

B. R. Haydon, Aldous Huxley

B. R. HAYDON

Two likenesses of Haydon hang in the National Portrait Gallery. One, by Miss Zornlin, is a full face, and might be a prophetic portrait of Mussolini. That vast and noble brow, enlarged and ennobled by incipient baldness beyond the limits of verisimilitude; those flashing eyes; that square strong jaw; that wide mouth with its full, floridly sculptured lips; that powerful neck—are not these Il Duce's very features? But Miss Zornlin was not a very good painter.

A competent portraitist knows how to imply the profile in the full face. Miss Zornlin's implications are entirely misleading, and if it were not for Haydon's own self-portrait in the National Gallery, and the drawing of him as a youth in the possession of Sir Robert Witt, we should never have guessed that this truculent dictator was the possessor of a very large yet delicately modelled and somehow frail-looking aquiline nose, and a chin which, while not exactly weak, was not so formidably protuberant as one might have expected. It is as though Mussolini had been strangely blended with Cardinal Newman.

From whatever angle one looks at it, the face is remarkable. One would notice it in a crowd; one would know at once that it belonged to some unusual spirit. It is a face that bears the stigmata almost of genius. Haydon had only to look in the glass to realize that he was a great man.

Nor was a grand appearance Nature's only gift to him. The other attributes of genius—a little tinged, it is true, with vulgarity—were not lacking. He was endowed with a sharp and comprehensive intelligence; an excellent judgment (except where his own productions were concerned); a daemonic vitality; the proverbial 'infinite capacity for taking pains'; a mystical sense of inspiration, and a boundless belief in his own powers. His special gifts were literary and discursive. His brain teemed with general ideas. He was an acute observer of character; he could talk, and he could write. He had a gift of expression, even a literary style. Never was anyone more clearly cut out to be an author.

Or, if the outlet of literature had been denied him, he would have made a good politician, a first-rate soldier ('I did not command bayonets and cannons. Would to God,' he says himself, 'I had!'); he might even—if we may judge from his laborious studies in anatomy and his facility in the propounding of theories—have been a tolerably efficient man of science. The one gift which Nature had quite obviously denied him was the gift of expressing himself in form and colour.

One has only to glance at one of Haydon's drawings to perceive that the man had absolutely no artistic talent. The lines are hard, heavy, uncertain and utterly insensitive. He fumbles painfully and blunderingly after likeness to nature, and when he cannot achieve realism falls back on the cheapest art-student tricks. The paintings—such of them, at any rate, as I have seen in the original or in reproductions—are entirely without composition. They abound in bad drawing and disproportions. The colour is crude and inharmonious. In his enormous Agony in the Garden, which now reposes in the cellars of the Victoria and Albert Museum, a shapeless Saviour (straight from the studio and illumined by a strong North light) kneels in the right foreground.

Behind Him lies a Rembrandtesque night, full of torch flames, of ruddily illuminated faces and portentous chiaroscuro. The ground is apparently meant to slope up from the place where the Saviour is kneeling. But it slopes in such a curious way that the background seems to be on a level with, if not actually in front of, the figure in the foreground. One is forced to imagine a Mount of Olives constructed like those Tudor houses, in which each storey projects a little farther forward than the one below.

The painting is broad, dashing, and amateurishly uncertain. In the draperies, and in what is visible of the landscape, one notices great swishing brush strokes entirely devoid of meaning, whole passages daubed in for the sole reason that every inch of the canvas has got to be covered with paint. The thing is ludicrous. The Agony in the Garden is admittedly one of the least successful of Haydon's pictures. I regret that I have never seen his best—Christ's Entry into Jerusalem, and The Raising of Lazarus.

The former is at Cincinnati; to judge by the photographs it bears a certain very distant resemblance to a picture. Where the latter is, I do not know; nor have I ever seen it reproduced. But after having looked at the Agony in the Garden, the portraits at the National Portrait Gallery, and the various reproductions in Sir Robert Witt's library, I feel quite justified in saying that it must be entirely worthless.

