

**RURAL NOSTALGIA : PAINTING IN SCOTLAND C. 1860-  
1880**

**JOHN MORRISON**

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
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RURAL NOSTALGIA:  
PAINTING IN SCOTLAND c.1860-1880

Ph.D. Thesis  
University of St Andrews

John Morrison

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## ABSTRACT

A work of "rural nostalgia" is a distorted image of a past, or passing rural existence produced in the period c.1860-1880. It is distorted in such a way as to heighten the emotional impact of the work and to emphasize the inherent moral message carried by the painting. This message is always the same. In precisely the same terms as contemporary commentators, the painters lauded those aspects of human existence thought to be essential for a humane civilised society and felt to be being destroyed by the urbanisation of man. Hence family life, the home and community life were praised. Along with individual human relationships, society's provision of both temporal and religious education were seen as vital. These linked factors, so prevalent in rural life, were thus also frequently portrayed, praised and give an implicitly rural setting.

The ambivalent response to their industrial society of mid-Victorian Scots, themselves engaged in commerce and industry, found expression in the work of artists such as G.P. Chalmers and George Reid. In effect the collectors of rural nostalgia, convinced of the educative role of art, sought to promote a more responsible, caring, society through their purchasing and subsequent lending out of rural nostalgia paintings.

The paintings themselves, though heavily imbued with the spirit of contemporary Calvinist Scotland, were philosophically influenced by John Ruskin and by French "Realist" writing and criticism. They were practically influenced by nineteenth century Dutch painting.

The significance of the painters of rural nostalgia lies not in their formal innovations, though they were technically of considerable importance to the later "Glasgow School", it lies in the alternative view they afford of the motivations and concerns of the patrons and practitioners of painting in Scotland in the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

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To Alyson  
For all support and belief.



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## Introduction

### CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SCOTTISH ART

"His works have acquired a large amount of popularity, and generally formed one of the chief attractions of the landscape department of the Exhibition". Thus The Scotsman in 1867 described the painting in the Royal Scottish Academy of Alexander Mollinger [1833-1867], a Dutch landscape painter who five years before had been unknown in Scotland. Mollinger's work stands at the beginning of this consideration of the Realist tradition in Scotland. Drenthe, by Mollinger, arrived in Scotland in 1862, purchased by the Aberdeen collector John Forbes White from the London International Exhibition of 1862. It was the first painting by a contemporary Dutch artist to come to Scotland. However by 1862 there was already established a climate of change in Scottish painting. Dutch painting was the catalyst for a number of younger Scottish painters who were developing in a very different manner from their forbears.

Contemporary Dutch art introduced Scottish artists to other traditions of European painting. However the philosophic thrust of progressive Scottish painting in the period was derived not from Holland, but directly from a knowledge of the "Realist" debate in contemporary France.

In the early 1860's Scottish art was entering a period of change. The first generation of Scottish painters to have worked through the Royal Scottish Academy was giving way to the next and new ideas and practices were coming with them. This spirit of change gave rise to Scottish Art and Artists in 1860, by "Iconoclast", an anonymous pamphlet which used the platform of the

1860 R.S.A. to launch an attack on contemporary painting. <sup>2</sup>. The author obviously felt the need for change but equally obviously could not quite discern the desired direction in which Scottish art ought to move.

"Iconoclast" listed the leading Scottish artists of the day as he saw them: Noel Paton [1821-1901], Horatio McCulloch [1805-1867], John Watson Gordon [1788-1864], John Graham Gilbert [1794-1866] and Daniel MacNee [1806-1882], and acknowledged that they were worthy champions of Scottish culture. They, in company with all Scottish painters however, fell down in that all that their paintings displayed was a manual dexterity. Art had to be judged by the nature of its thought and the clarity with which this thought was expressed. It was this vital quality that "Iconoclast" found lacking in Scottish painting.

By 1862 the pupils of Robert Scott Lauder were established exhibitors and in that year too George Reid [1841-1913] had his first picture accepted by the R.S.A.. Painters of the generation of McCulloch in landscape painting, Watson Gordon and Graham Gilbert in portraiture, David Scott [1806-1849] in history painting, were either dead or coming towards the end of their active painting lives. Certainly their methods and their visions were perpetuated by followers and pupils. Arthur Perigal [1816-1884] for instance continued to paint and exhibit pastiche McCulloch landscapes until his death in 1884. However the sway these earlier men held which would allow McCulloch to alter one of George Reid's landscapes as it hung on the wall of the Academy, because he felt it "looked too much like paint" <sup>3</sup>. was beginning to fade. Within twelve months of this happening Reid was interviewed by the then president of the R.S.A., George Harvey [1806-1876].

He was told in no uncertain terms that his work was fast going down hill, that he was coming too much under the influence of foreign artists and that McCulloch, who had been kind enough to alter one of his promising if defective canvases, was the model to follow, not Mollinger.

By 1862 also, William Quiller Orchardson [1832-1910] and John Pettie [1839-1893], along with George Paul Chalmers [1833-1878] and Hugh Cameron [1835-1918], pupils under Robert Scott Lauder [1803-1869] at the Trustees Academy in Edinburgh, were reaching their maturity as painters. In that year the two former moved to London but always maintained very close ties with their fellow students who remained in Scotland.

This concept of the period c.1860 being the beginning of something innovatory in Scottish painting is not new. Brief though the literature on Scottish art is, it is generally accepted in it that there was a decisive break with what had gone before around this time. The anonymous author of the 1860 pamphlet may not have known whither he wanted Scottish art to progress - he was as critical of the "New School" as of the old - but he knew some change had to occur. "Iconoclast", as he signed himself, attacked some painters specifically. John Faed [1820-1902] was condemned for his pictures having "no idea" and as having no more merit than that of being "satisfactory as furniture".<sup>4</sup> Amid many other criticisms the collector Robert Horn was condemned for forcing unsuitable subjects onto artists.<sup>5</sup> The deficiencies of Scottish art were clear for the author but the way ahead was uncertain. Subsequent critics and commentators have basically agreed on the nature of the break which occurred around 1860. It is

invariably described in formal terms. Perceptions have concentrated on the supposed new use of broken colour and broad technique.

This period of change in Scottish painting and its consequences between c.1860 and 1880 forms the subject of the thesis. 1880 is a logical point at which to close the consideration of the actions and motivations of the innovative painters of the early 1860's. By 1880, they in their turn had been superceded as the progressive avant-garde in Scotland by the emergence of the Glasgow School. Many of those who had participated in the changes of c.1860 were, by 1880, for a variety of reasons no longer working in response to the Scottish society which had influenced them over the previous twenty years. Hugh Cameron had left for London and the very different English art market in 1876. G.P. Chalmers had died in mysterious circumstances in 1878, and, George Reid had, by 1880, become almost a full-time portrait painter with little opportunity for landscape or genre painting.

Scottish painters were not isolated in European terms and they were decidedly not a sub-branch of English nineteenth century painting. There was a separate Scottish outlook derived from the very particular nature of Scottish society in the mid nineteenth century, from Scotland's strong cultural links with Holland and through Holland with France. Through an examination of these factors the reasons can be established detailing why the younger Scottish artists painted as they did, why they chose the subjects they did, and why they conformed to a specific manner in representing these subjects.

There are few studies of this generation of painters. A brief examination of the literature demonstrates the predominant concerns of received opinion regarding Scottish artists of the period c.1860-1880.

Robert Brydall wrote an informative history of the origins and progress of art in Scotland in 1889. \* It was confined however to developments up to the mid nineteenth century and never considered "modern" Scottish painting. Much the same approach is manifest in The Scottish School of Painting 7. by the landscape painter and member of the R.S.A., W.D. McKay (1844-1924). In his introduction he alluded to the difficulties of writing on his artist contemporaries when he himself was a painter and so declined to do so. This led to some anomalies. In the chapter on later landscape painting McKay covered briefly the effect of nineteenth century Dutch landscape painting in Scotland. He mentioned Alexander Mollinger as a strong influence on Scottish painting and acknowledged that Aberdeen had many collectors who acquired contemporary Dutch paintings. When it came to discussing the particular influence this had on Scottish art however his reticence in discussing the work of living painters meant that he could not mention George Reid. Perhaps the fact that Reid, then 65 and only recently retired as president of the R.S.A. inhibited him. Instead James Cassie (1819-1879), an older and more traditional Aberdeen landscape artist was mentioned as being affected by the aims and methods of the Dutchmen. Reid, who lived and worked with both Mollinger and Josef Israels (1824-1911) and who had been castigated in the sixties for being too Dutch, was ignored altogether. In the final brief chapter McKay covered in just seven pages all painting from 1858 to 1900. From a distance of over forty years McKay found a decisive change in Scottish painting around 1860. He put the date

at c.1858-63 and used the fact of the change as a reason for stopping his detailed account before embarking on a whole new era. He did however seek to give a brief account of the "New School". McKay tentatively linked the new spirit in Scottish painting to Pre-Raphaelitism, recalling that a number of Pre-Raphaelite works, mainly by J.E. Millais [1829-1896], had appeared on the walls of the R.S.A. since 1852. He offered no real analysis of what influence they might have had and simply concluded "This cannot have been without effect on the band of eager lads \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ who were then making their *debut*". \*

There was virtually no individual discussion of the painters and although Jules Breton and tonal painting were mentioned, McKay's book specifically excluded the possibility of Breton's influence on the painters of the sixties and seventies. He concentrated instead on Breton's importance for the rise of the Glasgow School.

Writing in 1908 and approaching all Scottish painting from the standpoint that Scottish art was always and only a free and independent voice, James L. Caw similarly identified 1860 as a turning point. \* From that date he sought to trace increasing naturalism and most importantly individualism in Scottish painting. The painters coming to prominence around this time exhibited, he felt "a more expressive technique, a more pictorial treatment of subject, and a fuller and far finer colour."<sup>10</sup> He proceeded to attack McCulloch for being "grandiose and empty" <sup>11</sup>. and the colour of the Paton's <sup>12</sup>. and the Faed's <sup>13</sup>. as being "patchy, unrelated and harsh in quality". <sup>14</sup> Caw advanced the theory that art in Scotland had been ripe for change, and waiting for a new direction. This direction, he felt, was given

by the pupils of Robert Scott Lauder. For Caw the Scott Lauder artists equated roughly with the Pre-Raphaelites in England in that both were, as he put it, to "regenerate a decadent school." <sup>15</sup>. The differences lay he felt in the fact that, coming to fruition under the influence of one master, who himself possessed a respect for tradition, the Scottish "reconstruction" was less revolutionary and less wide ranging. Whereas in England the development of Pre-Raphaelitism was bound up with ideas which affected literature, religion and politics, Caw did not see the artistic changes in Scotland as linked to any wide intellectual movement.

This resulted in Caw seeing the work of the Scott Lauder artists and their "reconstruction" in purely formal terms, an approach that became very influential. Caw continued the theme by discussing the younger painters as innovators in colour and tone, and treating these concerns as being of first importance. <sup>16</sup>. The overseas influence of the Dutch painters, Israels, J. Maris [1837-1899] and others was recognised but only by opining that they had unfortunately imposed on the Scots a feeling for the primacy of tone over colour as opposed to colour over tone which would have been the Scots natural inclination.

When dealing individually with the painters, Caw's concentration on formal innovations and formal analysis persisted. He felt Chalmers was only concerned with "purely artistic problems". <sup>17</sup>. Supposedly he was supremely uninterested in subject matter. Any insight achieved by Chalmers into human character or life or landscape was attained almost by accident and brought about by the artist's skill in manipulating the language of painting.

William McTaggart [1835-1910] merited the longest section devoted to the Scott Lauder pupils presumably because he most conveniently could be fitted into this reading of the painters as technical innovators. McTaggart was credited with profound insight into man's relationship with nature and, for Caw it was his ability to express this insight which marked him out as a genius. Turner's seascapes were dismissed as "conventions" <sup>19</sup>. when placed alongside the depth of feeling present in a McTaggart. Equally his rendering of light on a landscape was seen as infinitely superior to the "crude colour, chalky light \_ \_ \_ (and) \_ \_ \_ disagreeable and repellant handling \_ \_ (of) \_ \_ Monet and his followers" <sup>20</sup>.

George Reid, while discussed mainly as a portrait painter, was only briefly considered as a landscape painter, this in spite of the fact that in his early career Reid decried portraiture. <sup>20</sup>. Again Caw correctly cited the influence of contemporary Dutch painting, albeit very briefly, but qualified his remarks by tying Reid firmly to the innovations of the Lauderites by playing down the artist's concern for his subject matter and concluding "it (Reid's landscape painting) is pensive rather than pathetic, and is less dependent on the associations of humanity and toil than that of the Dutch master (Anton Mauve)." <sup>21</sup>.

Caw's concentration on the "pure painting" of Scottish artists, and his vision of them as unhindered by any moral or anecdotal motive, reflected the artistic concerns of the period in which he was writing, the first decade of the twentieth century. His desire to see Scottish painting as being uninfluenced by foreign art, is due simply to his nationalist approach which is a prevalent theme of the book.

Caw was not the first to advance this view of the painters of the 1860's. Walter Armstrong produced a volume entitled Scottish Painters, A critical study, in 1888. <sup>22</sup>. In a long section on Chalmers largely made up of biographical details and quotations, his only personal view on the artist was that he showed great sympathy for colour. <sup>23</sup>. Writing on George Reid, Armstrong noted his extensive training in Holland and in a slightly more subtle formal analysis, described the painter as one who was more concerned with the pictorial motive than with the subject. Certainly Reid was not a painter of literary subjects. However to regard the landscapes and studies of figures in landscapes as exercises in solving problems of colour and line, as Armstrong did, misrepresents the artist's pictorial concerns entirely. <sup>24</sup>.

In 1897 R.A.M. Stevenson writing in The Pall Mall Gazette traced the development of the Glasgow School to the changes set in motion by McTaggart and P.G. (sic) Chalmers. <sup>25</sup>.

Eleven years before the publication of Caw's Scottish Painting Past and Present Richard Muther had written on "Whistler and the Scotch Artists" in volume four of his history of modern painting. In it he briefly compared what he saw as the different approach of Scottish and English artists and concluded "The English artists made spiritual profundity and graceful poetry the aim of their pictures. The Scotch are painters. They instituted a worship of colour such as has not been known since the days of Titian." <sup>26</sup>.

Once again the main attribute of Scottish painters was perceived to be associated with the exploration of the formal elements of painting. With

Muther however this characteristic was modified by his specific comments regarding Chalmers and Reid. Chalmers' work, he noted might be mistaken for pictures of the same type by Josef Israels. Reid he described as painting landscapes in the manner of Anton Mauve. Since both Israels and Mauve were noted for their involvement with and profound insight into the lives of the working classes, Muther appears to have exempted them from his overall categorisation of Scottish art.

Again and again the influence of the Dutch was mentioned only to be quickly dropped. It was never explored. There was never any attempt at analysis on a deeper level, or even to question the assumption, apparently routinely made, that the influence was purely a technical one.

In the 1917 book The Royal Scottish Academy by W.D. McKay and F. Rinder. McKay contributed an essay on the history of the R.S.A..<sup>27</sup> Once more the Dutch influence on Scottish painting was brought up and dropped. McKay simply recorded that dating from 1865, when Alexander Mollinger first contributed two pictures to the annual exhibition, there was a gradually increasing contribution from "modern" Dutch painters. McKay again saw the influence in technical terms. He traced the Dutch painting, which he described as, "founded on a systematic recognition of values",<sup>28</sup> to the influence of French painting of c.1850. However he never attempted to analyse why the influence should have come to Scotland from France via Holland, and to take sixteen years doing so.

The by now established truth about Chalmers as a painter interested in technical problems for their own sake was repeated again here. McKay

concentrated on Chalmers' personality and on his renowned inability to finish works to his own satisfaction. He then quoted from one of the artist's letters to his patron G.B. Simpson. "\_ \_ \_ for really, after all, what size? Quality is the thing!" 29.

McKay insisted on reading this statement as a declaration of interest in surface qualities. He wrote that this quotation indicated "what Chalmers and his fellow artists were striving after. In the language of the studio 'quality' signifies that variety of surface by which painters, through certain artifices of the brush, are able to render the appearance of different surfaces in a way that is pleasant and satisfying to the eye." 30. Subject matter is overlooked. There is no suggestion that 'quality' might refer to anything other than technical competence.

John Tonge wrote a short and none too considered book called The Arts Of Scotland in 1938. 31. It was designed, the author claimed, to be preliminary reading for people who intended to visit the major exhibition of Scottish art which was to take place at Burlington House the following year. There is very little that is new in the book. Chalmers was held up as an intuitive impressionist but a lesser painter than McTaggart because the latter "evolved theories of light and movement very similar to the French" 32. And what is more, had done so "long before he saw a Monet" 33. Reid was dismissed as a painter of "sombre, graceless" 34. portraits, and the consideration of the Dutch influence in the nineteenth century was limited to a brief mention of Matthew Maris in conjunction with the Glasgow School. 35.

The following year the Royal Academy duly mounted the large, wide ranging exhibition, "Scottish Art". The introductory essay on painting and sculpture was written by Caw and his ideas had not substantially changed in the thirty-one years since the publication of Scottish Painting Past and Present. The Scott Lauder trained artists were still described as introducing a more purely pictorial conception of painting, and Chalmers in particular was still singled out on account of his technique. This time it was his "expressive touch" <sup>36</sup>. which drew praise. Towards the end of his essay Caw attempted to characterise Scottish painting. The common traits he identified and commented upon were a reliance on a well-grounded technique and an ability to fuse tone and colour. The whole thing was then applied with "unaffected pictorial intention to simple, unsophisticated themes". <sup>37</sup>. This definition seems to be ill at ease with his slightly earlier remark that Scottish artists accepted life as it was, realised certain aspects of it vividly and "informed their realistic treatment with sentiment insight and charm" <sup>38</sup>. The one definition would seem to imply a concentration on and concern with purely technical matters while the other throws the emphasis on to a very specific approach to a very specific group of subjects. While not backing down from his earlier assertion of the primacy of formal considerations, and certainly not withdrawing his remarks concerning the reasons for the significance, either individually or collectively, of the Scott Lauder pupils, Caw, by 1939, seems to have come to realise something of the importance of subject and treatment of subject in Scottish painting.

Ten years later Stanley Cursiter, who was one of the joint chairmen of the Scottish executive committee for the 1939 exhibition, wrote his own book on

Scottish art. <sup>39</sup>. Cursiter echoed Caw's views. Chalmers and McTaggart were singled out for creating an unspecified "new approach to colour" <sup>40</sup>. and Orchardson for his "clearly developed sense of design." <sup>41</sup>. Like Caw, Cursiter was keen to fit Chalmers into the vanguard of developments in European art. Chalmers' formalist credentials were established simply by stating that despite his too brief art education he possessed "a greater appreciation of the importance of purely pictorial qualities". <sup>42</sup>. Then allying the artist's much vaunted qualities as an innovative colourist with his obvious concerns with designing a picture in terms of light and shade, Cursiter made the statement that Chalmers and McTaggart discovered the role of colour in shadows and were "hovering on the edge of Impressionism." <sup>43</sup>. This statement frankly does not stand up to an examination of the paintings. Cursiter attempted to make a case for Chalmers' unfinished *magnum opus* The Legend, as being proto-Impressionist. <sup>44</sup>. He cited the artist's supposed "sub-division of colour" and the "colour running through the shadows of the cottage interior" <sup>45</sup>. as evidence to support his claim. This in spite of the fact that the painting is clearly based on nineteenth century Dutch work rather than French. Chalmers' studies in light and shade are derived from Rembrandt far more than from Monet.

It was admitted that "Scottish Impressionism" did not have a scientific basis in colour theory, but Cursiter persisted in linking the Scots to what he saw as the seminal movement in nineteenth century painting. The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century view that the Scott Lauder pupils were interesting from a technical standpoint obviously still held sway in 1949. Cursiter was unable to sustain an outright condemnation of

Impressionism in favour of Chalmers and McTaggart as Caw had done in 1908. However he still sought to latch the Scots onto the coat tails of the French innovators. Any close examination of the paintings demonstrates that there is no basis for comparing the Scots with the French. If a definition of Impressionism is to go any deeper than to claim all paintings employing free, broken brushwork as "Impressionist" then Chalmers is not remotely concerned with Impressionism. He not infrequently painted landscapes on a toned ground, he underpainted interiors in a vermilion like colour; he used black and white, he never adapted local colour because of lighting effects and he mixed colours on the canvas. All those practices are anathema to French Impressionism. They are closer technically to seventeenth century Dutch painting than to nineteenth century French. Chalmers' landscapes are the most frequently cited as having some link with Impressionism. The Head of Loch Lomond (Illustration 1.) illustrates just how far away from Impressionism Chalmers was.

The landscape is painted with a loose, broken touch. This handling is the painting's only link to contemporary French practice. It is likely that it was painted on a toned ground. It contains a boat, the underside of which is painted black. There are flecks of pure white in the highlights. The trees set against the sky are painted entirely green; there is no suggestion at all of complimentary orange off-setting the sky's blue. Presumably what Cursiter meant by "sub-division of colour", and "colour running through the shadows", is present here in the water under the broken pier. There are small touches of colour in the water. However, unlike Impressionist practice, they are blended on the canvas. Furthermore, by far the greater percentage of the water is painted a warm brown. In concentrating on the

technical elements of Chalmers' painting, and misconstruing them, Cursiter, like others before him, bypassed any questions that might have arisen concerning subject matter, or its sociological significance.

The most comprehensive survey of Scottish painting is the 1975 volume Scottish Painters at Home and Abroad 1700-1900 by D. and F. Irwin.<sup>46</sup> They acknowledged and denounced the over emphasis placed on the Scott Lauder pupils colour innovations in the past. Furthermore they specifically refuted the concept that these pupils were somehow separate from other contemporary developments in Scottish painting. They did this by including George Reid in their discussions of changes and developments c.1860. Chalmers they saw as very much more concerned with his friend Reid's painting than he was with the backward-looking productions of many of his fellow pupils at the Trustees Academy.<sup>47</sup> There were still however a number of questionable assertions. Having linked Reid to the Lauder pupils it seems strange to then claim that "One striking shared characteristic of these painters is their lack of emphasis on the need for travel and study on the continent"<sup>48</sup>.

As a pupil of Mollinger, Israels and Yvon, Reid had three protracted stays in Europe. Chalmers while making only two relatively brief visits to the continent was a friend of the Dutch painter Josef Israels and would certainly appear to have been abreast of the Realist debate taking place in periodicals such as the Gazette des Beaux-Arts and the Fine Art Quarterly Review.<sup>49</sup> Indeed the Irwins were at pains to point out that Chalmers' work was undoubtedly influenced by the very large numbers of contemporary European paintings he saw in the collections of numerous patrons with whom

he was particularly friendly. <sup>50</sup>. Likewise they acknowledged Cameron's links through Reid and Chalmers with contemporary Dutch painting. The facts of Reid's studies in Holland, and the practical effect they had on his painting were also briefly discussed. Yet again however the emphasis was placed on the technical innovations found in these painters. The group may have been logically broadened to include George Reid but the analysis was not broadened to question the motives and sources of the subjects, and treatment of subjects, common to these artists.

William Hardie's 1976 survey Scottish Painting 1837-1939 <sup>51</sup>, although not as thorough or conscientious as the Irwin volume, does contain a sympathetic and perceptive consideration of Reid and Chalmers and their association with the collector James (sic) Forbes White. Hardie detailed White's role in the introduction of both Reid and Chalmers to contemporary European painting and briefly discussed the effect this had on their work. While there was no examination of the significance of the painters' choice of subject matter, there was no attempt to classify them as formalists and Chalmers' emotional involvement with his genre subjects was at least acknowledged. <sup>52</sup>.

Not every author has failed to consider the significance of subject matter and the artists' motivations and involvement with what they chose to paint. The biography of Chalmers published just one year after his death, and written by two collectors who were close friends of his, is the best example. <sup>53</sup>. For these two men who knew the artist, every painting was marked by Chalmers' own views on his subject. "Without sentiment a picture had little abiding charm for Chalmers, even though its artistic merits

might otherwise be great. It must touch the heart if it is to move men. \_ \_  
\_ \_ The simplest sketch bears traces of his (Chalmers') heart and soul; .  
feeling pervades every canvas." 54.

J.F. White, who wrote the critique on the paintings acknowledged and praised the artist's love of colour and skill at manipulating it, but equally he saw importance in Chalmers' choice of subject. Concerning the landscapes he wrote "They are seldom ever direct transcripts from nature; they convey rather the impressions produced in him, and thus, \_ \_ \_ \_ they bear distinct traces of his personality." 55.

Chalmers' involvement with his subject was most keenly felt, White claimed, in his genre works. The subjects were of primary importance. Chalmers' character "displays itself \_ \_ \_ \_ in full force in his genre subjects. To be successful in this line it is obvious that the artist must tell his story so that his sentiment shall be felt, he must infuse his feeling into his canvas. The very essence of his art is that you shall sympathise in the joys or sorrows he has depicted." 56.

The only other volume devoted exclusively to Chalmers is the enormous and verbose biography of the artist published by Edward Pinnington in 1896. 57. It is most useful for its wealth of personal detail and its quotations from now lost letters and journals. However, when opinion was expressed as to the nature of Chalmers' art, it once more came down on the side of technical innovation. The artist was discussed in terms of his use of light and colour and his expressive handling of paint.

However, White was not alone in his reading of Chalmers. W.E. Henley in his memorial catalogue of the loan collection of the 1888 Glasgow International Exhibition agreed with White. <sup>60</sup>. Paying service to the artist's gifts as a colourist, Henley also observed "His nature was intensely sympathetic; he could never paint what he did not feel. \_ \_ \_ \_ he took infinite pains to master his subject, and put himself as it were inside it;\_ \_ \_" <sup>61</sup>.

The most recent consideration of the painters of the 1860's was a National Gallery of Scotland exhibition called "Master Class". <sup>60</sup>. To a certain extent the 1983 exhibition devoted to Scott Lauder's directorship of the Trustees Academy, and thus once more excluding Reid, perpetuated the imbalance of reading the artist's pupils in purely formal terms. Certainly Orchardson and Pettie were credited with introducing a new kind of historical painting based on real human interactions and real human motives, but Chalmers and McTaggart were once more seen in technical terms. The author, Dr Lindsay Errington stated explicitly that the paintings of these two artists were devoid of intellectual and analytical content. Their subject matter was read as purely conventional landscape and genre "but in pictorial terms they were pioneers" <sup>61</sup>. As might be expected, with the benefit of seventy-five years more hindsight and a more sound historical method, Errington's analysis of the technical relationships between developments in Scotland and in France is considerably more subtle and more informed than that of Caw or of his intellectual follower, Cursiter. In this case however, what is significant is that the tradition of formal analysis in relation to Chalmers and McTaggart is perpetuated. Just as for Caw "Lauder's pupils \_ \_ \_ \_were definitely pictorial in intention" <sup>62</sup>. so

for Errington "The fascinating thing about the Lauder group's attitude to colour is that it parallels so closely contemporary developments in France \_ \_ \_ " 63.

The ideological background to the painters of the 1860's and 1870's has never been considered before. The assumption has been made that the rural genre works of Chalmers, Cameron and others were the direct linear descendents of the early rural genre paintings of David Wilkie (1785-1841). The paintings have never been related to the wider concerns of contemporary Scotland. All the elements which went to make up Scottish society c.1860-1880, the nature of Scotland's changing industrial society, the widespread pro-rural/anti-urban sentiments, the continuing but changing significance of Presbyterianism, awareness and interest in European art, all go to make the Scotland of that era a very different place from the Scotland of Nasmyth and Wilkie. It is with this particular society and its specific effects on contemporary artists that the thesis is concerned.

## Footnotes

### INTRODUCTION

1 The Scotsman, Edinburgh, 24th September, 1867 explains that Mollinger's "earlier artistic education was received in the atelier of Roelofs - one of the most distinguished landscape painters in Belgium - with whom, and the still more celebrated painter, Israels, he was in the closest and most intimate friendship."

2 Iconoclast, Scottish Art and Artists in 1860, Edinburgh 1860.

3 Correspondence George Reid to John Forbes White held by Aberdeen Art Gallery. February 20th 1867.

4 Iconoclast, *op. cit.*, p.9.

5 *ibid.*, p.13.

see chapter 3. for a discussion of Horn as a collector.

6 Robert Brydall, Art in Scotland. Its Origins and Progress, Edinburgh, 1889.

7 W.D. McKay, The Scottish School of Painting, London, 1906.

8 *ibid.*, pp.357-358.

9 Sir James L. Caw, Scottish Painting Past and Present, 1620-1908,  
Edinburgh, 1908.

10 *ibid.*, p.203.

11 *ibid.*, p.204.

12 Sir Joseph Noel Paton RSA 1821-1901. Elder and more successful of two  
artist brothers. Became H.M. Limner for Scotland and knighted in 1866.  
Painted historical, religious mythical and allegorical subjects.

Waller Hugh Paton RSA 1828-1895. Scottish landscape painter. Reputedly he  
was the first Scottish artist to paint a picture entirely in the open air.

13 John Faed RSA 1820-1902, eldest of three artist brothers. Began as a  
miniature painter in Galloway. Later became a painter of Scottish genre and  
historical subjects.

James Faed 1821-1911, brother of John and Thomas, landscapist and animal  
painter. James also worked extensively as an engraver, often reproducing  
the works of his brothers.

Thomas Faed RA 1826-1900, youngest and most successful of the three  
brothers. Painted mainly scenes of Scottish peasant life. Worked in London  
from 1852.

14 Caw, *op.cit.*, p.204.

15 *idem.*

16 *ibid.*, p.205.

17 *ibid.*, p.245.

18 *ibid.*, p.253.

19 *ibid.*, p.250.

20 As late as 1881 Reid was still attempting to limit his portrait painting practice.

"I suspect I must limit myself to four or five portraits a year - at most - I have not now half the pleasure I used to have in my work when I was free to choose it for myself, others do so now and I have to make the best of what is often a very hopeless task."

Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, September 14th, 1881.

21 Caw, *op.cit.*, p.288.

22 Sir Walter Armstrong, Scottish Painters.A Critical Study, London, 1888.

This material first appeared in The Portfolio of 1887.

23 *ibid.*, p.69.

24 *ibid.*, pp82-83.

25 R.A.M. Stevenson, The Pall Mall Gazette, June 16th, 1897, pp.1-2.

- 26 Richard Muther, The History of Modern Painting, vol.4, London, 1897, p.28.
- 27 W.D. McKay and Frank Rinder, The Royal Scottish Academy 1826-1916, Glasgow 1917.
- 28 *ibid.*, p.xci.
- 29 *ibid.*, p.xciv. Chalmers' letter to Simpson is dated January 21st, 1865.
- 30 *ibid.*, p.xciv.
- 31 John Tonge, The Arts of Scotland, London 1938.
- 32 *ibid.*, p.84.
- 33 *ibid.*, p.85.
- 34 *ibid.*, p.89.
- 35 *idem.*
- 36 Catalogue of the Exhibition of Scottish Art 1939, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1939, p.xiii.
- 37 *ibid.*, p.xv.
- 38 *idem.*

39 Stanley Cursiter, Scottish Art to the Close of the Nineteenth Century, London, 1949.

40 *ibid.*, p.120.

41 *idem.*

42 *ibid.*, p.124.

43 *idem.*

44 Cursiter linked G.P. Chalmers' The Legend, W. McTaggart's The Young Fishers and H. Cameron's A Lonely Life as examples of work which were on the verge of Impressionism.

45 Cursiter, *op.cit.*, p.125.

46 David and Francina Irwin, Scottish Painters at Home and Abroad, 1700-1900, London, 1975.

47 *ibid.*, p.337.

48 *ibid.*, p.338.

49 Chalmers was elected an Associate of the Royal Scottish Academy in 1867. From that date at the latest he would have had access to the library of the Academy which subscribed to a large number of periodicals, including

the Gazette des Beaux Arts, The Fine Art Quarterly Review and The Art Journal. For a full discussion of the significance of the Academy's library holdings, see chapter 5.

50 John Morrison, The Dutch and Flemish Influence on Painting in Scotland from 1862-1901, Senior Honours M.A. Dissertation, Department of Art History, University of St Andrews, 1983.

51 William Hardie, Scottish Painting 1837-1939, London, 1976.

52 *ibid.*, pp.66-70.

53 Alexander Gibson and John Forbes White, George Paul Chalmers, Edinburgh, 1879.

54 *ibid.*, p.59.

55 *ibid.*, p.63.

56 *ibid.*, p.62.

57 Edward Pinnington, George Paul Chalmers RSA and the Art of His Time. 1833-1878, Glasgow, 1896.

58 W.E. Henley, A Century of Artists. A Memorial of the Glasgow International Exhibition of 1888, Glasgow, 1889.

59 *ibid.*, p.22.

60 National Galleries of Scotland, Master Class, Robert Scott Lauder and His Pupils, Exhibition Catalogue by Lindsay Errington, Edinburgh, 1983.

61 *ibid.*, p.42.

62 Sir James L. Caw, Scottish Painting Past and Present, 1620-1908, Edinburgh, 1908, p.205.

63 National Galleries of Scotland, Errington, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

## Chapter 1

### REALISM AND REALITIES: The Country and the City in Victorian Scotland.

It is always necessary to examine paintings within the context of their own time. When dealing with a subject so far removed from current thought as Victorian genre painting the necessity becomes even greater. We are presently so out of sympathy with mid-nineteenth century views that the derisory epithet "sentimental" seems inextricably bound up with the words "Victorian genre." In terms of social attitudes, social environment, leisure, labour and religion, nineteenth century painting grew out of a very different climate from our own. Scottish nineteenth century painting grew out of a different climate again. Some things affected Scottish and English artists equally. Many social factors however were quite different in Scotland and not surprisingly produced quite different results.

Initially it is worthwhile to attempt to characterise the spirit of Victorian art as it was understood by the painters with whom this thesis is concerned. In the enormously complex variety of schools and movements and responses to movements that go to make up Victorian painting, the central belief which animated those mid-Victorian painters who were working at the time of John Ruskin was that art had a moral purpose. Art had a duty to impart important truths, not only truths about the visible world, but truths about society and the conduct of life.

"The end of Art is as serious as that of all other things - of the blue sky and the green grass, and the clouds and dew. They

are either useless, or they are of much deeper function than giving amusement. Whatever delight we take in them, be it less or more, is not the delight we take in play, or receive from momentary surprise. It might be a matter of some metaphysical difficulty to define the two kinds of pleasure, but it is perfectly easy for any of us to feel that there is a generic difference between the delight we have in seeing a comedy and in watching a sunrise. Not but that there is a kind of Divina Commedia, - a dramatic change and power, - in all beautiful things: the joy of surprise and incident mingles in music, painting, architecture, and natural beauty itself, in an ennobled and enduring manner, with the perfectness of eternal hue and form. But whenever the desire of change becomes principal; whenever we care only for new tunes, and new pictures, and new scenes, all power of enjoying Nature or Art is so far perished from us: and a child's love of toys has taken its place." 1.

Again:-

"Whenever art is practised for its own sake, and the delight of the workman is in what he *does* and *produces*, instead of in what he *interprets* or *exhibits*, - there art has an influence of the fatal kind on brain and heart, and it issues, if long so pursued, in the *destruction both of intellectual power and moral principle*; whereas art, devoted humbly and self-forgetfully to the clear statement and record of the facts of the universe, is

always helpful and beneficent to mankind, full of comfort, strength and salvation." 2.

In addition to Ruskin's specific purpose of directing painters towards the moral teaching role of art, mid-Victorian Britain exerted other more subtle pressures on its artists. The prevailing sentiment of the time was one of profound anti-urbanism; this in spite of being a society which was unquestionably proud of its technical achievements.

An equivocal acceptance, or not infrequently an outright rejection of industrial Britain is found again and again throughout the Victorian period. In order to comprehend the environmental and social pressures which Victorian Scotland exerted, an examination and analysis of the Scottish society in which the painters of the 1860's and 1870's lived, is highly relevant.

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#### THE SCOTTISH CITY

"The Dighty, being the most considerable stream of water in the vicinity of Dundee, is used as a powerful engine in different manufactures, but since public works have been created in the parish, the picture of pastoral life has been withdrawn, and the eye of the spectator is presented with a busy scene of human industry, and the arts brought into operation for the benefit of man. There are few improvements that are not accompanied by some mixture of evil; volumes of smoke are now seen issuing

from engines along the whole line of the valley; the bleachfields have rendered the water unfit for the use of cattle and for domestic purposes; the fish have disappeared; the fumes emitted from the works are offensive to travellers but still more to those residing on the spot, whose first sensation in the morning when they awake is the dilation of their lungs from a mixture of muristic acid and chlorine gas." 3.

The Presbyterian minister of Strathmartine, writing in 1841, painted a graphic picture of the changes wrought by local industrial development near Dundee. His observation that "There are few improvements that are not accompanied with some mixture of evil." reflects a characteristic response to the swift and unprecedented changes with which the Victorian Scot had to come to terms. Pride in technical achievement, awareness of material progress and belief in future prosperity contended with the realisation that "the arts brought into practical operation for the benefit of man" were creating an entirely new and alien environment in which to live. As the century progressed, the reluctance of many Victorians to accept the social consequences of their own industrial success grew ever more pronounced. 4.

The population of Glasgow increased five times between 1801 and 1861. In A Summer In Skye published in 1865, Alexander Smith pointed out:-

"Its (Glasgow's) rapidity of growth is perhaps without a parallel in the kingdom. There are persons yet alive who remember when the river, now laden with shipping, was an

angler's stream, in whose gravelly pools the trout played and up whose rapids the salmon from the sea flashed like a sunbeam; and when the banks, now lined with warehouses and covered with merchandise of every description, really merited the name of the Broomy Law." \*

The rapid, uncoordinated growth of cheap housing to accommodate the workers streaming into the mushrooming industrial towns from the lowland countryside, the Highlands and from Ireland left little scope for good town planning. Dreary new towns such as those dominated by a single industry brought together large groups of working class people in an environment so different from that of the equivalent rural labourer that a new kind of proletarian society developed. This society involving both new work and leisure patterns, because of its very newness and scale, was often feared and misunderstood. In A Summer in Skye Smith described:-

"the mineral districts of Gartsherrie and Monkland, where everything is grimed with coal dust, where spring comes with a sooty face, where the soil seems calcined, where by night innumerable furnaces and iron works will rush out into vaster volume and wilder colour and for miles the country will be illuminated, restless with mighty lights and shades" \*

In less poetic language an 1865 Gazeteer described Coatbridge as:-

"situated in the very centre of the coalfields and iron works of Monkland amid a region of railways, furnaces. din and smoke.

Property all around it has, in recent times, risen amazingly in value; and the town itself has suddenly swollen from the condition of a village to the character and appearance of a bustling suburb of a commercial city. It contains malleable iron works, tube-works, foundries and other manufactories; and it is the centre of a circle of only about a mile in diameter, within whose circumference stands the large iron-works of Gartsherrie, Summerlee, Dundyvan, Calder and Langloan, with forty three smelting furnaces \_ \_ \_ \_ It perhaps owes a considerable breadth of peculiarity to the reckless, spendthrift habits of many of the miners." 7.

The rapid influx of Irish immigrants into Glasgow, Dundee and Edinburgh during the Irish potato famine greatly exacerbated the problems facing these cities, particularly problems of sewage, drainage and water supply. Between December 1848 and March 1849, that is a period of four months, forty three thousand Irish people moved into Glasgow. \* Like most immigrant communities tend to do, for the purpose of cheap accommodation, they concentrated in the oldest parts of the city. Not surprisingly, when cholera struck, as it did for the third time in 1853-4, one in ten people died in the epidemic in these areas. \* This association of the overcrowded city with disease contributed to a widely held belief that whereas in the country men had in some way retained wholesome virtues akin to its open landscape, the city imposed upon its unfortunate inhabitants a morality as cramped and twisted as its slummish lanes.

Puskin expressed his loathing of modern cities as places:-

"in which the object of men is not life, but labour; and in which the streets are not the avenues for the passing and procession of a happy people, but the drains for the discharge of a tormented mob, in which the only object in reaching any spot is to be transported to another." 10.

In such "loathsome centres of fornication and covetousness" 11. the individual ceased to have any significance, being no more than "one atom in a drift of human dust." 12. Thus Ruskin warned architects and artists to avoid cities. "There is that in their miserable walls which bricks up to death men's imaginations as surely as ever perished foresworn nun. An architect should live as little in cities as a painter." 13. For Ruskin,

"the great cry that rises from all our manufacturing cities, louder than their furnaces blast, is all in very deed for this that we manufacture everything there except men; we bleach cotton and strengthen steel, and refine sugar, and shape pottery; but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine or to form a single living spirit never enters into our estimate of advantages." 14.

"No great arts were practicable by any people, unless they were living contented lives, in pure air, out of the way of unsightly objects, and emancipated from unnecessary mechanic occupation." 15.

Ruskin's writings were widely read in Scotland by artists and collectors alike. When he wrote specifically on the conditions prevalent in Scottish cities the impact was even greater. Volume four of Fors Clavigera, published in 1874 had in it a letter entitled "A Scottish Fireside". <sup>16</sup>. It contained direct allusions to the conditions of the poor in Edinburgh. The letter closed with a section on what it meant to live a moral life. Ruskin heavily criticised those who felt that by simply "keeping the Sabbath" they were somehow superior to those who did not. The example he used to illustrate his point was the condition of the urban poor in Edinburgh. He quoted a long passage from Notes on Old Edinburgh by I. L. Bird <sup>17</sup>. which described the disease, filth and degradation of an Edinburgh slum and concluded "\_ \_ neither new-moon keeping, nor Sabbath keeping, nor fasting nor praying, will in anywise help an evangelical city like Edinburgh to stand in the judgment higher than Gomorrah, while her week-day arrangements for rent from her lower orders are \_ \_ [these]." <sup>18</sup>.

In less extreme but no less forceful terms than Ruskin, Hugh Miller characterised the cities of Scotland as the "dark parts" of the country where paganism prevailed. He attributed this not only to industrial development but to the fact that "the cities of the country have increased their population during the past fifty years greatly beyond the proportion of its rural districts" <sup>19</sup>. He argued that migrant workers had "removed mostly from country districts and small towns, in which they had been known, each by his own circle of neighbourhood and had lived, in consequence, under the wholesome influence of public opinion." <sup>20</sup>.

In much the same way Samuel Smiles felt that "Great towns do not necessarily produce great men. On the contrary the tendency of life and pursuits in great towns is rather to produce small men." <sup>21</sup>.

The anonymity of the city had permitted a lessening of standards which over two or three generations, led to a physical, moral and spiritual degradation. <sup>22</sup>. Many writers of the time commented on the appearance of the inhabitants of the poorest parts of their cities.

In true Calvinist style Alexander Smith warned any visitor to the Cowgate of Edinburgh that:-

"shoals of hideous faces will oppress you, sodden countenances of brutal men, women with loud voices and frantic gesticulations, children who have never known innocence. It is amazing of what ugliness the human face is capable. The devil marks his children as a shepherd marks his sheep - that he may know them and claim them again. Many a face flits past here bearing the sign-manual of the fiend." <sup>23</sup>.

Similarly Hugh Miller described faces to be seen in the High Streets of Edinburgh and Glasgow where "the features are generally bloated and overcharged, the profile lines usually concave, the complexion coarse and high, and the expression that of a dissipation and sensuality become chronic and inherent." <sup>24</sup>.

Urban existence was condemned at every turn. However, there were positive ideas as well as negative criticism. An adequate sanitary dwelling was a prerequisite for happy family life Miller argued, in a plea for improved housing for factory workers. Rural life was the model on which to base any improvements. For Miller, life in the country, at however humble a level, was infinitely to be preferred unless the iniquitous bothy system was present. <sup>25</sup>.

"We are all aware that the decent portion of our country population look with absolute horror on the habitual circumstances of a town life. <sup>26</sup>. And why so? Is it not because in their country dwellings they have been accustomed to the sacred integrity of the family, and that their isolated cottage was a home, containing father, mother and children; God's first institute - a family? The cottage may be small, ill-thatched, ill-ventilated, ill-floored and smoky; it may have its dubs, its puddles, and its national midden; It may be high up on a hill where winter blasts and winter snows are more familiar than blue skies and green fields; or it may be down in a glen, miles away from other mortal habitation, so solitary, that every stranger who appears is a spectacle and amazement to the children. No matter, wherever or whatever it may be, it is a home, and contains a family every member of which would look with instinctive horror at the indiscriminate sort of existence common in many of our towns." <sup>27</sup>.

Increasingly in the nineteenth century men came to be seen as the victims rather than the directors of progress. The changes taking place were imperfectly understood but all too clearly apparent. What was not clear was how best to deal with them. The city was an alien environment where established institutions no longer served, and where men lost their individual values and sense of belonging. The important relationship between the individual and the community was destroyed. Old patterns of behaviour and thought were assailed on all sides by new experiences, so that they no longer served as a guide for living in the complexities of the evolving urban surroundings. <sup>29</sup>. The city came to be the symbolic expression of the bewildering changes which had taken place in the accepted view of the harmonious relationship between Man, Nature and God. Tom Graham's Alone in London (Illustration 2.) reveals this attitude towards the city. The artist portrayed the city as the potential ruin of the young girl. Implicit in the picture is the threat of ultimate degradation and disaster in a friendless, uncaring environment. <sup>30</sup>.

Cultural patterns are evolved over long periods of time. <sup>30</sup>. They are absorbed by the individual as are his experiences with nature as part of his objective experience. In this way it becomes part of his psychic content. Thus Victorians in urban Scotland as elsewhere were essentially part of a transitional culture which included not only a gradual accretion of new urban modes of daily behaviour but also much of the historic influence of earlier patterns of behaviour deriving from rural experience. This community development, welding old and new patterns into a complex culture with a clear urban identity, proceeded over two or three

generations. For those living through this process of adjustment there was no clear image with which the artist might seek to identify himself. <sup>31</sup>.

Thus the artist's natural inclination to paint well loved rural areas was strengthened by the prevalent intellectual attitudes of the time. The great economic and demographic changes which had transformed society created a degree of confusion and a sense of menace even among those who materially benefitted from them most. There was "a canker at the heart of the peach" <sup>32</sup>. Alexander Smith's descriptions of the Cowgate and Canongate in Edinburgh bear witness to the changes which had taken place there. The Cowgate was a place where "many an Edinburgh man has never set foot" for it had become:-

"one of the world's sights and one that does not particularly raise your estimate of human nature. <sup>33</sup>.

The Canongate has fallen from its high estate. Quite another race of people are its present inhabitants. The views to be seen are not genteel. Whisky has supplanted claret. Wild, half-naked children swarm round every doorstep. Ruffians lounge about the mouths of the wynds. Female faces worthy of the Inferno, look down from broken windows. Riots are frequent; and drunken mothers reel past scolding white atomies of children that nestle wailing in their bosoms - little wretches to whom Death were the greatest benefactor." <sup>34</sup>.

Painters then, convinced of the necessity of art encompassing a moral lesson for society, were also assailed by a climate of belief which decried

the new industrial cities. The artists themselves were well aware of the debate. Chalmers, who had spent fourteen days at the Manchester International Exhibition of 1857, was a professed admirer of Ruskin, and almost certainly heard the critic's two lectures on The Political Economy of Art. <sup>28</sup>. Ruskin's lectures, which outlined a rather paternal brand of socialism, set the tone for the author's developing social philosophy. The famous phrase "soldiers of the ploughshare" occurs in these lectures and might almost be a title from a rural genre painting by Chalmers. Chalmers was accompanied on this trip to Manchester by William McTaggart and Robert Law, a friend from Montrose. George Reid did not hear Ruskin speak but certainly read the lectures after they were published in book form.

The upshot of all this anti-urban, pro-rural philosophising was a general feeling of dislocation and confusion spread throughout society.

Sociologists have frequently examined and documented this response to rapid cultural, economic and demographic change. The behaviour of the people living through the change is always the same. The most overt manifestation of the changes becomes the focus for the emotions generated by the transformation. The transformation itself may be exciting but is also frequently frightening and confusing. Along with the machine the city was the most tangible result of the tremendous changes in Victorian society. It therefore attracted the brunt of the ire directed at the still evolving and confusing culture. The city came to be seen as the cause of the ills of society, and not a result of the ills of that society.

In Victorian Britain there grew up a myth of the evils of urban life and the purity and goodness of life in the country. This myth pervaded poetry,

fiction and much painting, almost to the end of the century. The majority of painting in the period c.1860-80 failed to address directly the problems of the realities of life in the city. However, in the way that it avoided the city and regressed, almost to a "happier time", with visions of "England, happy in her homes, and joyous in her hearty cheer, and peaceful in her snug firesides", <sup>36</sup>. the paintings alluded to the more profound effects of the huge shock of the rapid urbanisation of the country.

Even when new forms of behaviour and thought emerged within the industrial city, they were often not recognised since the dislocation of the old forms very often intensifies the emotional attachments to them. <sup>37</sup>. People living in a period of rapid change may feel that while their old values no longer seem relevant, nevertheless they cling to them as there seems to be nothing to take their place.

For Victorian Scots of sensibility who were closer to their rural past, this impulse to retreat from the complexities of the developing industrial society must have been even stronger. <sup>38</sup>. In so far as they were men of their time, the artists working in the period c.1860-1880, reacted to the view of the city portrayed by writers such as Carlyle, Miller, Smith, Smiles and Ruskin and its relationship to the rural environment. Certainly in the thought and culture of the period the nostalgia for a fading, if not yet faded, rural past was a potent force at least up to the 1890's and arguably right up to the outbreak of the first World War. <sup>39</sup>. This climate of ideas can be seen acting on painters throughout Britain. At the most basic level, the motivation for a painting such as Myles Birkett Foster's Making Hay While The Sun Shines (Illustration 3.) is the same for as William Collins'

Rustic Civility, Thomas Faed's The Mitherless Bairn or Chalmers' The Legend.  
(Illustration 4.)

Painters such as Chalmers are often seen as ideologically identical to, for example, Birkett Foster. H. D. Rodee in his Ph. D thesis Scenes of Urban and Rural Poverty in Victorian Painting and their development 1850 to 1890, explicitly states in his introduction that "Since most Victorian Painters were trained in London, exhibited there eventually, or were influenced by the men and movements in the capital, 'British' is understood to be 'English'.<sup>40</sup>. This specifically excludes any possibility that the nature of Scottish, or for that matter Irish or Welsh, society was sufficiently different from London society, and would exert markedly different pressures on an artist and so produce works with different meanings.

By examining the paintings of the artists who remained in Scotland, and comparing them to the "voluntary exiles" as Chalmers termed those Scots who went to London, a difference in approach becomes clear. The paintings of Orchardson and Pettie who, after 1862, were based in London, uphold the academic tradition of linear draughtsmanship before the freedom of colour. This is in distinct contrast to the best of the painters who remained in Edinburgh. The work of Chalmers or Reid or McTaggart is not similarly based. The linear element is found also in the second rank of the painters who went south - the Burr brothers for example and Thomas Graham. The distinction can be seen again in the previous generation of London Scots. Thomas Faed's elegant rural genre paintings are crisply and precisely drawn.

It has been suggested that the lack of a strong academic tradition in Scotland accounts for the technical innovation of Chalmers and others in rejecting hard linearity. The London Scots, the argument states, were subject to the weight of the long tradition of academic draughtsmanship promoted by the Royal Academy; the Edinburgh painters were relatively free to do as they pleased. <sup>41</sup>. The academic drawing practiced and promoted by such stalwarts of the R.S.A. as George Harvey, Horatio McCulloch and James Drummond ought to be considered in any debate on this subject. There was strong pressure placed on Reid by the older generation of painters to conform to traditional neo-classical drawing practice. Chalmers too was well aware of the fashion of the age for tightly drawn, crisply contoured images, but refused to conform to it. <sup>42</sup>. It will be argued that there was nothing inherent in Scottish training or artistic practice that promoted a rejection of hard linear drawing. The response of the younger Edinburgh based artists to their society, and their need to both express an emotional reaction to their subject, and to elicit an emotional response from their audience, led them to paint in a particular manner. The content dictated the form. The form was different from that of the painters who were removed from Scottish society and were free from its incumbent attitudes and pressures.

This proposition can be examined directly by briefly considering the work of Hugh Cameron. Cameron lived and worked in Scotland until 1876 when he too made the move to London. <sup>43</sup>. There is a marked difference between his typical pre-London work, and that of his London and post-London periods. He was at his most expressive when he most closely approached Chalmers in technique and sentiment. In the 1870's, before going to London, Cameron

produced a number of paintings depicting Scottish rural peasantry engaged in hard country tasks, paintings such as A Lonely Life (Illustration 5.) of 1873. His paintings after 1876 - The Little Housewife (Illustration 6.) for example, <sup>44</sup>. while often treating subjects similar to his earlier work are painted in a noticeably different manner. They are "a sweetened and softened version of Millet's Barbizon subjects." <sup>45</sup>. These works actually recall more Birkett Foster than Millet or Chalmers. The message inherent in A Lonely Life will be examined in detail later <sup>46</sup>. what is significant in this context is the change in technique evident between 1873 and 1880. The expressive use of paint, the bold brushwork the "vision of the undefined" <sup>47</sup>. as The Art Journal described his early work, gave way, after his move south to a more intricate, more precisely delineated and less painterly method. <sup>48</sup>.

