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The Art Of 1900. By A. L. Baldry.

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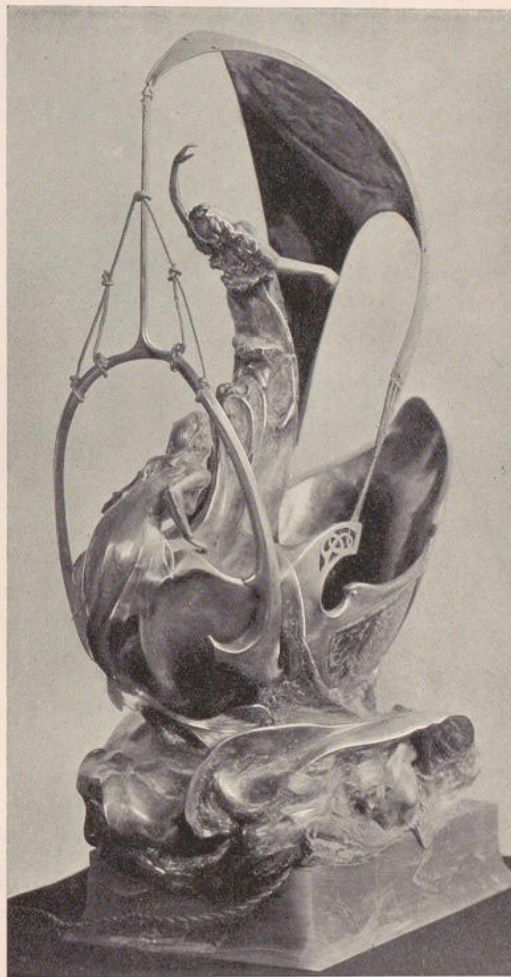
THE STUDIO

THE ART OF 1900. BY A. L. BALDRY.

THERE is a well-worn proverb to the effect that one swallow does not make a summer, which is often used to check the exuberance of those sanguine people who are in the habit of building a massive enthusiasm on a very small basis. The saying serves as a kind of warning against assumptions that are not justified by circumstances and not directed by common-sense, but it does not go far enough in the direction of instruction. To learn how many swallows ought to be put in evidence to prove that summer has really arrived would save many minds from the strain of vague speculation. It would be consoling to feel that they knew where they were, and that there was no risk of committing themselves by arguing on an insufficient premise. They would stand on safe ground at all events, comfortably relieved from the necessity of studying rules of proportion and subtleties of cause and effect.

It is just this sort of knowledge that is anxiously desired by the great array of people who cannot, without assistance, read the signs which mark the coming of a full harvest of artistic effort. They have been told so often that one fine picture does not make a great school, and have been on so many occasions snubbed for being enthusiastic without sufficient cause, that they have acquired a timid view. What natural instincts they may have they are afraid to express for fear they should be taken to task and ridiculed for their simple self-satisfaction. Some other help must be given them, some explanation of the course they ought to follow to arrive at a proper attitude on æsthetic questions, and to reach that safe harbour of comfortable conviction where they will be able to hide

their real unfitness to battle against the storms of outside opinion. Left alone, they might be quite willing to amuse themselves with little things and to enjoy in all sincerity their own untutored tastes. One swallow, or perhaps two or three that chanced to come together, would delight them quite as much



"THE BIRTH OF APHRODITE": SILVER AND ENAMEL BY A. FISHER



SILVER STATUETTE, BY
ALEXANDER FISHER



OVERMANTEL IN BRASS, SILVER,
AND ENAMELS. BY
ALEXANDER FISHER

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as a whole swarm, and would leave them in no manner of doubt concerning the reality of the summer for which they were longing.

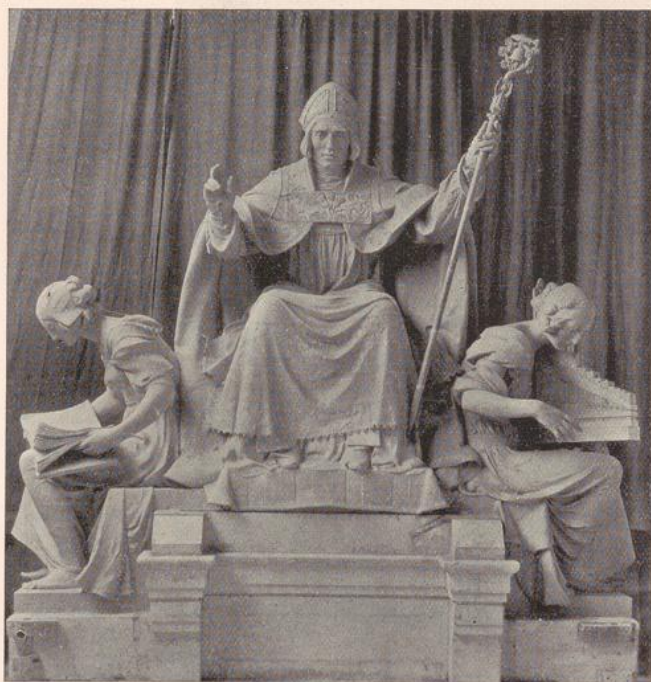
But now-a-days the untutored taste is out of fashion in art matters. Everyone has to pretend to have the critical faculty whether it belongs to him naturally or not. Everyone is expected to be analytical and to discriminate between æstheticism, pure and simple, and that which covers up imperfections under a fair exterior. The plain man who pins his faith to one type of art, who knows what he likes and will not interest himself in anything else, does not by any means come up to modern standards. For him the single swallow is quite sufficient, and one picture of the sort he wants sets him boasting that the full blaze of the artistic summer has come. This narrow creed, however, can only be professed by the person who is absolutely indifferent to what may be said about him. The sensitive or self-conscious man, with aspirations to be thought enlightened and intelligent, may privately be quite as limited in his æsthetic beliefs, but he cannot stand the ridicule to which he would have to submit if he said openly what he thought. He

has to grope about in search of some kind of guidance that will save him from betraying himself. He waits till the leaders of opinion begin to comment on the number of swallows there are about before he will admit that he has seen one at all, and keeps up a discreet scepticism concerning the advent of summer until the fact itself is beyond dispute. To such a one, especially, a few clear rules as to what form his admirations should take would be an inestimable boon; his existence would be far more comfortable, and his mind would be eased of many irritations.