Most children are geniuses, and perhaps there may have been some excuse for admiring the scribblings of the infant Haydon. Half the five-year-olds in any country are Raphaels; one in a hundred retains his genius at the age of ten. One in a million of these childish talents survives puberty. Some Imp of the Perverse must have suggested to young Haydon that he was destined to preserve his baby gift and become a painter. Outraged nature protested. The boy was afflicted with a disease of the eyes that permanently weakened his sight.

To a natural incapacity to draw or paint was now added an inability to see. It was a broad hint. But the Imp of the Perverse and Haydon's will were very strong. Illness only reinforced the boy's decision to become a painter. All his exuberant energy, which a piece of judicious advice or a happy accident might have harnessed to some congenial labour, was now directed to painting. His self-confidence became a confidence in his powers as an artist.

His heavenly muse breathed artistic inspirations. He had, as he tells us, 'perpetual and irresistible urgings of future greatness.' And again, 'I have been like a man with air balloons under his armpits and ether in his soul. While I was painting, walking or thinking, beaming flashes of energy followed and impressed me.' To have refused, in such circumstances, to devote oneself body and soul to painting would have been the sin against the Holy Ghost. On another occasion, after having conceived my background stronger than ever, I strode about the room imitating the blast of a trumpet—my cheeks full of blood, my heart beating with a glorious heat.

Oh, who would exchange these moments for a throne?' These ecstatic moments came to him whenever his mind was occupied with something that specially interested it. He would spend a whole evening 'in a torrent of feeling about Homer.' On the day after the news of Waterloo had come through to London, he 'got up in a steam of feeling and read all the papers till he was faint.' Since he had elected painting as the chief concern of his life, it was natural that these delicious and inspiring moments came oftenest while he was at work on a picture.

They justified his belief in his own powers, in the same way as the raptures of the mystic justify his belief in a personal God. An emotion so intense must, it is felt, have some adequate external cause. Similarly, the sentiments of a lover are so enormous that it seems impossible that they should have been aroused by plain Miss Jones or plainer Mr. Brown. Something cosmic, something divine must have crept in somewhere. Nothing short of the Absolute could account for such ecstasies. A whole literature of platonizing love-poems has arisen, in order that Mr. Robinson's feelings for Miss Smith might be satisfactorily accounted for. Something analogous took place in Haydon's case.

Full-blooded, emotional, a sort of Gargantua turned idealistic and romantic, he was easily excited and, when excited, felt profoundly. He could not believe that such prodigious emotions as his were not due to some proportionate cause. If he felt grandly about his painting, that was because his painting was grand, and because to paint was his mission in life, his divinely ordained duty.

Of the divine approbation he was, indeed, directly convinced. We find references in the Autobiography and Journals to voices which commanded him to embark, even in the midst of financial ruin, on vast and unsaleable works. To his prayers for guidance (and Haydon was always praying) were vouchsafed, so he believed, encouraging replies. And every small success, every happy coincidence—the opportune arrival, for example, of a cheque or a commission—was interpreted by him as a friendly message from the Almighty. It is not to be wondered at if, in the teeth of failure and of hostile criticism, he should have gone on believing in himself. What matter the sneers of human connoisseurs when one knows, one is certain that the Heavenly Critic approves?

And then there was Haydon's pride, there was Haydon's ambition. Right or wrong, he had embarked on a painter's career. He was too proud to admit failure and withdraw. And his ambition to excel was inordinate, his vanity was without bounds. He admits (and his frankness is engaging, his perspicacity even in the midst of so much self-deception is remarkable) that he was 'always panting for distinction, even at a funeral (for I felt angry at Opie's that I wasn't in the first coach).' He wanted to be in the first coach at the christening of a new school of English painting. Portrait making, the sham beau idéal, petty genre painting were to be ousted from their pre-eminence and historical painting on a colossal scale was to take their place. Haydon was to be the father of the new school. 'The production of this picture (Dentatus) must and will be considered an epoch in British Art.' And towards the end of his life he records: 'I thought once of putting up a brass plate (on his old house in Lisson Grove), Here Haydon Painted His Solomon, 1813.'

