

manner it appeared to his own eyes, he always placed his figures so that they would tell the story in the clearest way; drew them with skill; gave to them a truth and force of characteristic expression such as few painters of any other school ever equalled; arranged the light and shadow so as that every object should have just that measure of each which belonged to it, yet every figure and every part of the composition should hold its true place in respect of all the rest, and of the picture as a whole; coloured truly and forcibly, and in harmony with the serious purpose of his pictures, although not in accordance with the traditions of painting-rooms and picture galleries; and finally in the manipulation showed an amount of dexterity in the handling of his tools such as many a painter, who is known only as a painter, might well have envied.

With the mention of Hogarth we close this sketch. He forms the link which unites this period with that in which the English school sprang into a sturdy existence, and therefore claimed notice here; but his proper place as a painter undoubtedly is at the head of the school of which he was the founder.

## CHAPTER XIX.

Hogarth as the historian of manners in the transition-time between Anne and George III.—His art essentially dramatic.—Society, in Hogarth's pictures, appears a sort of chaos.—The life of the streets.—The anarchy out-doors a type of the disorder in houses of public resort.—Genteel debauchery.—Low profligacy and crime.—The Cockpit.—The Gaming-House.—The prison.—Bedlam.—The Rake's Levee.—The lady's public toilette.—Marriage à-la-mode.—The Election Prints.—The sleeping Congregation.—Fanaticism.

WHEN Defoe, in 1724, had given to the world three novels, in which the incidents in the various fortunes of a low abandoned woman, of a more refined courtesan, and of a young thief, are related with a circumstantiality that is "like reading evidence in a court of justice,"\* there was an artist engraving shop-bills and silver plate for a livelihood,—who was also looking with a curious eye upon the world around him. As he walked about London, all its strange exhibitions of pomp and misery,—its habitual contrasts of velvet and rags,—its eccentric characters, its grotesque faces,—were to him materials for artistical study and for moral reflection. Did the genius of Hogarth take any direction from the genius of Defoe? Had he read "Moll Flanders," when he painted his first great fiction of the "Harlot's Progress?" Had he read "Colonel Jack" when he painted that never-to-be-forgotten figure in "Industry and Idleness" of the young blackguard who is gambling on a grave-stone with Tom Idle—some such as Defoe described as "brutish, bloody, and cruel in his disposition; sharp as a street-bred boy must be, but ignorant and unteachable from a child." Charles Lamb said that Defoe's novels "are capital kitchen-reading, while they are worthy, from their interest, to find a shelf in the libraries of the wealthiest and the most learned."† Hogarth's first set of prints, in which he might originally have had the adornment of the kitchen-wall chiefly in view, became the subjects of fan-mounds, which ladies of quality displayed at the opera. The graphic representations of Hogarth have been truly termed "books." We look upon them as presenting the best materials for the history of manners in the transition time from Anne to George III. We regard Hogarth as the legitimate successor of Steele and Addison,

\* Charles Lamb, in a contribution to Wilson's "Life of Defoe."

† Essay on Hogarth, in "Reflector."



as presenting a mirror of some portion of the higher and middle classes, and of Defoe in exploring the depths of ignorance and vice.

The works of Hogarth range over a period of nearly thirty years; from the days of Walpole and the Excise Law to the days of Wilkes and Liberty. He was the engraver as well as the painter of these representations, "which have the teeming, fruitful, suggestive meaning of words." He got small prices for his pictures. He made a fortune by his prints. Every one could read his prints; and his art went direct to the popular comprehension. His was essentially a dramatic art. But he was bound by no pedantic rules about the unities of time and place, in opposing which law of the critics Dr. Johnson was "almost frightened at his own temerity." On the other hand, he had an absolute reverence for that "poetical justice," the occasional absence of which in Shakspeare Johnson thinks a great demerit. With Hogarth, it is always Vice punished, Virtue rewarded. The limitations of his art might have something to do with this great object of Hogarth as a moralist. Defoe very considerably departed from such an overstrained view of the results of human conduct. Defoe does not, as a matter of course, hang the thief, and make the respectable apprentice Lord Mayor of London. His notion is that "the best and only good end of an impious misspent life is repentance:"—and so, Colonel Jack, the pickpocket, becomes a decent member of society; and Moll Flanders ends as a respectable wife and mother after she is transported. Hogarth could not very well *paint* repentance, so as not to be mistaken for hypocrisy. In his pictorial stories, we are taken through all the transitions of guilt and extravagance;—to Bridewell, to the goal, to the madhouse, to the gallows. Society, in Hogarth's pictures, is a sort of chaos, in which filth jostles finery; grossness makes decorum blush; and drunken frenzy is well-nigh involving all things in a general conflagration, typified by the revellers at the "Rose" setting fire to the map of the world.

