**J. L. Vychan, active *c.*1873–93; probably the pseudonym of John Lloyd, later Lloyd-Elsegood, *c.*1830/34 –1912 [DRAFT 3]**

Vychan was the exhibiting name of a British and continental landscape painter, showing work between 1873 and 1893 in a style similar to the topographical ‘Landscape Annual’ artists of the 1830s (e.g. Stanfield, Roberts, Harding). His only known address, from which he had ten works hung at the Society of British Artists, 1873–77, was 29 Bolsover Street, London. That was premises of Thomas & Co., frame makers, who probably acted as his agent and for others: in 1874 the Belgian painter, Alfred de Bylandt, also submitted to the RA from there.

Vychan’s subjects at the SBA in 1873–4 were in Ireland and England (Wye valley and Derbyshire) and in 1875–6 Germany and France. In 1874 he also showed two works at the Royal Academy from Bolsover Street; ‘Showery Weather, Lake Geneva’ (205), and ‘The Castle Crag of Drachenfels’ (227). In 1875 and 1876 he had two pieces at the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists, both priced at £20; an unidentified Rhine woodland scene and a view of Isola San Giorgio, Venice, though the Birmingham listings confuse his initials, respectively, as ‘L.J.’ and ‘F.L.’ A view of the Doge’s Palace, Venice, is also recorded in private hands. At the Yorkshire Fine Art and Industrial Exhibition, held at York in 1879, he exhibited ‘Village Pilgrims, Crossing the Bridge at Lourdes, Pyrenees’ (also from Bolsover Street) and in 1880, at the Atkinson Art Gallery, Southport, a picture showing ‘the grand sweep of mountains around Lourdes, Pyrenees’ (*Manchester Courier*, 8 March). At York in July his ‘St Sauveir [*sic*], Pyrenees’ was described by the *Yorkshire Gazette* (31 July) as ‘a good representation of wild scenery’. *The Artist* of 1893 (vol. 14, p. 90) also reported that he exhibited a piece called ‘Moving Timber’ in that year in which the reviewer ‘ was forcibly struck by the ‘wonderfully naturalistic presentment of the hoar frost and the ferns, the haze of the frozen air…’. The only work by him in a UK public collection is in the Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, as the ‘Drachenfels on the Rhine’ but in fact shows Heidelburg Palace and the adjacent Old Bridge over the River Neckar, seen from the north-east.

There is no mention of anyone named Vychan in the 1871 and 1881 censuses either in England or Wales, though it is an old Welsh name and word (with variant spellings of ‘fychan’ and ‘bychan’) meaning little or small. It is also an antecedent of the name Vaughan and occurs fairly commonly back to the fifteenth century as ‘Lloyd Vychan’, Lloyd also being a Welsh name: one branch of the Lloyds, for example, sprang from a David Lloyd (d. 1497), himself a son of Sir Gruffydd Vychan, who fought at Agincourt in 1415 but was executed in 1447. This raises the possibility – for which there is a strong circumstantial case – that it was the pseudonym of a gentleman amateur painter originally called John Lloyd, who was born in London about 1830 but perhaps as late as 1834, his father being another John Lloyd, ‘gentleman’.

Nothing substantial is yet known of the younger John Lloyd until 22 July 1865, when he married in Marylebone to a widow living there at 6 Baker Street, Mrs Sophia Elsegood, who was at least fifteen years older. Her age declarations in all census records to 1881 falsify her birth date to as late as 1826 but she was born Sophia Read on 18 November 1815, as daughter of Richard and Sophia Read of Bryanston Street, Marble Arch, her father being a (probably well-off) London coal merchant. Sophia first married, aged 25, in January 1840 at St George’s, Hanover Square, to Francis Charles Elsegood, also 25 and a surgeon. It was a brief union since he died aged only 27 on 18 December 1841, when they were living in Upper Brook Street, Mayfair, leaving her with a daughter called Frances Sophia, born late in 1840. Thereafter, or at least by 1861, Sophia and her daughter lived with her own widowed mother in Baker Street.

Four days after remarrying to John Lloyd in 1865, the latter – giving his occupation as ‘gentleman’, and his address as 6 Oriental Place, Brighton – put a solicitor’s notice in the *Illustrated London News* (29 July) stating that from the 26th of that month he had changed his surname to Lloyd-Elsegood. While the exact reasons are unknown this showed a readiness to do so that might have extended to using a pseudonym when he later had paintings in the London exhibitions, although painting was not inherently an ‘ungentlemanly’ pastime even if selling work might have been considered so.

