

### Studio Training.

I had never taken root in Bedford but I rapidly took root in London. St. John's Wood School was chosen for me. I enjoyed every day of the year that I spent in Highgate with Graham. I entered heart and soul into the work at St. John's Wood Studios. Although now I criticise the method of instruction given I did not criticise it then or, if I did venture so far, I knew that the teachers were tired, that I was in a cramming school and that the aim of the masters was to pass as many pupils as possible into the Academy Schools. I wanted to get into them so I must needs submit to the spending of so much time in copying antique statues in black chalk elaborately stippled. For me history cast a glamour over the R.A. schools. Where Turner had worked as a boy I would work. The Institute of which Sir Joshua Reynolds had been President I would enter.

I only went to St. John's Wood Schools every other day for the year that I lived at Highgate. On the alternate days I was free to do what I liked. My brother went off early to his work at the Admiralty and I went off early to explore London, to haunt its museums and galleries and to sketch anything that I fancied. I was always back in the late afternoon to be ready to meet my brother at supper. Some of my relations, hearing of my having penetrated into little known parts of

London, Expostulated with Graham but he expressed his conviction that all would go well with me even if I were left free to wander unattended where I would. I only lost myself once and then I reached our lodgings very late. I did think he might be a little anxious. Perhaps he was, but I found him sitting reading by the fire. He had had his supper which was still set on the table. He looked up in welcome but only said:- "I knew you would turn up. I suppose you lost your way". I was very thankful for my brother's trust and calmness.

There were fewer omnibuses in those days and all were drawn by horses. I had very little money to spend and so had to do a great deal of walking but I found walking easier in the air of London than in the air of Bedford. Every day but Sunday I only had a bun and coffee lunch. There were few restaurants then so I generally took something with me hoping that I could find a place where I could get coffee. Sometimes I had enough money for a dinner-lunch and then I would spend the whole day in the Victoria and Albert Museum and have it there. This seemed to me the height of luxury. When I go there for a lunch now I do not expect to enjoy it as a lunch. I enjoy it because I never fail to feel again a festive glow as I push open those glass swing doors. I look up at the big, palely-tinted, confused windows of the students restaurant with my old delight. When I sit in the visitors' "Rosetti room" I still puzzle over what the ladies can possibly be doing that are represented in the stained glass that lights

up our tables so dimly and I wonder what the plants are that are painted on the gloomy panels. They dont make me feel dull or gloomy, I am a student once more. I pass through the furniture and picture galleries noting every change made. The British Museum I cant see with the same young eyes for it has changed so much. When I first went there, which was long before I was a student, the Natural History Collection was housed in it. I visited the stuffed Lyre Bird sent from Australia by that celetrated convict, Margaret Catchpole. My father being a Suffolk man, had told me about her. For his sake I greeted the bird.

I knew well all the London galleries and museums and on Sundays Graham and I made enchanting expeditions to Kew, Greenwich, Dulwich etc. or paid calls. I was always fresh for my work on Monday mornings. I made friends at the Studios and was very happy in their friendship - gloriously happy - such intercourse being so new to me. I was conscious, although ~~not~~ I was only a beginner, that my new friends had little artistic talent. They were struggling with me to get into the Royal Academy Schools and certainly would get in by dint of patient, accurate work and eloborate stipple. I recognised that a few had talent but they were in the higher class ready for their passing into the R.A. Schools so I could not belong to their circle. Among my friends was a strange, hot natured New Zealand girl who ~~was~~ interested me and yet rather alarmed me. She had second sight and knew when I was going to call on her

before I came and would put my cup and plate ready for me to have tea with her. She had also, what would be called now, violent reactions to all sortw of events and ideas. I dont deal in reactions and she declared my coolness bothered her. She liked me in spite of my disadvantages and as she was well off she gave me an order to paint a large picture, in oils, of London from Parliament Hill. She had seen a study I had taken and wanted to carry such a picture back with her to New Zealand.

One side of Parliament Hill was in those days a lonely place. The view from it was fine and a railway line curving round in the foreground took away the confusion of the scene and made a composition good for a picture. St.Pauls stood up well above the blue smoke. I worked hard at this subject, much of my work on it was done on the spot. One day a Japanese or Chinese young man passed by. He saw me painting, looked at my canvas for a moment and then sat down on the grass beside me. He said nothing. I said nothing. I went on with my work quietly for an hour and he still sat by me but got up when I got up to go. I said good-bye. He did not follow me but stood looking at me as I retreated with such pathetic, appealing eyes that he remains in my mind as the type of lonely foreigner.

