

Pre-Raphaelism.

BY H. H. ROACH, "99."

Among the many developments of civilization in England during the 19th century not the least remarkable is the expansion of art, -- art as a factor in life, art as an institution, art as a motive power. Until this century art had no direct bearing upon the political economy, social conditions or moral life of the British nation. The condition of art in the last century was one of mystery; with its temples, priests, and votaries, it revolved in a charmed circle and played little or no part in the development of the race. It was patronized but not practised by the wealthy, and the common people knew little or nothing about it, save as on state occasions they were permitted to view the pomp and pageantry of high life. On the continent, on the other hand, the conditions were different. Art had been for a long time an important element in the civilization of the European races. The result was that art flourished on the mainland in both castle and cottage, but failed in the British Isles, until the Revolution of 1789 drove to England the cultured aristocracy, the princes of finance and the skilled workmen of the crumbling enterprise of France. With these also came the masterpieces of Versailles, and the Tuilleries, the galleries of Choisenl, of Colonne and the Duke of Orleans,—the heirlooms of the centuries. Art itself followed in their wake and throughout the next sixty years waxed and waned in its struggle for liberty; but was at length overcome and bound fast with the bonds of hopeless, helpless mannerism.

As 1848 was a memorable year in the annals of the history of social and political changes in Europe it was also a marked period in the history of the development of art in England. Fifteen years before the great army of slaves in the British Empire were emancipated, and for half a generation men had been breathing the enlarging air of freedom. The popularization of the House of Commons had brought in the "Era of Reform." For eight years the people had had free postage, for two years free bread, religious freedom had been long enjoyed, and this selfsame year shook every throne upon the European continent, and gave to the Chartists of England the freedom of the franchise, which the middle classes had enjoyed for sixteen years.—society was free, governments were free, the individual was free, the grace of God was free; but as yet art was not free. Light was breaking however. A prophet had arisen in the person of Turner—a veritable John the Baptist "preaching repentance." with all the power and grace, fearlessness and eloquence of the prophet of the wilderness. Turner went to nature and was instructed, he turned to his canvass and preached the thorough "stiffness of what was stiff, the grace of what was graceful and the vastness of what was vast." He caught the sublime and transferred it to canvas, the