By late December 1865 there are at least two newspaper references to Lloyd-Elsegood’s London address being 6B Baker Street (*sic*) and Irish records show him having dealings there in Longford and Dublin the following year. On 8 August 1866, at Monkstown south of Dublin, he was one of the two witnesses to the marriage of his stepdaughter Frances Sophia Elsegood to Henry Owen Lewis, then of Raconell, Co. Monaghan (where the family owned land), son of Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Lewis of Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin. The groom’s late mother was ‘the Hon. Mrs Lewis’ and the celebrant the Revd W. Lake Onslow, Rector of Sandringham and Domestic Chaplain to HRH the Prince of Wales, indicating the social levels involved. This family and perhaps also property link to Ireland soon saw press notes of the Lloyd-Elsegoods return there: in 1867 *The Irish Times* (8 Oct.) noted their departure for London from Old Merrion, south of Dublin, and ‘Lloyd Elsegood’ was a name among passengers leaving Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire) by the mail steamer in March 1869 (*Saunders’s Newsletter*, 24 March). As becomes clear in the 1871 census, when John and his wife were at 30 Oriental Place, Brighton, they both lived as ‘Annuitants’, deriving income from ‘Dividends’ and ‘Houses’, and hers at 6 Baker Street was still their London address in 1872 (according to *Boyle’s Court and Country Guide*).

In 1873 and 1874 J.L. Vychan’s SBA exhibits included views of ‘Dublin Bay from Sandymount Strand’, and ‘Killiney and Bray Head from Dalkey’. Taken with Lloyd-Elsegood’s previous known presence at Old Merrion and Monkstown, none of these are more than nine miles from Dublin. In 1874 Vychan also showed a morning view of Brighton, where Lloyd-Elsegood had also long been based. The other wide English and Continental views, in France, Switzerland, Germany and Venice painted by Vychan are also consonant with the possible movements of the Lloyd-Elsegoods as moneyed people of leisure and with no dependent children after 1866. At the 1881 census they were living at 41 Inverness Terrace, London, with five servants and two servants’ children: John’s age is listed as 51 and his wife Sophia’s now reduced to 50 (rather than her actual 65). Press notice of her death there on 5 February 1887 added that her daughter, ‘Mrs Owen Lewis’, was then resident in Lancaster Gate, her husband’s London home. (*London Daily News*, 16 Feb.). Sophia’s personal estate of just over £6,543 at probate was equivalent to about £430,000 today.

On 29 April 1889, John Lloyd-Elsegood remarried at Holy Trinity, Paddington, to Sara Louisa Braham (b. *c.*1841) daughter of Henry Lewis Braham, a wealthy lawyer (1808–83), and there are press notes mentioning their early 1890s holiday movements to Hastings, Folkestone and the Isle of Wight. When Sara also died on 14 May 1900 they were living at ‘Fontenay’, Cavendish Road, Bournemouth and John was still there as a widower at the 1901 census. In 1902 he married for the third time to Fanny Harriet Speed (née Bond, b. 1846 and widow of William Speed QC) who also had a daughter called Theodora (b. 1881). Fanny left him a widower for the third time, by then at ‘Heather Bank’, Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, when she died there on 3 August 1911 aged 65 or 66. The preceding census of that year, which also shows Theodora and five servants in the house, gives John’s age as 74 rather than the 80 or 81 he would have been if born in 1830. He himself died on 17 July 1912 at St Mary’s, Derby Road, Bournemouth leaving ‘effects’ valued for probate at just under £2,116, which suggests he either expended or otherwise disposed much larger earlier property. His executor appears to have been his doctor and his age was officially registered as 78.

Lloyd-Elsegood was certainly a painter under his own name, with a late-life exhibiting record at the annual exhibitions of the Bournemouth Arts Society, of which he was a committee member by late 1911 and probably earlier. His ‘View in in the High Pyrenees’ gained mention in the *Bournemouth Guardian* of 15 April 1899 and on 11 May 1901 it noted ‘An Approaching Storm’, ‘The Devil’s Bridge, St. Gothard’ and ‘A View on the Rhine’. On 13 April 1905 the *Bournemouth Graphic*, in an illustrated review, praised his ‘The Rain is on the River, but the Sun is on the Hill’ and in 1906 both papers (the *Graphic* on the 22nd and the *Guardian* on the 24th) reviewed his ‘The Fair in the Hauteplante, Pau, Pyrenees’, ‘Rouen from St Catherine’s Hill’ and ‘On the Rhine near Breisig’. In 1908 he showed ‘Morning on the Rhine’, ‘Hope comes with Morning’ (a shipwreck scene), ‘Moonrise over Killarney’ and ‘Evening, Heidelburg’ (*B. Graphic*, 19 March).

