

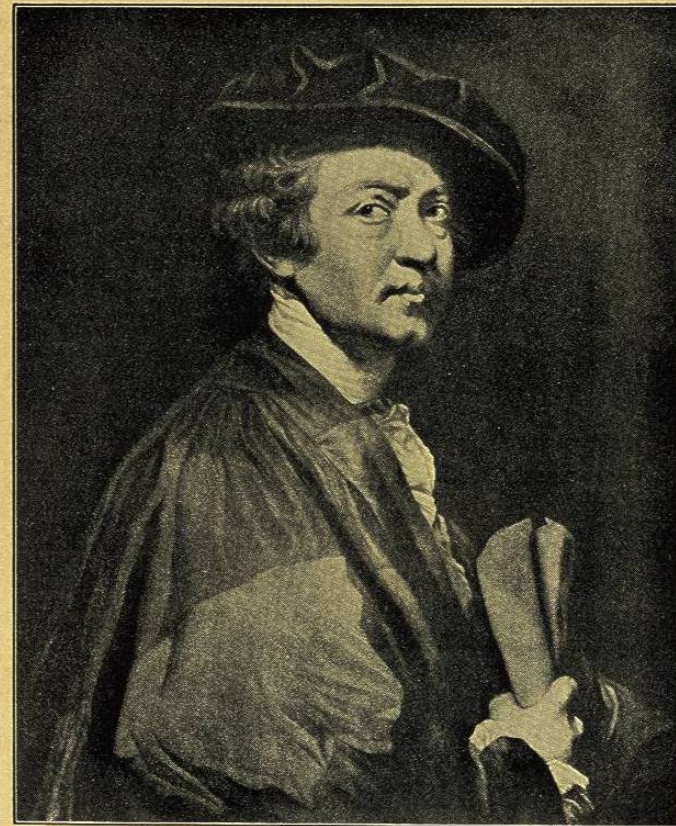
## SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

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IN Plympton, Devonshire, July 16, 1723, the great English painter, Sir Joshua Reynolds, was born. His father, Samuel, and his grandfather, John, were both ministers, while his mother and grandmother were both daughters of clergymen.

Samuel Reynolds was a gentle, kindly man, master of the grammar school at Plympton, supporting his eleven children on the meagre income of seven hundred and fifty dollars a year. He had married Theophila Potter, when she was twenty-three, the lovely daughter of a lovely young mother, Theophila Baker, who, marrying against the consent of her father, was disinherited by him, and at the early death of her devoted husband wept herself blind, and died broken-hearted.

Joshua, the seventh child of Samuel and Theophila, was a thoughtful, aspiring boy, who cared more for drawing than for Ovid, and spent his early years in copying the illustrations from "Plutarch's Lives" and Jacob Cats's "Book of Emblems," which his grandmother, on his father's side, had brought with her from Holland. His



SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

After a painting by himself. Uffizi, Florence.



sisters were also fond of drawing, and as pencils and paper could not be afforded in the minister's family, they drew on the whitewashed walls of a long passage, with burnt sticks. The boy's sketches were the poorest, and he was therefore nicknamed "the clown."

On the back of a Latin exercise, the lad drew a wall with a window in it. Under it, the not highly delighted father, who wished his boy to be a learned doctor, wrote: "This is drawn by Joshua in school, out of pure idleness." But when in his eighth year the boy made a fine sketch of the grammar-school with its cloister, having studied carefully the Jesuit's "Treatise on Perspective," the astonished father said, "Now, this exemplifies what the author of the 'Perspective' says in his preface, 'that, by observing the rules laid down in this book, a man may do wonders;' for this is wonderful."

Joshua was fond of literary composition, and early composed some rules of conduct for himself, which influenced him through life. He said, "The great principle of being happy in this world is not to mind or be affected with small things," a maxim which he carried out in his peaceful, self-poised, and remarkably happy life.

"If you take too much care of yourself, nature will cease to take care of you," he said, and thus without excessive self-consciousness he did his great work and reaped his great reward.

