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mist period. Mr. Thomas Moran has carried his admiration for Turner far enough to satisfy the claims of the English artist upon any single family, doubtless; and, possibly, Mr. Edward Moran may unconsciously have been impelled thereby in a direction quite opposite. But the fact of present interest is that Mr. Edward Moran's naturalism is a much surer foundation for a painter than are the imaginative vagaries of the author of "The Slave-Ship," and a much better foundation for success in an age when the least thing that exists in Nature, the least fact that has been discovered, is of far-reaching and lively interest; when the meanest flower that blooms has succeeded in making itself very generally respected. And the artist must be an exponent of the temper and life of his age if he is to do work that will live. If the objection be made that Mr. Moran sometimes carries his naturalism too far, that he sometimes "finishes" too carefully, the objector, of course, must explain precisely what he means by "finish." Is it in Rousseau's sense that he uses the word? "Let us understand this term 'finish,'" said the great Frenchman to his pupil, M. Letronne—and the latter has done no small service to his profession by recording many wise utterances of his master—"that which finishes a painting is not the quantity of the details, but the justness of the whole. A painting is limited not only by its frame. It matters not what the subject may be, there is a principal object on which your eyes continually rest; the other objects are only the complements of it; they interest you less; after it there is nothing more for your sight. This is the true limit of the painting;" and Rembrandt, he added, understood this truth better than any other painter. "If everything in your picture interests equally, nothing interests at all." Mr. Moran, judging from the

best of his works, would subscribe heartily to this sentiment, "If everything interests equally, nothing interests at all," and of the three brothers he is the one who has most exemplified it in his professional practice. Yet is there room for a still further manifestation. "One day I asked Rousseau," continues M. Letronne, "about copying a painting by Huysmans, or by Malines. He preferred, he said, that I should go and paint at Montmartre or Barbizon. But that need not prevent you from going to see in the Louvre how these masters made use of Nature." It was characteristic of a great teacher to convey a great truth so simply, and the student of Rousseau's works can fancy how effective must have been such advice when falling from his lips. Mr. Moran could scarcely have better improved the lesson had he, like M. Letronne, learned it amid the unspeakable inspiration of Rousseau's immediate presence. This American artist has not wasted his opportunities by copying the pictures of great men. He received from Nature the impressions that he records, and it is for this reason that the water which he paints has vitality and that his waves move. Moreover, after a systematic course of study in France he has returned home with no fondness whatever for modern Gallic "sensationalism." He may paint figures as often as he has painted marines, but his instincts will have no affinity for "the foul reek of crime, the creep and chill of horror and the feverish breath of lasciviousness, the tolerance or enjoyment of what shocks and disgusts, provided only it arrests attention; the acceptance of what offends taste, and even outrages decency, provided only it be powerfully painted, with strong relish for the artistic aspects of the ghastly or foul thing."

G. W. S.

IMITATION IN ART.



IN a recent article on "Landscape Painting," by Sir Robert Collier, we find the following admirable comment on "Imitation in Art:" "It is a trite observation that imitation is not the object of Art, and, in a sense, a true one, though sometimes obscured by hazy writing. To select for imitation a piece of Nature, which admits of being imitated, without reference to composition or effect, is to make a study, not a picture. Nor is deception the object of Art. The old story of the birds pecking at the painted grapes certainly illustrates somewhat crude ideas on the subject. Mr. Ruskin declares that the grapes must have been very ill-painted, and denounces all exact representation of Nature as low Art. It is but just to him, however, to say that many passages may be found in his writings maintaining precisely the reverse. Whether a picture be or be not deceptive depends less on itself than on its surroundings. A portrait hung on a wall cannot be deceptive—it is plainly impossible for a man to be where the figure is, and further the realism of the portrait, however great, is subdued by the greater realism and force of the surrounding objects—greater in proportion as Nature's light is stronger than the artist's white paint. But remove the picture from its frame, pose the figure where a man might naturally stand, by a disposition of curtains or otherwise dim everything around it, concentrating a strong light upon it, and most good portraits will become in a great degree deceptive, none more so than those of Velasquez or Rembrandt. By such means panoramas and dioramas are made deceptive; indeed, the simple process of looking through a tube excluding the frame and all other objects, gives a picture some appearance of reality—a good painting of a bas-relief in a proper light must be deceptive. The modern painter of fruit and flowers desires not to deceive birds or men, but to convey the beauty of his subject by the best disposition of forms and colours. Assuming his conception and general treatment of his subject to be good, will it be gravely contended that he can paint his grapes too like real grapes, and must make them look a little unnatural lest the birds should peck at them? The power

of imitation, which may under certain circumstances amount to deception, and is in truth neither more nor less than quite accurate drawing and colouring, is the foundation of all artistic excellence, without which no poetical or imaginative superstructure can stand. It is a power possessed by but few, and sneered at by many who are unable to appreciate or attain it.

There are people who talk and write as if every aspect of Nature could be perfectly imitated, provided the artist would but condescend to do so; they insist, however, that he ought not so to demean himself, because all imitation is beneath the dignity of high Art, which is concerned with expressing the ideas of the artist, infinitely finer, as they are, than anything in Nature. Indeed, there are some Art-critics who run down every picture which does not contain some element of *unlikeness* to Nature. The truth is that, while many natural forms and surfaces admit of almost exact imitation, there are certain aspects of Nature, and these the finest, altogether above and beyond imitation. Has not every one of us been struck from time to time by effects of Nature, most commonly seen about the hours of sunrise or sunset, which have impressed us with a sense of overpowering and transcendent beauty altogether beyond the reach of Art—which, if they could be literally imitated and transferred to canvas, would put to shame every picture and extinguish whole galleries? To speak with contempt of the imitation of such scenes is sheer ignorance and presumption—the imitation of them is above, not below, the highest Art. They are for the most part transient, and will not wait to be painted; nor could they be if they would: they have a brilliancy and force, combined with a subtlety and delicacy, not to be attained by the rude and imperfect materials with which the painter works. It should be remembered that Nature has colours compounded of sunlight not to be found on his palette. But these effects, stored in his memory, become food for his imagination, which is worth little unless fed by such food drawn plentifully and freshly from Nature. He may compose and combine recollected effects with advantage, but the more realistic his painting—in other words, the more nearly it approaches the forms and colours of Nature—the greater will be the effect."