**George Gregor Delotz, 1815 – 1879 DRAFT**

A painter of London scenes and fruit and flower compositions who exhibited at the RA, BI and SBA from 1848 to 1864. The RA exhibits, three in 1848 and one in 1850, were London views as was one at the BI in 1850: the other five there in 1861–64 (all years) were of fruit, with a second one of flowers in 1863, all priced between £3 and £10. He only exhibited at the SBA in 1862, again with a ‘Flower piece’ at ten guineas and a subject titled ‘Where there is life there is hope!’ at eight.

Delotz was born in Jedburgh, Roxburghshire, in the Scottish borders and apparently in 1815: where 1818 or 1819 appear they are perhaps based on initial press reports of his age at death. In 1924 Campbell Dodgson of the British Museum was in contact with two surviving daughters – Mrs F.J. Hedges and Mrs James Watmore – who reported that their father ‘was a reticent man, self-absorbed, who told them little about his life and work’. The connection was made when he purchased 92 etchings and about a dozen drawings by Delotz for the Museum from the Watmores: another 18 went to the V&A about the same time (see *Print Collector’s Quarterly*, vol XV, no. 1 (1928) p.71 ff.). Some of those in the BM, which acquired a few more in 1929, are flower pieces but most a range of landscape, marine and city views.

Delotz’s father had the same forenames – probably originally as ‘Georges Grégoire’ – since he was a French dragoon lieutenant in the Napoleonic army in Spain and one of 17,000 prisoners taken by the Spaniards when they defeated General Dupont’s forces at the Battle of Bailén, Andalusia, in July 1808. He and other officers were transferred to British custody and sent to England, where he was first held at Portsmouth from October 1808 but sent to live on parole at Crediton in October 1810. In March 1811, renewed fears of French invasion saw about 240 French parolees in the area recalled to Plymouth and shipped north to Leith via Deal in the frigate *Romulus* for re-billetting in the borders, which accounts for how Delotz reached Jedburgh. Since Mrs Watmore said that he married a Scottish woman (if indeed it was a formal marriage), he is likely to have done so there while still a paroled prisoner and appears to have remained in England after the war. He was a witness at his son’s marriage in 1840, though his given occupation by then is illegible in the record.

By profession, according to his daughters, the younger George Gregor was a decorative house painter, noted for graining work. They said that he came to London in early life, married there in about 1838 to Elizabeth Cassinette (or Cassanet) Evans (b. 1821/2) and had eleven children. Of these Mrs Hedges claimed to be eldest and aged 85 in 1924 (so born in 1839). Her parents in fact married at St Luke’s, Old Street, on 26 October 1840 and at the 1851 census, when Delotz was called a ‘grainer’ living at 28 Maiden Lane, Covent Garden, the only children present were Mary (7, so born about 1844), George [Gregor] (4) who died in 1852 and Florence (2). No 1861 census entry has been found but that year’s Post Office directory calls Delotz a ‘picture dealer’, resident at 11 Duke Street, Adelphi, which was also his exhibiting address in 1860. The 1871 census for 30 Southampton Street, Pentonville – his final address – lists him as ‘Artist’, and the children at home as Elizabeth, a 28-year-old dressmaker; Horace (15), also a grainer but at remarriage in 1891 called an ‘artist’ as was his deceased father; Sydney (14), a ‘stamper at Somerset House’ and Edith (9) at school. Elizabeth became Mrs Frederick James Hedges on marriage in 1877 with a then-stated age of 29 though clearly older, leaving four siblings unaccounted for, possibly including further infant deaths.

As a fine-art painter Delotz appears to have been self-taught, working in both oil and watercolour. His daughters said he did it primarily for recreation and ‘went on students’ days to the National Gallery, where he copied Titian, Rembrandt and Turner.’ He also studied at the British Institution, where old masters lent by its aristocratic members for summer exhibitions were left for student or ‘probationer’ copying after they closed and the results were shown in the autumn. A press report of 1847 (*Morning Herald*, 15 November) mentions a landscape by Delotz copied from Rubens, while others of 1849 note copies by him after Titian, Cuyp and Christian Dietrich. In 1856 he was noticed for a fruit composition copied after Jan de Heem (a celebrated still-life master) and a Venetian view after Guardi. A privately owned fruit piece by Delotz still bears a label on the back showing that it was prize no. 156 in the June 1861 subscribers’ draw of the Art Union of Great Britain. Since that body bought 14 pictures for the purpose from the BI spring exhibition of 1861 it is beyond reasonable doubt Delotz’s ‘A Study of Fruit’ (no. 490), priced at £5.

His printmaking was also apparently self-taught and a personal hobby. His daughters ‘knew practically nothing about his etchings but said that he spent much money on making them, and never sold, published or exhibited his prints.’ Dodgson noted that none were larger than 6 x 8 inches; that they are ‘almost entirely soft-ground etchings, aquatints, or a combination of the two processes’ and that Delotz never used dry-point or etched on a hard surface. He considered them ‘most exceptional’ both for their ‘wholly unprofessional character’, small scale, and for their period given that English aquatint was by then ‘practically extinct’.

The small scale at which Delotz seems to have worked in all media, and at least semi-privately, supports his daughters’ suggestion of his self-absorbed character, but if they told Dodgson the tragic end-result he kept it to himself. In Greenwich Park on the afternoon of Thursday 13 November 1879, a local boy called Philips saw a respectably dressed man of about 60 sitting with his back to a tree: as he looked, the man raised a pistol and shot himself through the head. Paper in his pockets soon led to his identification as ‘George Gregor De Lotze, a grainer of 30, Southampton Street, Pentonville’. No explanation was offered at the Greenwich coroner’s inquest and the jury’s verdict was suicide owing to ‘temporary insanity’. His age at death was officially registered as 64.

*Summarised from Art UK discussion of ‘Fruit on a salver on a marble ledge’, now identified as by Delotz (National Trust for Scotland)*

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