

A History of British Water Colour Painting; With a Biographical List of Painters



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by Herbert Minton Cundall

PREFACE WHEN Horace Walpole wrote his *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, in 1762, he remarked that this country had not a single volume to show on the works of its painters, and it had very rarely given birth to a genius in that profession, Flanders and Holland having sent the great men. For this latter reason he apologised for not being able to call his work *The Lives of English Painters*. At the present time, however, if an apology be needed, it must be offered for adding yet another volume to the vast multitude of books which have been written concerning English painters and paintings. The earliest form of water colour painting was tempera. It is as old as the early Memphic dynasties of Egypt, i.e. 3,000 years B.C. The Egyptian painters on papyrus or on walls mixed their colours with water, and used mastic, wax, and various glues as a medium to fix them. The Greeks learned their methods from the Egyptians, which were later acquired by the Romans, who dispersed the art throughout Europe. The Byzantine Empire followed on the Greek traditions, and the manuscripts of Mount Athos of the sixth and seventh centuries were executed in ancient Greek methods. In early times the monks in England visited the Continent, and were constantly bringing back with them fresh advances on the lines of ancient traditions, so that in all probability the early miniature painters in this country employed the same technique as that of the old Egyptian tempera painters. Owing probably to the admixture of white being employed, the term painting in body colour came later into use. Gradually less white was used, the colours became more transparent, and now what is called painting in pure water colour is the general accepted meaning of water colour painting. All colours, however, must be tempered by some fixing medium, otherwise they would return to powder; and the admixture of a little white, however

slight, gives to the tint applied a far greater equality of tone than can be obtained by washes of transparent pigments without it. Owing to the great advance made during recent years in the process of printing in colours by the aid of photography, it is now possible to obtain reproductions of water colour paintings which give a good representation of the originals; and it is hoped that, by the means of the illustrations inserted in this volume, those who are interested in the history of water colour painting in this country may be able to readily trace the different phases through which the art has passed from the time of Holbein to the present day. In writing a history of the art, I can lay no claim to any fresh discoveries; I have simply given a brief account of the British Water Colour Painters, which, it is trusted, will help to elucidate the work of those men, shown by the reproductions of their paintings. A biographical list, alphabetically arranged, of the water colour painters has been added; and, in compiling it, I have to acknowledge my indebtedness to the writers of many previous works on the subject, especially Richard and Samuel Redgraves *Century of Painters of the English School*; J. L. Rogets *History of the Old Water Colour Society*; Bryans *Dictionary of Painters*; and A. Gravess *Dictionary of Artists*. I have to thank the Secretaries of the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours and the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours for the kind assistance which they have afforded me in the compilation of the respective lists of the members of these two Societies. The account of the Associated Artists in Water Colours has been mainly acquired from the minutes of the meetings of that Society and other manuscripts, which, it is believed, have not hitherto been published; these documents are now in the Art Library of the Victoria and Albert Museum. The illustrations have been chiefly reproduced from paintings in the National Collections, but some have been made through the courtesy of private owners;

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