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Maria Grazia and the Brigand School of Art

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tist knows so well how to bestow upon his works—Mr. EDMONDS's *New Scholar*, a composition of great humor—and Mr. WOODVILLE's *Card Players*, one of the earlier productions of the author of *Old '76 and Young '48*, and *The Old Captain*, form the remaining subjects of this series of engravings. We shall be greatly disappointed if they do not prove more popular than any thing which the Art-Union has yet offered to its subscribers.

The *Bulletin* for the remainder of the year will probably contain more valuable illustrations than those which have hitherto been published. We may announce, among others, an original etching in outline by DARLEY, whose works are now recognized in Europe as well as America as among the best in the world in their department, and whose fame the American Art-Union has had the gratifying privilege of materially extending. It will be seen that the present number contains a highly finished etching by HINSHELWOOD, after a drawing by ENSING MÜLLER of the first picture of the series of the *Voyage of Life*. Etchings of the third and fourth of the series will follow in succeeding numbers of the *Bulletin*.

In thus describing the return which each member will be *certain* to receive for each sum of five dollars contributed by him, we must not forget the works of Art already purchased to be included in the distribution for the present year, and which are certainly more numerous, interesting and valuable than we have ever before exhibited at a corresponding period.

The September *Bulletin* for 1849 announced a Catalogue of but two hundred works. We now present to the public a list of more than three hundred, several among them being the best productions of their authors. It will be conceded, we think, that our walls have never exhibited better specimens of GLASS, RANNEY, HICKS, PEELE, BOUTELLE, CHURCH, HINCKLEY, KENSETT, DOUGHTY, GIGNOUX, HUBBARD, CASLEAR, COLE, CROPSEY, AMES, and others, than they now contain. Besides these paintings, there will be included in the distribution a beautiful *bas relief* in marble, by PALMER, of *Morning*—a bust in marble, by MOSIER—twenty copies in bronze of *The Filatrice*, a most graceful statuette, by BROWN—six bronze busts of *Washington*, by KNEELAND—and several hundred bronze medals of Stuart and Trumbull. Such is the return which the Society is already prepared to offer to the subscribers of 1850, and which will be still further extended and increased in value by the operations of the remaining months of the year.

#### OPENING OF THE GALLERIES.

The Galleries will be opened again to the public sometime in the early part of the present month. The day of opening will be duly announced in the newspapers. The principal improvement which has been made during the recess is a new floor in the larger gallery. It was found that the carpet collected a great deal of dust, which filled the atmosphere, diminishing the comfort of visitors, and injuring the paintings. Wooden floors are almost universally used in Europe, and that which was laid in our new gallery did such good service last year, that it was determined to try the same experiment in the old room. The floor just now finished is quite an elaborate affair. It is constructed of

narrow bits of Georgia pine, laid herring-bone fashion, with a border of darker wood. We need now only to have the ceilings painted in arabesque to make our apartments the most elegant of any in the country devoted to the exhibition of paintings.

#### NOTICE TO THE MEMBERS OF 1849.

The members of 1849 are informed that the Engravings, Etchings in Outline and Transactions are ready for delivery to all who have not yet received them.

#### HONORARY SECRETARIES.

ELIJAH P. BENJAMIN, Poughkeepsie, N. Y.,  
Vice P. Merwin, resigned.  
DR. A. H. DOW, Marion, N. Y.  
WILLIAM F. FANNIN, La Grange, Ga.  
JAMES GILLENDER, JR., Hyde Park, N. Y.  
WILLIAM T. HAMILTON, Syracuse, N. Y.,  
Vice G. J. Gardner, resigned.  
THOMAS HILL, Webster, Mass.  
TELEMAN C. JUTTING, Maracaibo, Venezuela, S. A.  
GILBERT KIMBALL, Haverhill, Mass.  
CHARLES E. LATHROP, Tunkhannock, Pa.,  
Vice A. Durham, left.  
C. P. LEONARD, Lowville, N. Y.,  
Vice V. R. Martin, resigned.  
HENRY MILLS, Morristown N. J.,  
Vice J. W. Poinier, resigned.  
F. A. ROSS, Tuscumbia, Ala.  
J. M. THORNDIKE, Windsor, Vt.  
ORSANUS WHITE, Monson, Mass.  
CHARLES J. WYLDE, St. John, Newfoundland.

#### CRITICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE ARTICLES.

##### MARIA GRAZIA AND THE BRIGAND SCHOOL OF ART.

Many of our readers have seen the striking bust, by Brown, called *La Grazia*, which was included in the distribution of the Art-Union last year. Some of them, perhaps, recognized in it the same noble traits which charmed them in several of the pictures of Leopold Robert or of Schnetz, or in other works illustrating the life and manners of modern Italy. The original of this countenance, so regularly beautiful, and at the same time so dignified and expressive, was the famous model, *Maria Grazia*, whose recent death at Rome, was announced in the public prints as a matter of interest to all artists and lovers of Art. We have lately met in a biography of Leopold Robert, by F. Feuillet de Conches,\* a particular account of this woman, and also of the Brigand school of Art in Rome, from which we have gleaned most of the following details.

Twenty-five or thirty years ago, there was an extraordinary rage in Europe for pictures representing the adventures and exploits of Italian bandits. Their wild life amidst the rocks and fastnesses of the Appenines, their combats with the Pontifical and Neapolitan troops, the courageous devotion of their wives and children, their haughty bearing after defeat, became the most popular subjects which the artists in Rome could illustrate. A great many pictures were produced upon these and similar themes, the best of which were engraved, and prints from them became common both in Europe and America. It was in the year 1819 that the occasion arose which first suggested paintings of this description.

The brigands of the Appenines were rendering the journey from Rome to Naples every day more

\*Leopold Robert, sa vie, ses œuvres et sa correspondance, par F. Feuillet de Conches. Paris, 1848, pp. 418.

dangerous. Old bands which had been scattered, were re-organized. The Pope's Secretary of State, Cardinal Consalvi, had been captured and only released upon his promise to give the bandit leader, *Barbone*, who was tired of this adventurous kind of life, a place in the Roman police. *Barbone's* retirement, had made way for a bolder chief, Gasparone of Sonnino, whose banditti infested the whole country and pushed their depredations as far as Albano, scarcely halting at the very gates of the Holy City. Troops were raised to subdue these formidable robbers, but with little or no success, until a resolute Frenchman by the name of Dubois was put in command. He at once commenced an exterminating warfare. The little town of Sonnino, about twenty-five leagues from the capital, was the chief recruiting ground of the brigands, and there the executioner and the scaffold were permanently established. Great numbers were executed and their heads exposed over the gates. But these means, vigorous as they were, did not prove sufficient, and the Pontifical government were obliged to resort to extreme measures. By a sudden *coup-de-main*, a great part of the population of Sonnino was carried off, and more than two hundred mountaineers—men, women and children—all of them brigands or the connections of Brigands, huddled together at Rome, the chiefs at the Castle of St. Angelo, and the others at the establishment of labor of the *Termini*, so called because it is in front of the *Thermi* or baths of Dioclesian.

This transportation took place, as we have said, in 1819. It was then that Leopold Robert, the French artist, whose genius and premature death have given so much interest to his productions, obtained from the Governor of Rome the privilege of establishing his studio in the midst of this transplanted population. He installed himself at the *Termini*, mingled familiarly with the brigands, with whom his money made him very welcome, and passed two months in taking sketches from the life, being generally alone, but for a part of the time in company with Michalon, another artist. The most strongly marked physiognomy, beauty of stature, suppleness and freedom of gait and posture, originality of costumes and manners, all combined in these models to bestow upon Leopold Robert's small pictures the power of unusual character. He succeeded beyond his expectations, and after his studies were finished, he bought of the brigands all the dresses and arms he could obtain from them, which he proposed to introduce into new pictures. This collection was one of great interest, and formed the only luxury in which he indulged. One evening during the winter of 1830-31—that season so fertile in political troubles in Rome—while he was entertaining a party of artists and amateurs, a sudden tumult, excited by some of the French students, broke out under his windows. When his guests asked what they should do in case of an attack, he laid these rich weapons before them, there being enough of them in his possession to equip the whole party.