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### The Influence of the Church in Scotland

The doctrine of "Self-Help" received its most populist and forceful promotion from a Scot, Samuel Smiles. Certainly it was a British phenomenon, not an exclusively Scottish one, but in Scotland its application had a unique aspect. Chambers Information is further demonstration of this. The flat statement in the 1857 essay on "Social Economics of the Industrial Orders" included in Chambers Information stated that:-

"While it is allowed that the need when it does exist, must and ought to be relieved, all must likewise see that, in the effort to diminish one immediate and dominant evil, another of a

serious nature is introduced. The working man is morally deteriorated by ceasing to be self dependent." <sup>49</sup>.

The message it carries was given widespread credence throughout Britain, but once more with a distinctly different slant in Scotland. The entire legislative history which documents the rise of the English workhouse system as an institution so unpleasant that people must be truly desperate to commit themselves to it, springs from the idea that free outdoor aid must be given only as a last resort. In Scotland the "Poor's House" as distinct from the "Work House" promoted self-reliance in a rather different manner. The system of outdoor relief, abolished in England with the introduction of the 1835 Poor Law Amendment Act, continued to be available in the vast majority of Scottish parishes. <sup>50</sup>. In Scotland society had one fundamental difference in its approach to social issues. That difference was the Calvinist doctrine of predestination as perceived by Scottish Presbyterians. <sup>51</sup>.

Considering Calvin's views on Art as they are definable from his writings, N.P. Ramey <sup>52</sup>. characterised the theologian's approach as promoting art which was "Protestant, realistic and moral" <sup>53</sup>. Art was to be Protestant in that it repudiated the Roman Catholic use of art in the routine ceremonial functioning of the church; realistic in that it promoted only the painting of images of real life and the real world. Calvin wrote "It remaineth therefore lawful that only those things be painted and graven whereof our eyes are capable:" <sup>54</sup>. And finally moral in that art should not be "defiled by disorderly abuse", or, "turned to our own destruction." <sup>55</sup>. To stretch a point, Calvin's espousal of painting only those things "whereof our eyes are

capable" <sup>56</sup>. coupled with his repeated assertion of the worth of the individual no matter what his station, seems very close in spirit to innumerable peasant genre paintings. The dedicatory Epistle to Francis 1, where Calvin told how he came to write the Institutes for the sake of the common people, and passages in the book itself might be reflected in the subject matter of peasant genre painting from the Le Nain brothers to

Courbet, Israels and Chalmers. For example:-

"Whom do the Papists call lay and unlearned men whose unskilfulness may bear to be taught by images? Forsooth even those whom the Lord acknowledgeth for His disciples, to whom He vouchsafeth to reveal the heavenly wisdom, whom He willeth to be instructed with the wholesome mysteries of His kingdom." <sup>57</sup>.

Painting in Scotland was strongly influenced by the country's Presbyterian brand of Calvinism. The Bible is repeatedly seen in the hands of the people. Just Knows and Knows no More Her Bible True (Illustration 7.) shows an elderly figure reading a bible. The title Chalmers gave the work stressed the importance placed on personal recourse to the bible. The title suggests that even if this figure is ignorant in all worldly matters she still has, in her scriptural knowledge, the basis for a dignified human existence. This humanity and dignity and its foundation in individual religious learning is here, as always, linked with rural life. This connection with morality, religion, rural life and individual dignity everywhere abounds. It is either specific in works such as Just Knows and Knows no More Her Bible True, Bible Story, and Prayer (Illustration 8.) all by Chalmers, or implicit in the choice of "humble" scenes as subjects worthy of representation and praise, as in The Legend [Chalmers], (Illustration 4.) Broadsea [G. Reid], (Illustration 9.) and A Lonely Life [H. Cameron]. (Illustration 5.) Scottish portraiture too might be construed as Calvinist. The theological stress laid on character is the main thrust of all work in this field from Jameson (d. 1644) to Reid.

Calvinism in Scottish landscape painting is most clearly to be found in the work of Rev. John Thomson. His works, often evoking a sense of harmony whether in a storm or in clear weather, seem almost to illustrate passages of Calvin's writing. <sup>50</sup>. That is not to say that landscapes by painters after 1860 are not affected by the still pervasive influence of the church. Rather they echoed the sentiments of the genre paintings. They were concerned not with an approach to the land as God's creation but more with the land as a setting for human activity, activity by a section of the population felt to be the holders of profound truths about human existence.

The influence that Presbyterian thinking had throughout the whole of nineteenth century Scottish society was immense. At times Calvinist doctrine, which it should be noted, pervaded not just the majority Scottish Presbyterians, but to greater or lesser degrees the Free Church movement, the Baptists, the Methodists and the Congregationalists, actively fought against certain aspects of social reform. The ideological precepts of Calvinism held to a belief that secular intervention in divine providence was indefensible. Such arguments were advanced frequently and with great effect in Scotland. While the church itself certainly never actively campaigned against material aid for the poor, and indeed had its own long standing tradition of poor relief, the objections raised in the country against charity can reasonably be ascribed to the middle-class' understanding of Calvinist teachings. For example it was secular understanding of religious strictures that prevented sanitary reform, which was being promoted in an attempt to counteract the ravages of cholera epidemics which flared in Britain four times between 1832 and 1867. <sup>51</sup>. Typhus too was held by many middle class people to be God's will, and not

infrequently was categorised as a disease brought about as much by spiritual degeneracy as by financial destitution. The failure to recognise the differences between typhus and typhoid must have led to instances of awkward questions being asked of the sufferers of typhoid when the disease struck down members of the richer classes. When cholera first appeared in Britain in 1832 the general belief was that it was simply, like typhus, another manifestation of the omnipotence of God. This was not just the popular view but was believed to be true by the clergy and the medical profession. John Lizars, the medical officer at the cholera hospital in Edinburgh, wrote in 1832 that cholera "has been cast upon us by the inscrutable workings of divine Providence, which human power cannot avert." People could only bow "with reverence and humility to the inscrutable decrees of HIM, whose fiat they have vainly tried to avert." 60.

The idea that it was moral failings that precipitated the disease, and that these moral failings were themselves the product of the city, appeared again and again. On the island of Lewis it was believed that God would not send the plague to Lewis, but that even if he did, then it would not affect the rural poor in the way it affected urban poor. The rural poor would be spared because they did not lead the dissipated lives of the city dwellers.

The firmly entrenched Calvinist belief in the hopelessness of attempting to thwart the workings of God's will can be seen to have had such an effect in Scotland that it easily acted on secular activities. The climate of belief though, was so strong, and so widespread, that it acted in myriad different ways. The cholera epidemics and blocked attempts at sanitary legislation

simply form one dramatic example of the power of Scottish beliefs and their fundamental difference from contemporary England.

Essentially it was Calvinism that formed the theoretical basis for the Scottish rejection of pure charity and promotion of self help.

"Politically, socially and morally, a man can be said to fulfil his proper function only when he trusts to his own right arm for the support of himself and his family and leans upon no one save in the general sense in which mankind are all mutually dependent." 61.

From Henry Cockburn in the 1790's to Samuel Smiles in the 1850's-80's, the message was the same. The poor were not aided simply by distributing money to them. The form of aid to be encouraged was that which would promote self-help. A community might be aided by ensuring that they had education and spiritual guidance in church. They could not be aided by simply handing out material goods, even if the need for those goods was glaringly obvious. The only correct method of aid was to give the community what was seen as the means to go out and get their own share of material wealth for themselves. 62.

These beliefs account for the complete lack of charity pictures in Scottish genre painting. There is no equivalent of William Mulready's Train up a Child in the Way he Should go, (Illustration 10.) of 1841 showing a child being encouraged to give a coin to three beggars, or of Thomas Brooks' Relenting, (Illustration 11.) which depicts a landlord having second

thoughts about evicting a widow and her family.

More typical of Scottish sentiment as regards the subject of money and the poor is George Harvey's The Penny Savings Bank (Illustration 12) of 1864. The poor are depicted, albeit not without humour, as attempting to better their lot by committing a small amount to a savings bank. Harvey's painting was recognised in Scotland as being based on a real "penny bank" in Leith which had opened some eleven years earlier. <sup>63</sup>.

Here then is a fundamental difference that marks Scottish painting from English. When this difference - the Calvinist inspired push towards self-help rather than material largesse - is coupled with the anti-urban sensibilities widespread in nineteenth century Britain already discussed, the results are highly individual. The establishment and maintenance of schools and churches to give the working classes the chance to better themselves was common practice. Finally, the values promoted by those involved in what might be termed "social work" were unequivocally and explicitly the values of the country rather than the values of the town.

Hugh Miller made the comparison directly <sup>64</sup> in "Our Working Classes". Thomas Chalmers sought to impose a rural ideal, based on the farm labourer's cottage and the country parish church, on the poor of the industrial parish of Tron in Glasgow among whom he worked. Rural life was seen as possessing things fundamental to the human condition which were being systematically destroyed by increasing industrialisation. While a simplistic "back to the land" movement was impossible, there existed a very firm belief that somehow man was a product of a natural order which found

its expression in rural life, and that this order was being destroyed. It was not just that in the country man felt the beneficent power of the Creator at first hand. It was more practical than that. In the country people lived in small communities where each was known to all, as Hugh Miller said, "under the wholesome influence of public opinion." In the country people lived in family units, and not packed forty to a room, sleeping in two shifts, as was recorded happening in the Gallowgate in Glasgow. In the country each family lived in its own home, not communally and without any suggestion of private property or personal privacy.

All these contrasts were made explicitly. The rural system of values and social behaviour was the model on which any reformation of urban deprivation was to be based. Praise for rural life, the rural peasantry, rural manners, mores, dress and scenery was not necessarily specific. It was collective. It was the expression of an idea of human dignity and decency over a reality of human deprivation and misery.

This then is the nature of Scotland c.1860. These are the beliefs and attitudes woven into the very fabric of the society in which the painters lived. The results of these beliefs and attitudes are manifest.

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#### Scottish Artists and The City

In common with the rest of society, the painters held a decidedly ambivalent attitude towards their own time. By and large cities and industrialisation simply were not subjects for painting, unless augmented by

some additional narrative element. Sam Bough painted the High Street in Edinburgh (Illustration 13.) in 1862 but only because it was the setting for a depiction of a group of marching Gordon Highlanders. A more common reaction was that of John MacWhirter who came up to Edinburgh from London in 1887. He came intending to paint a distant view of the city from Salisbury Crags, but found it impossible to work on the painting because of a persistent pall of smoke and fumes which hung in the air. There was simply no suggestion that because cities frequently had pollution lying over them, indeed with a nick-name like "Auld Reekie" Edinburgh was notorious for it, that this would be a valid way to represent the place. MacWhirter complained to other painters of the impossibility of working in those conditions. They sympathised with him. <sup>66</sup>. They too never thought of a smoking industrial city as a suitable subject for a painting. Even when apparently committed to representations of urban Scotland, painters simply edited out the images. In 1885 George Reid was commissioned to complete a series of illustrations charting the course of the river Clyde.

(Illustrations 14. & 15.) Reid's illustrations ignored the industrial aspect of the river almost entirely. Instead he concentrated on the rivers pastoral scenery. Any suggestion of a representation of Glasgow and the industrial significance of the river did not occur to Reid. His avoidance of urban subject matter is typical of nineteenth century attitudes. In a series of letters to his friend and patron John Forbes White, Reid exhibited all the widespread ambivalent attitude towards the city. This attitude can be said to be ambivalent because despite all his protestations he lived and worked in cities all his life. <sup>66</sup>. Writing to White from London in July 1870, Reid explained why he would not consider settling in London as the designer Daniel Cottier had suggested to him. <sup>67</sup>. "I should like to spend pretty much

the life of a mere student. There seems so many things that one ought to learn in peace and quietness which the stir and strain of an existence here would render impossible." 68. Once back in Scotland Reid wrote again to White the following month criticising severely the then current Royal Academy exhibition which, for him, exemplified a nineteenth century paradox in relation to painting. He wrote "We are in the habit of congratulating ourselves that we live in this enlightened nineteenth century. But why with all our enlightenment are we still so much in darkness?" 69. The explanation, Reid claimed, lay in the emphasis on financial reward for painting. Millais, Leslie, Landseer, Frith, Faed and the rest were all acclaimed by London opinion not for what they painted, Reid felt, but for the amount for which their paintings were sold.

"Such a thing as a man painting out of pure love for the thing - with no ultimate end in view save and accept goodness in his work - is never heard of.

In short this element of money meets you in London at every turn." 70.

Like Ruskin and many concerned Victorians, Reid considered social behaviour in personal ethical terms. Social reform through political action was not the answer. The underlying need was for personal reformation. Reid was concerned that art had been affected by what he saw as the fundamental greed at the basis of the nineteenth century economy.

"Nowadays we have succeeded in combining after an amazing fashion two very different things. The service of God and Mammon

- I should rather say Mammon and God - if due priority is to be observed - what holds good of the whole country holds good of its minor subdivisions - and its art has not escaped." 71.

Something of this sense of dislocation can be seen also in Chalmers attitude towards London where so many of his friends had settled as painters. Like MacTaggart, he rejoiced in their success and at times, when things seemed to be going badly for him, Chalmers considered going to London himself. 72. The opportunity to seek advancement in England was certainly there and repeated offers of patronage and support were made to him by Admiral Warde. 73. Pinnington pointed out that "He had more influential friends in the south than his Edinburgh acquaintances knew, and probably had stronger inducements held out to him to try the wider field of London than any of his compatriots." 74. He maintained all his connections with the London based Scots and made friends with prominent English painters also. 75. Yet while for many years he "held London in reserve" 76. he did not in the end choose to settle there. The emotional bonds which tied Chalmers to rural Scotland were too strong.

For Chalmers, accustomed from childhood to ready access to the countryside, a visit to a rural environment, however brief, was also a source of great pleasure. His friend and patron James M. Gow, described the effect of a short visit in 1865 to Elie at a time when Chalmers, working in Edinburgh, had been worried and dispirited. "Exhilarated by the fresh air and feeling to the full the charm of the country, he was as full of fun and frolic as a boy. The little trip did him a great deal of good and he went back to work with new vigour and courage." 77. This sense of repose, renewal and sensual

gratification identified with withdrawal from the city to a more natural environment is expressed by the best of the rural genre and landscape of Chalmers, Reid and others.

In later years Glenesk became Chalmers' regular refuge from the city. 70. Like Reid a little later, Chalmers relied heavily on portrait commissions for which the city was a suitable working location, but, while he enjoyed the amenities of Edinburgh and his connections with the Royal Scottish Academy where he had many friends, he never regarded the city as his home. 71. In a letter to MacTaggart in October 1863, after a three month stay in Montrose, his native town, he wrote "Just got back to Auld Reekie yesterday and today, as usual I feel deeply melancholy after leaving home" 00.

Under the stimuli mentioned, Scottish artists painted rural pictures which recalled the recent past and dying present. These works are ideologically identical to the writings of, for example, Hugh Miller. They explicitly promote the values and attitudes of rural life, and implicitly decry urban society. They are about cultural values in nineteenth century Scotland. They are not a strict portrayal of the reality of rural existence. That is not their purpose. The pictures promote an attitude to humanity and a concern for society at large rather than a specific interest in the minutiae of the lot of individual characters.

The paintings are now popularly regarded as sentimental and an irrelevance in relation to the reality of rural existence in the nineteenth century. Within the Victorian period the term "sentiment" used in relation to

painting was one of approbation. As employed by George Reid and John Forbes White, it implied an almost indefinable quality exhibited by an artist which was variously referred to as "sentiment", "sympathy", "feeling", "truth" and "pathos". <sup>11</sup>. It is therefore important to distinguish between this type of sentiment and sentimentality.

James Caw claimed "Scotsmen, as a whole are \_ \_ sensitive to the presence of sentiment in all forms of art." <sup>12</sup>. Their enthusiasm for Burns is perhaps because:-

"\_ \_ in his poetry they find full and unrestrained expression of their own pent-up emotion, and quoting his verses can talk enthusiastically about the depth of feeling and nobility and humanity of the ideas expressed without committing themselves personally. Their enthusiasm is really for feelings of their own about which they would not care to speak to others on their own initiative." <sup>13</sup>.

In an attempt to express the desired emotion, to emphasise the message, the painters would distort reality somewhat. This distortion can be seen to have a number of identifiable and repeated traits. The painters highlighted certain areas, sometimes literally, and concentrated on them in an attempt to emphasize the "message" of the piece. Absolute fidelity to reality, when this is portrayed as a profusion of accurate details was seen as undesirable because it concentrated on the external lifeless aspects of existence. It got in the way of a sympathetic response to the subject, when the subject was the life of the characters portrayed.

The pictures are not a summary of everyday peasant life. Rather they are a heightening, an exaggeration, of those features which gave the artist his own particular insight, and created, for him, an area of understanding and appreciation which he was seeking to portray.

More important than the accuracy of the depiction was the artist's ability to create out of his selection and exaggeration of given elements, a new understanding about his subject. If the term "Rural Nostalgia" is used to cover all those works exhibiting the above characteristics, a very large number of different subjects are included. It is not proposed to give here an exhaustive analysis of the precise relationship between the reality and the portrayal in every case. <sup>24</sup>. The examination of a few paintings will serve to illustrate the workings and functions of the "heightening" described.

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### Subjects of Rural Nostalgia

Hugh Cameron's 1873 work A Lonely Life (Illustration 5.) exhibits all the above characteristics. The solitary figure set against the barren landscape illustrates the title very clearly. The bundle of sticks indicates too that it is a hard life with few luxuries. The dress of the figure however, and the cottage she is about to enter are very far from an accurate portrayal of rural life. The woman's clothing is simply of too high a quality. The woven basket at her feet is a well crafted object - an absurd impossibility if the painting was to be thought of as an accurate rendition of a typical Highland lifestyle. Similarly the cottage is far too grand. There is a solid

thatch roof and a relatively well finished wooden door. The woman is actually in the act of unlocking the door with a key. This is pure fantasy. An isolated moorland cottage would probably not have had a door swinging clear on its hinges and certainly would not have had a lock and key.

A Lonely Life is implicitly set in The Highlands and it was the Highlands that was the most poverty stricken area. This region was the standard location of the "black houses" - rough stone and turf dwellings with a heather thatch, no ceiling, solid floor, chimney or windows. "Black-houses" were simply hovels of stone and earth. Cameron's cottage has high straight limewashed walls, a lintel over the door and there is a window. There is even a wooden bench to the left of the door that is fashioned out of a smoothly round turned leg and a flat planed plank for a seat. All this in an area that is desolate and totally devoid of trees.

This is not, and was never intended to be, a view of reality. The painting was commissioned from Cameron by John McGavin. McGavin had a large collection of paintings including works by Israels, J. Maris and J.F. Millet. \*\* It is not unreasonable to assume that the collector viewed this work as being in keeping with the rest of the paintings in his possession. The work is in keeping. This is not a sentimental sweetly idealistic view of nature. \*\*.

The exaggerations are there to aid the generation of a sympathetic viewer response to the subject. Cameron selected and heightened selected parts of his observed reality to lead the viewer into a new area of understanding and appreciation. The aims of the painting are precisely those already

discussed. He praised those aspects of rural life felt to be essential for a dignified human existence. The woman's life is lonely but she is not a broken defeated figure. She has dignity: dignity expressed in the portrayal of her taking possession again of her own house. As Miller remarked the isolated cottage was a "home". It was not just a sleeping place to be shared by innumerable, unknowable others. One of the great virtues of country life over the urban slums was seen to be the existence of homes, not just houses. Cameron here exaggerated and distorted his subject away from reality to point out the humanity derived from this simple fact. There is no literal "truth" in the painting, no accumulation of details and facts that progressively lead to a feeling of matter of fact accuracy. These "facts" were ignored in favour of creating the correct atmosphere for a sympathetic response.

This aim was clearly understood by Cameron's contemporaries. While the artist was working on the painting George Reid saw it and wrote to a friend concerning it. Reid understood the painting not as a representation of reality, but as a painting about emotions.

"Cameron's principle picture is not large in size, but promises to be great in every other quality. An old woman coming home to her cottage in the gloaming sets her basket down while she introduces the key into the key hole. She has a bundle of gathered sticks under her other arm. The feeling of loneliness and sadness is begining to creep over the picture in a very beautiful way." 97.

The same approach is seen again in the work of Chalmers. The Legend, (Illustration 4.) which the artist worked on for fourteen years until his death in 1878, is again a rural subject. Again there are very few details shown. He made no attempt to build up a convincing interior by adding more and more objects. The reason for this again is the same. Chalmers sought to concentrate his viewer's attention on the aspect of the painting most important to him, the idea of community, of interaction and communication between the ages. To return to Miller once more, Chalmers was portraying a country district where everyone was known "each by his own circle of neighbourhood and had lived, in consequence, under the wholesome influence of public opinion." \*\*.

Chalmers avoided details he thought to be positively wrong in the atmosphere he was trying to create. He wrote regarding another commission to his friend and patron G.B. Simpson. The piece Chalmers was working on was called Auld John Brown.

"Well you will be wanting to hear of 'John Brown' - I've had a hitch with him - the background puzzled me terribly - I tried the grand dodge - viz very simple - it got tame and uninteresting - I then tried to get interest by putting objects in - it then got commonplace and horrible - I am disgusted of course and have been fighting awfully hard day and night." \*\*.

Chalmers confirmed this as a firm belief of his in another letter to Simpson.

"I went up tonight to a fellows (who shall be nameless) and saw a great picture 5 or 6 feet 50-60 or 100 figures in it - bosh, rubbish, all paint, Robertsons medium, and canvas, nothing earnest. Nothing true not a bit that you could affectionately love. - That is the stuff for this age - but I'll be hanged if I do it." ∞.

The Legend contains very few "objects". The painting is unfinished but Chalmers remaining task was to work on the definition of some of the children. Four of the children are very ill-defined. There would have been no great additions to the composition. ∞. The "sentiment", "feeling", "truth" that Chalmers sought in The Legend was very elusive. Like Cameron he moved away from literal truths in search of insight and understanding into his subject. In Chalmers' case the interior is probably fairly accurate. It is rude and smoky. Perhaps the figures are slightly overdressed but again for similar reasons to Cameron. The major departure from objective truth in The Legend comes in the artist's lighting scheme. He accurately depicted a small window in the cottage wall, although it probably would not have had glass. However the light he required to force home his points was far more dramatic than the one to be found in nature. The cottage would have been too dark to show anything, particularly since the fire and the interior setting, would appear to point to it being something other than a bright summer day outside. Chalmers use of a strong directional light coming from somewhere in the region of the storyteller dramatised the whole interior. It also lent itself to interpretations of light in a metaphorical sense - perhaps as wisdom and understanding. The praise for the lives of the people

and the ideas of community are all emphasized by the chosen "unreal" lighting system. <sup>22</sup>.

Chalmers' remarks concerning pictures being "all paint" and containing "nothing true" are quite complex. They refer not only to the content of the paintings but also to the form. The handling of the paint and its use for expressive ends will be covered in chapter 5. However, observations made by George Reid and J.F. White are also relevant to the question of content and form in relation to motivation and expressive intention in the works. Reid and White returned to this theme frequently in Thoughts On Art, a pamphlet which passed comment on the R.S.A. of 1868, and on the state of art in Scotland in general. <sup>23</sup>. He complained of paintings which suffered from an excess of details <sup>24</sup>. and of Waller Paton's landscapes having no feeling for nature. He claimed that they were "hard and without nature". <sup>25</sup>.

All this is very different from both the painting and the criticism of rural genre being displayed in contemporary London. "Truth" was perceived in the 1863 Art Journal review of the Royal Academy as accuracy of detail. Commenting on T. Faed's Train up a Child it was observed

"The accessories, which give the picture much of its value, are evidently taken from life - furnished, in fact, by minute studies made from cottage interiors. The bellows, the bed, the chair, the broken slate, all give circumstantial reality to this humble scene." <sup>26</sup>.

This desire to personalise a painting, to have it represent specific incidents in the life of specific people lasted, in England, right throughout the period c.1860-1880.

Thomas Faed (1826-1900), though trained at the Trustees Academy from 1844, settled in London in 1852, when still only 26. His art was part of the mid-Victorian fashion for Scotland and he painted pictures which sprang directly from the contemporary romantic vision of Scotland rather than from the reality of the country. Faed successfully catered for the Victorian enjoyment of painting as a drama of human actions concerning readily identifiable types of people to whom the viewer might relate in much the same way as to the characters in a modern "soap opera".<sup>27</sup> Without any unpleasant intrusion of reality those viewing could feel they had revealed to them "truth to the incidents and motives of humble peasant life."<sup>28</sup> They could consider all the characters taking part, closely examine all the telling background detail to gain more information about the "story" and perhaps detect some secondary plot within. They could even, as some reviewers did, postulate a happy ending to a particularly moving event. The reviewer of Luke Fildes' Widower (Illustration 16.) exhibited on the R. A. in 1876, felt that "there has not been such an intense piece of sentiment in the Academy since Thomas Faed's From Dawn to Sunset," and claimed that the grieving widowed father who kisses his dying child might be "but of lowly kind; but the love in that kiss, and the yearning in that look, place him on a level with the lordliest on earth." He foresaw, by paying great attention to the detail of the painting, that all would end well. He explained to his readers that "were the danger as extreme as the poor father thinks, the child's hands would have been closed, and closed over the thumbs."<sup>29</sup>

Ultimately this type of rural genre is derived from David Wilkie. In much the same way as Faed and Fildes were discussed, Wilkie's rural interiors were praised and analysed in terms of their objective accuracy. In 1844 the Art Union analysed Wilkie's Blind Fiddler in detail and decided, on the evidence of the vegetables in the bottom left corner, that the whole scene took place in a market gardener's cottage! 100.

Scotland in the 1860's then, was a highly individual country. It shared a number of important general trends with the rest of Britain, but frequently gave them an individual slant. The anti-urban, pro-rural bias was not peculiar to Scotland. It spread right across the country, as did Ruskin's views on morality and art, and Smiles' ideas on self-help. However, the character of society in Scotland, influenced by the all pervasive Calvinist doctrine, moulded those general impulses in an individual manner. Having discussed the paintings of rural nostalgia, the following chapters document its collectors, and examine Scottish art in the context of wider developments in Europe.

## Footnotes

### CHAPTER ONE

1 John Ruskin, "The Cestus of Aglaia. Public and Private Art", The Works of John Ruskin, ed. E.T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, Library Edition, vol. xix, London 1903-1912, pp. 144-145.

2 John Ruskin, "The Two Paths"; Being Lectures On Art And Its Application To Decoration And Manufacture, Delivered in 1858-9", E.T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, *op. cit.*, vol. xvi, London, 1903-12, Lecture 1, p. 268.

3 Sir John Sinclair, Bart, The Statistical Account of Scotland drawn up from the communications of the ministers of the different parishes Volume XIII. Strathmartin, Edinburgh 1793, p. 97.

4 Richard L. Schoenwald, Training Urban Man. A Hypothesis about the Sanitary Movement, The Victorian City, vol. 2., ed H.J. Dyos and M. Wolff, London 1973, p. 669. refers to  
"the population which had to be induced to alter its behaviour and accept external control."

5 Alexander Smith, A Summer in Skye, Byway Books edition, 1983, p. 198. First published Edinburgh, 1865.

William Harriston in The Steam Boat Traveller's Remembrancer, Glasgow, 1824, could describe the later densely populated shipyards area of the Clyde thus:

"How pleasant the Broomlands appear

In the midst of yon pastoral slope.

So delightful the view is, that here  
Meditation might always have scope.

As Linthouse approaches the edge  
Of the deep-winding streams of the Clyde  
There is here little need of a hedge  
To enclose on the northern side."

6 Alexander Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

7 The Imperial Gazetteer of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1865, vol. 1, p. 286.

8 For a full discussion of comparable immigration in Dundee see  
Carol S. Bebb, The Chartist Movement in Dundee, B.Phil thesis, University of  
St Andrews, 1977.

9 On the other hand Glasgow was in the forefront of municipal enterprise  
in nineteenth century Britain. See Geoffrey Best, "The Scottish Victorian  
City", *Victorian Studies*, vol. xi, 1967/8, p. 338.

10 John Ruskin, "The Study of Architecture in Our Schools", Cook and  
Wedderburn *op. cit.*, vol. xix, p. 24.

11 John Ruskin, "Letters to the Clergy on the Lord's Prayer and The Church",  
Letter VIII, Cook and Wedderburn *op. cit.*, vol. xxxiv, p. 205.

12 John Ruskin, "The Study of Architecture in Our Schools", Cook and Wedderburn *op. cit.*, vol. xix, p. 24.

13 John Ruskin, Seven Lamps of Architecture, Cook and Wedderburn, *op. cit.*, vol. viii, p. 136.

14 John Ruskin, "The Nature of the Gothic", The Stones of Venice, vol.2. Chapter 6. Cook and Wedderburn, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 196.

15 John Ruskin, Fors Clavigera, 1, Letter 9, Cook and Wedderburn, *op. cit.*, vol. xxvii, p. 159.

16 John Ruskin, Fors Clavigera, 2, Letter 40, Cook and Wedderburn, *op. cit.*, vol. xxviii, pp. 62-78.

17 "We entered the first room by descending two steps. It seemed to be an old coal-cellar, with an earthen floor, shining in many places from damp, and from a greenish ooze which drained through the wall from a noxious collection of garbage outside upon which a small window could have looked had it not been filled up with brown paper and rags. There was no grate, but a small fire smouldered on the floor, surrounded by heaps of ashes. The roof was unceiled, the walls were rough and broken, the only light came in from the open door, which let in unwholesome smells and sounds. No cow or horse could thrive in such a hole. It was abominable. It measured eleven feet by six feet, and the rent was 10d per week paid in advance. It was nearly dark at noon, even with the door open; but as my eyes became accustomed to the dimness, I saw that the plishings consisted of an old

bed, a barrel with a flagstone on the top of it for a table, a three-legged stool, and an iron pot. A very ragged girl, sorely afflicted with ophthalmia, stood among the ashes doing nothing. She had never been inside a school or church. She did not know how to do anything, but 'did for her father and brother.' On a heap of straw, partly covered with sacking, which was the bed in which father, son and daughter slept, the brother, ill with rheumatism and sore legs, was lying moaning from under a heap of filthy rags. He had been a baker 'over in the New Town,' but seemed not very likely to recover. It looked as if the sick man had crept into his dark, damp lair, just to die of hopelessness. The father was past work, but 'sometimes got an odd job to do.' The sick man had supported the three. It was hard to be godly, impossible to be cleanly, impossible to be healthy in such circumstances.

"The next room was entered by a low, dark, impeded passage about twelve feet long, too filthy to be traversed without a light. At the extremity of this was a dark winding stair which led up to four superincumbent storeys of crowded subdivided rooms; and beyond this, to the right, a pitch-dark passage with a single 'room' on either side. It was not possible to believe that the most grinding greed could extort money from the human beings for the tenancy of such dens as those to which this passage led. They were lairs into which a starving animal might creep to die, but nothing more. Opening a dilapidated door, we found ourselves in a recess nearly six feet high, and nine feet in length by five in breadth. It was not absolutely dark yet matches aided our investigations even at noonday. There was an earthen floor full of holes, in some of which water had collected. The walls were black and rotten, and alive with woodlice. There was no grate. The rent paid for this evil den, which was only ventilated by the chimney is 1s per week,

or £2 12s. annually! The occupier was a mason's labourer, with a wife and three children. He had come to Edinburgh in search of work, and could not afford a 'higher rent.' The wife said that her husband took the 'wee drap.' So would the President of the Temperance League himself if he were hidden away in such a hole. The contents of this lair on our first visit were a great heap of ashes and other refuse in one corner, some damp musty straw in another, a broken box in the third, with a battered tin pannikin upon it, and nothing else of any kind saving two small children, nearly nude, covered with running sores, and pitiable from some eye disease. Their hair was not long, but felt into wisps, and alive with vermin. When we went in they were sitting among the ashes of an extinct fire, and blinked at the light from our matches. Here a neighbour said they sat all day, unless their mother was merciful enough to turn them into the gutter. We were there at eleven the following night, and found the mother a decent tidy body, at 'hame.' There was a small fire then, but no other light. She complained of little besides the darkness of the house, and said, in a tone of dull discontent, she supposed it was 'as good as such as they could expect in Edinburgh.'"

I.L. Bird, Notes on Old Edinburgh, Edinburgh, 1869, pp. 10-11.

18 John Ruskin, Fors Clavigera 1 Letter 9 Cook and Wedderburn *op. cit.*, vol. xxvii, p. 78.

19 Hugh Miller, My Schools and Schoolmasters or The Story of my Education, Edinburgh, 1905 edition, p. 363.

First published Edinburgh, 1854.

20 *idem*.

21 Samuel Smiles, Life and Labour, 2nd Edition, London, 1910, p. 355.

First published London, 1887.

22 This sense of spiritual degradation was evidenced by the attitude to typhus which many middle class people held.

"Typhus was widely recognised by the medical profession as a disease which responded to the vagaries of the trade cycle and reached its height in times of high unemployment and destitution, but because of its continual presence in areas of ungodliness and irreligion it remained in many middle class eyes as the disease of spiritual as well as economic destitution."

A.A. MacLaren, "Bourgeois Ideology and Victorian Philanthropy: The Contradictions of Cholera", Social Class in Scotland, ed A.A. MacLaren, Edinburgh, 1976.

23 Smith *op. cit.*, p. 32.

24 Miller *op. cit.*, p. 364.

25 The bothy system was particularly prevalent in the north east of Scotland although to some extent it occurred all over Scotland in the nineteenth century and earlier twentieth century. Unmarried farm labourers lived in the farm 'bothy' often a two roomed stone building with few facilities and comforts. All their possessions including their stored food were kept in wooden chests called kists. Living communally in harsh and often insanitary conditions bothy dwellers were notorious for lax moral

behaviour. Unlike the situation of earlier farm workers who had lived more closely in contact with the farmer often eating in the farm kitchen, those living in the bothy had no chance to experience either the controls of family life or the constraints of regular social contact with their employer.

For further information see Alexander Fenton Scottish Country Life Edinburgh, 1976, pp. 161, 188 and 219.

26 "Well regulated family life sometimes served as a metaphor for harmony in society at large."

J.V. Smith, "Manners, Morals and Mentalities; Reflections on the Popular Enlightenment of Early Nineteenth Century Scotland", Scottish Culture and Scottish Education, 1800-1980, Edited E.D. Humes and H.M. Paterson, Edinburgh, 1983, p. 32.

27 George Rosie, Hugh Miller Outrage and Order, Edinburgh, 1981, pp. 130-131, quoting Hugh Miller Our Working Classes June 17th, 1854.

This view of the benefits of life in the country was not uncommon. eg. "In cities a young man is but one of a multitude; his neighbours know nothing of him, and he knows nothing of them. He sees what he has always seen, and, provided his pleasures and wants are satisfied, he receives but little impulse towards further improvement. It is altogether different with the young man born in the country, who comes, as it were, fresh from his mother earth. There he is more of an individual; he is also more responsible to those about him."

Samuel Smiles, Life and Labour, 2nd Edition, London 1910, p. 356.

First published London 1887.

In spite of this Lowland people continued to leave the countryside voluntarily. T.C. Smout points out

"There is no doubt that many, both men and women, removed themselves voluntarily, and in a spirit of hope; rural life, though certainly not without its powerful compensations in terms of environment, nutrition and security, offered few prospects of high earnings and fewer of social mobility. - - - - - Farm work, said one witness to the Royal Commission on Labour in 1893, appeared as 'a rough, dirty, badly paid job, with long hours and few holidays.'"

T.C. Smout, A Century of the Scottish People 1830-1950, London, 1986, p. 60.

28 "Substantial sections of the emergent working class - many of them recent migrants from the countryside - found themselves confronted by a web of institutions seeking to impose values and norms having little immediate relevance to their former rural experience and life styles."

A. Allan MacLaren, Religion and Social Class: The Disruption Years in Aberdeen, London, 1974, p. 162.

29 Thomas A.F. Graham HRSA 1840-1906.

Alone in London c.1877, Perth Art Gallery and Museum.

30 A. Goldenweiser, History, Psychology and Culture, London, 1933, p. 89, defined culture in terms of both its communal and individual aspects and emphasised that while culture is psychological stemming, in the end, from

the individual, "as an integral entity culture is cumulative, historical, extra-individual."

31 Nicholas Taylor, "The Awful Sublimity of the Victorian City; Its Aesthetic and Architectural origins", The Victorian City, vol.2, p. 431, argues

"The ways in which the Victorians argued about the environment of their cities, even about such distinctively nineteenth century inventions as railways and gasworks and philanthropic tenements were rooted in the categories defined by eighteenth century authors such as Winckelmann, Walpole, Pope and Burke."

32 Alexander Smith, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

33 *ibid.*, p. 31-32.

34 *ibid.*, p. 29

35 Chalmers wrote regarding his proposed visit to Manchester but since these letters are undated, his exact date of arrival there is uncertain. He was still arranging to go on July 7th 1857 but plans proceeded rapidly from then. Ruskin's lectures were delivered on July 10th and July 13th.

36 "The Royal Academy", The Art Journal, June 1st, 1863, p. 110.

37 R.E. Turner, The Industrial City: Center of Cultural Change, Edited C.F. Ware, New York, 1940, p. 232.

38 When George Reid came to deal with industrial Glasgow in his The River Clyde he showed in plates 5, 6, and 7 factory chimneys belching black smoke but all were viewed from a distance.

39 "In fact Barrie could say what he liked *then* in 1895 and be considered a genius. His fellow geniuses were Meredith, Hardy, Kipling and Stevenson. Nobody was then ashamed of emotion, and admiration of genius was one of the finest of outlets. Love of one's mother and gratitude to her, the charm of little children, pride in one's country - these were some more of the popular sentiments publicly stated and with no self conscious shyness. In 1922, and still more in 1935, how different! To believe in the Good and the True and the Noble in 1935 was to declare yourself a catchpenny hypocrite.

J.M. Barrie, McConnachie and JMB, London, 1938, extract from the preface by Hugh Walpole, pp. viii to ix.

40 Howard David Rodee, Scenes of Urban and Rural Poverty in Victorian Painting and their development 1850-1890, Ph.D. thesis, University of Columbia, 1975, p. iv.

41 National Galleries of Scotland, Master Class: Robert Scott Lauder and his Pupils, Exhibition Catalogue, Lindsay Errington, 1983, p. 42.

42 "I went up tonight to a fellows (who shall be nameles) and saw a great picture - 5 or 6 feet - 50 - 60or 100 figures in it - hosh. rubbish. all paint. Roberson's medium & canvas, nothing earnest - nothing true not a bit

bit that you could affectionately love. That is the stuff of this age but I'll be hanged if I do it. I could easily do that sort of thing but won't."

Correspondence G.P. Chalmers to G.B. Simpson c.January 28th, 1866.

George B. Simpson of Broughty Ferry, a patron and friend of G.P. Chalmers, made annotated copies of the correspondence he received from Chalmers. They are now in the library of the Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh. The original Chalmers letters to Simpson are in the National Library of Scotland MS 6348.

43 Cameron returned to live in Scotland in 1888.

44 Hugh Cameron, The Little Housewife, 1880, Oil on canvas: Orchar Collection, Dundee Art Gallery and Museum.

45 See N.G.S., Errington, *op.cit.*, p. 85.

46 See pp. 56-59. for a discussion of the significance of A Lonely Life

47 E. Pinnington, "Hugh Cameron, R.S.A." The Art Journal, 1902, p. 18.

48 See E. Pinnington, "Hugh Cameron R.S.A. II", The Art Journal, 1902, pp. 297-300.

49 "Social Economics of the Industrial Orders", Chambers Information, Edinburgh, 1857, p. 561.

50 The Disruption of 1843 in the Church of Scotland placed heavy strains on the parish based relief system. The Presbyterian Church had played an important role in poor relief. However it was only those areas such as Galloway where there was a heavy influx of immigrants in the years after the Irish potato famine which were forced to abandon outdoor relief. Outdoor relief continued elsewhere. Even after the 1845 Poor Law Amendment Act in Scotland set up Poor's Houses which provided indoor relief, these had a somewhat different regime from that operating in the English Workhouses. Scottish establishments maintained that much vaunted institution of a civilised society, the family. In England families were separated on entering the workhouse. In Scotland they remained together for the most part.

51 A.A. MacLaren, "Bourgeois Ideology and Victorian Philanthropy: The Contradictions of Cholera", Social Class in Scotland, ed. A.A. MacLaren, Edinburgh, 1976, pp. 42-43.

52 M.P. Ramsay, Calvin and Art Considered in Relation to Scotland, Edinburgh, 1938.

53 *ibid.*, p. 13.

54 *ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

55 *ibid.*, p. 25.

56 *ibid.*, p. 36.

57 *ibid.*, p. 37.

58 "How great a strength it is with His only word to uphold this infinite mass of heaven and earth; with his only beck, sometimes to shake the heaven with noise of thunders, to burn up each thing with lightnings, to set the air on fire with lightning flames, sometimes to trouble it with divers sorts of tempests, and by and by the same God, when He lists, in one moment to make fair weather in the sea as if it hanged in the air, which with its height seemeth to threaten continual destruction to the earth, sometimes in horrible wise to raise it up with outrageous violence of winds, and sometimes to appease the waves and make it calm again."

John Calvin, Institutio Religionis Christianae, book 1., V.

59 See A.A. MacLaren, *Bourgeois Ideology*, *op. cit.*, pp. 43, 49, *et passim*.

60 *ibid.*, p. 44.

61 Chambers Information, *op. cit.*, p. 570.

62 Seeing the degradation on the island of Iona in 1840, Cockburn found some consolation in his concern for the plight of the people in the fact that at least they had access to church and school.

"A more wretched set of creatures than those that crawled around us I doubt if even Ireland could exhibit. Certainly no other part of the world that I have ever read of could exceed it. It might have been accounted for by supposing that Argyleshire had sent its most humiliating destitution to affect the visitors of Iona, had it not been for the sad truth, that the

naked and diseased dirt which greets and follows the tourists there, will meet and follow him in many other islands of the Hebrides. My sensibility has perhaps been too little blunted by the past reality of such spectacles, for I doubt if I was ever on one of the western islands before, but it is dreadful to think that these poor creatures are not only human but countrymen. Yet they have an infants' school which I saw in action, and a church where the sacrament was dispensed the day before. So easy is it to combine the forms of religion and education with the degradation of human habits, if not the prostration of the human character. They are the better of the church and the school, but still are about as brutish in the economy of life as their very nasty cows and swine are."

Lord Cockburn, Circuit Journeys, Byway Books edition, Kelso, 1983, p. 49.

First published London, 1888.

In a more forceful manner Smiles asserted

"Help from without is often enfeebling in its effects, but help from within invariably invigorates. Whatever is done *for* men or classes, to a certain extent takes away the stimulus and necessity of doing for themselves; and where men are subjected to over-guidance and over-government, the inevitable tendency is to render them comparatively helpless."

Samuel Smiles, Self-Help: With Illustrations of Character and Conduct,

London, 1859, p. 1.

63 George Reid, "The Exhibition of The Royal Scottish Academy", Montrose Standard and Angus and Mearns Register, February 19th, 1864, pp. 4-5.

64 see page 36.

65 "MacWhirter looked in yesterday afternoon. He came north to get some studies for a view of Edin. from the Salisbury Crags - but has never been able to see it for the Smoke (sic) - This place is getting nearly as bad as Glasgow."

Correspondence George Reid to John Forbes White of Aberdeen now in the Aberdeen Art Gallery.

Reid to White, February 20th, 1887.

66 For further discussion of Reid's attitude to the city see chapter 4.

67 Daniel Cottier, 1838-1891 was born in Glasgow. His mother was a Highland Scot and his father, a sailor, was a Manxman of possible Huguenot extraction. On completing his apprenticeship as a worker in stained glass, he worked both in Scotland and in England before setting up in business in Glasgow as a decorator, picture dealer and manufacturer of glass. As a designer in stained glass, his work was outstanding and innovative. Early examples of his work in glass were produced for Townhead Church Glasgow, Paisley Abbey, Links House Montrose and the Aberdeen town house of John Forbes White. White was particular friend and patron of Cottier. In 1863 he invited him to decorate his large house in Aberdeen and to enlarge and decorate Seaton Cottage his summer residence. He designed a picture gallery and elaborate furniture for the house at 269 Union Street and 19 tall windows depicting painters were made by Cottier's firm for the cottage. There are also examples of his work in St Machar's Cathedral, Aberdeen and in St Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh. However he removed to London in 1869 where he greatly extended his business. By 1873 he had expanded to open a

branch in New York. He was a man of many parts and W.E. Henley writing in 1892 described him thus:

"In truth there were several men in him: an artist, for example, who was the keenest hand at a bargain, with an art critic who was also a heaven-born picture-dealer. In this latter complication of capacities, he was able to do excellent service to art and the collectors thereof."

68 Correspondence George Reid to John Forbes White, *op. cit.*, July 24th, 1870.

69 *ibid.*, August 7th, 1870.

70 *idem.*

71 *idem.*

72 Edward Pinnington, George Paul Chalmers and The Art of His Time, 1833-1878, Glasgow, 1896, pp. 137 and 242.

73 *ibid.*, p. 116n.

Chalmers met Admiral Warde in 1861 during a visit to England. Warde was a retired naval officer living in Westerham, in Kent. Pinnington Quotes numerous letters from Warde to Chalmers.

Pinnington, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-117.

74 Pinnington, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

75 Correspondence George Paul Chalmers to George B. Simpson *op. cit.*

In a letter of 29th August, 1865, Chalmers referred to a letter from his "dear friend Pettie" written within an hour of Pettie's marriage.

On 11th May, 1866 Chalmers wrote when Pettie was elected ARA, "You would be glad to hear of Pettie's great success? Wonderful chap! Had a letter yesterday from him - a most delightful letter - full of modesty and meekness - instead of being cocky or elated."

Chalmers visited London in February 1868 and stayed with Pettie at 36 Gloucester Road Regents Park.

76 Pinnington, *op. cit.*, pp. 137. and 242.

*ibid.*, p. 116.

77 *ibid.*, p. 107.

78 Pinnington, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

However Montrose was also important to him.

"I have been working hard 'Don Quixote' has not come well \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ What with very hard work, worry and disgust I got positively ill in mind and body and resolved to bolt down to Montrose for a day or two - I could not go on any longer I was so unhappy."

Correspondence G.P. Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, *op. cit.*, June 28th, 1865.

79 Pinnington, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-149.

80 *ibid.*, p. 120.

81 The Chalmers to G.B. Simpson correspondence *op. cit.*, contains frequent references to 'sentiment', 'feeling', and 'truth'.

For example Chalmers referred to the "quiet sentiment" of McTaggart's Enoch Arden. He felt that he could not "get the sentiment" of his own painting of Auld John Brown and described Hugh Cameron as a painter of "very fine feeling".

82 Sir James L. Caw, Scottish Painting Past and Present, 1620-1908, Edinburgh, 1908, p. 475.

83 *idem.*

84 For a discussion of the reality of rural life in the period see T.C.Smout, A Century of The Scottish People 1830-1950, London, 1986, chapter 3.

85 See chapter 3.

86 Before leaving for London in 1876 Cameron's painting could be readily associated with that of Chalmers. For a collector such as J. McGavin his work could evidently take its place beside works by continental Realist painters. The artist's paintings produced after his relocation in London are markedly more sentimental.

87 Correspondence George Reid to Alex. Walker now in Aberdeen Art Gallery.  
January 1st, 1872.

88 See note 20

89 Correspondence Chalmers to Simpson *op. cit.*, March 6th, 1866.

90 Correspondence Chalmers to Simpson *op. cit.*, January 28th, 1866.

91 The fact that the composition was settled is demonstrated by the several extant oil sketches which are compositionally identical to the final version. Chalmers was working, in these sketches, on the effects of light and atmosphere. There are paintings which examine the cottage interior, figure groups, and individuals.

92 For discussion of The Legend see chapter 2.

93 For a full discussion of Thoughts On Art and Notes on The Exhibition of The Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh, 1868. see chapters 4. and 5.

94 Veri Vindex (Pseudonym - George Reid and J.F. White), Thoughts on Art.  
*op. cit.*, p. 49.

95 *ibid.*, p. 45.

96 "The Royal Academy", The Art Journal, June 1st, 1863, p. 112.

97 One reviewer claimed, "Pictures of domestic life are as garrulous as gossip itself."

The Art Journal, 1866, p. 167.

98 *idem*.

99 "The Royal Academy Exhibition", The Art Journal, 1876, p. 189.

100 Edward Mangin, "The Blind Fiddler", Art Union, 4., pp. 19-20.

## Chapter 2

### THE CASE OF GEORGE PAUL CHALMERS

"Any observant man may come to appreciate style and the intricacies of technique;" wrote the reviewer of R.M. Lindsay's collection in 1909,

"it takes a man of heart and head to read the language of art and to feel its best influence. The former may reach the pseudo dignity of connoisseurship; the latter places himself 'en rapport' with the artist \_ \_ \_ \_ He gathers about him pictures that stir his imagination and appeal to his feeling." 1.

The collectors of rural nostalgia paintings considered in chapter 3. would appear, by their actions and statements to be "en rapport" with the identifiable views of the artists whose work they collected. They can be thought of as reading the paintings in a similar way to the artists themselves. An analysis of the response of an individual artist to the forces moulding nineteenth century Scottish society may serve to clarify the message inherent in the pictures.

The work of George Paul Chalmers, and his relationship both with other painters and with his patrons will be considered in this light. The choice of Chalmers is not arbitrary. Certainly a case could be made for identifying the work of other artists as being archetypally Scottish in the terms described earlier. Chalmers however was seen in this role by his contemporaries. Despite the conventional wisdom that he died just as his

powers were reaching maturity, he was acknowledged as a highly influential artist by contemporary painters, collectors and critics.

In a letter to William McTaggart of February 1878 John Pettie wrote of Chalmers' death.

"I wish I were a girl that I might cry my eyes out to try and relieve this horrid weight in my heart. We will never see his like again, Mac, such a genuine and good fellow \_ \_ \_ You and I will keep his memory green for many a year yet \_ \_ \_ Do write me again. You have an opportunity to interest me with any talk of Chalmers." 2.

In 1894 The Magazine of Art published a series of articles by Robert Walker on "Private Picture Collections in Glasgow and the West of Scotland." 3. The second article, on the Andrew Maxwell collection, contained a section on Chalmers and his merits and importance as a painter. Walker felt that, despite the fact that Chalmers did not exhibit all that extensively in Scotland and hardly at all outside Scotland, he was never the less, a painter of considerable note. The relatively low numbers of exhibited works Walker attributed to Chalmers' renowned painstaking approach. "It would have been better for art and for Chalmers' self had he possessed less fastidiousness, less self-distrust," 4. he wrote. The surviving pictures however assured his reputation for Walker. He felt that the paintings were powerful emotional statements and "never lacked feeling or expression. He could not paint what he did not sympathise with." 5.

In addition to the individual value of the works, Walker felt Chalmers was overall a significant figure for Scottish art, "a genius lost too soon to Scotland." 6. He claimed that those who understood " \_ \_ \_ somewhat of the art-history of their country, can appreciate the quiet power he has been for good." 7.

In Scottish Painting Caw observed

"It is difficult for anyone who did not know him personally to understand fully the fascination he seems to have possessed for those who did \_ \_ \_ [His] qualities gave him a peculiar influence over the younger artists of his time, many of whom studied under him in the life school of the Scottish Academy." 8.

W.D. Mackay in The Scottish School of Painting wrote of "Paul Chalmers' brilliant work in genre, portraiture and landscape." and observed that the artist held a "leading place." 9.

Chalmers' own biographer, the prolific and verbose Edward Pinnington, made fantastic claims for the painter. For example, he seriously compared Chalmers to Rembrandt and did not find him wanting. 10. While there are more considered statements among all the suppositions, incidental detail and hyperbole, Pinnington's book was based on a fundamental misconception. It was written in 1896. Very much in keeping with the times, and in an attempt to portray Chalmers as a figure of European significance, Pinnington analysed the painter in purely technical terms. Formal innovation and development was the author's touchstone for artistic

greatness. Pinnington therefore clung to the concept of Chalmers as a pure painter, interested only in the technicalities of painting. Although he disagreed with earlier commentators about the artist's motivations, he never questioned his significance. "That quality which makes him a power in art will be more widely recognised as the knowledge of art spreads. His influence will spread with it." <sup>11</sup>.

The importance of Chalmers then was not in question for those who understood "something of the art history of their country." <sup>12</sup>. Sometimes however they misinterpreted the evidence, or interpreted it in the light of their own preconceptions. Chalmers' friend Reid wrote of Pinnington, that he invented a new Chalmers "quite different from the real one." <sup>13</sup>. The painter's immediate contemporaries, just by being contemporaries, came to more reliable conclusions. The reasons for their beliefs and the nature of the interpretation they placed on the paintings will now be examined.

There are very few recorded statements by Chalmers relating to the message he saw conveyed by his paintings. However, from a number of surviving letters and extracts it is possible to infer something of his views on his own work.

