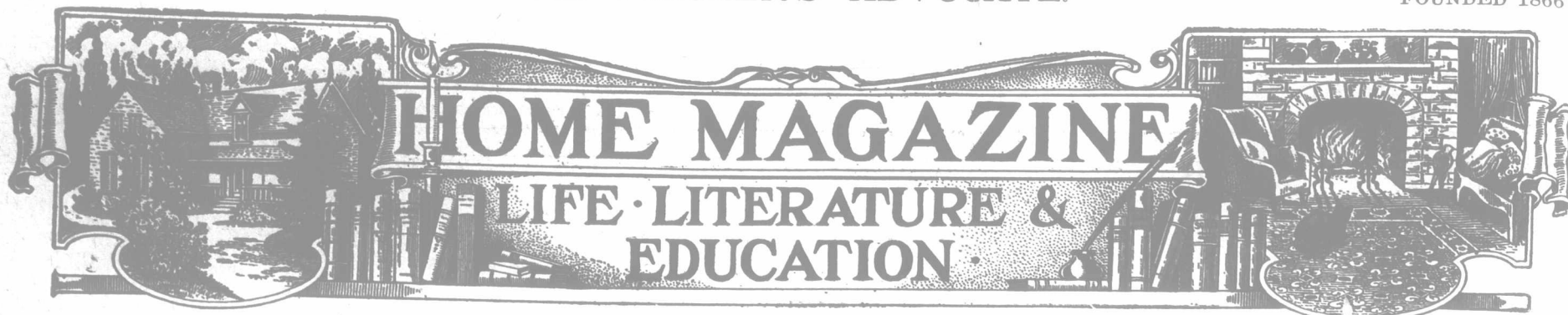




Little Trips Among the Eminent.

Sir Thomas Lawrence.

(1769—1830).

In the series of sketches which have already appeared in these pages, touching upon the lives of British artists, enough has been said to show that in art, as in most other things, Great Britain has won a place of her own among the great nations of the earth.

There still remain the names of five among those of the more eminent artists to complete the list,—Lawrence, Constable, Wilkie, Landseer, and Watts. Of these that of Sir Thomas Lawrence is undoubtedly the most illustrious, although not, perhaps, the best known, that of Landseer holding pre-eminence in this respect.

Sir Thomas Lawrence—plain Thomas Lawrence to begin with—was born in Bristol on May 4th 1769, the son of an innkeeper, and the youngest of a family of sixteen.

The father had been educated for the law, but his career had been rather chequered. He had become, successively, "attorney, poetaster, spouter of odes, actor, revenue officer, farmer, and publican, and had prospered in none of these callings," hence it is not surprising to find that as old age drew on with a sixteenth child added to his family, his outlook became rather unusually uncertain. Oddly enough, it was this sixteenth child who was to become, before long, the chief support of the family.

Before half a dozen years had passed, the little lad evinced an astonishing precocity. When he was but five years of age his father used to put him on the table of the inn and require him to draw the portraits of his customers and recite for them passages from Milton and Shakespeare.—Just here, are we of the present day falling upon degenerate days intellectually? Who now would listen long to passages from Milton and Shakespeare, even though recited from an inn table by a wonderful, golden-haired lad of but five years of age, as did those customers of the Black Bear Inn at Devizes less than one hundred years ago?

The story is told that upon one occasion Lord and Lady Kenyon arrived at the inn, tired. The landlord at once began to tell them how his son could recite and draw, when in came the child riding on a stick. Attracted at once by his beauty, they became very much interested, and presently Lady Kenyon asked if he could draw their portraits. "That I can," he said, "and very like too." He was put on a high-chair, and within an hour had drawn remarkable likenesses of both. That of the lady, done in pencil and delicately shaded, was recognized twenty-five years after.

When the boy was but ten years of age his father failed in business, left Devizes, and went to Oxford, where he induced his son to set up as a portrait painter. It became the fashion to be painted by the handsome little prodigy, and so, at this early age, he became the chief support of the household.

