

object suggested itself which could be kept as a memorial. While Trafalgar has the 'Victory,' Waterloo has left us no national relic at all. Greece saved no relic of Thermopylae, nor has England of Lucknow, or of Gordon at Khartoum.

There have been national monuments which have taken shape so fast when the heat of action and high emotion was still glowing, that they have the force of national relics, of actual things which were set among the action of the day. The offering of the tripod which the Greeks dedicated to the Delphian Apollo after the Persians had been routed at the battle of Plataea, dated from that night of triumph on which the Grecian leaders drank from the golden cups in Mardonius's tents; and the legend on its pedestal must have appealed to their gazing descendants as if stamped with the names of the saviours of Hellas in metal melted almost on the battle-field. But on the same day the Greeks omitted to preserve an object which offered itself as a perfect national relic, and was at once and at the time noted as a concrete omen of success. On the afternoon of the same day on which the Greek army defeated Mardonius at Plataea, the Greek fleet were preparing to attack the Persians at Mykale, on the opposite side of the Ægean. "The Greeks had begun to move towards the barbarians," says Herodotus, "when, as they advanced, a rumour flew through the host from one end to the other, that the Greeks had fought and conquered the army of Mardonius in Boeotia. At the same time a 'herald's wand' (such as would have accompanied the messenger had such tidings really been delivered) was seen lying on the beach." This wand was the omen of success which, taken with the mysterious and true rumour, won the day. "Many things prove to me," says Herodotus, "that the gods take part in the affairs of men. How else, when the battles of Plataea and Mykale were about to happen on the same day, should such a rumour have reached the Greeks in that region, cheering the whole army, and making them more eager than before to risk their lives?" But the wand itself was not preserved as it should have been, as a relic, which might, in another race, have kindled a fervour equal to that with which the Jews regarded the sacred contents of the Ark of the Covenant. The veneration and pride with which the Jews looked on the Ark, are the model and epitome of the mixture of religion and patriotism which may be excited by such a relic. There is no national idea recorded in history more strong and enduring than this pious preservation of the simple evidences of the favour of Jehovah—the Pot of Manna, and the Tables of Stone—as the common inheritance of the Chosen People; no tale of national disaster more crushing than the simple enumeration of the fact, "The Ark of God is taken—the glory is departed from Israel."

Purely personal relics seldom awake national enthusiasm unless they are also suggestive of national effort. France would gladly exchange the seal of Charlemagne for a suit of the armour worn by Joan of Arc; and the ruins of the Malakoff are more precious to the Russian than the crown of Kazan. Nelson's blood-stained coat is almost worshipped because its wearer was the embodiment of the national spirit, while the armour of the Black Prince at Canterbury only raises, with a faint echo of national pride, a stronger sense of personal ambition. Crowns and swords and thrones are not, as a rule, in the category of national relics; they are the hall-mark of dynasties, or pieces of national furniture which are evidences of an interesting past. Even the Iron Crown of Lombardy was little more than a "property," necessary to a formal function which gave the Emperor a semi-fictional right to govern a people who soon ceased to have a separate existence. There was more virtue in a portion of the garment of Mahomet, when the "Holy Standard," displayed in Constantinople, summoned the faithful to the aid of the Sultan against the Janissaries in 1822, than in all the crowns of Europe in the revolutions of 1848. The Holy Standard was a national relic used for political ends; as is also to this day the leather apron of Orchan, the founder of the Ottoman line. Unfurl that apron, and eight hundred thousand Osmanlis will follow it till it is captured or they are slain. Europe selects its national relics from the chance association of great events, and consecrates them to practical suggestion and moral stimulus. That is the way in which the President of the Royal Geographical Society interpreted the influence of the Franklin commemoration. But he did not insist enough on the peculiar appeal to emotion made by

the sight of the relics themselves. There the Germans are wiser. They have displayed at Berlin every relic and trophy of the war with France, with maps of the fortresses won, and eulogies on the exploits accomplished. Our naval relics remain at Portsmouth and at Greenwich, because we undervalue their influence.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

### HAWAII, AS HALFWAY-HOUSE, FREE TO ALL, FOR EVER.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—Nearly half-way between Asia and America, on that great trade route of the Pacific, lies Honolulu, the capital of Hawaii, with its spacious harbour and well-protected port. It is the very place of all others for landing the Australian cable for which we have been trying to find a stage. At the same time, the world has here an admirable station for coaling and repairing its ships. How needful, then, that such a spot should for ever be free from all liability to internal or external war and disturbance. At last Hawaii seems to be at rest, and to have obtained a settled Government and independence; but recent troubles may some day be renewed. There is still a party in the American Congress which desires to annex the islands; while such an attempt would certainly be opposed by one or more of the other Powers. That means fresh disturbance, and injury to the prosperity of the native population, as well as to the legitimate trade of many nations.