Many of the indications of this chaotic state of life in England may be worth a transient notice. Let us glance first at the outdoor life—the life of the London streets. By day, as by night, disorder seems to reign. By day there is not the slightest appearance of authority to repress outrage or robbery, to enforce decency; or to save from accident. The brewer's carman falls asleep upon his shaft, and the child driving his hoop across the road is crushed under the wheels of the dray. \* St. James's-street is crowded with

\* Stages of Cruelty.

sedan chairs bearing lords and ladies to queen Caroline's drawing-room; whilst a group of shoeblacks, chimney-sweepers, and half-naked vagabonds are playing at cups and balls, dice, cards, and prick-in-the-garter, on the pavement.\* In the city, close by the Monument, the great thoroughfare to London Bridge is choked by a mob of butchers with marrowbones and cleavers, of drummers and fiddlers, of beggars relieved with broken meat,—all assembled to greet with their din the marriage of Mr. Francis Goodchild.† Before the window of the enraged Musician in St. Martin's Lane, the blind haut-boy player, the ballad-singer, the boy with the drum, and other gentry that the policeman now deems street nuisances, are undisturbed, whilst the irritable professor stops his ears and shrieks in vain. Before Covent Garden Church, on a snowy morning, market-women are warming themselves at a fire of sticks, and the quack doctor is holding forth to the crowd.‡ When magistracy, even, puts on its grandest pomp and splendour in the Lord Mayor's Show, the lumbering gilt coach is surrounded by a mob of whooping and fighting blackguards. By night, confusion is worse confounded. Bonfires blaze in the narrowest streets on occasions of public rejoicing. The Salisbury Flying Coach is overturned at Charing Cross, amidst the crackling of tar-barrels and the hissing of squibs. Traitors' heads upon Temple Bar are lighted up by the fire beneath that burns Guy Faux. In their usual state the streets are dark. The cut-purse and the burglar roam about unmolested. The rake beats the watchman, and carries his staff and his lantern in triumph to the hideous revels at the night-house.§ The "fery fop, the "frolic drunkard,"

"Lords of the streets, and terrors of the way."

insult every passenger; and no judicious magistrate fines the rich ruffian five pounds, as in our more decorous days.

The anarchy of the streets is but a type of the absence of all legal supervision and control in houses of public resort, and in places of amusement for high and low. One of Hogarth's early prints is "A Midnight Conversation." Twenty years after Steele and Addison had exhibited, under many forms, the club-life of London, Hogarth brings together a far less decorous set in tipsy jollity. They are not the drunkards of the pot-house. They are the noble Britons who, up to the end of the eighteenth century, thought it no disgrace to a gentleman to be led reeling home by the watchman, or to fall under the table, whilst roaring out the Bacchanalian songs

\* Rake's Progress, 4.

† Morning.

‡ Industry and Idleness, 6.