Sanguine and very susceptible to flattery, Haydon was always ready to believe that the smallest stroke of good fortune must be the herald of complete success, that a word of praise was the first note in that chorus of universal commendation for which he was always anxiously listening. When a 'lady of the highest rank' remarked (with that charming and entirely meaningless politeness of which only ladies of the highest rank know the secret): 'We look to you, Mr. Haydon, to revive the Art,' poor Haydon 'anticipated all sorts of glory, greatness and fame.' He was a man who dramatized his own life, who saw himself acting his own part, not merely as he was playing it at the moment, but in the future too. 'I walked about the room, looked into the glass, anticipated what the foreign ambassadors would say, studied my French for a good accent, believed that all the Sovereigns of Europe would hail an English youth who could paint a heroic picture.'

The 'Sovereigns of Europe,' it may be remarked parenthetically, played a great part in Haydon's imaginative life. Of burgess origin, and endowed with a romantic temperament, Haydon was—fatally and inevitably—a snob. The prestige of great names and titles impressed him profoundly. The picturesqueness of traditional aristocracy and the splendours of wealth went violently to his romantic head, just as they went to Balzac's. We have seen how absurdly elated he felt when the 'lady of the highest rank' looked to him to 'revive the Art.' He was as much delighted when Sir George Beaumont and his family 'allowed that nothing could exceed the eye of my horse.'

Even the approbation of a noble savage (if only sufficiently noble) was intoxicating to Haydon, who records complacently that the Persian Ambassador remarked of his Jerusalem 'in good English and in a loud voice, "I like the elbow of soldier."' But bitter experience soon taught him that lordly patrons are fickle and their favour not to be relied on. He realized that he had taken their praises of his historical pictures too seriously. 'I forgot,' he sadly remarks, 'that the same praise would have been applied to the portrait of a racehorse or of a favourite pug.' He discovered to his cost that lords and ladies 'are ambitious of the éclat of discovering genius, but their hearts are seldom engaged for it.'

And—yet more painful discovery for a man of Haydon's intelligence and acquirements—'I find the artists most favoured by the great are those of no education, or those who conceal what they have. The love of power and

superiority is not trod on if a man of genius is ignorant when a gentleman is informed. "Great folks," said Johnson, "don't like to have their mouths stopped." ' Haydon was rash enough to be right about the Elgin Marbles. The great were all on the side of Payne Knight and grotesquely wrong. They did not enjoy being told so. But though he early discovered the truth about aristocratic art patrons—namely, that they regard artists as mere court fools existing for the entertainment of their endless leisure, that they take no genuine interest in art, and are, for the most part, bottomlessly frivolous—though he knew all this, he yet retained an extraordinary affection and respect for lords. How excessively and abjectly he enjoys his week-end with Lord Egremont at Petworth! 'The very flies at Petworth seem to know that there is room for their existence, that the windows are theirs. Dogs, horses, cows, deer and pigs, peasantry and servants, guests and family, children and parents, all share alike his (Lord Egremont's) bounty and opulence and luxury.'

He dramatized himself in misfortune no less than in success. It is a fallen Titan who goes to the Debtor's Prison and haggles with creditors. And in spite of everything, how much he enjoys his grandly and dramatically unhappy position at the time when his reforming zeal had made him, in 1832, the official painter of the radical party! At half-past nine he would be in the pawnshop raising money on the silver coffee-pot; at ten he would be sitting in the palace of some peer of the realm, sketching the grand patrician profile and discussing high politics.

