following,

"Life's Illusions" appeared on the walls of the famous Academy which

contained the first works of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Watts was

not of the party, though he might have been had he desired; he preferred

independence.

Watts' personal life was at this time pervaded by the influence of Lord

and Lady Holland, who, having returned from Florence to London, had him

as a constant visitor to Holland House. In 1850 he went to live at The

Dower House, an old building in the fields of Kensington. There, as a

guest of the Prinsep family, he set up as a portrait painter. His host

and family connections were some of the first to sit for him; and he

soon gained fame in this class of work.

There was a temporary interruption in 1856, when a journey to the East,

in company with Sir Charles Newton, for the purpose of opening the

buried Temple of Mausolus at Halicarnassus, gave Watts further insight

into the old Greek world; and, one cannot but think, stimulated his

efforts, later so successful, in depicting for us so many incidents in

classical lore. We have, in a view of a mountainous coast called "Asia

Minor," and another, "The Isle of Cos," two charming pictorial records

of this important expedition. The next six years of the artist's life

were spent as a portrait painter; not, indeed, if one may say so, as a

professional who would paint any one's portrait, but as a friend, who

loved to devote himself to his friends.

In pursuance of his principles touching monumental work, Watts engaged

himself over a period of five years on the greatest and the last of his

civic paintings--namely, the "Justice; a Hemicycle of Lawgivers," to

which I shall later refer.

Watts was a man who seems to have enjoyed in a singular degree the great

privilege of friendship, which while it has its side of attachment, has

also its side of detachment. Even in his youthful days he never "settled

down," but was a visitor and guest rather than an attached scholar and

student at the schools and studies. It is told of him that when just

about to leave Florence, after a short visit, he casually presented a

letter of introduction to Lord Holland, which immediately led to a four

years' stay there, and this friendship lasted for many years after the

ambassador's return to England. Other groups of friends, represented by

the Ionides, the Prinseps, the Seniors, and the Russell Barringtons,

seemed to have possessed him as their special treasure, in whose

friendship he passed a great part of his life. Two great men, the

titular chiefs of poetry and painting, were much impressed by him, and

drew from him great admiration--Tennyson and Leighton; from the latter

he learned much; in the sphere of music, of which Watts was passionately

fond, there stands out Joachim the violinist.

Watts used to recall, as the happiest time in his life, his youthful

days as a choral singer; and he always regretted that he had not become

a musician. Besides being fond of singing he declared that he constantly

heard (or felt) mystic music--symphonies, songs, and chorales. Only

once did he receive a \_vision\_ of a picture--idea, composition and

colours--that was "Time, Death, and Judgment." Music, after all, is

nearer to the soul of the intuitive man than any of the arts, and Watts

felt this deeply. He also had considerable dramatic talent.

In 1864 some friends found for Watts a bride in the person of Miss Ellen

Terry. The painter and the youthful actress were married in Kensington

in February of that year, and Watts took over Little Holland House. The

marriage, however, was irksome, both to the middle-aged painter and the

vivacious child of sixteen, whose words, taken from her autobiography,

are the best comment we possess on this incident:

"Many inaccurate stories have been told of my brief married

life, and I have never contradicted them--they were so

manifestly absurd. Those who can imagine the surroundings into

which I, a raw girl, undeveloped in all except my training as

an actress, was thrown, can imagine the situation.... I

wondered at the new life and worshipped it because of its

beauty. When it suddenly came to an end I was thunderstruck;

and refused at first to consent to the separation which was

arranged for me in much the same way as my marriage had

been.... There were no vulgar accusations on either side, and

the words I read in the deed of separation, 'incompatibility

of temper,' more than covered the ground. Truer still would

have been 'incompatibility of \_occupation\_,' and the

interference of well-meaning friends.

"'The marriage was not a happy one,' they will probably say

after my death, and I forestall them by saying that it was in

many ways very happy indeed. What bitterness there was effaced

itself in a very remarkable way." (\_The Story of My Life\_,

1908.)

In 1867, at the age of fifty, without his application or knowledge,

Watts was made an Associate, and in the following year a full Member, of

the Royal Academy. Younger men had preceded him in this honour, but

doubtless Watts' modesty and independence secured for him a certain

amount of official neglect. The old studio in Melbury Road, Kensington,

was pulled down in 1868, and a new house was built suited to the painter

who had chosen for himself a hermit life. The house was built in such a

way as would avoid the possibility of entertaining guests, and was

entirely dedicated to work. Watts continued his series of official

portraits, and many of the most beautiful mythical paintings followed

this change. Five years later, Watts was found at Freshwater in the Isle

of Wight, and in 1876 he secured what he had so long needed, the

sympathetic help and co-operation in his personal and artistic aims, in

Mr. and Mrs. Russell Barrington, his neighbours.

In 1877 Watts decided, in conformity with his views on patriotic art, to

give his pictures to the nation, and there followed shortly after, in

1881 and 1882, exhibitions of his works in Whitechapel and the Grosvenor

Gallery. A leaflet entitled "What should a picture say?" issued with the

approval of Watts, in connection with the Whitechapel Exhibition, has a

characteristic answer to the question put to him.

"Roughly speaking, a picture must be regarded in the same

light as written words. It must speak to the beholder and tell

him something.... If a picture is a representation only, then

regard it from that point of view only. If it treats of a

historical event, consider whether it fairly tells its tale.

Then there is another class of picture, that whose purpose is

to convey suggestion and idea. You are not to look at that

picture as an actual representation of facts, for it comes

under the same category of dream visions, aspirations, and we

have nothing very distinct except the sentiment. If the

painting is bad--the writing, the language of art, it is a

pity. The picture is then not so good as it should be, but the

thought is there, and the thought is what the artist wanted to

express, and it is or should be impressed on the spectator."

In 1886 his pictures were exhibited in New York, where they created a

great sensation; but incidents connected with the exhibition, and

criticisms upon it, caused the artist much nervous distress.

[Illustration: PLATE III.--HOPE

(At the Tate Gallery)

At the first glance it is rather strange that such a picture

should bear such a title, but the imagery is perfectly true.

The heavens are illuminated by a solitary star, and Hope bends

her ear to catch the music from the last remaining string of

her almost shattered lyre. The picture was painted in 1885 and

given to the nation in 1897. A very fine duplicate is in the

possession of Mrs. Rushton.]

