

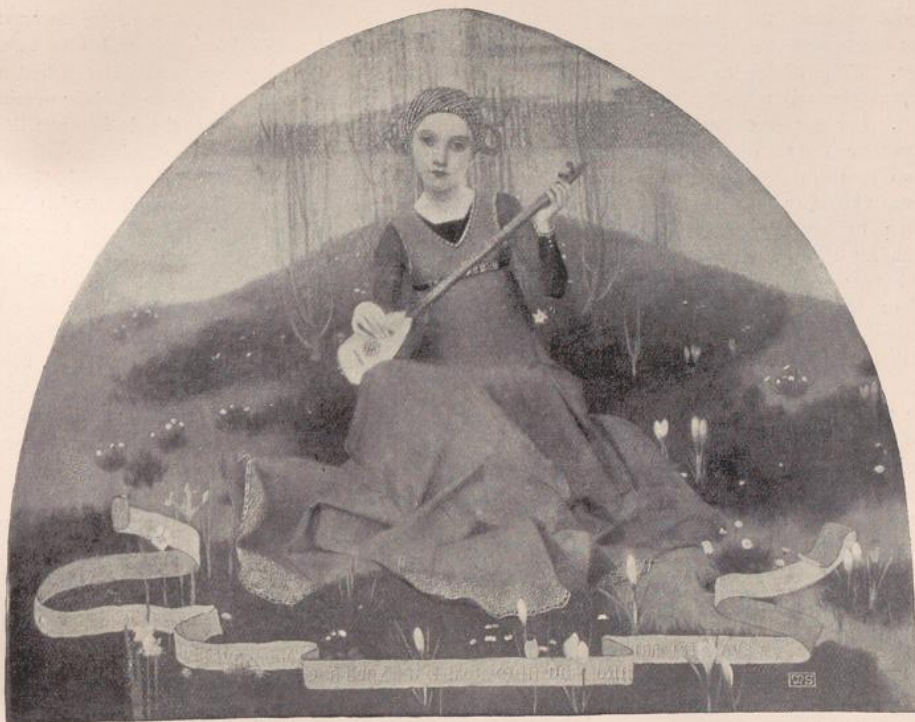


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The Work Of Mrs. Adrian Stokes. By Harriet Ford.

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The Work of Mrs. Adrian Stokes.



“PRIMAVERA”

(By permission of George McCulloch, Esq.)

BY MARIANNE STOKES

THE WORK OF MRS. ADRIAN STOKES. BY HARRIET FORD.

“THE impressions of childhood put later into criticisms and pictures make themselves felt by a strange depth of emotion, and are precisely what give delicacy and life.” I was glad to come across that passage in a translation of Sainte-Beuve’s “*Essay on Balzac*,” the other day, because it gave me a direct authority, as it were, for the idea with which I wanted to begin this notice of Marianne Stokes. It seemed to me that if it were possible to trace to their source the special characteristics marking the work of individuals, we should generally find the influence directing them lay in the, often unconsciously, treasured-up impressions received in early youth. Such apparent anomalies as the fact of Turner being a Londoner, and the environment of the small Parisian shopkeeper being the uncongenial atmosphere in which Corot lived for thirty years,