The most basic point to be made is that Chalmers did care about his work and thought about it a great deal. There are instances in his letters to his patron George Buchan Simpson of Broughty Ferry when he resolved to worry less about the smaller things he painted. He vowed simply to finish them and sell them because he had to have some income. <sup>14</sup>. This was not typical. In the great majority of the letters Chalmers was in despair over his work.

He worried about producing anything of value. In January 1865 he wrote "I begin to doubt if I will be able to finish it for the Exhibition for I am determined it shall be fine - even though I exhibit nothing." 16.

He was describing The Legend, a painting for which Simpson was later to pay an advance in order to have first refusal when it was completed. The painting depicts a cottage interior with an old woman recounting a tale to a group of eight children. Apart from the immediately apparent anecdotal element of the painting, which revolves around the observation of the awe and interest of the children in the story being told, the painting also contains one of the central tenets of rural nostalgia work. Implicitly this scene takes place in a community. There is interaction among the generations. There is collective responsibility, not a multitude of individuals as Smiles and Miller found in urban environments. Chalmers worked on the piece intermittently until his death in 1878 and never finished it. The fourteen years of work on The Legend reveal how Chalmers thought about his paintings and how he went about their production. The painting's development illustrates Chalmers' pursuit of something "fine". The artist's intentions in the work and the problems he had in realising these intentions illustrate that there was, for Chalmers, something which he felt it essential to convey. The development of The Legend can be considered by examining the unfinished work itself and one of the numerous preparatory oil studies.

Chalmers worked on The Legend from 1864. When the earliest surviving letter from the artist to Simpson was written in November of that year the project was already established and Chalmers was already having problems with it. He resolved to paint it relatively small in order to finish it in time for the R.S.A. of 1865. Through December 1864 and January 1865 the artist's letters record the lack of progress made. On December 20th he was so worried about the painting that he would not discuss it. By January 1st he reneged on a promise to send it to Broughty Ferry for Simpson to examine because it was so far behind. He said that he had changed the whole "effect" of the picture and destroyed a month's work. On January 21st

Chalmers acknowledged that he could not finish the work in time for the R.S.A. and laid it aside. <sup>16</sup>.

The Legend was well known in Chalmers' circle of friends. A Glasgow collector saw the painting and tried to persuade Chalmers to paint him a copy. <sup>17</sup>. Reid referred to it in one of the reviews that he wrote of the 1865 R.S.A.. He praised Chalmers for leaving it aside to finish later and for not hurrying it for the exhibition. <sup>18</sup>. Reid commented on The Legend again five years later when Chalmers had once more abandoned it; this time because he could not get it ready for the R.S.A. of 1870. At that stage, although Reid admired the work in terms of its design, its colour, in light and shade and thought the composition "very perfect", he felt the painting was still in need of "a great deal of time and thought to finish it" and that this could well take several months. <sup>19</sup>. The "effect" that Chalmers wrote of to Simpson is quite discernible in the painting. The artist's attempt to create it can be traced through the preparatory studies. <sup>20</sup>.  
(Illustrations 17. 18. and 19.)

The Legend Study (Illustration 17.) depicting the group of children is compositionally very close to the large painting. (Illustration 4.) All eight of the children are in the same positions and poses in both works. The composition of these figures is fully resolved. The "effect", as controlled by the lighting scheme is exactly the same. It was the technical problem of representing the figures in that specific light that was the reason for making the study.

The only visible light source is the small window in the wall in the background, but that is not the main light source for the painting. The four most defined figures are lit from somewhere off to the left. The shadows at the feet of the seated child point almost directly at the place where the old woman sits in the large picture. The four other figures in the painting are very indistinct. They hardly have faces at all. The child lying on the floor is just an unfocused head and a vague suggestion of arms and hands. These figures correspond almost exactly to the figures in the final version. They are no more resolved after fourteen years of intermittent work. The three standing children in the background are all little more than symbols for figures to be completed later. Even the four children at the front are not fully developed; the drawing of the legs of the tallest child not being in keeping with her torso. Technically the painting is certainly unfinished and the solution is no more advanced in the final version than it is in the sketch. However the "effect" that Chalmers was striving for is quite clear.

The struggle was caused by the lighting. As with all Chalmers' rural interiors he attempted to use the lighting to heighten the emotion, to elicit an empathetic response from his audience. On this occasion the use of two light sources, one out of view to the left, raised such technical problems that he ultimately failed.

The unseen window behind the figure of the storyteller casts a dramatic raking light which illuminates the figures of the four principal children. It was used to pick out their faces and set them off against the dark interior. The theme of the painting, transcending the observation of the concentration and disquiet on the faces of the children, is the perennial

one for Chalmers. It concerns age and youth, community, collective support and tradition. The Legend is actually about all those subjects promoted by Hugh Miller. It is virtually an illustration of Miller's polemical writing on the superiority of rural life over urban. The message of the painting, its "effect", is entirely successful. But, because of the way Chalmers painted, it failed technically. The artist's need to use the light for emotional ends forced on him this dramatic composition. His need to use the paint surface in a gestural, expressive manner forced him to try to reinforce this emotional content with the handling of the paint. The demands of these two devices proved irreconcilable. The emotional lighting scheme dictated that the four children in the background had to be back-lit by the visible window and in strong shadow. The emotional handling of the paint meant that they had to be expressive participants in the unfolding rural drama. Technically the two ends were mutually exclusive. Emotionally the painting is entirely successful.

Precisely how successful The Legend was can be measured by events at Chalmers' studio sale. A bid of £1000 was made for the painting but Chalmers' friends who were in control of proceedings rejected it. They organised the purchase of the painting for the National Gallery for £500. Even unfinished they felt that this painting contained a full and complete expression of the artist's intents.

Chalmers' aims can be partially discerned from the letters he wrote to his patron Simpson. Just as Reid wrote about the essential "feeling" <sup>21</sup> which had to be present in any great work, so Chalmers wrote about trying to get at the "sentiment" of paintings. The series of letters from Chalmers to

Simpson, which cover the period 1864 to 1873, reveal the artist's approach quite clearly. Among other things these letters chart the progress of another of Chalmers' rural nostalgia paintings Auld John Brown.<sup>22</sup> Simpson wrote to the painter early in February 1866 saying that he had come across a subject which he felt was absolutely ideal for Chalmers.<sup>23</sup> The qualities of the subject which he felt particularly suited to Chalmers were that it was "very simple" and very "Scotch". These then obviously epitomised for Simpson the valuable aspects of Chalmers' work. The best paintings were always identifiably Scottish in subject and always "simple". What Simpson meant by "simple" is not immediately clear. The term was often used in relation to Chalmers' work.<sup>24</sup> It was usually intended as a compliment and denoted a clarity of thought and of message: the paintings allowed an easy comprehension of what Reid termed their "motif"<sup>25</sup>. It transpired that the subject suggested by Simpson was a poem, "Auld John Broon" by Robert Leighton.<sup>26</sup>

Chalmers was delighted by the subject and enthusiastically wrote to Simpson on February 17th 1866 thanking him for suggesting it.

"By jove yon is a wonderful subject. I was so tickled and delighted last night when I read your letter and the wee bit of description of 'John Brown' that I could not help beginning to scribble. \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ I have commenced the sketch - have been working all day at it - an oil sketch about 9½ X 7½. It will paint splendidly. I haven't felt anything so much for a long time."<sup>27</sup>

Chalmers agreed with Simpson then about what constituted a good subject. The artist's and the collector's views were identical. How much Chalmers felt for his subject is demonstrated not only by his initial enthusiasm but also by his perseverance in attempting to work out a composition and his persistence of vision throughout these attempts.

On February 26th he wrote telling Simpson that he was still working on the sketch of Auld John Brown "and will continue to do so until I get it finished." 28. On March 1st he told the collector that he was about to send the sketch up to Broughty Ferry by rail. It was not sent and on March 6th he wrote explaining that he had "had a hitch with him" and was "working awfully hard day and night \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ I am working at it alone and will continue to do so until I send it." 29.

By March 19th he was beginning to despair. "I could not have wrought harder than I have done nor thought more about it and yet the confounded thing won't come." 30.

Chalmers finally reported on March 21st that he had a watercolour sketch of the subject almost completed, that he was quite pleased with it and that he would send it up when it was finished. The watercolour was dispatched on March 30th with great misgivings on Chalmers' part. 31.

It might be argued that this particular painting was not typical of Chalmers' work in that it was based on a poem. It was not an image produced by the artist's own vision of rural life. It was rather, Chalmers' interpretation of Robert Leighton's apparently sentimental depiction of peasant life. However, the way Chalmers tackled the problems that the

subject posed him, and the artist's eventual solution to the most awkward of these problems, demonstrated that this was not the case.

Chalmers, as was fully typical of him, had a lot of trouble with the painting. He wrote of being unable to "get the sentiment of it." <sup>32</sup>. He attempted to overcome his difficulties by immersing himself in the poem. "I will try and drink as deeply of the poem as my small capacity will enable me and endeavour to get the spirit of it!" <sup>33</sup>.

For all his concentration on Leighton's written word, Chalmers saw his painting as a depiction of reality and not simply as an illustration to a poem. This is demonstrated by a number of incidents recounted in numerous letters to Simpson concerning the painting's progress. Chalmers went to great lengths to secure a costume for his elderly figure. He wrote to Simpson asking him to look out for suitable clothes. "\_ \_ \_ \_ do you think you could in that curious auld toon o' yours find them \_ \_ \_ \_ We must get the real costume and give genuine character." <sup>34</sup>.

Eventually the painter found clothes that he considered suitable in "a horrible slum of an old clothes shop" <sup>35</sup>. in the Cowgate in Edinburgh. <sup>36</sup>. Chalmers was obviously concerned that the painting be accurate, but accurate not only to Leighton's verse. This concern rather was for the kind of "truth" proposed by Reid in his R.S.A. reviews. <sup>37</sup>. Reid's Ruskinian concept of "truth" implied more than just factual accuracy. The entire reason for a painting, its overall conception, its authenticity, its method of production all contributed to its "truth" These concerns were demonstrated when Chalmers wrote some six months later from "Pitlochrie".

"\_ \_ \_ \_ saw 'John Brown' in an interior up at Struan - the very thing - am almost inclined to paint the subject on the spot. If I can possibly arrange to get put up at Struan and all other things go well I may do it. The old man is quite the thing - the interior very good - all the effect I put in the sketch - reek etc. etc. . I will think of it seriously." 39.

Chalmers found a real life John Brown in a real interior. He saw the poem not as a sentimentalised imaginary vision, but as a view of reality: 39. possibly a nostalgic reality, but never the less a reality which coincided with his "motif" in the painting, his conception of "truth".

The painting was not just an illustration to the poem Auld John Brown. Rather both poem and painting were recordings of a particular reality, elements of which Chalmers and Leighton sought to promote. The poem simply provided the painter with stimulus towards a subject, a subject very close in spirit and in treatment to those he normally chose. Chalmers' interpretation of Auld John Brown as reality, and his avowed affinity for Leighton's vision allows those views expressed or implied in the poem to be taken as analagous to those of the painter. Initially the poem might appear to be a very sentimental vision. The first two stanzas, with their description of the old man living

"\_ \_ \_ \_ in our cosie home -

A snug cottar hoose on the edge o' a muir

Wi' a theekit ruif and an earthen fluir" 40.

and the description of the figure, his dress and posture all appear romanticised and idealised. But there is more to the poem. There is no more dwelling on the man and his appearance. Instead, in both the third and in the final stanzas there is a sense of the frailty and mortality of the figure. The old man's mind is failing. Only occasionally is he lucid. There is a sense of realism behind the initial sentiment. This can be assumed to be what Chalmers was aiming for in his Auld John Brown and in other representations of aged figures in rural interiors. Beyond the emotionally stirring surface he sought a true picture of the reality of old age after the physical hardships of a lifetime working on the land. Pathos, realism and "truth" lie behind this project and behind all Chalmers' rural nostalgia paintings. There are specific comparisons that may be drawn between the poem and Chalmers' rural nostalgia paintings. In the fourth stanza of Auld John Brown Leighton linked age and childhood as the two most innocent and knowledgeable forms of man.

"Had we een that could read, and heads that  
could learn  
We wad get deep lessons frae the auld  
man and bairn." <sup>41</sup>.

This concept can be thought of encapsulating those Chalmers' pictures such as Age and Infancy, Prayer, Bible Story, The Legend and all other depictions of childhood or age or both. Again, behind the sentimental exterior was a core of belief in a world of innocence and truth; a greater awareness of "A presence that words could not reveal." <sup>42</sup>. Both the old and the young were

seen as possessing this pure and more innocent link with nature and with awareness of man's "deepest lessons." 43.

There is a long description of the land and its creatures. The land was credited almost with powers of restoration and certainly with a strong effect on the psyche. The old man's joy in the sunshine, in the "green earth", has him

"Wakenin frae out o' his aged swoon,  
Maist thinkin' himsel' to be young John Broon.

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His will louns up, but his banes keep him doon  
And tell him that he is auld John Broon." 44.

Chalmers' painting then, though it contained no visible reference to the land outside the depicted interior, included all the overtones of land and landscape described in the poem. Chalmers' pastoral paintings and landscapes, either with figures, such as The End of The Harvest, (Illustration 20.) or without them, as in The Ford, (Illustration 21.) had all these associations. Just as Auld John Brown contained implicit references to the land outside the cottage, so The End of The Harvest spoke of the people depicted and The Ford of people who were not shown but were implied.

The near spirituality of nature, something of Ruskin's early belief that nature was a direct revelation of the glory of God, was emphasised in the final stanza of the poem.

"And ower his existence he has nae power -  
He is guided by the hand that guides the  
flower." 45.

Nature and man were seen as one indivisible unity under God. The "deep lessons" to be learned from the old and the young were in the closeness they were perceived to have had with nature and the land.

Auld John Broom can be used as a model for reading all Chalmers' works. The artist read the poem and was fascinated by it. He wanted desperately to make a large and important picture out of the subject. 46. The subject in essence was the dignity and pathos of rural life, the relationships between people living in a community and the relationship of people to the land. In addition, the largely subjective symbolic significance of the natural and the rural environment was evoked, as was that environment's ability to gratify man's instinctive needs. These were the same elements which formed the core of the subject in The Legend. They reappeared singly or in combination throughout Chalmers' working life. The message of the paintings was unchanging.

Chalmers' recorded views expressing these sentiments are not numerous. However the underlying "motif" occasionally surfaces in the painter's correspondence.

That Chalmers was aware of and approved of the work of John Ruskin is certain. 47. The painter was evidently happy to have his work associated with Ruskin's theories. In March 1866 he wrote to Simpson enclosing two

newspaper reviews. One of these linked Chalmers' work approvingly with Ruskin. <sup>49</sup>. Chalmers wrote

"What do you think of Ruskin and me - Eh - that's the style. O dear if good notices would make good painters I ought to be one." <sup>50</sup>.

Though Chalmers was very reluctant to talk about his own paintings and only revealed how he felt they ought to be read on rare occasions, such as the one above, he did sometimes comment on other painters' work. <sup>50</sup>. When this work is by an artist closely related to Chalmers his comments are relevant to an understanding of Chalmers' own painting.

In March 1866, in a long letter to Simpson, Chalmers wrote about a painting by William McTaggart which was based on an extract from the poem Enoch Arden (Illustration 22.). <sup>51</sup>. Simpson, who was eventually to buy the work, had asked Chalmers to go and see the painting and to offer his advice on it. Chalmers wrote :-

"I do believe it is the best thing he has done - at least he has never surpassed. In composition it is decidedly the finest - it is also beautiful in colour and there is a quiet sentiment and mysterious magnitude in the long stretch of sand and calm bit of ocean - the latter melting imperceptibly into the sky which is perfectly splendid. There is a second incident that of an old woman up in the right corner of the picture mending which I don't like and have strongly advised him to take out. He has not

consented to do it yet but I hope he will as I don't think it requires it to tell the story and in consequence hurts the principle incident which of course you know - three children building sand houses or castles."<sup>52</sup>.

Chalmers read the painting in terms of its ability to "tell the story". Like Reid, Chalmers was anxious that a painter ought not to do anything that detracted from the central message of the work. Chalmers' own works then may also be read as attempts to "tell a story"; to orchestrate all the elements of picture making in order to convey a meaning. It is unlikely that Chalmers was referring to a simplistic tale of children enjoying themselves on a beach when he remarked on "the story". For Chalmers the story, the message, also involved the "quiet sentiment and mysterious magnitude" of the landscape elements of the work. Significantly, it would appear from the structure of the letter that he felt the landscape setting of the work was as important as the figures in conveying what the painting was about. The implication here is that the message of the painting was of paramount importance to Chalmers, sufficient to have him urge his friend to remove elements he felt were not justified in terms of the work's overall conception.

It is reasonable to assume then that Chalmers attempted to convey something of his involvement with the subject in his own genre and landscape paintings. This is borne out by his recorded views of perhaps the most successful of all his landscape subjects, The End of The Harvest (Illustration 20.).

On December 16th 1872 Chalmers wrote to James M. Gow <sup>33</sup>. saying that he had very few sketches for the painting and that in consequence "I am literally painting it out of my head." Ten months later reflecting on The End of The Harvest in a letter to Hugh Cameron, he recalled "\_ \_ last year's picture depended entirely on effect." <sup>34</sup>. By "effect" Chalmers meant the successful recreation of nature's psychological impact rather than its visual impact. He felt that a painting like The End of The Harvest evoked an emotional response equivalent to the contemplation of a scene such as he represented, in reality. He went on to contrast the painting with one which had to be "made out" with "lots of detail." The End of The Harvest, he felt, communicated on the basis of its overall design and handling and emotional intensity. He contrasted this with a painting full of details which communicated through its observable objective veracity.

It is not clear from the above whether Chalmers thought he had been successful with the painting. In a letter of Feb 1873 to J.F. White in Aberdeen he made his views clear. To fully understand the importance of the following letters to White and Simpson it is necessary first to examine another letter the artist wrote to Simpson five years earlier. He wrote:-

"You know full well how I feel generally regarding my own work. If I were to express my own feelings \_ \_ \_ \_ in connection with the picture in question of course I would disgust you with it \_ \_ \_ This I'll say only to you that it is not highly finished and lots of it must be blurred over.\_ \_ \_ I must get this thing out of my studio good or bad this time and begin something new and better. Of course \_ \_ \_ this is cutting my own throat." <sup>35</sup>.

Chalmers was trying to sell a small picture to Simpson but even then he could not bring himself to praise the painting. <sup>56</sup>. It was well established among his friends that Chalmers was never satisfied with anything he did. <sup>57</sup>. As he wrote to Simpson "You know full well how I feel generally regarding my own work."

With this in mind the later letters to White and Simpson are very surprising. In a letter reporting on the contents and hanging of the R.S.A. of 1873, Chalmers told White of the fate of the pictures which the collector had lent to the exhibition. "The 3rd room <sup>58</sup>. the honours are divided between Millais <sup>59</sup>. and my landscape. The Millais (Illustration 23.) is looking simple, grey and charming; it does not look grand, but everything else. Mine [or rather yours] is looking very well. The fellows have not said much about it but I think they like it." <sup>60</sup>. In a letter to Simpson two days later he commented "Millais' Chill October is simple true and beautiful - my landscape hangs opposite it \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ It is queer and I doubt it will not be a popular but there is something in it." <sup>61</sup>.

Chalmers had a great deal of admiration for Millais. <sup>62</sup>. For him to compare himself with Millais and feel that "the honours are divided" between the two of them, Chalmers must have been extraordinarily pleased with The End of The Harvest. <sup>63</sup>. While Chalmers never voiced the opinion himself, from his comments on the work of other painters it is probable that the "something in it" which he referred to in the letter to Simpson, was the painting's "feeling", the same emotional involvement and emotional commitment which he sought in the work of his friends. He saw The End of

The Harvest as something more than a landscape. He read it as a painting with a relevance and a message. This interpretation is certainly the one which Chalmers' friends and associates favoured.

A monograph on Chalmers was published in 1879. <sup>64</sup>. It contained an analysis of his work written by the painter's friend J.F. White. White felt that The End of The Harvest was one of the greatest of Chalmers' landscapes. <sup>65</sup>.

"In this subject he found a theme congenial to his feeling. At the outskirts of a small Highland croft under the shadow of a belt of trees, he has painted two women busy taking up the last few bags of potatoes. The sun has set in gold behind the trees, an ominous cloud overhangs the scene, and all is solemn and still, the presage of the coming storm \_ \_ \_ And here again we find sympathy and tenderness pervading his work, for the whole scene is in harmony with the evening of life of one of the women; indeed it is the keynote of the picture." <sup>66</sup>.

White read the landscape as being involved with Chalmers' own views on the people whom he depicted, and on their lives. White thought that this intuitive insight was not always present in Chalmers' work. When it was absent he saw the resulting work as less profound. He wrote of the large Running Water (Illustration 24.) of 1875 <sup>67</sup>.

"\_ \_ \_ \_ it was the absence of this personal impression that was its defect. One did not feel as if the motive of the picture

had come from his inner self, and it was doubtless from this want of a dominant conception that the picture looked like a great study rather than a complete work, at least to those accustomed to the suggestiveness of Chalmers." 60.

The critic of the Glasgow Herald also felt Running Water lacked something. In a review of the R.S.A. he dismissed the picture as "a very large canvas with very little in it." He offered the opinion that "A figure or two cleverly introduced might have improved it" but that ultimately it was "simply a huge sketch." 61. Similarly The Scotsman critic observed that "\_ \_ \_ \_ from this description it may be inferred that as a composition the picture has more of the character of a study than of a complete landscape." 70. All these commentators felt that Running Water was a simple transcription of nature. It was lacking something which other Chalmers' landscapes possessed.

This reading of Chalmers was not universal. The formalist views expressed by Pinnington in his biography of the painter have been noted. In an article on Chalmers in the The Art Journal in 1897 he was even more specific about the reading of the landscapes.

"We may read into his landscapes whatever sentiment we please. \_ \_ \_ \_ Whatever human feeling may be attached to Chalmers' works, he was first and foremost a painter, emphatically and always a devoted student of the fine art of painting." 71.

He returned to this idea again and again. In a later article in The Art Journal he wrote:-

"Chalmers' aim was always purely artistic \_ \_ \_ He stands by himself in a single-hearted devotion to pure art, as distinguished from an art which being primarily aimed at the rendering of subject is bent to illustrating the poets and historians, embodying an allegory. inculcating a creed, pointing a moral or adorning a tale." 72.

This misunderstanding, very much in keeping with then current art criticism, coloured all Pinnington's opinions. It led to his biography of the painter being criticised by former friends and associates of Chalmers. George Reid wrote to J.F. White complaining that Pinnington had written a ridiculously "long winded yarn about Chalmers", with all sorts of extraneous details about the painter's family and childhood. He also claimed that Pinnington had "proceeded to construct a Chalmers of his own - quite different from the real one" and that the problem stemmed from "his never having seen or known the subject about which he writes." 73.

Reid found himself much more in agreement with the view of Chalmers expressed in the book written by Gibson and White for which he had provided the illustrations. 74. Reid supported White's analysis of Chalmers' painting and told the collector. "The little book that you and Gibson wrote told all that was worth telling." 75.

In addition to drawing conclusions from the evidence of the paintings and the views of his closest associates, there is one other small source which throws light on Chalmers, and thus perhaps the collectors' attitude to society. Evidence for an empathetic reconstruction of Chalmers' approach to his society is limited. There are relatively few surviving letters from the painter and those that do exist tend to concern commissions and purely artistic matters. Pinnington quoted extensively from letters written by Chalmers to McTaggart, Gow, Reid, McGavin and others. <sup>76</sup>. Unfortunately the great majority of these, along with the painter's diary to which Pinnington also had access, are now missing. Pinnington's basic contention that Chalmers was "purely a painter" and not interested at all in anything else coloured his selection of quotations. Furthermore, since Chalmers was not in the habit of keeping letters he received, there is little of this correspondence surviving either. However there is some surviving material relating to the painter's approach to his subject matter. White felt that "into an aged face and head [Chalmers] would put as far as possible, the history of a life, making it a record of work done and of sorrows felt, and yet a resting-place of placid contentment." <sup>77</sup>.

He saw Chalmers as commenting on the lives of the people he depicted. Chalmers' contact with Samuel Smiles, the most popular of all nineteenth century social theorists, reveals perhaps his own approach to society, work and a "good life". George Reid knew Smiles well. There are several hundred surviving letters from Smiles to Reid. The painter illustrated one of Smiles' books, travelled around the east of Scotland with him and his family and visited him in London on numerous occasions. <sup>78</sup>. It was through Reid that Chalmers came into contact with Smiles. In 1876 Smiles sent

Chalmers a copy of his book illustrated by Reid, Life of A Scotch Naturalist: Thomas Edward. 79. On December 27th he wrote briefly to Chalmers saying

"I am extremely glad to find that you are pleased with it. \_ \_ \_  
Of course I shall be most happy to see you when you are next in  
London. \_ \_ \_ \_ I heard a great deal about you from George Reid,  
White, Macdonald and others when at Aberdeen, and I long to make  
your acquaintance." 80.

It is not possible to draw too many conclusions from this brief note, but it demonstrates at least that Smiles saw the painter as a potential friend. After Chalmers died in 1878, White, Reid and a collector called Alexander Gibson produced a monograph on the painter. One of the people to whom Reid sent a copy was Samuel Smiles. Smiles was very enthusiastic about the book and about the illustrations. He felt that in his portrait of the painter Reid had captured the "moral & intellectual" force that Chalmers had had. 81. In sending Smiles the biography of Chalmers, and in discussing him with Smiles in the first place, Chalmers' Aberdeen friends must have given Smiles the impression that he would get on well with the artist. They would appear to have been correct. Chalmers evidently approved of the book on Thomas Edward and may even have enquired about the possibility of meeting Smiles the next time he was in London.

Demonstrating a similarity of outlook between Chalmers and Smiles is difficult given the paucity of surviving information. However if a rather general theme is examined, possible concurrences appear. Smiles' approach to

"sympathy", to the ability to "go out \_ \_ \_ and inhabit another's personality" <sup>22</sup>. is virtually identical to Chalmers' approach to the painting of rural figures, if White is to be believed. White wrote of the "sympathy and tenderness" pervading The End of The Harvest. <sup>23</sup>. He spoke of the whole work being in harmony with one of the elderly figures in the painting; of that figure's life being "the key-note of the picture." <sup>24</sup>. Writing with Reid, White recalled the painting as one notable for its "solemn and impressive feeling" and as being "full of pathos, full of feeling." <sup>25</sup>. Chalmers' "sympathy" with the characters he depicted, the "feeling" revealed by George Reid in Reflected Light <sup>26</sup>. is very similar to Smiles' "inhabiting another's personality." Chalmers saw realism as undesirable when it was concerned only with the depiction of an excessive amount of surface detail. It put too much emphasis on the external realities and not enough on the intangible human qualities. To quote Thomas Hardy, Chalmers felt that to be an "accurate delineator of human nature" one required "a sympathetic appreciativeness of life in all its manifestations." <sup>27</sup>.

Another fundamental similarity between Smiles and Chalmers, indeed between Smiles and any of the rural nostalgia painters who have been considered, was their dislike and distrust of the city. Both Chalmers and Smiles decried the city for its effect on humanity in favour of rural life, no matter how harsh. Chalmers' documented dislike of the city is recorded elsewhere. <sup>28</sup>. Smiles wrote in a very similar vein. He sometimes promoted rural society as exemplifying many of the character traits he wished to encourage. Like Hugh Miller, <sup>29</sup>. he sought, not so much a return to rural life in actuality, he was perceptive enough to realise the impossibility of

this, but rather a return to rural values. In the city claimed Smiles "there is a want of personal sympathy. Though there is no scandal there is no help. The people are strangers to each other; each is intent upon his own business, knowing nothing and caring less about what his neighbours are doing or feeling or suffering." 90. In the country, Smiles felt, a man was "\_ \_ \_ more of an individual; he is also more responsible to those around him \_ \_ \_ He knows his neighbours and they know him." 91.

Chalmers' paintings depicting rural virtues such as the home, the family, neighbourliness and quiet devotion must be read as just as strong a promotion of those elements as were the writings of Smiles and others. Through association, the collectors who bought these works and who maintained a friendship with Chalmers might be supposed to have held similar beliefs. Chalmers was a major influence on the formation and content of John McGavin's collection in Glasgow.<sup>92</sup> The painter's close contacts with other patrons suggest similar situations. <sup>93</sup> Without the direct evidence of statements made by the collectors to the effect that Chalmers did discuss the meaning of his paintings with them, or that independently they held these beliefs and simply bought works of art with whose sentiment they sympathised, conclusions must be drawn from other sources. The statements, practices, politics and lives of these men, as set out in chapter 3, serve to illustrate their concurrence with the established approach of the artist.

There is some written evidence to suggest that Chalmers and those who collected his paintings interpreted the message in the works in the same way. For example, John McGavin's views about the role of art in society, and

the relative importance of different subjects and approaches, were hinted at in a short essay written about him and in a series of letters he wrote to the R.S.A.. In volume two of Memoirs and Portraits of One Hundred Glasgow Men the author of the piece on McGavin made an interesting assertion about his subject's views on art. 24. McGavin was recorded as having held a "just estimate of the high function of the artist as a member of society." 25. From the evidence of the letters written to the R.S.A. it is at least possible that this "high function" of McGavin's was bound up with the rural nostalgia work of Chalmers. In 1876 McGavin lent two works to the R.S.A. annual exhibition, one by Linnell and one by Frère. 26. He closed his letter to J. Dick Peddie, the secretary to the Academy, by saying "I shall be glad to give you something for your next year's exhibition; perhaps more important than these sent this year." 27.

Some four years later, on the occasion of the visit of the Social Sciences Conference to Edinburgh, the R.S.A. held an exhibition to coincide with the event. McGavin lent three pictures by Chalmers to the exhibition, among them a small version of The End of The Harvest. The collector described all these works as "small pictures" but never the less he obviously felt that these were an example of the "more important" works he had referred to earlier. 28. He closed a letter to the Academy saying "I hope you will have a great Exhibition to show our English friends what Scottish art can do." 29.

McGavin saw the three small Chalmers' paintings as being of sufficient note to stand as fine examples of Scottish art. Yet he saw the two non-Scottish works he lent in 1876 as not being very important.

Similarly, in 1897, as part of a series called "Private Picture Galleries", the magazine Good Words published an article on the Orchar collection. In discussing the Chalmers' pictures owned by Orchar, the author observed "We are apt to accept their [the artist's] pictures calmly as things made for our pleasure. But do we remember that they are nothing less than bits of their creators' lives and that the best of head and hand and heart has been given for us?" 100.

Twelve years later in a series of articles on "Art Collections of Dundee and District" written for the Dundee Advertiser, Pinnington made similar observations. In a piece on the Orchar Gallery he wrote:-

"What a painting says to feeling, it says at once; what it is calls for a deeper appreciation, and holds us by its quality as pure art. Unless a work of art is thus doubly endowed, it is either of transient interest or voiceless. There is no picture in the Orchar gallery without more or less eloquence as a human document. \_ \_ \_ Every picture here has a meaning addressed to the head or heart of man." 101.

The Orchar gallery contained ten paintings by Chalmers which were presumably included in Pinnington's remarks. Pinnington had apparently abandoned his reading of Chalmers as a formalist by this time (1909). He qualified his remarks by discussing works which relied wholly for their effect on the interest aroused by their subject, or by the facility of their execution. This latter class consisted mainly of the productions of the "Glasgow School". He accused these painters of "emotional and intellectual

vacuity" and of "painting nothing with a strong French accent." <sup>102</sup>. The Chalmers' and the other pupils of Scott Lauder were therefore presumably to be included in those read as having an emotional and intellectual gravity.

Both Orchar and those commenting on his collection seem to have identified the Chalmers paintings as observations of deep significance to men and nineteenth century society. The similarity of interpretation is borne out in Chalmers' connections with other collectors of his work. Chalmers had a close relationship with J.C. Bell. <sup>103</sup>. A cabinet portrait of Bell was painted in 1865 and exhibited at the R.S.A. of 1866 (Illustration 25.). In 1873 Chalmers wrote to Reid concerning a visit to the R.S.A. exhibition. "A lot of friends, viz, Messrs Ritchie, Simpson, Bell etc. etc. are all going on Monday, and they wish me very much to accompany them, which I will likely do if I can't work." <sup>104</sup>.

Presumably these collectors hoped to have not only the benefit of Chalmers' company, but also his comments on the exhibition. When, in 1877 Chalmers painted his celebrated portrait of Bell in fifteen sittings, it entailed Bell staying in the artist's home in Edinburgh. Such close ties with Chalmers strongly suggest that Bell too can be considered to have shared in the view of painting ascribed to the artist.

Although the extensive surviving letters from Chalmers to Simpson demonstrate that the relationship between the two men was also close, as is typical of Chalmers' correspondence, there was very little given away about what the painter thought of his own work. Also typically the return letters from Simpson to Chalmers have not survived. Any reference to Simpson's own

reading of the paintings then must rely on similar material to that used in the cases of Orchar and Bell. Simpson's close contacts with Chalmers and his willingness to lend pictures point to his sharing of the views of painting as something significant for society; something involved with the reality of the lives of the people. His involvement with the Dundee Fine Art Exhibition administration, an organisation felt in the nineteenth century to have had a powerful influence for good on all classes of people in Dundee, is further confirmation of his approach to the paintings. <sup>105</sup>.

The Weinberg collection contained just three Chalmers', all of them strongly rural in flavour. <sup>106</sup>. A. H. Millar, writing of the noted philanthropist, was in no doubt as to the motivation of the collector. He read the Chalmers', the Hugh Cameron's, Josef Israels', John MacWhirter's, William McTaggart's and the rest of the largely rural based collection as an embodiment of Weinberg's outlook on society. "Nature and human nature in all their varied moods have an attraction for him. \_ \_ \_ \_ The pervading influence of his personality is visible in every part of his collection." <sup>107</sup>.

Weinberg even chose rural nostalgia works for his collection by painters whose subject matter was usually very different. One of the Orchardson's he owned was Figures at a Cottage Door described as showing "a mother seated by the entrance to her humble homestead, nursing her infant while other children play around her knee." <sup>108</sup>.

One collector of Chalmers' work did reveal more positively his view of the message inherent in the paintings. In the monograph he wrote on Chalmers, J.F. White expressed his own views concerning how he read Chalmers

pictures <sup>109</sup>. This, together with the fact that he owned a large number of important paintings by Chalmers and the fact that the artist visited him frequently and even went on holiday with him, all serves to show the two men's close personal ties. <sup>110</sup>. Given that White's links with Chalmers and that his specific views on Chalmers' painting are recorded, there are still several general points to be made concerning White's perception of art in society.

White's attempt to make a contribution towards the welfare of others can be seen in the paper given by him to the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science at Aberdeen in September 1877. His address was titled How can art be best introduced into the houses of persons of limited income? <sup>111</sup>. It directly demonstrated his opinions on the role of art in society and, as is apparent from his already mentioned views on Chalmers' genre and landscape work, his beliefs concerning the underlying message inherent in the paintings he owned himself. He began the paper by stating "We all know that wealth is not necessary to the perception and enjoyment of art." <sup>112</sup>.

He went on to claim that art had to be available to all or it was worthless. It would " \_ \_ occupy a second-rate position among the aims and objects of study [and] would be undeserving of the attention of any except the dilettante." <sup>113</sup>.

White clearly saw art as a major force in nineteenth century Scotland and if it would not match up to his aims for it, he was prepared to condemn it. If it was restricted to those with wealth then it "would deserve to forfeit

the love and interest of those that care for the general good of society." '14. All the way through the paper the message was that art was for everyone, was relevant to everyone and was a positive force for good in society. The concern of his lecture was to promote art for all, consequently White did not discuss contemporary oil painting, the prices being prohibitively high. Instead he concentrated on methods of reproduction; photography, woodcuts, engraving and etching, on etching as an independent art form, and on interior furnishings and decoration. However there can be no doubt that White saw the paintings he owned as being in line with the philosophy he sought to promote in his paper. An anonymous writer discussing White's paintings in an article in Good Words paraphrased "Bürger (Thoré)" '15. in relation to the works and claimed the White collection was "an exact index of the artistic feelings and convictions of the collector"

An art which White saw as elitist would have found no sympathy with him. White was certain in his belief that art had to be relevant, and accessible to all classes of society if it was to be of any significance. '16. White's general beliefs in this matter and his recorded statements on Chalmers' work fully demonstrate his motives in collecting and exhibiting paintings. He saw these paintings as commenting with pertinence and validity on nineteenth century society.

The way in which rural nostalgia works were thought of by Chalmers and by the collectors is significant. Chalmers' paintings embody all the elements that have been identified as exhibiting an aware concern about his own society. In terms of that period in nineteenth century Scotland the

paintings could go no further in their comment on the need for social change. In his work Chalmers sought to promote the rural life over the urban while in no way ignoring the harsh reality of certain aspects of the rural experience. He looked to the recent past to evoke images which promoted the home, the family, the church and education as ultimate necessities in a civilised society. In doing so he recalled exactly the work of earlier commentators on Scotland such as Henry Cockburn, Hugh Miller and Alexander Smith. '17. The paintings expressed a very widespread anti-urban view and presented a view of reality which, in a subtle and intuitive manner, sought to draw attention to human dignity and worth.

If the paintings generally reflect the concerns of Scottish society in the 1860's and 1870's, in the language he used to discuss painting, and sometimes in the very subjects he painted, Chalmers exhibited evidence of the other major influence on contemporary Scottish painting, contemporary European art. His frequent referral to "effect" and "feeling" betrays the influence of the realist criticism admired and consulted by Reid. '18. In Chalmers' case the influence was not conscious. There is little evidence of his systematically consulting periodicals as did Reid. He simply became influenced by the climate of ideas surrounding friends and acquaintances such as Reid, White and Walker. Similarly a painting such as The End of The Harvest, (Illustration 20.) although there is no direct evidence for it, is very likely to have been influenced from Europe; Jules Breton would appear to be a likely source. Reid's Peat Moss (Illustration 26.) was, he thought "a new subject among painters." '19. Possibly so, it was nevertheless a Scottish version of the theme of rural labour, very thoroughly explored by

French painters. Chalmers' The End of The Harvest is ultimately a Scottish version of Breton's The Recall of the Gleaners (Illustration 27.).

In Auld John Brown, The End of The Harvest and The Legend Chalmers' sentiments and debts are expressed most clearly. The "deepest lessons" for man are examined. These lessons concern the dignity of man, the relationship between individuals and between men and nature and the land. Chalmers' paintings expressed precisely those ideas which so concerned Scottish society in the 1860's and 1870's. They were as much a recognition of the problems of the nineteenth century urban environment as any of the writings quoted in chapter one. The paintings were not simply sentimental visions of a non-existent rural golden-age. They implicitly criticised a society not founded on the maintenance and promotion of humanity. The rural setting was a metaphor for human dignity.

Having considered the case of George Paul Chalmers, the next chapter will examine the collectors of rural nostalgia and their role in the promotion of this particular branch of Scottish painting.

Chapter 2.

- 1 Edward Pinnington, "Art Collections of Dundee and District; The R.M. Lindsay Gallery", The Dundee Advertiser, May 8th, p.8.
  
- 2 Martin Hardie, John Pettie RA HRSA, London, 1908, p. 108.
  
- 3 Robert Walker, "Private Picture Collections in Glasgow and West of Scotland. I. Mr. James Reid's Collection.", The Magazine of Art, 1894, pp. 153-159.  
  
Robert Walker, "Private Picture Collections in Glasgow and West of Scotland. II. Mr. Andrew Maxwell's Collection.", The Magazine of Art, 1894, pp. 221-227.
  
- 4 *ibid.*, p. 222.
  
- 5 *idem.*
  
- 6 *ibid.*, p. 155.
  
- 7 *ibid.*, p. 221.
  
- 8 Sir James L. Caw, Scottish Painting Past and Present, 1620-1908, Edinburgh, 1908, p. 247.
  
- 9 W.D. McKay, The Scottish School of Painting, London, 1906, pp. 358-359.

10 Edward Pinnington, George Paul Chalmers RSA and the Art of His Time, 1833-1878, Glasgow, 1896, pp. 306-307 et passim.

11 *ibid.*, p. 401.

12 Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

13 Correspondence George Reid to John Forbes White held by Aberdeen Art Gallery, April 12th, 1896.

14 Correspondence George Paul Chalmers to G.B. Simpson held by National Library of Scotland MS 6348, copies made by Simpson held by Royal Scottish Academy library, November 16th, 1864.

15 *idem.*

Chalmers did not submit any major works to the RSA exhibition of 1865. He was represented by No. 488. W.B.G. Shiells, Esq. and No. 837. Portrait: a Sketch.

16 Correspondence G.P. Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, *op. cit.*, January 21st, 1865.

17 Correspondence G.P. Chalmers to G.B. Simpson *op. cit.*, January 12th, 1865, and February 23rd, 1865.

18 George Reid, "Notes on The Thirty-Ninth Exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy. (Second Notice.)", Montrose Standard and Angus and Mearns Register, March 31st, 1865, p. 6.

19 Correspondence Reid to White *op. cit.*, January 29th, 1870.

20 It was common practice at this period in the nineteenth century to paint partial replicas of successful paintings and sell them as studies. On occasion Chalmers did do this. In a letter to G.B. Simpson, of October 15th 1865, he mentioned painting such a 'study'. However it is unlikely that the studies for The Legend were replicas. It was only practical to repeat paintings when the original work had been a success. Since The Legend was never completed it is likely that on this occasion the studies were genuine preparatory works.

21 See chapter 5 for a discussion of Reid's promotion of "feeling".

22 Auld John Brown was never completed as an oil painting. Chalmers did send G.B. Simpson a watercolour study of the painting. This work appeared in the catalogue of the sale of Simpson's collection at Dowell's in Edinburgh on April 3rd 1886. It was listed as "670. 'Auld John Brown,' *vide* R. Leighton's Poem, *water-colour*, 7" X 8"". The present location of the work is unknown.

23 Correspondence Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, *op. cit.*, February 9th, 1866.

24 Most commonly critics referred to the story in Chalmers' paintings being simply told and needing no further explanation. Caw referred to the "simplicity of his motives in genre" (Caw, *op. cit.*, p. 248.) Walter Armstrong talked about the "simple pathos" of Chalmers' work. (The Portfolio, 1887, p. 189.) In 1877 The Portfolio had printed an etching after Chalmers. The painting etched was Prayer and depicted a child kneeling beside an aged figure in a rural interior. Although not actually using the word 'simple', the brief note beside the etching summed up all that 'simple' implied when used by other writers of the time.

"Pictures ought not to require literary explanation, and the one before us tells its own story so completely as to need no commentary. We would say nothing about it which the reader would not immediately discover for himself."

"Scottish Painting", The Portfolio, 1877, p. 192.

25 See chapter 5. for a discussion of 'motif'.

26 Robert Leighton, 1822-1869, was born in Dundee though he lived in England from 1854 until his death. His poetry was nationally published (Kegan, Paul & Co.) and he had a considerable reputation. Auld John Broom is typical of his work although not one of his most renowned poems. Reputedly admired by Longfellow and Emerson, Leighton's name was made by such pieces as Baptisement o' the Bairn, John and Tibbie's Dispute and The Wee Herd Loan. He was the uncle of William Leighton, a poet in very similar vein.

27 Correspondence Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, *op. cit.*, February 17th, 1866.

28 *ibid.*, February 26th, 1866.

29 *ibid.*, March 6th, 1866.

30 *ibid.*, March 19th, 1866.

31 *ibid.*, March 6th, March 19th, March 21st, March 30th, 1866.

32 *ibid.*, March 26th, 1866.

33 *ibid.*, April 16th, 1866.

34 *ibid.*, February 13th, 1866.

35 *ibid.*, March 6th, 1866.

36 See p. 28. for Alexander Smith's description of the Cowgate.

37 See chapter 5. for a discussion of how George Reid understood 'truth'.

38 Correspondence Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, *op. cit.*, September 3rd 1866.

39 See chapter 1. for a discussion of the relationship between reality and rural nostalgia painting.

40 Robert Leighton, "Auld John Broon.", Rhymes and Poems, London 2nd ed., 1861, 1st stanza.

41 This might be considered to owe a great deal to Wm. Wordsworth's ode, "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood", 5th stanza.

"But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home:  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!"

42 Robert Leighton, "Auld John Broon.", *op. cit.*

43 *idem.*

44 *idem.*

45 *idem.*

46 Correspondence Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, *op. cit.*, February 13th, 1866.

47 See chapter 5. for a discussion of Chalmers' knowledge of, and admiration for John Ruskin.

48 Chalmers did not mention in his covering letter where the reviews he enclosed had come from or when they were written. His letter concerned newspaper critics. Simpson had sent two reviews to Chalmers and, almost as a reciprocal arrangement, Chalmers sent two in return. It has proved impossible to trace the reviews he mentioned which refer to Ruskin.

49 Correspondence Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, *op. cit.*, March 12th, 1866.

50 "Cameron and Chalmers are both much pleased with \_ \_ \_ 'Broadsea' \_ \_ \_  
\_ There is a great division of opinion about the figure of the woman in the  
foreground - Chalmers and Cameron say 'put it out altogether' and merely  
put in a basket or something of that kind in her place - holding that she  
is spoiling the whole picture."

Correspondence George Reid to J.F. White now in Aberdeen Art Gallery.  
December 30th, 1871.

51 G.B. Simpson's sale catalogue of December 4th, 1880 lists the painting as  
number 76 and gives as the title the following extract.

"Here on this beach, a hundred years ago,  
Three children of three houses, Annie Lee,  
The prettiest little damsel in the port,  
And Philip Ray the miller's only son,  
And Enoch Arden, a rough sailor lad  
Made orphan by a winter shipwreck, play'd

-----  
And built their castles of dissolving sand  
To watch them overflow'd, \_ \_ \_ \_ \_"

Vide 'ENOCH ARDEN'"

52 Correspondence Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, *op. cit.*, March 26th, 1866.

"It was not until the last day that he consented to do away with the old  
woman."

Correspondence G.P. Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, *op. cit.*, April 10th, 1866.

53 Edward Pinnington, George Paul Chalmers RSA and the Art of His Time, 1833-1878, Glasgow, 1896, p. 147.

54 *ibid.*, p. 205.

55 The "picture in question" was Bible Story.

Correspondence Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, *op. cit.*, January 28th, 1868.

56 G.B. Simpson did buy the painting.

57 George Reid wrote to J.F. White in February 1870 explaining that he could only prevent Chalmers from continuing to work on his RSA painting, Just Knows and Knows no More Her Bible True, by insisting "on his putting on coat and coming out to Clerk Street to his dinner."

See chapter 5. p. 291.

On January 29th, 1870, Reid wrote to White

"I spent Monday evening with Chalmers - when I went in first he was in a quietly resigned frame of mind - having just (after great mental agony) come to the conclusion that he would send nothing to the exhibition - after a little while he 'turned out' having first prefaced the display by a lamentable story as to the badness and wretchedness of what I was about to see."

Reid reassured him about the worth of the two paintings Woman Reading a Bible, and Italian Woman with a Guitar and concluded

"I have not seen him since - but if he has not relapsed again both will be in the exhibition."

In the R.S.A. exhibition of 1870 Chalmers exhibited two works under the titles; No. 394. Just Knows and Knows no More Her Bible True and No. 505. A Love Song.

58 The third room is the largest exhibition gallery in the R.S.A.

59 Millais' Chill October was displayed at the R.S.A. of 1873 while Chalmers exhibited The End of The Harvest.

60 Pinnington, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

61 Correspondence Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, *op. cit.*, February 11th, 1873.

62 Pinnington, *op. cit.*, pp.209. and 223.

Pinnington quoted Chalmers' longing "for the power of a Millais", p.209., and his reference to the "great man Millais", p. 223.

63 The End of The Harvest, Canvas, 62½" X 34". Exhibited R.S.A. 1873; International Exhibition, Paris, 1878; Chalmers and Bough Exhibition, Glasgow, 1880; Royal Jubilee Exhibition, Manchester, 1887.

The painting was owned by J.F. White and sold by him in December 1888 when he removed to a smaller house. By 1900 it was in the collection of Andrew Carnegie and kept by him at Skibo Castle, Dornoch. It was sold along with the castle and contents to Mr Derek Holt in 1983. The painting currently still hangs at Skibo Castle.

64 Alexander Gibson and John Forbes White, George Paul Chalmers, Edinburgh, 1879.

65 See chapters 4. and 5..

66 Gibson and White, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

67 For many years the whereabouts of Running Water was unknown, (see W. Hardie, Scottish Painting 1837-1939, London, 1976, p. 69.) but in 1983 it was purchased by Angus District Libraries and Museums Service from Richard Murray McBey of Johnshaven. The painting was in very bad condition, seventeen per cent of the paint surface having been damaged. The painting was sent for restoration to the National Gallery, Edinburgh. When it was due for return to Montrose Museum the resulting publicity drew the attention of local people who recognised it as "a gloomy painting" which had hung previously in the dining room of Sunnyside Royal Hospital, by Montrose. It would appear that a former superintendent of the hospital, by the name of Howden, had been an admirer of Chalmers and had placed the painting there.

68 Gibson and White, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

69 "The Royal Scottish Academy", The Glasgow Herald, February 12th, 1875, p. 4

70 "Exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy (Second Notice)", The Scotsman, February 13th, 1875, p. 6.

71 Edward Pinnington, "George Paul Chalmers R.S.A.", The Art Journal, 1897, pp. 83-88.

72 From, Edward Pinnington, "Robert Scott Lauder, R.S.A., And His Pupils." The Art Journal 1898, pp. 367-371.

73 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, April 12th, 1896.

74 For a discussion of Reid's involvement in the production of George Paul Chalmers by A. Gibson and J.F. White see chapter 4.

75 Correspondence Reid to White *op. cit.*, April 12th, 1896.

76 Edward Pinnington, George Paul Chalmers RSA and the Art of His Time 1833-1878, Glasgow, 1896.

77 Gibson and White, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

78 For a discussion of the relationship between Samuel Smiles and George Reid see chapter 4.

79 Samuel Smiles, Life of a Scotch Naturalist. Thomas Edward Associate of the Linnean Society, London, 1876..

80 Pinnington, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

81 Correspondence Samuel Smiles to George Reid held by Aberdeen Art Gallery. December 30th, 1879.

82 Samuel Smiles, Duty. With Illustrations of Courage, Patience, & Endurance, London, 1880, p. 260.

83 Gibson and White *op. cit.*, p. 67.

84 *idem.*

85 George Reid and John Forbes White, "The Arts Exhibition. The Paintings - No. 4", The Aberdeen Journal, August 27th, 1873, p. 8.

86 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, January 29th, 1870.

87 Quoted by William J. Hyde, "Hardy's View of Realism: A Key to The Rustic Characters", Victorian Studies, vol. 2., 1958-59, p. 56, from The Science of Fiction, p. 89.

88 See chapter 1.

89 See Chapter 1.

90 Samuel Smiles, The Autobiography of Samuel Smiles, ed. Thomas Mackay, London, 1905, p. 78.

91 Samuel Smiles, Life and Labour, London, 1887, pp. 356-357.

92 See chapter 3.

93 See chapter 3.

94 Memoirs and Portraits of One Hundred Glasgow Men, Vol II, Glasgow, 1896, pp. 191-196.

95 *ibid.*, p. 192.

96 In 1876 McGavin lent to the R.S.A.

No. 337 During The Hay Harvest, by John Linnell.

No. 359 Landscape Painters, by Edouard Frère.

97 Letter from John McGavin, of 4 West Nile Street, Glasgow to J. Dick Peddie Esq., R.S.A., May 18th, 1876, held by the library of the Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh.

98 A second, smaller version of The End of The Harvest, at 20" X 11" was the largest work lent by McGavin.

99 Letter from John McGavin, of 4 West Nile Street, Glasgow to Wm. Brodie Esq., R.S.A., September 25th, 1880, held by the R.S.A. library.

100 I.M.W., "Private Picture Galleries. The Collection of James Orchar, Esq., of Broughty Ferry", Good Words, 1897, pp. 811-817.

101 Edward Pinnington, "Art Collections Of Dundee and District. The Orchar Gallery", The Dundee Advertiser, May 1st, 1909, p. 8.

102 *idem*.

103 See chapter 3.

104 Correspondence G.P. Chalmers to George Reid, July 31st, 1873, quoted in Edward Pinnington, George Paul Chalmers and the Art of His Time 1833-1878 Glasgow, 1896, p. 180.

105 See chapter 3.

106 A.H. Millar, "The Collection of I. Julius Weinberg, Esq., Dundee.", The Art Journal, 1898, p. 86.

"G.P. Chalmers is represented by three early pictures - a delicate watercolour landscape called 'Through the Fields'; a suggestive figure-sketch in oil of 'A Brittany Peasant'; and a brilliant little picture of a girl in a scarlet cloak, which might appropriately be named 'Little Red Riding Hood.'"

107 A.H. Millar, "The Collection of I. Julius Weinberg Esq., Dundee, The Art Journal, 1898, p.19.

108 *ibid.*, p. 86.

109 Gibson and White, *op. cit.*

110 White and Chalmers were close personal friends. When Chalmers died in strange circumstances in 1878 White wrote to the President of the R.S.A..