A book did for Joshua what a book has often



done before, became an inspiration, and therefore led to grand results. He read Richardson's "Theory of Painting," wherein was expressed the hope and belief that there was a future for England in art. "No nation under heaven so nearly resembles the ancient *Greeks* and *Romans* as we. There is a haughty courage, an elevation of thought, a greatness of taste, a love of liberty, a simplicity and honesty amongst us which we inherit from our ancestors, and which belong to us as *Englishmen*; and 'tis in these this resemblance consists. . . . A time may come when future writers may be able to add the name of an *English* painter. . . I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but, considering the necessary connection of causes and effects, and upon seeing some links of that fatal chain, I will venture to pronounce (as exceedingly probable) that if ever the ancient, great, and beautiful taste in painting revives, it will be in *England*; but not till *English* painters, conscious of the dignity of their country and of their profession, resolve to do honor to both by Piety, Virtue, Magnanimity, Benevolence, and a contempt of everything that is really unworthy of them.

"And now I cannot forbear wishing that some younger painter than myself, and one who has had greater and more early advantages, would practise the magnanimity I have recommended, in this single instance of attempting and hoping only to equal the greatest masters of whatsoever age or nation. What were they which we are not or may

not be? What helps had any of them which we have not?"

The boy Joshua was electrified by these words. Perhaps he could become "equal to the greatest masters." He told a friend, Edmond Malone, that this book so delighted and inflamed his mind "that Raphael appeared to him superior to the most illustrious names of ancient or modern time."

Young Reynolds painted his first oil painting, now in the possession of Deble Boger, Esq., of Anthony, near Plymouth, when he was twelve years old. It was a portrait of Rev. Thomas Smart, a tutor in the family of Lord Edgecumbe. In church, while Smart was preaching, Joshua made a sketch on his thumb-nail of the minister. He enlarged this sketch in a boat-house, using part of the sail for his canvas.

Good Samuel Reynolds began to wonder whether a boy who could paint at twelve would make a successful apothecary, and, not being able to decide the question alone, he consulted Mr. Craunch. This gentleman, of small fortune, resided at Plympton, and was the father of pretty Betsy Craunch, a sweetheart of Peter Pindar (Dr. Wolcot). The lad himself said, "he would rather be an apothecary than an *ordinary* painter; but if he could be bound to an eminent master, he should choose the latter."

Mr. Craunch advised the study of art, and through his influence and that of his friend, a lawyer, Mr. Cutcliffe of Bideford, the lad was sent to Thomas Hudson, the principal portrait painter



in England, living in Great Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn, London. He was the pupil of Richardson, married his daughter, and thus Reynolds was brought again under a kindred influence to that which had inspired him in the "Theory of Painting."

Hudson was to receive six hundred dollars for care of his pupil, half of which was loaned by a married sister till he should be able to repay her. The boy made drawings from ancient statuary and from Guercino, and was delighted with his work, writing home to his father, "While I am doing this I am the happiest creature alive."

One morning, while purchasing some pictures for Hudson at an auction room, he was overjoyed to see a great poet, Alexander Pope, enter the place, and bow to the crowd, who opened a passage for him. Among others, Pope shook hands with the ardent young artist. He described the poet as "about four feet six inches high; very hump-backed and deformed. He wore a black coat, and, according to the fashion of that time, had on a little sword. He had a large and very fine eye, and a long, handsome nose: his mouth had those peculiar marks which are always found in the mouths of crooked persons, and the muscles which run across the cheek were so strongly marked that they seemed like small cords."

Though bound to Hudson for four years, at the end of two years Joshua was dismissed, ostensibly for neglect to carry a picture at the time ordered,

but in reality, it is believed, because the master was jealous that he had painted so admirably the portrait of an elderly serving-woman in the house. He returned to Devonshire, and settled at Plymouth, where he soon painted about thirty portraits of the magnates of the neighborhood, at fifteen dollars apiece.

He worked earnestly, saying, "Those who are determined to excel must go to their work whether willing or unwilling, morning, noon, and night, and they will find it to be no play, but, on the contrary, very hard labor."