Really, there is a great deal of truth in the old proverb, even if it is a little vague and unsatisfactory from an educational point of view. There is in existence a tendency to assume that any school-of-art practice which is headed by one or two men of conspicuous power is necessarily in a state of exuberant vitality, and deserves to be regarded as of the highest possible importance. Enthusiasm of an exaggerated kind is wasted upon artistic associations which have really no claim to influence and no right to be ranked as in any sense authoritative. They are hailed as exponents of all that is valuable and illuminating in æsthetic

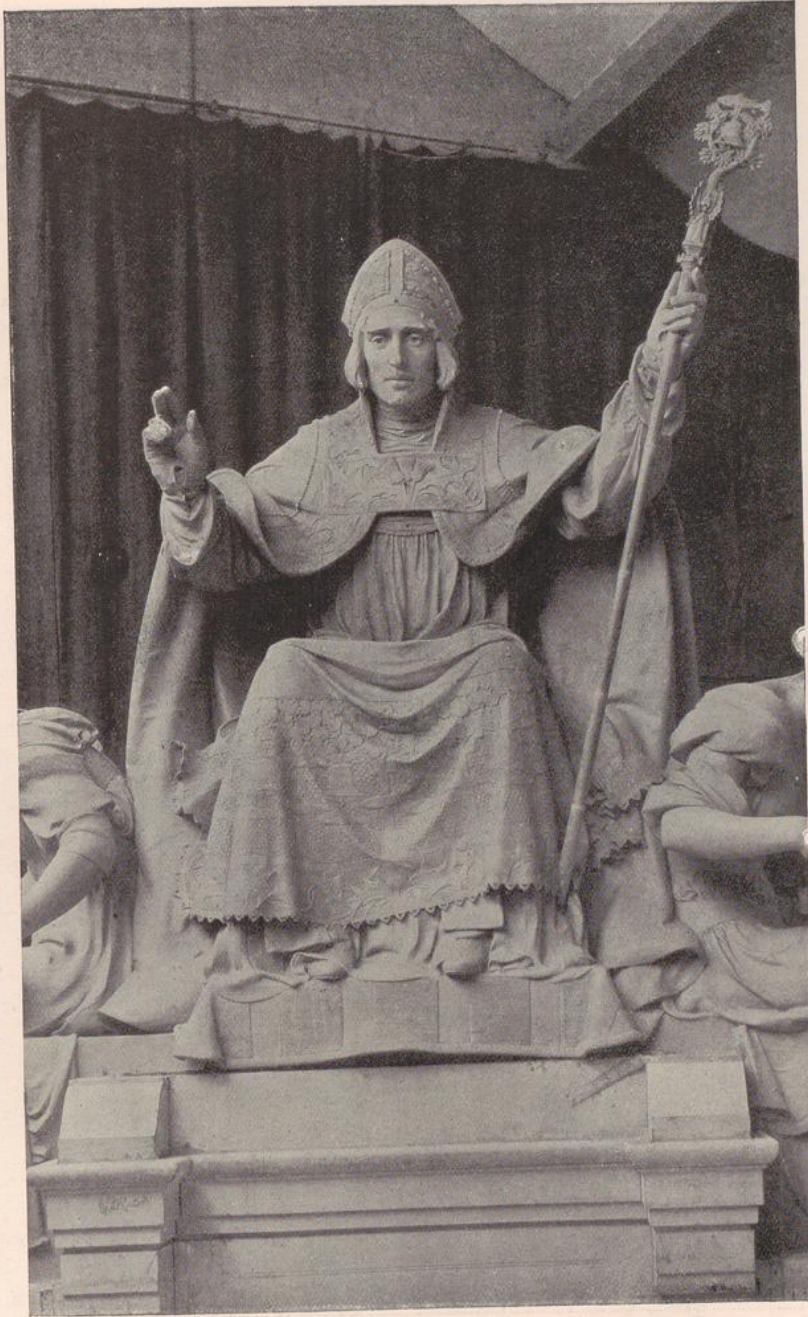
progress, as evidences of the strong hold that great principles have upon the ideas of the community; and they are worshipped as if they owed their existence to a sort of divine inspiration.

All this is radically wrong, because the foundation for such rampant enthusiasm cannot be said to exist. The measure of the vitality of a school is not so much the eminence of one or two men in it as the numerical strength of the whole body of workers. The summer has not come because one or two swallows stronger winged than the rest have raised premature hopes. These forerunners only hint at what is to be expected; the true perfection of the season is proved by the numbers that follow. When the air is full of busy toilers, striving one

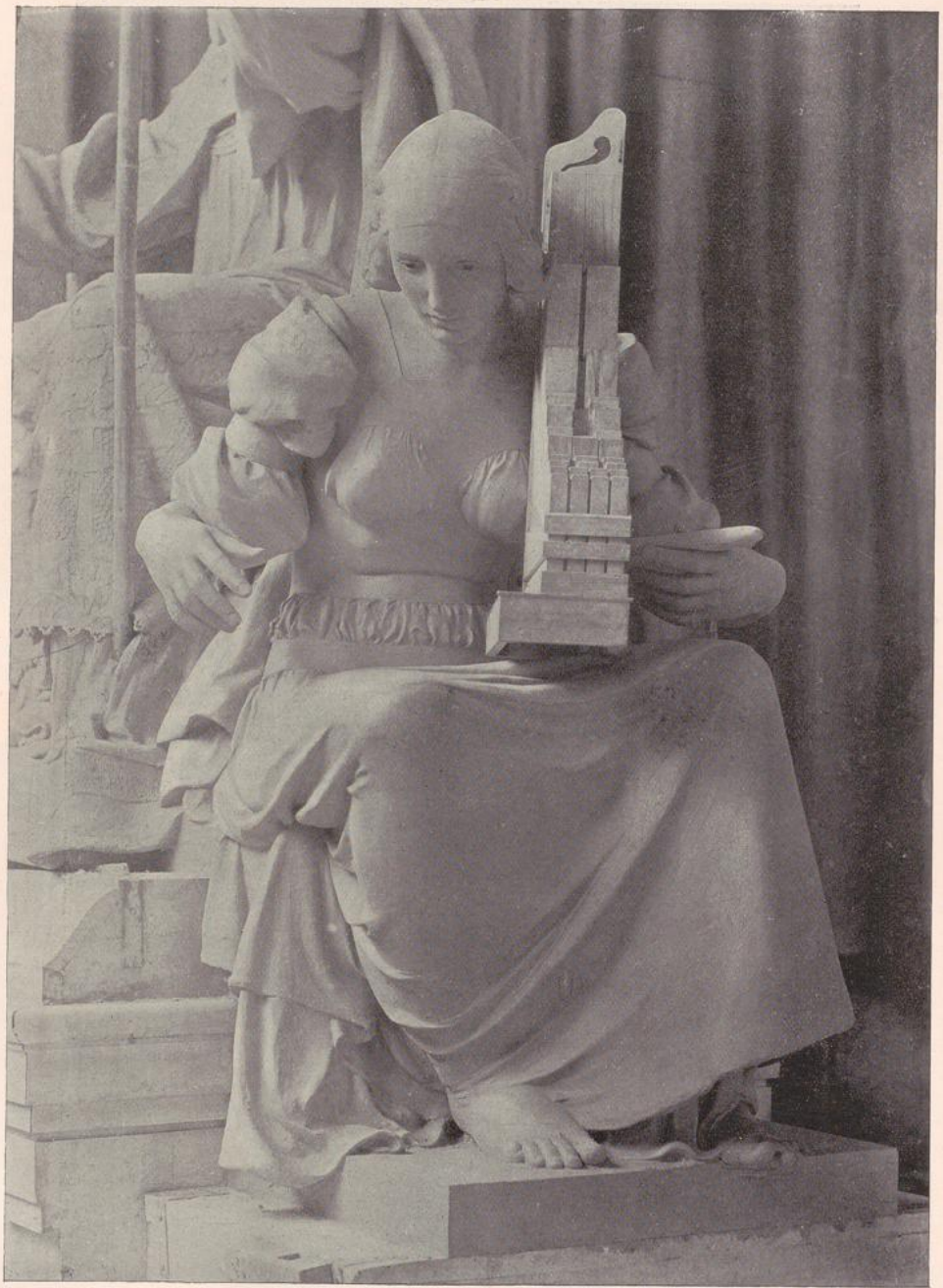


STATUE OF SAINT MUNGO

BY GEORGE FRAMPTON, A.R.A.