Allow me, then, to make known, through your columns, what appears to be an excellent suggestion which emanates from a distinguished citizen of Boston, U.S.A., Mr. Edward Atkinson. This is, that the Government of Hawaii should be invited to declare the ports and harbours of these islands to be free for ever to the ships of all nations, and that the latter should enter into a treaty with each other and with Hawaii to that effect, with a joint guarantee against invasion. "Why," says Mr. Atkinson, "should not these islands become a sanctuary of free commerce, without fear of 'commerce-destroyers'?" Under the treaty it should be ordained that no great guns should ever be pointed seaward from forts upon the land, and that no hostile shot should ever be fired upon the waters assigned to the jurisdiction of the Sandwich Islands." Mr. Atkinson very appropriately cites, as a precedent, the Anglo-American agreement of 1817, still in force, under which both nations bound themselves never to place armed ships on the Great Lakes.

In their own interest the people of Hawaii may be trusted to maintain peace and order for the future in their territory, and such a treaty would give them every motive for so doing. I hope that this proposal may, by publication in your columns, attract the attention of statesmen in this and other countries which are deeply interested in the growth and maintenance of free and uninterrupted sea-going trade.—I am, Sir, &c.,

40 Outer Temple, Strand.

HODGSON PRATT.

### GLORIFYING THE SLIPSHOD LIFE.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—Will you allow a sympathetic reader of more than a generation to record a protest against your recent use of the Coleridge letters as a text for your warning against "Glorifying the Slipshod Life"? The warning itself is one which, in weighty words at present familiar to all of us, is "desirable when it is necessary;" and with reference to that part which is of general significance, I would merely express a regret that it loses force by passing into exaggeration; you surely do not mean, as you say, that "of all characters, the slipshod character is the least admirable." You mean, no doubt, that the slipshod are "a Dio spiacenti ed a' nemici sui,"—that they make the worst of both worlds. It is true, but still I can imagine several characters less admirable. However, what I would urge now is not the rights of the slipshod to a merciful position in the critical Inferno, but the unsuitability of the selection of Coleridge as a type to point that moral. Genius provides no excuse for a man's leaving undone the things that he ought to do, except so far as it makes what he ought to do more difficult; but when you say, "it is more than possible that but for the habit of taking opium he might never have composed the few great poems by which he will always be remembered," you remind us how immensely it

may have just this effect. You paint the most tremendous temptation that a human being can conceive (a temptation which only culminates in a particular habit, and is latent in every other), and then class its victim with the *merely* lazy and self-indulgent. No doubt the life of a Coleridge does, in some aspects, terribly approach the life of a Micawber, and it may be well, if you point out much else, to point out the vast descent of such an approximation; but to select this as the salient point in the career which it mars, seems to me unjust and somewhat ungrateful. I cannot but think, indeed, that your verdict was pronounced before the case was heard out. It is surely untrue that the slipshod period of life was extended by Coleridge "to the very end of what might well have been a glorious life." The last eighteen years of his life present a specimen of victory over temptation such as we can find in very few lives, and the fact that they never brought back the power of verse surely shows at what a price that victory was obtained, and claims for it, to my mind, something like reverence.

All that can be said of Coleridge's moral disasters, has been said by himself more forcibly than it can possibly be said by any critic. An attentive student of these two volumes will question your assertion that "he never recognised the fluidity of his own character;" there is more than one letter in which he confesses this quality with an emphasis which did not, perhaps, help him to overcome it, but at least may help others to escape it. The warning is emphasised by his fate as well as by his confessions. He lived to expiate his sin by the most terrible punishment man can know,—he saw it bequeathed to a son. All this does not establish a claim that his failings should be ignored. The tendency of our time to relax the claim for all that is arduous in virtue, is the root of our worst ills, and all to whom the ideal of strenuous self-control is dear must value your continued and much-needed protest against the assumption of the hour that it is impossible. Such a protest cannot be altogether excluded from any criticism of the life of Coleridge. But in that life itself—its confessions, its sorrows, and its aspirations—that protest is expressed so much more forcibly than in any criticism, that I would, on the whole, seek to bring before the world of readers all that makes such a life a tragedy—and then, again, all that makes it a promise and an encouragement—rather than to dwell upon that portion, no doubt quite as real, which makes it a warning.—I am, Sir, &c.,

JULIA WEDGWOOD.