"Sir Daniel Macnee

P.R.S.A.

Edinburgh

Dear Sir,

I have had several interviews with Mr J.W. Barclay M.P. this week about the subject of his question to the Home Secretary about Mr Chalmers' death, (put by Mr Ramsay M.P. to him on Tuesday).

I doubt not that you like Mr Chalmers' other friends feel sore that the matter rests as it does, with not much hope of discovery and with an obvious desire to assume that accident was the cause of death.

Mr Barclay suggested that the Academy should write to the Home Secretary, under cover to Mr Barclay who will deliver the letter, urging the Government to offer a reward of £250, the Academy undertaking to extend this offer to the same sum, thus holding out an offer of £500 which may be sufficient to tempt some source to come forward and confess. It is not unusual for the Government to offer considerable sums, even £500 in some cases.

Mr Barclay also suggested that the Academy should urge that an independent and competent person should be sent down from London at once to make special enquiry into the circumstances. The report that is asked from Mr Carnegie is understood to refer only to the general police administration of the city, but this is not what is immediately wanted at best as regard to the mysterious death of our friend.

In want of Government making any difficulty about the £250, I would most respectfully but strongly urge the Academy to increase their offer, and I am sure that Mr C's friends would gladly join in making up a sum that would possibly bring out the facts. If the Academy can see its way to offer £300, I shall add £100 (but without giving my name). The dreadful uncertainty as to the circumstances of his tragic death is too painful to bear. Every day however that elapses makes detection or discovery more difficult.

Mr Barclay leaves Aberdeen tomorrow (Saturday) at 4.5 pm for London and will be found in the sleeping car at Edinburgh about 10 pm. when he will be glad to see any of your body to confer with him as to what should be done without delay. Mr B. has shown an interest in the matter which is much to his praise.

I remain, Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

John F. White."

Letter from J.F. White to the President of the Royal Scottish Academy, written from Aberdeen, March 8th, 1879. The letter is now held by the library of the R.S.A..

111 See chapter 3.

John Forbes White, How Can Art Be Best Introduced Into The Houses Of Persons Of Limited Income?, A paper read before the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, at Aberdeen, September 24th, 1877. Published for private circulation, Aberdeen, 1877.

112 *ibid.*, p. 3.

113 *idem.*

114 *idem.*

115 "It has been well said by the great French critic Bürger (Thoré), that a private collection is an exact index of the artistic tastes, feelings, and convictions of the collector. Nowhere is this theory more evident than in the interesting collection formed by Mr. John Forbes White, of Dundee." Quoted from "Private Picture Galleries. The Collection of John Forbes White, Esq, LL.D.", Good Words, 1896, pp.813-819.

116 For further discussion of White's promotion of a didactic art available to all sections of society see chapters 3. and 4.

117 see chapter 1.

118 For a discussion of the influence of French art criticism on the views of George Reid see chapter 5.

119 Correspondence George Reid to J.F. White, *op. cit.*, c.May 14th, 1868.

### Chapter 3.

#### THE COLLECTORS OF RURAL NOSTALGIA

The encouragement that rural nostalgia painters received from contemporary collectors was highly significant. The educative role of art could be explicitly theorised over as it was by George Reid and John Forbes White<sup>1</sup> but could only be practiced if the owners of the paintings were prepared to display their purchases widely. Within the broad sweep of the diverse elements which influenced Scottish painting in the period c.1860-1880 the comprehensive examination of the effect that the formation of large scale collections had on Scottish painting cannot be the purpose of this thesis, but the importance of collectors in general is such that the theme merits some consideration.

In the 1860's the rise of the phenomena of the newly wealthy industrialist as collector of modern paintings was still a relatively recent one. It is never possible to assign definite dates to something as ill-defined as a change in taste. It can be stated however that during the 1830's there were certainly men appearing in Britain who had tastes in art that were decidedly different from the widespread views held by eighteenth century collectors and still adhered to in the 1820's.<sup>2</sup> Contemporary artists, until this time patronised almost exclusively as portrait painters, were quite suddenly in demand as purveyors of genre, landscape, narrative and history. It is not the purpose here to account for the dramatic shift in emphasis which led to modern painters being deemed worthy of patronage. The traditional historical answer, indeed that advanced at the time,<sup>3</sup> was that this change was brought about by the rise of a wealthy middle class.

This is certainly true, but this class was not new in 1830. Based on commercial development, men with no aristocratic background had been amassing considerable fortunes since the beginning of the industrial revolution. Yet it was not until c. 1830 that they began buying the works of contemporary painters in large numbers. Whatever the reason for it, around 1830 the patronage of living painters began to become fashionable in Britain.

There has been very little research carried out specifically on the activities of nineteenth century Scottish collectors of contemporary painting. It is likely that in common with other matters in the commercial world, Scotland followed the lead of the larger more wealthy England and developed along similar lines albeit some years later<sup>4</sup>. . By the 1860's the Scots would appear to have 'caught up' with the practices of English contemporary collectors and there are interesting parallels to be drawn. Just as George Rae [1817-1902], the Liverpool banker and patron of the Pre-Raphaelites insisted on buying his works directly from the artists themselves, indeed was praised by the writer of his obituary for never consulting dealers, <sup>5</sup> so too Scottish collectors of contemporary art such as G.B. Simpson, J.F. White and J. McGavin all took pride in the fact that they bought their pictures directly from the artists.

Similarly, while the collector Isaac Lowthian Bell [1816-1904] had the interior decoration of his palatial mansion at Rounton Grange, Northallerton carried out by William Morris and Co., particularly by Burne-Jones, Aberdeen collectors J.F. White and Alexander Walker had their houses

remodelled by the man they, as Scots, saw as the most innovative designer of the day, Daniel Cottier.

The Scottish collectors were not just northern versions of their English counterparts. In the same way that Scottish genre painting was qualitatively different from that in England, so Scottish collectors exhibited different tastes from those in England. Collectors in Scotland bought contemporary Scottish art not only because it was Scottish although national pride was a factor. • They bought Scottish art because it was different from English and suited to them as Scots. Their different tastes naturally led to a different approach to European painting, an approach that was to have a profound effect on the development of painting in Scotland.

Scottish collectors bought French Barbizon painting and Dutch Hague School painting well before it became fashionable in England. These purchases were not always popular with the older generation. The R.S.A. wanted to reject a large Corot in 1878 for example and it was only thanks to pressure from Chalmers that they were persuaded to accept the painting. Scotland was seen as a distinctly different place in artistic terms. Mollinger referred to it as "the land of my success" in the 1860's 7. and by the 1890's it was a well established fact. W.E. Henley, in his introduction to the sale catalogue of the Cottier collection in 1892 wrote "In England the parochial feeling was so strong, the parish visions so purblind, that even now the National Gallery contains no single specimen of the highest achievement of the century. But in Scotland, where the historical regard for France is yet a living statement, the case was far other." •.

In 1912 W. Shaw Sparrow recalled the early difference between Scottish and English taste. "Long before modernised French work was appreciated by English collectors there were Scotsmen who liked and bought Rousseau, Diaz, Troyon, Daubigny, Millet, Corot as well as many Dutch painters like Israels and the brothers Maris." 9.

By 1860 the Victorian middle class in Scotland, involved in manufacturing and industrial development, had come to provide a new and very different art market from that on which artists had previously depended and had set new values in the paintings they favoured. Certainly in Scotland in the second half of Victoria's reign there was a bigger market for contemporary painting than had ever existed before. R.A.M. Stevenson writing in 1894 pointed out that "In Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee, many houses, unpretentious save for their fine material or good proportions, contain at the present day fair collections of pictures." 10.

These collections had all been assembled in the preceding thirty years. This new collecting class has been described as " \_ \_ bent on acquiring a semblance of culture, while devoting some part of its riches to the embellishment of its homes." 11.

It was fashionable and desirable to demonstrate refinement and taste by decorating one's home with modern pictures. For such people engaged in establishing their respectability and growing influence and power, art collecting served as a conspicuous way of acquiring prestige and, by the 1870's in Britain as a whole, and certainly including Scotland, the money spent on the inflated prices which particular pictures fetched in the

saleroom was deemed a good investment. Arthur Perigal, a painter of the generation before the Scott Lauder pupils was consistently amazed at the prices pictures fetched at auction in the 1870's. <sup>12</sup>.

Any patron bent on "acquiring a semblance of culture" was unlikely to display a discerning taste in painting. When they did buy contemporary painting they purchased either from official academy exhibitions or through dealers. <sup>13</sup>. The lack of discrimination practised by collectors intent only on demonstrating their sophistication, or on making an investment, was acknowledged at the time. George Reid wrote:-

"Take, as an average specimen, either Jones or Smith, respectable, well-to-do men in the commercial world. He will put a spare £20 in his pocket some of these days, and make a run up to see the exhibition, and 'pick up,' as he phrases it, some little bit. He makes a hasty survey, puts a mark opposite the numbers of the pictures which take him most. He consults the price list in the clerk's room, - perhaps finds that by making his £20 into guineas one or other of his marked pictures can be bought; and without further hesitation, the purchase is completed; and at the close of the exhibition, the picture is transferred to the walls of his villa - he, simple man, congratulating himself on his growing collection, complacently thinking how his friends will speak of his refined taste and keen appreciation of art. Well, possibly the bulk of them may; but some day there comes to dine with him a friend, say Mr Snarling, who really knows a thing or two about pictures. He listens to all his friend Jones' glowing descriptions of his several purchases with a good-

natured incredulous stare; and not wishing to hurt his feelings, or lower his household gods in his estimation, allows him still to remain in blissful ignorance as to their true merit. Poor Jones, poor Smith. They are a class of picture-buyers which abound, well pleased with their purchases. Why, oh! Mr Snarling, should you seek to run them down? Why leave shrugging your shoulders and fortifying yourself in the conviction that they love art, not wisely but too well?" 14.

Reid was later to have personal experience of a collector certain of his own abilities as a judge of taste and an arbiter of artistic development. This collector was certainly concerned with contemporary painting, but was not aware of anything other than his own personal prejudices. In February 1870 Reid wrote to White.

"On Monday after breakfast I went to visit the great "concooser" Mr Robert Horne (sic) advocate. Macdonald wrote to him saying I would like to see his pictures - and Blackie had told him I was to call on Monday - consequently I found my visit expected. I was first shown into his business room, and after rather a formal welcome I was requested to take a seat. The 'concooser' sat down in his arm chair in the corner and after a few preliminary remarks about the weather proceeded to deliver himself upon the subject of art in general and on the duties of young artists in particular. He spoke like the Delphic Oracle - slowly, solemnly, weightily fell the words from his lips - the sentences short, precise, measured. He dilated upon the dangers that young and

inexperienced painters were exposed to - and of all 'going abroad' seemed the most fatal. 'Yes, they go abroad, they see the works of distinguished foreign artists, they are taken as the bird in the snare of the fowler, they adopt their style and manner of working & often end in being nothing save mere wretched copyists - unless - their own native strength and originality should again prevail and enable them to throw off the yoke of bondage in which they have become entangled. The true course of the young artist is to go to nature and form his own style from it - but to go abroad - to look at the works of contemporary artists there, never. Be confirmed first in your own originality so that their influence cannot affect you and then you may go safely' - such was the substance of his deliverance on this point. I wondered what it was all about - it soon came - 'I have heard that you' resemble Mollinger.' I shuddered even as poor David must have done when Nathan the prophet said to him 'thou art the man'. I made a weak attempt at self-justification - but felt powerless. The attack had evidently been prepared beforehand and all resistance was useless. I felt it so - and just let him have it all his own way. After a little he exhausted himself and then he proposed looking at the pictures. He has several very good ones - especially Harvey's 'Sheep Shearing' (Illustration 28.) & 'Dr Guthrie fishing in a punt'. I spent about an hour and a half with him. Most of the pictures seem to be the joint production of the artist and himself - he seems to have sat over them and given the needed inspiration. He proposed visiting me and called at the College about 2. O'clock.

He said little or nothing about Mrs Duguid's portrait [don't tell Mr Duguid so I pray you] but seemed rather to like Blackie's portrait. He made one or two suggestions and was desirous to see them carried into effect. To please him I did so and his satisfaction with the work grew in measure. When he rose to leave he was positively complimentary in his expressions - we did it seemed to be the meaning of it all." '6.

Reid admired elements of Horn's collection. In particular he singled out the landscapes of George Harvey. However, if the collection as a whole is examined it reveals a very different approach to that identifiable in the holdings of White, Chalmers' friends Simpson and McGavin, or indeed any of the collectors discussed in this chapter. Much of Horn's collection could not have been to Reid's taste. There were four McCulloch's and nineteen paintings by McCulloch's pupil Fraser in the collection. There were works by Gourlay Steele, John Faed, and Berghem, all of whom had been attacked in Reid and White's joint publication, Thoughts On Art two years earlier. '7. There were no works by contemporary French or Dutch painters.

It has been suggested, perhaps with attitudes like Robert Horn's in mind, that Scottish painting in this period suffered from a lack of the right kind of patronage and that Scottish life failed to provide a market for works of art such that they could represent a real and native tradition. '8.

The situation in later Victorian Scotland does not bear out this stereotyped picture of the middle-class collector. It is true that many middle-class Scots crowded the walls of their homes with inferior anecdotal canvasses

and popular engravings and, just as in England some men of wealth were ill-advised in the purchases which they made, particularly of Old Masters.

Less than thirty years after the initiation of many of these collections they came under attack from the new generation of art critics active in the 1890's. R.A.M. Stevenson, for example, while identifying and praising certain items of worth in the Keiller collection in Dundee, described it as one which "illustrates no principle in painting and points to no definite taste for schools or methods \_ \_ \_ \_ . If a tendency of any sort directs the choice of canvasses it is towards the figure-picture with an incident." <sup>19</sup>. He summed it up as representing "the tastes of an ordinary citizen of a commercial town." <sup>20</sup>.

Somewhat more diplomatically Edward Pinnington described the collection of R.W. Kydd as one which "tells of an elastic taste." <sup>21</sup> Even the major and well informed collector James Donald whose bequest to the Kelvingrove Art Gallery in 1905 provided a number of works acknowledged to be of great importance, <sup>22</sup>. was accused of having in his collection some "works of no meaning beyond an evident and anecdotic one." <sup>23</sup>.

These criticisms are in large part accounted for by the fact that taste had changed again by the 1890's, just as it had in the 1850's to allow the formation of these collections to begin. The practitioners of the "new criticism" of the 1890's shied away from what they saw as overly sentimental works and failed to comprehend their relationship to the society which had produced them. Stevenson's disparaging remarks regarding the Keiller collection stem from precisely the same misunderstanding about

the painters of the 1860's and 1870's as that which led to Pinnington's attempt to interpret Chalmers' work in purely formal terms. <sup>24</sup>. Both critics, though very different in perception and in critical ability, read the paintings from the formalist point of view inherent in art criticism from this time onwards.

Irrespective of this the major collectors of contemporary work in Scotland in the second half of the nineteenth century were, for the most part, well established, informed and perceptive men. They valued their links with contemporary artists in whose well-being they took an active interest and were anxious to enable a wider audience to enjoy, appreciate and benefit from the paintings which they purchased.

These men played a formative role in the development of Scottish painting. Their contributions as patrons were so fundamental to the encouragement of certain painters at particular points in their careers and the link between patron and artist in many instances was so close, that it is worthwhile to consider some cases individually.

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#### The Dundee Collectors: John Charles Bell

Many collectors of the period, particularly those following the advice of certain dealers, did not chose to buy a great deal of contemporary Scottish painting. Indeed in a review of the Glasgow Exhibition of 1901 it was stated that "All or nearly all the foreign pictures have come from Glasgow collections and Glasgow collectors seem not only to have neglected in a

great measure, the painters of their own country but to be ignorant as regards modern French art of any school save that of Barbizon." 25.

Though described by Henry Cockburn in 1844 as "The palace of Scottish blackguardism" 26. and generally acknowledged to be the least desirable of the four main Scottish cities, 27. Dundee, from the 1860's to the turn of the century, was a notable artistic centre. The Art Journal of 1898 noted Dundee's importance.

"There is a notion prevalent south of the Tweed that Dundee is a mere mushroom city of yesterday, wholly given over to commerce and manufactures, \_ \_ \_ \_ This is a total mistake \_ \_ \_ As to the position of Dundee in the world of Art, it is sufficient to say that for many years it has held premier rank in Scotland for the sale of pictures at its exhibitions. Since these exhibitions were established some thirty years ago; the totals of annual sales of pictures have exceeded those of either Edinburgh or Glasgow; and indeed there is no English provincial town, save Liverpool, that can show larger results than Dundee. The fact implies that there are private collections in the city and its neighbourhood which will compare favourably with those in almost any other large city except London." 28.

In quality as well as quantity Dundee was an important centre for private collections. A good indication of the contribution of the patron can be given by considering the creation and dispersal of the three separate collections made by the Dundee merchant John Charles Bell. A successful and

highly respected businessman in the flax and jute trades, Bell had come to Dundee as a fifteen year old to learn what the writer of his obituary described as "the methods of commerce." <sup>29</sup>. His family had for generations lived in Berwick-on-Tweed so that his background, as was the case with the majority of collectors of rural nostalgia, was perhaps less commercial and industrial than his later life would suggest. Although successful, he was never a rich man judged by the standards of the day. <sup>30</sup>. His home at number 7 Cowgate was a modest one, yet he managed to form collections which were both financially and artistically valuable. Since he chose to live in an unostentatious style, he had more money available to purchase paintings. His first collection, begun in the 1840's, earlier than Caw credited most Scottish collectors with developing an interest in contemporary painting, was formed at a time when a man of moderate means could still acquire works by distinguished painters. He was a contemporary of Bough, McCulloch, Fraser and Douglas and possessed examples of their work. By the time the Scott Lauder pupils appeared on the scene, Bell was a recognised collector and became very much their patron.

It was this first collection which came up for sale in 1877 when Bell was 61. Possibly the sale allowed him to continue to collect during his retirement. There was a large crowd at Dowell's on the day of the sale including buyers from London and the pictures fetched £11, 000. At the time this was the largest sum ever realised for a modern Scottish collection and reflected the rising popularity of contemporary painting. <sup>31</sup>.

Bell had befriended many young artists at a time when the art market was much less favourable. <sup>32</sup>. He had a good appreciation of artistic merit so

that the sale included early works by artists who had subsequently gained high reputations. Bell's collection was not exclusively Scottish. He was quick, for example, to include an example of Mollinger in his collection after he had seen his work in the R.S.A. exhibition of 1865. He wrote to Mollinger saying:-

"As I have a collection of pictures, I should be glad to have one of yours among them - anything that you may have, with such pleasing effects as either of these I have seen, I should be glad to possess, and for which, I would be prepared to pay £20, or a little more, according to the importance of the picture. If you can furnish me with such a one, as I have mentioned, be kind enough to send it on to me, that I may have it before the middle of January 1866 as [if you have no objections] I would like to put it into the next Academy exhibition." <sup>33</sup>.

His collection then was not exclusively Scottish but he did have fine examples of McTaggart, Hugh Cameron, Pettie, Chalmers, Graham, MacWhirter and Orchardson. <sup>34</sup>. McTaggart's Willie Baird (Illustration 29) fetched £245 at the 1877 sale and works by Bough, Pettie, Cameron and Chalmers made similar sums, being, in some cases, over five or even ten times the artist's original asking price. <sup>35</sup>. This phenomenal rise in the price of paintings illustrates the rapidly rising fashion for collecting modern pictures.

Bell could not long exist without paintings in his home and he soon began the formation of a second collection which now included examples of the work of Wingate, J. Farquharson, W.D. McKay, D. Farquharson and others. <sup>36</sup>.

This example which had already influenced other prominent businessmen to form collections, many larger than Bell's, was further promoted by the encouragement he gave to the exhibition of paintings in Dundee. The first exhibition to be held in the Drill Hall in Dundee in 1867 on the occasion of the visit of the British Association owed much to his cooperation with J.G. Orchar, T.S. Robertson, G.B. Simpson the patron of Chalmers, and W. Ritchie, Simpson's partner. <sup>37</sup> He lent all the finest works in his possession for the exhibition and thereafter took an active part in all subsequent local exhibitions. He was a prominent member of the Fine Art Committee which directed the the frequent exhibitions held in the Albert Institute. His eagerness to lend works is demonstrated by the remarks he made to Mollinger in the letter already quoted. It was his desire to lend out his paintings that governed the date by which he wanted the commission completed. It should be remembered that when Bell spoke of putting a painting into the R.S.A. in 1866, this meant submitting the work for selection. Works owned by collectors did not have an automatic right of entry into the exhibition. Bell intended going to a considerable degree of trouble and expense, with no guarantee of success, simply because of his belief in the importance of exhibiting the pictures he owned to a wider audience.

Circumstances led Bell to dispose of his second collection in 1890, but almost immediately he began to build up a third collection. The economy was considerably less buoyant by this time and this undoubtedly had an effect on the sale of paintings. Nevertheless before his death at the age of 81 in 1897, Bell had once again acquired the basis of a sound contemporary collection of Scottish painting. A man of few words, it was recorded that

he "never glibly talked the art jargon which repels possible admirers." <sup>38</sup>. Certainly, while he generously supported younger painters, he repudiated the term "patron". <sup>39</sup>. Like other major collectors of rural nostalgia paintings, he had warm friendly relations with the artists whose work he purchased directly, always paying their own price. <sup>40</sup>. G.P. Chalmers regarded Bell with great affection and the portrait he painted of the collector, <sup>41</sup>. (Illustration 25.) at the time claimed to be one of the finest portraits ever painted in Scotland, <sup>42</sup>. reveals much of the quality of the sitter. Chalmers' diary recorded Bell living and dining with him during work on the painting. <sup>43</sup>.

A constant preoccupation of Bell's was his desire to share his interest in art and the work he possessed with a wider public drawn from all levels of society. The writer of his obituary in 1897, referring to himself as "an old friend", was clear as to Bell's motivation in forming his collections. He wrote

"To those whose memories embrace the whole period covered by Mr Bell's history as an art collector, his and other notable examples, and the many fine exhibitions held during that time, have very distinctly raised the taste of the whole community, and exercised a refining influence on all classes as beneficent as it is unconscious. And such should always be the chief aim of art, for, to paraphrase a celebrated passage of Mr Bright's 'it should cause light to shine not only in the palace, the castle and the mansions of the rich, but in the cottage and the homes of the

poor and lowly.' Mr Bell was an early pioneer in this good work, which he did with all his might \_ \_ \_ \_ " 44.

Perhaps in some degree due to Bell's influence and even more to the increasing prosperity which jute and other industries had brought, Dundee in the second half of the nineteenth century had become a major area of collecting activity. Pinnington commented on "\_ \_ the astonishing number of pictures of a high standard of artistic value gracing and enriching the residences of Dundee and district." 45.

#### The Dundee Collectors: James Guthrie Orchar

A year after Bell's death in 1897 another major collector in the area, James Guthrie Orchar, died and left the whole of his art collection to be retained for the benefit of the burgh of Broughty Ferry for public exhibition. Orchar's collection had begun in the 1860's, He was very much a self made man from the "virtuous peasantry." 46. His father, a country joiner and wheelwright, had a small business at Craigie outside Dundee while his grandfather had farmed at West Ferry, and Orchar never tired of recalling incidents of his early life. Early training as a joiner led subsequently to engineering first in Dundee and later in England. Returning to Dundee, he later entered into partnership with William Robertson, another noted collector, to form the Wallace Foundry at a financially propitious time. Once the business was securely established both men went on to play a prominent part in public affairs. 47. As chief magistrate, later Provost of Broughty Ferry, Orchar was a popular local figure. He was recorded as being

generous to charities, unfailingly courteous and free from self-aggrandizement. <sup>49</sup>.

Orchar's reputation was of being an eminently social man with a fund of old Scottish stories which he told superbly. Two brief contemporary remarks made on the character of the collector are very revealing. He was described as having "a reverence for the past", and, in spite of his business success an "instinctive dislike of change". <sup>50</sup>. These observations tie Orchar in with the traits identified in the characters of both collectors and painters of rural nostalgia. Reid certainly possessed a dislike of change, <sup>50</sup>. as did White. Orchar's ambivalent attitude to society can be assumed to have stemmed from the same sources already identified. The rapid changes in society and the impossibility of assimilating them were discussed in chapter one. It is precisely these which led to men such as Orchar living and working successfully in a developing industrial society while at the same time maintaining a reverence for the past. The changes would have appeared even more dramatic and the resulting sense of dislocation even more pronounced when one's background was, like Orchar's, essentially rural. The outward manifestation of this uneasy relationship with society was Orchar's collection of paintings. <sup>51</sup>.

Although a man of many interests, the dominating influence in Orchar's life was art. He was himself an amateur painter and was considered to be a reasonable draughtsman. <sup>52</sup>. From a modest beginning as a collector when a young man, he gradually built up an extensive collection of contemporary art. While his taste was not narrow, he owned examples of work by Israels, Bosboom, Cox, Millais, Linnell, De Wint, Alma Tadema and a selection of

etchings by J.M. Whistler, his collection was mainly Scottish and predominantly the work of the Scott Lauder pupils. Pinnington, writing of the collection in 1909, described it as " \_ \_ the expression of an exceptionally developed artistic sense in a connoisseur of catholic sympathy, discriminating in estimating quality and acute in perception." 53.

Orchar's particular preferences are revealed by considering the numbers of works by individual painters in his possession. There were twenty-three McTaggarts, sixteen Hugh Cameron's, thirteen MacWhirter's, five Orchardson's, thirteen Bough's, eight Chalmers', five Pettie's etc.. 54.

Like Bell, Orchar had a genuine interest in the artists whose paintings he acquired. He was always prepared to give generous support to young artists or to those who were ill or infirm. A particular friend was Chalmers 55. and it was his painting Old Letters, 56. which founded the Dundee Permanent Collection. When the gallery first opened in 1874 this painting, the gift of Orchar, was its only possession all the others being loan pictures. Orchar's example induced others to follow. His own gifts, besides Old Letters, included works by Hugh Cameron, McTaggart, Pettie, Colin Hunter, T. Graham and others. 57. Like Bell, Orchar played a leading part in the organisation of the first fine art exhibition held in Dundee in 1867. 58. As was the case with Bell, Orchar was keen to lend out his pictures to exhibitions. He was one of the largest single lenders of pictures to the 1867 show with twenty-five works. Most of the donations that Orchar made to the Dundee Art Gallery were purchased from the annual Fine Art Exhibitions held in the Albert Institute from 1873 onwards. He similarly was one of the motivating

forces behind the inaugural 1873 exhibition which celebrated the opening of the permanent gallery. <sup>50</sup>.

Orchar's reasons for lending his pictures and for being involved in the mounting of loan exhibitions were explained in his obituary. According to the author, Orchar believed that art should be an agent " \_ \_ working under greater and more potent influences towards the elevation and refinement of humanity." <sup>50</sup>.

Orchar gave up much time to setting up exhibitions in Dundee. With T.S. Robertson, he acted as joint-Convenor of the managing committee of the series of highly successful artist's sale exhibitions begun in Dundee in 1877. It is indicative of the number of Dundee collectors that the average sales over a twenty year period till 1895-6 when the last exhibition was held, were about £5000 a year, a result far surpassing any other Fine Art Exhibition of the time in a city of comparable size. <sup>51</sup>.

It was Orchar who put forward a proposal for new galleries specially built for the annual exhibitions. Keiller's donation of £10,000 made the project viable and other collectors such as Robertson, Buist, Weinberg and Dalgleish lent their support. <sup>52</sup>. The scheme was formally launched in 1887 and the first exhibition was opened in late 1889. <sup>53</sup>.

One characteristic of Orchar seems to have deeply impressed his contemporaries. Repeatedly comment was passed on his simplicity and lack of ostentation. Like Bell he avoided the fashionable art jargon of the day. He was described as a self-effacing man who "never for one moment assumed

the airs of a superior person," <sup>64</sup>. making no attempt to pose as a connoisseur unlike others of lesser abilities and knowledge.

#### The Dundee Collectors: George Buchan Simpson

Another notable collector in the Dundee area was George Buchan Simpson. Unlike the two previous collectors, he was a native of Dundee, born there in 1820. Like Orchar and Bell, he went into business in the city and founded a manufacturing concern with, coincidentally, another collector William Ritchie. This partnership was dissolved in 1877 and thereafter, in the difficult period which followed, Simpson suffered a succession of commercial misfortunes and was perhaps glad, at the age of 66, to give up his business completely in 1886.

His major collection of 120 works, "nearly all obtained direct from the Artists" <sup>65</sup>. was sold in Edinburgh in December 1880. <sup>66</sup>. Following the pattern of Orchar and Bell, Simpson was heavily involved in the administration of the exhibition in Dundee to commemorate the meeting of the British Association there. Simpson in fact was the convenor of the committee in charge of organising the exhibition. <sup>67</sup>. He was renowned for his willingness to lend out his pictures.

"Though possessed of a splendid collection of artistic works, he did not selfishly conserve these for his own pleasure, but was ever ready to bring his most cherished treasures before the public and to enable his townsmen to participate in his enjoyment." <sup>68</sup>.

He was the largest single contributor of paintings to the 1867 exhibition lending some twenty-six works. Simpson's partner Ritchie also contributed heavily with twenty paintings.<sup>69</sup> Again, like Orchar and Bell, Simpson became involved in the Dundee Fine Art Exhibitions. Even after losing most of his money, he continued to be involved in the administration right up to his death in 1892.<sup>70</sup> Also like Bell and Orchar he had close personal contacts with several Scottish artists of the day. His obituary noted that:-

"Amongst those whom he befriended in their early struggles the names of George Paul Chalmers, W. McTaggart, W.Q. Orchardson, Sam Bough, James Cassie and Alexander Fraser may be mentioned as artists who fully realised the hopes which Mr Simpson entertained of them, and proved the astuteness and accuracy of his anticipations regarding their abilities."<sup>71</sup>

Simpson's 1880 sale catalogue reveals that many of the works he owned were direct commissions from the artists. In addition to the works which Chalmers undertook for Simpson, of the seven works by McTaggart in the sale, four had been specifically painted for Simpson. Many of the paintings were rural genre works; paintings such as, McTaggart's Herding Ae Wee Lamb & Ewe for her Puir Mamie and The Mother's Song Cameron's Going to The Hay; J. Cassie's Highland Crones; Chalmers' Cottage Interior Glen Lyon and Saying Grace and G. Reid's A Fishing Village on the North East Coast.

Thus Simpson, like Orchar and Bell, regarded many of these contemporary Scottish artists as personal friends and was glad to welcome them to his home in Broughty Ferry. His particularly close relationship to Chalmers is

evidenced by the series of letters which the artist wrote to Simpson between 1864 and 1873. 72. Chalmers discussed with Simpson his deepest feelings about his work and, for example catalogued his moods of relative satisfaction and near despair over the progress of The Legend, writing as to an understanding friend. 73. The letters reveal not only Simpson's concern for the health and well being of the artist and his material support but also his knowledge of and interest in the other artists who made up Chalmers' circle of friends. 74.

### The Dundee Collectors

Isaac Julius Weinberg, a noted philanthropist who also resided for many years in Dundee, was considerably more successful in his commercial ventures than Simpson, being described as a "merchant prince" whose "business sagacity had been recognised and utilised in many directions, on several occasions, by Ministers of the Crown." 75. He had however a common interest in acquiring works by contemporary Scottish artists, particularly of the pupils of R.S. Lauder. It was Weinberg's noted collection which moved A.H. Millar in the first of two articles published on the collector in The Art Journal in 1898 to stress the importance of Dundee as an unrecognised centre for the Fine Arts. 76. Chalmers, Cameron, McTaggart and MacWhirter were all well represented in the collection by rural nostalgia works. 77. The collection also included early rural works by W. Q. Orchardson and a somewhat uncommon early figure sketch by James Cassie entitled The Old Cronies. 78. In keeping with many other collectors of modern Scottish painting Weinberg owned contemporary Dutch and French works also. Josef Israels was well represented in the collection and there were two rural

genre paintings by E. Frère. As had Orchar and Bell, Weinberg contributed to the newly formed civic art collection in Dundee. 79.

Dundee collectors were seen as a more or less cohesive unit. Chalmers, in his letters to Simpson frequently mentioned, or sent regards to other collectors, apparently in the knowledge that Simpson would be in contact with them 80. The collectors visited exhibitions together 81. and were perceived in the art press as having common attributes. Pinnington closed his series of eight articles on "Art Collections of Dundee and District" by repeating that art was an instrument for instruction for society and that "The collectors of Dundee are generous to its citizens. As Mr Julius I. Weinberg says of his pictures, they are so well known as to barely warrant their being written about." 82.

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### The Glasgow Collectors

Wealth in Scotland in the period c.1860-80 was based largely on industry and manufacturing. Glasgow, as the main industrial centre was economically the most buoyant city. The country as a whole was generally increasing in prosperity during the period and Glasgow was at the heart of that development. It might therefore be expected that the inhabitants of Glasgow, living in a larger and more industrial city than Dundee or Aberdeen, would exhibit the same tendencies as those identified in the northern towns, only more so. They might be expected to have more money, feel more at odds with their changing industrial society, look more nostalgically to the rural past and in consequence form larger collections of rural nostalgia paintings

from the artists already discussed. This does not appear to be the case. There were many collectors in Glasgow and they bought large numbers of paintings, but there was never the concentration on contemporary Scottish art of the type produced by Chalmers, Reid, H. Cameron and Dun. A number of reasons can be suggested for this apparent anomaly.

In the nineteenth century Edinburgh quite definitely felt culturally superior to Glasgow. The western city was viewed as a rather crude, dirty, manufacturing place. The centre of the artistic life of Scotland was very definitely Edinburgh. Artistic success in nineteenth century Scottish terms meant success at the R.S.A. and to be successful there you had to live in Edinburgh. There was genuine friction between the two cities and painters who were based in Glasgow really were badly treated when they attempted to exhibit in the Academy. As late as 1889 the president of the R.S.A. Sir William Fettes Douglas said at an after dinner speech "These Glasgow fellows are very troublesome. What do they want here at all? If they are badly hung in Edinburgh I am sorry for it but we must look after ourselves." At the time Fettes Douglas was referring to the Glasgow Boys but was only giving voice to an attitude that had persisted since the Academy's foundation since 1826.

Glasgow then was, to a certain extent excluded from the Scottish artistic establishment. This led to the city tending towards self-sufficiency in artistic terms. In 1861 the Fine Art Institute was founded (later The Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts) and six years later the Glasgow Art Club appeared. From the early 1800's until 1878 when the City of Glasgow Bank failed and ruined many, there was prosperity in Glasgow. With the

rising fashion for buying modern pictures there was a great market for artists. Caw observed:-

"The demand for pictures created the supply. Men who had been in business and had painted in an amateur way went in for art as a profession in much the same way as they would have gone into any other business opening; and, relaxing the old prejudice, parents sent their sons 'to be artists' as they might have apprenticed them to a trade or sent them to sell calico or tea. Some of these possessed the true feeling, but with more it was simply a pleasant and honourable calling, and save that they could find a market for their wares, there seemed no justification for their existence." 24.

Glasgow collectors, if they were to buy modern Scottish work, tended to buy it from local exhibitions and bypass the cultural exclusivity of the capital. Certainly members of the Academy sent works to Glasgow, it was a good market place, but they had to compete on the walls with the huge output of the west's own down-market rural genre painters. Artists such as Alexander Davidson (1838-1887) (Illustration 30.) and James A. Aitken (1846-1897) who painted pictures strongly derivative of David Wilkie and Horatio McCulloch were typical of the west's successful painters. It was not until the late 1870's, when the emergent Glasgow Boys began to exhibit, that the west could claim to be the base of artists truly in the vanguard of Scottish painting.

This accounts in part for the dearth of large numbers of collections based around the works of the east coast rural genre painters. There were of course collectors of much greater discrimination who avoided the productions of the "glue-pot school" as the Glasgow Boys termed their sentimental predecessors. Much has been made of the important role of dealers in the formation of many Glasgow collections. <sup>25</sup> In general however this was a later development. The most important dealership, Alexander Reid's "Société des Beaux Arts" did not have a permanent home until 1889. It had begun in 1877 simply as an exhibition of the work of Reid's Glasgow School friends in a single room on his father's picture framing premises. Even the earlier Craibe Angus gallery was not opened until 1874. Certainly Angus' gallery was an important outlet in the west of Scotland for the work of the Hague School, and many Glasgow collectors purchased European paintings through him. <sup>26</sup> Prior to 1874, and for a considerable while afterwards, collectors of taste similar to those on the east coast had no choice but to buy either through the R.S.A. or directly from the artists. Among all those who bought the work of the "glue-pots" there were some who concentrated on the rural nostalgia works of the east coast painters. One such was John McGavin. (1816-1881)

#### The Glasgow Collectors: John McGavin

McGavin conforms almost perfectly to the model of the typical collector of rural nostalgia. Like many other such collectors, McGavin himself had a rural background. He was born in Kilwinning in 1816. He had close ties with the church. His family had plans for his becoming a minister but ill-health led to the idea being abandoned. He became a trainee grain miller/merchant

in 1832 and established his own company in 1838, in partnership with his brother-in-law Alexander Harvie. Like others of the collectors under discussion, McGavin was noted as being generous to young and aspiring artists and for his "kindliness of disposition" <sup>87</sup>. He was also particularly friendly with Chalmers <sup>88</sup>, reserving one room in his house exclusively for smaller Chalmers paintings. Like White he was very much affected by Chalmers' sudden mysterious death, <sup>89</sup>. He had a strong belief in the importance of exhibiting his pictures as widely as possible, as the letters he wrote to the R.S.A regarding lending works demonstrate. <sup>90</sup>. His work with the 1878 Fine Art Loan Exhibition in Glasgow further confirms his views. McGavin was chairman of the twenty-nine strong "Acting Committee" which organised the exhibition and personally lent fifteen works to the exhibition. The reason behind the 1878 exhibition likewise confirms McGavin as conforming to the established model of a rural nostalgia collector. It was designed to benefit the community by raising funds for the Glasgow Royal Infirmary.

McGavin was very involved with the administration of the arts in Glasgow. In addition to his central role in the 1878 exhibition he had become a member of the Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts when it became incorporated in 1870. He took a very active role. In 1877 Glasgow Corporation indicated that it was no longer willing to let the corporation galleries to the Institute. A competition to design new galleries was organised and work on the winning design by J.J. Burnet was begun in 1878. McGavin met half the cost of the building of the Institutes new premises. <sup>91</sup>.

McGavin's own collection, described as "superlatively select" <sup>92</sup> . , demonstrated his taste for rural works. He owned pieces by Linnell, H. Cameron, from whom he commissioned A Lonely Life, Israels, Mollinger, James and Matthew Maris, Corot, Millet, Diaz, Frère and Troyon. <sup>93</sup> Chalmers was particularly well represented. At his death in 1881 McGavin possessed thirty-one pieces including a second smaller version of The End of The Harvest and the archetypally rural nostalgic work The Gloaming of Life. Of the thirty-one works by Chalmers, only the portrait of McGavin himself was not either a landscape or a rural interior. <sup>94</sup> McGavin was also typical of collectors of rural nostalgia in that he had a close relationship with the painters from whom he bought work With thirty-one of his paintings it is not surprising that the artist with whom he was most closely associated was Chalmers. Robert Walker recalled the friendship of the two men in 1894 and wrote "Chalmers exercised no small influence over Mr McGavin in art-matters, hence we in the west have reason to be thankful to him." <sup>95</sup> .

The limited surviving correspondence between the two men would suggest their relationship was close. Having urged McGavin to purchase The Frugal Meal (Illustration 31.) by Israels in November 1876 <sup>96</sup> . Chalmers wrote again concerning the painting just over a year later. Israels wanted the picture to represent him at the Paris World's Fair of 1878 and despite his usual generosity McGavin was on this occasion unsure about lending it out. Chalmers wrote:-

"My Dear Mr M'Gavin,

I received yours today, and am very sorry indeed that you feel you cannot lend Mr Israels "The Frugal Meal"

for the Paris Exhibition. I have just seen Mr George Reid from Aberdeen, who has come here to-day, and he tells me that Mr Israels has written Mr White in great distress, asking him to send a picture Mr White has had only for a short time. He also mentions that he wished your picture, being very anxious to be well represented in Paris at this Exhibition. As you saw from his letter he has been ill, and has not finished what he intended, so that he is in a dilemma. If you really can see your way, I wish you could let him have it. I believe it one of his best works, and it is a pity the public should not see it.

I am sorry to bother *you*, but I feel for Israels at this time. Will you kindly let me hear from you by return, and oblige,

Very sincerely yours,

G. P. Chalmers.

P.S. I know it will put you about and disturb your walls, but for the sake of art and Israels perhaps you will see your way to do it." 27.

Three days later Chalmers had not heard from McGavin and had no compunction about writing again asking the collector please to reply immediately to his request as Israels was waiting on the outcome. 28.

While not sharing the easy familiarity that grew up between Reid and White, Chalmers was surely close to McGavin. He was definitely perceived as such in that it would appear that it was Reid that told Chalmers of Israels' predicament and asked him to intercede.

Although Glasgow was less of a centre for rural nostalgia collectors than was Dundee, McGavin obviously was not the only one. Robert Ramsey, a hide wool and tallow broker from Glasgow had an extensive collection of rural nostalgia paintings and of French and Dutch works.<sup>99</sup> He owned pictures by Mollinger, Israels, Bosboom, Mesdag, H. Cameron, Chalmers and Frère and lent eight of them to the 1878 Glasgow loan exhibition.

Henry Simson, a Glasgow brewer, was also involved in the 1878 show. He was a member of the "Acting Committee" and one of the four men in charge of hanging the entire exhibition. Simson owned four Chalmers' and rural genre works by H. Cameron, W.D. Mackay, McTaggart, James Maris and H. Ten Kate. Simson was another collector on friendly terms with Chalmers. In 1865, before he had purchased any paintings by Chalmers he saw The Legend and wanted to commission Chalmers to paint a second version for him. Even earlier than this he had attempted to buy The Favourite Air and been disappointed. G.B. Simpson of Broughty Ferry who had commissioned The Legend originally was not happy about having his picture repeated and as a result Henry Simson failed again to buy a picture.

Having been unsuccessful with his commission, Simson came across to Chalmers' studio in Edinburgh to see if there was anything else he liked. He arranged to buy The Card Players, not for himself, but for another collector in Manchester. The painting was very successful in Manchester and several people offered Mason, who had bought it, a quick profit if he would sell it to them. Simson was delighted and visited Chalmers to tell him that he thought he could organise at least six commissions from Manchester on the strength of the success of The Card Players.<sup>100</sup> Simson was not a picture

dealer. His actions in connection with Chalmers selling additional pictures were a reflection purely of his personal friendship with the artist.

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The Aberdeen Collectors: John Forbes White and Alexander Macdonald

Aberdeen, like Dundee, had several significant collectors of rural nostalgia works. Two were particularly notable, John Forbes White and Alexander Macdonald. Around these two men was a very lively social and cultural life, fondly recalled by those who participated in it. William Robertson Smith (1846-1894), co-editor of the Encyclopedia Britannica, Professor of Hebrew at Aberdeen University and later of Arabic, at Cambridge was one of the company. He met White through the collectors friendship with Sir William Geddes, the Professor of Greek at Aberdeen. Robertson Smith's biographer wrote of White

"Mr John Forbes White, will be long remembered as a genial and public-spirited citizen. He was a man of considerable literary culture and exquisite aesthetic taste, a humanist who wrote and spoke Latin with the old-world facility, and in his social relations the very embodiment of friendliness and hospitality." 101.

It was through White that Robertson Smith first met Alexander Macdonald. He soon became friendly with Macdonald and visited him frequently enjoying the company of the artists, Reid, Chalmers, Bough, Millais and Keene who were

also regular guests. George Reid became a close friend. The two men toured Germany, Holland and Belgium together in 1876 and produced a travelogue which they published privately and circulated amongst friends.<sup>102</sup>.

The close relationship between artists and patrons in Aberdeen is demonstrated by some of Robertson Smith's letters. He wrote:-

"For a week back everything has been very quiet with me: but before that I had great doings. Gibson was with me, and at the same time also Sheriff Nicolson, whose performance of 'the Phairshon' would have delighted Alice. Then at the same time there was in town, with J.F. White and Reid, a famous French etcher called Rajon, and all of us had sundry dinners and lunches and excursions together. For one thing we were at Dunottar Castle, where we had a grand day. In the evening we came home in a railway carriage without lamps; so we burned vestas and newspaper torches and sang songs at the top of our voices all the way in under Nicolson's guidance. It was a great day! Then the whole party came up to me and were regaled on chops and potatoes; including Mrs. J.F. White, who enjoyed herself extremely, and was smoked to an extent which even a German lady might have disliked.

Another day Gibson and I and Rae \_ \_ \_ went up Bennachie from the Oyne side. We got a great deal of rain, but it was a capital excursion notwithstanding, and we also saw the *Maidenstone*, an old Scotch sculptured stone which I had long wished to visit.

Finally, at the end of last week, Millais, the greatest English painter, came to visit Mr Macdonald of Kepplestone, and I met him at Mr White's. After all this excitement I am glad to be quiet again \_ \_ ." 103.

The "Aberdeen Academy" or "The Academy of Old Deer" was a particular group of Aberdeen friends who met informally for dinner. In the Spring of 1877 Robertson Smith wrote of a meeting of the Academy.

"I was at a wonderful dinner at Old Deer after the Presbytery with George and Archie Reid, J.F. White and one or two others. George Reid sang an original song of considerable humour, and sat up till three in the morning - which is a novelty for him. We had a very nice evening, and I had just two hours in bed - having to rise next morning at six at which hour I ate a capital breakfast." 104.

John Kerr, another member of Aberdeen society also recalled the "Academy". One evening when White, Chalmers, Reid, Reid's brother Archie and James Cadenhead (both painters), Sir David Gill the Astronomer Royal, Robertson Smith and others were present Kerr recalled:-

"After a dinner admirably served, and characterised in every respect by chastened taste and refinement, we settled down to such a comfortable, all-round talk *de omni re scibili et quibusdam aliis*, as is possible with eight or ten, but scarcely possible with a much larger number. It may be supposed that in

such a company there was no lack of topics for discussion. It was understood, but without written enactment, that anyone who chose to contribute anything in the shape of jingle would get a willing and attentive hearing. There was no meeting which was not enlivened by contributions in which rhyme and humour were creditably represented." 105.

The centre of all this activity involving painters and collectors was definitely J.F. White and Alexander Macdonald. They were the two most significant collectors in the area.

John Forbes White, whose extensive correspondence with the artist George Reid is examined elsewhere 106. was another collector who enjoyed the friendship of the considerable number of artists who regularly visited his houses in Union Street Aberdeen, and Seaton Cottage in rural Aberdeenshire. 107. White's daughter Lady Dorothea Fyfe wrote that by the later 1860's

"J.F.'s house was becoming a Mecca for young Scottish painters. His hospitality and geniality were unbounded, and with increasing links with well-known Dutch, French and English artists, his influence was much extended to help rising painters in Scotland." 108.

A native of Aberdeen, White gave up his studies in medicine when circumstances forced him to take over the family milling business. He proved an able businessman in both Aberdeen and Dundee where he settled in

1888 when the lease on his Aberdeen flour mill expired, and played a prominent part in public affairs in both cities. In his politics he was an enthusiastic Liberal and later Liberal-Unionist.

In spite of his commercial successes however he was known for his plain, unaffected style and the enthusiasm with which he entered into everything he undertook. <sup>109</sup>. His contribution to the development of the Aberdeen Artist's Society was a major one and the writer of his obituary stated "It is not too much to say that his individual ardour was in many ways a stimulus to the development and public cultivation of art in Aberdeen at a time when 'art feeling' in the city was not so prevalent as it is today." <sup>110</sup>.

The fragment of autobiography which he left reveals his views as to what makes a person's life worthwhile. "Has any contribution been made towards the welfare of others or for the sweetness of life around us?" <sup>111</sup>. he asked. It was this consideration which led him, like the other collectors considered, to give generously of his time and paintings in the organisation of loan exhibitions. White was a frequent lender to the R.S.A., and, as has been noted was always keen to entertain artists in his home where they no doubt examined his collection. As well as lending forty-four works to the Aberdeen Art Exhibition of 1873 White served on both the Art Committee and the Finance and Arrangements Committee. There is no extant catalogue of the complete White collection. However the forty-four works lent to the 1873 exhibition demonstrate the nature of his holdings. Of these forty-four paintings twenty-three were by modern Dutch painters, eleven were contemporary Scottish rural nostalgia works, including five

by Reid and Chalmers. There were two French paintings, eight miscellaneous portraits and flower pieces and one picture painted as a collaboration by Reid, Chalmers, H. Cameron and Israels, and gifted to White. <sup>112</sup>. His joint reviews of this exhibition leave no doubt about his views regarding the importance of lending out pictures and the reasons for doing so. In the Aberdeen Daily Free Press he wrote:-

"The end and aim of such collections must ever be to exhibit works of high artistic merit, calculated to be the teachers of all that have an interest in such matters. And who among us, from the highest to the lowest, can fail to be benefitted by such exhibitions." <sup>113</sup>.

This educative role was quite definitely the guiding principle behind White's collection. He pressed the importance of it again and again. <sup>114</sup>. His lecture delivered to the National Association for the Promotion for Social Science in 1877 <sup>115</sup>. was entirely based on the role of art in society. To close his lecture he quoted T.H. Huxley, the Rector of Aberdeen University.

"The humblest artizan will find that it is not beyond his reach to surround himself with beautiful things, the collecting and the care of which, as in the mounting and framing of his etchings and woodcuts, would be a constant source of pleasure, and a means of giving him a higher education. It was to workers of all classes that Mr Huxley says truly, in one of his 'Lay Sermons', lamenting the want of a wider and higher training, 'You will have

to weary your soul with work, and many a time eat your bread in sorrow and in bitterness, and you shall not have learned to take refuge in the great source of pleasure without alloy, the serene resting-place for worn-out human nature - the World of Art." 116.

At the same time, living through an era of great change, he displayed the widespread ambivalent attitude towards his developing society. Like Orchar, White had a dislike of change. He was concerned that the values of the past should not be totally forgotten. "The old gives place to the new, not always for the better. Hence it appears to me to be the duty of fathers like myself to collect these memories, which otherwise will be speedily forgotten." 117.

White was particularly friendly with Alexander Macdonald of Kepplestone, the owner of a granite works, and another major collector of rural nostalgia. As well as entertaining artists himself, White was a frequent visitor to Kepplestone when Scottish and English artists were visiting there. 118. Macdonald's friendship with White and Reid was so close that when he was sent a copy of Thoughts On Art he had no doubt but that it was a collaborative work by Reid and White. "He says it had quite a home feeling to him before he had read a couple of pages - he could feel you and I all through it, in every thought and sentence." 119. Macdonald's strong connections with artists of the period were demonstrated by his collection of cabinet portraits of ninety-four artists with whom he was friendly. Macdonald's friendship with White meant that he too collected the work of Mollinger and later of Hague School artists. Like White he was a good friend of George Reid and like the other collectors considered in this

chapter he almost always tried to buy directly from the artists. <sup>120</sup>. He was a well known philanthropist, making frequent donations to charitable causes and taking a keen interest in the development of public exhibitions in Aberdeen. <sup>121</sup>. Again, like White, he was a member of both the "Art Committee" and the "Finance and Arrangements Committee" for the 1873 exhibition in Aberdeen. He lent eighteen works to the exhibition and although his collection was less grand and more catholic in taste, it included large and important pictures by Israels, Mollinger, Roelofs, H. Cameron, Reid, McTaggart and Chalmers. He died in 1884 and decreed that on the death of his wife his entire collection, along with one third of his estate of £51,000 should be given to Aberdeen Art Gallery. <sup>122</sup>. They received the collection and the endowment in 1900. In leaving such bequests Macdonald hoped to further his conviction that paintings were "an education and refinement" which should be made available to all. <sup>123</sup>.

#### The Aberdeen Collectors: Alexander Walker

A third significant collector from Aberdeen, though not as active as White or Macdonald, was Alexander Walker a wine merchant. Walker was a close friend of Reid's from an early date. The earliest surviving correspondence between the two men dates from 1863 when Reid was only 22. <sup>124</sup>. Although not in possession of a large collection of paintings, Walker was very concerned with the contemporary art world. He read art criticism and art periodicals extensively and was ever willing to lend them to others. <sup>125</sup>. Largely under the influence of Reid, Walker built up a small collection of contemporary paintings. As well as several works by G. Reid and by his brother A.D. Reid, Walker owned pieces by Chalmers, Cassie, Giles,

MacWhirter, Bough, Artz and Mollinger. At least two of the Mollinger's and one of the Chalmers' were the result of Reid persuading the collector to buy or commission paintings. <sup>126</sup>. As befitting his smaller collection Walker was involved in a less important way in the 1873 Aberdeen Art Exhibition. He lent eight paintings to the show and served on the "Finance and Arrangements Committee." <sup>127</sup>.