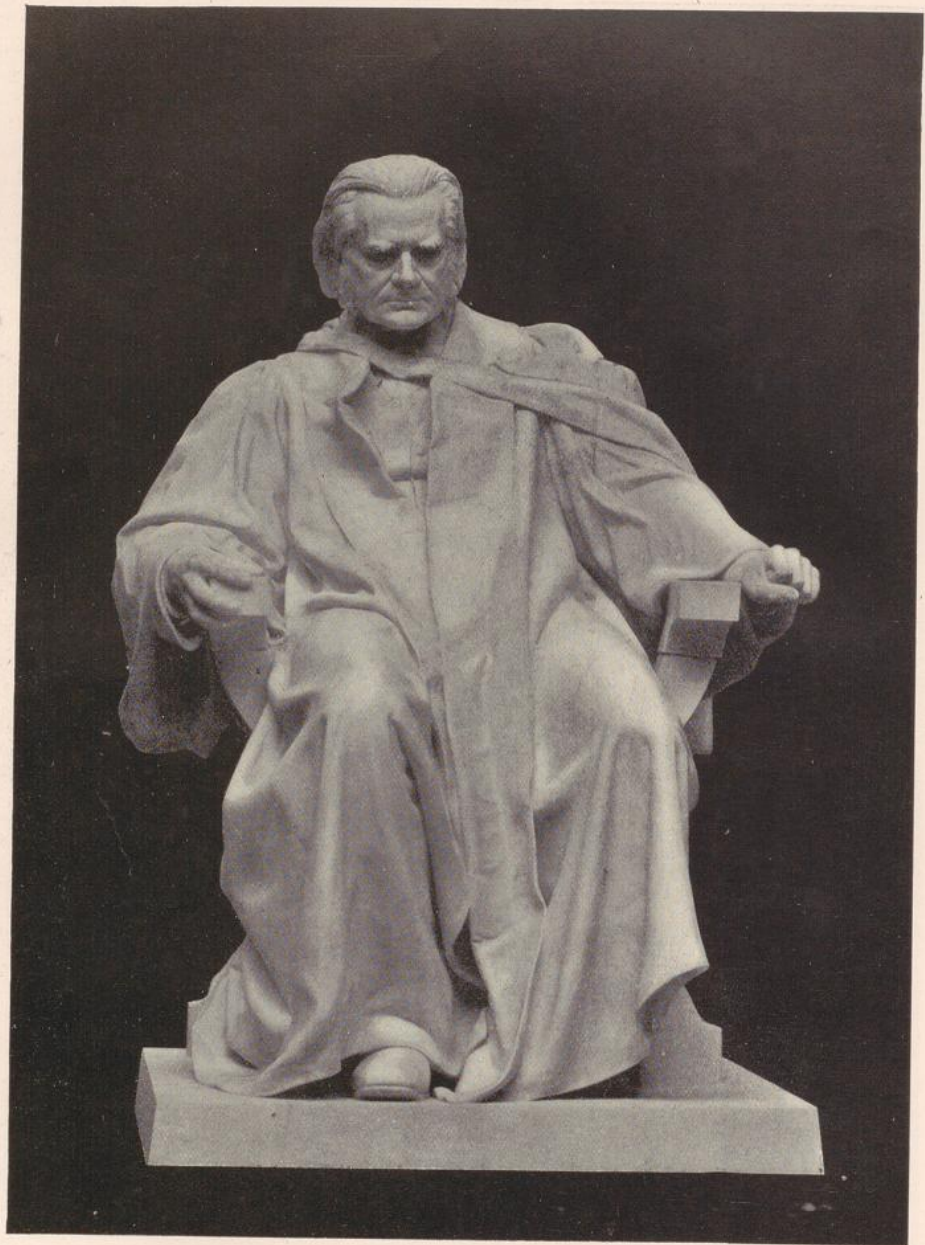
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DETAIL OF ST. MUNGO STATUE
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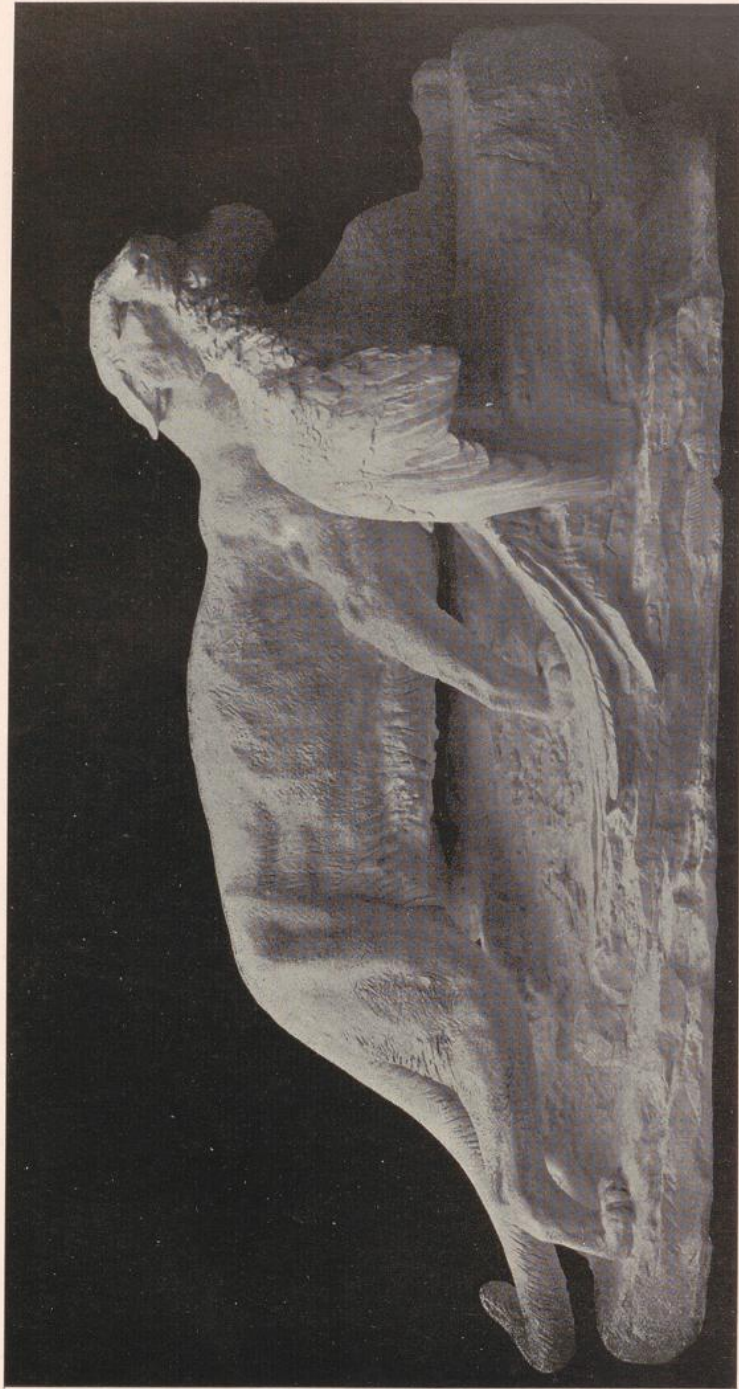
DETAIL OF ST. MUNGO STATUE
BY GEORGE FRAMPTON, A.R.A.



