

become their possessor? * Of this there is no doubt, the pictures are here, and there is no doubt that in 1871 the Tuileries and the Palais Royal were plundered very completely; the Chateau de Neuilly and the Chateau of the Rothschild family at Surennes were sacked, and some works of Art found their way thence to England. Queen Isabella of Spain, in her flight from Madrid, in 1868, took with her several pictures which were sold at Paris. The Grand Duke of Tuscany, when leaving Florence, in 1856, sold his pictures, and there is ample testimony that some of the Old Masters seeking admission into the Gallery in Phillip's Square can be traced to three or more of these sources. Again, this is a fact, which may as well be stated forthwith:—Mr. Wallace Superintendent of the Kensington Museum, having seen these Old Masters, and approving them, wished to have some of them for exhibition at the Bethnal Green Museum, an offshoot of the former, and especially erected for the benefit of the working classes—*East-enders*—who although they do not live in stately mansions, yet have taste and discrimination, as they evidenced by so long maintaining the exponents of Shakspeare in the unclassical region of Sadler's Wells, when the *West-end* National Theatres were either closed or devoted to very different objects from that of presenting the real Drama of England.

If the dramatic poet must be able to say with Aristophanes,

"I have an understanding audience,"

so must the owner of these Old Masters be able to say,

I have an understanding critic,

one who can and will pass judgment wisely and with understanding; otherwise my pictures will be treated as "worthless imitations," counterfeited by some "Chattertons in pictorial art" for the purpose of deceiving, which they occasionally do so effectually that any one desirous to purchase an "original" will have to hold communion with the dead and call up the spirits of Rubens, Rembrandt and Raphael, after the manner of the Witch of Endor, who brought up the soul of the departed prophet Samuel to confirm the word that had been spoken relative to Saul being delivered into the hands of the Philistines.

"Mahpop" says of the Landscape by Jacob Ruysdael: "The scene is a familiar acquaintance. We have even met it more than once in the windows of the well known establishments of Messrs. Attenborough in London." The Attenboroughs are pawnbrokers and money lenders, and it is scarcely probable that Queen Isabella of Spain, the former owner of the picture in question, should have hypothecated it, and that the present owner bought it as an unredeemed pledge or pawn. The Spanish Curator of Her Catholic Majesty's private picture gallery may have been deceived in the same way that Sir Charles Eastlake and Mr. Ellis were with the *Andrea Mantegna* and the *Turner*; and the Grand Duke of Tuscany may also have had imposed upon him two "old pieces of canvas, super-added with sundry coats of varnish, duly blistered, patched and smoked," and yet, when washed with some mild detergent, the *Ahasuerus and Esther* and the *Judgment of Jupiter* suddenly appeared. Perhaps the disproportionate size of the calf of the leg to the kneeling page" may be accounted for by over blistering. The picture by "Mr. Raphael" belonged to Baron Rothschild, at Paris, and there is absolute and irrefragable testimony as to its genuineness, and if compared with some of the "heads" of families that were exhibited at the Windsor Hotel in 1878, when the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Dufferin gave his cheque, it will be, in truth, Hyperion to the Satyrs.

If the object of the Council is, presumably, to encourage the Fine Arts in all its branches and phases, ancient and modern, I hope these Old Masters will be properly exhibited, so that the voice of public opinion may be heard relative to them, and that there will be some sensible honest criticism upon their merits. If in the beginning (1860) it was the aim of the Council to do everything that "may be found practicable and conducive to the Fine Arts," I trust it is now, and ever will be, its desire to give to the public, and more particularly to the members of the Art Association, the opportunity of seeing all the works of art that lie within the prerogative of genius, when presented for exhibition.

Anthony Raphael Mengs, who was not only a good artist but also an admirable critic, says: "It appears to me indubitable that the part most noble in painting is not that which solely delights the sight and renders a work pleasing to men who are in fact ignorant of the art, but that those parts are the most valuable which satisfy the understanding and content those who know how to use the faculties of the mind"; and after referring to the works of Raphael, and descanting on their beauties, he contends that they "move our intellects, and acquire, above all, power and authority, like poetry and oratory." Speaking for others as well as for myself, we could derive more solid pleasure in a week from the contemplation of the *Rembrandt*, the *Rubens*, the *Cerreggio*, the *Raphael* and the *Palma il Vecchio*, than we could from the everlasting presence of one-half the pictures in the Gallery at Phillips Square. The Old Masters will be indeed Tritons among the minnows; and, as contrasts they will be as great in point of genius as the writings of Shakspeare, Byron and Scott are superior to those of Boucicault, Amos Cottle and Mrs. Beecher Stowe, or as the oratory of Sheridan and Burke is to that of Ulysses Grant and Benjamin Butler.