It was a peculiar difficulty of his nature which led him to insist, on

the occasions of the London and provincial exhibitions of his pictures,

that the borrowers were to make all arrangements with his frame-maker,

that he should not be called upon to act in any way, and that no

personal reference should be introduced. Watts always considered himself

a private person; he disliked public functions and fled from them if

there were any attempt to draw attention to him. His habits of work were

consistent with these unusual traits. At sunrise he was at his easel.

During the hot months of summer he was hard at work in his London

studio, leaving for the country only for a few weeks during foggy

weather.

At the age of sixty-nine Watts married Miss Mary Fraser-Tytler, with

whom he journeyed to Egypt, painting there a study of the "Sphinx," one

of the cleverest of his landscapes. Three years after his return, he

settled at Limnerslease, Compton, in Surrey, where he took great

interest in the attempt to revive industrial art among the rural

population.

Twice, in 1885 and 1894, the artist refused, for private reasons, the

baronetcy that other artists had accepted. He lived henceforth and died

the untitled patriot and artist, George Frederick Watts.

II

THE MAN AND THE MESSENGER

Having given in the preceding pages the briefest possible outline of the

life of Watts as a man amongst men, we are now able to come to closer

quarters. He was essentially a messenger--a teacher, delivering to the

world, in such a manner that his genius and temperament made possible,

ideas which had found their place in his mind. He would have been the

first to admit that without these ideas he would be less than nothing.

If it were possible to bring together all the external acts of the

painter's life, his journeyings to and fro, his making and his losing

friends, we should have insufficient data to enable us to understand

Watts' message; his great ambitions, his constant failures, his intimate

experiences, his reflections and determinations--known to none but

himself--surely these, the internal life of Watts, are the real sources

of his message? True, he was in the midst of the nineteenth century,

breathing its atmosphere, familiar with the ideals of its great men,

doubting, questioning, and hoping with the rest. To him, as to many a

contemporary stoic, the world was in a certain sense an alien ground,

and mortal life was to be stoically endured and made the best of. It is

impossible to believe, however, that this inspiring and prophetic

painter reproduced and handed on merely that which his time and society

gave him. His day and his associates truly gave him much; the past and

his heredity made their contributions; but we must believe that the

purest gold was fired in the crucible of his inner experience, his joys

and his sufferings. In him was accomplished that great discovery which

the philosophers have called Pessimism; he not only saw in other men (as

depicted in his memorable canvas of 1849), but he experienced in himself

the transitory life's illusions. To Watts, the serious man of fifty

years, Love and Death, Faith and Hope, Aspiration, Suffering, and

Remorse, were not, as to the eighteenth-century rhymester, merely Greek

ladies draped in flowing raiment; to him they were realities, intensely

focussed in himself. Watts was giving of himself, of his knowledge and

observation of what Love is and does, and how Death appears so

variously; and who but a man who knew the melancholy of despair could

paint that picture "Hope"?

Immediately after the central crisis of his personal life appeared the

canvas entitled "Fata Morgana," illustrative of a knight in vain pursuit

of a phantom maiden; and before long there was from his brush the

pictured story of a lost love, "Orpheus and Eurydice," one of the

saddest of all myths, but, one feels, no old myth to him.

By a more careful analysis of the artist's work we hope to learn the

teaching Watts set himself to give, and to ascertain the means that he

adopted; but one point needs to be made clear at this stage, namely,

that although Watts was a great teacher, yet he was not a revolutionary.

The ideals he held up were not new or strange, but old, well-tried, one

might almost say conventional. They represent the ideals which, in the

friction and turmoil of ages, have emerged as definite, clear, final.

They are not disputed or dubious notions, but accepted truisms forgotten

and neglected, waiting for the day when men shall live by them.

Furthermore, Watts was not in any sense a mystic--neither personally or

as an artist. "The Dweller in the Innermost" is not the transcendental

self known to a few rare souls, but is merely conscience, known to all.

The biblical paintings have no secret meaning assigned to them. The

inhabitants of Eden, the hero of the Deluge, the Hebrew patriarchs,

Samson and Satan--all these are the familiar figures of the

evangelical's Bible. "Eve Repentant" is the woman Eve, the mother of the

race; "Jacob and Esau" are the brothers come to reconciliation; "Jonah"

is the prophet denouncing the Nineveh of his day and the Babylon of

this. The teaching--and there is teaching in every one of them--is plain

and ethical. So also, with the Greek myths; they teach plainly--they

hold no esoteric interpretations. Watts is no Neo-Platonist weaving

mystical doctrines from the ancient hero tales; he is rather a stoic, a

moralist, a teacher of earthly things.

But we must be careful to guard against the impression of Watts as a

lofty philosopher consciously issuing proclamations by means of his art.

Really he was not aware of being a philosopher at all; he was simply an

artist, an exquisitely delicate and sensitive medium, who, when once

before his canvas, suddenly filled with his idea, was compelled to say

his word. If there be any synthesis about his finished work--and no one

can deny this--it was not because Watts gave days and nights and years

to "thinking things out." His paintings are, as he used to call them,

"anthems," brought forth by the intuitive man, the musician. This was

the fundamental Watts. Whatever unity there be, is due rather to unity

of inspiration than to strength or definiteness of character and

accomplishment, and this was sometimes referred to by Watts as a golden

thread passing through his life--a thread of good intention--which he

felt would guide him through the labyrinth of distractions, mistakes,

irritations, ill health, and failures.

One of the striking incidents in the life of Watts was his offer to

decorate Euston Railway Station with frescoes entitled "The Progress of

Cosmos." "Chaos" we have in the Tate Gallery, full of suggestiveness and

interest. We see a deep blue sky above the distant mountains, gloriously

calm and everlasting; in the middle distance to the left is a nebulous

haze of light, while in the foreground the rocks are bursting open and

the flames rush through. Figures of men, possessed by the energy and

agony of creation, are seen wrestling with the elements of fire and

earth. One of these figures, having done his work, floats away from the

glow of the fire across the transparent water, while others of his

creative family have quite passed the struggling stage of movement and

are reclining permanent and gigantic to the right of the picture. The

same idea is repeated in the chain of draped women who are emerging from

the watery deep; at first they are swept along in isolation, then they

fly in closer company, next they dance and finally walk in orderly

procession. But Chaos, for all this, is a unity; of all material forms

it is the most ancient form; Cosmos however is the long-drawn tale

beginning with the day when "The Spirit of God brooded on the face of

the waters." Cosmos might have been Watts' synthetic pictorial

philosophy; Herbert Spencer with his pen, and he with his brush, as it

were, should labour side by side. But this was not to be; the Directors

of the North-Western Railway declined the artist's generous offer, and

he had to get his "Cosmos" painted by degrees. On the whole, perhaps, we

should be thankful that the railway company liberated Watts from this

self-imposed task. We remember that Dante in his exile set out to write

"Il Convivio," a Banquet of so many courses that one might tremble at

the prospect of sitting down to it; the four treatises we have are

interesting, though dry as dust; but if Dante had finished his Banquet,

he might never have had time for his "Divine Comedy"; so perhaps, after

all, we shall be well content to be without Watts' "Cosmos," remembering

what we have gained thereby. Besides, the continuous and spontaneous

self-revelation of an artist or a poet is sometimes truer than a rigid

predetermined plan.