At the Society’s 1909 exhibition the *Graphic* (11 and 25 March) illustrated both his ‘A Summer Morning – Heidelburg’ and ‘Moving Timber – Early Winter’ in its two reviews of the show. The former is exactly complementary to the ‘Vychan’ painting of Heidelburg in the Ferens Art Gallery, showing the Old Bridge on the Neckar in the foreground and the Palace on the hill behind, this time from the north-west rather than north-east. The ‘Moving Timber’ picture is especially significant since the published image in the *Graphic* (captioned as ‘Timber Moving in Early Winter’) accords well with *The Artist*’s description of the painting that ‘Vychan’ showed under the same title in 1893. Two of three pictures that Lloyd-Elsegood showed at the Arts Society in 1907 were also illustrated in the *Graphic* (4 April), one being a view of ‘Bordeaux from La Bastide’ – again the same title as one that ‘Vychan’ had exhibited at the SBA in 1877. His pseudonymous mask also appears to have slipped as early as 1890 when, in mentioning inclusion in a local exhibition of ‘The Rhine at Cologne’, the *Derby Mercury* (24 Sept.) identified the artist as ‘ Mr J. Lloyd Vychan’. On the assumption that ‘Lloyd Vychan’ and ‘Lloyd-Elsegood’ were the same man it is no surprise that the locations and titling of their landscape subjects are close matches, nor that the ageing Lloyd-Elsegood was probably exhibiting (or re-exhibiting) works painted long before and retained for his own use rather than sale. His ‘Early Winter’ – compositionally a near-version of the winter ‘Moving Timber’ – and ‘The Cirque de Gavarnie, Pyrenees’ in the Art Society’s 1911 show were illustrated without comment in the *Bournemouth Graphic* of 24 March and ‘The Duet’, of a small girl playing the piano accompanied by her dog, was also reproduced in it on 15 March the following year: in this last notice the reviewer called it ‘Probably the most charming of the popular local painter’s four exhibits in the Art Society’s exhibition.’

From this generally associative evidence it seems more likely than not that ‘Vychan’ was Lloyd-Elsegood’s early artistic *alter ego*. It is easy enough to envisage that a man of independent means and who travelled widely may have started as a habitual sketcher and later become a competent exhibiting painter of oil landscapes based on his own drawings, for pleasure rather than profit. The equally competent Admiral William Smyth (1799–1877), of whom no exhibition record has yet been found, is another example, though drawings from his earlier exploring career were the basis of illustrations in published accounts. Why Lloyd-Elsegood may have concealed his identity under a pseudonym is not clear. His apparent abandonment of it in the late 1890s, after ceasing London exhibition, suggests social motives and these may have had more to do with his first (if not also second) wife’s notions of propriety, rather than his own. As daughter of a coal merchant, however wealthy, the first Mrs (Sophia) Lloyd-Elsegood may have congratulated herself on twice ‘marrying up’, and her daughter even further so into the landed Anglo-Irish Lewis family. She may also have regarded it as a recovery of more ancient status, since the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* entry on her notable granddaughter, Frances Isabella Sophia Mary Moloney (née Lewis), states that Sophia was a family name passed down to commemorate maternal descent from a Habsburg princess. That is something Mrs Sophia Elsegood’s second husband would certainly have known, and while compliant in adding the name of her first to his own to make it Lloyd-Elsegood, adopting ‘Vychan’ as an artistic pseudonym was perhaps to signal of his own pedigree within a limited circle. Having begun that way, it was in his own interest to continue while still gaining entry to London exhibitions up to 1893 but, since not working commercially, pointless when he began exhibiting in Bournemouth in his 60s from 1899 on, after a six year break.

*Summarised from Art UK discussion on Vychan’s ‘Drachenfels on the Rhine’ – though in fact of Heidelburg – as above. The hypothesis that Vychan was the pseudonym of John Lloyd-Elsegood, and the supporting evidence, were provided by Kieran Owens.*

PvdM 30.10.20