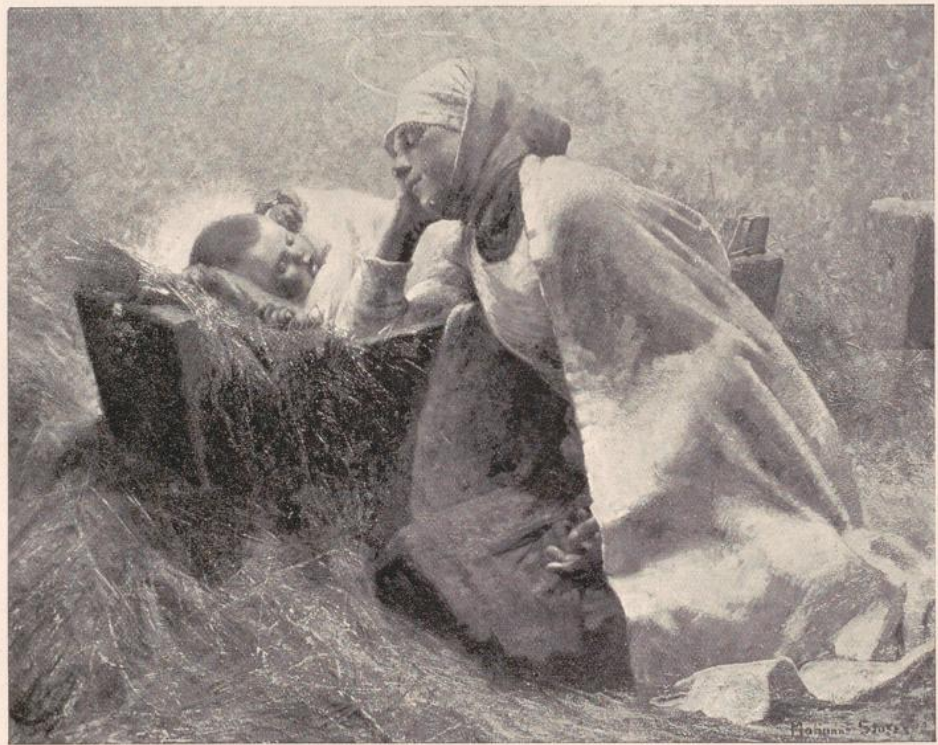
do not contradict the generalising statement. For what do we know of the impressions—their very unusualness, perhaps, adding to their force—which first placed their abiding seal upon the minds of these men? Some flash of sunset among the barges and shipping, burnishing the sluggish river, and glorifying the enveloping mist, may have set the Cockney boy a-dreaming before the conscious effort had arisen in his mind. Or a Sunday spent with his family at St. Cloud, in the Bois, or among the grey and silvery reaches of the lower Seine, may have sunk so deeply into the soul of Corot that while still measuring tape and putting up shutters the influence lived and bore its fruit. These men were the rich soil upon which the good grain fell; to them the accidental, the occasional, were the more important. But we all know how we are constantly troubled by the jarring note of what we know to be false, which nevertheless rings in our ears with the insistence of long

The Work of Mrs. Adrian Stokes.

association; or perhaps we are grateful that the books we used, the illustrations which fell into our hands, were the beginning of a just appreciation. While talking to Mrs. Stokes one day she became personal upon this matter of early association. For her own part she recognises in her experience the influence of certain definite things. Two of them stand out more vividly than the rest. One is a volume of Grimm's "Fairy Tales," given to her as a child, with illustrations of sufficient artistic quality, quaintness of humour, and fineness of line not to be harmful: "It might have been so much worse," says Mrs. Stokes. The other, and the more important, is the fact of having lived in a Catholic country. The Catholic ceremonial appealed strongly to the æsthetic part of her mind, so much so that the feeling for, and delight in, colour, with a dash of mysticism in her later work, have had their origin in the pleasure derived from the processions, the lights and the vestments of the Church.

With the æsthetic enjoyment came the effort of expression. Marianne Stokes is of the fortunate ones who find their *métier* early, and who never swerve from their allegiance to it. Her earliest recollections are connected with an old lady wearing grey curls who humoured her delight in a pencil.

In due course the local art schools were followed by a visit to Munich. The chances of effective art training for women in Munich at that time were few. There were no schools open to them. All they could do was to take a studio, two or three girls together, and ask some artist to visit them. Generally, on the professor's part it was not altogether serious. He came, he praised, he pointed out a superficial fault or two, he went away. For the rest, the student wrestled with technical problems by herself—as, indeed, falls to the lot of most students. But the encouragement was not always great. To a quick-witted, earnest-minded girl the feeling of being treated with a somewhat perfunctory gentleness and con-



"LIGHT OF LIGHT"

(By permission of Frau von Panizza)

BY MARIANNE STOKES



"SAINT ELIZABETH SPINNING
FOR THE POOR." BY
MARIANNE STOKES

(By permission of Leopold Hirsch, Esq.)

The Work of Mrs. Adrian Stokes.

descension, not too much being demanded of her, added insult to injury. In the case in point, however, Mrs. Stokes speaks with gratitude of the kindness and helpfulness of her professors, and the years spent in Munich produced excellent results. A facility, a dexterity in the management of materials was gained, and beyond that a good deal of practice in the making of pictures; a very different thing indeed from the manipulation of pigments. It is with a quaint charm of humour that Mrs. Stokes describes her Munich days. Depending much upon her own resources, this picture-making answered the double purpose of study and of pot boiling. A dealer agreed to take her work. Every month a little picture was painted. It was generally some study of children, some fleeting, humorous idea or arrangement in light and shade, or colour. All the thought was concentrated in realising upon canvas something seen. The painter's energies were engrossed with the study of technique—the alphabet, in fact, of the language by which she was later to speak. Pleasant, charming no doubt many of them were, these little pictures, showing already a happy appreciation of pictorial qualities. The Munich picture galleries were a constant source of enlightenment; the inspiration drawn from them was all towards naturalistic expression. "Nature is so beautiful" then as now, to Mrs. Stokes. It was an excellent beginning, self-reliant and vigorous.