The whole family came, after a year, and settled in Stanley Gardens, Hampstead. I now attended St.John's Wood Schools every day and at the end of a year and a half I was passed for probation for entry into the Schools of the Royal Academy. Probation lasted a month. One of the exhibition

galleries was set apart for the students whose drawings had been chosen. There were about twelve students that year who were tested with me, most of them from St. John's Wood Studio, and the others from different Schools in England. An upright, lifesized cast from one of the Greek statues was in the gallery. The gallery was of course lighted evenly all round from high windows made to show off pictures hung on all four walls. The poor cast therefore could receive no shadow and quite lost its solidity. We were virtually in prison during the working hours - we were locked in - for fear, I suppose, lest any instructed person might come in and give help. We spent our month over just one drawing, elaborately finished, of that glaringly white upright figure. It had not a shred of drapery on it, or, as far as I remember, near it, to give a helpful shadow or a chance of texture. I felt sick in body, mind and soul at the end of the month. I was surprised to find, when it was over, that my drawing, done in a mood of such rebellion, had been actually approved of by the Royal Academicians. Yet another term or two must be spent by the Students in the same method of study before a pass could be gained into the preliminary painting schools. The gazing at colourless casts, copying them in black chalk and finishing them by the aid of opera glasses ( we all carried opera glasses) took from me for ever a sense of the beauty of classic statuary. It also sent me to the oculist and my eyes often remind me that they were once badly treated. The oculist told me never again to work in black and white. If such styles of painting as futurism and

surrealism had existed then I suppose I should have thrown myself headlong into their cult. As it was I saved my soul by studies of London.

The R.A. classes at Burlington House are held in its cellars, partly under ground and rather dark. The dressing rooms were then infested with rats and when I sometimes remained there to touch up some sketch of London that I was working at I had to sing all the time to keep the rats from my feet. I ought to say that that was put right ( and also the drains). Things like that were part of the adventure and as for rats I had not lived in a house by a river for nothing.

According to the rules of the Royal Academy an annual inspection of the class rooms is to be made by the President accompanied by some of the R.As. The day it took place, the only time when I happened to be there, we students were requested to go into the dressing rooms and to remain out of sight. This was the custom. No student was ever to be seen by the President. The girls made coffee. I left the coffee and opened the door slightly. I saw Sir Frederic Leighton followed by his train of R.As. and A.R.As. making a kingly march through the class room. During the time I was peeping through the door he did not stop for a moment nor did he speak nor did he even seem to look with the least interest at anything.

A different R.A. or A.R.A. came to criticise our work every month. They varied very much in their teaching and I learnt little from it but independent judgement. The month

however that Richmond taught was an exception. It was my golden month. He gave me courage and inspiration. I made many friends among the students and from two who visited me from higher classes I learnt a great deal. Mr. Calderon, the Keeper, suddenly made a rule that no one from a higher class should visit a lower. My friends said good-bye to me and I have never seen them again. Mr. Calderon was foreign in his nationality and foreign in his outlook. He would have liked to keep a strict surveillance over us. Up to the time when I entered the Schools I had lived in an atmosphere of freedom and trust. The dark cellars and the influence of Mr. Calderon's personality did not tend to make me happy latterly. I did not wish to remain for the second period of three years allowed in the Schools.

(Note. As it was made a rule that no former student should be allowed to visit the old school I have never seen it again nor do I know what changes have taken place in it. No doubt that this and many other rules have been altered as well as the method of study.)

Helen wanted to study French and music in Paris, so we two with my mother's and Graham's blessings decided to go to Paris together. We did not know how to set about it so we made an absolutely wrong start.

Helen had been working under a governess and the governess, who was an elderly, untravelled and rather narrow-minded lady, took a great interest in the plan, especially thinking of it from the point of view of her pupil's safety in morals. She strongly recommended us to go to a Protestant School in

the North of Paris that she had heard of. Helen could there share in the music lessons and learn French while I went to the Studio. If I could get to the R.A. Schools from Hampstead, a suburb of London, why should I not as easily get to the Studio from Colombe, a suburb of Paris? The plan sounded well. Madame X. was written to and we started off. We crossed the Channel by a night journey from Newhaven to Dieppe for that was the cheapest route. We decided to sit up on deck for we could not bear the air down below. That night there was a real storm. The lovely basket of provisions that our mother had packed for us was washed overboard when a big wave struck the ship. I suppose we were in danger of being washed away for a sailor rushed to Helen and carried her down for shelter and I was treated in the same way by another sailor.

At long last we arrived at the school house in a northern outlying suburb of Paris. Madame X. welcomed us. We had a very plain meal with the children who did not look up to the standard of our elementary children of that time. The one teacher beside Madame X. would certainly not know as much music as Helen and I doubt if music was taught at all. There was no manner of means to get to the Studios from Colombe at an early hour and all studio work in Paris begins at eight. Helen said that she would die if I left her in such company all day long and in a house we knew was insanitary. We must leave but where to go and how to go was the burning question.