Later the family removed to Bath, and here again orders for portraits came in plenty, the studio of the child of twelve becoming, indeed, "the resort of the beauty and fashion and taste of the city."

At seventeen he had progressed so far that he was able to write to his mother—and that without conceit, for he was never conceited.—"Excepting Sir Joshua, for the painting of a head I would risk my reputation with any painter in London."

This consciousness made him long more and more to try his skill in the great metropolis, hence in 1787 he went up to London, took a house, and, by his father's advice, gave an exhibit. His extreme youth, however, was now past; he was no longer a "prodigy," and his exhibit did not set the city on fire. There was nothing to be done, therefore, but to study and work upward as the other artists were doing.

At once he began to study at the Academy,

where he was received kindly by Reynolds, but for several years he did not try to sell more than paid expenses—often a large enough contract, because of an unhappy habit his father possessed of speculating with certain loss, leaving the son to make up the differences.

After a time, however, the years of unflagging perseverance met with their reward. Commissions began to come in, and almost with a bound Lawrence became a favorite painter of the nobility. On the death of Sir Joshua Reynolds, much to the chagrin of the members of the Academy, who nevertheless could not dislike him, so generous and sweet of disposition was he, he was made principal portrait-painter to the royal family. Before he was twenty-four, by influence of King George III., he was made an Associate of the Royal Academy, and henceforth his fortune and his fame were both assured. Two years later, so excellent had been his work, he was elected a full member, by unanimous choice of the Academy itself.

Lawrence was now not only a very successful portrait-painter but a very popular young man, to whom the doors of the most illustrious houses in London were opened, as much because of his graces of person and courtly manners as because

sation was held in that soft, low whisper, and with that tone of deference and interest which are so unusual and so calculated to please. I am myself persuaded that he never intentionally gave pain. He was not a male coquet; he had no plan of conquest."

In 1815 he was knighted by the king. Three years later, during the negotiations that closed the War of the Austrian Succession, he was sent to Aix-la-Chapelle, to paint the sovereigns and diplomats gathered there.

From there he went to Vienna and Rome, painting portraits of the nobility of Austria and Italy, and of the Pope and his Cardinals. Indeed during his career nearly all the sovereigns, soldiers and statesmen of Europe sat to him, and conferred upon him every mark of favor and personal friendship.

After a stay of eighteen months he returned to England, and on that very day was made President of the Royal Academy in succession to Benjamin West, who had died a few days before.

As old age came upon Lawrence, he became serious and religious, and painted less, devoting himself more and more to charitable works. One



Portrait of Mrs. Siddons, the Famous Actress.

From a painting by Sir T. Lawrence, P.R.A.

of his fame. Even until old age, it was said, he was "assailed by ladies," but, although he fell in love with both of Mrs. Siddons' daughters, and was for a time engaged to one of them, he never married. Both of the young ladies, who were very delicate, died, the one, it was said, for love of him, the other, to whom he had been engaged being so affected by her sister's death that she quickly followed. The mother, whose portrait he had painted, would never afterwards consent to see him.

He was, indeed, dangerously fascinating. "His character," a lady of his acquaintance wrote of him, "was beautiful and much to be loved; his manners were likely to mislead without his intending it. He could not write a common answer to a dinner invitation, without its assuming the tone of a billet-doux; the very commonest conver-

of the last stories told of him, indeed, although of a small matter, illustrates his unvarying thoughtfulness for others:

"I sat opposite to him at the table," says Washtington Irving, in referring to a dinner at Sir Robert Peel's. "He seemed uneasy and restless; his eyes were wandering; he was pale as marble; the stamp of death seemed on him. He told me he felt ill, but he wished to bear himself up in the presence of those whom he so much esteemed as his entertainers."

A few days later, on January 7th, 1830, he died. He was buried in the artists' corner of St. Paul's Cathedral, the Earl of Aberdeen and Sir Robert Peel being two of his pall-bearers.

