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EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS

BY

THE HON. JOHN COLLIER.

*Lent by the Artist, the National Gallery of
British Art, and others.*



HELD AT THE
MUNICIPAL ART GALLERY & MUSEUM,
CLARENCE STREET, CHELTENHAM.

ADMISSION FREE.

DAILY, 10—5 ; WEDNESDAY & SATURDAY, 10—8.

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D. W. HERDMAN, *Curator.*



Introductory Note.

There are few contemporary painters who have enjoyed wider appreciation for several decades of years than the Hon. John Collier. Primarily and by choice a painter of portraits, he has created a long and most interesting sequence of convincingly true pictures of contemporaries—many of them persons eminent in science, literature and the drama—but it is not on these that his popular fame rests. Early in his career he turned his attention to the creation of subject compositions which, treated with a rare dramatic instinct, compelled the admiration and interest of the great public. He is an unsurpassed master of that valuable device of the pictorial story-teller which may be called "the suspended climax." In this the moment chosen for representation is one when the dramatic situation is at its highest intensity, ripe for solution, but still unsolved. In one of his occasional contributions to the "Nineteenth Century" magazine, Mr. Collier remarked "the public likes cheerful pictures . . . here I have been at fault. I have an unfortunate hankering after domestic tragedy. Subjects of this kind interest me, and I think they also interest the public, but the public, alas! does not in the least want to buy them. I cannot blame the public. I am all in favour of cheerfulness, except in my art. I think people are quite right to prefer to live with cheerful pictures, only, as it happens, I do not want to paint them."

Occasionally Mr. Collier has been tempted to be as cheerful on canvas as he himself is in life: for example, in those charming compositions "In the Forest of Arden" and "The Land Baby"; but his leaning is certainly in the opposite direction, and this has contributed materially to his success in having his pictures talked about, if not sold. Unfortunately, some journalistic writer hit upon the notion of calling them "problem pictures," which was by no means to his liking; especially as jaded critics, always delighted to have any new catchword, persisted in labelling him a problem painter and when each new picture appeared made desperate guesses as to the problem's solution, or found fault with him when he did not provide one. His pictures are no more intended to propose problems than any others that have a similar dramatic motif, but he only has had the ill-fortune to have this label tied round his neck; perhaps because of the unusually rare instinct he has for choosing the right moment for representation.

Although he avows a preference for domestic tragedy, Mr. Collier has by no means restricted himself to subjects of that class. We find him covering a very wide range with

glimpses of Homeric Story, of the life of ancient Egypt, of Greek mythology, of mediæval history and story, of subjects from drama and music-drama and of incidents in our own legend and history. The extent of his range is not more remarkable than the wide knowledge shown in the appropriate and adequate knowledge of all the details of each composition. The impressive single figure subject "Clytemnestra," exhibited in 1914 at the Royal Academy Exhibition and "The Last Voyage of Henry Hudson" shown there in 1881 (the latter in this exhibition) illustrate in a very interesting way the beginning of the artist's achievement as an illustrator of history and story, and his matured method. A period of thirty-three years separates the two works. "The Last Voyage of Henry Hudson," which was bought for the nation by the Chantrey Bequest Trustees, and is now one of the Tate Gallery treasures, was Mr. Collier's first subject-creation, but there is nothing of a tentative character about it; indeed, it must rank among his most notable achievements, along with "Hetty Sorrel" (1889), "In the Forest of Arden" (1892), "Four a.m." (1896), "The Prodigal Daughter" (1903), "Mariage de Convenience" (1907), and "Sentence of Death" (1908). Of all these I retain lively recollections and so single them out; but it is fair to add that I have probably omitted equally remarkable things which I may not have seen or which have temporarily escaped my memory. The dates show that Mr. Collier has steadily kept his achievement at a high level.

The characteristic learned accuracy as to details of Mr. Collier's pictures has already been mentioned. Another phase of his accomplishment is indicated in subjects which have a landscape setting: seeing one of them you say at once—"this man is also a landscape painter"; for scenery, trees, flowers, and, where required, animals, are as adequately presented as the more usual architectural backgrounds and interiors: the scenes in which his engaging incidents are oftenest set. Mr. Collier has always been an ardent student and lover of landscape, and has travelled far and often in quest of novel and congenial subjects. He does not believe in (at any rate for his own practice) large studio-made landscape compositions, and seldom paints, unless it be for occasional amending touches, away from the actual subject, of which he does his utmost by "intelligent realism" to set before us the charm that he found to be pictorially engaging. His aim may be well expressed in a passage from one of his writings:—"the individual painter is a poor thing compared with the world that he is feebly endeavouring to portray, and the more Nature shines through the fabric of his art, and the less he intrudes his little personality, the better."

