

Some Sketching Stoires

When an artist is painting out of doors he is certain to hear remarks on his picture from interested watchers. Often the remarks will not be directed to him but to the other watchers and will be spoken as if the artist did not possess ears and did not even possess eyes directed with any intelligence. To them he is, for the time being, a machine, a camera in human shape.

I was asked by the Vicar of Barrington - Mr. Conybeare - to paint a picture for him of a little fountain on the village green. Barrington is a pretty village with charming old cottages ranged round the green. It is still a very rural village. It has now an omnibus that connects it with Cambridge but it is not a frequent one. Then the village was cut off except to good walkers and to those with some sort of conveyance. Few of the inhabitants could have seen an artist at work, so I found myself an interesting sight. My chosen light being about four o'clock the youth of Barrington formed, at the end of the afternoon, a little semicircular wall behind me.

The fountain head was built of dull red brick. There was a brick seat connected with it convenient for anyone who waited for a pail to fill. The scene made a pleasant, easy composition, a pool in front, then the fountain head, a bit

of green, a few trees, a cottage or two and a hillside meadow. Now the fountain and the pool seem dried up. I fear from neglect.

When I was well on in my picture I painted in it the figure of a man who came regularly at about four o'clock for water. He always came with an ordinary watering can but I preferred the pail that most of the others brought. I put in a pail and he, being just the sort of figure I wanted, I put him resting on the seat while his vessel filled. I had my usual crowd behind me. They were puzzled by what I had done and expressed themselves strongly.

1st Boy "She's put in a man. Who is it?"

2nd " "It looks like Jim Smith but it cant be old Jim"

1st " "Nay. It can't be him. He never has a pail. He always has a can."

2nd " "I wonder if its the new man who's come to the old cottage yonder."

1st " "Perhaps it is. He may have a pail. But it's like Jim Smith."

Much discussion followed among all the boys and girls but no one thought it could be Jim Smith owing to the awkward fact of the pail. A youth strolled up and made room for himself with his elbows and stood just behind me. I had felt the need for the repetition of the red of the brickwork and had put a few touches of red for cows far away on the hillside meadow. The youth glowered at my picture and said in such a

fierce tone that it startled me - "Who druv them cows up there?" The boys replied in chorus - "Nobody druv them cows up there. Nobody here anyways." The youth repeated angrily - "Some one must have druv them cows up there of she could'nt have put 'em in. I wont have it ! No one shall drive cows there !" The little crowd said nothing to this and the youth strolled off sullenly.

An old man came out from one of the cottages that I was painting in my picture. He looked with favour at what I had done and remarked - "That's my cottage, that is, - the one with the porch !" I said - "You have a very pretty home." "That is so. I tell you what I'll do, miss. You come along with me. I'll take you round it. You shall see the back on it and you can put that in too." No other village has ever given me such delightful remarks.

Once I was painting one of the yards of Cambridge. An old house looked out on it, no longer lived in by well-to-do people but by ^acottager. I wished to be very accurate in my yard for it was to be a record as well as a work of art. The dweller in the house, an elderly man, came out and looked long at the picture when it was all but finished. At last he, exclaimed - "Dear me ! I'd never have thought it. Does my house really look like that ?" Feeling a little daunted I went over every detail ready to revise it if necessary but I found that I could change nothing. Did I enlighten the eyes of the man or had I to learn to paint such a subject seeing it with sim-

ler eyes ?

One year I went with my people to spend a summer holiday in Scotland near the Bridge of Allan. The animal painter, Denoven Adam, lived near and ran a studio for pupils. As I wanted to study cows I joined his class. After working at skeleton and muscles I was advanced to sturging a live cow which was tethered between two poles so that she could not move. The field where we worked was large and was full of Mr. Adam's models. There were Highland cattle and Lowland cattle, horses, ponies, a donkey, sheep, goats, geese, turkeys, ducks, cocks and hens and rabbits and hares in hutches. He had a dog and a cat and these two knew quite well how to behave in that mixed society. The field was rough and irregular with slopes and dips in it. It was surrounded by a very thick hedge and was quite private. I was usually the only one left in the field at luncheon time. I ate my sandwiches in the company of the animals .