[Illustration: PLATE IV.--THOMAS CARLYLE

(At the South Kensington Museum)

This canvas was painted in 1868, and is the earlier of the two

portraits of the famous historian painted by Watts. It formed

part of the Foster Bequest. It is interesting to compare this

with the painting in the National Portrait Gallery.]

A few words from the pen of the artist, appearing by way of preface to a

book, "A Plain Handicraft," may here be quoted to indicate the strong

views Watts took on the "Condition-of-England Question." His interest in

art was not centred in painting, or sculpture, or himself, or his fellow

artists. He believed in the sacred mission of art as applied to profane

things. We see how closely he adheres to the point of view made so

famous by Ruskin. Both Watts and Ruskin, one feels, belong rather to the

days of Pericles, when everything was best in the state because the

citizens gave themselves up to it and to each other. Writing of the

necessity and utility of reviving Plain Handicrafts among the mass of

the people, the painter of "Mammon" says:

"... When the object is to vitalise and develop faculties--the

especial inheritance of the human race, but strangely dormant

in our time among the largest section of the community--the

claim becomes one that cannot be ignored. Looking at the

subject from a point of view commanding a wide horizon, it

seems to be nothing less than a social demand, rising into a

religious duty, to make every endeavour in the direction of

supplying all possible compensating consolation for the

routine of daily work, become so mechanical and dreary. When

home is without charm, and country without attaching bonds,

the existence of a nation is rudely shaken; dull discontent

leading to sullen discontent, may readily become active

animosity. There will not be men interested in the maintenance

of law and order, who feel that law and order bring them no

perceptible formal advantage. In the race for wealth, it has

been forgotten that wealth alone can offer neither dignity nor

permanent safety; no dignity, if the man of the population is

degraded by dull toil and disgraceful competition; no safety,

if large numbers drag on a discontented existence, while the

more active and intelligent leave our shores.

"Whether or not our material wealth is to be increased or

diminished, it is certain that a more general well-being and

contentment must be striven for. A happy nation will be a

wealthy nation, wealthy in the best sense, in the assurance

that its children can be depended upon in case of need, wealth

above the fortune of war, and safety above the reach of

fortune. The rush of interest in the direction of what are

understood as worldly advantages, has trampled out the sense

of pleasure in the beautiful, and the need of its presence as

an element essential to the satisfaction of daily life, which

must have been unconsciously felt in ages less absorbed in

acquiring wealth for itself alone. In olden times our art

congresses would have been as needless as congresses to

impress on the general mind the advantages of money-making

would be in these." (\_Plain Handicraft\_, 1892.)

In G.F. Watts, however, we have an instance of a man who, although he

sees and is attracted by abstract principles of ethics, does not

perceive the manner of their final application; he is not really

scientific. It might be thought that the painter of "Greed and Toil,"

"The Sempstress," "Mammon," "The Dweller of the Innermost," and "Love

Triumphant," would be able to indicate, in that sphere of social

activity called "practical politics," how these principles could find

their expression and realisation. It is interesting, however, to know,

and to have it authoritatively from his own pen, that Watts at least

could not discern either the time or the application of these ethical

principles to the affairs of the great world; for in 1901 there appeared

from his hand a quasi-philosophical defence of the South African War,

entitled "Our Race as Pioneers." He said:

"Inevitable social and political measures claim obedience,

which may be at variance with the spiritual and ethical

conscience; but there comes in the question of necessity,

apparent laws that contest with pure right and wrong; ... and

as we must live, nothing remains but commerce; and commerce

cannot be carried on without competition, and pushing the

limits of our interests. The result of competition can only be

conflict--war, unless some other outlet can be found. Commerce

will not supply this; its very activity, which is its health

and life, will produce the ambition, envy, and jarring

interests that will be fatal to peace.... The principle,

\_Movement\_, must have its outlet, its safety valve. This has

always been war.... The goddess Trade, the modern Pandora, has

in her box all the evils that afflict mankind.... How can

Commerce, as understood by the principles of trade, abolish

war?"

"The simple principles of right and wrong are easily

defined," and perhaps easily painted; "but the complexity of

human affairs and legitimate interests, conducing to the

activity demanded by the great law, \_Movement\_, makes some

elasticity necessary, even where there is the most honest

desire to be just."

Thus, from his own words, we see how the painter transcends the

politician; he is a stimulator, he gives hints, not instructions; he is

commanding, imperative, but he does not show how, nor stay to devise

ways and means. He even perceives, as he thinks, that though the

commands of his pictures, "Faith," "Conscience," and "Love Triumphant,"

be given, yet they cannot be obeyed fully because of "Evolution" and

"Destiny," or as he calls it "Movement."

To his intimate friends Watts, who was so introspective, often

complained of "the duality of my nature." In the midst of affairs,

financial or worldly, on questions of criticism, personal conduct and

the like, the great artist was variable and uncertain. Though humble and

self-deprecatory to an extreme degree, he made mistakes from which he

could escape only with great difficulty; and he suffered much from

depression and melancholy. This man, however, never appears in the

pictures; when once in his studio, alone facing his canvas, Watts is

final, absolute, an undisturbed and undistracted unity, conscious of

that overwhelming "rightness" known to a Hebrew prophet. Whatever Time

or Death may have in store for him or any man, there riding swiftly

above them is Judgment the Absolute One; whatever theories may be spun

from the perplexed mind of the magazine writer about Expansion and

Necessity, there sits the terrible "Mammon" pilloried for all time.