STATUE OF PROFESSOR HUXLEY
BY ONSLOW FORD, R.A.



"BEAUTY'S ALTAR," ENAMEL
BY PROFESSOR VON HERKOMER, R.A.



PUMA AND MACAW"
BY J. M. SWAN, A.R.A.



"GUINEVERE AND THE NESTLING"
BY W. REYNOLDS-STEPHENS

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against the other, and each one keen on working out his own destiny in the way that seems to him to be best, then is the time for real rejoicing among the people who have been waiting for a sign; and not till then can they safely congratulate themselves on the complete satisfaction of their hopes.

However, as things are now, even the most timid observer of signs and portents can feel convinced that it is summer time with our native school. Art in this country depends for its vitality to-day not upon the inspired energy of one or two famous workers, but upon the strength and

originality of a whole host of able men. We have, it is true, our leaders who stand out above the rest by virtue of their commanding ability, but the lesser lights do not merely follow in the wake of these great ones; they have their own ideas and their own definite aspirations that each in his own fashion is striving his utmost to realise. Consequently there is a vast amount of healthy variety in their methods, and a great deal of freshness and spontaneity distinguish their activity. All aspects of art are presented, not in a perfunctory manner and in accordance with certain recognised rules, but sincerely and logically with a

pleasant intention to secure the right kind of independence. Here and there this independence may be a little exaggerated, and, in its vehemence of protest against dull conventions, it may be open to the charge of eccentricity; yet the protest is without affectation, and its quaintness of form expresses nothing worse than a craving for originality that has for the moment got beyond control. Honesty, indeed, is a virtue that no one can deny to the British school, a virtue that graces the rank and file not less than the most distinguished leaders. It gives a charm to the humblest efforts, and adds a further value to the achievements of the master-craftsmen, and it links together all phases of our national art into a completeness that is full of dignity and significant meaning.

This year the demonstration made by the artists of this country is extremely encouraging. Not only is it interesting in actual accomplishment, but it is also notable for the evidence it gives of steady



STUDY FOR "CHARITY"

BY FRANK BRANGWYN

STUDY FOR FIGURE IN
"CHARITY"
BY
FRANK BRANGWYN.



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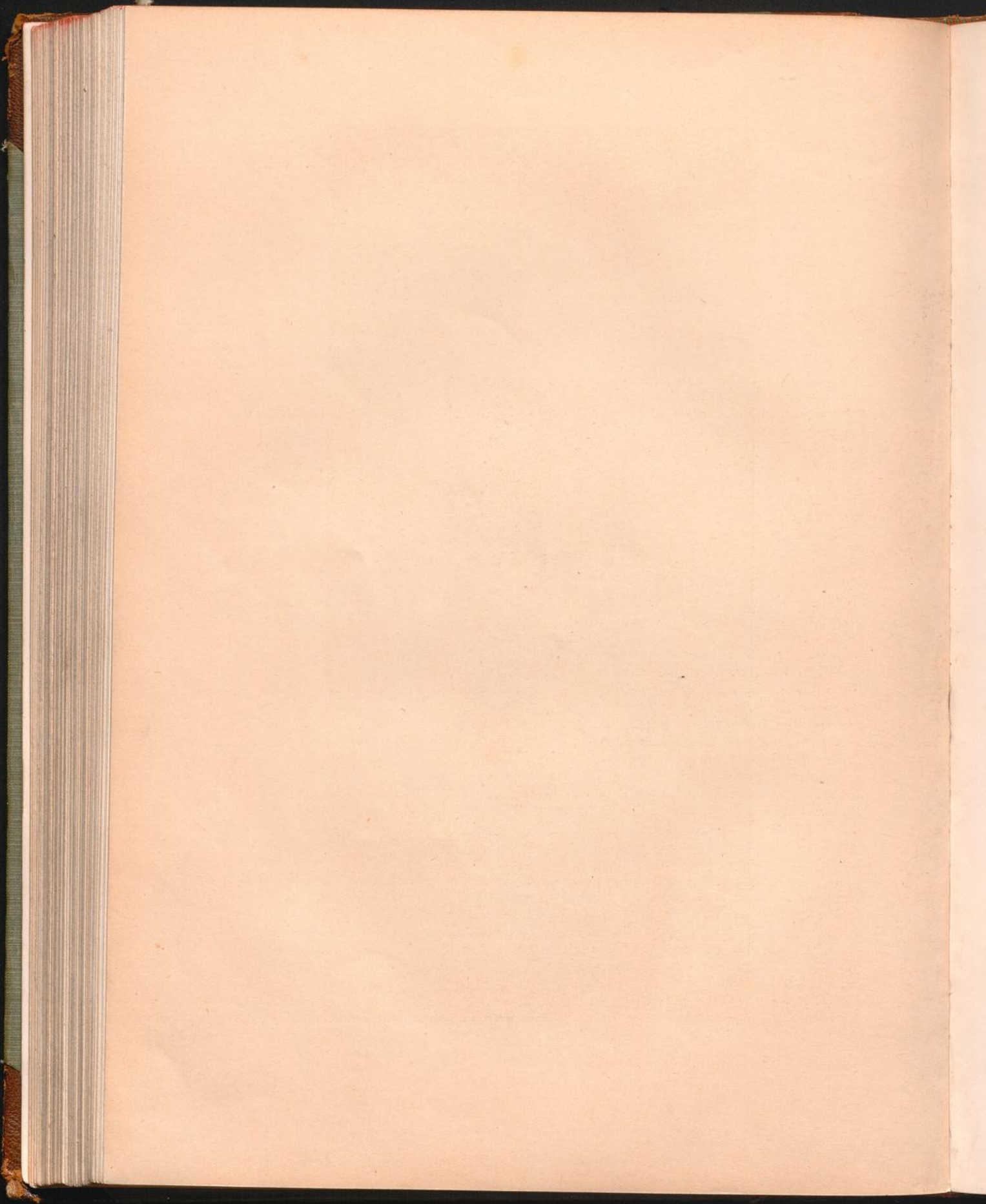