Young Reynolds made a portrait in 1746 of Captain Hamilton, father of the Marquis of Abercorn, which was the first of his pictures which brought the artist into notice. He also painted Hamilton in a picture with Lord and Lady Eliot. The latter married Hamilton after her husband's death.

"This Captain Hamilton," we find in Prior's *Life of Malone*, "was a very uncommon character; very obstinate, very whimsical, very pious, a rigid disciplinarian, yet very kind to his men. He lost his life as he was proceeding from his ship to land at Plymouth. The wind and sea were extremely high; and his officers remonstrated against the imprudence of venturing in a boat where the danger seemed imminent. But he was impatient to see his wife, and would not be persuaded. In a few minutes after he left the ship, the boat was upset and turned keel upwards."



"The captain, being a good swimmer, trusted to his skill, and would not accept a place on the keel, in order to make room for others, and then clung to the edge of the boat. Unluckily, he had kept on his great-coat. At length, seeming exhausted, those on the keel exhorted him to take a place beside them, and he attempted to throw off the coat; but, finding his strength fail, told the men he must yield to his fate, and soon afterwards sank, while *singing a psalm*."

This year, young Reynolds, now twenty-three, painted his own portrait. Says Tom Taylor, in his "Life and Times of Sir Joshua Reynolds," begun by Charles Robert Leslie, the royal academician, and finished by Taylor, "It is masterly in handling, and powerful, almost Rembrandtesque, in *chiaro-oscuro*. The hair flows, without powder, in long ringlets over the shoulders. The white collar and ruffled front of the shirt are thrown open. A dark cloak is flung over the shoulders."

This year, 1746, Samuel Reynolds died, and the young painter took his two unmarried sisters to Plymouth to provide for them in his new home. Reynolds learned much at this time from William Gandy, whose father had been a successful pupil of Van Dyck. One of this painter's maxims, which Joshua never forgot, was that "a picture ought to have a richness in its texture, as if the colors had been composed of cream or cheese, and the reverse of a hard and husky or dry manner."

Three years later, an unlooked-for pleasure came

to Reynolds. He had always longed to visit Rome for study, but his father was too poor to provide the means, and artists, as a rule, do not grow rich early in their career, if at all. The famous Admiral Keppel, then a commodore only twenty-four years old, appointed to a command in the Mediterranean, put into Plymouth for repairs to his ship. Here, at the house of Lord Edgecumbe, he met the young painter, and was so pleased with his courteous manner and frank kindly nature that he offered him passage on his vessel. The offer was gladly accepted, and they sailed for Lisbon, May 11, 1749. From here they went to Cadiz, Gibraltar, Tetuan, Algiers, the Island of Minorca, where Reynolds painted nearly all the officers of the garrison, then to Genoa, Leghorn, Florence, and, finally, Rome. "Now," he said, "I am at the height of my wishes, in the midst of the greatest works of art that the world has produced."

He remained at Rome two years, his married sisters, Mrs. Palmer and Mrs. Johnson, advancing the money for his expenses. He studied and copied many of the works of Raphael, Michael Angelo, Titian, Rubens, Rembrandt, and others, and filled several journals with his art notes. Two of these books are now carefully preserved in the British Museum, two in the Sloane Museum, and several in the Lenox Gallery in New York.

At first, Reynolds was disappointed in the works of Raphael, but, said he, "I did not for a moment conceive or suppose that the name of Raphael, and



those admirable paintings in particular, owed their reputation to the ignorance and the prejudice of mankind; on the contrary, my not relishing them as I was conscious I ought to have done was one of the most humiliating things that ever happened to me. I found myself in the midst of works executed upon principles with which I was unacquainted.

"I felt my ignorance, and stood abashed. All the indigested notions of painting which I had brought with me from England, where the art was at the lowest ebb,—it could not, indeed, be lower,—were to be totally done away with and eradicated from my mind. It was necessary, as it is expressed on a very solemn occasion, that I should become as a *little child*. Notwithstanding my disappointment, I proceeded to copy some of those excellent works. I viewed them again and again; I even affected to feel their merits, and to admire them more than I really did. In a short time a new taste and new perceptions began to dawn upon me, and I was convinced that I had originally formed a false opinion of the perfection of art, and that this great painter was entitled to the high rank which he holds in the estimation of the world. . . .