Then came Paris. A picture more important and more fortunate than the rest opened the way. There she learnt the meaning of line, the search for values, for tone. Vague and vapoury ideas of art gave place, under a merciless system, to hard-headed logic, a looseness of method to a just and positive observation. The young, and often misplaced, enthusiasm of the student is not always cheered by the professorial prophecy, *Vous arriverez*, but it fell to Mrs. Stokes' lot. A couple of years spent in France—about ten months of it in Paris—were followed by her coming with her husband to England. Since then most of her work has been shown in the annual London exhibitions. It is not my intention to attempt here anything in the nature of an exhaustive and detailed criticism of Mrs. Stokes' work, but any notice of her methods must take into account the apparent contradiction between the work she did some years ago and that which she is now doing. The first picture exhibited by her in Burlington House, a study of a child sitting by a calf bound for market, struck the keynote for much of her subsequent work.

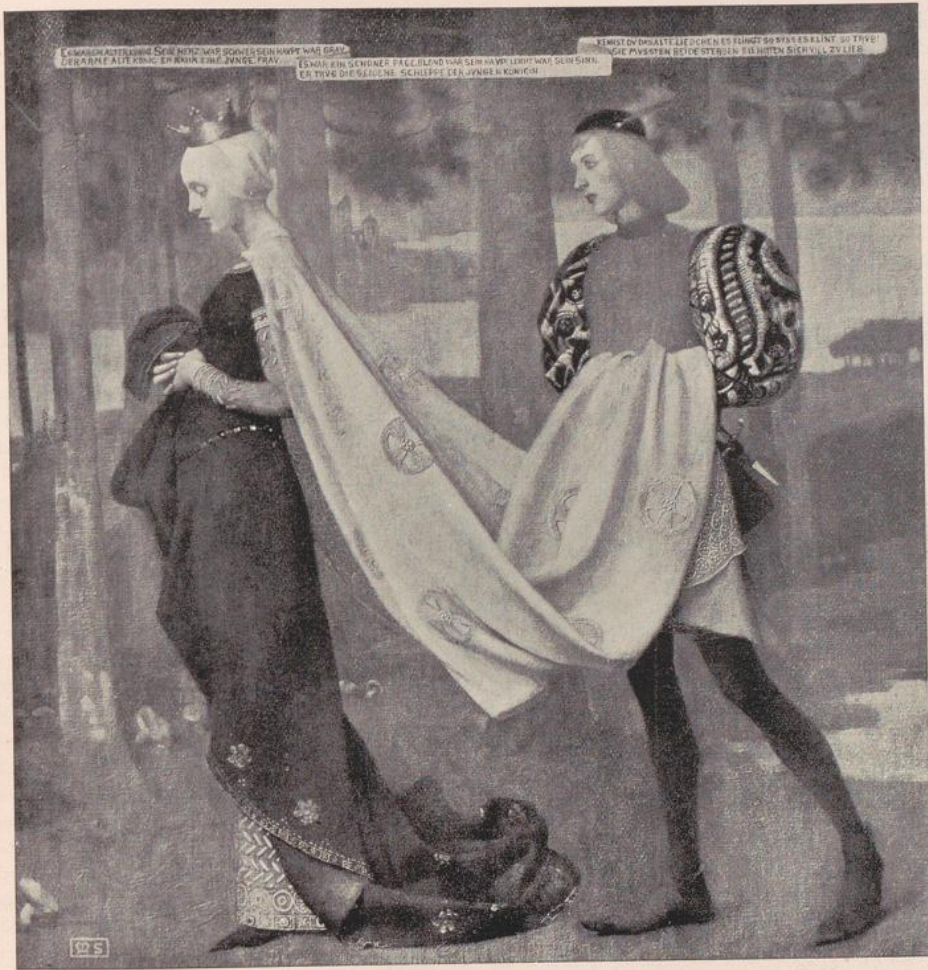
It was a frankly realistic study. That it was deeply imbued with sentiment, with a story-telling quality, is true, but at no time has she approached her subject from the literary side. Always painter-like in her methods, with a largeness of grasp, and a feeling for balanced masses, indispensable to a painter of decorations, Mrs. Stokes devoted herself, at this time, to the problems of light and shade, tone, quality and variety in texture, flexibility, and dexterity in handling. Line and pure colour played little part in her methods, yet the drawing already indicated a psychological quality, if I may so call it, used



"HAIL, MARY"

BY MARIANNE STOKES

(By permission of Leonard Stokes, Esq.)