Indeed, he said his pictures were "for all time"; they were from the

mind and hand of the seer, who, rising from his personality, transcended

it; and as the personality of dual nature gradually fades away into the

forgotten past, the Messenger emerges ever more and more clearly,

leaving his graphic testimonies spread out upon a hundred canvases. It

might be said as a final estimate that the value and sincerity of Watts'

work becomes intensified a hundred-fold when we remember that its

grandeur and dignity, its unity and its calm, was the work of a man who

seldom, if ever, attained internal peace. Like some who speak wiser than

they know, so Watts gave himself as an instrument to inspirations of

which he was not able, through adverse circumstances, to make full use.

Thus was the Man divided from the Messenger.

[Illustration: PLATE V.--LOVE AND LIFE

(At the Tate Gallery)

Love, strong in his immortal youth, leads Life, a slight

female figure, along the steep uphill path; with his broad

wings he shelters her, that the winds of heaven may not visit

her too roughly. Violets spring where Love has trod, and as

they ascend to the mountain top the air becomes more and more

golden. The implication is that, without the aid of Divine

Love, fragile Human Life could not have power to ascend the

steep path upward. First exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in

1885. Companion picture to "Love and Death," and "Love

Triumphant."]

III

A REVIEW OF WATTS' WORK

Failing the "Progress of the Cosmos," we have from the mind and brush of

Watts a great number of paintings, which may be grouped according to

their character. Such divisions must not be regarded as rigid or

official, for often enough a picture may belong to several groups at the

same time. For the purpose of our survey, however, we divide them as

follows:

1. Monumental or Historical Paintings and Frescoes.

2. Humanitarian or Social Paintings.

3. Portraits, private and public.

4. Biblical Paintings.

5. Mythical Paintings.

6. "Pessimistic" Paintings.

7. The Great Realities.

8. The Love Series.

9. The Death Series.

10. Landscapes.

11. Unclassified Paintings.

12. Paintings of Warriors.

"Caractacus" was the first of the monumental paintings; by them Watts

appears as a citizen and a patriot, whose insular enthusiasm extends

backward to the time when the British chief Caractacus fought and was

subdued by the Romans. He enters also into the spirit of the resistance

offered to the Danes by King Alfred. George and the Dragon are included

by him in the historical though mythical events of our race. Undoubtedly

the most remarkable of Watts' monumental paintings is the fresco

entitled "Justice; a Hemicycle of Lawgivers," painted for the Benchers'

Hall in Lincoln's Inn. It is 45 x 40 feet. Here Watts, taking the

conventional and theoretical attitude, identifies law-making with

justice, and in his fresco we see thirty-three figures, representing

Moses, Zoroaster, Pythagoras, Confucius, Lycurgus and his fellow-Greeks,

Numa Pompilius and other Romans. Here figures also Justinian, the maker

of the great Code; Mahomet, King Alfred, and even Attila the Hun. The

painting represents the close of this phase of Watts' work; he received

a gift of £500 and a gold cup in memory of its achievement. In England,

at least, no one has ever attempted or accomplished anything in fresco

of so great dimensions. Watts' monumental genius drove him to sculpture

on the grand scale also. "Hugh Lupus" for the Duke of Westminster, and

"Physical Energy," upon which he laboured at intervals during

twenty-five years of his life, are his great triumphs in this direction.

It is not the first time that an artist deficient in health and strength

has made physical energy into a demigod. Men often, perhaps always,

idealise what they have not. It was the wish of the sculptor to place a

cast of "Physical Energy" on the grave of Cecil Rhodes on the Matoppo

Hills in South Africa, indicating how Watts found it possible (by

idealising what he wished to idealise), to include within the scope and

patronage of his art, the activities, aims, and interests of modern

Colonial Enterprise.

\_Humanitarian Paintings\_.--The earliest of these, "The Wounded Heron,"

asks our pity for the injured bird, and forbids us to join in the

enthusiasm of the huntsman who hurries for his suffering prize. The same

thought is expressed in the beautiful "Shuddering Angel," who is

covering his face with his hands at the sight of the mangled plumage

scattered on the altar of fashion. In the large canvases, "A Patient

Life of Unrequited Toil," and "Midday Rest," we have paintings of

horses, both of them designed to teach us consideration for the "friend

of man." "The Sempstress" sings us Tom Hood's "Song of the Shirt."

"The Good Samaritan" (see Plate VII.) properly belongs to this series.

It was presented by the artist to the citizens of Manchester, as an

expression of his admiration of Thomas Wright, the prison

philanthropist, whose work was at that time (1852) creating a sensation

in the north of England. If we compare this painting with other Biblical

subjects executed at a later date, we see how much Watts' work has

gained since then. The almost smooth texture and the dark shadows of the

Manchester picture have given way to ruggedness and transparency. Still,

"The Good Samaritan" is simple and excellent in purpose and composition.

A little known painting entitled "Cruel Vengeance," seems to be a

forecast of "Mammon"; a creature with human form and vulture's head

presses under his hand a figure like the maiden whose head rests on

Mammon's knee. In "Greed and Labour" the seer's eye pierces through the

relations between the worker and his master; Labour is a fine strong

figure loaded with the implements of his toil, with no feeling of

subjection in his manly face; on the other hand, the miser creeping

behind him, clutching the money bags, represents that Greed who, as

Mammon, is seen sitting on his throne of death. "Mammon" is, however,

the greatest of the three, containing in itself the ideas and forms of

the other two. It is a terrible picture of the god to whom many bow the

knee--"dedicated to his worshippers." His leaden face shows a

consciousness of power, but not happiness arising from power; his dull

eyes see nothing, though his mind's eye sees one thing clearly--the

money bags on his lap. The two frail creatures of youth and maiden,

"types of humanity" as Watts said, are crushed by his heavy limbs, while

behind a fire burns continuously, perhaps also within his massive

breast.

\_Portraits\_.--In portraiture, as in other forms of art, Watts had

distinct and peculiar views. He gradually came to the opinion, which he

adopted as his first rule in portraiture, that it was his duty, not

merely to copy the external features of the sitter, but to give what

might be called an intellectual copy. He declared it to be possible and

necessary for the sitter and painter to attain a unity of feeling and a

sympathy, by which he (the painter) was inspired. Watts' earlier

portraits, while being far from characterless, are not instances of the

application of this principle. There is in them a slight tendency to

eighteenth-century ideal portraiture, which so often took the sitter

(and the observer too) back to times and attitudes, backgrounds and

thunderstorms, that never were and never will be.