While the trials of the brigand chiefs were slowly progressing, the Roman government grew tired of supporting the prisoners at the *Termini*, and so released many of them on their parole. These sons and daughters of the mountains wandered about the streets, and attracted all eyes by their picturesque raggedness and savage style

of beauty. The stories which had been told of their prowess excited the curiosity of the people in a high degree, the more so, as in the opinion of the Romans, brigandage and assassination are not so dishonorable as they are held to be in our better regulated communities. And indeed Leopold Robert was accustomed to say that these mountaineers had preserved many noble qualities. These unhappy people at last became a population of models, whom the Roman government out of regard to the necessities of the *ateliers* in that metropolis of Art, had not the courage to imprison or to banish. It seems, however, that they began by degrees to abuse their privileges. Unlike those Roman ladies who professed philosophy only when veiled, these models professed too openly the epicureanism of unveiled beauty. The Governor of Rome imprisoned some of them, and they were at last required to have certificates of being artists' models from the director of the French Academy, in order to preserve their freedom.

Two of the most remarkable of these women of Sonnino, thus reduced from the freedom of mountain life to the abject condition we have described, were *Maria Grazia* and her sister *Teresina*. Their family name was Boni. They were daughters of a cacciatore or hunter, and were born, the former in 1797, and the latter in 1802. Both were married at the age of fifteen. *Grazia's* husband was a boy of seventeen, *Marco Caperchio* by name, a brigand, or what was as bad. It happened that there dwelt in those days on the skirts of the mountains a certain *Mattia Caputi*, a laboring man, but still a land-holder, who did not wear the *cioccia*, that classic sandal of the Roman peasant. "He works in shoes," said the brigands, "so he must be rich." To seize, bind him and carry him off to the mountains was the work of an instant, and *Mattia* owed his release to nothing but the payment of a ransom of one hundred piastres, which his wife raised by selling her trinkets. *Mattia* swore vengeance upon his captors, and one day meeting them at an inn, he killed two of them and pursued a third who narrowly escaped with his life. One of the slain was the husband of *Maria Grazia*, who had then been married to him for seven months. The fugitive was her cousin, a certain *Gregorio*. From that moment a solemn vow of vengeance was sworn between *Mattia* and *Gregorio*.

*Maria*, the beautiful widow, now became the object of the amorous pursuit of all the heroes of the mountains. It was *Francesco Nardelli*, a carbonaro, who won her hand. "The first a lamb, the second a tiger," she used to say, when speaking of her husbands. She had only been re-married a year, when the honest *Nardelli* was commissioned by his band to kill an informer at *Terracina*. Having struck the blow, he ran off to the mountains, where the zeal of the executioner of *Sonnino* forced him to remain. Meanwhile, the expedition of the Roman Carbineers, to which we have alluded, took place, and *Grazia*, with a new-born infant at her breast, and her sister, *Teresina*, were carried off and thrown in the *Termini*. She was then nearly twenty-three years of age, and her sister eighteen. Already, three years before the sack of *Sonnino*, this *Teresina* had been married and to that very *Mattia Caputi*, (a widower meanwhile,) who had sworn vengeance against her cousin, *Gregorio*.

*Nardelli*, the husband of the *Grazia*, remained secreted among the mountains. He read one day

at the door of a church, a decree of amnesty, and hurried off to *Sonnino* to make his submission; unfortunately he arrived a few hours after the stipulated period for delay had expired, and was accordingly arrested as if he had been found with arms in his hands, and taken in chains to *Porta d'Anzio*. "*Tanto meglio!*" said *Grazia* to the Biographer at Rome in 1846, "*tanto meglio per questo cazzaccio che e venuto ad arrendersi! Fosse arrivato cento anni prima!*" "So much the better for the poltroon who had come in to surrender himself. Would to God it had happened a hundred years sooner!" "When they took him," she added, "I was still at the *Termini*. My virtue there was conspicuous to all eyes, but this tiger heard it said at *Porta d'Anzio*, that the women at the *Termini*, talked with men through the windows. Furious with jealousy, he made his escape, found his way to Rome, and raged around my prison like a wild beast, with the intention of killing me. They arrested him and he was put back in the dark at *Porta d'Anzio*, where he served it out for five years longer."