STUDY FOR "CHARITY"

BY FRANK BRANGWYN



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progress and orderly development. In all the exhibitions proofs can be seen that the scope of art practice is widening to include new ways of presenting accepted beliefs and to take in types of original effort that have hitherto been looked upon as little more than bare possibilities. The old limitations have been swept away by a flood of fancies based upon an entirely fresh set of ideas, and our art has thrown off its former subservience to dogmas which held it back from fields of activity where chances of splendid success were open to it. What were once condemned as rank heresies by

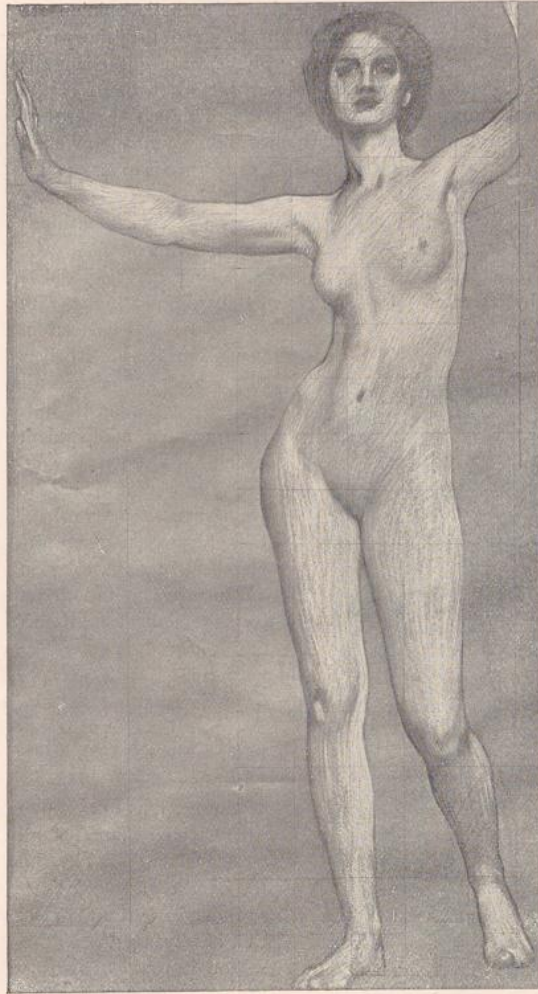
the self-constituted leaders of æsthetic opinion are to-day essential parts of the creed that the whole community professes. The effect of this change is apparent enough to everyone who compares the work that fills the public galleries at the present moment with that which was a few years ago viewed as properly orthodox. The contrast is in many ways surprising.

For much of this destruction of obsolete fashions we have to thank the younger men. With the characteristic irreverence of youth they have treated as of no account traditions hoary with antiquity; and instead of being satisfied with beliefs that were good enough for their grandfathers, they have formed independent conclusions upon an entirely fresh basis. Like the young heir to an old estate, they have rooted up decayed plantations to open out new vistas and to let air and sunlight into dark and musty corners. The clearance has done good, for it has not only left the way open for the representatives of modern thought, but it has stimulated many of the veterans to abandon their stagnant fancies and to throw in their lot with the band of progressives.

Indeed, in the art harvest that has been gathered this season, it would be hard to say whose contribution has been the more helpful. The men of established reputation have been by no means content to rest upon their laurels, and, as they have so often done before, to leave their juniors to gain all the credit for activity in advancement of the higher æsthetics. The honours now are fairly shared, and the balance between the artists who have arrived and those who are winning their way to well-deserved prominence



STUDY FOR "THE WAYS OF MAN ARE PASSING STRANGE" BY BYAM SHAW



STUDY FOR "THE GATES OF DAWN"

BY H. J. DRAPER

is very evenly held. Many points of difference between the representatives of past and present creeds have vanished outright, and there has been a fusing together of yesterday and to-day that has obliterated distinctions which seemed at one time to be fixed beyond possibility of change. The vitality of our schools must, indeed, be great if it can produce such results and can so unite in one strong movement the most diverse types of intention.

A review of the galleries and studios gives at this moment an admirable insight into the process of revolution that is in progress in British art.

In painting, sculpture and design alike there is sounding clearly a common note of originality. Every worker who is honestly conscious of his responsibilities is not only trying to find something fresh to say, but is seeking for phrases that will give shades of expression unlike any that have been known before. If, for example, we turn to men of recent repute like Mr. Brangwyn, Mr. Byam Shaw, Mr. Harold Speed, or Mr. Bertram Priestman, we find them inspired by the same craving for independence that has through longer years of working guided such modern masters as Mr. J. S. Sargent, Mr. Orchardson, Mr. La Thangue, Mr. Clausen, or Mr. Boughton; but we can perceive in none of them any trace of that uniformity which would imply that they had sunk their respective individualities in an effort to keep within the limits of a prescribed fashion. On the contrary, each one to all appearance is in absolute opposition to all his fellows, speaking a language with different idioms, and it is only by close analysis that the bond of serious intention by which they are linked together can be detected. This diversity of expression makes certainly for development, for it provides a standing proof that there are many directions in which the evolution of our school can go on without being on the one hand narrowed between hard and fast bounds, and on the other hand without being launched vaguely into space to drift uncontrolled and lose itself in empty uncertainty.

It is more than ever difficult this year to choose for comment those pictures which can be said to mark definitely the highest levels of achievement. There are, it is true, a few works which are so obviously great that no hesitation is possible in assigning to them their place of pre-eminence; but there are besides many splendid productions whose merits are so evenly balanced that to make distinctions between them is an altogether puzzling task. Among the canvases which can easily be singled out, the most remarkable are Mr. J. S. Sargent's superbly handled group of the three daughters of Mrs. Percy Wyndham and his vividly living portraits of the Lord Chief Justice; Mr.

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J. W. Waterhouse's *Awakening of Adonis*, with its noble craftsmanship and exquisite atmosphere of poetic fancy; Mr. Orchardson's unsurpassable composition representing four generations of the Royal Family; Mr. Brangwyn's *Charity*, an allegory that has given him a rare opportunity of showing his subtle sense of decoration and his unerring taste in colour arrangement; and Mr. E. A. Abbey's vast picture of *The Trial of Queen Katharine*, in which he has once again grappled with those combinations of deep tones and gorgeous hues that seem to afford him unbounded pleasure; not less notable are Mr. Boughton's *Waters of Forgetfulness*, in which his always supple and graceful art has taken to itself a masterly strength of handling and depth of meaning; Mr. La Thangue's pastoral, *The Water Flash*, with its bright reflection of Nature and charm of rural character; Mr. East's *Morning Moon*, dignified and significant in design and splendidly sure in handling; and Mr. Waterlow's *Pastorale Provençale*, a romantic note in which Nature has been used with true discretion to give vitality to an admirable motive.