The afternoon would be spent imploring attorneys to give him time; the evening at some luscious rout where 'the beauty of the women, the exquisite, fresh, nosegay sweetness of their looks, the rich crimson velvet, and white satin, and lace, and muslin, and diamonds, with their black eyes and peachy complexions, and snowy necks, and delicate forms, and graceful motions, and sweet nothingness of conversation bewildered and distracted him.' Pauper and pampered pet of society, frequenter of drawing-rooms and pawnshops—the rôle was dramatic, picturesque, positively Shakespearean. He dwells at length, emphatically and almost with pleasure, on his own romantic misery.

Haydon was at all times very conscious of his own character. He is his own favourite hero of fiction. He realizes his own energy, genius and vitality, and describes them dramatically in a bold Homeric style. We find him in his journals constantly comparing himself to one or other of the nobler animals. He 'flies to the city to raise money, like an eagle.' He bathes at Margate 'like a bull in June.' He is constantly walking up and down his studio or furiously painting 'like a lion.' (And we know from what he says in his journal, after dissecting one, how much lions meant to Haydon. 'Spent the whole day with a lion and came home with a contempt for the human species.')

Haydon's belief in himself was infectious, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say contagious—for it was only while one was actually in the presence of the man himself that one could fully believe in his powers as an artist. In front of his pictures, even his most admiring friends must occasionally have had their doubts. But the man had such a masterful and magnetic personality, was so large, so exuberantly vital, so intelligent and plausible, such a good critic of all art but his own, so well read, such an entertaining talker, that it was impossible not to take fire at his ardour; it was difficult when he said, 'I am a great artist,' not to believe him.

All those, it would be true to say, who came into personal contact with Haydon believed in him. All—from Keats (who lent him money) and Wordsworth (who addressed two admirable sonnets to him) to the poor wine merchant, of whom Haydon records 'I showed him Solomon and appealed to him whether I ought, after such an effort, to be without a glass of wine, which my medical man had recommended. "Certainly not," said he. "I'll send you a dozen." ' And he sent them, gratis. Lamb and Hazlitt and the Hunts were among his friends and admirers.

His landlord, Newton, was infinitely kind to him. His colourman provided him, on

indefinite credit, with canvases of unheard-of dimensions on which to paint unsaleable historical pictures. Sir Walter Scott not only admired and liked him, but gave him money. His servant, the faithful Sammons, seems positively to have worshipped him. There was a magic about the man, a magic which began to evaporate as the years passed and a generation arose which had not known him in his dazzling prime, and the man himself grew old and querulous and hysterical with failure and repeated disappointment and chronic poverty. With the final pistol-shot the magic was totally dissipated. The pictures remain, deplorable monuments of a wasted life. The real, the magical Haydon can only be divined from the Autobiography.

Haydon was sixty when he committed suicide. One can only feel astonished that he did not kill himself before. A few years of the life which Haydon led for the best part of forty years would have sufficed to drive most men into suicide, or madness, or the selling of their principles. Haydon's energy, his sanguine temperament kept him struggling on, year after year, decade after decade. His later journals make the most distressing reading. In the course of his desperate and never-ending hunt for cash, what agonized anxieties, what humiliations were his daily lot! Familiarity with humiliation seems, indeed, in the long run to have blunted his sensibilities.

One has the impression that, after some years of chronic misfortune, it no longer cost him much to write a begging letter or draw up for publication a pathetic statement of his accounts. He was never, even in his early days, very scrupulous about financial matters. The story of his debt to Keats is not told in the Autobiography; it must be read in Keats's own letters.

It is not, assuredly, very creditable to Haydon. With his usual frankness, Haydon admitted his unscrupulousness about money. 'Too proud to do small modest things that I might obtain fair means of existence as I proceeded with my great work, I thought it no degradation to borrow.' And again, 'I have £400 at Coutts's, thought I, never thinking how I was to return it, but trusting in God for all.' Haydon trusted a great deal in God. It salved his conscience to feel that the Almighty was standing security for his I.O.U.'s.