§ Rake's Progress, 3.



which were the most precious gifts of the English Muse. The president, who is concocting a fresh bowl of punch, is a rubicund divine; whose calling, according to the theory of that age, is as much denoted by the corkscrew hanging from his finger, as by the band and cassock which he wears. The solemn listener next to him, with his band and his full-bottomed wig, is a barrister. Another distinguished personage of the company, judging by his laced cravat and his sword, is an undoubted gentleman, although he is so far gone in enjoyment that he sets fire to his ruffles instead of his pipe. The officer with the cockade breaks his head as he falls from his chair; and the apothecary, holding on to the table, pours brandy upon the bald pate. The justice has hung up his cocked hat and wig, and has made himself comfortable in his nightcap sitting apart in resolute drinking. Maudlin drunkenness, ranting drunkenness, sleepy drunkenness, sprawling drunkenness, are given with inimitable minuteness of character and incident. This is genteel revelry. In the night-cellar in Chick-lane, Smithfield, some of the low profligates are fighting in the background with chairs and pokers, whilst others are quietly smoking on. The thieves in the foreground are dividing their booty; their murdered man is thrust into a hole; the constable comes, not to disperse the whole gang of the Blood-bowl house, but to carry off Tom Idle to Newgate. He began his career by gambling in the churchyard; the beadle stands over him with a stick. He is sent to sea; and runs away from the round dozen. He comes home and becomes a thief; and the end is the last ride in a cart to Tyburn. Tyburnia is now otherwise occupied than in looking upon a procession of javelin men followed by a ragged and scrambling mob, whilst Tiddy-Doll sells his cakes, and but for the coffin in the cart, the gathering has as merry an aspect as a country fair. This is the last step in the mad dance of low profligacy; and the great master of the ceremonies is the hangman, who sits astride upon the gallows, smoking his pipe.

What the Bear-garden was in the time of Steele is the Cockpit in the time of Hogarth. It is free for all men. The gambler by profession here sits by the side of the amateur in the blue ribbon, as welcome as in the ring at Epsom. The blind peer is betting with the blackguards around him; whilst the thief at his elbow is purloining the banknote which my lord is prepared to stake. Another illustrious one, with a star on his breast, is jammed amongst the crowd; the carpenter, in his shirt sleeves, presses on the noble shoulder, and thus disturbs the earnestness with which his lordship contemplates the two cocks at the crisis of the game.\*

\* The Cockpit.

In the fashionable gaming-house, there is the same equality and happy fraternity. The rake, who has run through his inheritance, but is again master of riches, by marriage with an ancient lady, whom he will hate and ruin, is the central figure of the gaming house. He has lost his money. In the frenzy of despair, has torn his periwig from his head, and is invoking heaven with curses. By the fire sits the highwayman, regardless even of the liquor he has ordered. He has no business in such company; for according to the wise Mr. Peachum, "the man who proposes to get money by play should have the education of a fine gentleman, and be trained up to it from his youth." The company at the gaming-house are gentlemen for the most part in laced coats and ruffles. There is no want of money or credit. The usurer is lending his gold to one, and drawing his bill. Another fortunate gamester is sweeping off his stakes. All are absorbed in their joy or their rage, their hope or their despair; and the watchman who rushes in to bawl that the house is on fire, can scarcely obtain a notice. The retribution must come, according to the Hogarthian doctrine, which cannot be impugned, though the moral is not always so palpable as the great painter makes it. The highwayman will be hanged; for he has lost the means of propitiating the thief-taker. The rake will go to the debtor's prison. The economy of the prison is regulated by those approved principles which subsisted for a century after Hogarth. The misery of the common-room leads to the mad-house. The terrible scenes of melancholy and laughing madness which Cibber personified in his statues, are minutely displayed by Hogarth. Bedlam was an image of the external life which the painter has represented in so many aspects—the ludicrous side by side with the terrible; and the attempts to make the mad world sane were founded upon the same ignorance of moral health and disease as in the treatment of the lunatic by a general system of coercion.