#### A DOG-STORY.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR,"]

SIR,—As you are so interested in animals, I send you yet another "dog-story," which seems to me a good instance of intelligence. A collie, in Scotland, whom I know well, is in the habit of fetching from his master's room slippers, cap, keys, or anything he is sent for. One day, sent on the usual errand, he did not reappear. His master followed, and found that the door of the bedroom had blown to and that the dog was a prisoner. Some days later he was again told to fetch something; and as the wind was high, his master, after a few minutes' delay, followed him. He found him in the act of fixing the door firmly back with the door-mat, which he had rolled up for the purpose, and having taken this precaution, the prudent animal proceeded to look for the slippers. This same collie, when walking with me, ran on in front and rang the gate-bell of the house to which I was going, so that I had not to wait when I arrived there!—I am, Sir, &c., N. A. G.

### A R T.

#### THE ACADEMY.—III.

##### MERE TECHNIQUE.

THERE has been going on what the papers call a Revulsion of Public Feeling in the matter of technique. It was but yesterday that the correct public form for speakers about painting was to deprecate "Mere Technique," surmised by the hearers to be something French and soul-destroying. In the days when English painters were not ashamed of being masters of their craft, when Gainsborough painted his *Musidora* and Turner his *Shipwreck*, there was naturally no such cant about technique, or, as it was called then, execution.

Those painters did not find it incompatible with the possession of a heart to have an eye and hand as well, and the paint on *Musidora's* leg or Turner's ship was as beautiful as the paint on a gold chain by Velasquez or Lorenzo Lotto. The fashion of scouting technique arose from a particular disability of the pre-Raphaelites. Endowed with faculties of imagination, design, and, up to a certain point, drawing, they embarked on oil-painting not only with a sham system of modelling, but with several unfortunate techniques. The most unfortunate was borrowed from water-colour, and consisted in thin pencillings of colour over a white ground.

But all this preaching has done its work on the restless spirit of fashion. The mysterious, dangerous something, supposed to have been invented in recent years in Paris, has exercised the charm of a forbidden fruit. In the fanciful works of the realists, in the revelations of improving novelists, no life is complete without an experience in Parisian studios of two things, vice and technique, alike unknown in this country of ours. They reflect a lurid light upon one another, and you picture the artist devoting the hours he can spare, say from the consumption of absinthe, to the exciting practice of technique. The lady novelists have not yet estimated for us how many home-grown students go wrong upon sherry and bitters, or destroy their nerves upon tea; but the awful truth as to technique, is that there is rather more of it on this side than on the other, and that a single study from the cast by a blameless Academy student, contains more technique than twenty equally bad school studies in Paris; indeed an Academy study in crayon is very nearly that impossible thing, "mere technique," throughout. In good drawing, of course, there is no such thing. Mere technique, if it means anything, means passing off a caricature of your teacher's execution in place of an account of something seen. The right word for this is shoddy technique, and the ordinary Parisian shoddy is no better than the London article. One is more laborious, the other more flashy, but it is just as much a pretence to stipple brainlessly, which is the old shoddy, as to splash brainlessly, which is the new. One apes fraudulently the patience of the master, the other his brilliance. Any real way of looking at things introduced into the schools, like the method of M. Carolus Duran, is rapidly converted by teaching middlemen into a shoddy technique for the average art-student.

At home, however, the superstition has grown, and there has been a natural anxiety to discover and admire examples of this famous technique. Grave gentlemen, who a year or two back frowned their brows and pursed their lips in the then correct attitude at the sound of the word, are now to be seen anxiously beating the galleries for pictures with "technique" in them, ready with the now correct admiration where they are found. The simple truth is that changes in technique have had a very small part in modern painting. Carolus Duran's technical innovations were small; his attempt was to formulate for school purposes Velasquez' manner of seeing things, and a way of seeing is not a technique. Degas and Whistler have rendered new aspects of things; their technique is classic. The only important new set is that of the broken-handling painters, and their technique also reposes on a truth of aspect, which they incline to caricature. Impressionism, once more, is not a technique; it is an allowance for the effect of focus and attention on the field of vision. But the critics were on the look-out for the much-talked-of modern technique, and appear to have found it. A master whom the art students in Paris never attempted to learn from, Degas, was hooted on his appearance in London. The shoddy article, the clever *chic* and pretence of drawing of Jules Chéret, is received with acclamation. So the popular mind, left cold by Whistler, now grows almost tepid over, for an example, Mr. Brangwyn. The gentle *Standard* even tells us of Mr. Brangwyn's and Mr. Cayley Robinson's pictures (Nos. 605 and 612 in the present Academy), that "here is very modern sensitiveness of technique. These things are in the vanguard of the artistic forces of the day."

Modern they certainly are, but whether sensitive or in the vanguard of the artistic forces of the day admits of question. What is this mysterious affair, technique? It is not exactly simple, it is duplex; but no mystery if we do not mix it with the process of seeing, which results in an image, and the process of designing, which results in a picture, but neither of which is technique. Technique is the last, the physical