According to many critics, Sir Thomas Lawrence comes second to Sir Joshua Reynolds among the portrait-painters of Great Britain.

Some Old Time Echoes.

NO. VII.

On Trek in the Transvaal.

WE MEET MORE GOOD SAMARITANS.

June 16th, 1875.—Another cold, dull day. The mountain opposite, patched all over with snow, gives quite a Canadian aspect to the view from our window. So, dear old Canada, we think and speak of you this morning. . . . Mr. Clarke has just come in, bringing with him, to call upon us, Sir Morrison Barlow, an English baronet, who has a large property and fine farm in the Orange Free State, and who, happening to be in Harbismith, from which he lives some two days' journey off, has been weather-bound like ourselves. He means to start to-morrow, for he has a very light trap, and four horses, all eager to face homeward, so they will pull gladly through drifts and spruets, which our obstinate beasts would be safe to balk at. He says we would be mad to venture until we have given the sun and wind a day or two longer to dry up the boggy places, which we with our heavier vehicle cannot possibly avoid. Sir M.'s hearty, cheery manner and kind greeting acted like a restorative, and his thoughtful offer of help and hospitality should we need it later on, as indeed we did, when we passed near his place, drove away the dismal, and replaced resignation with hope. He and Mr. Clarke mapped out our route clearly, Mr. Clarke promising to escort us safely over the first bad "drift" we must go through not far from Harbismith, and Sir M. promising to secure for us the good offices of a certain Dutchman, Placide by name, not given to help strangers, but who would do so when thus requested. Should our horses again fail us we might, thus introduced, count upon Placide's oxen to pull us through Satin Spruit (suggestive name), at the foot of his farm.

We were to have left Harbismith two days ago, but on the morning of the 14th, after we had arranged our packages in their usual condensed form, John came with the announcement, "Four of the horses must be shod, sir!"

Seeing that it costs 17s. 6d., i.e., four dollars and thirty-seven to get each horse shod, and moreover, that the blacksmith is sure to take a very leisurely time for the process, to say nothing of the lengthening of the already very heavy hotel bill, it is not to be wondered at that we were keenly disappointed. Meanwhile the hope is held out to us of the possibility of obtaining oxen to replace our skittish steeds, when we are fortunate enough to reach Sir Morrison Barlow's farm, he in the meantime promising to enquire about a possible exchange of animals amongst the Dutch settlers with whom he was on sufficiently friendly terms to make a proposition which would assuredly be met with denial if it came from ourselves without the diplomatic intervention of one who has lived long enough in their midst for his nationality to be almost forgiven him.

The story of the next few days would take up too much space to be given in detail—but it records instances of most helpful kindness, all hands over and over again to the rescue, until we arrived weary but with renewed hope at

LEON KOPJE, OR LION MOUNTAIN.

As we neared the Ranch, we were met by Mr. Crayneau, Sir Morrison's bailiff, factotum, right-hand or lieutenant, but indeed it is difficult to define what he is to his chief, and more difficult still to discover what he is not! To us, he proved another good Samaritan indeed, and I can only say that no name is too good for him.

The first bit of good news Mr. Crayneau brought us after conveying the message telling of the welcome awaiting us, was that Sir Morrison had already secured for us a small span of trained and "salted" oxen, i.e., acclimatized and inoculated, at a fair price to take us to the Transvaal.

I may just as well note right here the very serious drawbacks to travelling in South Africa, one which is probably much modified under the more civilized conditions of nowadays, and that is, the effect of climate and disease upon animals. Natal oxen or horses could not live in the Transvaal, and vice versa, although those of the Orange Free State had a better chance of surviving in the Transvaal. Ours did, at any rate, lasting with one exception until we reached Natal the following March.

Our welcome at Leon Kopje must ever remain as one of the pleasantest memories of my life. It was a veritable City of Refuge. A calm after a storm. By Sir Morrison's instructions our wagon was