Horace Walpole has remarked of Hogarth "the very furniture of his rooms describe the characters to whom they belong. . . . The rake's levee-room, the nobleman's dining-room, the apartments of the husband and wife in *Marriage à-la-mode*, the alderman's parlour, the poet's bed-chamber, and many others, are the history of the manners of the age." This is true, as far as it goes. "It was reserved to Hogarth to write a scene of furniture." In the same way Hogarth is the great authority for costume. But dress and furniture are only a small part of the "history of the manners of the age." Let us look at the domestic life associated with these externals. The rake's levee-room is peopled with a group of figures



that again remind us of the chaotic state of society even in gilded saloons. Charles Lamb has described this remarkable exhibition as "almost a transcript" of the opening scene of Shakspeare's 'Timon:' "we find a dedicating poet, and other similar characters in both." But the difference is as manifest as the similarity. In Timon's levee we have the poet, the painter, the jeweller, and the merchant. The Rake, in his morning gown, attends to the bully who grasps his sword, and places his hand on his breast, to intimate the secrecy with which he will stab in the dark. The jockey exhibits the bowl which his master's racers have won. The prize-fighter comes to teach him the science of quarter-staff. The French fencer and the attitudinising dancing-master, are ready to give their lessons. Handel is touching the harpsichord. Bridgman has his designs for a landscape garden when the villa is built:

"Heaven visits with a taste the wealthy fool."

The poet is in the antechamber spouting his verses amongst tailors and wig-makers. It is exaggeration, we may say, to group together such opposite professors of fashionable accomplishments. But ostentation makes no nice distinctions. The patron sees no difference between the poet and the dancing-master.

If the Rake's levee may seem to some an overstrained representation, the genius of Hogarth has been vindicated by Scott seizing upon similar characteristics of the levee of George Villiers, duke of Buckingham—"a gathering of eagles to the slaughter." Amidst projectors, and gamblers, and others of "the sordid train,"—who "stimulate the wild wishes of lavish and wasteful extravagance," are the poet, the architect, the musician—"all genuine descendants of the daughter of the horse-leech, whose cry is, Give, give."\* Turn to the fourth plate of "Marriage à-la-mode." The lady Squander is at her public toilette. As her hair is dressed—the most important labour of the day—Farinelli is singing to a flute accompaniment. A fashionable lady is in ecstasy; a country gentleman is asleep. The coxcomb sips his coffee with the vacant indifference that belongs to an exquisite with his hair in papers. The mistress of the mansion, whose plebeian wealth has been wedded to his titled poverty, is receiving from a gentleman who is lolling upon a sofa a ticket for the masquerade. The barrister who drew the settlement for the marriage of the lady is thus making arrangements for a very prompt dissolution of the tie. The citizen's daughter is the victim of the lawyer's profligacy. The lawyer passes his sword through the noble husband, and is hanged. The lady takes poison. There are various scenes of this drama

\* Peveril of the Peak."

before we reach the catastrophe. One scene has been painted with matchless skill. The lady has passed the night in her splendid mansion amidst a crowd of visitors. She has snatched an hour or two of broken and feverish sleep, and has risen unrefreshed to a late breakfast. The servants have been unable to repair the disorder of the previous night. It is noon, but the candles are still burning; the furniture is disarranged; the floor is strewn with music, and books of games, and overturned chairs. The husband has spent his night from home. The jaded debauchee—his dress disordered, his features pale and fallen, his whole attitude expressive of that withering satiety which has drunk the dregs of what is called pleasure, and found nothing but poison in the cup—tells a tale of the ruin which has overwhelmed thousands. Neither the besotted husband nor the careless wife can listen to the silent remonstrances of the old steward, who comes to them with a bundle of unpaid bills, and a file with only one receipt upon it. The uplifted hand and careworn face of the old servant distinctly paint the ruin which he sees approaching in debt and dishonour. The catastrophe, indeed, is more sudden than he expects.

If this be the life of fashionable England, we can scarcely be surprised at its "Gin Lane," where the drunken wife lets her infant fall from her arms down an area; and the tumble-down house reveals the spectral sight of a wretch hanging to a beam. The moral is here written in Capital letters, which those who run may read. The moral is not quite so legible, when we look upon that print in which Francis Goodchild, esquire, sheriff of London is represented as feasting the liverymen of his company. The eager clamour of fresh supplies; the gloating satisfaction of the healthful feeder; the exhausted appetite of the apoplectic gorged—these triumphs of civilisation may yet attest that Hogarth was "not for an age, but for all time" in some of these note-books. The satire of his "election" is of course only local and temporary. There is now no treating allowed. The odious attempt to seduce the incorruptible British patriot by a vulgar feast is proscribed by statute and by custom. No candidate at the head of the table, with "Liberty and Loyalty" for his banner, submits to be whispered to by a fat old hag, whilst a facetious elector knocks their heads together. No haberdasher brings an assortment of ribbons and gloves, and is paid by a promissory note. The wife threatening her husband with vengeance if he refuses the proffered bribe, is necessarily extinct. The attorney knocked off his chair by a brickbat that comes through the window, can no longer apply to the gentle people that some libellers in our day call "roughs." The banner of "no Jews"