Watts, however, was slightly influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite school. He

might, had he wished, have been their portrait painter--and indeed, the

picture of the comely Mrs. Hughes, a kind, motherly creature, with a

background of distant fields, minutely painted, is quite on the lines of

Pre-Raphaelite realism.

[Illustration: PLATE VI.--LOVE TRIUMPHANT

(At the Tate Gallery)

Time and Death having travelled together through the ages,

have run their course and are at length overthrown. Love alone

arises on immortal wings, triumphantly, with outspread arms to

the eternal skies.

Given to the nation in 1900.]

Somewhat of the same character is the portrait of Mrs. Nassau Senior,

who, with one knee on a sofa, is shown tending flowers, her rippling

golden hair falling over her shoulders. A full-length portrait of Miss

Mary Kirkpatrick Brunton, dated 1842, also belongs to the old style.

Watts had a passion for human loveliness, and in his day some of the

great beauties sat to him. The "Jersey Lily" (Mrs. Langtry) with her

simple headdress and downcast eye, appeared at the Academy of 1879.

"Miss Rachel Gurney" is a wonderful portrait of a flaming soul

imprisoned in a graceful form and graceless dress. Miss Gurney is shown

standing, turning slightly to the right with the head again turned over

the right shoulder, while the whole effect of energy seems to be

concentrated in the flashing eyes. Watts was able to interpret equally

well personalities of a very different character, and perhaps the canvas

representing Miss Edith Villiers is one of the most successful of his

spiritual portraits. Miss Dorothy Dene, whose complexion Watts was one

of the first to transfer to canvas, Miss Mary Anderson, and Miss Dorothy

Maccallum, were all triumphantly depicted. He will be known, however, as

the citizen portrait-painter of the nineteenth century, who preserved

for us not merely the form, but the spirit of some of the greatest men

of his day. Lord Tennyson sat three times. In 1859 the poet was shown in

the prime of life, his hair and beard ruffled, his look determined. In

1864 we had another canvas--"the moonlight portrait"; the face is

that of Merlin, meditative, thoughtful. As you look at it the features

stand out with great clearness, the distance of the laurels behind his

head can be estimated almost precisely, while seen through them is the

gleam of the moon upon the distant water. The 1890 portrait, in

scholastic robes, with grizzled beard, and hair diminished, is Tennyson

the mystic, and reminds us of his "Ancient Sage"--

"... for more than once when I

Sat all alone, revolving in myself

The word that is the symbol of myself,

The Mortal limit of the self was loosed

And passed into the Nameless, as a cloud

Melts into heaven."

The portrait of John L. Motley, the American Minister to England in

1869, and author of "The Rise of the Dutch Republic," is one of the most

successful paintings of handsome men; Watts here depicts perfectly the

"spiritual body" of strength, purity, and appeal; the eyes are deepest

blue, and the hair the richest brown. In this case the artist has, as he

was so prone, fallen into symbolism even in portraiture, for we can

trace in the background a faint picture of an old-time fighting ship.

Another classic portrait, so different to that by Whistler, is of Thomas

Carlyle. The sage of Chelsea sits ruffled and untidy, with his hands

resting on the head of a stick, and his features full of power. He seems

protesting against the few hours' idleness, and anxious to get back to

the strenuous life. The sitter was good enough to say that the portrait

was of "a mad labourer"--not an unfair criticism of a very good

portrait.

\_The Biblical Paintings\_ are, as before said, in partial fulfilment of

the frustrated scheme of "Cosmos." "Eve Repentant," in an attitude so

typical of grief, is perhaps the most beautiful; it is one of a trilogy,

the others being "She shall be called Woman," and "Eve Tempted." It is

singular that in these three canvases the painter avoids the attempt to

draw the face of the mother of the race. In the first the face is

upturned, covered in shadow; in the second it is hid from view by the

leaves of the forbidden tree, while in the third Eve turns her back and

hides her weeping face with her arms. This habit of Watts to obscure the

face is observed in "The Shuddering Angel," Judgment in "Time, Death,

and Judgment," in "Love and Death," "Sic Transit," "Great Possessions,"

and some others. Often indeed a picture speaks as much of what is not

seen as of what is seen.

Incidents from the Gospels are represented by "The Prodigal," where the

outcast is seen crouching on the ground, his face fixed on vacuity,

almost in the act of coming to himself. "For he had Great Possessions,"

is, however, the greatest and simplest of all. There the young man who

went away sorrowful with bowed head, scarcely knowing what he has lost,

is used by Watts as one of his most powerful criticisms of modern life.

Although the incident is a definite isolated one, yet the costume,

figure, chain of office, and jewelled fingers, clutching and releasing,

are of no time or land in particular.

It is not a little remarkable that Watts, who had breathed so deeply the

air of Italy, and had almost lived in company of Titian and Raphael,

should never have attempted the figure of Christ or His apostles. This

was, however, not without reason. His pictures were not only "for all

time," but apart from time altogether. His only specific reference to

Christianity is his beautiful canvas, "The Spirit of Christianity," in

which he rebuked the Churches for their dissensions. A parental figure

floats upon a cloud while four children nestle at her feet. The earth

below is shrouded in darkness and gloom, despite the steeple tower

raising its head above a distant village. The rebuke was immediately

stimulated by the refusal of a certain church to employ Watts when the

officials found he was not of their faith. In this picture Watts

approached nearest to the Italian Madonnas both in form and colour.

\_The Mythical Paintings\_ are, in the main, earlier than the Biblical

series, but even here the same note of teaching is struck, and our human

sympathies are drawn out towards the figure depicted. In one, "Echo"

comes to find her lover transformed into a flower; in another, "Psyche,"

through disobedience, has lost her love. She gazes regretfully at a

feather fallen from Cupid's wing; it is a pink feather, such as might be

taken from the plumage of the little Lord of Love who vainly opposes

Death in his approach to the beloved one. In "Psyche," Watts has made

the pale body expressive of abject loss; there is no physical effort,

except in the well-expanded feet, and no other thought but lost love.