"Having since that period frequently revolved the subject in my mind, I am now clearly of opinion that a relish for the higher excellences of the art is an acquired taste, which no man ever possessed without long cultivation and great labor and

attention. . . . It is the florid style which strikes at once, and captivates the eye, for a time, without ever satisfying the judgment. Nor does painting in this respect differ from other arts. A just and poetical taste and the acquisition of a nice discriminative musical ear are equally the work of time."

In making the studies from Raphael in the Vatican, Reynolds caught so severe a cold as to produce deafness, from which he never recovered, and was obliged to use an ear-trumpet all his life. He could not help observe the superficiality of the average tourist. He said, "Some Englishmen, while I was in the Vatican, came there, and spent above six hours in writing down whatever the antiquary dictated to them. They scarcely ever looked at the paintings the whole time. Instead of examining the beauties of the works of fame, and why they were esteemed, they only inquire the subject of the picture and the name of the painter, the history of a statue and where it is found, and write that down."

Later, Reynolds journeyed to Bologna, Modena, Parma, and Venice, studying the methods of the Venetian painters. He says, "When I observed an extraordinary effect of light and shade in any picture, I took a leaf out of my pocketbook, and darkened every part of it in the same gradation of light and shade as the picture, leaving the white paper untouched to represent the light, and this without any attention to the subject, or to the drawing of the figures. A few trials of this kind



will be sufficient to give their conduct in the management of their lights. After a few experiments, I found the paper blotted nearly alike. Their general practice appeared to be, to allow not above a quarter of the picture for the light, including in this portion both the principal and secondary lights; another quarter to be kept as dark as possible; and the remaining half kept in mezzotint or half-shadow. Rubens appears to have admitted rather more light than a quarter, and Rembrandt much less, scarcely an eighth: by this conduct, Rembrandt's light is extremely brilliant, but it costs too much; the rest of the picture is sacrificed to this one object."

Reynolds longed to be at home again. So great was his love for England that when, at Venice, he heard at the opera a ballad that had been popular in London, it brought tears to his eyes.

Reynolds settled in London on his return from the Continent, after spending three months in Devonshire. He took a suite of handsome apartments in St. Martin's Lane, his sister Frances, six years younger than himself, being his housekeeper. She failed to make her brother happy, through her peculiar temperament. She was, says Madame d'Arblay, "a woman of worth and understanding, but of a singular character; who, unfortunately for herself, made, throughout life, the great mistake of nourishing a singularity which was her bane, as if it had been her greatest blessing. . . . It was that of living in an habitual perplexity of



THE TWO SISTERS.  
Painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds.



mind and irresolution of conduct, which to herself was restlessly tormenting, and to all around her was teasingly wearisome.

"Whatever she suggested or planned one day was reversed the next; though resorted to on the third, as if merely to be again rejected on the fourth; and so on almost endlessly; for she rang not the changes on her opinions and designs, in order to bring them into harmony and practice, but wavering, to stir up new combinations and difficulties, till she found herself in the midst of such chaotic obstructions as could chime in with no given purpose, but must needs be left to ring their own peal, and to begin again just where they began at first."

Frances copied her brother's pictures, which copies, Reynolds said, "make other people laugh, and me cry." Dr. Samuel Johnson said she was "very near to purity itself;" and of her "Essay on Taste," "There are in these few pages or remarks such a depth of penetration, such nicety of observation, as Locke or Pascal might be proud of."

Reynolds now painted the portraits of Sir James Colebrooke, the Duchess of Hamilton, the Countess of Coventry, and the Dukes of Devonshire and Grafton. The two ladies were two beautiful Irish sisters. Horace Walpole tells us "how even the noble mob in the drawing-room clambered upon chairs and tables to look at them; how their doors were mobbed by crowds eager to see them get into their chairs, and places taken early at the theatres