

NEVERMORE.

DREAMILY watching the heaving surge,
I heard old Ocean swinging slow,
From stormy tones to plaintive dirge,
For lost ones sleeping calm below.

The waves gleamed soft and glistened bright ;
In them as rippling o'er the shells,
It only seemed to sheathe its might,
While tolling for lost souls the knells.

Rolling they broke, and gliding near
Far reaching lapped the pebbled shore,
Their curling crests suppressed a sneer,
And hoarsely whispered—"Nevermore."

Montreal.

M. FANNING.

PORTRAIT PAINTING.—II.

IN claiming this position for portrait painting above the painting of history, let us illustrate by two pictures—the first, the Battle of Gettysburg. For a series of historical events full of dramatic play, of deep emotions, of breathless interest, Gettysburg will satisfy the chronicler. But the artist must go through the mass of detail, requiring weeks, visit the positions held by the various brigades, see in effect the cannonade, the wild charge, the heroic defence, retreat, rally, sulphur, dust, commanders, men—everything. But all this cannot be given in a picture, one event alone being sufficient for the canvas. He must choose, therefore, some leading incident to hold the primary place in his picture, and a few minor incidents to sustain the character of the leading thought. Character demands supremest attention ; it underlies and controls the whole intention of the picture. The character which is to invest the *motif* must be embodied in some leading figure, wisely placed, on which, for pictorial effect, the light must be focussed. The accessories which repeat the thought are of importance ; these, leading away in forms determining the lines of the picture, are relieved from the mass of material which fills the background by appropriate tones to graduate the distance. The day is hot ; a glimpse of sultry sky reveals the fact. Smoke, belching from artillery, conceals the horizon ; but smoke of musketry leads up to the front, and sweeps right across the canvas. Near the centre of the picture General Meade looms out amongst his staff, posing, between calmness and excitement, splendidly for a picture. The boys in blue have just charged over the foreground, and those in gray may be seen in glimpses to the left, getting ready for disordered retirement. A dismounted field-piece forms, with a horse and rider thrown to earth, a strong mass of colour for the foreground. A shell is bursting just at the point where the radiating lines of fire and fragments balance the line of distant "Round Top." The flash brings into focus the highest point of light, and answers as a foil to the broader light which glows upon the General's face. This broader light is seconded upon the faces of his staff ; it falls next upon the hero who bites the dust ; then illumines the cloud that rolls away the battle-smoke. This is the picture of Gettysburg ; but not all the picture. You have caught the idea of a leading thought, have you ? then look into the General's face and read it, for it is written there. The whole battle is going on in his mind, and his face is a mirror of it. Observe the faces of his staff, and see if they are not appropriate accessories to his. And then the on-rushing column ; note their movements, man by man. Each form is full of intensest action, and the whole is a whirlwind of life. Read the weary marches in the worn-out shoes of the dying soldier ; the chilly night-dews on his earth-painted and tattered blouse. Read the home-thought—or perhaps it may be a curse of bitterness—that curls and quivers on his lip. Oh no, there is a smile wreathing its mysterious garland of a whispered prayer to rest upon those parted lips ! The light of another bivouac is flushing his cheek, and kindling in eyes that shall look no longer on red and shot-ploughed fields of earth, but forever upon the sunlit fields of peace. Now we begin to see Gettysburg ; for our latent thought is stirring itself to take up suggestions like loose threads of a garment, and, with their aid, discover what was in the artist's mind through the long weeks of his work, what were the legends from which he shaped his picture, and the story of the day and hour he chose to tell us of.

