

Amice Rappard,

Now it is some days since I started looking through the Graphics.

If I were to write you about all that is beautiful in them, and if my description were not to be too superficial, I should really have to write a tome. I cannot refrain, however, from mentioning just a few sheets that are absolutely "hors ligne."

Take, for instance, Frank Hol's "The Foundling." It represents some policemen in their waterproof capes who have picked up a baby exposed among the beams and planks of the Thames Embankment. Some inquisitive people are looking on, and in the background one sees the grey silhouette of the town through the mist. Then, also by him, there is a burial – some people entering a churchyard – beautiful of sentiment; he calls this sheet "I am the Resurrection and the life."

There is another burial by Nash, but this time on shipboard. One sees the corpse near the railing, the sailors are standing by, and the captain is reading the liturgy.

You know Hol's "Third Class Waiting Room" from a small reproduction of it that I sent you last summer, but the Graphic contains the large one – infinitely more beautiful.

I have been interested before now in the work of C. Green, but I had no idea that he could do such splendid things as, for instance, "A Bench in the Hospital," patients waiting for the doctor. By the same, "A Quay at Liverpool" and "Land once More," passengers coming ashore, and "Here They Come," spectators at the Derby races (Buckmann has done the same scene under the same title, and his work is also very good). I did not know Gordon Thompson; he also has a "Spectators at the Derby," and there is "Clapham Road" – quite close to the spot where I used to live, incidentally. This sheet is incredibly clever; it resembles Dürer or Matsys, for instance. You know the work of Percy Macquoid – Heilbuth – Tissot – when you see it, it seems to be the non plus ultra of elegance and mild refined feeling. In a certain sense it really is the non plus ultra.

But compared with them, Pinwell and Fred. Walker are what the nightingale is to the lark. On a page of the Graphic called "The Sisters," for instance, Pinwell draws two women in black in a dark room, a composition of the utmost simplicity, into which he has brought a serious sentiment that I can compare only with the full warble of the nightingale on a spring night. And then there are two more sketches by him in Byley's Home; and, among other things by Fred. Walker, a splendid sheet, "The Old Gate," and also "The Harbor of Refuge."

Herkomer has in them, among other things (I am not speaking of the sheets I had already), "Divine Service" (pews in a church), "Treat to the Whitechapel Poor," "Lodginghouse St. Giles," "The Workhouse (women)," "Charcoal Burners," "Wirtshaus" [Public House], "The Cardinals Walk Rome," "Kegelbahn," "Carnival Time," "Anxious Times," "The Arrest of a Poacher," Then (without the large figures occurring in it) the very first sketch of "The Last Muster," under the title, "Sunday at Chelsea." In a later issue one can read about this sheet that, when Herkomer showed it for the first time, not one of the members of the Graphic board thought the drawing good, with only one exception – the manager, who published the sketch immediately and ordered a more elaborate drawing.

So you see, things may change in the world – for instance, later on the Graphic published a sheet representing the spectators looking at the ultimate painting of "The Last Muster."

You know Ridley's "Miner's Head." Now I also have his "Boat Race Spectators"; I already had a "Hospital" by him – both serious, elaborate drawings.

But something new by Ridley is a series of six or seven drawings, "Miners, Pits and Pitmen," which remind one of etchings of Whistler or Seymour Haden, or Stamland's [Staniland's] "The Rush to the Pit's Mouth," also from the mining district.

Now a sheet that struck me particularly – Abbey's "Christmas in Old Virginia," engraved by Swain. This drawing is evidently done wholly with the pen, like Caldecott's and Barnard's, for example, but the figures are large.

Small has a superb drawing, "Claxton [Caxton] Showing Specimens of His Printing to the King." It makes one think of Leys; there are many beautiful things by Small in the Graphics, of course, but this one and the "Ploughing Match" are the most beautiful drawings of his I know.

His "A Queue in Paris during the Siege" is excellent, and so are several of his "London Sketches" and "Irish Sketches."

Then Green has "The Girl I Left behind Me," also uncommonly good – a group of soldiers returning from the war, and the meeting of one of them with the girl who has remained faithful to him. "Irish Churchyard" is no less beautiful.

Boughton's "Waning of the Honeymoon." Nash's "Laborers' Meeting" and "Lifeboat" and "Sunday Evening at Sea."

Gregory's "Hospital in Paris during the Siege." Buckmann's "Hampstead Heath."