The legend of "Diana and Endymion" was painted three times--"good,

better, best." A shepherd loved the Moon, who in his sleep descends from

heaven to embrace him. The canvas of 1903 must be regarded as the final

success--the sleeping figure is more asleep, his vision more dreamlike

and diaphanous. "Orpheus and Eurydice" (painted three times) is perhaps

the greatest of his classical pictures. It is one of the few

compositions that were considered by its author as "finished." Here

again the lover through disobedience loses his love; the falling figure

of Eurydice is one of the most beautiful and realistic of all the series

of Watts' nudes, and the agony of loss, the energy of struggle, are

magnificently drawn in the figure of Orpheus. Looking at the canvas, one

recalls the lines of the old Platonic poet-philosopher Boëthius:

"At length the shadowy king,

His sorrows pitying,

'He hath prevailed!' cried;

'We give him back his bride!

To him she shall belong,

As guerdon of his song.

One sole condition yet

Upon the boon is set;

Let him not turn his eyes

To view his hard-won prize,

Till they securely pass

The gates of Hell.' Alas!

What law can lovers move?

A higher law is love!

For Orpheus--woe is me!--

On his Eurydice--

Day's threshold all but won--

Looked, lost, and was undone!"

In "The Minotaur," that terrible creature, half man, half bull, crushing

with his hideous claw the body of a bird, stands ever waiting to consume

by his cruel lust the convoy of beauteous forms coming unseen and

unwilling over the sea to him. It is an old myth, but Watts intended it

for a modern message. The picture was painted by him in the heat of

indignation in three hours.

A small but very important group of paintings, which I call "The

Pessimistic Series," begins with "Life's Illusions," painted in 1849.

"It is," says Watts, "an allegorical design typifying the march of human

life." Fair visions of Beauty, the abstract embodiments of divers forms

of Hope and Ambition, hover high in the air above the gulf which stands

as the goal of all men's lives. At their feet lie the shattered symbols

of human greatness and power, and upon the narrow space of earth that

overhangs the deep abyss are figured the brighter forms of illusions

that endure through every changing fashion of the world. A knight in

armour pricks on his horse in quick pursuit of the rainbow-tinted bubble

of glory; on his right are two lovers; on his left an aged student still

pores over his work by the last rays of the dying sun; while in the

shadow of the group may be seen the form of a little child chasing a

butterfly.

This picture has the merit, along with "Fata Morgana," of combining the

teaching element with one of the finest representations of woman's form

that came from Watts' brush. He was one of those who vigorously defended

the painting of the nude. These are some of his words:

"One of the great missions of art--the greatest indeed--is to

serve the same grand and noble end as poetry by holding in

check that natural and ever-increasing tendency to hypocrisy

which is consequent upon and constantly nurtured by

civilisation. My aim is now, and will be to the end, not so

much to paint pictures which are delightful to the eye, but

pictures which will go to the intelligence and the

imagination, and kindle there what is good and noble, and

which will appeal to the heart. And in doing this I am forced

to paint the nude."

"Fata Morgana" is a picture of Fortune or Opportunity pursued and lost

by an ardent horseman. It was painted twice, first in the Italian style,

and again in what must be called Watts' own style--much the finer

effort. This picture shows us what, in the artist's view, man in this

mortal life desires, pursues, and mostly loses. Fortune has a lock of

hair on her forehead by which alone she may be captured, and as she

glides mockingly along, she leads her pursuers across rock, stream,

dale, desert, and meadow typical of life. The pursuit of the elusive is

a favourite theme with Watts, and is set forth by the picture

"Mischief." Here a fine young man is battling for his liberty against an

airy spirit representing Folly or Mischief. Humanity bends his neck

beneath the enchanter's yoke--a wreath of flowers thrown round his

neck--and is led an unwilling captive; as he follows the roses turn to

briars about his muscular limbs, and at every step the tangle becomes

denser, while one by one the arrows drop from his hand. The thought of

"Life's Illusions" and "Fata Morgana" is again set forth in "Sic Transit

Gloria Mundi," where we see the body of a king whose crown, and all that

represents to him the glory of the world, is left at death. It is not,

however, in Watts' conception essential glory that passes away, but the

\_Glory of the World\_. Upon the dark curtain that hangs behind the

shrouded figure are words that represent his final wisdom, "What I

spent, I had; what I saved, I lost; what I gave, I have."

[Illustration: PLATE VII.--THE GOOD SAMARITAN

(At the Manchester Art Gallery)

This is an early picture, painted in the year 1852 and

presented to the city of Manchester by the artist in honour of

the prison philanthropist, a native of that city.]

These I call "Pessimistic paintings," because they represent the true

discovery ever waiting to be made by man, that the sum total of all that

can be gained in man's external life--wealth, fame, strength, and

power--that these inevitably pass from him. To know this, to see it

clearly, to accept it, is the happiness of the pessimist, who

thenceforward fixes his hope and bends his energies to the realisation

of other and higher goods. In this he becomes an optimist, for this is

the pursuit, as Watts never ceases to teach, in which man can and does

attain his goal. Thus our prophet-painter, having seen and known and

felt all this, having tested it in the personal and intimate life,

brings to a triumphant close his great series, where positive rather

than negative teaching is given.

\_The Great Realities\_.--We have seen in "Chaos" primordial matter; we

have now from Watts' brush the origin of things on the metaphysical

side. In "The All-pervading," there sits the Spirit of the Universe,

holding in her lap the globe of the systems, the representation of the

last conclusions of philosophy. This mysterious picture is very low in

tone, conforming to Watts' rule to make the colouring suit the subject.

Here there is nothing hard or defined; the spirit of the universe is

merely suggested or hinted at, his great wings enclose all. The

elliptical form of this composition is seen again in "Death Crowning

Innocence" and "The Dweller in the Innermost," and the same expressive

indefiniteness and lowness of the colour tones. In the latter effort we

have the figure of Conscience, winged, dumb-faced and pensive, seated

within a glow of light. On her forehead is the shining star, and in her

lap the arrows which pierce through all disguises, and a trumpet that

proclaims peace to the world. Here, therefore, is the greatest reality

from the psychological side. We have also cosmical paintings

representing "Evolution," "Progress," the "Slumber of the Ages," and

"Destiny," all of them asking and answering; not indeed finally and

dogmatically, but as Watts desired that his pictures should do,

stimulating in the observer both the asking and the answering faculty.

In "Faith" we have a companion to "Hope." Wearied and saddened by

persecutions, she washes her blood-stained feet in a running stream, and

recognising the influence of Love in all the beauty of Nature, she feels

that the sword is not the best argument, and takes it off. The colouring

of this picture is rich and forcible, the maroon robe of the figure

being one of Watts' favourite attempts.