Walker's correspondence with Reid, and his own writings demonstrate that he also fitted the pattern for a collector of rural nostalgia as established by White, Simpson, Bell and others. Walker's collection was made up almost entirely of rural nostalgia paintings. His willingness to lend them and therefore presumably his participation in the belief in the importance of paintings as moral education, is demonstrated by his contributions to the 1873 exhibition. Walker's concern for his society and in particular for the urban poor is demonstrated by his long involvement with the city of Aberdeen poorhouse. He voluntarily worked for the Association of Old Boys of the Boys and Girls Hospitals <sup>128</sup>. from its inception. In 1885 he delivered a speech to the Association noting "In the syllabus, without consulting me, you put me down for delivering an address to you this evening. You didn't need to ask, for I think you all know me sufficiently well to know that I would not hesitate, to attempt, at any rate, to serve you." <sup>129</sup>.

The poorhouse had been a concern of Walker's for many years. In 1871 he had written to Reid on the subject and in so doing gave evidence to his adherence to a very common belief among painters and collectors of rural nostalgia.. The importance of the church, above material well-being was a

central tenet of the Scottish Presbyterian outlook. <sup>130</sup>. Writers from Cockburn to Smiles put forth the view that what was most needed to regenerate society was not the provision of material aid for the poor, but of spiritual aid. Given spiritual guidance, along with education the poor were then in a position to help themselves. It was the perception that the rural poor possessed these facilities in a greater degree than the urban poor that contributed to the lauding of rural virtues in rural nostalgia paintings. In April 1871 Walker wrote to Reid expressing concern about the condition of spiritual education in Scottish poorhouses. The material quality of life was very low but what also mattered to Walker and to Reid was the quality of the inmates' spiritual life. Reid who had lived in the same street in which the Aberdeen poorhouse stood, had strong views on the matter. He wrote "I believe the commissioners go from time to time to trace the material good - do they ever do the same thing in regard to the spiritual? I fear not and so these poor creatures are left to starve." <sup>131</sup>. The collector exhibited all the characteristic signs of distrust of his urban environment and of taking solace in the values of rural life.

All these collectors of Scottish rural nostalgia painting who have come under consideration here would seem to share to a greater or less degree certain common characteristics. Although some had a relatively humble rural background, they were all men of substance with sufficient funds at their disposal to enable them to purchase over the years a considerable number of paintings. Some, like Bell, had to subordinate all other expenditure in order to indulge their collecting passion. Some, like Simpson, in the uncertain economic climate of the 1880's were forced to dispose of all or part of the collections they had so painstakingly built up.

None of them saw their collection as a means of ostentatious display of wealth or a means of acquiring prestige within the community. For the most part they were described as living in a quiet simple and unassuming way and avoiding the use of fashionable "art jargon" in relation to the pictures they owned. At the same time they were often, or had made themselves, cultured, educated men who rejoiced in their Scottish heritage with its traditions and values. This led them, while fully accepting the changes taking place in their lifetime, to regret the passing of much they saw as worthwhile in the Scottish way of life. Their politics were, more often than not Liberal although some were paternalistically Conservative. In an age noted for middle-class philanthropy, they all contributed to a noteworthy degree to various charitable enterprises and played a significant part in the social concerns of their day.

Significantly, they seldom, if ever, made their purchases through dealers, preferring to buy direct from the artists themselves. They made a virtue out of not consulting dealers. On the cover of the sale catalogue of G.B. Simpson's collection in 1880 it was proudly stated that most of the works had come directly from the painters to the collector. As a whole they would have agreed with George Reid's view of men who bought paintings from picture dealers when he wrote :-

"Great things I hear in the picture dealing way M. Everard it is said having fleeced some of our dillitanti (sic) heavily. Well well you know the old story about fools and their money. J.D. Milne I hear is about the heaviest victim. Stevenson, Skene and some others make up the list.

If they will consent to let these dealers make a hundred and fifty percent off sales of course it can't be helped. Stevenson wouldn't think of buying his cheese or lucifer matches from a retailer why he hasn't sense to get his pictures from the maker himself it's hard to say." 132.

Frequently rural nostalgia collectors specifically commissioned works and sometimes used artists with whom they were friendly to negotiate the purchase of a picture from another artist. Several had made initial purchases from the painters of the Scott Lauder School when the artists were still relatively young and unknown and had not hesitated to offer financial assistance where required. They valued their friendship with these artists and made them welcome and frequent visitors to their homes. Surviving correspondence reveals the closeness of the relationship between certain collectors and the artists whose work they admired. Usually, beginning with J.F. White's purchase of Mollinger's Drenthe, (Illustration 32.) the collections they built up contained a number of works of the Dutch artists of the Hague School and this was of some significance for the Scottish painters with whom they came into contact. 133. Their preference for rural nostalgia works was demonstrated not only by the numbers in their collections but by the particular pictures they chose. In a number of cases they owned works by artists whose work was not normally genre painting, but who were represented by rural nostalgia works.

These men were all convinced of the important role of art in the community as a whole. 134. They did not see it as a universal panacea but they did

feel with J.F. White that "Art must be for all if it is to have any real interest for us." 138.

They saw the work of the Scottish painters of rural genre and non-urban landscapes which they admired as being essentially Scottish in the underlying seriousness of its portrayal of those aspects of rural life which epitomised the human condition and stressed the innate dignity and worth of the individual in triumphing over an adverse environment. Thus they were actively involved in a variety of schemes to bring art increasingly before as wide a section of the public as possible. They generously lent paintings to one exhibition after another so that at times some households must have been virtually denuded of paintings.

Among the collectors of the rural nostalgia paintings of Chalmers, Reid and their associates, the common characteristics of background and taste, the recurring links with charity aimed at alleviating the problems of an industrial society, all point to their holding a similar, socially concerned view of the role of art. They held a firm belief in art as a tool with which society might be changed. They used that tool by exhibiting the rural nostalgia works they themselves owned to as wide a public as possible and by organising the exhibition of other rural nostalgia paintings.

## Footnotes

### Chapter 3

1 see chapter 4.

2 From John Steegman, "The Changing Taste of Collectors", The English as Collectors. A Documentary Chrestomathy, ed. Frank Herrmann, pp. 235-238. London, 1972. The essay originally formed part of a larger publication Consort of Taste, London, 1950.

3 Lady Eastlake noted that in the 1830's patronage became "shared, and subsequently almost engrossed, by a wealthy and intelligent class chiefly enriched by commerce and trade."

Lady Eastlake (Elizabeth Rigby), Contribution to the Literature of the Fine Arts by Sir Charles Eastlake, London, 1848, vol. II.

Quoted from John Steegman, "The Changing Taste of Collectors", The English as Collectors. A Documentary Chrestomathy, ed. Frank Herrmann, p. 235, London, 1972.

4 James L. Caw claimed that the collecting of contemporary painting did not properly begin in Scotland until the 1850's.

Sir James L. Caw, Scottish Painting Past and Present, 1620-1908, Edinburgh, 1908, p. 226.

5 See Dianne Sachko Macleod, "Mid-Victorian patronage of the arts: F.G. Stephens's 'The Private Collections of England'", The Burlington Magazine, vol. cxxviii, 1986, pp. 597-607.

6 For example, John McGavin's nationalistic support of Scottish painting is demonstrated by a letter written to the Royal Scottish Academy. McGavin lent three paintings to the R.S.A. exhibition mounted to commemorate the visit of the Social Science Congress to Edinburgh in 1880.

"I hope you will have a great Exhibition to show our English Friends what Scottish art can do."

Correspondence John McGavin to The Secretary of the R.S.A., September 25th, 1880. Now held by the library of the R.S.A..

7 Correspondence G.A. Mollinger to D.A.C. Artz, held by Gemeentearchief, The Hague, Holland, August 12th, 1866.

8 W.E.Henley, Collection Cottier Catalogue, Paris, 1892, p. xi.

9 W. Shaw Sparrow, John Lavery and His Work, London, 1911, p. 58.

10 R.A.M. Stevenson, "Mr Keiller's Collection in Dundee", The Art Journal, February 1894, p. 56.

11 E.D.H. Johnson, "Victorian Artists and The Urban Milieu", in, The Victorian City: Images and Realities, vol. 2., ed. H.J. Dyos and Michael Wolff, London, 1973, p. 450.

12 Perigal frequently attended Dowell's picture sales. He annotated his sale catalogues. These catalogues are now in the Mitchell Library in Glasgow. At the end of the sale catalogue of Henry Simson's collection, sold at Dowells on December 9th 1876, Perigal wrote "4 or 5 times more than was given!" Throughout the catalogue he had commented on the prices raised. He felt that £84 given for No. 65 A Lowland Shepherd, 13" X 19", by Chalmers, was "very dear". No. 86 Passing Showers: Autumn, 31" X 22", by Peter Graham, he described as "very dear - not good - weak".

13 Charles Carter, "Alexander Macdonald, 1837-84, Aberdeen Art Collector", Scottish Art Review, vol. V, no. 3, 1955, p.24.

14 George Reid, "Notes on The Royal Scottish Academy's Exhibition", Montrose Standard and Angus and Mearns Leader, March 8th, 1867, p. 4.

15 For a discussion of George Reid's studies abroad and the Scottish reaction to them, see chapter 5.

16 Correspondence George Reid to John Forbes White now held by Aberdeen Art Gallery, February 4th, 1870.

17 "Macculloch has no real feeling for the majesty and mystery of the noble scenery he chose as the subject of his art. Hardness and conventionality were the characteristics of all his later works."

Veri Vindex, (pseudonym George Reid and John Forbes White), Thoughts on Art. and Notes on the Exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy of 1868, Edinburgh, 1868, p. 50.

"Alex. Fraser is slovenly and conventional, and in every way unsatisfactory."

Thoughts on Art, p. 50.

"Little can be said about our Scottish animal painters, of whom Gourlay Steele is considered the leader. From his works we never yet derived a single pleasurable sensation."

Thoughts on Art, p. 22.

"There is a mystery in drawing and a mystery in colour; but John Faed sees neither the one, nor the other, he leaves you in no doubt as to what he would be at, he has a meaning, but it is narrow and stubborn, 'a hard and vulgar intelligibility of nothingness.'"

Thoughts on Art, p. 64.

"There was indeed another class of Dutch painters, such as Both and Berghem; but, with all their technical excellences, they fail to reach the heart, for this reason, that they were not content to paint the scenes around them, but thought it a grander style of work to produce hybrid-landscapes, half-Dutch and half-Italian, missing the spirit of both."

Thoughts on Art, p. 38.

18 Sydney and Olive Checkland, Industry and Ethos, Scotland 1832-1914, London, 1984, pp. 142-143.

19 R.A.M. Stevenson, "Mr Keiller's Collection in Dundee", The Art Journal, February 1894, p. 56.

20 *ibid.*, p. 55.

21 Edward Pinnington, "Art Collections of Dundee and District, V, - Elmslea (continued)", The Dundee Advertiser, May 22nd, 1909, p. 9.

22 James Donald donated 42 works to Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum. These

included J.B.C. Corot, 4 works.

C. Troyon, 3 works.

J. Maris, 3 works

J.F. Millet, 2 works

C.F. Daubigny, 1 work.

E. Frère, 1 work.

J. Israels, 1 work.

J. Bosboom, 1 work.

A. Mauve, 1 work.

B.J. Blommers, 1 work.

23 R.A.M. Stevenson, "A Representative Scottish Collection", The Art Journal, September 1894, p. 257.

24 For a discussion of Pinnington's reading of Chalmers in purely formal terms, see chapter 2.

25 Andrew Mudie, "Fine Art at the Glasgow Exhibition", The Magazine of Art, vol. xxv, 1901, p. 462.

The Glasgow bias towards foreign art is reflected in the collectors examined here. More from Dundee are examined than from Glasgow.

26 Henry Cockburn, Circuit Journey's, North Circuit, April 27th, 1844, Byway Books edition, 1983, p. 141.

First published London, 1888.

27 T.C. Smout, A Century of The Scottish People 1830-1950, London, 1986, p. 33.

28 A.H. Millar, "The Collection of I. Julius Weinberg, Esq., Dundee, 1", The Art Journal, 1898, p. 16.

29 "Obituary Notices - Mr John Charles Bell", The Dundee Yearbook, Facts and Figures for 1897, reprinted from 'The Dundee Advertiser', Dundee, 1898, p. 74.

30 At the confirmation of his estate in February 1898, Bell was listed as being worth only £2016 1s. 7d.. This is very different to other collectors. eg. :- Orchar - £37,786 2s. 10d.

Weinberg - £204,296 14s. 8d.

McGavin - £79,247 18s. 8d.

White - £44,101 6s. 6d.

Of all the collectors discussed in this chapter, only G.B. Simpson was worth less. He gave up his business in 1886 having split with his partner in 1877. The confirmation of his will listed his estate as being worth just £4 0s. 10d.

31 The Dundee Yearbook, 1897, op. cit., p. 75.

Catalogue of the Cabinet of Valuable Modern Pictures belonging to J. Charles Bell Esq., Broughty Ferry, Dundee. To be sold by Auction by Mr Dowell within his Fine Art Gallery, 18 George Street, Edinburgh, on Saturday, 17th, 1877.

32 The Dundee Yearbook, 1897, op. cit., p. 74.

33 Correspondence, J.C. Bell to G.A. Mollinger, in Gemeentearchief, The Hague, Holland, c.June, 1865.

Mollinger wrote re Bell's commission to his patron P. VerLoren van Themaat. "This summer I hope to do more work for the Edinburgh Exhibition beginning with the Dutch landscape - full of effects, full of water and sky for Charles Bell of Dundee. There's no denying the British are good chaps. Dr Drummond, John White's brother-in-law has told me what sort of man he is. You know he sells all kinds of liqueurs, being the inventor of a liqueur which has been so successful that Charles Bell is now a rich man and that he possesses a large collection of paintings."

Deze somer hoop ik meer voor de aanstaande Edinburger tentoonstelling te werken, en wil beginnen met het Hollandsche landschap vol effect, vol water en vol lukt voor Charles Bell to Dundee. De engelschen syn toch beste kerels. Dr Drummont de swager van John Withe heeft my verkelt wat dat voor eener heer is. U moet weten, dat hy alle mogelyke likerren verkopt, en dat hy de uitvoder is van eene likeur, die in Schotland such een succes heeft dat Charles Bell thans een ryken man is, en eene groote versameling van schilderijen heeft.

Correspondence in Gemeentearchief, The Hague Holland, April 29th, 1866.

34 The Dundee Yearbook, 1897, op. cit., p. 75.

35 *idem.*

36 *ibid.*, p. 76.

37 *idem.*

38 *ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

39 *ibid.*, p. 75.

40 *idem.*

41 Bell's portrait is now in the Dundee Art Gallery.

42 The Dundee Yearbook, 1897, op. cit., p. 76.

43 Edward Pinnington, George Paul Chalmers and The Art of His Time, 1833-1878, Glasgow, 1896, p. 200.

Robert Walker, "Private Picture Collections in Glasgow and West of Scotland. Mr. Andrew Maxwell's Collection", The Magazine of Art, 1894, p. 221-227.

44 The Dundee Yearbook, 1897, op. cit., p. 76.

- 45 Edward Pinnington, "Art Collections of Dundee and District, V, - Elmslea (continued)", The Dundee Advertiser, May 22nd, 1909, p. 9.
- 46 "Obituary Notices - Provost Orchar", The Dundee Yearbook, Facts and Figures for 1898, reprinted from 'The Dundee Advertiser', Dundee, 1899, p. 56.
- 47 *ibid.*, p. 57.
- 48 *idem.*
- 49 *ibid.*, p. 58.
- 50 See chapter 4.
- 51 The Dundee Yearbook, 1898, op. cit., p. 58.
- 52 "Before going into business (Orchar) taught gratuitously a drawing class for young men in connection with the old Watt Institution. Men in the city who attained good positions in business often spoke gratefully of the help they got as pupils of Mr Orchar."  
The Dundee Yearbook, 1898, op. cit., p. 58.
- 53 Edward Pinnington, "Art Collections of Dundee and District, The Orchar Gallery II", The Dundee Advertiser, May 1st, 1909, p. 8.
- 54 *idem.*

55 I.M.W. "Private Picture Galleries, The Collection of James Orchar Esq. of Broughty Ferry", Good Words, ed. Donald Macleod, London, 1897, pp. 812-813.

56 Now on long term loan to Paisley Art Gallery.

57 The paintings gifted by Orchar to the Dundee Art Gallery were purchased from the annual Fine Art Exhibitions held in Dundee. They included

Hugh Cameron The Funeral of a Little Girl on the Riviera, purchased 1881

Phillip Morris The Gipsy, purchased 1882

Wm. McTaggart A Message From the Sea, purchased 1883

John Pettie Disbanded, purchased 1885

Colin Hunter The Lass that Baits the Lines, purchased 1886

John Smart The Pass of Leny, purchased 1887

T. Graham Kismet, purchased 1889

George Harvey Arran, purchased 1890

Wm. McTaggart Portrait of Dr Watson, purchased 1894

58 The Dundee Yearbook, Facts and Figures for 1898, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

59 *idem.*

60 *ibid.*, p. 60.

61 *ibid.*, p. 59.

62 J.M. Keiller, see "Mr Keiller's Collection in Dundee", The Art Journal, 1894, pp. 54-60.

Isaac Julius Weinberg 1832-1912, see "The Collection of I. Julius Weinberg, Esq., Dundee", The Art Journal, 1898, pp. 84-89.

Sir William Ogilvy Dalgleish, Bart 1832-1913, see The Dundee Yearbook, Facts and Figures for 1913, Dundee 1914, pp. 70-72.

T.S. Robertson see The Dundee Yearbook, Facts and Figures for 1898, reprinted from The Dundee Advertiser, Dundee 1899, pp. 56-58.

A.J. Buist see The Dundee Yearbook, Facts and Figures for 1901, reprinted from The Dundee Advertiser Dundee 1902, pp. 57-60.

63 The Dundee Yearbook, Facts and Figures for 1898, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

64 *ibid.*, p. 60.

65 Sale of Modern Pictures of the Scottish, English and Belgian Schools, Belonging to George B. Simpson Esq., Seafield, Broughty Ferry, sold by Messrs T. Chapman and Son, 11 Hanover Street, Edinburgh, December 4, 1880.

The cover bears the inscription,

"120 works of the highest class nearly all obtained direct from the Artists."

66 Simpson's collection of paintings was actually sold in two separate auctions. In terms of his Scottish collection the 1880 sale was the major one. There was another sale in April 1886, this time at Dowells. It was mainly composed of older non-Scottish works. Most of the paintings were smaller although there were a number of larger works including two by R.S. Lauder. Chalmers' watercolour sketch for Auld John Brown (No. 670.) was included in the sale.

67 "Obituary Notices - G.B. Simpson", The Dundee Yearbook, Facts and Figures for 1892 reprinted from 'The Dundee Advertiser', Dundee, 1893, p. 79.

68 *idem.*

69 These men are the Messrs Simpson and Ritchie mentioned by Chalmers in his letter to George Reid regarding the impending visit of Dundee collectors to the R.S.A. of 1873. See chapter 2.

70 The Dundee Yearbook, Facts and Figures for 1892, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

71 *idem.*

72 Correspondence G.P. Chalmers to G.B. Simpson held by the National Library of Scotland MS 6348. Copies of the letters, made by G.B Simpson, are held by the library of the Royal Scottish Academy.

73 Correspondence G.P. Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, *op. cit.*, November 16th, 1864; December 20th, 1864; January 1st, 1865; January 21st, 1865; May 12th, 1865; August 11th, 1865; August 18th, 1865; January 28th, 1866.

74 The letters from Chalmers to Simpson repeatedly show the painter reporting to Simpson the paintings, movements or deeds of his friends. Chalmers knew that the collector was interested.

For example, "I saw McTaggart last night & gave him your regards as desired. He will be very strong this year - his large picture is very fine improving it every day. He has another picture - Kit Cat - beautiful in

colour - landscape background with a group of figures in the foreground, playing at a game. I think it is exquisite - then he has Mr Ritchie's pictures which of course you have seen. Another of 'Little Nell & her Grandfather' - very nice."

Correspondence G.P. Chalmers to G.B. Simpson. *op. cit.*, January 21st, 1865.

Mr. Ritchie was William Ritchie, G.B. Simpson's business partner until 1877.

75 "Obituary - Isaac Julius Weinberg", The Dundee Yearbook, Facts and Figures for 1912, reprinted from 'The Dundee Advertiser', Dundee 1913, p. 55.

76 See note 28.

A.H. Millar, "The Collection of I. Julius Weinberg, Esq., Dundee", The Art Journal, 1898, p. 16.

77 Included in the Weinberg collection were the following works:-

Chalmers	<u>Through the Fields</u>
	<u>A Brittany Peasant</u>
	<u>Girl in a Scarlet Cloak</u>
McTaggart	<u>Spring</u>
	<u>Autumn</u>
	<u>The Old Well</u>
	<u>A Summer Sea</u>
	<u>Venturing</u>
MacWhirter	<u>Fall of Foyers</u>
	<u>First Snow, Glen Affric</u>
	<u>Autumn Floods</u>

78 Weinberg had three works by Cassie in his collection, Near Oban, The Firth of Forth, and The Old Crones. This last work was not typical of Cassie's landscape work but was very much a rural nostalgia picture.

79 Weinberg donated four works to Dundee Art Gallery including a portrait of himself by W.Q. Orchardson.

80 There are numerous letters in which Chalmers sent regards to other collectors in Dundee.

eg. "Please give me any Dundee or Broughty Ferry news which you think I may have the slightest interest in. Have you seen Mr Walker yet? Kindly remember me to Mr McDonald & Mr Ritchie "

P.G. Walker, H. McDonald and W. Ritchie were all Dundee based collectors.

Correspondence G.P. Chalmers to G.B. Simpson *op. cit.*, April 8th, 1865.

On occasion the letters reveal just how close the relationship was between the Dundee collectors and the painters whose work they most often acquired.

Early in 1867, Chalmers, in company with other painters, including McTaggart and MacWhirter, intended having dinner with their Dundee patrons. Chalmers was charged with inviting G.B. Simpson.

I am deputed \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ to ask you to do us the honour of dining with us on same evening - don't know the Hotel but that will be arranged somehow & you will be duly acquainted. Now I do hope you will come. I may mention all that we expect - McDonald - I'll enclose a note for him which you will

please deliver as I don't know his address, P.G. Walker, Ritchie, Orchar, Robertson, Bell, Cargill, there's some other body but hang me if I can remember, doesn't matter."

Correspondence G.P. Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, *op. cit.*, undated - noted by Simpson as February or March 1867.

81 Chalmers noted in a letter to Reid of July 31, 1873 that a number of Dundee collectors were proposing to visit the R.S.A. together and that they wished him to accompany them.

Quoted in Edward Pinnington, George Paul Chalmers and The Art of His Time, 1833-1878, Glasgow, 1896, p. 180.

82 Edward Pinnington, "Art Collections of Dundee and District. VIII. - Viewbank, Tayport.", The Dundee Advertiser, June 12th, 1909, p. 8.

83 The speech was delivered on the evening of February 15th 1889 and reported in The Scotsman the following day. Over the next two weeks there were a series of letters and articles which commented on, or alluded to Fettes Douglas' remarks.

The Scotsman, March 2nd, 1889, p. 6.

84 Sir James L. Caw, Scottish Painting Past and Present, 1620-1908, Edinburgh, 1908, p. 227.

85 For a discussion of the significance of picture dealers in the formation of collections in Glasgow, see Ronald Pickvance, A Man of Influence: Alex. Reid, exhibition catalogue, Scottish Arts Council, Glasgow, 1967.

86 See Introduction.

87 "John McGavin", Memoirs and Portraits of One Hundred Glasgow Men. vol. II, Glasgow 1886, p. 192.

88 *ibid.*, p. 191.

Writing on the collection after McGavin's death in 1886, the anonymous author stated,

"Poor G.P. Chalmers was well represented. He was an especial favourite \_ \_

McGavin was able to lend the R.S.A. several pictures by Chalmers after the painter's death. The R.S.A. library contains correspondence from McGavin to Wm. Brodie, Secretary of the R.S.A.. On July 27th 1880 McGavin wrote:-

"Dear Sir,

I have your favour of the 24th inst, I have on hand of Chalmers' pictures

1st 'A Quiet Pool' very fine, exhibited some years ago in your Academy.

2nd Finished sketch of the large picture of 'Running Water'.

3rd A work with an old woman sitting on a fallen tree which I call 'Weary'.

4th A small picture of stream with wood and rock.

You are welcome to any one or all of the above if you require them. They are all pretty highly worked.

I am dear Sir,

truly yours

John McGavin."

The smaller version of The End of the Harvest was in London at the time being etched but McGavin lent it to the R.S.A. later in the year.

89 Memoirs and Portraits of One Hundred Glasgow Men", *op. cit.*, p. 191 (footnote).

"His picture of 'The Legend' now in the National Gallery, Edinburgh, was commissioned by Mr McGavin, who was much affected by the sudden accidental death which overtook the gifted artist."

The letters from G.P. Chalmers to G.B. Simpson demonstrate that The Legend was commissioned by Simpson. There is mention of another collector seeing the work after it was commenced and being interested in buying it.

Correspondence G.P. Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, *op. cit.*, January 12th, 1865. It is possible that McGavin was the unnamed collector.

90 See chapter 3.

91 Memoirs and Portraits of One Hundred Glasgow Men, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

92 *ibid.*, p. 191.

93 "Chalmers says McGavin in Glasgow has got a little picture from Israels and is very much delighted with it and he has written sending him a commission for another."

Correspondence, George Reid to J.F. White now held by Aberdeen Art Gallery. August 13th, 1873.

94 Correspondence, John McGavin to Wm. Brodie, Secretary of R.S.A., July 23rd, 1880. Now held by R.S.A. Library, Edinburgh.

"I shall be delighted to lend you G.P. Chalmers' 'End of The Harvest' for your coming exhibition. I presume that you are aware that Mr. J.F. White of Aberdeen holds the large picture (which we now have in Glasgow) and that mine is a finished sketch, painted in 1870 and retouched in 1877."

It is likely that McGavin was mistaken in the original date for his painting. The full scale version was painted in 1872 -1873. McGavin's version probably dates from this time.

95 Robert Walker, "Private Picture Collections in Glasgow and West of Scotland. II - Mr. Andrew Maxwell's Collection.", The Magazine of Art, 1894, pp. 221-227.

96 Edward Pinnington, George Paul Chalmers and The Art of His Time, 1833-1878, Glasgow, 1896, p. 273.

97 *ibid.*, p. 274.

98 McGavin did lend the painting. The Frugal Meal was shown at the World's Fair Exhibition. "No. 41c LE DINER DES SAVELIERS, appartenant à MacGavin, à Glasgow." It was one of four paintings by Israels in the show.

99 Catalogue of works in the sale from the estate of Robert Ramsey, J. & R. Edmiston, Auctioneers. April 26th, 1917.

100 Correspondence G.P. Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, *op. cit.*, August 29th, 1865.

101 J.S. Black and G.W. Chrystal, The Life of William Robertson Smith, London, 1912, p. 137.

102 William Robertson Smith and George Reid, Notes and Sketches, Aberdeen, 1876.

103 *ibid.*, pp. 212-213.

The Gibson mentioned is Alexander Gibson the joint author of George Paul Chalmers R.S.A., Edinburgh, 1879.

104 Quoted in J.S. Black and G.W. Chrystal, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

105 John Kerr LL.D, Memories Grave and Gay: Forty Years of School Inspection, Edinburgh and London, 1902, p. 223.

106 See chapters 4. & 5.

107 Charles Carter states

"He became the point around which revolved a number of the Scottish painters, notably the Reids, and some prominent members of the Scott Lauder Group. His friendship and intimate association with these young artists was at its closest in the 1870's. They were frequent guests at his home; either

they came to stay and painted pictures or they came to paint pictures and stayed."

Charles Carter, "Art Patronage in Scotland: John Forbes White", The Scottish Art Review, vol. VI, 1957, p. 29.

Chalmers stayed with White in 1873 to paint The End of The Harvest. In 1874, he stayed for several weeks to paint a portrait of White's daughter Aitchie. Hugh Cameron also stayed with White to paint portrait heads of two of his children.

108 C.S. Minto and Dorothea Fyfe, John Forbes White, 1831-1904, Edinburgh Libraries and Museums Committee, 1970, p. 12.

109 See Wm. Keith Leask, "John Forbes White", The Aberdeen University Review, vol. VI, No. 16, November 1918, p. 46.

110 "John Forbes White LL.D", In Memoriam: An Obituary of Aberdeen and Vicinity For the Year 1904, with Biographical Notes and Portraits of Prominent Citizens., Aberdeen, 1904, p. 142.

111 Wm. Keith Leask, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

112 For further details of the J.F. White collection see,

I.M. Harrower, John Forbes White, Edinburgh and London, 1910.

Auction Catalogue, Sotheby's, London, December 14th and 15th, 1888.

Auction Catalogue, Dowell's, Edinburgh, December 1st, 1888.

113 George Reid and John Forbes White, "Aberdeen Art Exhibition. 1.", The Aberdeen Daily Free Press", August 5th, 1873, p. 2.

114 See chapter 4.

115 *idem*.

116 John Forbes White, How Can Art be Best Introduced into The Houses of Persons of Limited Income? A paper read before the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science at Aberdeen on September 24th 1877.

Printed, for private circulation, Aberdeen, 1877.

White quoted T.H. Huxley from A Liberal Education and Where to Find it, An address given to the South London Working Men's College on January 4th 1868. Reprinted in Lay Sermons, Addresses and Reviews", by Thomas Henry Huxley, LL.D. FRS., London, 1870.

Huxley was rector of Aberdeen University from 1873 to 1876.

117 Wm. Keith Leask, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

118 Charles Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

and

"Mrs Macdonald of Kepplestone", In Memoriam. An Obituary of Aberdeen and Vicinity for the Year 1900. With Biographical Notes and Portraits of Prominent Citizens, Aberdeen, 1900, p. 106.

119 Correspondence George Reid to J.F. White, *op. cit.*, c.May 14th 1868.

120 "Mr Macdonald noted (in his will) that he himself had purchased all his pictures direct from the artists, and in doing so, had enjoyed much pleasant intercourse and association with them."

"Mrs Macdonald of Kepplestone", In Memoriam, An Obituary of Aberdeen and Vicinity for the Year 1900. With Biographical Notes and Portraits of Prominent Citizens, Aberdeen, 1900, p. 108.

121 "Mrs Macdonald of Kepplestone", *op. cit.*, p. 109.

122 *ibid.*, pp. 108-109.

Included in Macdonald's bequest to Aberdeen Art gallery were the following works.

H. Cameron      Responsibility  
                         Mrs Macdonald  
                         The Village Well  
                         At St Fillans

G.P. Chalmers    Sympathy

Wm. McTaggart   The Old Net

George Reid      Alexander Macdonald  
                         The Avenue at Old Montrose  
                         Here I Am Still (Illustration for Smiles' Life of A  
                         Scotch Naturalist)

G.A. Mollinger   A Dutch Landscape

123 "Mrs Macdonald of Kepplestone", *op. cit.*, p. 108.

124 For a discussion of Walker's influence on George Reid, see chapter 5.

125 See chapter 5.

126 Correspondence George Reid to Alex. Walker, held by Aberdeen Art Gallery.

"You should give him (Chalmers) a commission to paint a little bit for you. I am sure he'd be proud to do it as he seems to have a notion for you and if you'd go in for a 6 or 7 pounder and let me knowing your aesthetics have the superintendence of its execution, I'll guarantee you something worth at least twice the sum you'll pay for it."

December 22nd, 1863.

"If a certain friend of mine who shall be nameless is desirous of having in his collection a little bit of this same "sorry mannerist" (Mollinger), I could for a matter of 120 Guilders (£10) secure a bit which would not prove unworthy of a niche. It is a small upright about 7" X 10" on a panel \_ \_ \_ It is a figure subject, or almost so - a dutch (sic) woman in a pea field in the morning."

August 30th, 1866.

The remark "sorry mannerist" is a mocking reference to a mutual acquaintance of Reid and Walker's who had described Mollinger thus.

"I have taken the liberty of giving him (Mollinger) a commission to paint you a bit for £5 or £6 - He is to do it."

May 12th, 1867.

127 Alex. Walker's brother, James, also collected paintings. He owned works by George Manson, Robert Herdman, D.A.C. Artz, and G.A. Mollinger. Reid also occasionally acted for James Walker. While in Paris in 1867 Reid commissioned a painting from Mollinger for James Walker.

Correspondence George Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, c. May 15th, 1867.

128 The Hospital was a charitable organisation linked to the Aberdeen Poor House. From their inception in 1739 the two were run as a single unit until the establishment of a separate hospital in 1818.

129 Alexander Walker, The History of the Workhouse or Poor's Hospital of Aberdeen from 1739 to 1818. Its Boys Hospital from 1818 to 1852. Girl's Hospital from 1828 to 1852. and its Boys and Girls Hospitals from 1852 to 1885, Aberdeen, 1885, p. 2.

130 See chapter 1.

131 Correspondence George Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, April 26th, 1871.

132 *ibid.*, May 19th, 1867.

133 See chapter 5.

134 "The evangelical fervour with which the 'social mission' of art was coming to be regarded had already been apparent in the first half of the nineteenth century, but by the second half the writings of Ruskin, of Morris and of many others had increased its intensity and widened its scope. This

account of the Kyrle Society which appeared in *The Magazine of Art* in 1880 gives a clear indication of the kinds of preoccupations which were exercising the well-meaning at the time."

Bernard Denvir, The Late Victorians. Art, Design, and Society, 1852-1910., London and New York, 1986, p. 74.

135 John Forbes White, How Can Art be Best Introduced into The Houses of Persons of Limited Income?, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

## Chapter 4

### ARTIST AND PATRON: THE CASE OF JOHN FORBES WHITE AND GEORGE REID

In discussing the history of painting in Scotland the period c.1860-1880 is a logical unit. It covers the time between the emergence of the generation of the Scott Lauder pupils and their later eclipse as the avant-garde by the Glasgow School. In analysing the character of George Reid, his relationship with J.F. White, and the effect of society on the painter, there is no logical break at 1880. Attitudes and beliefs, while definitely held in the period c.1860-1880 were sometimes only fully expressed in the light of events outside the period. There has therefore been extensive use made here both of later correspondence between Reid and White and of later journals and published works.

"Wednesday 10th Augt is in some respects a memorable one, for it was then that his acquaintance with Mr John Forbes White commenced. He called at GR's home accompanied by Mrs White and professor Wm Geddes. More than 19 years have elapsed since then, and this evening as we write in 20 Duke st Edinburgh, Mr and Mrs White have just left us after a short but delightful visit. It would be hard to say how much good, how much happiness, how much initial helpfulness has resulted from the acquaintance thus begun, - All GR's subsequent career has been influenced in many most important ways by him - but for Mr White he should never have gone to Holland, and made the acquaintance of Mollinger and Israels. How great the influence this has had upon his work it is impossible to say." '1.

Thus George Reid's wife Mia recorded in September 1883 the start of the friendship between George Reid and John Forbes White of Aberdeen. The surviving private correspondence and public writings of the two men are of particular interest. Extending over a period of 38 years from the first letter written in 1866 by the young aspiring artist to the more senior and successful businessman and art collector who was his patron, the writings provide an insight into the motivations, opinions and actions of two highly influential figures in Scottish art circles in the later nineteenth century. Writing at a time when the work of the older "Scotch School"<sup>2</sup> was coming under increasing criticism, they demonstrated a well-informed awareness of contemporary art movements on the continent and a concern as to how these influences might be integrated into an art that remained essentially Scottish in character.

Both White and Reid were well read, well travelled men who came into contact with some of the foremost European artists of their day. However their adherence to distinctively Scottish attitudes and values remained strong throughout their lives. White was more than a business man who collected paintings. He was a perceptive man of letters who lectured on the role of art in society, wrote contemporary art criticism and contributed articles to the Encyclopedia Britannica.<sup>3</sup> In the course of his career Reid became one of the best known and sought after portrait painters in Scotland. He too wrote on contemporary art, he travelled and studied abroad extensively and was President of the Royal Scottish Academy at a particularly traumatic period in its existence.<sup>4</sup> Their correspondence, at times on an almost daily basis, reveals their concerns about the social, political, economic and moral problems of the day. Both men were prepared to

express their views forcefully, on society and on the role of art within that society. Like many well-intentioned contemporaries, they shared a belief in the value of art as a source of great satisfaction and as an educative force. Early on they entered into the debate as to how its benefits might be made available to all. Although very much better documented than most, the attitudes revealed by Reid and White are, to a considerable degree, characteristic of an entire group of painters and collectors active in Scotland from the 1860's onwards.

The work of George Reid will be examined elsewhere in a variety of contexts. <sup>5</sup> Similarly the activities of J.F. White will be discussed in relation to his associations with other artists. <sup>6</sup> This chapter is concerned with the developing relationship between the two men and its significance. The main evidence for this consideration are the large number of surviving letters from Reid to White and the several pieces of art criticism which they wrote both individually and jointly.

The surviving Reid-White correspondence dates from 1866. <sup>7</sup> Previously White had written to Mollinger in Utrecht enquiring if the artist would take Reid as a pupil. <sup>8</sup> White had been in contact with the Dutch painter since the collector's purchase of *Drenthe* (Illustration 32.) from the London International Exhibition four years earlier. Mollinger agreed to White's request and Reid travelled to Holland, arriving on August 2nd 1866. At this stage, although it was very nearly two years since the two men had first met, Reid's relationship with White was still rather formal. In the first letter Reid wrote from Holland on August 6th, he addressed White as "sir". The overall tone of the letter was respectful and a little distant. The

younger man was very careful to arrange financial matters between them on a formal basis. A work of Mollinger's that was owned by White had been damaged, and Reid had taken it with him to Holland for the artist to repair. Reid was somehow responsible for part of the handling costs and wrote "The expenses for carriage etc from Abdn to Utrecht amounts in all to £1. 11. 5. \_ \_ \_ \_ I have paid this and will consider it my share \_ \_ \_ the carriage from Utrecht to Aberdeen will be yours." 9.

As will be seen, this betrays a very different attitude from the one prevailing in later correspondence. Though the letter of August 6th is respectful, it is nevertheless friendly and open. Reid gave White all the information about his arrival and about his, so far, brief stay in Holland. Nine months later however Reid was still treating White rather formally, though perhaps with more confidence. Again the question of money arose. White wrote to Reid on May 1st 1867 proposing a week's trip to Paris with himself and Mollinger. Reid replied the following day, saying he very much wanted to go, and listing all the advantages of the journey.

"I should enjoy most thoroughly a week in Paris in company with you and Mollinger. \_ \_ \_ \_ then its advantages in an educational way are not to be overlooked. Ones provincial ideas would get dispelled somewhat and the eyes opened more as to what painting means and is capable of doing. The whole to finish up with a look at the R.A. on the way home, truly the inducements to go are great." 10.

He then went on to explain that due to financial constraints caused by the death of his elder brother, leaving a widow and children, the failing health of his father and the burden of an expensive Aberdeen town house, it was impossible for him to spend money on a trip to Paris.

White apparently had made Reid no offer of money at this stage. Reid now brought up the subject. He said that for the above reasons he could not afford to go to Paris. And further that since he shrank from the idea of borrowing money, and indeed had never yet borrowed money, he could not contemplate the journey. While this would appear to be a continuation of the attitudes displayed in the letter of August 6th 1866, that is, precision and concern in matters of debt and liability arising between the two men, in the light of what ultimately transpired, the letter can be understood as showing Reid gaining in confidence in his relationship with the collector.

If White had made no offer to Reid to finance the journey, Reid's exhaustive analysis of why he could not afford to go, and of how he did not wish to borrow to finance the trip, was possibly a subtle request to borrow the necessary money. Reid was careful to leave White an obvious method of refusal. White might simply have congratulated Reid on his caution and gone to Paris in company with Mollinger. Instead, as a letter of October 1872 demonstrates, White did lend Reid money in May and again in December 1867. In October 1872 Reid repaid White all the money he had borrowed from him to date. This included some £15 received on May 6th 1867, and the considerable sum of £60 received on December 3rd. In the correspondence between the two men there was no mention for almost forty years, of the

trip taking place. Eventually however in October 1904 Reid recalled the trip fondly. <sup>12</sup>.

If this letter of May 1867 was a delicate request to borrow money, it forms a bridge between the rather austere formality of early letters and the more intimate relationship which had developed by 1868. It was in 1868 that Reid and White collaborated to produce Thoughts On Art, <sup>13</sup>. a project which required a good deal of mutual confidence. In March 1869, during Reid's second and more protracted study visit to Paris, he concluded a letter to White with a direct statement about their friendship. Reid obviously felt awkward about writing, but nevertheless he wanted to express his feelings. He wrote:-

"Another thing I must thank you for is the long letter you sent me\_ \_ \_ (it) is to me another proof that we understand each other. I often wonder when I think of it, how much influence you have had over my life since we first came to know each other. I cannot speak of that here, indeed I question if it is a matter that should be spoken about at all\_ \_ \_ . I believe, had it not been for you, I should have had to leave Aberdeen long since - for there was no other who could give me the right kind of sympathy but yourself - and one must have that if there is any kind of earnestness in work or aim." <sup>14</sup>.

A month later on April 25th 1869, still in Paris, and possibly missing Scotland, Reid again commented on his relationship with White. "I know of

no one with whom I have more in common than yourself - no one for whose good in every way I feel a deeper hope." 15.

The financial arrangements between the two men were also on a much less formal basis by this time. Reid wrote thanking White for the unsolicited money draft which he had sent. He explained that he did not need the money at present and would return it when he arrived in Scotland.

Also in 1869 Reid replied to a letter from White and offered advice over the patron's sending of pictures to an exhibition in Glasgow. 16. Reid explained how to send the paintings, how much commission would be taken on them, how to label them and so on. The advice was rather tentatively given. Reid still addressed his letters to "My Dear Mr White", and despite their collaboration over Thoughts On Art, and the testaments of friendship the relationship would still appear to be merely one of patron and artist. By January 1871 things were different still. Reid wrote to White from Edinburgh asking to borrow money. There was no hesitation as had been the case in 1867. Reid simply wrote

"My Dear JFV,

Would you kindly get an order for £ 40. 5. 9 payable to Mr Norton, 11 Argyll Street, Regent Street London W and send it to me?" 17.

He went on to apologise for bothering White "in this way" so often but promised to pay him in "a week or two." By now the two men were in very regular correspondence. Reid noted "It is seldom a fortnight passes without our having some interchange of news." 18.

These communications continued unabated when Reid made his second visit to Holland. In September 1871 Reid went to work with Josef Israels in The Hague, Mollinger having died in 1867 of tuberculosis. In mid-October Reid wrote to White, '9. again soliciting money, though this time not for himself. He wanted White to buy some watercolours from Bosboom, the Hague School painter, whom, Reid said quoting Israels, was "old and poor". Reid wished to help Bosboom. White agreed, and Reid purchased four watercolour sketches from Bosboom for £35. Again Reid's advice to White was rather tentative. It was as if he did not object to borrowing money from him, even asking for it openly, as demonstrated; that was within the bounds of their developing patron/artist relationship. However, the unsolicited offering of advice and guidance was an area in which Reid felt much more restrained. Reid wanted to aid Bosboom, and genuinely admired the paintings, but he was very worried about advising White to buy them. In the initial letter on the subject he wrote:-

"Have you £20, £30, or £50 to throw away on pictures?\_ \_ \_ They are the merest blotches and suggestions, but so intense that you would think the man's very soul had been coming out at the ends of his fingers when he did them - a few pencil lines and a splash of colour but the result is wonderful. They are however so purely artistic that no amateur, and I might say not every artist, would care about them. To the ordinary Philistine they would be simply unintelligible. \_ \_ \_ \_ Think over the matter - it was Israels who fixed the relative value at £20 - a dealer or a man of business would think him mad - and truly so, for as labour goes it is little for the money - perhaps half an hour's

work but labour is not the question, it is the result. I feel that in suggesting your throwing away your money in this way I am perhaps being wrong - if it was my own I would have no hesitation, although nine hundred and ninety nine people out of a thousand would think me a fool. \_ \_ \_ \_ In the event of your trusting me and telling me to invest in a drawing or two from these I speak of, I shall almost fear to meet you and to hand over the dirty stained bits of paper as all that represents your gold." 20.

Reid was quite willing to borrow money personally from White but in 1871, actually proposing and encouraging a course of action which White had not initiated, was still worrying to him. The artist was very careful to point out towards the end of his letter that he had in no way committed White to buying anything at all. Indeed he had not even mentioned the possibility. Therefore if White did not want the pictures, or did not have any spare cash at the time, "no harm is done if nothing comes of it." White agreed to Reid's proposal, and the painter bought four watercolours for £35. Reid's trepidation continued however after he had bought the sketches. On October 28th he wrote "Well I've gone and thrown away your money for you and no mistake! I feel almost afraid to face you." 21.

The painter's faith in the works reemerged slightly later, and he reassured White that he felt the paintings were all "gems" 22. In view of his build up of the watercolours as only being capable of being understood and appreciated by a true member of the cognoscenti, Reid then made a none to subtle play to White's vanity and said that he was certain that the

collector would like the four watercolours which he had purchased. Once again however Reid's uncertainty at having advised White and his insecurity over the catalytic role he played in the affair, surfaced. Reid noted, almost as if he foresaw his future meeting with the collector. "The sketches are fine - but the £35 is gone! Only think of all that money converted into four scraps of dirty paper stained with a blotting of colour here and there! What might £35 not have done had it only been well spent?" <sup>23</sup>.

Through the remainder of 1871 and into 1872 the relationship between Reid and White continued to evolve gradually away from the traditional one of artist and patron. In December 1871 Reid, along with Chalmers and Cameron was instrumental in getting White elected to their Edinburgh club <sup>24</sup>. In October 1872 Reid was able to repay White all the money he had borrowed from him over the previous five and a half years. The painter had kept meticulous accounts of any money borrowed by him, and of the interim repayments he had made during that time. Also recorded were pictures given by Reid to White in lieu of his outstanding debt. On October 15th Reid wrote, setting out how much he had borrowed and on what date. The total borrowed was £289. 5. 9., including the money borrowed in 1867 to go to Paris. During the five a half year period Reid had repaid £100. 5. 9. , and had given White two pictures valued at £75. This left an outstanding debt of £114. Reid now repaid that money. <sup>25</sup>. No immediate change of attitude is detectable in the letters Reid wrote to the collector once he was out of debt. However the painter's letter concerning their writing of a series of reviews of the Aberdeen Art Exhibition of 1873, seems to show a relationship of equals. Writing from Montrose, Reid lamented that he had not written very much of his portion of the reviews. It would appear that

the painter was in charge of the enterprise. It was Reid who told White which artist's work he was to comment on, <sup>26</sup> and which Reid reserved for himself. Reid also explained how the articles were to be put together to disguise the collaborative nature of the work. Later in the same letter the artist confidently told White to sell a painting he owned by Peter Graham. Rather than the wary advice concerning Bosboom, full of qualifications, doubts and uncertainties, Reid simply wrote "I think you should sell the Peter Graham. I don't think his prices will go on increasing very much more now. You might have a very fine Israels for the money." <sup>27</sup>.

This very easy relaxed relationship is confirmed by a letter of October 1873 in which Reid wrote to tell White, quite casually, that he had invited a friend of his, George Hope, to visit Aberdeen and to stay with White. Reid offered White the opportunity of backing out of the arrangement, and admitted to being "presumptuous" and "audacious" but nevertheless he clearly expected that White would not only have no objection to the arrangement but would accept it as normal.

"He is such a fine genial unspoiled man it would be a pleasure for anyone to have him. If I have not done a presumptuous and wicked thing, and if you can lodge him, you might drop him a line, he knows all about you so you need not write as a stranger." <sup>28</sup>.

From this time on Reid was no longer hesitant. He spoke freely, and in matters concerning the Victorian art world, or indeed any aesthetic question, Reid guided White.

In 1879 White, in collaboration with Alexander Gibson of Edinburgh, wrote a short monograph on G.P. Chalmers. <sup>29</sup>. There was a biography of Chalmers written by Gibson; then a slightly shorter analysis and discussion of the paintings written by White. Chalmers had been an especially close friend of Reid's. When Chalmers was murdered in Edinburgh Reid was distraught. <sup>30</sup>. Outwardly Reid had very little to do with the written portion of the book. The painter contributed the illustrations, but officially that was all. A portrait of Chalmers by Reid and etched by Rajon was used as the frontispiece. (Illustration 33.) <sup>31</sup>. The series of four illustrations in the text were all by Reid. <sup>32</sup>. In fact the painter was also involved in every major decision concerning the work. In a series of four undated letters concerning the book, Reid advised on and virtually edited White's notes on Chalmers' paintings. He also appears to have read and commented on Gibson's biography of the painter. In a short letter of March 26th Reid remarked that he approved of Gibson's section saying, "with a little touching here and there it should be ready for the printer." <sup>33</sup>. Similarly Reid requested to see White's section before it was sent to the printers. In addition to this vetting of the text, Reid was apparently in charge of the actual production of the book. In the same letter he told White "I have written Douglas as it is time Durand had sent proofs of the four drawings. I hope they are all right. I trust Rajon will be able to finish the portrait soon." <sup>34</sup>.

As well as all this, Reid designed the decorative capital to begin the text and had a lot to say regarding the book's appearance. Alexander Gibson was not happy with Reid's influence over the organisation of the project. Far from being an inferior partner of the two authors, Reid evidently had a

series of serious disagreements with Gibson. While White went along with Reid's suggestions, and promoted them, Gibson objected strongly on a number of occasions. Reid wished the number of copies of the book limited to 150. Gibson wrote to White "I suspect 150 will be too small so I have in the meantime arranged with Douglas that 250 copies of the letter should be run off." 35. Reid suggested to White "I am rather in favour of paper covers like these on 'The Letters of Delacroix' and let people bind afterwards according to their own fancy." 36. This suggestion of paper covers was not at all acceptable to Gibson. He wrote to White

"Impressions as to the binding. I am sorry to say that there is a split in the camp. Douglas, Smith and I - also Hutchieson and Tuke whom I consulted - are all dead against the cover plan - Roughly for these reasons. The great majority of those who buy the book will wish it bound and not binding it in a foreign system adopted for special reasons \_ \_ \_ \_ . In fact in a book of this kind I think it would look like a piece of affectation, a thing to be scrupulously avoided." 37.

Reid wrote in his next note to White "I think it is now for Gibson to make a distinct proposal regarding the binding as you have done your part." 38. In the same brief note Reid also gave his opinion on the style and positioning of the lettering on the cover, and the positioning of the authors' names. By the time this note was written some of the proofs of the illustrations had been received from Durand. Reid was not happy with them. In an addendum he wrote tersely "The vignette must be done over again or omitted all together. Tell Gibson this." 39.

In the final letter on the subject Reid repeated that the tailpiece had to be done again or omitted because "in its present form it would simply blemish the book." <sup>40</sup>. He also commented on the proposed size of the print run, advising White on 250 copies if he wished, but certainly not any more. The relationship between Gibson and Reid deteriorated still further when Gibson wrote to White and objected to Reid's illustrations and to the painter's desire to have the tailpiece done again. "I can't wait for or afford another tailpiece, but I wish the said GR hadn't been compelled by his d\_\_\_\_\_d literality of conscience to (?draw) a skeleton, and had rather trusted to his imagination." <sup>41</sup>.

Obviously by this time there was no barrier between Reid and White. They were friends and equals. Reid had an equal part in the discussion and was not prepared to back down. This relationship of equals is confirmed by looking briefly at an incident connected with the sale of part of White's collection. This took place almost ten years later but it does demonstrate the familiarity between the two men. The lease on the flour mill which White rented in Aberdeen expired in 1888 and he was forced to move elsewhere. After a brief link with Montrose, which White probably knew relatively well through Chalmers, he settled in Dundee. He bought "Craigtay", a large villa on the edge of the city. While he kept Seaton Cottage outside Aberdeen, he sold his town house at 107 King Street. This house had had a gallery especially built on to it and there was simply no space for all the paintings in Dundee. White sold some 72 works at the sale on December 1st 1888 at Dowells in Edinburgh. <sup>42</sup>. Many of the collector's most important pictures were included. Among them were Reid's Whins In Bloom, Chalmers' The End of The Harvest and Guthrie's A Highland Funeral. <sup>43</sup>.

What is interesting is that included in the sale was number 34, Anemone Japonica, and number 59 St Mary's Loch, both by Reid. Neither of these pictures actually belonged to White. Indeed the only work by Reid owned by White which was sold at Dowell's was Whins In Bloom. Presumably this was because at 66½ inches by 36½ inches it was simply too large for White's new home. Numbers 34 and 59 were in the sale because Reid had been unable to sell them and now wanted to get rid of them. Reid advised White over the conduct of the sale, the catalogue and the hanging of the pictures. The hesitancy of 1867 had completely disappeared and in matters concerning the art world Reid was acknowledged as the authority. Their friendship was such that whereas money problems caused Reid great embarrassment and awkwardness twenty years earlier, now he could simply write to White and ask him to include these works in his sale. It was a favour between two equals, not a kindness from a superior to an inferior. This then is the background against which the following discussion of the actions, opinions and motivations of Reid and White must be set.