More or less, this appears to have been the creed of all the truest landscape painters from Patinir to Turner, whose pictures are beautiful and desirable just in proportion to the power of genius with which each painter was able to perceive most intensely and set down with the fullest truth something of the splendour and charm of the pictures spread out before him by the supreme artist Nature. Even



in the case of the greatest men, the power to reproduce the beauty of what they have seen is as severely circumscribed by the limits of human genius, as their range of colour and statement of light and shade are infinitely belittled by the wider and more splendid gamut of sunlight. It is as sensitively observed and faithfully rendered statements of actual scenes that Mr. Collier's landscapes, of which a goodly number are in the exhibition, are to be judged. There is special interest in the group of Egyptian scenes painted for the most part only three years ago.

Of the creating personality behind Mr. Collier's pictures not much need be said here, beyond a slight outline of his career as an artist. He was the second son of the late Sir Robert Collier, who became the first Lord Monkswell; who, incidentally, was a capable amateur painter, with a particular penchant for Alpine scenery. After an educational career at Eton and Heidelberg, Mr. Collier turned seriously to art and studied at Munich, Paris and the Slade School. Thereafter his father asked Alma-Tadema to take him as a pupil: this the future Sir Lawrence would not agree to, but he said he would be willing to paint a picture in young Collier's studio and give him full opportunities of profiting by watching him. This generous offer was gladly accepted, and the result was the well-known and at one time (when the country was still severely Early-Victorian) much abused masterpiece, "The Sculptor's Model." Mr. Collier was, I believe, utilised by Alma-Tadema as the model for the sculptor. Later he enjoyed the privilege (as I learn from his paper on Portrait Painting delivered to the Royal Society of Arts in 1915) of frequenting the studio of his friend, Sir John E. Millais, Bart., P.R.A., and watching him paint. Mr. Collier has been a constant exhibitor at the Royal Academy and other important exhibitions since 1875, and his works are to be found in the National Portrait Gallery, the National Gallery of British Art, and the Municipal Galleries of Blackburn, Bolton, Oldham, Rochdale, Southport, Sunderland, Warrington and other places. He is a vice-president of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters.

That Mr. Collier is an occasional writer on art topics has already been indicated. His most important publications include: "A Primer of Art," "A Manual of Oil Painting" and "The Art of Portrait Painting." In 1914 the "Art Annual" volume was devoted to a monograph on Mr. Collier, by Mr. Walter Herries Pollock, which not only furnishes a fuller account of the artist and his work than is here possible, but contains excellent reproductions, some in colour, of a considerable number of the pictures which bear lasting testimony to his claims on public appreciation as an assured master of the art of the Painter as Storyteller.

E. RIMBAULT DIBDIN.

CATALOGUE.

The size of each canvas, in inches, is given, the first figure being the height.

The Committee acknowledge, with sincere thanks, the kindness of the artist in lending, and in assisting to secure the loan of many of the pictures. Thanks are also due to the Trustees of the National Gallery, and several private owners, for loans to the Exhibition.

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| 1. Eve | (63" x 74") | £ 525 | s. 0 |
| 2. Sentence of Death | | 525 | 0 |
| This picture was painted in the consulting room of a well-known London physician. The patient has just been informed that he has only three months to live. Exhibited at the Royal Academy, 1908 (51" x 64") | | | |
| 3. The Sleeping Beauty | (44" x 56") | 420 | 0 |
| 4. Sacred and Profane Love | | 210 | 0 |
| The arrangement of the two figures is borrowed from Titian's famous picture commonly called "Sacred and Profane Love," which is in the Borghese Gallery, Rome. A visitor entering the room is reflected in the mirror. (40" x 50") | | | |
| 5. The Last Voyage of Henry Hudson | | | |
| Henry Hudson, the great English navigator and explorer, had wintered in the bay which now bears his name, when the privations experienced by his crew caused a mutiny, which resulted in his being turned adrift on the 23rd June, 1611, in an open boat with a few infirm sailors and a boy, John Hudson, supposed to have been his son. He was never seen or heard of again. | | | |
| This picture was bought under the terms of the Chantrey Bequest, and has been lent by the National Gallery of British Art. (83½" x 71½") | | | |
| 6. Portrait of the Artist's Wife | (96" x 48") | | |
| 7. The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table | | | |
| Portrait of the artist's wife. Two favourite cats used to sit in this way, one on each side of her. The title is from the well-known book by Oliver Wendel Holmes. (44" x 54") | | | |