Then there comes a long list of works which illustrate the comprehensive conviction of our modern school, and justify a keen admiration for its aggregate ability. This list includes such excellent performances as Mr. Clausen's and Mr. Edward Stott's records of rustic incident, Mr. Harold Speed's *Cupid's Well*, Mr. Gotch's *Dawn of Womanhood*, Mr. H. J. Draper's *Water Baby and Gates of Dawn*, Mr. Byam Shaw's *The Ways of Man are Passing Strange*, Mr. G. S. Watson's *Prometheus consoled by the Spirits of the Earth*, Mr. Austen Brown's *Wayside Pasture*, Mr. J. Clark's *Songs of Araby*, Mr. C. H. Sims' *In Elysia*, and Mr. Hacker's *Musicienne du Silence*, in which the decorative intention predominates; the landscapes by Mr. David Murray, Mr. Alfred Hartley, Mr. Peppercorn, Mr. Alfred Parsons, Mr. Moffat Lindner, Mr. Yeend King, Mr. Coutts Michie, Mr. Bertram Priestman, Mr. A. S. Hartrick, Mr. Mark Fisher, Mr. J. L. Pickering, and Mr. Leslie Thomson, which make centres of interest in the Academy, New Gallery, and New English Art Club; such subject pictures as Mr. F. Bramley's



STUDY FOR "PROMETHEUS CONSOLED
BY THE SPIRITS OF THE EARTH"

BY G. S. WATSON

Through the Mist of Past Years, Mr. Solomon J. Solomon's *Equipped*, and the Hon. John Collier's *The Billiard Players*; the Nature studies of Mr. Stanhope Forbes, and the portraits by Mr. J. J. Shannon, the Hon. John Collier, Mr. Robert Brough, Mr. W. W. Russell, Mr. P. W. Steer, Mr. W. Llewellyn, Mr. R. Jack, Mr. R. Peacock and Professor Herkomer. Many more could be chosen that are quite as characteristic and as thoroughly representative of the men who can be looked upon as chiefs of one section or another of this country's art, but no expansion of the list could make more definite the evidence of the strength of the æsthetic movement amongst us at this moment.

But even this hopeful stir and activity among

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the painters is surpassed by the even more stirring energy of the sculptors and the craftsmen who use sculpture as a basis for decorative work. In this branch of practice there is this spring an all-round excellence that is especially encouraging to everyone who has watched the progress of the last few years. Not only is their ideal work of noble power, important statues like Mr. Pomeroy's *Spearman* and Mr. Pegram's *Fortune*, but there are such magnificent memorials as Mr. Brock's monument to Lord Leighton, Mr. Onslow Ford's *Professor Huxley*, and Mr. Goscombe John's *Dean Vaughan*, and such exquisite instances of

craftsmanship as *Guinevere and the Nestling* by Mr. W. Reynolds-Stephens, Mr. Frampton's bronze and ivory bust, *Lamia*, and Mr. Alexander Fisher's astonishing achievement, an overmantel in bronze, enamel, and other materials, which is now on view at the New Gallery. Professor Herkomer, too, has some new enamels, portraits, and allegorical subjects, which show how marvellous a mastery he has attained over the complicated technicalities of this artistic process. Mr. Drury exhibits, instead of the decorative sculpture that has of late occupied him almost entirely, a piece of imaginative work, *The Prophetess of Fate*, that is in every

way worthy of him. It is finely conceived, and is handled with commendable reserve and quiet power.

Altogether there is good reason to be satisfied with the art of the year. The prophets who a few months ago were foretelling disaster, and were warning the world at large to expect little in the way of a harvest, have been proved blind guides. Their forecasts have, happily, failed to come true, and things have gone better than, according to them, could by any possibility have been expected. That this should be so is a matter for rejoicing, for it would, indeed, have been a pity if an unseasonable frost should have come to mar the summer of our school. Years of striving with adverse influences have brought us at last to sturdy maturity, and everyone who wishes well to British art would be glad to see it reap now the fruits of its dogged perseverance in the past. It has been honest in its effort, and has certainly earned the right to encouragement.

A. L. BALDRY.



STUDY FOR "CUPID'S WELL"

