



Little Trips Among the Eminent.

Lord Leighton.

In our last biographical sketch, on Sir John E. Millais, it was mentioned that Millais succeeded Leighton as President of the Royal Academy. The name "Leighton," no doubt, brought back to many of our readers the memory of two pictures exhibited at Toronto Exhibition, the one, "Eucharis," if we remember rightly, in 1910, in the central room of the Art Gallery nearest to the lake; the other, "Summer Dreams," in 1909, a large canvas, occupying the most honored position in the opposite room farthest to the north. The first was of a young woman bearing upon her head a basket filled with fruit, hence the name of the picture, "Eucharis," from a Latin word meaning thanksgiving. The second was also of a young woman in diaphanous robes, lying asleep upon a stone garden seat, quite oblivious of the beautiful garden, with its statuary stretching beyond her. The people who crowded about these pictures remarked especially upon the exquisite finish of the flesh tints, hair and drapery, on which not a brush-mark could be described; and, although other pictures, by reason of greater fire of activity or emotion, may have impressed more, these could not but be remembered for their statuesque dignity and repose. Both, indeed, were typical of Lord Leighton. All through his life he painted for the most part either Greek figures and scenes from classical history, or modern figures marked by Grecian pose and drapery. All through his life he aimed to depict perfect beauty; the ugly or the commonplace had no attraction for him; he idealized everything that he touched.

Leighton was born just one year after Millais, at Scarborough, "a bleak coast town far up on the Eastern shore of England," the precise date being December 3rd, 1830. Like Millais, the talent for art appears to have been spontaneous with himself. In all his ancestry, no artist appears. His father and grandfather both were physicians, the latter having been court physician to two of the Emperors of Russia. From the beginning, however, the young Frederick was encouraged to develop his talent, and, although it was insisted that he should have a good general, and especially a good classical education, his drawing and painting lessons were always kept to the fore.

At the age of ten he went abroad with his mother, who was an invalid, obliged constantly to try a change of scene and climate for the sake of her health; and henceforth, until he had almost reached the age of thirty, he lived now at one place, now at another, on the continent, becoming acquainted with different schools of art, and taking lessons from the best teachers of his day in Europe.

At eleven, he was studying under Francesco Meli, in Rome. A few years later the family removed to Florence, and it was here that he told his father of his decision to be a painter. Upon the perhaps not unexpected announcement, the father went at once to talk the matter over with Hiram Powers, a noted American sculptor then in Italy. "Sir," said Mr. Powers, "you have no choice in the matter; he is an artist already." Then, after a pause, "He

may become as eminent as he pleases."

Later the lad studied in many different places, Dresden, Berlin, Paris, and particularly in Frankfurt, where he came under the influence of Steinle, perhaps the strongest art teacher of his day. While in Brussels, he painted his beautiful picture, "Cimabue Finding the Boy Giotto," which represents the great artist coming upon the little shepherd boy Giotto (afterwards also a famous artist), drawing a sheep with a bit of charcoal on one of the rough stones of the field.

From Belgium, Leighton went to Paris, then back to Italy, where his life was made unusually pleasant by meetings with the Brownings, Mrs. Kemble, and a number of French artists, among them Bouguereau. Here, too, he met Thackeray, who, after seeing him at work one day upon his "Cimabue's Madonna Carried Through the Streets of Florence," wrote home to Millais: "Millais, my boy, I have met in Rome a versatile young dog called Leighton, who will, one of these days, run you hard for the Presidentship"—referring, of course to the Presidentship of the Royal Academy.

In 1855, this great canvas was exhibited, in the same "Academy" at which were shown Hunt's "The Light of the World," and Millais' picture of firemen, "The Rescue." The "Cimabue," however, partly because of its size, attracted more attention than either of these. It was long and narrow, filling one side of the room, and representing a triumphal procession through the streets of the city. At the head of the procession, clad in white, and crowned

foremost of the British artists, and the fact that it was bought by Queen Victoria did no little to increase his fame.

During 1858 Leighton worked for a time in London, coming in touch with the Pre-Raphaelites, Millais, Hunt and Rossetti, whose work, so far as it entailed attention to finish and detail, won his complete approval.