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| 8. Mrs. Drysdale Kilburn
The artist's eldest daughter. (30" x 25") | | |
| 9. Mrs. T. H. Huxley
Portrait of the artist's mother-in-law, completed on her 80th birthday. It is an endeavour to follow the method of Holbein, and is in consequence smooth in surface and highly finished. (24" x 20") | | |
| 10. On the Way to Vermala, Switzerland | 31 | 10 |
| Mid-winter scene from the path leading up from Montana in the Valley of the Rhone, to the still higher small village of Vermala, about 6,000 feet above the sea. The sky is dark against the brilliant white of the snow in the sunshine. (28" x 20") | | |
| 11. The Monch and the Eiger from Murren | 52 | 10 |
| A view from Murren, across the valley of Lauterbrunnen, Switzerland. The valley is narrow, the great mountains are seen close at hand. Painted early in January, just after sundown, when there is an afterglow on the mountains. (22" x 30") | | |
| 12. The Nile from the Tombs of the Kings | 26 | 5 |
| There is a sandstone ridge in the Theban Hills, which falls in sheer precipice to the Temple of Deir-el-Babari in the plain below. Immediately behind this ridge are the wonderful tombs of the Kings. The ridge looks over the Nile and the little strip of irrigated land on each side which constitutes Upper Egypt. (15" x 24") | | |
| 13. Mocattam Hills from the Pyramids | 26 | 5 |
| View across the Valley of the Nile, to the Mocattam Hills behind Cairo. (14" x 20") | | |
| 14. The Nile at Assouan | 31 | 10 |
| A view of the river two or three miles below the Barrage. It shows the curious colouring of the Assouan scenery; the hills being of a bright yellow sandstone, not found elsewhere, which glows in the sunshine in an extraordinary manner. The bed of the stream is broken by fantastic islets, some of which are of a shiny black rock. (14" x 20") | | |
| 15. Remains of the Coptic Church in the Temple of Luxor | | |
| A view of the courtyard of Amenhotep III. Through the vista of columns is seen the altar of a little Coptic church, which was built among the ruins and is now itself a ruin. (15" x 11") | 21 | 0 |
| 16. Columns in the Temple of Luxor | 26 | 5 |
| These are columns surrounding the Courtyard of Amenhotep III. They are of a different style from those of the Great Colonnade. (20" x 14") | | |
| 17. The Temple at Edfou | (24" x 15") | 31 10 |
| 18. Roman Arch at the Temple of Luxor | 21 | 0 |
| This and No 20 give an idea of the wall decoration of the Temple. Part of the Egyptian work has been destroyed to make room for a Roman arch. (17" x 11") | | |
| 19. The Court of the Lions, Alhambra | 26 | 5 |
| The Alhambra, a Moorish Palace near Granada, Spain, is considered one of the most beautiful palaces in the world. The view is of the central fountain in the great courtyard. (22" x 15") | | |
| 20. An Inner Room in the Temple of Luxor | 21 | 0 |
| A study showing the delicate and elaborate decoration of Egyptian Temples. The carving is in very low relief and was, originally, highly coloured. (15" x 11") | | |
| 21. The Mosque at Cordova, Spain | 26 | 5 |
| The building, dating from 790 A.D., is in the purist style of Arabic architecture. This study shows the Mihrab of Mecca Niche—the holiest portion of the building. (23" x 16") | | |
| 22. Sunset at Assouan | (10" x 7") | 21 0 |
| 23. The Great Pyramid, from the Cairo Road | (10" x 7") | 21 0 |
| 24. Storm at Bordighera | (11" x 16") | 26 5 |

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| 25. Woolacombe Sands, Devonshire
(19" x 12") | 15 | 15 |
| 26. The Edge of the Reef
(19" x 12") | 26 | 5 |
| 27. The White Cliff, Studland, Dorset
(20" x 14") | 21 | 0 |
| 28. Evening near Tenby, Pembrokeshire
(20" x 16") | 21 | 0 |
| 29. Torquay, Morning
(10" x 14") | 15 | 15 |
| 30. A Cornfield, Sidmouth, Dorset
(14" x 20") | 15 | 15 |
| 31. The Islands, Torquay
(14" x 10") | 15 | 15 |
| 32. Fire
(57" x 45") | 315 | 0 |
| 33. Prodigal Daughter
(64" x 85") | £420 | 0 |
| 34. Steps at Bellagio, Italy
The study for the background of the picture,
"A Great Lady." No. 37. (30" x 25") | 31 | 10 |
| 35. Barmouth Estuary
(49" x 38") | 126 | 0 |
| 36. The Welhorn from Rosenlaur
(65" x 41") | 157 | 10 |

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| 37. A Great Lady
A mediæval Grande Dame in all her finery,
descending the steps which lead from her castle
to the waterside. The steps represent those lead-
ing from the Villa Ginlia at Bellagio to the shores
of the Lake of Como, Italy. Exhibited at the
Royal Academy in 1910. (60" x 48") | 315 | 0 |
| 38. Mrs. F. A. Buzzard
The artist's second daughter; wife of Brig.-
General F. A. Buzzard. (24" x 20") | — | — |
| 39. Poseuse
(25" x 30") | 105 | 0 |
| 40. A Mannequin from Chu Chin Chow
(86" x 45") | 315 | 0 |
| 41. The Producer
(Sir Gerald du Maurier). (94" x 58") | — | — |
| 42. The Oak Chest
(28" x 36") | 105 | 0 |
| 43. Trouble
(57" x 70") | 315 | 0 |
| 44. Nettie and Joyce
(76" x 42") | 315 | 0 |
| 45. Incantation
(72" x 54") | 315 | 0 |
| 46. The Mænads
(64" x 100") | 525 | 0 |
| 47. Touchstone and Audrey—In the Forest of
Arden (80" x 60") | 420 | 0 |
| 48. A Devonshire Orchard
(30" x 40") | 420 | 0 |