*Maria* was liberated from the *Termini* with the other prisoners, and while her husband was wearing the iron ring of the galleys, the beautiful mountaineer was strolling about the city and making the fortune of the *ateliers*. She was the true type of the brigand's wife—superb in stature and in form—with a head crowned by the most magnificent locks—strong, haughty, fearless, with the eye and gesture of command, something like that genius of liberty celebrated in the dithyrambs of the poets. *Teresina*, who, as well as her sister, was in the supreme eclat of her beauty, and who became the favorite of *Leopold Robert*, had more delicacy and gentleness in her traits. You would have called her a city lady in the *Cioccia*. The reader would form a false idea of the Roman women if he should imagine her to possess any thing of that charming piquancy, heightened by art, which we associate on this side of the Alps with the idea of beauty. The portrait of *Raphael's* famous *Fornarina*—not the magnificent painting of the Tribune at Florence, which is not the true *Fornarina*, and which some great connoisseurs think to be not even *Raphael's*—but the authentic portrait of the *Barberini* palace, and of which the *Borghese* palace has a copy by *Giulio Romano*—presents the characteristics of this Roman beauty—elevated—severe—but a little hard and savage—a *Maria Grazia* of the sixteenth century.

We have spoken of *Nardelli's* furious jealousy, and his attempt to destroy his wife. It might be supposed by some that the *Grazia*, a woman and an Italian, when thus threatened with assassination, would have sought to revenge herself. But this was not so; she seemed to have loved him then, although her feelings manifestly changed afterwards. Her savageness was only in her speech. Her heart was without bitterness, for after she was released from the *Termini*, she went from time to time to see her husband at *Porta d'Anzio*, and made her peace with him. She afterwards requested that he should be brought in to her neighborhood, and her earnest attempts to obtain a commutation of his punishment, corresponded with the ardor of her character. She demanded her *Nardelli* of *Monsignore*, the Chief of the Police, of the Cardinals, of the Pope, and of the *Madonna*. "She would have written to God," she used impiously to say, "if the post went so far."

At last through the intervention of the French Minister, the *Duc de Laval Montmorency*, she gained her point so far as to have the galley slave transferred to the Castle of *St. Angelo*. Their sorrows now began to be forgotten. He was quiet and obedient—only eighteen months longer remained of his term of imprisonment. Unhappily all their scaffolding of hopes broke down under an edict of *Leo XII*, which consigned to perpetual incarceration in the Citadel of *Civita Vecchia* all those who had ever been engaged in *brigandage*. There was no exception in this stern decree, not even for the poor fellow who had touched as it were the very limits of his confinement. *Nardelli*, in despair, formed his plan. He and another prisoner, while engaged in cutting wood attended each by a soldier, killed their guards and escaped. They swam the *Tiber* and crossing forty or fifty leagues of country, took refuge in the mountains of *Terracina*, where a price was put upon their heads. *Nardelli's* companion was one of *Gasparone's* old lieutenants. They collected a band and for two years stained themselves with the blood of the Roman and Neapolitan carbineers. Being at last hemmed in upon a mountain, they disputed this post foot by foot. Here *Nardelli* was captured, but not until all his men had been slain. He was taken to *Mola de Gaeta*, and afterwards to a prison in the Neapolitan kingdom.

*Maria's* conduct when she learned of her husband's escape and exploits, cannot be reconciled with her previous demonstrations of affection. After he was arrested, she grew quite impatient of the delay of the government in executing him: "*Morta la bestia, morta il veneno!*"—"the beast once dead, his sting is dead," she used to say, in her tender solicitude. She seems to have taken into her head the desire of a new matrimonial alliance, which could not well be consummated until *Nardelli* was out of the way. To bring this about, she caused a petition to the French Ambassador, to be drawn up for her by a scrivener of the *Piazza Barberini*, and went to present it to that dignitary, armed with the full power of her charms and in her most striking costume. The valets attempted to oppose her entrance, but she forced her way through them. "It is I," said she to the Duke, "the *Grazia*—I am come to ask of you justice from that Neapolitan government which never finishes its business, and keeps me languishing." This, however, did not succeed. The good news which the beautiful Roman was expecting, did not arrive. She lost all patience. A gossiping acquaintance was found, who declared before the authorities that she had heard it said by a sailor that *Nardelli* was dead, and a man named *Kimerly*, of gipsey birth, and a hatter by trade, became the happy husband of the pretended widow. "But are you sure," asked the biographer, "that your second husband is really dead? suppose he should come back?" "Oh, they would easily make everything right," "Is it so easy then to be married without being a widow?" "Bah! it was not then as it is under this Pope. For money one might have married one's father."

