

which, whether they may be accepted as authoritative or not, make extremely interesting reading.

A copy of this book, quaintly bound and time stained, published in Philadelphia in 1816, informs us that the branch of the West family, to which the artist belonged, was descended from the Lord Delaware, who distinguished himself in the wars of Edward III, and particularly under the Black Prince, at the battle of Cressy. About the year of 1667 the West family embraced the tenets of the Quakers. Colonel James West, the friend and companion in arms of the patriot Hampden, is said to have been the first proselyte of the family. The Wests emigrated to America in 1699. Thirty-nine years later—in 1738—Benjamin West was born in what was then the neighboring county of Chester, near Springfield, which Thomas Pearson, his maternal grandfather, so named because a large spring of water was discovered in the first field he cleared for cultivation. The house in which Benjamin West first saw the light still stands close by the gray-walled structure of Pennsylvania's Quaker college at Swarthmore. It is a quaint, curious relic of the primitive domestic architecture of 1724; in appearance unobtrusive and serene, well befitting the dwelling place of the friend, surrounded by plenteous evidences of the pastoral beauty which attuned the young eyes of the Quaker painter to an early delight in the observation of nature. Now the groves of Academus are peopled with youthful figures, capped and gowned. Once among the trees, on summer days, gathered the friendly Red Men. The little weather-beaten biography informs us that it was the Indians who taught Benjamin West to prepare the red and yellow colors with which they painted their ornaments. To these his mother added blue, giving him a piece of indigo; thus he secured the three primary colors. His first brush we are assured was impro-

vised from the tapering fur of the family cat's tail. The brush did not last long. A further supply, however, was secured by successive depredations upon Grimalkin's back. These became so frequent that his father noticed the altered appearance of pussy's coat and became grievously vexed at the disease which threatened to mar her beauty. Thereupon Benjamin confessed.

It was soon after the boy had first begun to indulge his imitative faculties that the visit of a relative, who became interested in the drawings and flowers around the West home, was followed by the present of a box of paints and several engravings. This precious gift was an inspiration. At night he placed the box on a chair by his bedside and often did he stretch out his hand in the darkness, half fearful that he might find his riches only a dream. The next morning he rose at day-break, and carrying his colors to the garret, proceeded to work. The time he should have spent in school he stole for painting. The school-master observing his absence, sent to ask the cause of it. This led to the discovery of his secret occupation. His mother, proceeding to the garret, found the truant; but so surprised and delighted was she at the picture which confronted her that she gladly forgave him. He had made, not a mere copy, but a new composition of his own from two of the engravings which he had colored from his intuitive feeling for the right tints. Sixty-seven years afterwards the picture hung in the same room with the painting, "Christ Rejected," and West, it is said, declared that there were inventive touches of art in his juvenile essay, which in none of his subsequent efforts he had been able to excel.

Young West was sent to Philadelphia to school, where he had the advantage of the excellent instruction of Doctor Smith, the provost of the college, who was a fine classical scholar,