Certain attitudes characteristic of Victorian Scotland were identified in chapter one: strong national feeling accompanied by a fear of losing national identity; the residual influence of the Presbyterian church; the attitude to social problems so extensively set forth by writers such as Hugh Miller, Samuel Smiles and Alexander Smith; and a strongly held conviction of the superiority of rural life over city life, were among the contributory factors considered. All these elements can be identified in the writings and correspondence of George Reid and John Forbes White.

The latent nationalism of Reid and White, their desire to identify Scottish art as something different and individual, was clearly displayed in 1868 in their anonymous publication, Thoughts On Art.<sup>45</sup> Just as Cockburn's fear earlier, in 1843, motivated him to write despairingly in his Journal of "the occasional disregard if not contempt by England of things dear to us merely because they are not English."<sup>46</sup> so Reid and White felt the need in 1868 to claim that in George Jamesone "Scotland \_ \_ \_ \_ could boast a native artist of considerable ability at a time when England was still indebted to foreigners for whatever art she had."<sup>47</sup>

As well as praising Jamesone's portraits, the authors were quick to establish him as a truly native talent. They analysed his character, declaring him to possess "in an eminent degree one of the characteristics of the true Scot, in his shrewd sound judgement of men and things."<sup>48</sup>

Reid twice wrote to White from abroad, apparently fearful of losing the "Scottishness" of his art; something he wanted to retain. In April 1869 he wrote from Paris, and commented on his exhibits at the forthcoming R.S.A.. He observed "I must be intirely (sic) Scotch in my subjects next year."<sup>49</sup>

A very similar concern, that of excessive imitation of European painting, perhaps in style as well as subject matter, seemed to be troubling Reid again in 1871. On September 30th he wrote from The Hague "I have a great fear that it will persist in looking like a dutch (sic) interior and like an echo of Israels after all though I shall try hard to make it look Scotch and not like Israels."<sup>50</sup>

Two years later in 1873 Reid and White worked together on a series of reviews of the Aberdeen Art Exhibition for the Aberdeen Daily Free Press. The nationalism of the authors surfaced again here. The review published on October 13th contained the following section. "English critics sometimes charge our Scotch school with a dinginess of colour, alleging even that a snuffy brown is the traditional North Country hue into which everything in nature and art resolves itself." <sup>51</sup>. The mere fact of Reid and White identifying Scotland as a separate entity, and defending it, is significant. Scottish painting was seen as something different, even if thought of as inferior by English critics.

The significance and influence of the Presbyterian Church in affecting Scottish attitudes was also clearly demonstrated in the writings of Reid and White. In February 1869, just after he arrived in Paris, Reid wrote of his meeting with David Artz, (Illustration 34.) the Dutch painter, then living in the city. Artz shared a studio with two other painters and Reid, although he did not admire the Classicism of Artz' companions, certainly envied them their lives in Paris. <sup>52</sup>. However there was one part of their existence which Reid found very distasteful. In the studio the three painters were, he reported:-

"generally to be found at work the allotted six days and unfortunately on the Sunday too. Artz knew I was to call on him on Sunday, so after church when Dun and I went we did not find him at work, but the other two fellows were at it tooth and nail. It really is a queer atmosphere they live in. I believe Artz would have been working too as he usually does, but Dun

had been frightening him before my arrival with descriptions of the horror with which I would regard such a thing if I saw him at it. And I fancy the good Artz out of deference lost his day's work. Well he was all the better of it I'm sure so I don't pity him a bit." <sup>22</sup>.

Reid found the idea of working on a Sunday disgraceful and was pleased that his visit had prevented Artz from working. In fact he used precisely the same words as Cockburn did on Iona when, concerned for the starving peasantry, he observed "They are the better of the church \_ \_ \_ ." <sup>24</sup>. The people Cockburn saw were in need of material aid but he felt the best that could be done for them was to provide them with a church. Reid manifested precisely the same approach. Whatever material or professional benefit might have been derived from working on a Sunday it was morally impossible. The religious component of life was infinitely more important than the secular one. Reid's beliefs were still the same when confronted with the Israels family who, as Jews, did not adhere to Reid's views on the sanctity of Sundays. He described Israels working on a watercolour while his wife sewed and commented "what a shameful way of spending a Sunday evening." <sup>25</sup>.

In May 1835, just as he was preparing to leave Edinburgh for a trip to the west, Reid told White that the city was full of clergymen. <sup>26</sup>. He recalled the traditional fascination of Scots with religious matters, the significance of the debates at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and closed the letter by saying "\_ \_ I suppose the old Scotch love of such matters still exists to some extent." <sup>27</sup>.

## Reid, White and Samuel Smiles

The attitudes and motivations ascribed to Reid and White have so far been dealt with individually. In the association which the two men had with Samuel Smiles, all these elements are brought together. Smiles' work is what unites all these areas. He had a firm belief in the importance of the Christian religion. Both Self Help of 1859 and Character of 1871, are steeped in what is sometimes referred to as "the Protestant work ethic". In Character Smiles quoted the Rev F.W. Farrar's book Seekers after God and said of ancient writers

"Unhappily it was not granted to these heathen philosophers in any true sense to know what Christianity was. They thought it was an attempt to imitate the results of philosophy, without having passed through the necessary discipline. \_ \_ \_ \_ And yet in Christianity, and in Christianity alone, they would have found an ideal which would have surpassed their loftiest anticipations." 50.

Smiles also strongly backed the concept of "the Home" and "the Family" as the basis of a sound society. In Character he devoted an entire chapter to "Home Power", with sections such as "Home makes the man", "Domestic and Social life", and "Influence of the Mother". In a passage very reminiscent of Hugh Miller's earlier promotion of "The Home" as the essential foundation of a decent society, 59. Smiles wrote "Home is the first and most important school of character \_ \_ \_ \_ From that source, be it pure or impure, issue

the principles and maxims that govern society. Law itself is but the reflex of homes." 60.

Later on, in Character, Smiles actually linked Christianity and the home in a short section in praise of Thomas More. He quoted the admiring observations made on More's home life made by Erasmus who described it as "a school and exercise of the Christian religion" 61. Even the concept of the particularly enobling character of rural life and labour is to be found in Smiles. Despite the author's promotion of industrial strength, and the enterprise of manufacturers, he was still attracted by the nineteenth century's belief in the purity of rural life. Smiles traced his views on the character enhancing aspect of work to classical antiquity and quoted from Pliny on the particularly enobling qualities of rural labour, saying:-

"In the third chapter of his Natural History, Pliny relates in what high honour agriculture was held in the earlier days of Rome: \_ \_ \_ \_ how the rural tribes held the foremost rank, while those of the city had discredit thrown on them as being of the indolent race." 62.

Smiles even went on to suggest obliquely that the fall of the Roman Empire was due to the importation of slaves to work the land. This led, he claimed, to the consequent lack of rural labour among Romans, the increase in indolence of the ruling classes, and their moral and spiritual decay and overthrow.

That Reid and White were in sympathy with the general character of these views can be very strongly suggested. Both Reid and White knew Smiles personally. White met the author when the latter was collecting material for his book on the naturalist Thomas Edward, in 1876. <sup>63</sup>. Smiles visited White on numerous occasions at Seaton Cottage, and wrote to the collector for years afterwards. Reid illustrated Smiles' book on Edward, Life of A Scotch Naturalist, and there are over two hundred surviving letters from Smiles to Reid <sup>64</sup>. which demonstrate a close relationship. The relationship was sufficiently close for Smiles to attempt to persuade Reid to make his home in London. He told him

"I don't like to tell you of the little mistakes that I think you have made in your career. I think that instead of spending your (?savings) in Aberdeen, you should have come to the centre of British Art, and established yourself here - as recommended by Millais and other friends." <sup>65</sup>.

Reid never acceded to Smiles' plea that he make his home in London, but he did agree at one stage to exhibit his works there. Smiles was full of enthusiasm for the plan and keen to support it in any way that he could. He wrote:-

"By all means ask Lord Ronald Gower (I suppose you know him) to see Sir Coutts Lindsay on the subject. I have no doubt he will comply. Besides, he is a Scotchman and they go 'shoulder to shoulder'. I believe he will be proud to see your works in the

Grosvenor Gallery; and they are much better seen there than in the R.A. collection.

Mrs Gill, who has just called, says that Lord Lyndsay, who is a cousin of Sir Coutts, might help a little, if you do not object.

The Marquis of Huntly also might be of use. I could call upon Sir Coutts myself. Let me know.

You must exhibit the sketch of 'Edward'. It is a very fine thing, and I might ask him to call and see it. That would fix him out nice.

Now, do not dream "in a hazy way" as you term it, but set to, and do it. Tom Taylor will do his duty when the time comes, but it would be better not to ask him to interfere at present. Perhaps Millais would be better. I think you might write to him. Millais is such a fine cordial fellow; and you know him." 66.

Despite Reid's refusal to base himself in London the two men saw each other regularly. They even travelled together touring along the shores of the Moray Firth while Reid made sketches of Fraserburgh and Aberdour to be used in Smiles' book on Edward. Smiles owned several pictures by Reid, including an interior view of a cottage; the portrait of Edward used in the book; a portrait of Smiles' mother and three portraits of Smiles himself. (Illustration 35.)

Reid was demonstrably on very friendly terms with Smiles. While he was in Venice in April 1881 the painter wrote to White of his plans for returning to Scotland. Having detailed further visits he and his wife planned to make in Italy. Reid closed the letter by stating quite casually "I expect we will

reach London on Saturday or Monday - I shall stay for a day or two with Dr Smiles - look at the RA and then home." <sup>67</sup>. Apparently Reid did not have to make any definite arrangements with Smiles about his arrival, or the length of his intended stay. The two men were obviously friendly.

Reid mentioned Smiles again over twenty years later in a letter of 1904. He told White he had noticed the announcement of Smiles' death in the newspaper, and said:-

"I saw him about this time last year but although cheery as ever, his memory was quite gone. He did not recognise me but seemed to have some dim recollections of having once known an artist of the name (Reid) in Aberdeen - and asked if I knew him!" <sup>68</sup>.

Apart from personal contacts, there are areas where Reid's writing seems strongly reminiscent of Smiles' views. The letter Reid wrote from Paris trying to dissuade White from his plans to expand his business is particularly noteworthy in this case, as is the letter concerning the financial dealings of their friend Daniel Cottier. Reid spoke feelingly of the waste in spending "the best and noblest years of one's life \_ \_ \_ in the busy and swarming thoroughfares of business and in the unceasing, unwearied service of Mammon." <sup>69</sup>. Similarly Reid's statement that "To get rich is not what he (Cottier) should live for. That is at best a labouring for the meat which perisheth." <sup>70</sup>. echoes parts of Self-Help. It is not possible to cite a specific source for Reid's remarks but several passages in Self-Help appear very close. For example

"The saving of money for the mere sake of it, is but a mean thing, even though earned by honest work. \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ to hoard for mere wealth's sake is the characteristic of the narrow-souled and the miserly." 71.

A formative influence already discussed on the rural nostalgia painters of the nineteenth century, was a broadly based feeling of anti-urbanism. More specifically, a sense of dislocation from society and its achievements, a pessimism about the future, a dislike of what was seen as over rapid change, and sometimes an overtly stated anti-city, anti-industrial viewpoint. These views had a profound effect on both Reid and White. That Reid was at odds with the society he lived in, from his earliest experiences as an artist, is not in doubt. Letters from as early as 1869, when the painter was studying in Paris, expressed his opinions very forcibly. There was no suggestion of a young man, Reid was twenty-eight, eagerly responding to new challenges offered by a new society. His dissatisfaction with society was not the nostalgic view of an old man or a vision of a non-existent "golden" past. Reid was fully aware of the nature of the times he lived in and was at odds with them.

On March 28th 1869, some six-and-a-half weeks into his second and more prolonged visit to Paris, Reid wrote to White advising against his friend's plans to expand his flour milling business. Reid was anxious to dissuade White from what he saw as a grave error. He began by specifically discussing White's plans and attempting to project into the future and examine the effect they would have on the miller's personal life. Reid conjured up a grim existence of increased workload and stress, of less time

for his family, friends and leisure interests, and generally attacked the proposal on all fronts. The letter however rapidly became a tirade against what Reid termed "go-aheadism" in general.

"I don't want to go-a-head and keep up with the times, \_ \_ \_ \_ I have a strong suspicion that keeping up with the times means this - that a man's whole life and energy shall be devoted to what is called getting on in the world - that money must be made by every possible means and that such a thing as quietness is out of the question - until such a time as a (?competency) or a fortune or something of that sort has been realised - and one's hairs are grey and the best and noblest years of life have been spent in the busy and swarming thoroughfares of business, and in the unceasing and unrewarded pursuit of Mammon. Well the man who does this sort of thing has wasted his life." 72.

Reid's attack on the need to "get on", to compete, continued as he dismissed the needless pursuit of money and of luxuries which he termed "the things that people nowadays consider absolutely needful." This desire for money and for personal gain Reid ridiculed as "the pursuit of the phantom" and he went on to lay before White what he saw as "the real pleasures and business of life". These things which made life worthwhile for Reid were exactly those social elements promoted by the church and, as we have seen, those elements which were thought to be under almost deliberate attack by life in the urban environment. Reid was adopting an implicitly anti-urban viewpoint by offering up as direct opposites the "service of Mammon" and the time "for wife and children \_ \_ \_ \_ and quiet thinking and for the peaceful

enjoyment of nature." 73. This attack might also link the painter to Samuel Smiles, In a section of Self-Help devoted to the folly of mere money making, Smiles condemned the very things Reid attacked. He wrote:-

"It is said of one of our most eminent modern men of business - withal a scrupulously honourable man - who spent his life mainly in money-making, and succeeded, that when upon his death-bed he turned to his favourite daughter, and said solemnly to her 'Hasn't it been a mistake, \_ \_ \_ ?' He had been thinking of the good which other men of his race had done, and which he might have done, had he not found exclusive money-making to be a mistake when it was too late to remedy it; and, when he must leave behind him his huge pile of gold, the accumulation of which had been almost the sole object of his life.

Worldly success, measured by the accumulation of money, is no doubt a very dazzling thing; and all men are naturally more or less the admireres of worldly success. But though men of persevering, sharp, dexterous and unscrupulous habits, ever on the watch to push opportunities, may and do 'get on' in the world, yet it is quite possible that they may not possess the slightest elevation of character, nor a particle of real greatness. He who recognises no higher logic than the shilling may become a very rich man, and yet remain all the while an exceedingly poor creature." 74.

In July 1889, twenty years after his letters from Paris, Reid's attitude towards industrial life remained unchanged. He had just heard that Millais

was seriously ill and wrote to White. "I am very sorry about Millais \_ \_ \_  
\_ \_ we are all living at such high pressure now a days that before a man  
is sixty he seems to be about used up. Why all this worry and excitement?  
It seems to be the 'Husk' without the 'Rasp'." 76.

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### Reid's Views of the City

City life was seen as the destroyer of family life. At the same time the  
theme of the rural environment, of nature, as an essential motivating and  
stimulating force for mankind was developed. Reid opined that commerce made  
it impossible to live with nature, and that art could not exist without a  
rural environment. It was nature after all, Reid claimed, that "\_ \_ fueled  
the fruits of the noblest minds that God has made." 76.

Reid's total disaffection with his society was made clear in his closing  
remarks on White's proposed business expansion. He wrote despairingly of  
the possibility of "the old feud of God and Mammon" still existing "in spite  
of the efforts that have been made to patch it up." 77. If the two things  
were incompatible as Reid suspected, then he chose to ally himself firmly  
with those against Mammon, and as he saw it, for God, the home, family life  
and nature.

This stated opposition to the desire to maximise all possible effort and to  
operate in the most modern way possible, is a theme which recurred again  
and again in Reid's letters. On July 24th 1870 Reid wrote to White from  
Clapham in London. On this occasion he was particularly disenchanted with

the city. The designer turned dealer, Daniel Cottier, a friend of both Reid and White, was convinced, like Smiles, that Reid could be a big success as a painter in London. Cottier was therefore attempting to persuade Reid that he should abandon Scotland for the greater potential of the English market. Reid had many good friends in London. In letters he frequently wrote of his delight at seeing Orchardson and Pettie again, or of dining with Peter Graham or Samuel Smiles. However the prospect of moving to London did not appeal to him at all. He wrote to White "I should like to spend pretty much the life of a mere student - there seem so many things that one ought to learn in peace and quietness which the stir and strain of an existence here would render impossible." 79.

In 1872 Cottier was once again the principle object of Reid's concern when he wrote to White on January 6th. This time Reid was more direct in his attack on London as the source, as he saw it, of his friend's downfall. Cottier had been a designer of stained and painted glass. White had commissioned him to design an extension to his rural base Seaton Cottage, and both Reid and White had seen Cottier as the beginning of something very innovative in the nineteenth century decorative arts. Reid even described him as "a soldier priest in the art world" and "a coming prophet" 79. By early 1872 however Reid felt worried about Cottier, "the man's nature is getting so changed." The root of that change, according to Reid, was Cottier's move south. "London has had an evil effect on him - now it is all business - a bigger shop and money - no end of it, impossible to have too much though for what end and purpose \_ \_ \_ \_ who can tell?" 80. Reid found the city directly responsible for the destruction, in his friend,

of the only things in life which he felt were worthwhile, and the replacement of them with a senseless pursuit of money.

Thirteen years later this despair at the course of society, and the dislike of the way commercial cities forced people to live, was just as strong. Reid had agreed to do a series of illustrations for a book about the river Clyde, and in June 1885 he went across to the West to work on the drawings<sup>21</sup>. He was horrified by what he saw as he travelled along the course of the Clyde making the twelve drawings needed for the book. The drawings did not celebrate the industrial might of the Clyde. Reid's letter of June 14th clearly explains why. The painter was appalled by the filth and sewage he encountered. He wrote as if this aspect of industrialisation had not been drawn forcibly to his attention before. Reid was staying at Bothwell where he made two drawings for the book. The first of these was a view of Bothwell Castle (Illustration 14.) seen from the opposite bank of the river. There is no sign whatever in the drawing that industry had had any effect on the landscape. Indeed the only evidence of man in the entire scene is the castle itself, and it is depicted as an almost organic part of the landscape. There is no suggestion that the building is anything but a ruin reverting to nature. Nineteenth century man is not in evidence. In the drawing the building emerges from the undergrowth and cuts through the horizon line. However it in no way holds a dominant position. The break of the castle into the sky is flanked by a dark hillside to the left and a tall tree to the right. These elements serve to soften the hard edges of the building's silhouette, and with the entire composition being dominated by a tree in the foreground, which disappears out of the top of the drawing, man's contribution to the scene is harmonious and in keeping with nature.

This depiction of Bothwell castle is very different from Reid's description to White of what he saw there. The fourteenth century castle, Reid noted, had been "turned into a carefully guarded tourists' and school children's resort, with brass bands and shaven lawns and clumps of rhododendron bushes." <sup>82</sup>.

No sign of this modern usage of the castle appeared in the drawing. The contrast between drawing and letter in the second work is even more dramatic. The Clyde, according to Reid, was already polluted by the time it reached Bothwell. The countryside all around sent up "the smoke of its torment day and night forever." Just outside Reid's bedroom window, and lasting "all night long" were "locomotive engines whistling and shrieking in every direction." <sup>83</sup>. Again however, the scene Reid portrayed, number five in the book, Bothwell Bridge, (Illustration 15.) was very different from the description of Bothwell sent to White. Reid showed a tranquil scene of the Clyde flowing under Bothwell Bridge with half a dozen tiny figures down near the banks and an even smaller group crossing the bridge. The river does not look polluted. The "filth indescribable, sewage, old boots, scraps of iron hoop, fragments of obscene crockery etc." <sup>84</sup>. that Reid described to White are not seen. The only people shown are so small that even if they are "illformed \_ \_ \_ ugly and undergrown", as Reid claimed, it is impossible to tell.

The painter's reaction to all this filth and degradation was to voice a clear concern for the people he saw, and a strong condemnation of the society that had given rise to the situation. He wrote "What is to be the end of such a state of things it is not difficult to guess. \_ \_ \_ \_ When

some great commercial depression overtakes this country the result will, in places like this, be simply awful." <sup>96</sup>:

Echoing Henry Cockburn's views as to the inevitability of occasional "sloughs of a very manufacturing nation", <sup>96</sup>. and sounding very like Cockburn when confronted with extreme hardship and poverty on Iona, Reid closed the letter by saying of the people "they are still human beings and must be pitied and thought of as such, however \_ \_ \_ misshapen their face and forms may be." <sup>97</sup>.

Six months later, early in 1886, Reid's disillusionment with his society was expressed even more clearly. In an undated letter Reid concluded his remarks with a lengthy observation on what he saw as his relationship with nineteenth century Scotland.

"This wild Babel and clamour in which we live, is sorely against one's peace and happiness - it keeps the mind in a state of unrest and takes it away from what is really one's proper business in life. I do not know what turn my thoughts may yet take on this point, but frankly enough they may end in my retiring into such seclusion from the outside world as it is possible in this xix century for one who has still his living to make by the work of his hands. Contact with the outside world cannot be altogether avoided, but it may be reduced to its possible minimum." <sup>98</sup>.

From the above remarks it can be observed that Reid did not see himself as part of a developing, vibrant society. He did not feel at ease in nineteenth century Scotland, and saw the changes going on around him as overly hasty, ill-considered, and on occasion as positively evil. This general dissatisfaction with his time not infrequently emerged as an outright attack on the urban environment and on industrial cities. In September 1895 Reid had just returned from Durham where he had been making sketches and drawings of the town in preparation for a large painting he had been wanting to produce for some time. This lies considerably outside the stated period of study. However early letters such as those from Paris in 1869 and London in 1872 demonstrate that the painter's beliefs in 1895 were essentially the same as they had been twenty-five years earlier. The letter from Durham is simply a more concise articulation of these views. Reid found the town a fascinating place and felt that it could provide "a new subject every day for months". Significantly it was the town's rural character which interested him. "If Durham had any factories or any great industry (other than Pastoral), it would have been destroyed long ago." <sup>89</sup>.

As well as these sketches of the non-industrialised town of Durham and the edited views of the Clyde, Reid did produce a few pieces of work depicting some of the less appealing areas of Edinburgh. However these works were, like the Clyde drawings, done on commission, and cannot be seen as personal expressions of the artist's views. In 1890 Reid illustrated a book by Mrs Oliphant <sup>90</sup>. celebrating the history of Edinburgh from the eleventh century until modern times. There were sixty illustrations including portraits, architectural details, heraldic arms, and landscapes. Among them however were a number of views of less inviting sections of the city. There were

four illustrations of Edinburgh closes. (Illustrations 36. 37. 38. & 39.) These showed old, poor housing and the people who lived there. There was no attempt however to make the drawings a social record of conditions. Like Thomas Annan's earlier commissioned photographs of Glasgow, Reid's illustrations were a description of place not of poverty. In keeping with the rest of the illustrations, those which were not strictly descriptions of detail, these four closes were treated rather romantically, in the same manner as views of "old houses", "castles" and "palaces".

Reid also contrasted the urban and the rural modes of life, just as Hugh Miller and Alex. Smith had done in the 1850's.<sup>91</sup> Again, just as these writers had done, he condemned the life of the cities. In two letters written to White early in 1886, Reid attacked the speed of change, and the destruction of the old rural values. In short, his behaviour exhibited signs of an ambivalent attitude towards his time.

The first of these two letters, undated but probably written late in January 1886, began with Reid regretting the passing of "one of the few remaining old landmarks of Aberdeen. "But", he observed, "in these days of progress it seems to be inevitable."<sup>92</sup> This first letter was in reply to one written by White which was, Reid felt, "written in a spirit of sadness". This had not surprised Reid. He felt sadness was "pretty generally the spirit of the times. Neither rest nor peace seem possible in these days," he went on. The reason for this common feeling of melancholy emerged a little later in the letter. Both Reid and White felt intimidated and disorientated by the changes in society that they witnessed. This became clear in a long section dealing directly with the development of "modern" society.

"The love of the old country and the old church and our old traditions and ways is still strong within me. One cannot easily break with the past. We are bound up with it in strange ways \_ \_ \_ \_ Nor do I think it good that this continuity should be broken. \_ \_ \_ \_ Changes I know there must be for with increase of time comes increase of knowledge in many ways and I am not one to shut my eyes to the light and refuse to see. But the restless desire for change for its own sake, I dislike. When it is found desirable let it come, but not with the suddenness of a whirlwind, or a cyclone if only wreck and ruin remain behind that, but slowly and calmly as befits wise self restrained people." 93.

In an autobiographical fragment left by White his views appear to be fully in accord with Reid's. When in one brief section he noted "Half a century brings revolution in many ways. The old gives place to the new, not always for the better, and our children have as much difficulty in realising the change as if we were taking them back a hundred years." 94.

In a letter of February 9th 1886 Reid continued his remarks on the nature of society, observing

"\_ \_ \_ it looks as if we are about to enter on a period of great change and possible collapse. Disintegration seems to be going on steadily in every direction, and unless some unforeseen event happens to put a stop to the process we shall soon be 'within measurable distance' of chaos." 95.

In these two letters, Reid, and by inference White, since Reid was replying in the first instance to a letter in the same vein from the collector, are seen to be very disillusioned with their society. All those attitudes identified in chapter one: a realisation that things must change yet a desire to retain traditional "ways"; a complete inability to identify and accept new urban modes of existence; an imposition of acknowledged old-fashioned, and sometimes inappropriate beliefs, traditions and life-styles on the new city environment, are present in these letters.

This, it might be argued, was an attitude to society, and not necessarily a factor in Reid's paintings. This is not so. In the joint reviews written for the Aberdeen Daily Free Press in 1873, there are a number of statements which show quite clearly how Reid felt about his paintings. This section of the October 13th review was probably written by White. <sup>96</sup>.

"Close by this picture hangs one of the best productions of our Scotch school in recent years, 'The Peatmoss' (147) (Illustration 26.) by Mr George Reid, a most original work of much simplicity and sentiment, and possessing the charm of a strong yet refined colour, combined with admirable tone. Quaint in its conception, it strikes by its excellent workmanship, and its intense sympathy with the common scenes of every day peasant life, that living poem which is daily before us, and which becomes dead to us only from its constant repetition. The genius however of Jules Breton, Millet and Rosa Bonheur has shown us what triumphs may be won by a loving interest in these humble subjects if laid hold of by artists of simple poetic minds, able to invest rustic labour with

its natural dignity, and to charm us with the high artistic quality of their work. Mr Reid's other landscape 'Broadsea' (107) (Illustration 9.)\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ has much the same sentiment, being much more than a truthful portraiture of nature, inasmuch as it conveys the feeling of the painter as he imagined his picture, the essence of the highest landscape." 97.

Reid's rural genre works were read by White, and therefore presumably by Reid himself, as being intricately bound up with the lives of the people he depicted. Reid was not seen as unique in this approach to landscape and genre painting. Other painters were felt capable of the same expression of sentiment and sympathy. In the September 15th review, W.D. McKay's two works in the exhibition were described as "\_ \_ beautiful in themselves, and more beautiful still when we think of them with their rich associations of hope and fear, and connect them with the simple life of the labourer, his joys and his sorrows. 98.

The continuing significance of rural life and nature to man was emphasised when the review of McKay's pictures ended with the statement; "The best poetry of many lands has found worthy subjects in these scenes, and it is possible that the Georgics may live when the Aeneid is forgotten." 99.

Perhaps more significantly than McKay, Chalmers was also seen as offering the same message as Reid in his work. Immediately after the section on Reid in the October 13th review, White, if it was White and not Reid himself, continued:

"Kindred in spirit with Mr Reid in many respects is Mr G.P. Chalmers R.S.A., \_ \_ \_ . Mr Chalmers contributes three pictures, 'The Pleasures of Hope' (211), 'Reflected Light' (156), a fine example of delicate, refined yet strong work, and, 'The End of the Harvest' (255), (Illustration 20.) a large and powerful imaginative landscape with figures. Here we have another example of that rare effort to pervade the landscape with the sentiment of the painter, to infuse into it the idea that was dominant in his mind. Mr Chalmers has chosen for his theme one of those subjects to which we referred above, the simple scenes of peasant life in this case inclining, if not to melancholy, at least to deep pathos. The sun is setting in a blaze of yellow behind a scrubby wood the boles of which stand out strong and black against the bars of light. The wood bounds the last out-lying field of a small croft, beyond which lies the moorland. The last remnant of the scanty crop of potatoes is being gathered by two women working industriously ere the close of day. The sky looks threatening, the trees are getting bare, and everything betokens that winter is not far off. The air is pensive with the sadness that comes at such a time and under such circumstances, and one is reminded of the beautiful words of Erckmann-Chatrion - 'L'automne était venu avec sa grand melancholie et ses grands coups des l'hiver'. <sup>100</sup>. When we add that the painting is vigorous and bold, and that the colour is rich though necessarily low in tone, from the nature of the subject, we think we are justified in considering it one of the most remarkable of the modern works in these rooms." <sup>101</sup>

Both Reid and Chalmers were seen as imbuing their works with a message higher than their literal contents. The language used to describe their paintings was used again in connection with other artists. In the review of Chalmers' and Reid's paintings the almost indefinable quality that was praised was described as variously exhibiting "sentiment", "sympathy", "feeling", "truth" and "pathos". All these terms reappear, associated with other painters. If these descriptions are used as a benchmark to measure how Reid and White judged other artists' works, some of the members of the "school" of rural nostalgia, if it can be thought of as such, can be identified. Arguably Hugh Cameron, and indeed any other rural nostalgia painter praised and admired in the same terms as Chalmers and Reid could be included in this "school".

This would permit paintings by Scottish artists such as John MacWhirter, C.E. Johnson, and W.Q. Orchardson, when he painted rural nostalgia works, to be considered as having the same attributes as those ascribed to Reid and Chalmers. <sup>102</sup>. Thus Orchardson's painting The Toilers of the Sea (Illustration 40.) was described in the August 20th review in the 1873 Aberdeen Journal as "entering into a true sympathy with the everyday life of the present." The same ideas were found by Reid and White in some of George Harvey's work. Those landscapes which were not given a spurious historical setting were thought of as being "full of feeling, of deep and at times profound pathos." <sup>103</sup>. The historical figure paintings were not deemed to have the same force. The landscapes were read in almost exactly the same way as were those of Reid and Chalmers.

"It is this presence of the emotional element in his landscape that gives it so much of its power to those who are capable of feeling it. He brings it into sympathy with our common humanity - with its joy and its sorrow, with its hopes and its fears." 104.

Certainly not all landscape or rural genre painters were thought of as possessing this capability. Thomas Faed, though described as a great populariser of Scottish genre painting, was not seen as working in the same vein. In Thoughts On Art his work was described as exhibiting "false lustre, gained too often by the sacrifice of truth." 105. Faed's picture, His Only Pair, exhibited in Paris in 1867 and presumably seen there by Reid and White, was acknowledged as being "brilliant and sparkling". However the authors continued "how deliciously sweet in colour, and yet how false." 106. Even Reid's own brother, A.D. Reid, was not included in the select band of artists felt capable of expressing "truth" and "sentiment" through their painting. In the final review of the 1873 exhibition published in The Aberdeen Journal on September 10th, A.D. Reid's landscapes were commented upon. They were admired as showing "great landscape facility" but were felt to be lacking in "the force and sentiment of 'The Peatmoss'." 107. The great admiration and praise for Dutch painters such as Israels, Artz, Mollinger and Roelofs, would certainly mean that their works too were thought to have the same qualities.

In addition to a generalised attack on nineteenth century society, and a specific condemnation of the urban environment, Reid also spoke out against the rampant commercialism of his age.<sup>108</sup>. As well as his advice to White

that the simple desire for money was pointless, Reid had a lot to say on society's all round fascination with money. On returning from another visit to London, Reid wrote to White from Auchterarder on August 7th 1870 in a very bitter, disillusioned mood. He wrote, "We are in the habit of congratulating ourselves that we live in this enlightened nineteenth century. But why with all our enlightenment are we still so much in darkness?" 109. Reid was discussing the Royal Academy exhibition which both he and White had attended. It was through art and through their common experience of the R.A. that Reid attacked nineteenth century commercialism, and the belief that what was important was how much the paintings sold for and not their qualities as art.

These attacks on commerce in art continued throughout Reid's life. In a series of three reviews of the 1867 R.S.A., written anonymously by Reid, the artist expressed publicly his views on the corrupting effect of money on man. In the first review published on March 8th, Reid wrote of John Phillip a fellow Aberdeen painter who had recently died. "He did not work for filthy lucre's sake. No painter who does so will ever rise to much eminence." 110.

In the reviews for The Aberdeen Journal in 1873 Reid commented jointly with White on this subject. The fourth review of the "Aberdeen Art Exhibition", a locally borrowed loan collection, was published on August 20th. In this notice Reid and White attacked the production of "pot boilers" by members of the Royal Academy. Examples of "pot boilers", they claimed, could be seen in the exhibition. They did not state precisely to which painters they were

referring but from the clues they gave they would appear to be E.M. Ward, Erskine Nicol and W.P. Frith. They wrote

"In a recent number of *Punch* (August 2d) there appeared a clever design by L. Sambourne, called 'Our Latest Art Dream'.

(Illustration 41.) It consisted of a curious jumble of portraits mostly of leading members of the Royal Academy, all of them with large heads and very small bodies. At the top sits Mr Punch who calls the attention of the President, Sir Francis Grant, to the state of 'the Art Barometer' which in 1873 has fallen far below the average. In one of the corners of the drawing there is a very clever group, in which four of the most popular Academicians are represented as busily engaged feeding the fire which burns under an inverted crown, suspended pot-wise from a crook. The fuel used is pictures and they bear the inscription 'Pot-Boilers'. The likenesses of the artists engaged in this somewhat undignified occupation are striking, and it is to be hoped that the reproof so publicly given will not be altogether thrown away.

Curiously enough the present Exhibition contains sample 'Pot-Boilers' by at least three of them, and very unsatisfactory productions they are." ' ' '.

Reid and White stated that these three artists, probably Ward, Nicol and Frith, their reputations established, now frequently produced second rate pictures "to supply the ever ready picture dealers (and so to fill) in this

fashion their own and the dealers' pockets with unrighteous gain." <sup>112</sup>. These artists painting "for money, not for love" were "prostituting their talents for the sake of mere filthy lucre." <sup>113</sup>. But the real attack was reserved for the dealers. In 1871 Reid had written to White from Holland explaining that Alma Tadema "is Gambart's slave", and saying that the artist was "in a state of bondage." <sup>114</sup>. Two years later, and for public consumption, Reid and White jointly attacked picture dealers in a savage manner.

"We feel angry only at the picture dealer, with whom mere gain is the object, and sorry \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ for the foolish picture buyer who \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ becomes the dupe of the cunning middle-man, whose sole interest in art, and love for it, has its beginning and its ending in the purely pecuniary." <sup>115</sup>.

This attitude was once again in evidence in 1888, when White, due to moving his business to Dundee from Aberdeen, and buying a smaller house, had to sell off some of his paintings. Reid advised White a good deal over the two sales of pictures. On March 28th he wrote to White saying:-

"I have no doubt you felt the sort of intercourse you had while in London with men of the picture dealer and auctioneer order, most unpleasant. Yes! That shows the seamy side of things as you well said. All the romance and all the poetry and beauty goes when the picture dealer shows his face alongside the canvas." <sup>116</sup>.

Both White and Reid were convinced that art had much more to offer than pretty pictures and the opportunity for pecuniary advancement. In a number of works written jointly they sought to make clear their ideas as to how art ought to interact with people's lives.

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### Thoughts On Art

In 1868 Reid and White collaborated to produce a twenty thousand word pamphlet entitled Thoughts On Art and Notes on the Exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy of 1868. In an undated letter, which Reid later asked White to destroy, because "it contains dangerous information", Reid detailed the effects the pamphlet's publication had had. "The thing has exploded like a shell in Edinburgh" '17. he wrote, and went on to explain some of the different reactions which Thoughts On Art had provoked. The pamphlet will be referred to extensively throughout the remainder of this chapter. It will be considered in other respects elsewhere, here it is the authors' views on art and society which are of note. Many factors concerning the relationship of art and society were covered by Reid and White: the polemical message inherent in the painting; the educative responsibility and potential of art, and the choice of subject all came under consideration. Initially however the authors' conception of the fundamental link of painting to society will be examined; that is, how society in all its manifestations exerted influence on painting, for good or ill. In this context the very first paragraph of Thoughts On Art is significant.

"The art of a nation is part of its life. The form which it assumes is not accidental but is the outcome of the aesthetic tendencies of the people. These tendencies are themselves the inevitable development of the conditions under which the nation has been moulded into shape." 110.

This paragraph sets out quite clearly how Reid and White read the paintings they discussed. All the pictures were seen in relation to the specific conditions of Scotland in 1868, as well as to themes which the authors saw as perennially Scottish. Paintings were judged by how they related to, commented upon, criticised, praised or condoned those things which Reid and White claimed gave them their existence. In simplest terms Reid and White saw the paintings as having a definable relationship to their society, and believed that that relationship was one way of looking at works of art. There were to be no exceptions to this rule, it was to be applied as a yardstick to all work.

"We believe that the same law of parallelism between the national life, literature and art, may be traced in every great school. \_ \_  
\_ \_ The landscape painters of the Dutch school were men whose chief aim was to get at the simple truth of things. \_ \_ \_ \_  
Theirs was eminently a national school of landscape, which every school must be if it is to have any vitality. \_ \_ \_ \_ let us now look at the schools on this side of the channel and see whether they fulfil the test of imaging forth the character and life of the people." 111.

It was not claimed that a telling comment or an accurate observation of society was a simple thing for an artist to achieve. As well as being involved with society, and necessarily being part of it, in order to depict it accurately, a painter had to be immune to certain distractions offered by society. The evil effect of public taste was instanced as one aspect of which an artist had to beware.

"\_ \_ \_ popular art and good art are not synonymous, and from nothing could a better idea of the prevailing depravity of public taste be formed than from an enumeration of a few of the so-called popular works that have appeared in late years." 120.

Similarly Scotland's own insular and conservative outlook was seen as a handicap which painters had to overcome if art was to fulfil its correct role in society.

"We, \_ \_ \_ \_ north of the Tweed are not given to change, and, in our traditions, are conservative to a degree. \_ \_ \_ We measure ourselves by ourselves, and compare ourselves among ourselves, and usually come to the most self complacent conclusions, refusing obstinately to believe that anything better is discoverable than our own narrow provincial views." 121.

This may seem at variance with Reid's oft stated views on his love of old Scots traditions and his attacks on the speed of change. However, Reid's conservatism was never "self-complacent". It stemmed, as has been demonstrated, from a break in continuity of experience, and a lack of

comprehension and assimilation of radical change. He did not ignore the possibilities of change and stifle them. He experienced the consequences of change and disliked and distrusted them.

Reid and White saw painting as being both a reflection of, and a mode of commenting on, modern society. Within that broad definition, while promoting the reflection of society in painting, they abhorred the baleful influence of public taste on art, and condemned those who pandered to it. Similarly, while seeking a Scottish art, and a national school, the Scottish characteristic of self-satisfaction, and the tendency to ignore the example, and potential benefit, of outside influence was attacked. The remedy, the source of inspiration for painters to overcome these difficulties, was, according to Reid and White, readily available to Scottish artists. They set out in Thoughts On Art what they felt artists ought to paint and claimed that what they painted was intricately bound up with the "character and life" of the country as every school must be "if it is to have any vitality" '22. .

The notion of what to paint occurs again and again in the writing of Reid and White and is markedly reminiscent of the requirements for realist painting advanced in France. '23. In a long section dealing with different types of painting, individual areas of art were criticised or praised according to how they fared relative to the primary need for all art to possess a relationship to society. In consequence history painting was savagely attacked. "Historical painting \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ is the falsest of all painting" they claimed. The perpetrators of this genre were vilified also.

"The crude and ill-digested reading of history and historical romance, aided by their own puerile fancies, and the spurious antiquities of Wardour Street can never make even approximations to the truth of things as they existed centuries since. It is painful to think of the amount of misdirected labour that is annually expended in seeking to realise the life of the past, while there is still so much room for recording that of the present." 124.

The complete lack of relevance of historical painting to the condition of modern man rendered it, in the eyes of Reid and White utterly without value. They championed the painting of modern life instead of history painting. Only paintings which related to contemporary society could have a relevance for contemporary society. Thus William Hogarth in the eighteenth century and the Punch illustrators John Leech and John Tenniel in the nineteenth century were promoted as great artists. The tremendous impetus given towards the "fruitless field" of history painting given by the great popularity of the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott, was cited as another of the influences that Scottish society had on art. Scott's influence on Sir William Allan they argued, led to his concentration on history painting. Allan's work, along with Scott's novels, were also seen as providing the stimulus for the history paintings of, among others Sir George Harvey. It was in terms of historical painting that David Wilkie was considered. The only pictures of Wilkie's of any note, according to Reid and White, were his scenes of contemporary life. Wilkie's later works were dismissed.

"\_ \_ \_ \_ in his desire after high art and history he made shipwreck of himself. 'The Preaching of Knox' is a picture of no value whatever apart from technical considerations, whereas 'Distraint for Rent' (Illustration 42.) possesses not only this, but is a faithful record of manners and costumes which will be of the greatest interest in future generations." 125.

This falling of historical painters was illustrated with a particularly savage series of attacks on selected painters. After condemning history painting in general and using the work of Benjamin West to illustrate their points, Reid and White turned on the history painting in the 1868 exhibition. The works of James Drummond and Daniel Maclise were particularly harshly treated. Some history painters were criticised for their technical deficiencies as well, but all history painters were condemned for failing to paint pictures relevant to contemporary society.

Not only did Reid and White reject historical painting, they offered positive advice about what artists ought to be doing. They called for painters to return to first hand examination of nature, of what was seen about them, and not simply to paint "through the spectacles of their predecessors." 126. They advocated two forms of the return to nature, firstly a direct response to nature in the painting of landscape which rejected the "superficial and repetitious" works of McCulloch and his imitator Perigal. In place of this mannerism the works of John MacWhirter, James Cassie, Peter Graham and especially Sam Bough were praised as the way ahead. 127. An artist had to have "a mind capable of discerning the beauty of things for itself" 128. In the same way the reflection of reality

was seen as the highest aim of the figure painters. To this idea Reid and White added the advice that artists might turn to traditional songs as a source of an imagery intimately connected with the real lives of Scottish people. "The songs are the outcome of the feelings of a nation, revealing its tastes sympathies and aspirations. They are the glass in which we see mirrored the whole character of the people." 129.

Rural genre subjects based ultimately on Scottish songs, particularly those of Robert Burns, were praised as views of contemporary life. This theme was continued in relation to the works of David Wilkie. Wilkie was considered to have converted a seventeenth century Dutch original into something very typically Scottish. Reid's contemporaries were examined in this respect as well. Reid and White passed judgement on their mutual friend G. P. Chalmers. Chalmers' works were criticised for their deficiencies in drawing and composition but it was only the one non-rural genre subject that was attacked on the grounds of its subject matter. My Lady's Page was described as being a painting of "a trivial nature". Ironically it was in this work that the two critics found Chalmers' talent for colour harmony most clearly portrayed. 130.

Another of Reid's friends, Hugh Cameron, was discussed in much the same terms as Chalmers. Cameron was praised for the "honest, truth (and) simplicity" 131. of his paintings. The rural genre subject matter of the works, their relevance to contemporary society, was what was really being praised. The only criticism levelled was that of Cameron's "tendency to mere prettiness." 132. It was not Cameron's choice of the "correct" subject matter that led to him being praised. Only those works which were perceived to be

manifestations of all the elements promoted by the two critics were admired. A painting had to present its subject as an honest view of contemporary reality, albeit a passing one. It had to be overlaid with a "genuine" pathos, and a feeling for the people depicted. It had to promote the rural virtues. Cameron's paintings presented the "truth" in an "honest" manner, according to Reid and White. In contrast to this, a work such as Reading To Grandfather, by William Fyfe, which might be thought from its title to contain all the necessary elements to gain Reid's and White's approval, was damned. The mere fact that this was a work which contrasted youth and age, and revolved around family relationships, was not enough. A lack of reality and a lack of honesty were perceived in the painting. It was described as a "vulgar work". <sup>133</sup>. Subject matter and manner of painting had to be in perfect accord to meet the requirements set forth by Reid and White. A work had to contain sentiment, not maudlin sentimentality.

In the reviews of the Aberdeen Art Exhibition of 1873 this differentiation between painters of rural genre was made even more plain. In the section on painters of "pot boilers" <sup>134</sup>. the works of E.M. Ward, W.P. Frith and Erskine Nicol were condemned. They were castigated for painting for money not for love. What is significant in this context, is that not all these painters fall into the categories deemed by Reid and White to be irrelevant.

Certainly the attack on Ward, who was represented in the exhibition in question by Queen Marie Antoinette Listening to Her Sentence of Death, <sup>135</sup>. would be expected. His subject exhibited all the irrelevancies to nineteenth century society found so offensive by the two critics. However, on grounds of subject alone one would not expect Frith to be attacked, although he was renowned as much for his eighteenth century subjects as for those dealing

with the contemporary scene; and certainly not the genre painter Nicol. Frith was represented by one theatrical portrait in the exhibition. Presumably he was criticised in the review because the painting was judged to be repetitious of previous works and also technically unsound. Nicol would appear to possess all the ingredients necessary to win the approval of Reid and White. The paintings he exhibited dealt with nineteenth century people and were based entirely on the "life and character" of the country. Clearly then subject matter was not enough. Nicol's works were judged as "pot boilers" because they were deficient in what Thoughts On Art termed "truth, honesty and feeling". Nicol's paintings lacked the moral instructive element found, for example, in Wilkie's genre work. The reason for Reid and White's disapproval of Nicol can be more fully identified from their reviews of the exhibition which appeared in the Aberdeen Daily Free Press. The review on September 15th discussed Nicol's works. (Illustration 43.)

"We would draw special attention to No. 74 'The Hot Potato' and No. 121 'A Hair of the Dog that bit him' - two of his earliest pictures, which are admirable examples of this, his best style. - - - - They are not so laboured as some of Mr Nicol's more recent pictures, in which he sacrifices his broad, firm manner and quiet tones to greater minuteness of finish and stronger colour, thus losing a good deal of his early spirit and sparkle. - - - - We should, however, like to see him return towards his earlier spontaneous vein." 136.

The two paintings not mentioned by Reid and White were presumably those judged to be "pot boilers". The spontaneity of The Hot Potato and A Hair of

The Dog That Bit Him, though lighthearted and amusing, they found truthful and accurately observed. The other works, No. 48 His Bawbees, and No. 94 Landscape, they felt were superficial, insincere and worthless. The list of works condemned in this way was long but they all had one factor in common. Some passed the test of relationship to contemporary life but all were dismissed because they were seen as being irrelevant to society. They served no educational or moral purpose. <sup>137</sup>.

Instruction was the next key element which Reid and White saw as necessary in the creation of a socially useful art. A painting had to have a message if it was to be successful. However a work could be partially redeemed by its technical merits. Just as Chalmers' My Lady's Page was praised for its colour harmonies, so the work of John Phillip was lauded for its technical excellence though it contained no instruction. <sup>138</sup>. Throughout the eighty-five pages of Thoughts On Art the idea of the necessity of a painter conveying a message in his work was developed. Initially it was simply stated that " \_ \_ \_ that which is valuable is the creative energy of the painter who can put nothing on his canvas which has not first existed in his own mind." <sup>139</sup>. Painting was not a purely physical exercise. It had to contain thought and intention. From this original and rather tentative statement there later developed a long and impassioned plea for artists deliberately seeking to influence the opinions of their audience through their work.

While Wilkie supposedly grafted on "the spirit of Scott and Burns" <sup>140</sup>. to a Dutch prototype in his genre work, there was one major area in which Reid and White saw Wilkie as far superior to his seventeenth century

predecessors. Traditionally Teniers is thought to be the first seventeenth century Dutch painter admired by Wilkie. It was Teniers' and Wilkie's attitudes to their work that were contrasted. Teniers' works were read as very accurate, if humourous depictions of the "low life" he witnessed round about him; the paintings of the "beer shop\_ \_ \_ barrack room and bowling green" <sup>141</sup>. as Reid and White styled them. The works were considered as portrayals of "\_ \_ the most powerful if not the most noble, passions of humanity." <sup>142</sup>. The major defect in the paintings, for Reid and White, was their lack of attempt at instruction. "\_ \_ \_ no nobleness or purity of sentiment was possible: the hidden leprosy continually kept coming to the surface: a teacher of morals he (Teniers) could in no way become." <sup>143</sup>. Later Dutch painting, the "small conversations" were admired as a record of manners and customs in the upper ranks of society, though they were considered to be of no intellectual interest at all. These later painters, Mieris, Metzsu, Gerard Dow, Terburg and Peter de Hooge, were all thought of as pursuing purely technical excellence. "(Of) moral considerations or thought of usefulness they had none, they sought art only for art's sake." <sup>144</sup>.

Wilkie's improvement on the original Dutch model was not just implied, it was clearly stated.

"Brauwer and Jan Steen were not men of high moral character. \_ \_  
\_ \_ \_ Wilkie had the advantage of them in that respect. The moral atmosphere of the old manse at Cults and its early associations clung to him all his life and had their influence on his art. Wilkie could not be impure: Teniers, Jan Steen and

Brauer, very often were. \_ \_ \_ \_ Wilkie's sympathy with common humanity was deep and intense, he had abundance of humour, but little of the mere levity of Jan Steen: he was a painter of altogether a more respectable order." 145.

Just as Wilkie was praised for his high moral teaching, so Phillip, for whom Reid had a great deal of admiration, was mildly criticised for producing works with "no moral purpose whatever." 146. What made Wilkie different from Phillip was Wilkie's open moral rectitude and his desire to teach morality. This was done in two ways according to Reid and White. Firstly the artist had to tell the story. The situation in which the people depicted found themselves had to be readily understood and entered into. Secondly, the painter had to reach his audience by involving them emotionally in the work. Wilkie was praised for doing both these things. The reason Reid and White felt that Distraint for Rent; (Illustration 42.) Village Politicians; and The Blind Fiddler (Illustration 44.) were successful, was because they were reflections of reality, a reality in which suffering brought about by agricultural changes, or the closeness of rural society, was readily understood. They "appeal to us at once, being full of human nature." 147. Interestingly, while Reid and White had to acknowledge Thomas Faed as the inheritor of the Wilkie tradition, they could not see quite the same things in Faed's paintings as they had praised in Wilkie's. Technically they acknowledged him as a master though even then they criticised his colour as false and found fault with it in comparison to Phillip.

Towards the end of Thoughts On Art Reid and White summed up their attitudes to painting which had been gradually laid down over the

preceeding pages. In essence what they said was that a picture had to justify its reason for being: that ideally a painting ought to yield both pleasure and instruction. A painting which did neither of these things could "serve no purpose (and) give no satisfying reason for\_ \_ \_ (its) \_ \_ existence." 140.

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Reid and White: Art Criticism in Aberdeen

Five years after Thoughts On Art was published Reid and White produced their second collaborative piece of art criticism. In keeping with their observations on the shortcomings of newspaper art critics voiced in the appendix at the end of Thoughts On Art, they sought to make their series of articles for The Aberdeen Journal and The Aberdeen Daily Free Press constructive and informative rather than just a list of paintings and a simple expression of personal preferences. One of the major themes running through these reviews was that of the educational, instructive role that art ought to play in society. In the first notice in The Aberdeen Journal, probably not written by Reid and White, the reason for the exhibition being held at all was made clear. At the opening White was praised lavishly for his part in the creation of the exhibition. Lord Provost Leslie stated in his speech that the exhibition was to commemorate the opening of the new County and Municipal Buildings. There were also loftier aims. Firstly, the exhibition was to benefit the community in a practical way. Profits made from the admission charges and the sale of catalogues were to be given to charity, specifically to the Association for the Poor. Secondly, according to the anonymous Aberdeen Journal reporter, "The exhibition was not organised

merely to amuse but to instruct the minds of all who took delight in such matters." 149.

In an excess of enthusiasm the reporter went on to claim that the highest aim of art was

"not only to delight the senses but to improve the human character, to improve the human mind and to develop in the highest manner those qualities whose cultivation tend to benefit mankind, to spread civilisation and to benefit the world at large." 150.

However grandiosely worthy these aims may appear and however difficult to put into practice, they were not something tacked on to give spurious credibility to the exhibition. In the opening speeches the theme of the benefit to the community was ever present. The Earl of Kintore, thanking the committee in general, and once again, White in particular, said that he hoped that the practical result would be not only a further appreciation of art but that society would be materially benefitted by the exhibition.

In the five reviews published in The Aberdeen Journal, the instructive role of the exhibition was stressed in a less fulsome manner. The first notice appeared on August 6th. It contained in its introduction a statement on the benefit that would, it was hoped, accrue from the exhibition. "It now remains for those whose pleasure and instruction so much has been done \_ \_ \_ to profit by it to the utmost." 151. In the introductory paragraph to the second notice of August 13th "those" referred to previously were stated

to be "all classes of the community". Everyone was to be encouraged to visit and benefit from the exhibition. To this end the price of a season ticket was reduced after one week, "as was originally intended. "The price of the season ticket came down to five shillings, still a formidable amount of money, and affordable only by a strictly limited section of society. However, rather nebulous "arrangements" were in hand to ensure that "every opportunity" of visiting the exhibition was given "to all classes of the community."