*Maria Grazia*, and her sister *Tercsina*, who died in 1839, have sat for almost all the pictures of *Leopold Robert*, and of *Schnetz*. In the gallery of the *Palais Royal*, there is a full length of *Maria*, by *Schnetz*, under the name of *La Femme du Brigand*. The young woman who presents to the fortune teller the hand of the child, in the pic-

ture of the *Enfance de Sixte Quinte*, by the same, is the portrait of Teresina. In the *Improvisateur Napolitain*, by Robert, the woman sitting at the feet of the singer, and holding a child, is Teresina. It is she also, who is represented in the dancing woman who precedes the car, in Robert's famous work, the *Retour de la fête de la Madone de l'arc*. H.

#### JOHN CONSTABLE.

The quiet and isolated life of a genuine landscape-painter has seldom been more consistently illustrated than in the memoirs of John Constable. His letters, collected and arranged by his friend Leslie, open to our view an existence ideal in spirit, and the more remarkable from the absolute contrast it affords to the frivolous, versatile and bustling social atmosphere in which it was chiefly passed. Indeed it may be said to embody the most natural and characteristic phase of English life—the rural sentiment, if we may so call it—for to Constable this was the inspiration and the central light of experience. He first rises to the imagination as "the handsome miller" of a highly-cultivated and picturesque district in Suffolk; and, since Tennyson's charming poem of the "Miller's Daughter," a romantic association easily attaches itself to that location. To the young artist, however, it was actually a better initiation to his future pursuit than might readily be supposed. Two phases of nature, or rather the aspects of two of her least appreciated phenomena, were richly unfolded to his observant eye—the wind and sky—and to his early and habitual study of these may be ascribed the singular truthfulness of his delineation, and the loyal manner in which he adhered, through life, to the facts of scenery. It seems to us that the process by which he arrived at what may be called the original elements of his art, is identical with that of Wordsworth in poetry; and his admiration of the bard arose not more from just perception than from the possession of a like idiosyncrasy. They resemble each other in discovering beauty and interest in the humblest and most familiar objects; and in an unswerving faith in the essential charm of nature under every guise. Thus the very names of Constable's best pictures evince a bold simplicity of taste akin to that which at first brought ridicule and afterwards homage to the venerated poet. A mill with its usual natural accessories continued a favorite subject with the painter to the last; and he sorely grieved when a fire destroyed the first specimen that his pencil immortalized. A harvest field, a village church, a ford, a pier, a heath, a wain—scenes exhibited to his eye in boyhood, and to the daily vision of farmers, sportsmen, and country-gentlemen—were those to which his sympathies habitually clung. No compliment seems ever to have delighted him more than the remark of a stranger, in the Suffolk coach, "This is Constable's county." His custom was to pass weeks in the fields, and sketch clouds, trees, uplands—whatever object or scene could be rendered picturesque on canvas; to gather herbs, mosses, colored earth, feathers, and lichens, and imitate their hues exactly. So intent was he at times in sketching, that field mice would creep unalarmed into his pockets. But perhaps the natural beauties that most strongly attracted him were evanescent;—the sweep of a cloud, the gathering of a tem-