has gone, with every other proclamation of intolerance. Ignorance is banished and no longer shouts "Give us our eleven days." The print of the Canvass, again, must be quite obsolete in its allusions. The yeoman no longer stands between two rival agents, with his palm open to each. This sturdy Englishman is not Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy. He is not Hercules between Virtue and Pleasure. He is an honest elector, who then did what he thought best for his family. He was tempted, and he yielded. All such temptations are at an end. No man takes guineas in the open street; and we may therefore presume that bribery has ceased to exist. Then, again, no such scenes can take place as in Hogarth's Election-booth, for a registration has been established, and all is fairness and tranquillity. No dying freeholder is brought from his bed to the poll; no idiotic cripple has the name of the Blue candidate shouted in his one ear, and of the Yellow in the other. No counsel are now vociferating for or against the legality of the voter who has lost his hands, taking hold of the Testament with his iron hook. No group of voters now chuckle over a squib which, in addition to its subtle wit, has the picture of one of the candidates on a gallows. Lastly, the solemnity of Chaining has gone out; and perhaps the accompanying generosity of setting free and enlightened non-electors to scramble for sixpences. Hogarth has painted a scene of riot, broken heads, blind fiddlers and dancing bears, which have no exact parallel in our age; and the evils of an election may therefore be supposed, by some believers in social perfectibility, to have died out with many other political evils, in our more decent times.

Hogarth lived at a period when some very signal changes in morals and manners were slowly developing themselves, under influences which were either ridiculed, or regarded as unworthy of notice. The chaotic state of society which he has so truthfully set forth in its most striking examples, must not be received as the whole truth. The essayists, the dramatists, the novelists, the painters, have furnished almost the only materials we possess for estimating the peculiar characteristics of a modern age. But we must not attempt to believe that many of their representations and vice and folly were any other than exceptions to the average amount of decorum and good sense which regulated the intercourse of the higher and middle classes, and of respect for the laws and for public order which, taken as a whole, the labouring class manifested. When we look at the defective state of the municipal administration of the country—the total absence of means for the prevention of crime, except the terror of the barbarous code for its punishment—

we may almost be surprised that there were not more Gin Lanes, and more Blood-bowl houses. When we regard the comparatively small influence which the Church then exercised upon social evils, we may wonder how the upper classes passed from the corrupt atmosphere of Hogarth's saloons into the more healthful air of the court-life of eighty years ago. A great change had then come over all classes. Hogarth has two prints which he produced out of his keen observation of passing things,—manifestations which he could scarcely be expected to regard with a prophetic or philosophic spirit. "The Sleeping Congregation" of 1736 speaks of the time when the be-wigged preacher droned through his tedious hour, without the slightest attempt to touch the vicious or to rouse the indifferent. The "Credulity, Superstition, and Fanaticism," a Medley," of 1762, tells that a new power had arisen. The chief object is the ridicule of Methodism. Whitefield's Journal and Wesley's Sermons figure by name amongst the accessories of the piece, where the ranting preacher is holding forth to the howling congregation. Pope had described the "harmonic twang" of the donkey's bray—

"There, Webster, pealed thy voice, and Whitefield thine."\*

Bishop Lavington had written "The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists compared." Hogarth followed the precedent, in all ages, of despising reformers. The followers of George Whitefield and of John Wesley might be ignorant, superstitious, fanatical. They themselves might have indirectly encouraged the delusions of a few of their disciples. But they eventually changed the face of English society.

\* Dunciad, book ii.