There would appear to be a conflict here between the desire to maximise income from the exhibition in order to benefit the Association for the Poor, and the importance placed on the role of the exhibition as a teacher to all classes. As was the case with Henry Cockburn commenting on the situation on Iona in Circuit Journeys, with Hugh Miller writing in Our Working Classes or with Thomas Chalmers in Glasgow, Reid and White came down on the side of moral teaching above financial aid. In the August 13th review they wrote "Although the proceeds are intended for the benefit of the 'Association for the Poor' the first consideration is to provide a means of artistic instruction." 152.

These views on the educative value of art for all classes of society did appear elsewhere. In the Dundee Fine Art Exhibition's begun four years later it proved possible to provide a 6d entrance fee on Wednesdays and Saturdays. In 1883 the charge after 3pm on a Saturday, when the exhibition remained open to 9. 30pm, was reduced to 3d. However the views put forward by Reid and White on the educational value of art for all sections of society were not universal. While there were notable exceptions, such as the

Whitechapel Gallery exhibitions in London, the standard view was more accurately represented by a piece in The Magazine of Art in 1888. Referring to exhibitions in England, the author expressed the opinion that it was utterly pointless to encourage the "lower classes" to look at paintings because they were totally unable to understand or appreciate them. <sup>153</sup>.

On September 3rd, in a small extra item printed just before the main review, The Aberdeen Journal noted the possibility of the exhibition being opened in the evenings. Echoing very strongly the views expressed in the columns known to have been written by Reid and White, the article argued forcefully for the proposal. The main reason given was that it was only in the evenings that most working men had time to visit galleries, and that every possible opportunity should be given to everyone to see the exhibition. The Free Press articles published at the same time, though usually less specific in their criticisms and observations, were more voluble on the subject of art as an educator. On August 5th, in the first Free Press review Reid and White wrote:-

"The object of this Exhibition will be mistaken if the poorest visitor leaves these rooms with the feeling that art is above his reach and intended only for the wealthy. For the student and lover of mankind, art can have but little interest unless art is for all; unless its function is to carry 'light and sweetness' into every heart and household." <sup>154</sup>.

Reid and White's conclusions about art were that it had to be of educative value to society and had to be aimed at everyone in that society. They wrote in the Free Press:-

"The recent controversy, as to the ethical value of art and its position in our complex society arose in a great measure from the mistake of supposing that art is the luxury of the rich, a theory which if true would deserve many of the hard things said of it. But this is a narrow and exclusive view, and is utterly fatal to the best interests of art." 1888.

All the pressures exerted by society that were identified in chapter one had their effect on Reid and White. Both men exhibited an ambivalent response to their society. Their attempts to act positively for that society were intricately bound up with the widespread beliefs concerning the intrinsic nature of life in cities and in the country. They clung to elements of outmoded rural society in an attempt to retain something stable in an era of great change. White, through his published writings, his promotion of art as an educational force in society, and Reid, through his published writings and through his paintings, promoted the adoption of rural values in an attempt to spiritually and materially benefit their society.

## Footnotes

### CHAPTER 4

1 In the early 1880's Reid's wife Mia wrote what she called a 'Journal' of her husband's life to that point. This extract is from volume II covering the period from 1859 until the end of 1867. The unpublished 'Journal' is now in Aberdeen Art Gallery.

2 The terms 'Scotch' and 'Scottish' were virtually interchangeable in the nineteenth century.

For example an anonymous pamphleteer of 1860 titled his work "Scottish Art and Artists in 1860" and referred throughout to 'Scottish' painters.

Iconoclast, Scottish Art and Artists in 1860, Edinburgh, 1860.

Reid and White who published their pamphlet eight years later, although using 'Scottish' in the title, consistently used the term 'Scotch' in the text to have exactly the same meaning.

Veri Vindex (Pseudonym of George Reid and John Forbes White), Thoughts on Art and Notes on the Exhibition of The Royal Scottish Academy of 1868, Edinburgh, 1868.

3 White had originally been intended for the medical profession. He entered Marischal College Aberdeen in 1844 as first bursar, and took an MA degree four years later, being the most distinguished graduate of his year. His subsequent medical studies were interrupted when his father died. His elder brother, Adam, wished to be a missionary so John Forbes White took

over the running of the family milling business at the age of twenty-one. For twenty-five years he acted as Vice-Consul for Sweden and Norway and was also Consular-Agent for France. He was also connected with the management of Dundee University College. He furnished a number of articles for the "Encyclopedia Britannica" including biographies of Rembrandt and Velasquez. He was a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and an early member of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society. In 1880 he was chosen as Assessor for the General Council of Aberdeen University to the University Court and received the honorary degree of LL.D from the University in 1886. He was a classical scholar of very considerable attainments and continued the study of the classics, particularly Greek, all through life, being an enthusiastic member of a Homeric Club. Keenly interested in music, he was one of the guarantors in connection with the Saturday evening concerts begun in St Katherine's Hall, Aberdeen in 1878.

4 Sir George Reid is noted now as Scotland's leading portrait painter of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. His early training however was as a landscape painter. He studied in Edinburgh, Utrecht, Paris and The Hague between 1863 and 1871. He was elected A.R.S.A. in 1870, R.S.A. in 1877, and became President of the Academy and was knighted in 1891. He gave up the presidency in 1902. Between 1864 and 1873 he wrote, either alone, or in partnership with J.F. White a number of pieces of art criticism. On his own he wrote reviews of the annual exhibitions of the R.S.A. for The Montrose Standard and Angus and Mearns Leader. With White he wrote Thoughts on Art and Notes on the Exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy of 1868 and reviews of "The Aberdeen Art Exhibition" of 1873 for The Aberdeen Journal,

and The Aberdeen Daily Free press. All these writings were published anonymously

5 See chapter 5.

6 See chapter 3.

7 Correspondence, George Reid to John Forbes White. Now held by Aberdeen Art Gallery.

8 For a discussion of Reid's studies in Utrecht and elsewhere in Europe, see chapter 5.

9 Correspondence, Reid to White, *op. cit.*, August 6th, 1866.

10 *ibid.*, May 12th, 1867.

11 *ibid.*, October 15th, 1872.

12 *ibid.*, October 3rd, 1904.

13 For a detailed discussion of Thoughts on Art and Notes on the Exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy of 1868 see chapter 4. and chapter 5.

14 Correspondence, Reid to White, *op. cit.*, March 28th, 1869.

15 *ibid.*, April 25th, 1869.

16 *ibid.* The letter is undated but can be ascribed to the second half of 1869.

17 *ibid.*, January 18th, 1871.

18 *ibid.*, January 14th, 1871.

19 *ibid.*, October 15th, 1871.

20 *idem.*

21 *ibid.*, October 28th, 1871.

22 *ibid.*, January 18th, 1871.

23 *ibid.*, October 28th, 1871.

24 "You are up at the club for election on the 6th proposed by Professor Masson and seconded by Barclay. There are two other fellows up along with you - a classical man and some Galloway laird. Cameron and Chalmers are to perk up all the artist fellows so as to make sure of getting you in all right."

Correspondence Reid to White *op. cit.*, December 27th, 1871.

25 "Now my dear JFW let me thank you as well as mere words may for your kindness in letting me have the use of all this money and for so long. Indeed I do not know well what I should have done if I had not had you to

apply to when in straits. I can tell you that five years ago when my father ceased to be the provider - and there was no one to look out but me - I felt it was an almost desperate case. I thought there was nothing else for it but long years of hard drudgery and pot-boiling, work of any kind, if it only brought in a little money."

Correspondence Reid to White *op. cit.*, October 15th, 1872.

26 "I shall do Dyce, Phillip, E. Nicol, Chalmers, McTaggart and K. Halswelle. You might do Herdman, Cassie, Giles and the other local men and then conclude with a few notes about the watercolours and engravings. I shall send my men all in bits - so you can mix them up with yours - this will keep it from reading like different men's work."

Correspondence Reid to White *op. cit.*, August 23rd, 1873.

27 Correspondence Reid to White *op. cit.*, August 23rd, 1873.

28 *ibid.*, October 19th, 1873.

29 Alexander Gibson and John Forbes White, George Paul Chalmers, Edinburgh, 1879.

30 Reid continued to grieve over the death of Chalmers for years.

"I miss Chalmers terribly. he was a great comfort and a help. Things have never seemed the same since."

Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, September 14th, 1881.

31 Paul Adolphe Rajon, 1843-1888. Rajon became well known in Britain after being invited over from France by P.G. Hamerton in his capacity as editor of The Portfolio. After initial success Rajon visited Britain annually and worked regularly for British publications.

For a full discussion of his work for The Portfolio, see

F.G. Stephens, Twelve Etchings contributed to the 'Portfolio' by Paul Adolphe Rajon, London, 1889.

32 The four illustrations Reid completed for the book were engraved by Amand Durand. They were

Montrose	page 1.
The Studio	page 11.
The Pictures in the Back Room	• page 41.
Vignette	page 75.

Alexander Gibson and John Forbes White, George Paul Chalmers, Edinburgh, 1879.

33 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, March 26th, 1879.

34 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, March 26th, 1879.

35 Correspondence Alexander Gibson to John Forbes White, held by Aberdeen Art Gallery, April 8th, 1879.

36 Correspondence Reid to White *op. cit.*, March 26th, 1879.

37 Correspondence Gibson to White *op. cit.*, undated, late March, 1879.

38 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, undated, early April, 1879.

39 *idem.*

40 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, undated. This letter is slightly later than that quoted above. It also dates from early April 1879.

41 Correspondence Gibson to White, *op. cit.*, undated. early April, 1879. This is the same letter as that cited in footnote 40.

In a brief, unheaded note presumably dealing with the production of the book, Reid wrote to White:-

"Great are the complications that seem to have arisen over small details, I hope you will find a satisfactory way out of them all in due course."

42 Sale Catalogue, Very valuable Modern Pictures from the Collections of John Forbes White LL.D Aberdeen and Robert Meldrum Esq. Glasgow. Saturday 1st December, 1888. Dowells, 18 George Street, Edinburgh, Edinburgh, 1888.

43 White also sold several of his non-Scottish pictures at Sotheby's in London in December 1888.

44 St Mary's Loch was unsold at the R.S.A. of 1888.

45 Veri Vindex (ie. George Reid and John Forbes White), Thoughts on Art and Notes on the Royal Scottish Academy of 1868, Edinburgh, 1868.

46 Henry Cockburn, Journal of Henry Cockburn, being a continuation of the Memorials of his Time 1831-1854, Edinburgh, 1874, vol. 2., p. 293.

First published Edinburgh, 1856.

47 Veri Vindex, *op. cit.*, p. 11

48 *ibid.*, p. 12.

49 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, April 25th, 1869.

50 *ibid.*, September 30th, 1871.

For a discussion of Reid's simultaneous interest in European art and desire to retain his 'Scottishness', see chapter 5.

51 George Reid and John Forbes White, "The Aberdeen Art Exhibition", The Aberdeen Daily Free Press, October 13th, 1873.

52 Frederik Hendrik Kaemerer 1839-1902.

Dutch painter of genre and landscape. Specialised in genre work from the 'Directoire' period of French history. Studied in Paris with Gérôme from 1865.

Auguste Panchaud 1845-1885.

Landscape painter.

53 Correspondence Reid to White *op. cit.*, February 10th, 1869.

John Dun flourishing 1863-1908.

Dun is not at all well documented. He trained at the Trustees Academy and won prizes for drawing in 1865, 1866 and 1867. He was already studying in Paris by the time Reid arrived there in February 1869 and introduced the other painter around his friends. Reid and Dun knew each other well. Dun exhibited at the R.S.A. every year from 1863-1900. He last exhibited in 1908. There is a small collection of letters from Dun to Reid held by Aberdeen Art Gallery and some of Reid's letters to Alex. Walker in 1866 and 1868 were written from Dun's home address in Leith. Dun, like Reid seems to have been strongly influenced by European Realist painting. Reid mentioned in a letter to White of January, 1870 that Dun's painting for the R.S.A. of that year was heavily under the influence of Jules Breton.

Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, January 29th, 1870.

54 See chapter 1. footnote 62.

55 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, September 30th, 1871.

56 The annual General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was meeting in Edinburgh as usual.

57 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, May 23rd, 1885.

"Religion, in its character as a serious intellectual exercise \_ \_ \_ \_  
still saturates the common mind of Scotland."

Hugh Miller, First Impressions of England and Its People, Byway Books  
edition, 1983, p. 212. First published Edinburgh 1846.

58 Samuel Smiles, Character, London, 1878, p. 194.

59 See chapter 1.

60 Samuel Smiles, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

61 *ibid.*, p. 309.

62 *ibid.*, p. 89.

63 Samuel Smiles, Life of A Scotch Naturalist, Thomas Edward, London, 1877.

64 Correspondence Samuel Smiles to George Reid, held by Aberdeen Art  
Gallery.

65 *ibid.*, December 5th, 1878.

66 *ibid.*, December 28th, 1878.

67 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, April 24th, 1881.

68 *ibid.*, April 30th, 1904.

69 *ibid.*, March 28th, 1869.

70 *idem.*

71 Samuel Smiles, Self-Help: With Illustrations of Character and Conduct., London 1859, p. 249.

72 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, March 28th, 1869.

73 *idem.*

74 Samuel Smiles, Self-Help, *op. cit.*, p.250.

75 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, July 2nd, 1889.

76 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, March 28th, 1869..

77 *idem.*

78 *ibid.*, July 24th, 1870.

79 *ibid.*, January 6th, 1872.

80 *idem.*

81 George Reid, The River Clyde. Twelve Drawings by George Reid, RSA. With an Introduction by Walter Chalmers Smith, D.D. LL.D., Edinburgh, 1886.

- 82 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, June 14th, 1885.
- 83 *idem.*
- 84 *idem.*
- 85 *idem.*
- 86 Henry Cockburn, *Journal, op. cit.*, p. 5.
- 87 Correspondence Reid to White, *op.cit.*, June 14th, 1885.
- 88 *ibid.*, undated, early 1886.
- 89 *ibid.*, September 1st, 1895.
- 90 Mrs Oliphant, Royal Edinburgh, Her Saints, Kings, Prophets and Poets.,  
London and New York, 1890.
- 91 See chapter 1.
- 92 Correspondence Reid to White, undated, early 1886. This is the same  
letter as that cited in footnote 88.
- 93 *idem.*
- 94 Ina Mary Harrower, John Forbes White, Edinburgh and London, 1918, p. 10.

95 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, February 9th, 1886.

Reid's disquiet probably stemmed from the extremely volatile political situation. The Glasgow Trades had recently demonstrated against the House of Lords and their opposition to the Third Reform Bill. The government was in turmoil and was about to be destroyed over the Irish question and there was rising radicalism in the Highlands. The elections later in 1886 would return four M.P.'s pledged to return the land taken from people during the clearances.

96 It had been agreed in a letter from Reid to White of August 23rd, 1873 that White would comment on "the \_ \_ \_ local men", ie. Aberdeen painters. See note 26.

97 George Reid and John Forbes White, "The Art Exhibition. - No. IV", The Aberdeen Daily Free Press, September 1st, 1873 p. 3.

98 George Reid and John Forbes White, "The Art Exhibition. No. V", The Aberdeen Daily Free Press, September 15th, 1873 p. 2.

99 *ibid.*, p. 2.

100 Erckmann-Chatrian was the name used by two French authors of the second half of the nineteenth century. Emile Erckmann 1822-1899 was a schoolmaster at Phalsburg in Lorraine. Alexander Chatrian 1826-1890 was his pupil and later his collaborator. They wrote over thirty novels together between 1849 and 1885. Many of the works were translated into English but

since both Reid and White read french, and the passage was quoted in french, it is likely that they were read in the original. Reid and White's willingness to be associated with the Erckmann-Chatrion writings is significant. Not only is it another link between the two men and contemporary France, the nature of the novels also reveals something of their sympathies. The plots (conceived in general terms by Erckmann and resolved in detail by Chatrion) frequently centred round the activities of the working class. The central character was often an unremarkable working man forced into the spotlight by external events. Such is the case for example in L'Histoire d'un Paysan of 1868 which dealt with the rise of the republican armies during the final decade of the eighteenth century. The protagonist, Michel Bastien, while abhorring war for its own sake, fought, in the words of the novel's English editor, "in order that the yoke of oppression might be lifted from the neck of the French people."

The theme of the working man fighting for his own destiny against the deprivations imposed on him from above was a recurrent one. The most striking example is L'Histoire d'un Homme du Peuple, of 1865. The novel was written as the autobiography of a young working joiner, and told of his involvement in the 1848 revolution. It was fundamentally a radical plea for universal suffrage and political rights. The strength and integrity of the country was portrayed as being in the hands of the working people. They were seen as honourable characters. Wealth itself was condemned.

"The rich only look to the rich and trouble themselves little about the fate of the poor. Their wealth merely proves their selfishness;"

(Passage quoted by D. Wedderburn in his review of L'Histoire d'un Homme du Peuple, in The Fortnightly Review, 1867, pp. 253-255.)

Although there are no other mentions of the Erckmann-Chatrian novels either in the Reid and White correspondence, or in the published writings, their willingness to associate themselves with the books makes it tempting to link their interest in French rural genre painting with the radicalism expressed by the French authors.

101 George Reid and John Forbes White, "The Art Exhibition. No. V", The Aberdeen Daily Free Press, September 15th, 1873, p. 2.

102 In Thoughts on Art, *op. cit.*, p. 46. MacWhirter was praised by Reid and White.

"No. 448 'A Pine Forest' by John MacWhirter is a work of considerable originality and promise. It shows that the artist possesses a mind capable of discerning the beauty of things for itself. Here is in this work a bold departure from the beaten track, \_ \_ \_ \_ . There is a feeling of solemnity and grandeur pervading the scene, a stillness and silence everywhere."

Pine Forest was thought of as expressing an emotion. This is underlined by the comments of Reid and White on another of MacWhirter's works in the exhibition.

"'Water Lilies' [no. 678] is scarcely worthy of the painter of the 'Pine Forest' conveying no sentiment in particular, \_ \_ \_ "

Johnson's one exhibit in the R.S.A. of 1868 was described in Thoughts On Art p. 50., as being

"fine in colour, harmony, and feeling."

103 George Reid and John Forbes White, "The Arts Exhibition. The Paintings. No. 2.", Aberdeen Journal, August 20th, 1873, p. 8.

104 *idem.*

105 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

106 *idem.*

107 George Reid and John Forbes White, "The Art Exhibition", Aberdeen Journal, September 10th, 1873, p. 8.

108 See chapter 5.

109 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, August 7th, 1870.

110 George Reid, "Notes on The Royal Scottish Academy's Exhibition.", Montrose Standard and Angus and Mearns Register, March 8th, 1867, p. 4.

111 George Reid and John Forbes White, "The Arts Exhibition. The Paintings. No. 2.", Aberdeen Journal, August 20th, 1873, p. 8.

From the likenesses in the cartoon it would appear likely that Reid and White were referring to E.M. Ward, Erskine Nicol and W.P. Frith.

The cartoon appeared in Punch, or The London Charivari, August 2nd, 1873, p. 48, London 1873.

112 George Reid and John Forbes White, "The Arts Exhibition. The Paintings. No. 2.", Aberdeen Journal, August 20th, 1873, p. 8.

113 *idem.*

114 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, October 7th, 1871.

In 1865 Gambart commissioned twenty-four paintings from Alma Tadema. The remarks about Alma Tadema probably refer to this first commission for the dealer. It took four entire years to complete the work. Alma Tadema was linked to Gambart for most of his painting life and Reid could simply be referring to that fact. However a commission on the huge scale of that of 1865, and the necessity of the artist devoting all his time to it for four years would have been extremely noteworthy. It is likely that it is this transaction that Reid learned of from Israels and commented on to White. For a full discussion of the relationship between Alma Tadema and Gambart, see Jeremy Maas, Gambart: Prince of the Victorian Art World, London, 1975.

115 George Reid and John Forbes White, Aberdeen Journal, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

116 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, March 28th, 1888.

117 *ibid.*, c. May 14th, 1868.

118 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

119 *ibid.*, p. 9.

120 *ibid.*, p. 16.

These remarks were made in the context of discussing Robert Herdman's Miss Shand, now in the National Gallery of Scotland.

For a discussion of the sources of the views expressed in Thoughts On Art, see chapter 5.

121 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

122 *ibid.*, p. 38.

123 For a discussion of the influence French art criticism, see chapter 5.

124 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

125 *ibid.*, p. 26.

126 *ibid.*, p. 52.

127 The praise given to Sam Bough led some people to suspect that he was the author of the pamphlet. In a letter to White of c.May 14th, 1868, Reid wrote that the speculation in Edinburgh was that because everyone but Bough was attacked

"\_ \_ it was evident Sam Bough must have been the man"

Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, c.May 14th, 1868

128 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

129 *ibid.*, p. 55.

130 *ibid.*, p. 66.

131 *ibid.*, p. 70.

132 *idem.*

133 *ibid.*, p. 71.

134 See footnote 111.

135 "No. 158. Queen MARIE ANTOINETTE of France Listening to Her Sentence of Death., E.W. (sic) Ward, R.A. Alex. Collie, Esq. London"  
Catalogue of the Aberdeen Art Exhibition. 1873, Aberdeen, 1873.

136 George Reid and John Forbes White, "Art Exhibition. No. V" Aberdeen Daily Free Press, September 15th, 1873, p. 2.

137 "These pictures can serve no good purpose, give no satisfying reason for their existence, yield neither pleasure nor instruction, \_ \_ "  
Thoughts On Art, op. cit., p. 72.

138 John Phillip R.A., H.R.S.A., 1816-1867 was a fellow Aberdonian who had died the previous year. Until the age of thirty Phillip lived mainly in Aberdeen although he did study for three years in London. His work was mainly Scottish genre until his first visit to Spain in 1851. Thereafter he painted almost exclusively Spanish subjects.

For a discussion of the perceived relationship between form and psychological content, see chapter 5.

139 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

140 *idem.*

141 *idem.*

142 *idem.*

143 *idem.*

144 *ibid.*, p. 59.

145 These remarks on Wilkie never being 'impure' would appear to ignore aspects of his earlier work. For example, Pitlessie Fair of 1804 (National Gallery of Scotland), and The Village Festival of 1811 (Tate Gallery, London), both contain scenes of behaviour which could not be described as morally uplifting. Reid and White accounted for this by ascribing lapses in moral rectitude to Wilkie's occasional over reliance on Dutch models. Having praised Wilkie as a moralist Reid and White observed

"In his 'Village Festival' we find little or none of this, but much that recalls Teniers."

Thoughts On Art, p. 60.

146 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

147 *ibid.*, p. 60.

148 *ibid.*, p. 72.

149 George Reid and John Forbes White, "The Paintings. No. 1.", Aberdeen Journal, August 6th, 1873, p. 5.

150 *idem.*

151 *idem.*

152 George Reid and John Forbes White, "The Arts Exhibition", Aberdeen Journal, August 13th, 1873, p. 8.

153 David Anderson, "Art and The Common People", The Magazine of Art, 1888, pp.102-104.

154 George Reid and John Forbes White, "Aberdeen Art Exhibition", The Aberdeen Daily Free Press, August 5th, 1873, p. 2.

155 *idem.*

## Chapter 5.

### SCOTTISH ART: RUSKIN AND THE EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

All the evidence so far presented has been aimed at establishing the individual nature of Scottish society in the period c.1860-80, and in examining how it affected painters and collectors. Obviously no one society exists entirely cut off from all others and there certainly were further factors which contributed to the development of the painters within the period considered. Paradoxical though it may seem, these outside agencies helped to establish the character of Scottish culture and Scottish painting in the mid-nineteenth century. The external sources which impinged most heavily on Scottish painting development after 1860 were quite unique. As a close and larger neighbour, English painting continued to influence some Scottish artists. Noel Paton, and his brother Hugh Waller Paton for example painted, broadly speaking, under the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites. In general however, the main effect of English painting was to provide a magnet for many young Scottish painters, which drew them to London. As was discussed in chapter 1, those Scots who chose to remain in Scotland, produced quite different work from their sometimes close friends who made the move to the south. In addition to the influence of Scottish society in the period, those who remained in Scotland were affected by developments in Europe. Any parallels drawn between nineteenth century Scottish painting and that of Europe have tended to concentrate on the links between the Glasgow School of the 1880's and their continental contemporaries. The influence of the Hague School painters, in terms of the physical appearance of the pictures, is usually briefly mentioned in relation to the artists of the 1860's and 70's, but never really examined. This Dutch influence is very

important indeed for Scotland. What is most interesting however is that what the Scots actually got from Holland was a Dutch-slanted version of French Realism: perhaps not the Realism of Courbet, but certainly the Realism of J.F. Millet and Jules Breton. As well as absorbing Dutch techniques and a certain amount of the Dutch philosophical approach, the Scots also learned directly from French Realist criticism. French exhibition reviews, in both English and French periodicals, and polemical articles in the art press, had a profound effect in giving Scottish artists a theoretical basis for their painting. This theory, though implicit in many of the works and explicit in the letters and published writings of the painters, has never been considered in the rush to label the artists of the 1860's and 70's alternatively "formally innovative" or "sentimental".

It is these two strands of European influence; how and why they arose and the effect they had on the paintings, on which this chapter will concentrate. Initially however there was one other external source which appeared slightly earlier than those from the continent. That source was John Ruskin.

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### John Ruskin

Ruskin delivered four lectures in Edinburgh in November 1853 under the auspices of the Philosophical Institution. After agreeing to J.F. Lewis' suggestion that he might lecture in Edinburgh, Ruskin came under considerable pressure from his father to abandon the idea. He defended his intentions vigorously in a letter to his father of August 19th 1853.

"\_ \_ \_ I cannot now get off without a great fuss, as I have sent a synopsis of the four lectures to be regularly printed with the others published at the commencement of the season. I rather liked the idea of giving my first lecture in your native city; and therefore met the request more immediately and unhesitatingly than I should have done had it come from any other quarter; besides that, I have many friends and admirers in Edinburgh, and am in some respects far better understood there than in London. The Edinburgh artists - Harvey, D.O. Hill, Noel Paton, etc., are all eager to meet me, while the London ones are all too happy to get out of my way, and the only letter you have yet got, showing true appreciation of my book, except George Richmond's, is from the Edinburgh Dr Brown." ' .

Certainly Reid, then aged only 12, did not attend the series. However it is just possible that Chalmers attended the last lecture which was on Pre-Raphaelitism. After holding an auction of drawings in Montrose to raise some capital, Chalmers travelled to Edinburgh on November 16th 1853 to begin his studies at the Trustees Academy. Ruskin's final lecture was delivered on Friday November 18th. Even if Chalmers did not attend the lecture, he was surely aware of the series' contents. He was a strong admirer of Ruskin and much of the spirit of Ruskin's philosophy is found in Chalmers' landscapes. The lectures were a huge success and very well attended. Ruskin himself estimated that over 1000 people attended each one and that the audience had to queue for over an hour to get in. Many of the Scottish writers already referred to, notably Lord Cockburn and Hugh Miller,

attended the lectures and as Ruskin himself observed "The Edinburgh artists  
- - - - are all eager to meet me." The first two lectures were concerned  
with architecture. After a brief attack on the aesthetics of Edinburgh New  
Town, the bulk of the lectures concentrated on the nature of architectural  
beauty and beauty derived from natural forms. The third lecture, delayed for  
a week because Ruskin had a throat infection, was officially about Turner  
though it dealt also with the rise of all landscape art from 1200 to the  
nineteenth century, and the position of current landscape painting. In  
decrying the classicism of Claude and Gaspar Poussin, and the fantasies of  
Salvator Rosa, Ruskin made a plea for an honest simple depiction of nature.  
He spoke about poetry but was addressing his remarks equally to painters.

"\_ \_ \_ the class of poetry which I mean, and which you probably  
understand by the term pastoral, is that in which a farmer's girl  
is spoken of as a "nymph," and a farmer's boy as a "swain," and  
in which, throughout, a ridiculous and unnatural refinement is  
supposed to exist in rural life, merely because the poet himself  
has neither had the courage to endure the hardships, nor the wit  
to conceive its realities." 2.

Cited as a harbinger of better things, of a man with a response to reality  
in nature, was Walter Scott. Thus the leading Scottish painters of the day,  
and more significantly, the young men who were to mature as painters in the  
next decade, had the foremost artistic theoretician of the day lay out a  
course for them. A course aimed at producing painters concerned with the  
reality of nature and of rural dwellers.

In the fourth lecture, entitled "Pre-Raphaelitism", Ruskin further expounded on what he saw as the valid course for a modern painter, this time with even greater significance for the new generation of painters. The supreme purpose of art was moral, Ruskin declared. Art which made beauty an end in itself was decadent. It was infinitely inferior to art which, through its primary love of truth rather than beauty, was a moral teacher. This lack of a moral purpose was, Ruskin felt the first cause of the decline of art.

Whether or not Chalmers attended this lecture or even read the published edition of the following year is almost immaterial. He certainly was aware of the debate and of Ruskin's views. His paintings are virtually a painted version of them. Chalmers was not a tremendously learned man. He did not have a wide education or a vast library. However he did own volumes by Ruskin and was ever delighted to be associated with the writer. <sup>2</sup> The concepts of truth to nature and of moral purpose are central to his art.

George Reid almost certainly read the published edition of Ruskin's Edinburgh lectures. Like Chalmers, Reid admired Ruskin tremendously. Later in life he wrote to the critic seeking his advice over proposed alterations to St Machars cathedral. He designed a decorated capital for the Ruskin Society, and in 1868 persuaded George MacDonald, with whom he was staying in Hammersmith, to take him to visit Ruskin. Reid was very disappointed when Ruskin was out.

"One day last week I went with George Macdonald to Denmark Hill to visit Ruskin. They are great friends and Ruskin had been spending an afternoon over here just a day or so before I

arrived. Unfortunately when we got to his house we found he had gone into London for the day. This was rather a disappointment for me for he is a man I have long felt rather a desire to meet. - - - - - I must live in hope that on some future occasion I may be more fortunate and that I may behold the man in his bodily presence." 4.

Reid owned volumes by Ruskin and repeatedly borrowed books on art criticism from his close friend Alexander Walker. 5. The most telling sign that Reid had read and been affected by Ruskin's Edinburgh lectures appears in the artist's own published writings. Sections of Thoughts On Art, published just ten weeks before Reid's abortive attempts to visit Ruskin in July 1868 are almost quotations from the critic's lecture on Pre-Raphaelitism. Reid's section on history painting and its iniquities is particularly close to Ruskin. Reid wrote:-

"The crude and ill-digested reading of history and historical romance, aided by their own puerile fancies, and the spurious antiquities of Wardour Street, can never make even approximation to the truth of things as they existed centuries since. It is painful to think of the amount of misdirected labour that is annually expended in seeking to realise the life of the past, while there is still so much room left for recording that of the present. It would be a question, not without interest, could we enter on it, to find out how far the so-called historical painting of the English and Scottish schools has been of use or value. - - - - - Hogarth\_ \_ is the man whom we regard as the

noblest and truest painter of history our country has ever seen. To him, 'Alfred Dividing the Loaf', or 'The Landing of Charles II. at Dover,' were things of quite extraneous interest, so long as he had an 'Election Dinner,' or a 'Rake's Progress,' or a 'Marriage a la Mode,' to occupy his attention. It was with the men and women of his own day and with their ways and doings, that William Hogarth was mainly concerned. \_ \_ \_ \_ No idea of high art ever crossed his mind, and yet how infinitely higher is his art in every respect, compared to that of a man such as West? The age, whose likeness Hogarth has fixed indelibly with his needle and brush, has for ever passed away; but in his works they still live with us, and we can live with them. \_ \_ \_ \_ Such record of men and manners as this is the only true way of painting history. The present generation may not look upon it as such, but assuredly the next will. \_ \_ \_ \_ We believe the time will yet come when artists will see that the only true historical painting, and the only kind that is valuable and enduring, is that of contemporary events. All our English painters who have sought it otherwise have failed. Hogarth alone lives to-day, and will continue to live so long as the love of English art exists. Wilkie still lives to us in his 'Village Politicians,' 'The Rent Day,' 'Reading the Will,' and the 'Blind Fiddler.' These, in turn, have become historical, or are rapidly becoming so, but he did not anticipate this; and accordingly, in his desire after high art and history he made shipwreck of himself. 'The Preaching of Knox' is a picture of no value whatever apart from technical considerations, whereas 'Distraint for Rent' possesses not only

this, but is a faithful record of manners and costumes, which will be of the greatest interest in future generations." 6.

Almost certainly this derives in large measure from Ruskin's remarks on history painting aired in his final Edinburgh lecture.

"But there is something still more striking in the evils which have resulted in the modern regardlessness of truth. Consider, for instance, its effect on what is called historical painting. What do you at present *mean* by historical painting? Now-a-days it means the endeavouring, by the power of imagination, to portray some historical event of past days. But in the Middle Ages, it meant representing the acts of *their own* Days; and that is the only historical painting worth a straw. Of all the wastes of time and sense which Modernism has invented - and they are many - none are so ridiculous as this endeavour to represent past history. \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ 'Well, but' you will say, 'we have left them portraits of our great men, and paintings of our great battles.' Yes you have indeed, and that is the only historical painting that you either have, or can have; but you don't *call* that historical painting. You don't thank the men who do it, you look down upon them and dissuade them from it, and tell them they don't belong to the grand schools. And yet they are the only true historical painters, and the only men who will produce any effect on their own generation, or on any other. Wilkie was a historical painter, Chantrey a historical sculptor, because they painted, or carved, the veritable things and men they saw, not

men and things as they believed they might have been, or should have been. But no one tells such men they are historical painters, and they are discontented with what they do; and poor Wilkie must needs travel to see the grand school, and imitate the grand school and ruin himself. \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Of all these men whom you now have come to call the great masters, there was *not one* who confessedly did not paint his own world, plainly and truly. \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ How did Reynolds rise? Not by painting Greek women, but by painting the glorious little living Ladies this, and Ladies that, of his own time. How did Hogarth rise? Not by painting Athenian follies, but London follies. Who are the men who have made an impression upon you yourselves - upon your own age? I suppose the most popular painter of the day is Landseer. Do you suppose he studied dogs and eagles out of the Elgin Marbles?" 7.

To return to Chalmers, while it is by no means certain that the painter heard Ruskin speak in Edinburgh in 1853, it is more likely that he heard Ruskin's Manchester lectures of 1857. There, Ruskin lectured not on a theory of art, but, for the first time, dealt systematically with the political influence of the Arts, and with the mechanics of the production and preservation of the nation's art. Unlike the later, more renowned Unto This Last Ruskin's tone in his two lectures on The Political Economy of Art was hopeful. Despite the fact that 1857 was a year of widespread commercial depression Ruskin wrote optimistically. "A time will come - I do not think even now it is far from us - when this golden net of the world's wealth will be spread abroad as the flaming meshes of morning are over the sky." 8.

The lectures were aimed at the picture buying public rather than at artists. Ruskin attempted to educate people in how a nation ought to respond collectively to art, and why a sympathetic response was a necessity. While addressing himself perhaps more to the collectors of Chalmers' pictures rather than to such as Chalmers himself, there is one all encompassing point which relates to Chalmers' painting. In as much as it may be said that Chalmers' works have been proved to be a manifestation of the anti-urbanism of the day, Ruskin's lectures may well have contributed to the development of these responses in the artist. <sup>9</sup>. The first lecture opened with the statement "Among the various characteristics of the age in which we live \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ one of the most notable appears to me to be the just and wholesome contempt in which we hold poverty." <sup>10</sup>. The poverty Ruskin condemned was not lack of money, but lack of "true wealth". Indeed he attacked the "false values" which placed store in financial riches. It was moral bankruptcy which he sought to assuage, not economic bankruptcy. He outlined a decidedly socialist programme for government, but always with the end of the advance of moral wealth. Chalmers, in his pictures supporting those apparently disappearing moral values, echoed Ruskin's plea for a morally regenerate society. Ruskin advocated an art in which painters worked only according to the dictates of their own beliefs and emotions and thereby painted with a "moral energy." Again Chalmers followed the model. An article on the painter noted "He could not paint what he did not sympathise with." <sup>11</sup>.

Once more the lectures can be shown to have had a direct effect on George Reid. There are specific points of comparison between parts of Ruskin's

lectures and Reid's recorded views. Ruskin attacked painters who painted primarily to make money.

"\_ \_ \_ \_ as for stimulus to exertion, believe me, no good work in this world was ever done for money, nor while the slightest thought of money affected the painters mind. Whatever idea of pecuniary value enters into his thoughts as he works, will, in proportion to the distinctness of its presence, shorten his power." 12.

Reid endorsed these sentiments exactly.

"What are some of the principal facts about the present exhibition that you have had thrust in your face over and over again? 'Millais painted a portrait of the Marchioness of Huntly and got £2000 for it - Millais painted a picture of a knight rescuing a nude lady. he got £ \_\_\_ for it' - and more wonderful still 'the picture was wrought in six weeks' Millais is the painter of the 'nouveau riches' and kelks and fowlers cannot be too thankful - 'Millais' pictures in the present exhibition have all been painted since the last one and represent about £11000' G.D. Leslie sold his large picture for so and so and the dealer immediately disposed of it for half as much again - and so on - with Landseer, Frith, Tom Faed and the rest - then you are told that Richard Ansdell, the academician elect, has his highland estate and is one of the richest artists in London - and Sidney Cooper is a man of abundant substance and has commissions for

more than two years running - In short this element of money meets you in London at every turn - such a thing as a man painting out of pure love for the thing, with no ultimate end in view save and except goodness in his work, is never heard of. Millais' years' earnings comes to some £11000. Rembrandt at the age of 50 or more is a bankrupt. - Peter de Hooge - Teniers and others were not above carrying home their pictures to the houses of those they were painted for and seeing them properly hung up. Can you fancy our Millais doing such a mean thing? There are a few earnest men but they are not enough to leaven the mass." 13.

Ruskin's ridiculing of those who purchased "fashionable" pictures merely on grounds of popularity also found an echo in Reid. Ruskin wrote "In all probability, you will find if you rashly purchase what is popular at a high price, that you have got one picture you don't care for, for a sum which would have brought you twenty you would have delighted in." 14. Reid frequently returned to the theme of popular paintings not necessarily being good paintings. He advised White to sell his painting by Peter Graham on the basis that the artist's prices were very high, would go little higher and he might have a good Israels for the same money. He wrote regarding Alexander Macdonald's proposed purchase of a Millais in 1870 and said:-

"I hope Macdonald will have better thoughts and not go in for a Millais - he will be foolish if he does. He will pay quite a ransom for anything he may get and have the satisfaction of knowing he will never make his own out of it again. Millais has

been too effectually worked up by the dealers - and has too extravagant a wife." 15.

In Thoughts On Art Reid stated his opinion bluntly. It was exactly the same as Ruskin's. " \_ \_ \_ popular art and good art are not synonymous, and from nothing could a better idea of the prevailing depravity of public taste be formed than from an enumeration of a few of the so-called popular works that have appeared in late years." 16.

There are innumerable examples of areas where specific influence would appear to have occurred. Without acknowledgment of each individual item it is not possible to state definitely that the source for Reid's arguments was his knowledge of Ruskin. It can however be demonstrated, through the artist's letters, that he read and admired the work of Ruskin. The spirit of Ruskin appears again and again. In a section of Thoughts On Art on David Wilkie, Reid and White wrote approvingly of the artist, not only as a great chronicler of his own time, but also as a great moral teacher. The tone could not be more Ruskinian.

"Brauwer and Jan Steen were not men of high moral character -- the stories that have come down to us strongly indicate their being something quite the reverse. Wilkie had the advantage of them in that respect. The moral atmosphere of the old Manse at Cults and its early associations clung to him all his life, and had their influence on his art. Wilkie could not be impure; Teniers, Jan Steen, and Brauwer, very often were -- indeed, seemed to take 'pleasure in unrighteousness.' Wilkie's sympathy

with common humanity was deep and intense, he had abundance of humour, but little of the mere levity of Jan Steen; he was a painter of altogether a more respectable order; he could touch at times our sympathies very keenly, and tell his story to perfection. 'Distraint for Rent' appeals to us at once, being full of human nature. So with his 'Politicians,' his 'Blind Fiddler,' and many others." 17.

When circumstantial evidence such as this is allied with the letters praising Ruskin, and the fact that Thoughts On Art actually contained a quotation from volume four of Modern Painters, Reid's debt to Ruskin is certain. 18.

There is one other area in which the influence of Ruskin might profitably be considered. The motivations and actions of collectors of rural nostalgia have been considered in chapter 3. It is worthwhile to examine independently, the links between some collectors and John Ruskin. As a highly influential figure in the mid-Victorian art world, Ruskin assuredly affected the views of all men interested and concerned with contemporary painting. Alexander Walker's associations with Ruskin were of this general nature. He did not meet or write to the critic, but had a large collection of his works, some 29 volumes. These he frequently and willingly lent out to his friends and then engaged in correspondence concerning them. A rare note of disapproval entered in correspondence with George Reid in 1868. Reid had borrowed Ruskin's "Ethics" from Walker. Though he enjoyed it he did not think it did the author's reputation justice. 19. In addition to Ruskin, Walker owned volumes of art criticism and theory by Hamerton,

Leslie, F.T. Palgrave, Whistler, Pinnington and The Earl of Southesk. He also regularly took The Athenaeum, Once A Week, The Fortnightly Review, and The Art Journal. Ruskin obviously was just one, albeit important, figure in Walker's overall interests in contemporary art. In addition to this widespread osmotic influence however, there are indications of specific contacts and influences.

John Forbes White read Ruskin and on occasion actively sought his advice. Between 1868 and 1870 White and Reid were involved in a long running debate on the restoration of the stained glass windows in St Machars cathedral in Aberdeen. Together Reid and White organised George MacDonalld to approach Ruskin on their behalf. Reid and White were attempting to block the use of figurative German stained glass in the windows in favour of colour patterned windows. They hoped that having Ruskin on their side of the argument would strengthen their case. <sup>20</sup>. Much to Reid's and White's delight Ruskin wrote at least two letters concerning the stained glass. They duly passed the letters around their friends. <sup>21</sup>.

White's 1877 paper How Can Art be Best Introduced into the Homes of Persons of Limited Income? bears the stamp of Ruskin's influence quite clearly. Everything from the subject itself, the opening line, "We all know that wealth is not necessary to the perception and enjoyment of art", to the basic tenet of the piece, "art must be for all if it is to have any real interest for us.", to the direct allusions to nature, art is for all "like mother Nature, whose image and superscription she bears." <sup>22</sup>. is essentially Ruskinian. The lecture contains quotations from Ruskin, and while it actually reads rather like William Morris' The Lesser Arts, White's lecture

was delivered three months before that of Morris. Certainly White's main debt was to Ruskin.

Thoughts On Art was co-written by White and Reid and there is no reason to suspect that the Ruskinian condemnation of history painting, championing of paintings of contemporary life and insistence on truth to nature in landscape, were purely Reid's contributions. White was deeply concerned with the arts. He wrote exhibition reviews, indeed he was so successful at this that he was invited to become the art critic of The Academy.<sup>23</sup> He served on exhibition management committees. He had a large personal collection and even contributed articles on Velasquez, Rembrandt and Vermeer to the Encyclopedia Britannica. The influence of Ruskin on White, and Ruskin's importance for him are summed up by White's decision to send a copy of the biography of Chalmers, written by White and Alexander Gibson, to Ruskin for approbation. The book was sent through White and Ruskin's mutual friend Dr John Brown in 1879. Unfortunately Ruskin was not impressed by the volume. His reply to Brown is lost but appears to have been scathing. Brown wrote to Reid on January 2nd 1880. "I do wish you may not feel half so much angry and hurt at Ruskin's letter as I do. It is most unjust and in a true sense unkind to us all. He could not have done more than give a glance to the book."<sup>24</sup> White's admiration and respect for Ruskin were not reciprocated.

Finally, although slightly at a tangent to the specific influence of Ruskin on Scotland, Dr John Brown's own art criticism was allied to that of Ruskin and may have been significant for Reid. It is possible that Reid came to discover Ruskin through Brown's work. In April 1863 the painter wrote to

Alex Walker returning three books that he had borrowed. One of the volumes was Horae Subsecivae, a volume of essays by Brown. <sup>25</sup>. Reid commented that Brown's art criticisms were "A. 1.". This probably referred to the essay "Notes on Art". Before the analysis of specific paintings "Notes on Art" contained a lengthy section in praise of Ruskin. Brown credited Ruskin with doing "more to breathe the breath of life into the literature and philosophy of Art than any art-union." <sup>26</sup>. Modern Painters was singled out for especially high praise. Reid then may have discovered Ruskin via Brown. As well as introducing Reid to the writings of Ruskin "Notes on Art" was important for another reason. The illustrator John Leech was lauded and his work prized over any reproduced engraving. <sup>27</sup>. Reid and White's later championing of John Leech as a recorder of contemporary life may have been based on Brown's original observations. Thoughts On Art was a much more radical piece of writing than was Brown's essay. This may be due to the nature of their respective writings. Brown was writing on a personal selection of works. He was seeking to promote what he saw as the higher qualities of painting. Reid and White were writing a polemical tract which sought to change completely the nature of painting in Scotland. It behoved them to be aggressive. Brown read Leech as a chronicler of the present and wrote "One true way to encourage Art is to buy and enjoy *Punch*. There is more fun, more good drawing, more good sense, more beauty in John Leech's *Punch* pictures, than in all the Art-Unions illustrations, engravings, statuettes etc. etc., put together." <sup>28</sup>. Five years later Reid, in collaboration with J.F. White wrote that Punch was "the truest historical artist of the present age, and future generations will be far better acquainted with the names of John Leech and John Tenniel, than with those of Maclise and Herbert." <sup>29</sup>.

Ruskin's views then were influential in specific instances and also in more general ways. The debates which centered round Ruskin's writings were very widely disseminated, and could not help but colour the opinions and beliefs of anyone concerned with contemporary painting and theory.

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### Holland & France: Scotland and European Art

As significantly however, and far more individually, the younger Scottish painters of the 1860's and 1870's and their patrons were actively concerned with the European phenomenon of "Realism". Perhaps not "Realism" implying a particular school, theory or group of painters, but "Realist Tradition" as defined by Gabriel Weisberg. Realism as "a name applied to those who sought to revitalise the centuries old artistic tradition of accurate, truthful recording of the world and to give this tradition contemporary relevance." <sup>20</sup>. This "Realism" was spread throughout Europe and the Scots drew on sources from more than one country. In general they looked at France and Holland, or more accurately at Dutch art and at French art through the Dutch. Before going on to discuss this European connection some account is necessary of why the Scots' views should be so coloured by the Dutch.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century Scotland had had strong economic and intellectual links with Holland for very nearly 400 years. Since 1407 Scots merchant burgesses had traded through the "staple" port, sometimes Bruges, sometimes Middleburg, but from the early sixteenth century, Campvere. <sup>21</sup>. This meant that which ever of these Low Countries towns held

the staple had a large Scottish community. All Scottish trade, exports of raw materials - hides, wool, coal, salt and salmon went through The Netherlands. Campvere granted Scots customs and docking privileges and there was a Scottish court and a Scottish kirk. The Dutch brought much to Scotland as well. Physically the trading ports of the east of Scotland were built on Dutch lines, sometimes even of Dutch materials brought over as shipping ballast. Settlers arrived in Scotland from Holland. New weaving techniques which spread through the country came from The Netherlands.

Scotland of course had strong links with France. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries large numbers of Scots lived in French Calvinist towns (held under the edict of Nantes) and studied law. There were so many in fact that in 1617 the Erskine family, who were living in Bourges, left because they "could not have learnt the French" <sup>32</sup>. There were so many of their countrymen in Bourges they had no opportunity to speak anything but "Scotish." From the middle of the seventeenth century the study of law also moved to Holland, specifically to the university of Leyden. In the first half of the eighteenth century there were some 658 Scottish students studying at Leyden, 302 of them law students. <sup>33</sup>.

Apart from a very strong historical link, there were other factors which encouraged Scots to look to Holland. These elements are less a matter of historical fact than of practical observation. The sober, Presbyterian background of nineteenth century Scotland had its affinities with the moral and religious values of seventeenth century Holland. In short, Dutch society naturally appealed to the Scots. There was also an inherited tradition in artistic terms of looking to Holland. From David Wilkie the Scots had

inherited a view and an appreciation of the Dutch seventeenth century "old masters," albeit a view with a distinctly Scottish slant. As the pre-eminent Scottish painter of the first half of the nineteenth century, Wilkie was the model for many later nineteenth century Scottish artists. Elected Associate of the Royal Academy in November 1809 and a full member eighteen months later at the age of only twenty-five, his work was admired and studied by younger painters. Painters who exerted an influence on Wilkie then, would also have an influence, at second hand, on later Scottish artists. These influences were predominantly Dutch. It is this tradition which Wilkie handed down to later Scottish painters - a tradition of looking to Holland and abstracting from Dutch painting while producing works characteristically Scottish in outlook.

In looking at Holland they immediately found painting congenial to their tastes. The mid nineteenth century Dutch painters had something important in common with Wilkie - they were rediscovering Dutch painting of the "Golden Age." As a contemporary writer observed.

"In the sixties, the Dutch after a long dull interregnum and affectation were reawakening to the artistic possibilities \_ \_ (of) \_ a national intimate and emotional art \_ \_ Above all Josef Israels had a few years before shaken the trammels of historical convention from him, and in the work of Rembrandt, and in Dutch cottages found the material and the method which yielded such a rich harvest." 34.

Both Wilkie and the members of The Hague School then were looking back to the seventeenth century Dutch masters for guidance. With the strong historical links with the Netherlands, the later Scots natural inclination towards Wilkie, their inherited inclination towards a subject matter similar to the Dutch, and the basic similarities in outlook between themselves, Wilkie their countryman and The Hague School, the idea that they looked towards and learned from Holland seems only natural. The way in which the Scots achieved access to Dutch art can also be documented. The first major source was the collections of Dutch paintings made by certain Scottish collectors.

After his purchase of Mollinger's Drenthe (Illustration 32.) from the 1862 London International exhibition, J.F. White commissioned a similar sized work from the artist. Soon afterwards he visited Utrecht and Mollinger took him to see Israels from whom White also commissioned a painting, The Departure, (Illustration 45.) the first Israels work to come to Scotland. 95. This properly marks the beginning for Scottish collectors of a major interest in contemporary Dutch art.

While some collectors like J.G. Orchar built up extensive collections of the work of Scottish artists, others bought examples of contemporary French and Dutch painting. White's instant enthusiasm in 1862 and his subsequent friendship with Mollinger led perhaps to the painter sending two works to the 1865 R.S.A. exhibition. 96. Both of these aroused considerable interest among Scottish artists and the fact that they were sold may have encouraged Matthew Maris and Mollinger's master William Roelofs to send paintings in 1866. The R.S.A. apparently noticed the popularity of Dutch

works. <sup>37</sup>. By 1867 they were inviting selected Dutch painters to exhibit in the exhibition. In 1867 D.A.C. Artz mentioned in a letter to George Reid that he had been invited to send. <sup>38</sup>.

Collections of European pictures grew rapidly. Although falling outside this exact period of study the two major international exhibitions held in Scotland in 1886 and 1888 serve to illustrate just how quickly the taste for European "Realism" developed. In 1886 R.T. Hamilton-Bruce, the organiser of the loan collection of foreign paintings at the Edinburgh International Exhibition, found that there was no shortage of exhibits in the country. He brought together a major display of French and Dutch paintings. The exhibition was rather hurriedly put together and apparently Hamilton-Bruce did not have the full support of the artistic community. <sup>39</sup>. Hamilton-Bruce borrowed pictures extensively outside Scotland. The lending pattern is quite revealing. Given that he did not have complete cooperation from all collectors and was unable to borrow the most prestigious paintings of whatever class or school, for the exhibition, he was left with an interesting if uninspired representative sample of paintings which probably reflect the spectrum of popular taste. He himself felt rather constrained by the pictures he had managed to acquire. He wrote a brief postscript to W.E. Henley's catalogue essay. "That this collection was to a large extent confined to the French and Dutch painters was more of an accident than the result of any preference on my part for these schools, \_ \_" <sup>40</sup>.