“THE QUEEN AND THE PAGE”
BY MARIANNE STOKES

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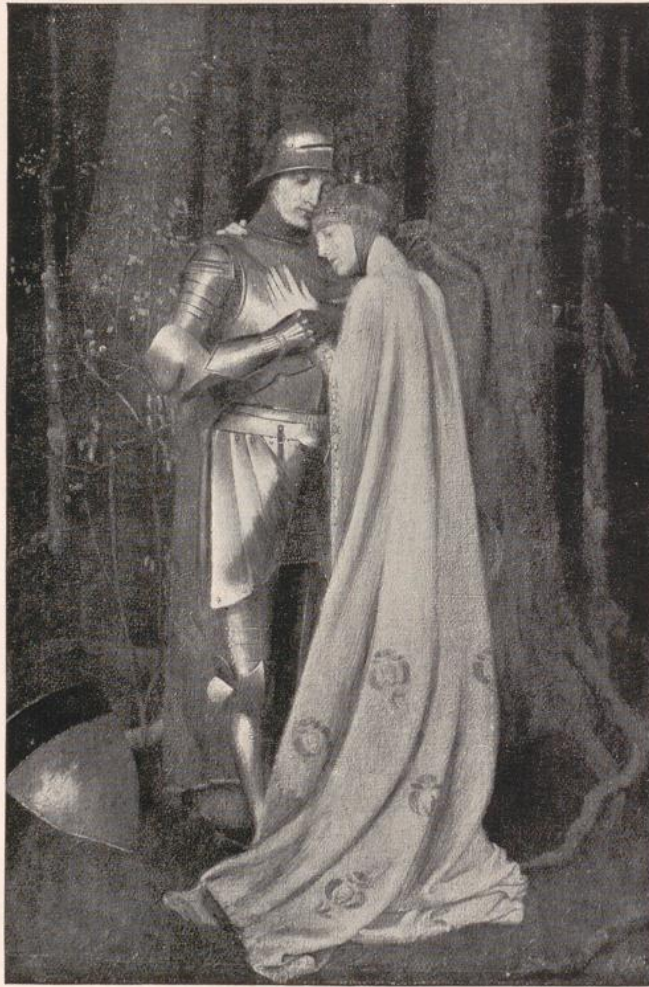
The Work of Mrs. Adrian Stokes.

with such effect in her later work. Mrs. Stokes admits that this period was one of probation, of strenuous endeavour to fully equip herself with a store of positive knowledge, ultimately to be turned to other uses. It has been often said that we must reach the accomplishment of leaving out by first knowing how to put in. The difficulties of selection, of simplifying, are only effectively possible after a long training in the relative importance of things.

In 1891 Mrs. Stokes first turned her attention to decorative work. The summer of the same year she went to Italy. Since then her attention has

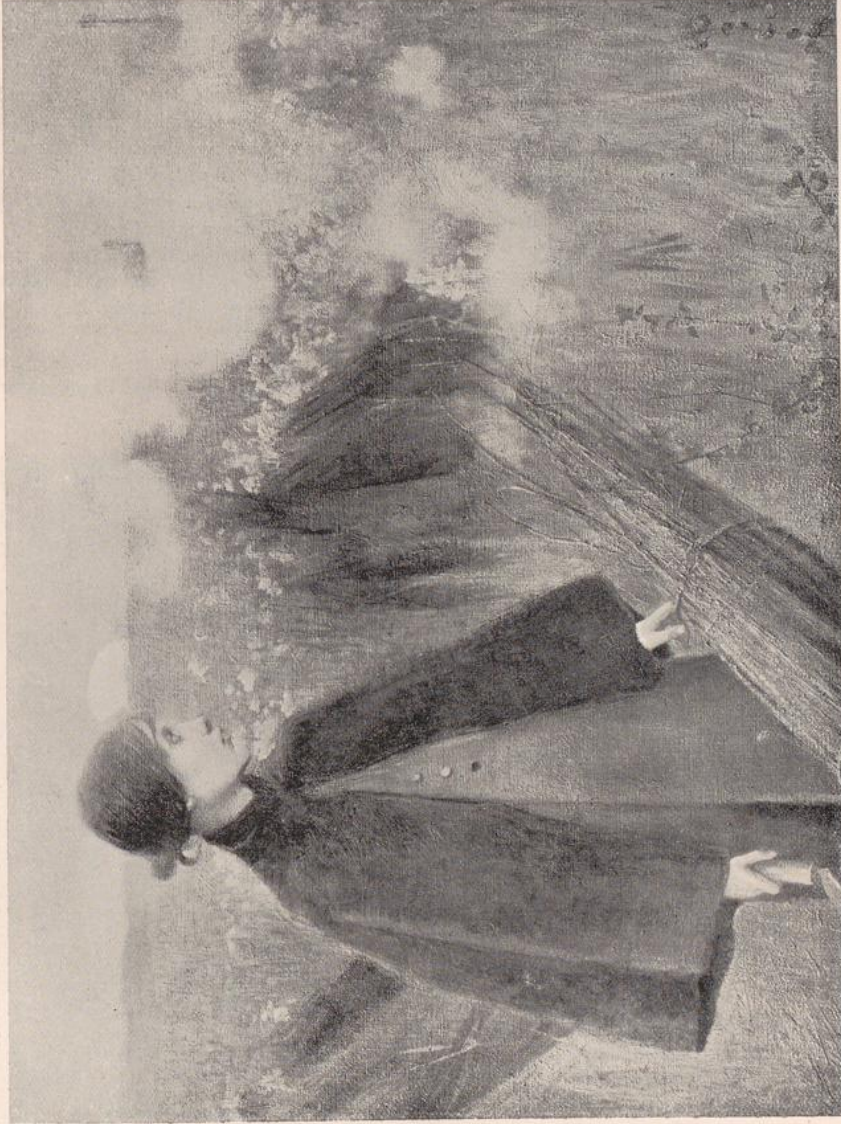
been given to problems of pure colour and line. Her later work has been called a "retrogression," inasmuch as she now deliberately chooses to deny herself the somewhat flamboyant use of many elements which are supposed to be necessary to the equipment of the modern painter. But within certain limitations, carefully studied with a view to not interfering with a desired effect, they are all there, for she by no means wishes to forego her inheritance as a "modern." Her work has, it is true, the haunting, elusive suggestion of a bygone convention; but try to follow the suggestion and we find it defies capture. In fact, it is personal.