A satisfying picture of a little child emerging from the latest wave on

the shore of humanity's ocean, asks the question, \_Whence and Whither\_.

I reserve for "Hope" the final word (see Plate III.). If, as I said, the

optimism which is spiritual and ideal springs from the pessimism which

is material and actual, so too does Hope grow from the bosom of

Despair. This the picture shows. Crouching on the sphere of the world

sits the blindfold figure of a woman, bending her ear to catch the music

of one only string preserved on her lyre. When everything has failed,

there is Hope; and Hope looks, in Watts' teaching, for that which cannot

fail, but which is ever triumphant, namely, Love.

\_The Love Series\_.--According to Watts, Love steers the boat of

humanity, who is seen in one of his canvases tossed about and almost

shipwrecked. Love does not do this easily, but he does it. Love, as a

winged youth, also guides Life, a fragile maiden, up the rocky

steep--Life, that would else fail and fall. Violets spring where Love

has trod, and as they ascend to the mountain top the air becomes more

golden. This picture, "Love and Life" (see Plate V.) was painted four

times. "Love and Death," painted three times, represents the

irresistible figure of Death tenderly, yet firmly, entering a door where

we know lies the beloved one. This is an eternal theme, suggested, I

believe, by a temporal incident--the death of a young member of the

Prinsep family. Love vainly pushes back the imperious figure; the

protecting flowers are trodden down and the dove mourns; and with it all

we feel that though Love fears Death, yet Death respects Love. Just as

"Love and Death" are companion pictures and tell complementary truths,

so "Time, Death, and Judgment" is related to "Love Triumphant" (see

Plate VI.). In the one we see Time, represented by a mighty youth half

clad in a red cloak, striding along with great vigour. His companion,

whom he holds by the hand, is Death, the sad mother with weary, downcast

eye and outspread lap ready to receive her load; but with neither of

them is the final word, for Judgment, poised in the clouds, wields his

fiery sword of eternal law and holds the balance before his hidden face.

In "Love Triumphant" Love takes the place of, and transcends Judgment.

Time and Death having travelled together through the ages, are in the

end overthrown, and Love alone rises on immortal wings. Thus the stoical

painter reaches his greatest height--tells his best truth.

\_The Death Series\_.--As may be expected, Death has no terrors for the

fundamental Watts. Never once does Death look with hollow eyes and

sunken cheeks, or grasp with bony fingers at the living. In "Death

Crowning Innocence," as a mother she puts her halo on the infant

Innocence, whom she claims. Death holds a Court to which all must

go--priest, soldier, king, cripple, beautiful woman, and young child.

The lion must die, the civilisation be overthrown, wealth, fame, and

pride must be let go--so Watts shows in his "Court of Death"; all come

to the end of the book marked \_Finis\_. Death is calm and majestic, with

angel wings, and overhead are the figures of Silence and Mystery,

guarding, but partially revealing what is beyond the veil--sunrise and

the star of hope; while even in the lap of Death nestles a new-born

babe--the soul passing into new realms through the gates of Death.

Again, Death is \_the Messenger\_ who comes, not to terrify, but as an

ambassador to call the soul away from this alien land, quietly touching

the waiting soul with the finger-tips. In the beautiful "Paolo and

Francesca" the lovers are seen as Dante told of them; wafted along by

the infernal wind; of them he spoke:

"... Bard! Willingly

I would address these two together coming,

Which seem so light before the wind."

Francesca's reply to Dante is of Love and Death:

"Love, that in gentle heart is quickly learnt,

Entangled him by that fair form...;

Love, that denial takes from none beloved,

Caught me with pleasing him so passing well,

That as thou seest, he yet deserts me not.

Love brought us to one death."

Watts has admirably caught the sweetness and sorrow of this situation in

his beautiful picture, which, again, is one of the very few he

considered finally "finished." It is almost a monochrome of blues and

greys.

In "Time and Oblivion," one of the earliest of the symbolical paintings,

Time is again the stalwart man of imperishable youth, while Oblivion,

another form of Death, spreads her mantle of darkness over all, claiming

all.

\_Landscapes\_.--Although Watts will ever be remembered for his

allegorical, biblical, and portrait painting, yet he was by no means

deficient in landscape art. Indeed, he carried into that branch of work

his peculiar personality. Not only do his landscapes depict beautiful

scenery in a fitting manner, joining atmosphere, sunshine, and colour,

but they convey in an extraordinary degree the mood of Nature and of

Man. "The Sphinx by Night" has an air of mystery about it that

immediately impresses the spectator, and tells him something that cannot

be communicated by words. The Italian and the Asiatic canvases by Watts,

"Florence," "Fiesole," "Correna," "Cos," and "Asia Minor," all induce

the feeling of repose and happiness, and the message that Nature sends

to her devotees comes sweetly and calmly in "The Rainbow," where we look

over an extensive valley from high ground, while heavy clouds and the

rainbow adorn the upper air. In "The Cumulus" we "see skyward great

cloud masses rolling, silently swelling and mixing." They recall perhaps

the memories of the child, to whom the mountains of the air are a

perpetual wonder. When in Savoy in 1888, Watts painted the Alps, again

with a cloudy sky and a rocky foreground. In this the quietude of the

scene penetrates the beholder. English landscape, to which all true

hearts return, was successfully depicted, both in form and spirit, by

Watts' "Landscape with Hayricks" (like the Brighton Downs), a quiet

view from the summit of a hillside, on which are seen some hayricks. But

perhaps the highest of them all is that very peaceful idyll named "All

the air a solemn stillness holds." It was a view from the garden of

Little Holland House. The time is sunset; a man and two horses are

wending their way home. There are farm buildings on the left, and a

thick wood in the background. In this one we feel how thoroughly Watts

uses all forms as expressions of his invisible moods. In purely

imaginative landscape, however, Watts struck his highest note. His

"Deluge" canvases are wonderful attempts; in "The Dove that returned in

the Evening," the bird is the only creature seen flying across the

dreary waste of waters, placid but for three long low waves. On the

horizon the artist has dimly suggested the ark of Noah. "Mount Ararat"

is especially worthy of mention among the landscapes.

[Illustration: PLATE VIII.--PRAYER

(At the Manchester Art Gallery)

This is one of the most simple and beautiful of Watts' early

works. The young woman is kneeling at the table, book in hand,

her mind absorbed in thoughts of reverence. Painted in 1860.]