But if he was not very honest, he had his justifications. To begin with, he could not afford to be scrupulous. Strict financial honesty is easy only for those whose bank balances are long, or who draw a regular wage and are without ambition. Haydon was filled with vast ambitions, believed himself the greatest painter of his age, and had no money. He felt that the world owed him something for existing, for being the genius that he was.

Loans and gifts were received on account of the world's debt to him; he had a certain divine right to them, even when they came from people who could not afford to lend or give. Still he did always honestly try to pay back, later if not sooner, the money he had borrowed. One has only to read the following passage to realize that Haydon had a nice, if peculiar, sense of honour—not to mention a financial ability amounting almost to genius. 'In one hour and a half I had ten pounds to pay on my honour and only £2, 15s. in my pocket. I drove away to Newton, paid him £2, 15s. and borrowed £10. I then drove away to my friend and paid him the ten pounds, and borrowed five pounds more, but felt relieved I had not broke my honour.'

It must not be thought that Haydon's exertions brought him nothing. First and last, he made considerable sums of money, which might have sufficed to keep a single man in comfort. But Haydon was married. His wife, who was a widow, brought him two small children and no dowry. His own family was numerous. Once every fifty or sixty pages his journals announce a fresh confinement; another little Haydon enters the world. A few years pass, and with a regularity almost as unailing the little Haydons shuffle off again. One stepson, it is true, reached manhood before he had a promising career in the navy cut short, in the Indian Ocean, by the bite of a sea-serpent.

But his case was exceptional. Most of the children died in infancy. After a time

one loses count of the births and deaths. I have an impression that about half a dozen children must have survived their father and that about as many died before they were six years old. Perhaps if one hunted among the sooty grasses of Paddington Green, in the shadow of Mrs. Siddons's monument, one might still find their little tombstones.

Haydon was a most conscientious father—rather too conscientious, considering that he could not possibly afford to educate his children as aristocratically as he did. Some of the most pressing debts of his later years were for his sons' tutorial and college dues at Oxford and Cambridge.

Towards the end of his life Haydon was no longer too proud to do 'small modest things.' His ambition was still to paint huge historical pictures; but meanwhile, to keep the pot boiling, he was prepared to stoop to a pettier kind of art. He painted portraits—that is, when he could find sitters. But he hated portrait painting. Lacking, as he did, any understanding of, or interest in, the formal side of art, he could never paint for painting's sake. He was only interested in the literature of painting; he needed a subject to stimulate his imagination. 'In portrait,' he complains, 'I lose that divine feeling of inspiration which I always had in history.

I feel a common man.' What he really liked painting was something in the style of The Plagues of Egypt. 'A Sphinx or two, a pyramid or so, with the front groups lighted by torches, would make this a subject terrific and appalling.' There was nothing very terrific or appalling about the stout business men and their wives and ugly daughters who came to have their portraits painted at twenty-five or thirty pounds a time. Moreover, Haydon was, as he himself admits, a very bad portrait painter. He soon lost whatever patronage he had. He felt the loss as something of a relief.

More congenial, at any rate to begin with, and no less lucrative than portraits, were his fancy pictures of Napoleon musing. Haydon's first picture of Napoleon on St. Helena caught the public fancy. It represents the Emperor standing on a crag, with his back to the spectator, contemplating the Atlantic Ocean, the remains of a sunset and the crescent moon. The piece was engraved and sold well. Sir Robert Peel bought the original. Replicas were ordered in quantities. For years Haydon lived on Napoleon musing—musing, not merely on St. Helena, but at Fontainebleau, in his bedroom, on the ocean, at Marengo, in Egypt before the pyramids. He turned them out by the dozen. Haydon also painted a picture of the Duke of Wellington musing on the field of Waterloo; but the piece was much less successful. Perhaps it was felt that the picture lacked verisimilitude. French tyrants might muse; but not an English general, not a Wellesley, a Duke, a Prime Minister.