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Fildes has a scene in a prison yard where policemen are holding a thief or a murderer whose picture they want to take. The fellow won't submit to it and is struggling. In the opposite corner of the composition, the photographer and the spectators.

There are many more beautiful compositions from America by Boyd Houghton, chiefly smaller ones, which might be etchings, but also larger sheets such as "Paris under the Red Flag," "Mormon Tabernacle," "Cabin of Emigrant Ship" – they're not like anything else. His details are emphasized surprisingly, and the aspect is something like an etching by – yes, by whom? – by Fortuny, or perhaps Whistler? Highly curious.

Edwin Edward's "The Foundling," "Sea Bathing," "The Meet," etc. Two drawings – I don't know whose – of the Turko-Russian War, "Osman Pasha" and "An Old Battleground," which are remarkable in their realism.

Stock's "Sermon Time" and "Last Sacrament."

Hodgson's "Navvies" and "Fishing."

Gow's "No Surrender."

Small's "Swan-Upping Game of Polo," "Boat Race," "Queen's Ladies Royal Academy," "Walking Match."

Green's "An Artist," "One Stone," "Outsiders Betting."

Well, in this matter it's easy to start summing up, but to stop is something else – that is difficult; there is so much more, in fact there is no end of them. For I am speaking almost exclusively of the larger sheets; but, to mention a single example, among the small drawings there are illustrations of Victor Hugo's *Quatre-vingt-treize* [Ninety-Three] by Herkomer, Green, Small – seldom has a book been illustrated like this one! – fortunately it is this book, for it is fully worth it.

But there is one volume missing from the collection, namely the first one. But I got very nice drawings from this volume at one time – among other things, Fildes's "Applicants at a Casual Ward" (from "Home and the Homeless") and his "The Empty Chair" (Dickens's studio).

Write me again soon – for you are recovered now, aren't you?

Ever yours, Vincent

I got two more volumes (1876) for good measure this week, but I took them anyway, because there are marvelous things in them; indeed I have them, but I want as many duplicates as I can find – e.g. Herkomer's "Old Women" – there's a masterpiece for you! Have you got it???

A beautiful "Woman's Figure" and "During the Reign of Terror" by Percy Macquoid; also little sketches: "Cats" – "Chinese" – "Mackerel Fishing."

Finally a large drawing: a corner of a studio – a lay figure that has fallen over, draperies worried by two playful dogs. There is preciousness in it, but it does not quite satisfy me; I think it somewhat high falutin' and over-refined. There is another magnificent illustration by Fildes (for a novel): two men in a churchyard in the twilight.

You will understand why I am of two minds about the following question. If I cut out the sheets and mount them, they will show up better and I can arrange them according to the artists who did them. But then I mutilate the text, which is useful in many respects if one wants to look something up, for instance about exhibitions, although the "general surveys" of them are very superficial.

And besides, one damages the novels, as e.g. *Quatre-vingt-treize* by Hugo.

I'd also have to spend a lot on mounting board. But it is certain that the large sheets especially would show up infinitely better mounted than folded in half. And also one gets a better survey of the whole if one arranges them according to the artists.

But isn't it queer that in an artistic town like The Hague a man like me should be the highest bidder at a book auction? One would think that other buyers would turn up – but no! I really did not expect to get them.

Before the auction the Jew spoke to me about them; I told him that I should very much like to have them, but that I could not afford to buy something like that. He told me afterward that he had bought them on speculation, because there were hardly any bidders, and if I wanted to have them they were mine. That was quite a different matter, and my brother helped me buy them – dirt cheap – a guilder a volume.

However glad I am to have them, it makes me sad to think that so few take an interest in them. I think it's wonderful to find such a treasure, but I would rather see so lively an interest in them that I should not be able to get hold of them for the time being.

Oh, Rappard – in many respect it's like this – much that has great value nowadays is ignored and looked down upon as worthless rubbish, garbage, wastepaper.

Don't you think there is something very dull about our times? Or am I imagining it? A certain absence of passion and warmth and cordiality – it's true that the "dealers" and such fellows say, "The desired change will come about in the nature of things" (isn't this statement highly satisfactory?), but personally I don't see that "nature of things" so very clearly.

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It isn't unpleasant, after all, to study the Graphics; yet I can't help thinking very selfishly while doing so, "What business is it of mine? I don't intend to be bored, even if the times are dull." But one isn't always selfish, and as soon as one isn't, one may grieve bitterly over it.