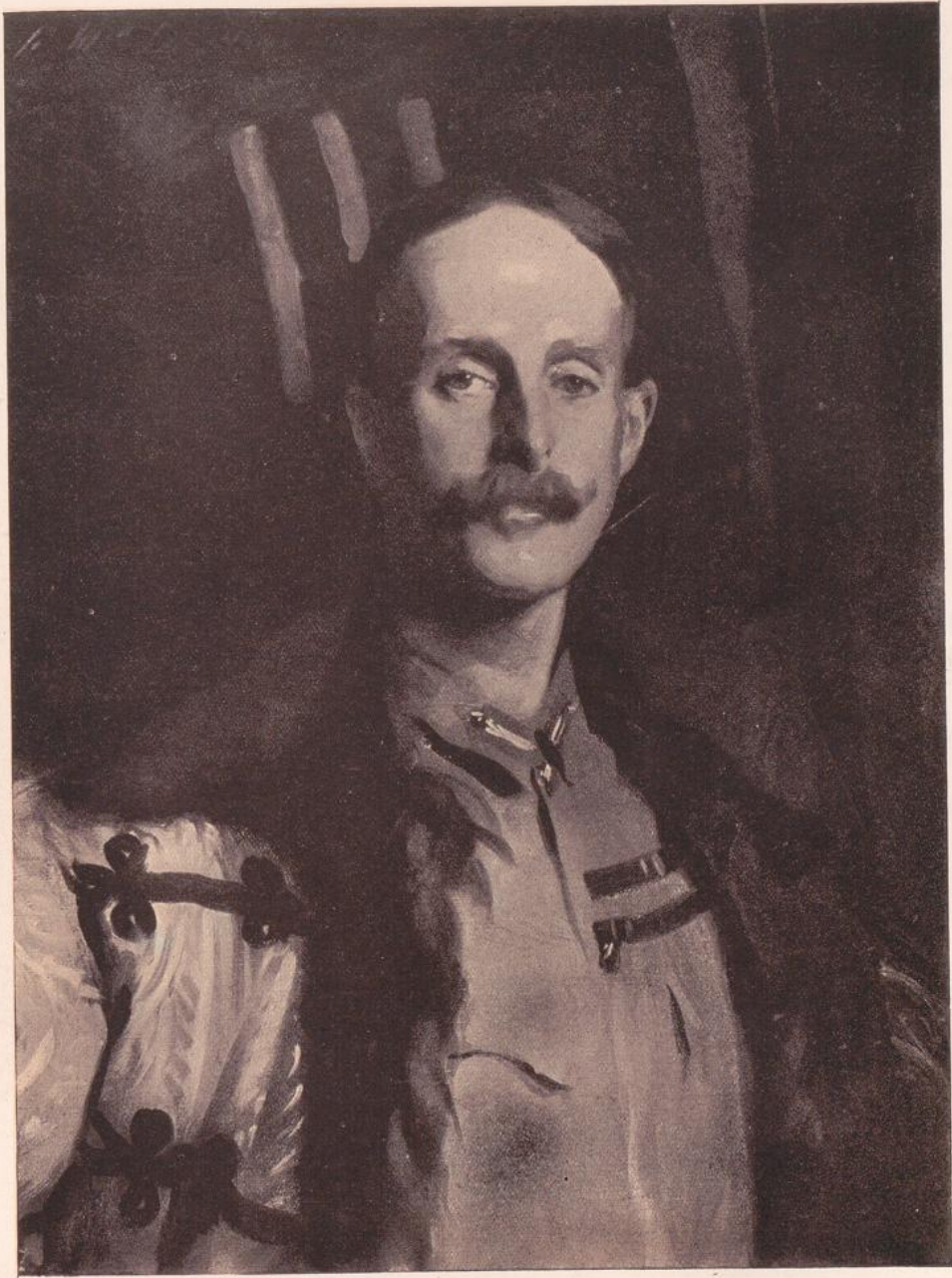
BY HAROLD SPEED



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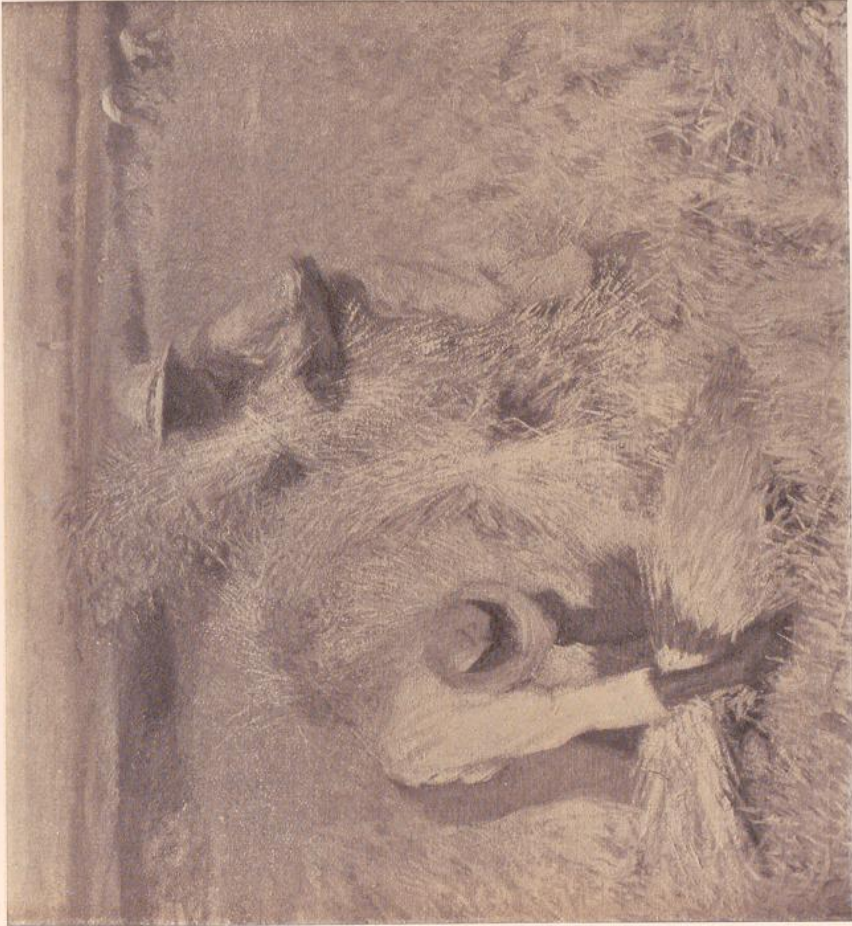
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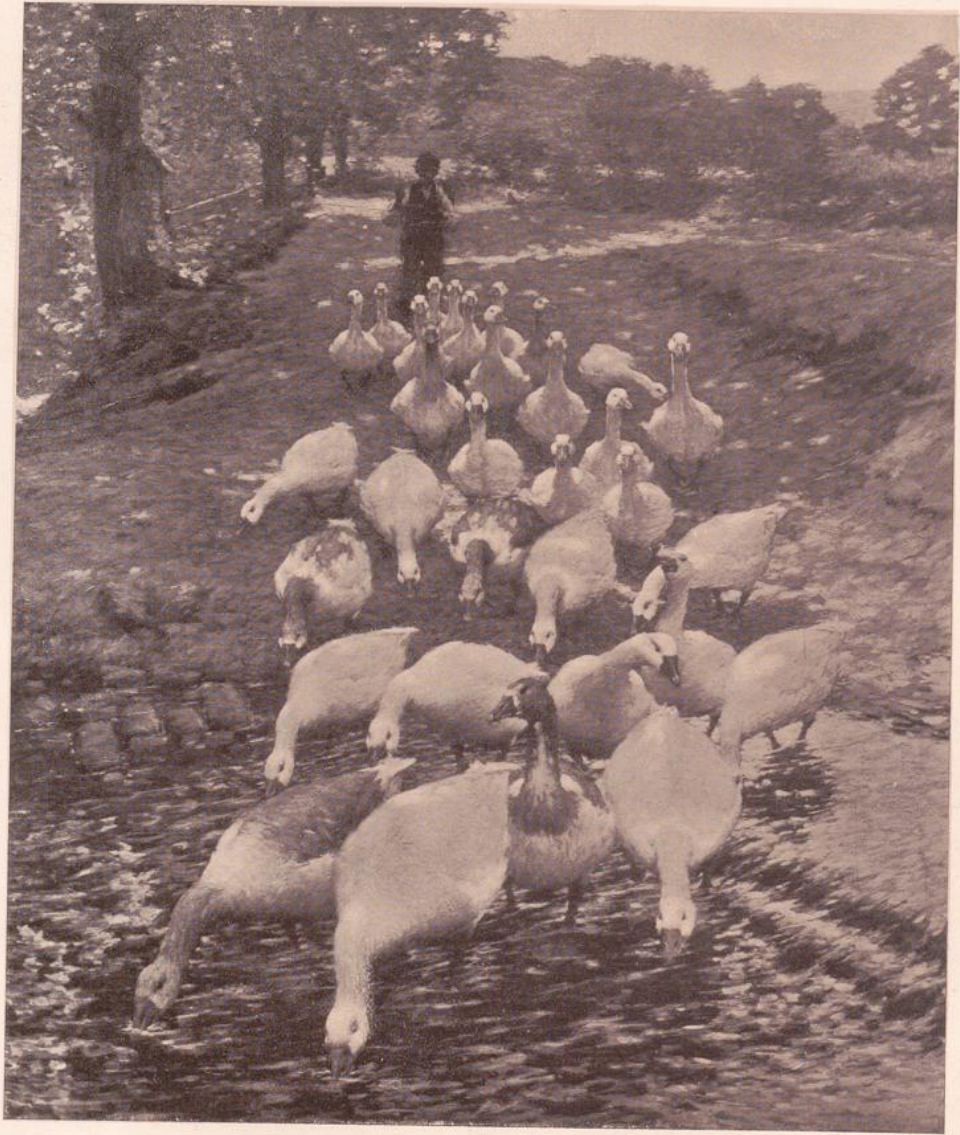