The outlook is her own. Believing, as she does, that the preoccupation with manual dexterity has run its course, and that the elements for truer art rest upon a less showy foundation, she elects to ignore "technique" in the "brushwork" sense of the word, and to confine herself to the problems of beautiful arrangement, that is to say, to the patternmaking quality of the pure decorator. It is no easy task thus to express, with the severest self-restraint, this decorative quality which yet shall have relief, space and envelopment. That she has not failed the *Primavera* testifies. Wholly devoted to beauty, Mrs. Stokes' aim is to build up, evolve, create some beautiful thing: a picture which shall be, in the broadest sense of the word, a piece of "decoration" for a wall, harmonious and delightful. Abhorring anything in the shape of "still life," independent of shop "draperies," all the ornamentation of robes and accessories are designed with a view to their special use, and are wrought with



"AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE"

BY MARIANNE STOKES



"THE PASSING TRAIN"
BY MARIANNE STOKES

Sporting Cups.

skill into the fabric of the picture. Full of ingenuity, of resources, delighting in all delicate and dainty means of expressing the thought, she yet never descends to triviality, to mere "prettiness." I spoke of the psychology of the drawing in the earlier work; how much more it may be spoken of now. Each line in the *Queen and the Page*



SILVER CUP DESIGNED BY C. R. ASHBEE
EXECUTED BY THE GUILD OF HANDICRAFT

carries its full force of spiritual significance. There is something of Maeterlinckian mysticism about it, almost something of Maeterlinck's insistent repetition. It is rhythmic in its flow and the ear is attuned to the sadness of the undercurrents of life. It has the charm, the tenderness, the "morbidezza" of a mediæval love-story. Yet no one more than Mrs. Stokes deprecates the unhealthiness of much modern attitudinising. Practical, capable, enthusiastic, with that "divine gift" of the dexterous use of tools, loving her work without pose or affectation, looking for beauty in all things, she has a clear, sane and healthy outlook upon life. H. F.

The sixteenth Home Arts and Industries Exhibition will be held at the Albert Hall, London, from the 24th to the 28th May.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF SPORTING CUPS AND TROPHIES. PART I.

THE age in which we live is of a piece with the jerry-builder who angered Tennyson by destroying useful trees. "Why do you cut them down?" the poet asked. "Make the foundation of your house a few yards back, and you could save them. Trees are beautiful things." The jerry-builder smiled with amusement. "Trees are ornaments," he replied; "what *we* want is utility." And the industrial vandalism of to-day has not had a more laconic spokesman.

The most general manifestation of this destructive kind of "utility" is to be found in the modern craze for cheap things. Thackeray laughed at this craze, at this childish mania for cheapness. A friend spoke to him one day of a place where cheap and excellent old wines could be purchased;



SILVER CUP
DESIGNED AND EXECUTED BY W. HARDIMAN