I had settled to attend Colorossi's Studios. In spite



of the strong disapproval of Madame we started off to go to the Latin Quarter. We found, working in the studio, a St. John's Wood student and we told her our woes. She advised us to take a room at once in the Hotel Haute Loire - a students hotel - and to give a week's notice to Madame. We took our room in the Haute Loire and went back and gave Madame a week's notice. Her astonishment and horror were unbounded. She would not take our notice, as she declared that we had no power to give it. We should be lost souls if we went to an hotel alone. She would not believe that where we wished to go we might go. Her husband was of course told when he returned from his work. We had to go to the schoolroom for the evening prayers which he conducted. We were made extremely uncomfortable by his praying for us two poor English girls. He prayed fervently for a change of our hearts. We were made still more uncomfortable when we rose from our knees by having to face the staring eyes of more than thirty children.

We spent the next few days in wandering about the northern outskirts of Paris and all along that part of the Seine. We lived only on little cakes or rolls that we could buy and still we did not care to eat our supper at night. One day we were too tired to explore and yet would not remain in a smelly house so we took our campstools, book and sketchblock to the road outside the School and I started to draw the house and Helen to read her book beside me. The road was bordered by trees and was so quiet that we sat in the middle of it. I

thought a drawing of the school might be taken as a compliment and lead to peace. As I drew I saw that the windows of the School House were suddenly filled with childrens' heads with eyes directed to us. The teacher hurried from the house with a message from Madame. We were ordered to go in at once ! I was so accustomed to sketching freely about London that it never entered my head that it could be considered wrong. I only thought some procession would perhaps pass. I asked if I could have ten minutes grace. The answer was that Madame said we must go in at once for the sake of our reputations. This so astonished us that we forgot our politeness and laughed. I worked on for ten minutes and then went in. It was like facing a bad thunderstorm when we did go in. Madame was indeed in a rage and said that she would lock up our trunks and that we should not go away from her care.

We wandered again in the afternoon and made plans for getting away with our luggage and, if it were indeed locked up, we decided to appeal to the English Consul. We came back to find a cab at the door. Two girls and a lady got out and went into the School. We went down to prayers as usual but that night we were prayed for differently. There were dangers ahead of us, it was true. Monsieur feared for us but yet we should be allowed to go with his and Madame's blessings. We were much relieved and we were glad indeed when we got off the next morning - luggage and all. Adieus were showered on us, I am sure they were really glad to get rid of us. As

we left the house two new scholars arrived to take our room. Poor girls ! We were soon at the Haute Loire and took possession of our little "appartement".

We were now close to Colorossi's Studios. The work there suited me. The visiting professors, Courtois and Prinnet, were permanent and came regularly to criticise. Helen's lessons were soon arranged. Our days became full and we made many friends.

We were very happy but very poor. We made our own breakfast and went out to cremeries for lunch and supper. We were half starved but we managed, on next to nothing, to get good lessons, painting materials, books, music and to make wonderful expeditions. I recovered my spirits which I had lost in the cellars of the R.A. and I began to look as if the hot air of the Studios was as good as seaside air.

I think I must be one of the few people left in the world who have had the chance and the privilege of seeing Manet's picture of the "Execution of the Emperor Maximilian of Mexico" before so much of it was burnt. Many who go to the National Gallery and the Tate see, and admire, the two remnants that England is lucky enough to possess. They, however, can only note the bold technique with which he painted the grave soldier handling their guns but I can see also the pale face of the distant Emperor standing in front of a white sheet waiting for the shots that are to send him to Eternity.

I was taken by a friend to see the picture. In my

memory, in order to get to it, I was led through a sort of back garden to a shed where it was standing against a wall. It was painted on a very large canvas. I know that I trembled as I looked at it and the horror and the sadness it gave me is almost as great now, when I remember it, as when I really stood before it.

I once saw Sarah Bernhardt in Paris not as an actress but at a social gathering. Helen and I were given tickets for the private view of the Salon. We were walking round a gallery that opened at one end on to a balcony looking over the entrance hall. Quite suddenly there was a hum of excited voices to be heard from the hall and at once people in the gallery surged to the balcony. We happened to be near it and we were pressed forward until we were against the pillared railings. Some from our gallery dashed down the balcony stairs to join the excited, hat-waving, handkerchief-waving, shouting sea of people below. In the centre of the crowd, like a queen bee in a swarm, was a lady. She was wearing in her hat a plume of bright feathers like those of a cock's tail. We could see at once that it was Sarah Bernhardt. It was her first appearance after a long stay away, chiefly in England. This was her welcome back and it was good to see her as the darling of her nation.

I have returned to Paris several times since the end of those periods of study but only for short visits to the Studios. (The family home was decided to be Harston House).

When I came back the last time from that enchanted city I knew that my Student days were over.

When I reached Harston my future was a blank. What did come was unsought and unthought of by me. Perhaps I was wrong in accepting what came, making no effort to get into surroundings that would give me more chances of artistic success - and perhaps I was right.