Before Watts entered upon his series of great imaginative paintings he

had used realism for didactic purposes. In those days his work was less

rugged than in later times, and had a delicateness and refinement which

is seen to perfection in some of his earlier portraits. A few of these

efforts may be mentioned. "Study" is the bust of a girl, with long red

hair, looking upwards; it represents a beautiful combination of

spirituality and human affection. "The Rain it raineth every day" is a

picture of ennui and utter weariness, beautifully and sympathetically

expressed. The colouring is very brave. In "Prayer" (see Plate VIII.)

the simplicity of the treatment may lead any one to pass it by as

something slight and conventional, but it is perhaps one of the greatest

of this type where simplicity and spirituality are combined. In

"Choosing" Watts approached very near to the summit of simplicity and

charm. A golden-haired girl is choosing a camellia blossom; but where

all are so beautiful it is difficult for her to decide. Great interest

in this picture lies in the fact that it was painted in 1864, and was

drawn from Watts' young bride Miss Ellen Terry. One is almost tempted to

find in this picture the germ of allegory which grew to such heights in

the artist's later efforts.

\_The Warrior Series\_.--Watts, like Ruskin and many other of the

nineteenth-century philosophic artists, idealised warfare. His warriors

are not clad in khaki; they do not crouch behind muddy earthworks. They

are of the days before the shrapnel shell and Maxim gun; they wear

bright steel armour, wield the sword and lance, and by preference they

ride on horseback. Indeed, they are of no time or country, unless of the

house of Arthur and the land of Camelot.

We are thus able to understand the characteristic of Watts' warrior

pictures. The first is "Caractacus," the British chief; though no

Christian, he is the earliest of Watts' heroes. The second is the

beautiful "Sir Galahad," whose strength was as the strength of ten,

because his heart was pure. We see a knight standing bare-headed at the

side of his white horse, gazing with rapt eyes on the vision of the Holy

Grail, which in the gloom and solitude of the forest has suddenly dawned

on his sight. The features of young Arthur Prinsep, with his bushy hair,

who later became a general in the British army, can be detected in this

wonderful and simple picture. Its composition is like a stained-glass

window. It is of all Watts' perhaps the nearest to mysticism, and at the

same time it is an appeal to the young to be like Sir Galahad. The

original is in Eton College Chapel.

In 1863 followed "The Eve of Peace," in which we see a warrior of middle

age, much like Watts himself at that time, who has lost the passion for

warfare, sheathing his sword, glad to have it all over. The peacock

feather that is strewn on the floor of "The Court of Death," and lies by

the bier in "Sic Transit," is fastened to the warrior's casque.

"Aspiration," also taken from young Prinsep (1866), is a picture of a

young man in the dawn of life's battle, who, wishing to be a

standard-bearer, looks out across the plain. He sees into the great

possibilities of human life, and the ardent spirit of life is sobered by

the burden of responsibilities. "Watchman, what of the Night?" is

another wonderful composition, representing a figure with long hair,

clad in armour, looking out into the darkness of the night, with his

hand grasping the hilt of the sword. The colour, low in tone, and the

whole composition, indicate doubt and yet faith. Ellen Terry was the

model for this painting.

"The Condottiere" represents the fighting spirit of the Middle Ages.

This soldier is, like the others, clad in armour, and is not likely to

have a vision of the Holy Grail. His features represent the

determination and vigour which were required of him in those ferocious

days. "The Red Cross Knight accompanying Una" is a charming picture,

representing an incident in Spenser's "Faëry Queen," but the palm must

be given to "The Happy Warrior," who is depicted at the moment of death,

his head falling back, and his helmet unloosed, catching a glimpse of

some angelic face, who speaks to him in terms of comfort and of peace.

This picture, of all the others, shows how Watts has insisted on

carrying to the very highest point of idealism the terrible activities

of warfare:

"This, the Happy Warrior, this is he,

That every man in arms should wish to be."

He sent a copy, the original of which is in the Munich Gallery, to Lord

Dufferin, whose son was killed in the South African War, and he declares

that many bereaved mothers have thanked him for the inspiration and

comfort it has brought to them.

Watts' pictures are widely distributed; a roomful may be seen at the

Tate Gallery, Millbank, S.W. Nearly all the portraits of public men are

at the National Portrait Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London. There is a

portrait of Thomas Carlyle in the South Kensington Museum, three or four

pictures at the Manchester Corporation Gallery, and one at the Leicester

Art Gallery. There are also several of Watts' best pictures in a gallery

attached to his country house at Compton in Surrey; while his fresco

"Justice" can be seen at the Benchers' Hall, Lincoln's Inn.

Watts was conscious of the benefit he had received from the great men

who had preceded him, and in his best moments so essentially humble,

that in his last will and testament, and the letters of gift, he rises

to the great height of artistic patriotism which always appeared to him

in the light of a supreme duty.

The former document has the following phrases: "I bequeath all my

studies and works to any provincial gallery or galleries in Great

Britain or Ireland, which my executors shall in their discretion select,

and to be distributed between such galleries." This Will is dated

November 1, 1899, and relates to such works as had not already been

disposed of. His great gift to the nation was made in 1897, accompanied

by a characteristic letter in which he says:

"You can have the pictures any time after next Sunday. I have

never regarded them as mine, but never expected they would be

placed anywhere until after my death, and only see now my

presumption and their defects and shrink from the consequences

of my temerity! I should certainly like to have them placed

together, but of course can make no conditions. One or two are

away, and I am a little uncertain about the sending of some

others; if you could spare a moment I should like to consult

you."

A few weeks later, following a letter from the Keeper of the National

Gallery, he writes as follows:

"I beg to thank you and through you the Trustees and Director

of the National Gallery for the flattering intention of

placing the tablet you speak of, but while returning grateful

thanks for the intention of doing me this honour I should like

it to be felt that I have in no way desired anything but the

recognition that my object in work, and the offering of it,

has only been the hope of spending my time and exercising my

experience in a worthy manner, leaving to time further

judgment. Most certainly I desire that my pictures should be

seen to advantage, and have a good effect as an encouragement

to artists of stronger fibre and greater vitality, to pursue

if only occasionally a similar direction and object."

At the end of a long life by no means devoid of mistakes and

disappointments, it would seem as though Watts attained to his desires.

The man has passed away, while the witness of his aspirations remains.

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