

ing, as now practised, and in comparison with what has been achieved. Is the portrait of a successful dry-goods merchant of Toronto done in the best (or worst) possible style for the best (or worst) possible price to be mentioned in the same breath as Titian's portrait of Lavinia, or admitted to the company of Rembrandt's portrait of himself? If this is the latest idea of portraiture, then we yield the argument at once, and advise that it be made a *fin* art of itself, and that portraits of all lunatics, criminals, sots and fools be recognized equally as specimens of human character, good and bad. Why are portraits required, and what class of men should they represent? Firstly, a portrait may be required by the family, by the nation, or by the world. The family portrait is of no value beyond the family circle and its visitors. Some of the most celebrated portraits by Vandyke, Reynolds and Gainsborough were painted for family requirements, and, if of value now, did not gain that value from any virtue of the original who sat for them, but from the virtue of the genius who painted them. However excellent they may be, mere family portraits are of the lowest order. Higher than these are portraits of great men, statesmen, warriors, lawyers, etc., which are (or should be) required for national remembrance, so that after they are dead and gone men who enjoy the fruit of their labours may look with love upon their faces. In such cases, portraiture is of a high order of painting, and should be done by the best possible artists, in the interests of the future. Thus the "scars of Cromwell" and the wart of Wolsey are of consummate interest, because of the men they adorned. They become marks of honourable distinction on such faces, whereas they would be marks of ridicule on others; for the red and pimpled nose of a boosing and hoodling alderman would be so unlikely to excite our admiration as an index of character that no artist would faithfully reproduce the blush of liquor on the outraged flesh.

HERE then we must draw the line. There are portraits and portraits—Vandykes and Vanduffers. Portraits of great and good men should be painted and preserved for the world; but the mere "likenesses" of persons whose only claim upon an artist's time and talent is their ability to pay for their "pictures," ought never to be drawn. Of the former, the world cannot have too many; of the latter it already has more than enough. It is disgusting to any true lover of art, who believes in the relation of art and soul in life, to see so many portraits of contemporary nobodies on the walls of our exhibitions and on the easels of our studios, and so little that is illustrative of Canadian somebodies. The history of Canada is full of noble and heroic subjects, waiting for the right soul to grasp and the strong hand to paint for our people. It is to be feared that it will wait long, since family pride and personal vanity cause so many portraits to be painted by our few artists annually that they, who could best devote time and energy to the commencement of a great historical school, cannot find time to labour in the higher direction. One thing, however, is certain—these mere portraits of contemporary nobodies will not live much longer than the originals, and will probably be sold by auction—not as works of art, but as pieces of wall furniture.

ALL who believe in simplicity, truth, goodness and spirituality must respect the Pre-Raphaelites of both ages. If the truth were thoroughly recognized it is unlikely such a sentence as the following would be penned:—

"Higher than action we esteem the actor."

Perhaps we do so; but it is nevertheless wrong; hence so many church-building swindlers, pot-boiling artists, rhyme-prating fools and bazaar beauties. The good Samaritan act is to be rejoiced in—we are not asked to admire the individual. "Greater than the actor is the action," rather let it be said. Hero-worship is often overdone, and virtues are forgotten in admiration of their possessor. In an act of charity is the giver to be esteemed above the deed? Men are the agents of divinity, or in other words, the creatures of circumstances. Let Mr. Forster prove the contrary, instead of pooh-poohing it away. Men as capable as Napoleon, Shakspeare or Michael Angelo have doubtless existed; and we esteem these only as types or representative creatures carrying out the Divine will. Do we esteem the sculpture, painting or literature which has lived down the ages less than the authors, who are not known? The origin of the Homeric works is not traceable; are the Homeric works of less value? Are the Grecian sculptures or the temples less admirable because we are ignorant of their designers? Men should be regarded as temporary agents, not as enduring heroes. Acts, rather than actors, should be esteemed. If we listen to a play—say "King Lear"—we are moved by the fleeting moods and passions of the human machine, and no portrait of Garrick, Kean or Irving can summon our emotion in like manner. What matters it if Shelley had a woman's beauty, so long as we can read his spirit in his verse? What if Savoriola looked sweetly sad and determinedly strong so long as his influence was stirring Italy for good? Does the "Transfiguration" improve on our souls after seeing Raphael's portrait of his own youthfulness? Mere portraiture, even of the greatest mortals, is not the first necessity. If history is to be illustrated, portraiture should be an accessory and not a prime factor. Let us have pictures by all means of as many great men as possible; but let them not be mere human photographs of flesh seen from the top of the clothes to the top of the forehead. Let them be brought to us in their most striking characters—in the great and signal accomplishments they have performed in the world's history—Cromwell turning out the Parliament, Cranmer at the stake, Milton in his blindness at work, Czar Peter knouting his nobles, Joan of Arc leading her troops, and others. Let them be true and faithful likenesses always, and in action; then the highest form of painting—the human-dramatic school—will be in its exalted place. If there is a good woman or a good man who has achieved some noble end in life, no matter how lowly, there is an excuse for the portraiture of that individual; but who can tell the character from the face alone? Recalling men and women we have known, how little reliance could be placed on their portraits as indices of their true natures. How many beauties on canvas are beautiful beyond the mere physical grace and skin-deep beauty? There is a woman, painted by a clever artist, wearing her most winning expression; amiable looking enough, but whose heart is filled with vanity and love of worldly things. Who can tell her by her portrait? Men of action should be painted in action, and in their greatest action. Women of beauty should be portrayed in their most beautiful undertakings. Mere facial portraits should be confined to mantelpieces and mausoleums, if artists will paint them. Great and good portraits should alone be recognized as fine art, and should be bought and paid for by the nation, when the true artist is found to paint them as a work of love and not of wages.

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