



THE accusation was brought against our first Dial of mere art eclecticism ; one thing, keenly attractive to us, might explain this reprehensible selectiveness, a little thing we think common to all good art. Inseparable from the garment of individuality, the word *Document* perfectly explains this.

Record of some remembered delight, record perhaps of a mere moment in transfigured life, producing and controlling it, the word *Document* represents some exquisite detail in a masterpiece, convincing to the spectator as a thing known, yet not of necessity the symbol of borrowed story—possibly, there, the mere symbol of time. A thing easily imagined away from a picture, but authoritative there, as a gesture, or poetical recollection, the lattice-light cast upon the wall in Rossetti's "Proserpine," the azalea near the scattered hair in Whistler's "White Harmony, number three," might be chosen to prove that *Document* is not necessarily the mere machinery giving vraisemblance to positive subject, for these pictures are almost without it.

Rossetti, it is true, adds to his work a sonnet, and between this and the picture some delicate interchime penetrates the sense with a conviction in its symbol, adding meaning to the well-like light ; to the fatality that seems to brood about the shadows ; to this face that listens to the ebb and flow of footsteps hastening. The fateful pomegranate might, however, be put into the hand of many an Italian portrait, the title *Donna Innominata* painted

on the frame would not destroy this picture's memorableness—to-morrow the name Proserpine might be given to Da Vinci's Monna Lisa, and so, seemingly, unseal its secret. In Whistler's "White Harmony" the subject is intentionally fugitive,—a chosen place where ladies live, with something of the pale life of lilies listening to the music of their shapes. Yet in this secret air that drowns over the perfume of hair and flower, and penetrating, as it were, this mute harmony, some stray notes would convey undertone-symbol, preexistence, and chime about the picture faintly, like evening music echoed by a river.

These works have been chosen for their lack of story, in its common acceptance ; and so we come easily to the colour exclamation on some Chinese enamel, dabbed there in vibrant crimson on a liquid purple, where no subject can exist at all ; yet this thing, by its cunning spontaneity, will give the emotion that sudden movement adds to nature—the ripple of grass in a summer landscape for instance—and so become *Document*—that monument of moods. A viol left on a lowering bough by some singer who has ceased, one marigold drowned in a space of water, would convey, within a picture and without, this sense of existence and preexistence, this sense of time.

In the work of the English Pre-Raphaelites, document has been chiselled in new-cleft gems ; in Impressionism, it has been wrapped in strokes that waved into air, or that palpitated into light ; far be it then from us to claim it treasure trove, for we think it inseparable from all art excellence—capable even of being spun to the veriest gossamer thread of definition. More common thirty years ago than at present, it may appear unfamiliar, its recentness has made it obsolete and strange.

We make no claim to originality, not feeling wiser than did Solomon who doubtless wrote the Song of Songs ; for all art is but the combination of known quantities, the interplay of a few senses only ; that some spirit seems to transfuse these, is due to a cunning use of a sixth sense—the sense of possible relation commonly called Soul, probably a second sense of touch more subtle than the first—and this sense is more common to the craftsman used to self-control than habit would allow.

We would therefore avoid all taint of announced reform for those pathetically persistent in demanding it ; dawn itself promises day only to some, not to all ; and Art has been, Art is, this is the pledge that it will be again.

"Fresh with some colour, a cloud breaks upon the sky. Dawn grows, wanes, and stretches fibres of frail light ; this is the signal to white hazy moths to shimmer above the gummy vines ; and stagnant water grows steel-like and hard.

"Suddenly the cock crows ; he is awake ; long before, he has mistaken one or two accidents in the night for signals that he should announce the light, his accuracy in utterance is merely sentimental."

One word more of apology.

All past effort has seemed more conscious of aim, more direct, than it was really ; we imagine an effort towards renaissance, springing from a white

hand beckoning above the ashes of some forgotten city, and seen at some time by one in whom the possible germ of a new art was placed. Again, revelation has come to one reading a book, or to one who fancies he has seen a grey torso beneath a cliff in some forgotten creek, and that it rocked with the water's motion. We forget those previous years, wasted in barren yearning, satisfied at last by something contemporary; imitation following, too often without knowledge of the new result attained.

To-day the announcement that you believe in Nature, or in *Ideas*, affords claim to originality, and we would avoid this announcement. By the word Idea is meant, that formulated experience of the many, their guarantee in life against future failure. Strange, this flattery of common thought, this useless pandering to the crowd, incapable in its appreciation to surpass the annual shilling or two, for some exhibition; for its characteristic is peevish lassitude—the bankruptcy of disinterest; the reviews have long since assured it as to contemporary lack of originality, separating this work from that master, to attribute it to his wife.

Indifference is only crested at times by little exasperated words, frost-bitten fronds, crooked and meaningless: let admiration be one of the reasons for the Dial to exist; admiration, so often fruitful of self-respect, nay more, it is "the essence of all art"—it is that which makes us wish in childhood, when power is not yet, and before experience has shut the gates, for larger flowers, something that would prevent soft, gentle beasts from walking away, the growth of berried twigs so out of reach, for these are the first stray waifs of all art feeling. Let the great artists yet alive be witness that copybook culture is the only reason for this colourless currency in art and thought; the rainbow of Art is still there for Hope to look through, all pleasantness has not been snatched from the meadows and hills of Nature's royalty, Art has been, Art is, so the present touches wings with the past.

"In the naïf delight and fantastic objectiveness we call primitive art feeling, space was found for the august and reticent personality of Piero della Francesca; his work was sweet besides with occasional convolvulus tendrils, or nestling finch, gay in some trick of dress revealing personality, some shapely gem or crown of selected leaf. Giorgione painted the Greek Theseus—but as St. George naked in a brook, his work fulfilled. Since then the world would expect *this* development with the budding of the garden peas, *that* quality with the bursting of the pod. Experience would, for convenience, separate the quality of form from its blossoming into colour, little caring to note its oneness—for in continuance from environing space, to the central surfaces, Form, Greek Form, as it is called, is colour; colour is continued line; without it, form is but some personal conviction not visual at all, a mental building into air, a reasoned spanning of given space. Change, with its contradiction, its return to the past, appears again in Romantic Art, which, nevertheless, would control Art and Nature more than did the older styles; dominate it by individuality at high vibrant pitch—Nature strained into symbolic action, and in an atmosphere dyed by personal feeling.—Slowly

the old fantastic details of primitive art return, with these, the old ornamentality ; lyrical movement recoils, becomes arrested, a tense immobility ensues, more ultimate than the great calm of the Antique, for upon the Parthenon, the great divine limbs leap and rebound, the draperies cling close to flesh, deep with the possibility of sweat."