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MR. JOHN THEODORE TUSSAUD.

WAXWORKS AND ALL ABOUT THEM.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MR. JOHN THEODORE TUSSAUD.

By Norman Nagromi.

'Mine eye doth his effigies witness most truly limned,' were the words of Shakespeare that came back to me as I walked with Mr. John Theodore Tussaud through the celebrated galleries of the waxwork exhibition in the Marylebone Road. * Much interested and amused with all I had seen, I at length, with my conductor, entered his private sanctum.

'Could you give me a brief history of your exhibition?' I began, as soon as we were seated.

'We can claim,' answered Mr. Tussaud, 'to have been established over one hundred years, as it was prior to the French Revolution of 1789 that we had an exhibition in Paris. It was not, however, until the year 1802 that my great-grandmother came to London, and located her show upon the site now occupied by the Lyceum Theatre. Later she removed to Blackheath, then the residence of the Princess of Wales, afterwards Queen Charlotte; then to the Hanover Square Rooms. From there a most successful tour of the provinces was made, and upon her return to London the exhibition found a permanent abode in Baker street, where it remained, as you probably know, from 1833 until 1884, when it was removed to this building.'

Madame Tussaud (at that time Marie Gresholtz), who had been taught the art of modelling in wax by her uncle, M. Curtius, at the commencement of her career was sent to Versailles, in order to give lessons to Madame Elizabeth, the sister of the king, who, with her royal brother, was destined afterwards to suffer death by the guillotine—a fate which also awaited many of the fair pupils then being taught by Marie Gresholtz.

All through the terrible revolution of 1789 she remained in Paris, being frequently called upon to model the newly-severed heads of the victims of that

remorseless engine of vengeance, the guillotine. It fell to her lot to portray in wax the features of the Princess de Lamballe after execution, and it was her nimble fingers that executed from life the counterfeit presentments of those hateful wire-pullers of the revolution—Robespierre, Danton, and Marat. It was not long ere the youthful modeller herself fell under the suspicion of 'The Committee of Public Safety,' who imprisoned her, her companion in misfortune being the celebrated beauty, Madame de Beauharnais, who was destined to become the Empress Josephine.

Madame Tussaud's son, Francis, under the tuition of his mother, for a long time modelled the figures for the exhibition, as

but all these are small exhibitions in comparison with ours.'

'Can you describe the process of constructing a figure? Of course, I don't want you to divulge any secrets,' I remarked.

Mr. Tussaud smiled. 'The heads,' he explained, 'are, first of all, modelled either from life, photos, or sketches from life, in clay. To get the portrait I have to model them with the hair. This, when I am satisfied with the portrait, is removed. A coating of plaster-of-paris is then placed over the clay head, which forms a mould from which the wax head is eventually cast. The real hair is then carefully put in, sometimes one hair at a time, with

put away for future use,' and Mr. Tussaud showed me a room containing some twelve hundred of these casts, each carefully carved with the name of its representative.

'Every figure in the exhibition,' continued Mr. Tussaud, 'has to be cleaned and re-colored once in six weeks, and to be wholly renewed every seven years. The costumes, when done with, are of little or no use, the action of the air, combined with dust, rendering them almost rotten.' When completed and dressed ready for show each figure weighs from one hundredweight to one hundredweight and a half. It takes about three weeks from the commencement to finish a model outright, but working day and night at high pressure I have completed one in three days.

'It is an interesting fact that the figure of Sir Walter Scott was modelled from life by Madame Tussaud whilst in Edinburgh, and met with the great novelist's entire approbation. The figure of Byron was also modelled from life in Italy.'

'We pride ourselves,' said Mr. Tussaud, 'upon the manner in which we dress our figures, and the accuracy of all costumes we vouch for. To begin with, we have a small army of skilled dressmakers, and all our uniforms and costumes are made upon the premises. You shall see the work-rooms presently. The most expensive costume we ever turned out was one worn by the Empress Eugenie in the zenith of her career; that costume cost us not one farthing less than £650 to produce. All the court dresses worn by figures in the Royal groups, upon an average, cost over £100 each. I will tell you a fact that is probably unknown to most people, that every figure in our exhibition is completely clothed from head to foot; all have their entire suit of underclothing, otherwise it would be impossible to make the costumes sit naturally upon the models. Of course we are constantly obliged to change our costumes, more especially those of the ladies, to keep up to date with fashion.

As to the jewellery, the larger stones are



THE ORIGINAL MADAME TUSSAUD.

did his son, and my father Joseph Randall Tussaud, and as I do now. Both my father and myself have exhibited in the Royal Academy, so that you see the art, with its secrets, has descended from one generation to another.'

'Do you consider that your exhibition is the largest of its kind in the world?' was my next query.

'Without hesitation,' answered Mr. Tussaud; 'by far and away the largest.'

We have now on exhibition over 500 figures. We have not, and never have had, what we consider a rival in this country, or any other. Of course, in Paris there is "The Musee Grevin;" in Brussels, "The Musee Castan;" and in New York, "The Eden Museum," I think it is called;

sharp instruments. Then the coloring of the face is laid on, the glass eyes having been previously fixed. The bodies are also completely set up in clay, from which a mould is taken, and the figure is cast in a composition of our own. Then there are the hands. As much care is taken in producing these as in the case of the heads, and they are frequently taken from life. You will, no doubt, be surprised to learn that the mould for a pair of hands sometimes consists of no fewer than thirty separate pieces. All these moulds are carefully labelled with the names of their owners and stored away, so you see there is no chance of, say, Mr. Gladstone getting Lord Derby's hands, or vice versa. The heads are all carefully labelled and



THE PRESENT MADAME TUSSAUD.

THE
MUSEUM