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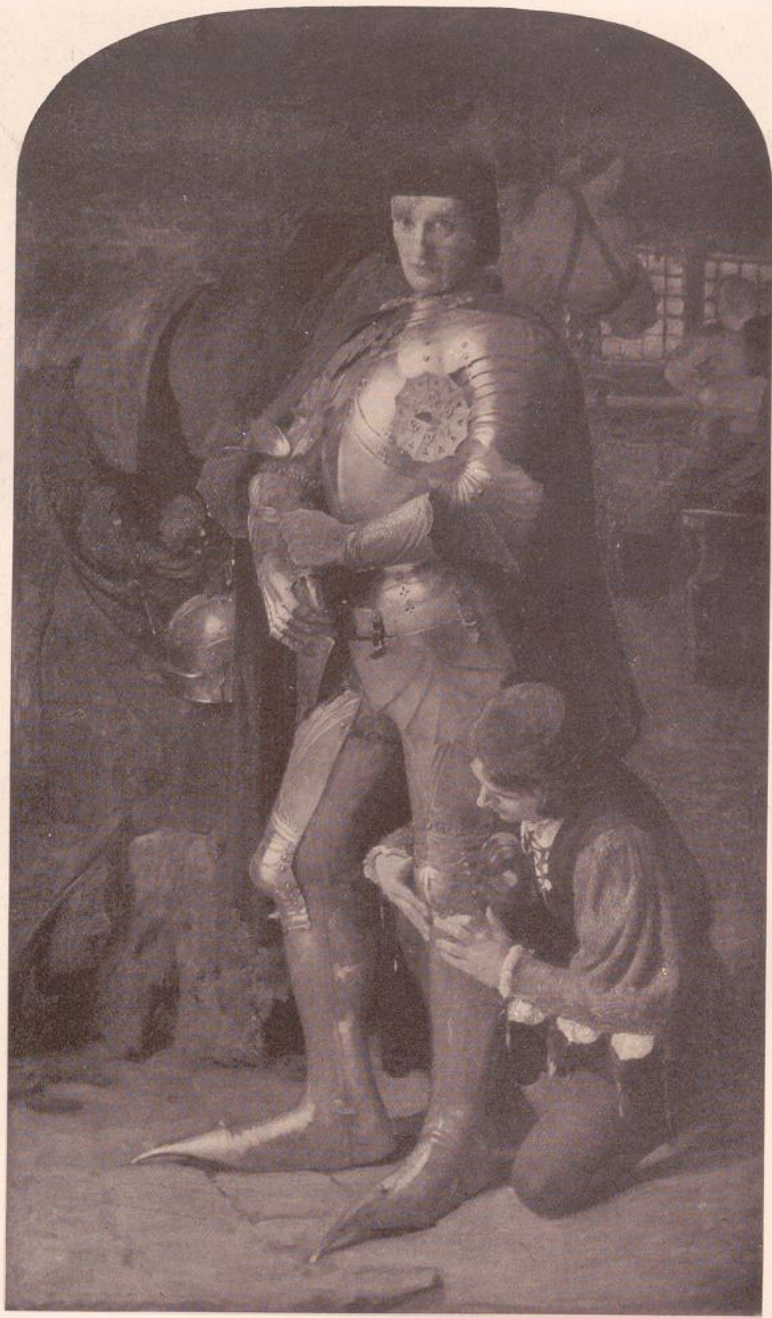
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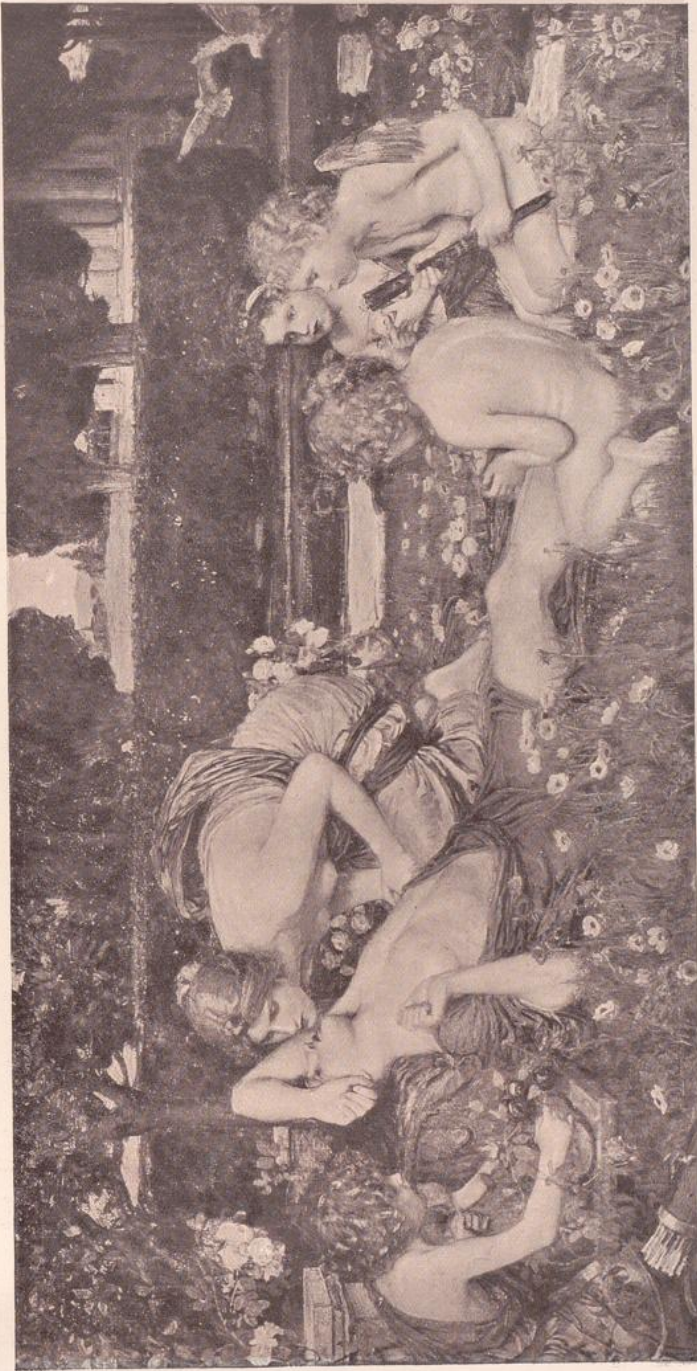


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