pest, the effect of wind on cornfields, woods and streams, and, above all, the play of light and shade. So truly were these depicted, that Fuseli declared he often was disposed to call for his coat and umbrella before one of Constable's landscapes representing a transition state of the elements. If there be a single genuine poetic instinct in the English mind, it is that which allies them to country-life. The poets of that nation have never been excelled either in rural description or in conveying the sentiment to which such tastes give birth. What we recognize in Constable is the artistic development of this national trait. We perceive at a glance that he was "native here and to the manor born." There is an utter absence of exaggeration—at least in the still-life of his pictures—while no one can mistake the latitude of his atmospheres. They are not American nor European, but thoroughly English. A great source of his aptitude was a remarkable local attachment. He not only saw distinctly the minute features of a limited scene or a characteristic group of objects, but he loved them. He had the fondness for certain rural spots which Lamb confessed for particular Metropolitan haunts; and, therefore, it was not necessary for him, in order to paint with feeling, to combine scattered beauties, as is the case with less individual limners, nor to borrow or invent accessories to set off his chosen subject—but only to elicit, by patient attention, such favorable moments and incidents as were best fitted to exhibit it to advantage. In this way, few painters have done more to suggest the infinite natural resources of their art. Its poetry to him was twofold—consisting of the associations and of the intrinsic beauty of the scene. There is often evident in genius a kind of sublime common sense—an intuitive intelligence which careless observers mistake sometimes for obstinacy or waywardness. Constable displayed it in fidelity to his sphere, notwithstanding many temptations to wander from it. He felt that portrait and historical painting were not akin either to his taste or highest ability; and that the ambitious and elaborate in landscape would give no scope to his talent; in his view Art was not less a thing of feeling than of knowledge; and it was a certain indescribable sentiment in the skies of Claude and the composition of Ruysdael that endeared them to him more than mere fidelity to detail. Accordingly he labored with zest only upon subjects voluntarily undertaken, and to which he felt drawn by a spontaneous attraction; and over these he rarely failed to throw the grace of a fresh and vivid conception. The word "handling" was his aversion, because he saw no evidence of it in nature, and looked upon her loving delineator as working not in a mechanical but in a sympathetic relation. "There is room enough," he says, "for a natural painter. The great vice of the present day is *bravura*—an attempt to do something beyond the truth." Harvest men were to him more charming than peers; and the rustle of foliage sweeter than the hum of conversations. In the foreground of a picture of a cathedral, described by Leslie, "he introduced a circumstance familiar to all who are in the habit of noticing cattle. With cows there is generally, if not always, one which is called, not very accurately, the master cow, and there is scarcely anything the rest of the herd will venture to do until the master has taken the

lead. On the left of the picture this individual is drinking, and turns with surprise and jealousy to another cow approaching the canal lower down for the same purpose; they are of the Suffolk breed, without horns; and it is a curious mark of Constable's fondness for everything connected with his native county, that scarcely an instance can be found of a cow in any of his pictures, be the scene where it may, with horns." "Still life," says his friend Fisher, on the receipt of one of his pictures, "is always dull, as there are no associations with it; this is so *deliciously fresh*, that I could not resist it." These epithets reveal the secret of Constable's effects. What truly interests us, derives, from the very enthusiasm with which it is regarded, a vital charm, which gives relish and impressiveness even to description in words, and far more so in lines and colors. The "cool tint of English daylight" refreshes the eye in his best attempts; "bright, not gaudy, but deep and clear." It is curious that the term "healthy" has been applied to Constable's coloring—the very idea we instinctively associate with the real landscape of his country. A newspaper, describing an exhibition of the Royal Academy, thus speaks of one of his pictures; and it gives, as far as words can, a just notion of his style of Art: "A scene without any prominent features of the grand and beautiful, but with a rich broken foreground sweetly pencilled, and a very pleasing and natural tone of color throughout the wild, green distance." The inimitable Jack Bannister said of another, that "from it he could feel the wind blowing on his face." Constable was delighted with the pertinacity of a little boy who, in repeating his catechism, would not say otherwise than—"and walk in the *same fields* all the days of my life," he declared "our ideas of happiness are the same." He also recorded his earnest assent to the remark of a friend, that "the whole object and difficulty of the Art is to *unite imagination with nature*." In one of his letters, he says: "I can hardly write for looking at the silvery clouds." Speaking of one of his own landscapes, he indulges in a remark, the complacency of which may be readily forgiven—"I have preserved God Almighty's daylight, which is enjoyed by all mankind, excepting only the lovers of old dirty canvas, perished pictures at a thousand guineas each, cart grease, tar, and snuff of candle."

It is thus obvious that he pursued his Art in a spirit of independence, and with a manly directness of purpose, which neither fashion nor interest for an instant modified. The sentiment which impelled him was the love of nature, and this, like the other love referred to by Shakespere, "lends a precious seeing to the eye." It was not a vague emotion, but a definite attachment; and he possessed the rare moral courage to act it out. This, the biography of artists convinces us is true wisdom. It would have been only the folly of a perverse ambition for Constable to have emulated the old Italian masters and produced saints, madonnas, and martyrs. The scenery of his native country was not more familiar to his eye than endeared to his heart; and so attentively and fondly had he explored it, that he used to declare he never saw an ugly thing, whose intrinsic homeliness was not relieved by some effect of light, shade or perspective. His delight in nature was, indeed, inexhaustible. He has been quaintly said