Haydon's self-confidence remained apparently unshaken to the end. Indeed, as failure was heaped upon failure, disappointment on disappointment, it expressed itself more vehemently than ever, with a kind of shrill, hysterical defiance. After the rejection of the cartoons which he had prepared for the decoration of the new Houses of Parliament—the cruellest blow of Haydon's whole unhappy career—he tried to comfort himself by insisting with an almost insane violence on his own genius. 'What magic! what fire! what unerring hand and eye! what a gift of God! I bow and am grateful.'

And looking at his Solomon ('this wonderful picture') he asks himself: 'Ought I to fear comparison of it with the Duke of Sutherland's Murillo, or any other picture?' And he answers with a confidence that would be ludicrous if it were not painfully pathetic, 'Certainly not!' At this period, too, he liked to insist more strongly than ever on the altruistic, the self-sacrificingly patriotic character of his whole career. He had always claimed that he was working for the glory of British Art. By the end of his life he was saying that he 'had devoted himself without a selfish feeling to the honour of his country.' The sense that he was a martyr to a great cause gave him, no doubt, a certain comfort in his misery.

His religion was another source of comfort. His journals reveal him in close and constant communication with his Maker. There is something curiously primitive about his prayers. He asks for specific material benefits, for the providential and almost miraculous solution of particular difficulties. This is how he prepares for one of his exhibitions: 'Grant, during the exhibition, nothing may happen to dull its success, but that it may go on in one continuous stream of triumphant success to the last instant. O God, thou knowest I am in the clutches of a villain; grant me the power to get out of them, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

And subdue the evil disposition of that villain, so that I may extricate myself from his power without getting further into it.' (An only too accurate description of Haydon's ordinary method of paying off debts.) 'Grant this for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen, with all my soul.' The prayer, alas, was not answered. On the day that Haydon opened his exhibition, Barnum arrived in town with General Tom Thumb. Unconsciously cruel, he hired a room in the Egyptian Hall next to Haydon's. Standing at the door of his empty gallery, the unhappy artist could watch the crowds that surged and shoved and fought in a Gadarene scramble to see the dwarf.

But enough of misery and failure and incompetence. Haydon was something more than a bad and deservedly unsuccessful painter. He was a great personality to begin with. And in the second place he was, as I like to think, a born writer who wasted his life making absurd pictures when he might have been making excellent books. One book, however, he did contrive to make. The Autobiography reveals his powers. Reading it, one realizes the enormity of that initial mistake which sent him from his father's bookshop to the Academy schools. As a romantic novelist what might he not have achieved? Sadly one speculates.

There were times when Haydon himself seems to have speculated even as we do. 'The truth is,' he remarks near the end of his life, 'I am fonder of books than of anything else on earth. I consider myself, and ever shall, a man of great powers, excited to an art which limits their exercise. In politics, law or literature they would have had a full and glorious swing. . . . It is a curious proof of this that I have pawned my studies, my prints, my lay figures, but have kept my darling authors.' The avowal is complete. What genuine, born painter would call painting an art which limits the exercise of great powers? Such a criticism could only come from a man to whom painting was but another and less effectual way of writing dramas, novels or history.

It is, I repeat, as a novelist that Haydon would best have exhibited his powers. I can imagine great rambling books in which absurd sublimities ('a Sphinx or two, a pyramid or so') and much rhapsodical philosophizing would have alternated in the approved Shakespearean or Faustian style, with admirable passages of well-observed, naturalistic comic relief. We should yawn over the philosophy and perhaps smile at the sublimities (as we smile and yawn even at Byron's; who can now read Manfred, or Cain?); but we should eagerly devour the comic chapters. The Autobiography permits us to imagine how good these chapters might have been.