* In the Miles Gallery there are eighty pictures by the best Masters of the 16th and 17th centuries. The family of Miles have been for generations merchants in the City of Bristol.

In conclusion, I do not suppose that "Mahpop" writes in ignorance, but it may not be amiss to quote a passage from Mengs, an author with whom he is doubtless very familiar: "He who manifests only the errors, and is silent on the beauties of a work, is either ignorant or invidious, or perhaps both one or the other." It is a pity that "Mahpop's" great knowledge, which has made him a doubter, should have blinded him to the beauties of some of these Old Masters,—whether he thinks them genuine or not. Perhaps, after they are hung on the walls of the Gallery, he may discover many good qualities which were not observable when the pictures were resting on the floor; a new angle of incidence may bring about a different reflection, and by and bye the public, through the columns of the SPECTATOR, may be honoured with a more favourable criticism.

Thomas D. King.

THE CRIMES OF RESPECTABILITY.

It is a mistake to suppose that "respectability" is in itself a "crime." This is the error to which communists and extreme radicals fall a ready prey. Yet there are crimes to which respectability is especially prone. These it behoves us to remember in judging of the rectitude of prevalent communistic theories.

That celebrated volume of short essays, in which brevity forms much of the wit displayed—the dictionary—demonstrates that "respectability" means simply the ability to command respect. The respect-compelling force, the soul of external respectability, varies according to the condition of heart and mind existing in the community. There can be little doubt that in this age wealth and the love of it, is the primary cause of respect; position, in the State or in society the second and personal ability, or genius, the third; while excellence of moral character and entire rectitude of conduct is a quite imponderable and infinitesimal homœopathic force as a respect-producing commodity.

The subtlety of this last remark will commend it to all readers. The allopathic schools will pronounce the view sound and excellent. Homœopaths will see in it a concealed appreciation of the power of one tiny globule of goodness to eradicate a weight of evil.

It would be easy enough to bring overwhelming and individual proof of all these positions, by becoming somewhat personal. But that ground is already sufficiently occupied by the "party organs," and might excite a jealousy in them, not respectable. A familiar instance, however, of the relative strength of the respect-producing forces enumerated, may be found in a recent instance brought with sufficient prominence before the public to justify the allusion. Sir Francis Hincks has "done the State some service" in his time; yet all this service and personal ability weighed in the balance with the loss of wealth he is supposed to have caused individuals, is found utterly wanting. Where that most sacred Goddess Wealth—the Diana of the Canadians—is attacked, the respectability of position in the State, or in society, is utterly powerless to quench the agonized cry of the outraged multitude. The woeful sacrilege is promptly avenged.

Yet, were there no other law, no other possible sociology than the gradual and natural "evolution" of public opinion, then respectability could be guilty of no crime, virtue would become only that quality which could command the respect of mankind in whatsoever state of evolution they might happen to be. At one time brute force would be virtue; at another, cunning; at another, skill in art; at present, wealth; in the future, perhaps, who knows? "modest assurance," more familiarly known as "chique." In none of these could there be any crime, because any or each of these would simply, in their turn, represent the extreme point of evolution so far attained. This ought to be the creed and practice of the religion of evolution; but it is not. Why? Because revelation of the one Supreme Being, who is absolute Goodness and Truth, in nature and natural laws, displays by every physical process in the universe, that usefulness to the community is the one aim and end of all material forces. This thrusts upon the true and honest philosopher, who loves wisdom and not sophistry, the grand conception that development of function has no real force except in usefulness toward others, and that such usefulness is the only true respectability—the only ability which has inherent within it power to command enduring respect.

So, thoughtful men, of all shades of religious opinion, who do not permit their opinions to blind them to facts, perceive that any existing ability to compel temporary respect may possibly be based on that which is really crime.

To return, however, to our first position. Wealth is at present, *par excellence*, the respect-compelling power. Wealth is to Respectability the first and great commandment. Yet wealth can never be universal. The very idea of wealth implies, not merely abundance, but super-abundance—not only more than self needs, but more than others possess. Wealth is always a comparative quantity—a "Will-o'-the-wisp" which ever eludes the grasp, and still floats and gleams across the horizon, however high a level we may reach. Ariel sings ever above us till we find ourselves wallowing in the mire. There is, to put it practically, only a certain fixed amount of material wealth in the world in any given age. Hence it is only by depriving others of their share that we can increase our own. In pursuit of this "ignis fatuus," we too often find it