One day I was finishing my lunch when I saw a strange dog entering the field. The gate must have been left ajar by one of the pupils. The dog made at once for the far corner of the field where the rabbit hutches were and started to worry the poor little creatures. I had to rescue them so I picked up a stick and ran. It was rough ground to run over and a sort of sloping trench was in my way. I knew that I could easily run over it and would have done so but I saw that a

sympathetic and allowed me to lead my cow , or cows, anywhere I would in the country lanes. I took them to a paintable corner and was glad to be free of the crowded field. The turkey must have been made ill by the shock and humiliation of my jump over him for he seemed to have now got the game of leap-frog on the brain. He started to play it on others and had, in consequence, to leave this world.

Another summer I ~~joined~~ joined a sketching party at Blakeney in Norfolk. The party had chosen for their critic Mons. Delecluse, the head of a Paris Studio. We had to drive from Holt, the nearest station, in order to get to Blakeney and I happened to see, when driving there, a big field with a pine-wood running down one side of it. The field sloped to other, lower meadows, to salt marshes, to sandy mud and to the shallow sea round Blakeney Point. Mons. Delecluse expected me to work with his class and I began to draw, as in duty bound, details of the old port but found myself uninterested in the little quay, the little boats and the little harbour so, with no consideration for poor Mons Delecluse, who would have a long way to go to follow me, I deserted the party. I had no wish to paint anything but the big field with the pinewood.

The landlord of my lodgings was a carpenter. He had a ramshakle governess cart and a pony. He had also a son, Tommy, about seven years old who was allowed, indeed encouraged, to manage the pony. One lovely morning he and I started out for

the day. The cart had in it not only us two but an easel, a fair sized canvas, paints and our lunch. The pony trotted off, little Tommy talking broad Norfolk to me all the way. We found the field. Tommy took the pony to tie him up so that he could eat the grass beside the road. I opened the gate, and, laden with easel, canvas and painting box, entered the vast meadow. Far away towards the lower hedge sheep were feeding. They were just what I wanted. I paused, stared at them and told my memory to guard well their grouping. I saw a shepherd boy start up from near them. He ran towards me shouting as he ran. He made such a noise that the sheep were scattered. I continued to stand still wondering what was the matter. As he came nearer I wondered still more for I could make out what he was shouting. "You are spoiling my clock ! You are spoiling my clock !" I had had an adventure with a madman in a church and I thought I was in for an adventure with a mad boy in a field. He came right up to me and repeated his words with a bitter emphasis pointing to my feet. I looked down and found that I had knocked over and trodden on a stick rather more than a yard long. The boy pointed beyond me. I saw that I had knocked over another stick, smaller than the first. The boy looked round aggrieved. I followed his eyes and I realised that I had to deal not with some poor mad creature but with a very intelligent boy. There were eleven sticks still standing round us.

I laid my burdens down. We set up the sticks again,

size was given to me. I looked over my canvases. The time given me in which to do it was short. The St. Andrew's Street picture was the right size and proportion, long and narrow, and I decided to paint over it. I carried that and my easel etc. to the Kings Meadow and began to work. I quickly painted in Kings Chapel without a thought that the result might appear odd. I took little notice of the fact that someone had climbed over the railings and was standing behind me. I had trained myself to being undisturbed when watched but I was disturbed and much annoyed to hear a mighty burst of laughter from the onlooker. I turned and found myself facing - not an undergraduate as I had expected - but an elderly gentleman. He still looked at my picture and uttered another big laugh. It was too much for me. I quietly and firmly ordered him off the meadow. He turned grave, bowed and like a true gentleman, obeyed.

I returned to my work and then - only then - did I realise how comic it was to see Kings College Chapel in the middle of St. Andrew's Street. I could hardly go on putting in trees and surroundings for every now and then I had to stop and laugh. Late that afternoon I discovered that it was the Provost of Kings - Austen lee - himself whom I had ordered off his own meadow and that he had left it obediently allowing me to remain queen of the situation. I had not asked leave to paint there so it was very kind of him.

One day a good, earnest, humourless Cambridge lady saw

me when I was painting some rural scene. She was something of a would-be artist and so she came to speak to me about what I was doing. "Oh Miss Greene" she exclaimed, "how I wish I could paint grass and trees as you do. I cant do it and yet I use the very best materials." It reminded me of the Hatter's "best butter".