Haydon was an acute observer, and he knew how to tell a story. How vividly, for example, he has seen this tea-party at Mrs. Siddons's, how well he has described it! 'After her first reading (from Shakespeare) the men retired to tea. While we were all eating toast and tingling cups and saucers, she began again. It was like the effect of a Mass bell at Madrid. All noise ceased, we slunk to our seats like boors, two or three of the most distinguished men of the day with the very toast in their mouths, afraid to bite.

It was curious to see Lawrence in this predicament, to hear him bite by degrees and then stop, for fear of making too much crackle, his eyes full of water from the constraint; and at the same time to hear Mrs. Siddons's "eye of newt and toe of frog," and then to see Lawrence give a sly bite and then look awed and pretend to be listening. I went away highly gratified and as I stood on the landing-place to get cool, I overheard my own servant in the hall say, "What! is that the old lady making such a noise?" "Yes." "Why, she makes as much noise as

ever." "Yes," was the answer, "she tunes her pipes as well as ever she did." ' There are, in the Autobiography, scores of such admirable little narratives and descriptions.

Haydon's anecdotes about the celebrated men with whom he came in contact are revealing as well as entertaining. They prove that he had more than a memory, a sense of character, an instinctive feeling for the significant detail. Most of the anecdotes are well known and have often been reprinted. But I cannot resist quoting two little stories about Wordsworth, which are less celebrated than they deserve to be. One day Haydon and Wordsworth went together to an art gallery. 'In the corner stood the group of Cupid and Psyche kissing.

After looking some time, he turned round to me with an expression I shall never forget, and said, "The Dev-ils!" ' From this one anecdote a subtle psychologist might almost have divined the youthful escapade in France, the illegitimate daughter, the subsequent remorse and respectability. The other story is hardly less illuminating. 'One day Wordsworth at a large party leaned forward in a moment of silence and said: "Davy, do you know the reason I published my 'White Doe' in quarto?" "No," said Davy, slightly blushing at the attention this awakened. "To express my own opinion of it," replied Wordsworth.'

Merely as a verbal technician Haydon was singularly gifted. When he is writing about something which deeply interests and excites him, his style takes on a florid and violent brilliance all its own. For example, this is how, at the coronation of George IV, he describes the royal entrance. 'Three or four of high rank appear from behind the throne; an interval is left; the crowd scarce breathe. Something rustles; and a being buried in satin, feathers and diamonds rolls gracefully into his seat.

The room rises with a sort of feathered, silken thunder.' He knows how to use his adjectives with admirable effect. The most accomplished writer might envy his description of the Duke of Sussex's voice as 'loud, royal and asthmatic.' And how one shudders at the glance of a 'tremendous, globular and demoniacal eye!' How one loves the waitresses at the eating-house where the young and always susceptible Haydon used to dine! When they heard that he was bankrupt, these 'pretty girls eyed me with a lustrous regret.'

Haydon could argue with force and clarity. He could be witty as well as floridly brilliant. The man who could talk of Charles Lamb 'stuttering his quaintness in snatches, like the Fool in Lear, and with as much beauty,' certainly knew how to turn a phrase. He could imply a complete criticism in a dozen words; when he has said of West's classical pictures that 'the Venuses looked as though they had never been naked before,' there is nothing more to add; the last word on neo-classicism has been uttered. And what a sound, what a neatly pointed comment on English portrait painting is contained in the following brief sentences! 'Portraiture is always independent of art and has little or nothing to do with it.

It is one of the staple manufactures of the Empire. Wherever the British settle, wherever they colonize, they carry, and will ever carry, trial by jury, horse-racing and portrait painting.' And let us hope they will ever carry a good supply of those indomitable madmen who have made the British Empire and English literature, English politics and English science the extraordinary things they are. Haydon was one of these glorious lunatics. An ironic fate decreed that he should waste his madness in the practice of an art for which he was not gifted. But though wasted, the insanity was genuine and of good quality. The Autobiography makes us wish that it might have been better directed.

The end