Now, let us sketch a portrait. It shall be of the commander of the Union forces on the occasion referred to. As he advances to the place assigned him, the enigma which first confronted us begins to unfold itself, and the complex nature of the man becomes simplified by degrees. See how every feature of his face tells what he has come through. The conditions attending his rise from a junior officer up to receiving command before Gettysburg are written in display lines—strong, plodding, earnest manliness, with a flavouring of reticence, the latter contributing in no

trifling degree to his receiving an appointment over more prominent political and military men, and helping very much the impression of his ability as a strategist. The painter's question is, How shall we bring into unison on the canvas all the features of his character ? His whole frame is the battle-ground of forces in his being, or the playground, it may be, according as they are found at variance or in agreement with one another. But what is to give the key to the situation ? Has he any peculiar characteristics ? Is there an all-controlling bias that bends and directs his energies ? If he were a domestic man, and we were to paint him under the genial influences of home life, our task would be lighter ; but it is General Meade we look upon and whom we must portray.

We are confronted with a greater work than the battle-piece of Gettysburg ; for in it was studied the history of an event, but in him we are studying the history of a life. In the battle picture were grouped figures and smoke to give the effect of movement in wild earnestness, and effect is the only thing we seek ; for in this portrait we have the pulsing life and thought that sent armies careering like a swollen torrent over the valleys, giving in brief the causes and their outworkings of effect as well. In the former were adapted the cloud, the men, and the shell to the relating of an incident—adaptation merely ; in the latter we must take the strong lines of character and the subtler lines, which are like shifting hieroglyphs, and, like a skilled interpreter, write their meaning in light and shade. In the former were employed means for giving expression, fullest expression, to the events of a passing hour ; in the latter we have the history of successes and reverses traced in Nature's handwriting upon his face, carried in the movements of his frame, perceived in the working of those innate forces which helped him on his march to eminence, gathering by intuition the whole volume of impressions, which serve a purpose in giving to the likeness its truest expression. To such a task let none approach but with reverent head. The after generations will know him better by his portrait than by what the books have said of him. Now we are ready to commence the picture. The leading line of character—that which touches most points—is active thoughtfulness. Arrange his muscular frame and well-poised head so that every line and every fold of drapery even will exhibit the peculiar stamp of the man. Do you realise what we have undertaken ? You say, in colloquial language, we have undertaken to handle the man who handled the armies of North and South, and we can't do it. But employing the resources of our experience with men, interchange of thought by anecdote, jest, and repartee, by waking up the memory of events, discussing the wrongs and rights of peoples, the dangers and hopes of the times, or any other theme—we discover the lines of character and the grouping of qualities of physical and mental nature. We find them all leading up to their features of expression. Upon them we play as upon a harp of many strings, and the response is unison and beauty. The subject has come to us through a constant run of impressions ; these the pliant pigments have received, and the result is resemblance. After many times recasting the effects of the picture, and after weary and persistent study, there stands out from the canvas the image of General Meade, a greater picture than that of Gettysburg, more full of suggestion. It is more full of suggestion, because it contains and reveals more. A subject taken from quieter circles of society will reveal less character, because he has had less of the exercise that develops character. And even if General Meade required a home portrait—a picture to adorn a quiet space above the fireside, for home, the dwelling place of peaceful thoughts, the altar for the tenderest and happiest gifts—much would be left out that found a place in the other. There would be no eye-flash of hot action, no scenting of battle afar. Such would be out of place then. And yet the tracing of all those strong experiences in stormy campaignings would be seen to linger, but only to weave their lines into wavelets that ripple and dance under the sunlight of home.

Queries as to method cannot be answered. The most enthusiastic and patient student alone may find his way into the sanctuary of this art.

If the painter can invest the portrait with what he realises of the life and character of his subject, another man, as he looks upon the picture may read as from a volume the character and life it represents. This may be found true in many portraits by Vandyke, Velasquez, and others. What is here said will not permit the inference that photography, with its repute for exactness, can give a better portrait of a man than what some term the unsteady touch of pencil or brush. The fact that the camera has no soul and only one eye is not the least against it. But we may have to talk about photography in its relation to portraiture again. The perception, interpretation, and expression of character are of infinite value above the swing of draperies, or arrangement of colours. To secure those qualities in an eminent degree is a gigantic task. It is the portrait painter's great problem. In it he confronts his titan difficulty, in its solution he achieves his true success.

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