In 1860 he decided to settle permanently in London, and henceforth became a regular exhibitor at the Academy, where he was soon made, first, associate, then member. He continued, however, to make frequent trips abroad, and in 1867 visited Turkey and Egypt, gathering in these places a stronger sense of the rich color, the indolent poses and luminous atmospheres which he so loved to paint in his pictures.

It was after he came back from this trip that he had built to his already beautiful home the famous "Arab room," which has been described as follows: "There is a dim dome above, and a fountain falling into a great black-marble basin below; there are eight little arched windows of stained glass in the dome; and there are white marble columns, whose bases are green, whose capitals are carved with rare and curious birds, supporting the arches of the alcoves. The Cairo lattice-work in the lower arched recesses lets in only so much of the hot light of midsummer as consists with the coolness and the quiet and the perfect Oriental repose which give the chamber its spell."

Quite like a dream of "Arabian Nights," is it not?—and quite worthy the handsome owner, and the

usually characterizes such places. Everything was kept with scrupulous neatness. About the wall ran a copy of the Parthenon frieze, while above and on the easels were Leighton's own pictures and studies, every one almost classic in suggestion, every one idealized beyond mortal beauty.

In 1879 Leighton was made President of the Royal Academy, a position for which he was eminently fitted by his fine presence, his courtly manners, his proficiency as a linguist, and his great knowledge of the various schools of art. He was, it is said, adored by the students not only because of his eloquent lectures, but also for his never-failing kindness and sympathy which never permitted him to tire of giving individual help. Leighton was, in short, beautiful in life as in manner. He lived, as it was said, ever among his fellows as one who had always in mind the thought, "We pass this way but once."

In 1886 he was created a baronet, and ten years later, but a month before he died, was advanced by Queen Victoria to be a peer of the United Kingdom, with the title of Baron Leighton, of Stretton. Some time since, however, he had been obliged to give up his duties in the Academy on account of ill-health, and as the months went on his sufferings became intense. He died in 1896, almost with the words on his lips, "Give my love to the Academy."

In these days of "broad effects" and quick brush-work, there is a tendency to underestimate the fine finish of work such as Leighton's; there is a tendency to accept the rather cynical estimation of Whistler, "Oh, yes, a marvellous man! He is a great speaker, a master of many languages, a fine musician, a leader of society; and they tell me he paints, too!" Even Leighton himself felt that he had failed to convey to the people the aesthetic message which had meant so much to him, and which he had wished to be his heritage for all time. His work had never been the kind which appeals most to ordinary men. People, as a rule, do not care much for classics or classic ideals. They want something warm and human, even at the expense of beauty. Nevertheless, there are those who assert that Leighton will yet come to his own in art, and be popularly known as the great artist which he undoubtedly is.

Perhaps his best work was done in the line of mural decoration, to which his long processional pictures tended, although he executed but few pieces for strictly mural purposes; but the England of his day made no demand for work of this kind. He was ahead of his time. Were he working to-day, when every public building of any pretensions the world over must have its "mural pieces," he would unquestionably rank with the highest. As it is, we only have his many canvasses to preserve his name, and his few famous wall-paintings, "The Arts of War" and "The Arts of Peace," with a fine panel in the Royal Exchange.

Among his pictures are the following—you may come upon prints of them any day: "The Lemon Tree," "A Syracusan Bride Leading Wild Animals for Sacrifice to the Temple of Diana," "Helen of Troy" (1865), "Psyche at the Bath" (1867), "St. Jerome in the Desert," "Dadalus and Icarus" (1869), "Greek Girls



Summer Slumber.

From a painting by Lord Leighton, P. R. A.

with laurel, marches Cimabue, leading by the hand the little Giotto. Behind him, and just below a Gothic grotto, is the picture of the Madonna, wreathed with flowers and carried by six men. Immediately following are a group of famous thirteenth century artists, with Dante standing disdainfully, as usual, at one side. Following came young men and maidens and little children, singing and playing on musical instruments. Although Leighton was but twenty-four at the time, this picture at once put him among the

splendid house, known as one of the most beautiful in London. Leighton had a mania for rare tapestries, fine paintings, and, above all, for tiles. The drawing-room was hung with dreamy Corots and rich Constables; along the stairway were paintings by Reynolds, Watts, and a genuine Tintoretto; in the great hall below was a massive bronze statue of Icarus, and everywhere the floors were covered with precious tiles, most of which had been brought from Persia.

Nor was the studio upstairs given over to such Bohemian carelessness as