The pictures on display were; 106 French paintings by 23 artists, 57 borrowed from Scottish collections, and 192 Dutch paintings with again 57 borrowed from Scots. <sup>41</sup>. Actually the number of Dutch Scottish generated

loans can probably be increased by 4 to 61 since 4 paintings by M. Maris were borrowed from E.J. van Wisselingh the Dutch dealer. It is very likely that it was van Wisselingh's strong connections to the Scottish dealer Craibe Angus, to whom he was related by marriage, that led him to lend the works. <sup>42</sup> Two years later the Glasgow International Exhibition, although not concentrating exclusively on French and Dutch painting, also contained a major collection of "modern" Dutch and French pictures borrowed from Scottish collectors. <sup>43</sup> Among others, pictures were lent by White, Hamilton-Bruce, James Donald, J. Carfrae-Alston, T.G. Arthur, and A.J. Kirkpatrick. The high quality of paintings exhibited in Glasgow was recognised by the reviewer of the Foreign Loan Collection who commented of the Bosboom lent by White that his "interiors are the best I know whether among the old masters or the moderns." <sup>44</sup> The Scottish Art Review of June 1888 pointed out

"The distinguishing feature of the Glasgow Exhibition is that being truly international in spirit, it is rich in sufficiently representative examples of what the modern world has been doing in art to allow ample scope for comprehensive and intelligent study of the subject." <sup>45</sup>

Early in the twentieth century the deaths of several major collectors led to the sale of their collections. The sale catalogues further demonstrate the widespread popularity of French and Dutch painting in Scotland. In fact it is by far the Dutch that were the more popular. John Ramsay owned fifteen Dutch paintings and two French, a Harpignies and a Lepine. <sup>46</sup> He also possessed a good representative Scottish collection including works by Reid

and Chalmers. Robert Ramsey's collection contained major works by Mollinger, Mesdag, Israels, M. Maris, Ter Meulen and Mauve. <sup>47</sup>. While the catalogue of the John Reid collection tells of a much more catholic taste, forty-three paintings, more than half his collection, were Dutch. Reid owned eleven Israels and eight Blommers as well as pieces by J. Maris, W. Maris, Mauve, Neuhuys, Ter Meulen, Apol, Van Rossum, du Chattel and Weiland. <sup>48</sup>. Reid also possessed seventeen French paintings including seven works by Corot, two each by Millet and Jacque, an Isabey and a Frère.

Two collections disposed of nearer to the end of the period c.1860-1880 reveal that while the interest in works of these schools continued right up to the end of the century, there were already collections being established by 1878. J.C. Bell's paintings, sold in early 1877, contained works by Dutch artists including Mollinger and Herman Tenkate. <sup>49</sup>. G.B. Simpson, Chalmers' patron, sold his collection in 1880. It included more than twenty works by artists from France and the Low Countries. <sup>50</sup>.

Despite many of the collectors making a virtue out of buying their pictures from the painters themselves the 1870's marks the beginning of picture dealing in Scotland. One of the earliest of such dealers was Craibe Angus (1830-1899). Angus' business was registered as a "Furniture Warehouse". He dealt in bric-a-brac and artistic furniture and acted as an agent for stained glass. <sup>51</sup>. In 1874 however Angus opened a picture gallery at 159 Queen Street Glasgow. Angus' son married Isabella van Wisselingh, the daughter of the renowned Dutch dealer E.J. van Wisselingh and through this connection the dealer maintained useful links with European art in general and Dutch art in particular. <sup>52</sup>. He exhibited

Barbizon painting and the work of contemporaries such as Corot but mainly he handled the Dutch school, particularly the works of Bosboom, Israels and Anton Mauve. <sup>53</sup>. Angus acted as the Glasgow agent for another dealer with international connections, Daniel Cottier, the early friend of George Reid and J.F. White. Through Craibe Angus, paintings bought on the continent were resold in Scotland. Other dealers also viewed Scotland as a good outlet for European painting. Ter Steeg for example, a representative of Boussod, Valadon et Cie sent modern Dutch painting to Scotland. <sup>54</sup>. European painting also reached Scotland via the Scottish born London director of the Goupil Gallery, David Croal Thomson. <sup>55</sup>.

Painters of the 1860's and 1870's then had increasing opportunities of examining rising numbers of works by Dutch and French contemporaries. These were particularly available if, like Reid and Chalmers, the artists were on friendly terms with a number of progressive collectors who were actively seeking out European painting.

The external influence acting in Scotland was principally Dutch. <sup>56</sup>. However the Dutch painters that the Scots were drawn to, The Hague School, were themselves looking to France. Dutch painting was also undergoing changes around this time and these changes were stimulated by increasing knowledge of what was happening in France. In 1860 A. G. Bilders (1838-1865), a Dutch landscape painter was visiting the Exposition nationale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. He wrote to his patron Johannes Kneppelhout (1814-1885) on September 25th.

"I have seen pictures such as I never dreamt of. I found all that my heart desires in them and that I almost always miss in the Dutch painters. Troyon, Courbet, Diaz, Dupre, Robert Fleury, Breton have made a deep impression on me. So I am now thoroughly French \_ \_ \_ \_ just by being thoroughly French I am thoroughly Dutch because the great Frenchmen of today and the great Dutchmen of former times have much in common. Unity, peace, earnestness and above all an inexplicable intimacy with nature are what strikes me in these pictures\_ \_ \_ \_ And yet it is from Holland that this luxuriant conception really springs." 57.

The qualities which Bilders found appealed to him in Barbizon painting are precisely those cited by Reid as being the necessary prerequisites for a vibrant art. Reid praised landscapes which he felt contained "simple truth," 58. "sympathy with nature" and "harmony and repose." 59.

The admiration felt by Bilders for Barbizon painting was becoming an increasingly common factor amongst nineteenth century Dutch painters. For example, it was through knowledge of Barbizon paintings and personal visits to Barbizon and the forest of Fontainebleau that Josef Israels came to abandon history painting and became a painter of peasant genre. Much the same influences and visits affected the landscape painter H. W. Mesdag who went to Barbizon in 1851. 60.

Scottish artists then, despite Scotland's traditional "Auld Alliance" with France, really discovered nineteenth century French painting through Holland. Once introduced to the work of Breton, Millet and Corot they

required no further promptings to thoroughly investigate the paintings and their sources.

The initial influence though was definitely brought about by seeing Dutch paintings, obviously first of all in the R.S.A. exhibitions and in the homes of collectors, but later on in Holland itself. In 1866 Reid made the first of two lengthy trips to Holland to study. This first visit was organised by White. The collector had known Mollinger personally since his visit to Utrecht in the aftermath of his 1862 purchase of Drenthe. (Illustration 32.) He wrote to Mollinger to ask if he would accept Reid as a pupil. <sup>61</sup>. Mollinger replied that he would accept Reid but the arrangement turned out to be more time consuming than he had imagined. After Reid had been with him about ten days Mollinger wrote to his friend D.A.C. Artz in Paris. The painter complained of bad weather and ill-health affecting his chances of working and continued:-

"I am saddled at the moment with a pupil whose pupil I have become because dear Reid is a Scot from Aberdeen who speaks nothing but English and this forces me to learn English. This takes up much time, because I have to help him with everything just like a child because he cannot converse with anyone. At the beginning of his stay he was such a nuisance that by the time evening came I didn't know if I was coming or going." <sup>62</sup>.

Reid had quite a different view of the matter. He had written to White about a week earlier.

"\_ \_ \_ \_ Mollinger's English is very limited indeed - however he seems inclined to speak it as much as possible and I have no doubt he will soon improve. \_ \_ I think him a very nice fellow indeed and I may say the same of all his family they are all extremely kind." 63.

Mollinger organised rooms for Reid to live and work in but Reid still seems to have seen a great deal of the Dutch artist and taken up a lot of his time. Reid's wife in her unpublished "Journal" of her husband, recorded Reid as being "daily with the Mollinger's." 64. This was in spite of Mollinger feeling on August 12th that he had "arranged everything for my Englishman in such a way that things go more smoothly. Thus I can resume my work \_ \_ \_ ." 65.

When he wrote to Artz again in October he seemed rather exasperated. "My Englishman keeps me so busy that I have no time to leave the city. Fortunately I'll be rid of him soon and will get some rest again." 66.

However Mollinger did feel that Reid was worth spending time on. He informed Artz that his Englishman "has talent" 67. and seems to have worked hard at fulfilling his responsibilities as a master. Mia Reid wrote that her husband "went with Mollinger to his studio close by and after a little talk Mollinger sat down and commenced to paint a little oil sketch which he afterwards gave to GR, the more easily to explain his method of work." 68.

Reid's work was affected a great deal by his study under Mollinger, so much so that when he returned to Scotland he was taken to task by George

Harvey, the then president of the R.S.A., for "looking at nature through Mollinger's eyes." <sup>69</sup>. Harvey told Reid that he had made a grave error in coming under Mollinger's influence: that his pictures before he studied in Holland were far superior: that Mollinger's work was "everything that was bad - false - conventional," and even that Reid's study in Holland had been discussed at an R.S.A. council meeting. The press also attacked Reid. He was described as "The Aberdonian who is imitating Mollinger." <sup>70</sup>.

Certainly the two months spent in Utrecht did have a radical effect on Reid's work. He can still be seen working through the lessons he learned from Mollinger five years later. When he arrived in Holland, Reid had, according to Mollinger, "a special preference for castles, churches and everything that is in ruins, which he decorates with thunderous effect, such as rainbows and setting suns." <sup>71</sup>.

This would certainly appear to be a fair assessment of Reid's taste. He took two pictures out to Holland to work on. One was a church Cowie Kirk, and one a castle, Dunottar (Illustration 46.). A study of Reid's early exhibits at the R.S.A. would also appear to support Mollinger's assertion. In the years from 1862 when Reid first exhibited at the R.S.A., to 1866 the last year before he went to Holland, seven out of thirteen pictures were paintings of castles, churches, towers or ruins. Before going to Holland Reid's work was very much in the picturesque tradition so abhorred by Ruskin and so immensely popular in Scotland through the work of Horatio McCulloch and his followers. Reid was thought, by Academicians to be very promising. <sup>72</sup>. Spynie Palace and Loch, (Illustration 47.) exhibited at the R.S.A. in 1866 was hung on the line and greatly admired by McCulloch. <sup>73</sup>.

The picture was almost exactly as Mollinger described Reid's work. It showed the building silhouetted against a yellow twilight sky. On his return from Holland Reid's work was very different and Mollinger's influence clear.

Mollinger occupies a rather transitional stage in nineteenth century Dutch painting. He died in 1867 before the full flowering of the Hague School in the 1870's and later. Mollinger concurred with Bilders' suggestion that there was a lot that nineteenth century landscape painters could learn from their predecessors of two centuries past. In this early stage of the Dutch rediscovery of their heritage some of Mollinger's paintings look back very strongly indeed to the seventeenth century Dutch landscape tradition.

Washing Day (Illustration 48.) for instance is probably an early work. <sup>74</sup>. The tree is painted very precisely in much the same manner as Ruisdael or Hobbema. It is underpainted first in black and then the gradually lightening tones of the outer leaves are added. Nothing is left to chance; no detail is ignored. There are no scraped areas or gestural areas in the tree. Everything is very tightly under control. The tree is "made" in paint. The small patch of foliage behind the figures on the extreme left of the work is painted in considerable detail. The working of the piece is such that it could be used to draw a reasonably accurate map of the objects in space.

By the time that Reid was studying with Mollinger the Dutchman was working in a noticeably different manner. A later painting such as Meerkirk. Clearing up After Rain, (Illustration 49.) of 1866 has more of an atmosphere. <sup>75</sup>. There is more suggested and not precisely delineated. The

buildings in the shadow of the town or even the ducks in the foreground are painted more freely than any passages in Washing Day. While Mollinger never fully developed the gestural, calligraphic brushwork of slightly later Hague School landscape painters such as Mauve or Jacob Maris, he did move in that direction with a work such as Meerkirk. Clearing up After Rain.

Reid and White later wrote a joint review which mentioned tonal landscape painting. They defined a landscape treated by tonal values in this way:-

"In speaking of the *tonalité* of a picture it is not its tone, but its scale of what is called "tonic values" that is meant, as in music, where a certain key may be high or low, major or minor. A picture may be high in tone or low as the artist sees fit, and as his subject demands; but high or low, major or minor, this key must be scrupulously adhered to till melody or picture is completed." 76.

The above mentioned Meerkirk, which was in the exhibition under review, illustrates their points perfectly. In common with later Hague School landscape painters such as J. Maris, Mollinger probably painted on a toned ground. One can envisage the ground here being the colour overall of the pale grey/blue of the sky which lies immediately behind the roofs. This is a median tone and a median colour for everything else that happens in the painting. That colour for instance underlies the colour of the pale yellow grass in the middle distance, the trees on the left hand side and runs right through the sky.

Reid knew this painting intimately. It was painted by Mollinger while Reid was living and working in Utrecht. Since Mollinger was teaching Reid in his studio, the Scottish painter must have seen Mollinger working on the piece. <sup>77</sup>. It was Reid who took a sketch of the picture to Alexander Macdonald in Aberdeen for his approval and it was Reid who arranged for the sale of the painting to Macdonald. <sup>78</sup>. Reid also greatly admired the work. Mollinger had requested that Macdonald lend the painting to the R.S.A. of 1867 almost as soon as the collector acquired it. When Reid reviewed the exhibition for The Montrose Standard, having in his first review discussed some of Mollinger's other works on exhibition, he wrote "The village of Meerkirk', no. 800, is another capital specimen - a cloudy, raining sky, the distant village lying in deep shadow, the foreground all in bright sunshine - - - - The whole picture is vigourosly and cleverly painted." <sup>79</sup>.

Studying with Mollinger had a great effect on Reid's work. He felt that continental artists had a far more thorough artistic education than their Scottish counterparts and he was anxious to learn from Europe. As well as weaning Reid away from his picturesque taste in dramatic subjects and settings, Mollinger also taught him to physically paint differently. Before going to Holland Reid worked in a manner that was standard in Scotland. He painted on a semi-absorbant ground with pigment thinned sufficiently to allow it some fluidity but not so much that it lost all its plasticity. Mollinger taught him to paint with no added medium at all, just with the paint straight out of the tube. In the first letter that Reid wrote to Alexander Walker from Utrecht on August 7th he just noted this "peculiarity" of Mollinger's in passing, and speculated as to what a traditional painter of their mutual acquaintance would think about such an approach. Three

weeks later after Mollinger had introduced Reid to the method he confessed. "I found it rather a ticklish thing to paint without oil or medium, having been so long accustomed to it - but I can see the advantages to be found by it." <sup>20</sup>. The advantages Reid spoke of are not difficult to imagine. For a painter interested in conveying his response to a subject in a painting, the greater intensity of colour and the increased possibilities for the expressive handling of thicker more plastic paint must have been seductive. These advantages outweighed, for Reid the technical difficulties of coping with stiffer more resistant paint.

A landscape such as Evening (Illustration 50.) demonstrates this Dutch influence on Reid very clearly. <sup>21</sup>. This was painted some seven years after Reid worked with Mollinger. It is quite an assured performance. None of the hesitancy and none of the flaws found in an earlier Dutch inspired work such as Broadsea (Illustration 9.) are in evidence. <sup>22</sup>. Superficially Evening and Meerkirk (Illustration 49.) are quite similar paintings. Both set a group of shadowed buildings against a grey sky; both have a strong horizontal emphasis. In the Mollinger it is the bank of reeds and grasses which emphasizes the horizontality, while in the Reid, a strip of darker ploughing serves much the same function. The similarities go beyond composition however. Both paintings are heavily worked. In both there is a gentle poetic response to the land. The Reid is more overtly involved with the land and the people who work the land than the Mollinger. The figures in Meerkirk are really little more than punctuation marks in the composition of the painting. The painting does however convey some sort of feeling for the flatness of the land and feeling for the nature of the Dutch landscape. Both works gently emphasize man's role in the landscape by

setting the buildings against the horizon and thereby having the greatest area of tonal contrast highlight the works of man. Both paintings view the land rather sombrely as the arena for all aspects of life. Neither landscape is simply an opportunity for glorying in the beauties and dramas of nature. Reid's work before is precisely that. It takes as its central and only subject the drama of nature. Both Evening and Meerkirk see nature as a setting for human activity rather than as the basis for a depiction for the picturesque world. The Mollinger is less emotionally explicit than the Reid but the two painters were painting ideologically very similar works. Both chose subject matter that was part of everyday life. That similarity is more significant than the quite subtle differences in the emotional intensity of the work of the two men.

The techniques of the two paintings are likewise very similar. As has been mentioned Reid's method changed while working with Mollinger. The result, given seven years to mature and to evolve into a personally comfortable technique, is evident here and it is still very close to that of Mollinger. Both pictures are heavily worked. The paint layer is very thick. The Mollinger is rather laboured and turgid and lacks the freshness of the Reid, but both paintings rely heavily for their effect on the unity and cohesion of the surface of the paint. Like the Mollinger the Reid is almost certainly painted on a toned grey ground. The Reid is not as markedly reworked as the Mollinger but his method of painting as learnt from the Dutch artist retained the heavy use of thick paint. In a letter of 1871, five years distant from Mollinger's instruction, Reid described how he worked. "(I) am now going over it again with lots of thick solid stuff - in a week or so I hope to have a good foundation laid for painting over." <sup>es</sup>.

Reid's method was still based on painting with heavy impasted paint. The effect of this is seen particularly in the foreground where the working of the grasses is on several different levels. The darkest paint layer is at the bottom and the tone gradually lightens towards the top.

Reid returned from Holland in October 1866 and worked through the winter of 1866/67 in Aberdeen. He remained convinced of the superiority of continental teaching and continental methods. It was not simply that he felt Scotland was backward in its practices, he actively admired developments and methods of learning practiced in Europe. London was not seen as having anything better to offer than Edinburgh in the way of education. Reid repeatedly voiced his dislike of London both as a place and for the practices of its painters. <sup>94</sup>. He apparently agreed with John Dun as to its merits as a teaching centre also. Dun wrote to Reid in early 1867. "I am very much surprised at Longmuir's going to London. I fear it will be a second May case, & farewell to improvement, \_ \_" <sup>95</sup>. London then was not deemed a suitable place for study. Not surprisingly with the strong links between contemporary French and Dutch painting and the Scots interest in Holland, Paris was deemed suitable.

In the spring of 1867 Reid returned to Europe, this time to Paris. He travelled with John Forbes White and went specifically to see the Exposition Universelle. There, by prior arrangement they met Mollinger and the three of them spent a week visiting the exhibition in the Champs de Mars. <sup>96</sup>. Reid went to Paris with the intention of learning. He wrote concerning what he saw as the benefits of the trip. "\_ \_ \_ \_ its advantages in an educational way are not to be overlooked. One's provincial

ideas would get dispelled somewhat and the eyes opened more, as to what painting means and is capable of doing." 97.

Reid wrote to Alexander Walker twice from Paris. The first time, on May 12th, he had just arrived and had not yet been to the exhibition. He concentrated in the letter on giving Walker his impressions of the Royal Academy which he had visited briefly while in London, and on describing the purchases and commissions of paintings he had organised and attempted to organise on Walker's behalf. 98. By the time he wrote again it was the day before he left Paris and he told Walker he would give him all the news of the trip when he got back to Scotland. The only information given in the letter about the activity of the three men was that they had "done the exhibition pretty effectively - especially the pictures." 99. There is very little evidence then from 1867 as to what was seen and what Reid's response to it was. However in 1869, during his second visit to Paris, Reid recalled some of the things he, White and Mollinger had seen two years previously. In 1869 Reid visited the Luxembourg gallery and saw "\_ \_ both the famous Jules Bretons \_ \_ \_ 'The Recall of the Gleaners' and 'Blessing the Wheat'" 100. He recalled seeing them, along with Daubigny's Wheat Field With Apple Tree two years previously at the World's Fair 101. The painters who were of interest to Reid then in 1867 were Realist artists.

The significance of France for the development of painting in Scotland in the 1860's and 1870's does not lie solely with the pictures themselves. As has been demonstrated Scottish taste as reflected by both collectors and painters was primarily for the French influenced Dutch artists, not for the French themselves. Breton, Millet, Daubigny et al were admired but it was

with Mollinger, Israels and Artz that the Scots actually studied and learned. It was French writing on art that was to prove more influential and that influence had begun even before Reid made his first visit to Paris in 1867.

### The Art Criticism of George Reid

Reid began writing reviews for newspapers in 1864 when he wrote two articles on the R.S.A. for the Montrose Standard in February and March of that year. <sup>92</sup>. These articles reveal an earnest young man committed to telling the truth as he understood it, but not yet at all certain what he believed in. Reid wrote of the difficulties of being impartial and honest when he himself was a member of the profession he was seeking to analyse. Then, having admitted his difficulties he went on to praise and attack as he saw fit. Apart from anonymously expressing pleasure at having sold two of his own pictures to the Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts, no personal preference had any bearing on his remarks. He attacked friends as freely as strangers if he felt that their work was not up to standard. For example he criticised James Giles (1801-1870), an elderly Aberdeen painter and friend of his. He wrote:-

"Mr Giles, of Aberdeen, has long been known as one of our best animal painters, but of late years he seems to have got into a thoroughly conventional style, especially in his landscapes. Several of the pictures he this year exhibits are so thoroughly mannered that \_ \_ \_ \_ they scarcely possess the slightest vestige of nature. \_ \_ \_ \_ No 338 'Glen Sannox' - is mild in

colour to a degree, and looks as if seen through some pale milk-and-water medium. \_ \_ \_ \_ A large Italian landscape - No 518 - 'Remains of the Amphitheatre at Cumae' - looks pale and sickly in colour and hard and mannered in execution." 93.

It was very important for Reid to be honest. In a letter written to Alexander Walker the day after the attack on Giles was printed, Reid justified his criticism. "You'll see I've pitched into old Giles rather heavily but he deserves it for his pictures are getting rascally bad," 94. There was no suggestion of praising Giles simply because he was a friend or even of quietly ignoring his work. Reid felt he had to express himself honestly.

Accepting then that from the very beginnings of his writings as a critic Reid always wrote exactly what he thought, there are numerous examples of his here expressing opinions directly opposite to those he later championed so forcefully. At this stage Reid's likes and dislikes were not consistent. They do not appear to follow any overall view of painting either technically or philosophically. The changes in his views and the sources of these changes can be charted through his writings of the next four years.

There are many occasions on which the 1864 views and the views expressed in Thoughts On Art of 1868 are very different. Often specific painters praised in the earlier writings seem to have become, for Reid, almost the epitome of incompetence four years later. For example in 1864 Gourlay Steele (1819-1894) was not unfavourably compared with Rosa Bonheur as an animal painter. His pieces at that year's exhibition were described as

"excellent specimens of animal painting" 95. In 1868 he was contemptuously dismissed. Reid and White wrote "From his works we never yet derived a single pleasurable sensation. His studies in Tempera are perhaps the best things he has done. They offend our aesthetic senses least, and that is about as much as can be said for them." 96.

Similar changes took place with regard to numerous other painters. More significantly there are several propositions which were central to Reid's and White's beliefs in 1868, which in 1864 Reid had spoken out vigorously against. At the beginning of the first article on February 19th it was noted with approbation:

The exhibition "is quite up to, if not beyond, the average, and certainly as far as the progress of our younger artists is concerned, affords many gratifying proofs. In fact, the exhibition, as a whole, is thoroughly Scottish, for upon no occasion for years past do we remember having seen so few pictures by foreign artists. There are only two or three pictures by foreign artists, and these are not of much importance, \_ \_" 97.

In 1868 Thoughts On Art struck a very different note.

"Our artists will not go abroad to seek for foreign teaching, and what little of it comes their way, at home, is seemingly beneath their regard. Works sent by painters of high position on the Continent, are only thought worthy of a position in the 'Condemned Cell,' or under some of the archways. \_ \_ \_ \_ We

measure ourselves by ourselves, and compare ourselves among ourselves, and usually come to the most self-complacent conclusions, refusing, obstinately, to believe that anything better is discoverable than our own narrow provincial views." 99.

In 1864 the historical paintings of James Drummond were singled out for praise.

"Mr James Drummond this year exhibits two pictures - No. 429 - 'George Wishart and John Knox' (Illustration 51.) - and No. 582 - 'King James VI. publicly returning thanks after the Gowrie Conspiracy.' Both these are works of great merit, and characterised by the most scrupulous attention to accuracy in the costumes and detail. \_ \_ \_ \_ 'King James returning thanks' is a composition full of small figures, cleverly grouped and arranged, and painted with great care and delicacy - qualities, however, which all Mr Drummond's works are possessed of, but never, we think, so strongly and favourably seen as this year." 99.

In 1868 Drummond, and the entire concept of history painting was savagely attacked. "Historical painting \_ \_ \_ \_ is the falsest of all painting. The primary qualities of art are sacrificed for the secondary, and the literary, dramatic or historical interest of the picture is put in the room and place of the artistic." 100.

The criticism of Drummond ran to over two pages. Several works were singled out. Old Weird Bell (Illustration 52.) was just one of them.

"The hardness and neatness of this picture completely mar it, the whole building, bricks, timbers, and all, seem to be but of yesterday; the feeling of old age and the effects of time find no expression in ruggedness or decay, or in the manifold stains and seams and scars which many a year's buffeting with the storm and the tempest leave. If the artist had loved this quaint old gable truly, and painted it lovingly, he could not have failed to see more in it than he has seen; but he paints everything of this kind in the spirit of a well-principled housemaid, insisting on propriety, cleanliness, and good order everywhere." 101.

Much the same occurred with the paintings of George Hay. Hay submitted rather similar works to the Academy exhibitions of 1864 and 1868. The receptions they received were very different. In The Montrose Standard of 1864:-

"'A Barber's Shop in the time of Elizabeth' - by Mr George Hay, although rather patchy in colour and wanting in general effect, is still a work of considerable merit - the figures being quaint and well marked in character, and much care seems to have been bestowed on the dress and accessories." 102.

In Thoughts On Art of 1868:-

"George Hay's 'Shopping in the 15th Century' (No, 735), would have been quite as much to the purpose, and fully more interesting, had the scene been laid in the 19th century instead. \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

We should think, from the appearance of the street, that the shopkeeper's customers were few and far between; the whole of the background bears too evident signs of having been 'made up.' \_ \_ \_ \_ We regret that he should so persistently choose his subjects from a past age rather than from the present. If he would only look a little nearer home, he would find subjects in the every-day life around quite as interesting, and would escape the endless worry and bother of 'getting up' properties and costumes." 103.

It was not simply that Reid was more tolerant in 1864. William Crawford (1815-1869) for example was the subject of criticism in 1864 that was just as harsh as any written four years later.

"Mr William Crawford also exhibits several portraits and groups of children, and in No. 644 - 'The Keeper's Daughter'- perpetrates one of the greatest pieces of 'clap-trap' in the exhibition. It represents a Highland maid, who is about to row the boat in which she is standing across a stream; and the artist has succeeded in investing her with a mock heroic look, which is irresistably comic, although doubtless meant to be the very reverse. \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ As regards execution, it is as poor as in conception - the landscape background being commonplace; her arms and one of her shoulders out of drawing, and the Scotch greyhounds head execrable. We by all means recommend Mr Crawford to keep to portraiture, and let such subjects as these alone." 104.

There are some clues in the 1864 writings that Reid was beginning to be aware of aspects of relatively current thinking. For example, while he praised highly the romantic picturesque landscapes of Horatio McCulloch, he would appear to have had some knowledge of more recent developments in the way in which he used truth to "nature" as a touchstone of quality in the discussion of Giles' landscape painting. In a letter to Walker he revealed further awareness of a shift in the aims of landscape painting when he wrote "\_ \_ he (Giles) seems to be losing all feeling for nature which won't do now a days." 105.

The attack he mounted on public opinion, and the public's taste in paintings perhaps also reveals his familiarity with some contemporary views. Just as Ruskin had condemned popular taste in his second lecture at Manchester in 1857, 106. Reid ridiculed it with a probably apocryphal story about a woman greatly admiring the Crawford painting he condemned so strongly. 107.

Reid's opinions in 1864 were strongly held and forcibly expressed. He had very little experience however. He had not travelled widely and was not, aged 22, very well read. 1866, when he went to Utrecht, was his first major journey for educative purposes. Before that, between 1864 and 1866, he learned a great deal about contemporary European painting through the periodicals and books he studied both in Aberdeen and in Edinburgh. The difference between his two reviews of 1864 and the four for 1865 is extensive, and bears the stamp of his year's learning.

Reid's knowledge of contemporary criticism came from two main sources: in Aberdeen, his friend Alexander Walker, and in Edinburgh, the R.S.A. library.

The earliest surviving letter from Reid to Walker dates from April 28th 1863 and it records Reid returning books borrowed from Walker. It would appear that this was not the first time that this had happened. The three books borrowed on this occasion were G.D. Leslie's Handbook for Young Painters, Dr John Brown's Horae Subsecivae and an unidentified History of Painting. The letters from Reid to Walker reveal that Reid's borrowing of books and periodicals was a regular occurrence. Frequently magazines seem to have been sent on to him by Walker almost automatically. Among others, Reid borrowed; The Fortnightly Review, The Art Journal, The Athenaeum, Once A Week, Macmillans Magazine and The Gentleman's Magazine. He noted on one occasion "What a lot of your books I have been keeping beside me! Some of them for too long I fear. It is really very kind of you to keep me so well posted up in current literature."<sup>109</sup>. The letter is undated but was certainly written before 1868. The "current literature", when it was identified was almost all concerned with art or art criticism. Ruskin was frequently borrowed and Reid made brief mention of reading articles by P.G. Hamerton. Tom Taylor. F.T. Palgrave and The Earl of Southesk. Walker owned an extensive library. It ran to over 3000 volumes when it was sold in 1903. Reid knew it very well. On one occasion directing Walker to compare a new book he had purchased which contained mechanically reproduced illustrations with a number of books in his collection illustrated traditionally. Reid was well aware of the contents in his friend's collection.

The things which Reid read and commented on radically affected his views on painting. He read The Athenaeum regularly. <sup>109</sup>. There are reviews and articles of a slightly later date which can be shown to have had a specific effect on Reid's writings. However in the earliest stages, around 1864/1865,

what is important is not the specifics of how a particular piece Reid read influenced him, it is simply that he read it and learned from it at all. The reviews written by F.G. Stephens in The Athenaeum in 1864 then gave Reid new information. They demonstrated different practices and introduced him to painters and approaches to painting he never came across in Scotland. Whistler was very favourably commented upon in 1864. His pictures were praised for the colour and tonal harmonies - a criteria for judgment unknown at the time in Scotland. <sup>110</sup>. The Athenaeum's brief Salon review too would have brought Reid more knowledge about developments outside Scotland. Israels, whom he had probably heard about through his contacts with White in Aberdeen, was lauded. Edouard Frère also played a prominent part in the review of 1864. <sup>111</sup>. At the time the various reviewers' positive or negative reactions to the paintings was probably irrelevant. Reid was interested and alive to everything in painting. By reading about paintings and methods in any context Reid's interest was awakened.

Similarly an article such as "On the Study of Nature as a Guide to Art" by J.L. Roget, which appeared in Macmillans Magazine in June 1864, broadened Reid's horizons. <sup>112</sup>. There is no record of Reid actually seeing this article. However he did read Macmillans Magazine and his remarks in both the second Montrose Standard article and in his letter to Walker concerning Giles' landscapes and nature, show that he was interested in the subject. <sup>113</sup>. The article is not tremendously original or even very informative but simply by airing differing views concerning the relationship of art to nature, it gave Reid further access to a debate in which he was becoming interested.

The reviews for The Montrose Standard reveal this gradually increasing awareness. There are passages which demonstrate the author's increasing confidence and authority as a critic. In addition to the straight forward assault on an artist's competence, as was launched on William Crawford in 1864, Reid, in 1865, made specific observations about how works might have been improved. Commenting on William McTaggart's Word From The West, Reid, after thoroughly analysing the painting, concluded "A little more breadth in the lights, and coolness and decision in the shadows, would improve it greatly." '14. A year previously there were no such considered comments. There was in 1865, as there continued to be throughout Reid's writings, outright condemnation of some artists. Beginning in 1865 however there was always some display of knowledge about the subject and some constructive criticism. With one more year's reading and learning behind him, Reid had begun to realise that certain aspects of common practice in the R.S.A. were hopelessly outdated. Portrait painting, which always interested Reid, although it did not come to dominate his work until the later 1870's, he identified in 1865 as being very conventional. At the beginning of the third notice he wrote:-

"There are over one hundred portraits in the present exhibition, varying in every degree of merit, included between A. 1 and Z. 26; but all, with one or two exceptions, are treated in the old conventional style with which visitors to our annual exhibitions must be so familiar. Here again, in 1865, comes the same long procession of old acquaintances, the ladies in white satin or black silk, generals or field officers in red or blue, gentlemen in kilts, resting one hand on the hilt of a claymore, while the

thumb of the other is hooked into their vest pocket, feet firmly set, head erect, and looking defiance. Stout members of parliament and learned doctors of divinity, pointing to ink-stands, and sheets of letter paper, with the usual Turkey carpet beneath them, a red curtain above them, a Doric pillar to support them, and a tremendous storm of thunder and lightning lowering and flashing in the background." 115.

The main difference that can be discerned here from the two 1864 reviews is the vastly greater commitment made in 1865 to the idea of nature as the single valid inspiration for art. From the rather tentative observation that there was not enough nature in the work of J.W. Giles in 1864, Reid advanced to take up a polemical position on the subject in 1865. He advocated "a constant and loving study of nature, the great fountain and source of all true art." 116. He advocated this "education" not just for artists but for everyone. Reid returned to the theme again and again in the 1865 reviews. Hugh Waller Paton's landscapes were compared to nature and found wanting. 117. McCulloch, who had been very highly praised in 1864, now, when set against the ultimate test, truth to nature, began to be criticised. He was still admired and still thought worthy of his huge reputation, but doubts were beginning to creep in.

"He serves up the annual allowance of mountains and mist; but we have had the same dish so often from him before that our relish for it begins to abate. We even have a slight feeling of nausea; we feel as if we were only being treated to 'cauld kail het again. ' \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ The colour throughout this picture (Glencoe,

No 425) (Illustration 53.) has a tendency to brownness and monotony, which we certainly do not find in nature." 118.

McCulloch's follower, Arthur Perigal, (Illustration 54.) was more vigorously attacked, again over the lack of truth to nature.

"Examine any of his (Perigal's) elaborate hill subjects in the drawing, and detail with careful reference to nature, and what do you find? Are his promontories and banks truthful in slope? Is this undulating mountain ground suggestive of what is simply true and right? Does he shew that he has yet discovered the true structure of hill banks? Does he give us anything of the complexity, endlessness, and harmony of the curvatures? In short, does he shew an acquaintance with the *sculpture* of the mountains, their aignilles, crests, banks and precipices? We are sorry to say he does not. He sees only one termination to a hill, and one to a mountain, and both are peaked. Now this uniformity we have never been able to discover in nature, although we have looked hard for it, even amongst the class of scenery Mr Perigal delights in - a gentle undulating outline we very often met - peaks very seldom; mountains of a delicate grey or purple we have seen at a distance, but never of pure cobalt." 119.

Not all the criticism was negative. A work by John Dun was praised for exhibiting "a true feeling for nature" and being a landscape full of "truth". 120.

The ultimate source of these changes regarding nature is not hard to find. Twice in the 1865 reviews Reid referred to Ruskin. Once he alluded to the fourth volume of Modern Painters, and once he cited Ruskin as an authority on man's links to nature, and quoted a lengthy passage.

"The essential connection of the power of landscape with human emotion is not less certain because in many impressive pictures the link is slight or local. *That the connection should exist at a single point is all we need.*' (Reid's italics) \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  
'The degree of power which any man may ultimately possess in landscape painting will depend finally on his perception of this influence.'" 121.

Ruskin though was just one, albeit important, writer that Reid learned from. With no corroborative evidence individual periodical articles cannot now be identified, but, Walker's supplying of these periodicals for the painter was certainly important.

In addition to the above developments Reid's views also progressed in other ways. For the first time he began using the term "feeling" as describing something he felt important in painting. There was never any definition given of precisely what was meant but John Dun, Waller Paton and Robert Herdman were all credited with possessing "feeling" in varying degrees. "Feeling" is one of the words, which, like "pathos", "truth" and "sentiment" Reid used almost interchangeably to describe a quality in a painting which led to the evocation, in the viewer, of the desired empathetic emotional response. The use of "feeling" as high praise in 1865 marked the beginning

of Reid's development of unstated ideas concerning the emotional ends of painting and the nebulous qualities which go to achieve those ends. <sup>122</sup>.

Interestingly Reid's attitude to history painting did not change at all between 1864 and 1865. There is no sign of the all out condemnation of history painting found in Thoughts On Art. Instead individual painters and paintings were praised or attacked on their perceived merits. George Harvey was praised particularly as the painter of the historical "Covenanting pictures". James Drummond's Queen Mary's Last Look of Scotland (Illustration 55.) was attacked, but significantly it was because of its failure to comply with Reid's new "truth to nature" beliefs that it was condemned, not simply because it was a history painting. Reid criticised the fact that in an age "not particularly distinguished for attention to sanitary matters" all the characters in the painting seemed remarkably clean and neat. He continued:-

"But what appears to us a matter of mystery is the total independence shown by the sea to the other elements in the picture. Here we have the wind evidently blowing from the right, to judge from the way the sail is filled; while, on the other hand, a huge white-crested wave rolls in upon us from the left. Of course Mr Drummond may be right; but in any of our nautical experiences in deep waters and far from shore, we always found the waves paying some sort of respect to the wind. Again, to our observation, the sea always changed colour in keeping with the sky above; but in this respect Mr Drummond's sea is an exception. The sky above does not seem to exercise the slightest influence

on the waters beneath; and the waters, which don't look like water in the least, roll in opaque, clothly folds past the side of the boat, which in its turn glides along without making so much as a ripple. But it is useless to say more. As long as painters live in their studios, and concoct seas and skies from nothing, so long will such blunders as these be perpetrated." 123.

In fact the vocation of history painting itself was praised and admired in 1865.

"To make a true historical painter requires talent of a high order, combined with high educational attainments. There is, of course a kind of natural intuition which may serve, to some extent, a natural appreciation of human character and human passion; but no intuition will ever make a man a thorough archaeologist, which is one of the most necessary attainments of a historical painter." 124.

Reid did not change overnight from the decisive, but substantially uninformed young man of the 1864 reviews, to the ardent champion of "Realist" values of the 1868 Thoughts On Art. It was a slow process, still a long way from completion in 1865.

The second source of periodicals and books which contributed to Reid's developing viewpoint was the library of the R.S.A.. James Drummond took over the job of librarian in 1865 and radically changed the running of the library. In 1865 he had the council approve a rule change which allowed

students access during the times of the year when classes were in session. He also reintroduced the practice of opening the library two evenings a week to allow members to bring in any artist friends that might wish to consult the books and periodicals. <sup>126</sup>. Reid himself was a student from 1863 and became increasingly friendly with Chalmers from late 1863 onwards. Both of these new avenues of access to the library were open to him. The library held numerous books and periodicals in the field in which Reid was becoming increasingly interested. There was for example Hamerton's Painter's Camp in the Highlands of 1862, The Art Journal from 1852 onwards, <sup>126</sup>. The Fine Art Quarterly Review from May 1863 to January 1865 and again<sup>127</sup>. from July 1866 to June 1867. Very importantly the Gazette des Beaux Arts, which the R.S.A. took from its inception in 1859, was also readily available. The period from the R.S.A. exhibition of 1865 to the corresponding exhibition two years later would appear to have been a very productive time in an educational sense for Reid. Even taking into account only the periodicals Reid wrote about borrowing from Walker, and those available to him in the R.S.A. library, the wealth of material for someone interested in "Realist" developments and in alternative practical methods, was immense.

Whistler and George Mason were frequently linked together and commented upon as purveyors of a new type of painting. They were cited in The Athenaeum of May 1865 for example as having evolved a new style based on subtle harmonies of colour and tone. These concerns with tonal painting were of great interest to Reid. <sup>128</sup>. Just the week after this review Stephens wrote on the foreign contributors to the 1865 R.A. and discussed Ribot and Legros. <sup>129</sup>. The following year the tonal paintings of Mason and

Whistler were again discussed and the Salon too was reviewed. For someone as untravelled as Reid was at the time such reviews must have been read avidly. They were his only source of information.

Regular access to The Art Journal also must have been welcomed. It too reviewed the Salon. The Art Journal tended to concentrate heavily on the very classes of painting that were coming under increasing attack from "Realist" critics in France. In 1866 for example there were extensive discussions of battle pictures, society portraits and history painting. Landscape and genre, in which Reid was most interested, were dealt with rather perfunctorily. Corot was heavily criticised, and, with the exception of Daubigny, those praised were not artists in which Reid ever expressed interest. <sup>130</sup>. P.G. Hamerton's Fine Arts Quarterly Review reviewed the Salon in greater detail. The October 1863 article however was only an extended version of the prejudices found in the other English Magazines. Hamerton was patronising about Corot; "I understand \_ \_ \_ (him) \_ \_ \_ now, and think his reputation, if not very well deserved, at least easily accounted for. Corot is a poet, not a great one, but perfectly genuine in his way." <sup>131</sup>. He defended history painting with an elaborate example to demonstrate its educative possibilities. He attacked Daubigny, saying:-

"If landscape can be satisfactorily painted without either drawing or colour, Daubigny is the man to do it. \_ \_ \_ \_ It is curious so much observation of nature should have lead Daubigny to the conclusion that there is no delicacy in her forms, nor intensity in her hues." <sup>132</sup>.

He attacked Courbet, accusing him of "wilful preference for ugliness" <sup>133</sup>. and he mocked Whistler.

The review of the 1864 Salon by Cte Ferdinand de Lasteyrie, published in January 1865, was slightly more sympathetic. Courbet and Millet were condemned but Breton and Jacque were praised. Perhaps these English reviews served only to alert Reid to the existence of more progressive European painting and to serve as a foil against which to set the views of the French critics.

More balanced Salon reviews appeared in the Gazette des Beaux Arts. There the Realist movement was lauded and attacked in lengthy sections - all the time introducing Reid to the fundamentals of the debate. Courbet was condemned, in 1863, for having moved away from nature; Breton eulogised as a painter of peasants above all else, and Millet simultaneously lauded as one who portrayed sentiment supremely but condemned for weak execution. <sup>134</sup>. In the review of the Salon of 1865 Reid would have read a thorough condemnation of history painting. What is more, a condemnation of history painting as it compared with the rural genre work of Jules Breton. Paul Mantz wrote:-

Je ne voudrais pas contrister les peintres d'histoire, les peintres religieux, les conteurs de légendes et des mythologies, mais je serais presque tenté de leur dire qu'il y a au salon simple tableau de genre qui a autant de caractère et de style que leurs récits les plus dramatiques, que leur inventions les plus savantes. Ce tableau, c'est la *Fin de la Journée*, par M. Breton:

ce n'est pas une oeuvre compliqué, et il n'est pas besoin d'avoir fait ses humanités pour la comprendre. Mais ses humble spectacles de la vie rustique ont parfois une sérénité qui ressemble à de la grandeur

M. Breton, dont le talent nous est cher et qui, par un privilège heureux, a toujours mérité son succès, excelle à peindre ces scènes tranquilles et presque augustes du travail en plein air. En mêlant beaucoup de poésie à beaucoup de réalité, il arrive à des résultats qui sont la fête du regard et la joie du coeur, et pourtant il ne sort pas de l'humble monde des travailleurs agrestes, et les campagnes du Pas-de-Calais sont tout son horizon. \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ L'effet est tellement juste, les valeurs, à peine sensibles, d'ombre et de clair sont si délicatement notées, qu'on se sent devant ce tableau la respiration plus libre et qu'on croit aspirer dans l'air les fraîches odeurs du foin coupé. Les figures, sûrement et grandement dessinées, ont une sorte de mâle élégance et une charme sévère; elles sont faites pour le paysage, et le paysage est fait pour elles. Tout est harmonie et sérénité dans ce tableau, et la *Fin de la Journée* est peut-être, parmi les oeuvres que M. Breton nous a montrées jusqu'à présent, la plus complète et, dans son calme apparent, la plus émue." 135.

In 1866 Philippe Burty wrote an extensive review of the R.A. for the Gazette des Beaux Arts. Reid then had an opportunity of reading a French view of English art. He was given the perceptions of France, whose painting he was coming to greatly admire, of England, whose painting was traditionally lauded in the press seen by the Scot. This article became an

impassioned plea for "Realism". English art was felt, by Burty, to be at a very low ebb. The root cause of this malaise, he felt, was two-fold, money and public opinion. He wrote:-

"L'ensemble de l'école anglaise semble se courber, plus bas encore que chez nous, devant ce tyran, le Public: le choix des sujets, le mode d'exécution, la conversation des artistes entre eux, tout révèle cette préoccupation finale de la vente et paralyse les plus généreux efforts. Le seigneur Maecenas de Londres est en ce moment un marchand de tableaux. Il n'est guère de toiles qui sortent directement de l'atelier des artistes. On peut conclure au résultat." 136.

The result of these afflictions, Burty thought, was that the English school had no clear direction.

"Ce qui manque à la moyenne de l'école, ce n'est pas le talent, ce n'est pas la conviction, car nous allons citer à l'instant des hommes aussi distingués par la tendance que par l'éducation; c'est la doctrine, c'est l'audace, c'est la virilité. Le public anglais s'est habitué à ne demander à l'art que son côté purement aimable. Il faudrait le violenter et lui montrer que sous l'épiderme il y a des muscles, sous le front une pensée, dans le poitrine une coeur. Il faut faire entrer en scène un acteur qui soit du même coup robuste et agité par la passion vraie. Ce personnage, c'est la réalité. Depuis qu'on a fait table rase de la peinture académique, le sujet de genre a triomphé: il met en

scène, non plus comme au temps d'Hogarth, les drames ou les comédies de la vie humaine, et au besoin des ivrognes, des débauchés abrutis, des filles perdues, des aliénés, des voleurs ou des ministres qui déshonorent leur habit, mais un idéal affadissant de vie superficielle et facile. On a fait seulement semblant de choisir ses sujets dans la vie réelle: mais pour ne pas offenser la délicatesse des misses et des gentlemen, on a débarbouillé les petit paysans peigné les servantes, baignés les pauvres Irlandais, décrottés les boeufs, lissé les chèvres, tondu les moutons, lustré les chevaux avec des brosses mécaniques et des eaux des senteur. Tout ce qui nous semble déjà maniéré et qui cependant est réel en angleterre, la verdure des arbres qui n'ont jamais été mutilés, la propreté exquise des villages de certains comtés, l'émiettage de la terre labourée, la langleur des yeux bleus des jeunes filles, l'éclat des leur joues, la finesse et l'or de leurs cheveux blonds, leur physionomie rêveuse et leur col souple, tout cela qui, répétons-le, est infiniment différent de ce que nous avons d'ordinaire sous les yeux en France, a été poussé à l'extrême ici et est passé en tradition. Aussi cette gaieté des tons, du geste, de l'entourage, gaieté factice et inamovible, finit par troubler et inquiéter." 137.

Comparisons with Reid's writings are obvious. He frequently spoke out against the evil effect public opinion had on art. Burty's remarks regarding the role of money in art are almost exactly the same as Reid's own views.<sup>138</sup> For example in letters to Walker from Falkland in 1867 and to White from London in 1870.<sup>139</sup> Reviews such as these were of central

importance for the developments of Reid's own views. At the same time, in addition to specific exhibition reviews, there were many more general articles which also appeared in periodicals frequently seen by Reid. F.T. Palgrave, for example, published "English Pictures in 1865" in The Fortnightly Review in August of that year.<sup>140</sup> The article praised French art criticism and frequently cited Phillippe Burty, the Gazette des Beaux-Arts critic as an authority. Palgrave agreed with Burty's views on the weaknesses of English art in general, and with the contention that English painting was too often "quasi-historical".<sup>141</sup> Mason and Whistler were once more linked together as tonal painters and this time Mason was tied also to Jules Breton "without being exactly of the same school."<sup>142</sup> The language used to discuss Mason in the comparison with Breton is very like that later adopted by Reid. Without properly defining the terms, Mason's landscapes were described as exhibiting "quiet truth". The word "effect" was used in a novel way. As in "the singular amount of effect which the artist has attained."<sup>143</sup> a form later used extensively by Reid though the Scot sometimes preferred to leave the word in its original French "effet". Overall Palgrave's article was different from the standard pieces of the time. It understood and praised tonal landscape painting and sided with the French view of English art, rather than with the slightly myopic nationalism found in The Athenaeum and The Art Journal.

Four months later P.G. Hamerton also wrote in The Fortnightly Review. Again the article had overtones of French criticism. The title of the piece was "The Place of Landscape Painting amongst the Fine Arts".<sup>144</sup> Once more many of the ideas and methods of discussing these ideas were to become hallmarks of Reid's writing. It is not possible to state definitively that

it was specifically these two articles which informed and moulded Reid's opinions, the language and debate were common currency at the time. It might well have been from completely different sources that Reid learned. However the articles by Palgrave and Hamerton must be considered at least likely candidates as seminal influences. The Fortnightly Review was definitely one of the periodicals that Reid read and he mentioned reading and approving of other articles by Palgrave and especially by Hamerton. Hamerton's piece was concerned with the practicalities of landscape painting rather than with analytical art criticism. Nevertheless, like Palgrave, Hamerton discussed tone and tonal landscape painting, effect, and truth to nature; ideas and language central to Reid's views and his explanation of them.

In August 1866 Reid went to Utrecht, and possibly because of the preparations for the journey there were no Montrose Standard reviews for that year. After the stay with Mollinger Reid's perceptions of "modern" landscape painting must necessarily have been very different. In addition to reading about developments outside Scotland Reid had now actually watched an artist who conceived of painting in tonal terms at work. As has been shown, Mollinger influenced not only Reid's technique, but also undoubtedly his subject matter as well. Reid's penchant for dramatic lighting effects and ruined castles gave way to less picturesque, more "Realist" subjects. As well as studying in Utrecht, Reid travelled. He visited galleries and saw other artists' work besides his teacher's. <sup>146</sup>. He now had practical as well as theoretical experience.

Certainly periodical articles continued to be important for Reid. He still avidly discussed them with Walker and asked him to keep certain articles for him if he happened to have missed them by being away from both Aberdeen and Edinburgh. In August 1868 for example he was painting in Peterhead and told Walker of an article by Tom Taylor in The Gentleman's Magazine on contemporary landscape painting. Reid had heard of the piece but had not yet seen it. <sup>146</sup>. He hoped to be able to read it. Pieces in The Athenaeum of January and March 1867 which concerned tonal painting must also have interested him, <sup>147</sup>. likewise the two articles on the International Exhibition in Paris which appeared in April. <sup>148</sup>.

Before seeing the reviews of the 1867 International Exhibition, and before Reid went to Paris to see the show for himself in early May, he wrote three more R.S.A. reviews for The Montrose Standard. These reviews are slightly different from the two previous series' of 1864 and 1865. They are shorter, there are less paintings discussed, and the analysis is often less rigorous. Reid himself acknowledged the move towards a more general discussion of Scottish art, rather than a tightly packed specific exhibition review, by writing in a letter to Walker that he was unsure of the reception his reviews would get. "I don't know if McCaskie will like sufficiently well the notes I am going to send him. They are perhaps a little too misty for the Montrose folks." <sup>149</sup>.

Reid was possibly too annoyed to write objectively about the exhibition that year. It was only six months since he had returned from his studies with Mollinger. He was wholly absorbed and excited by the new knowledge and methods he had acquired. But in the six months since he had returned

he had been attacked on all sides for his studies abroad. Even before he returned to Scotland he had learned from Walker of fears being voiced that he would return from Utrecht as an imitator of Mollinger. On his return, as already noted, he was summoned by George Harvey, the president of the R.S.A., and warned of the dangers of studying with a foreigner. He had been attacked in the press for slavishly following his Dutch master. Noel Paton had said that while Reid's 1866 paintings were good, his post Mollinger works were nothing other than "degrading copyism" <sup>160</sup>. As a final insult he discovered, while he was actually in the process of writing the reviews for the Standard, that his pictures had been deliberately badly hung at the R.S.A. to teach him a lesson. <sup>161</sup> The painting of Cowie Kirk that Reid had worked on while in Utrecht was a very cool, low toned landscape. It was hung under a portrait painted in strong, rich colours and beside a painting of a boy in vermillion stockings. "I can tell you it takes the colour out of my unfortunate landscape most effectually".<sup>162</sup> Another of Reid's paintings, worked on while in Holland, and consequently of the same generic type as Mollinger's tonal landscapes, was deliberately hung underneath a painting by the Dutch artist to point out Reid's supposed plagiarism and to try and put him off doing it again.

With all this happening in just six months Reid's failure to attempt a thorough, impartial review of the R.S.A. can hardly be wondered at. Nevertheless, there are still a number of revealing sections in the reviews which help to demonstrate the painter's still growing knowledge. He did vent his spleen somewhat in an attack on a painting by Noel Paton and in a strong condemnation of how appallingly badly the Academy treated younger painters. These were really the only signs of personal bias appearing.

Indeed the first paintings he properly discussed were the landscapes of Harvey which he praised very highly. The attack he had begun to make on McCulloch in 1865 had grown much stronger by 1867. There was now a specific contrast drawn between the nature based work of Mollinger and the "conventional" landscapes of McCulloch and his followers. While McCulloch and Perigal were dismissed as painting "hard" pictures with no "feeling", Mollinger was praised.

"It is quite a relief to turn from them to such a picture as No. 500. 'A Creek behind a Dutch Farm,' by A. Mollinger, a Dutch artist, who for some years back has sent us some of the finest landscapes which have adorned the walls of the Exhibition. His powers appear to be of a very high order. He possesses a fine appreciation for tone and colour. There is a unity and breadth and truthfulness about all he paints, and a simplicity in the subjects and in his mode of treating them which is quite charming. What could be more true to nature than the picture we have just referred to?" 153.

Along with his now certain conviction regarding nature as the fount of all painting, there was another demonstration of his expanded reading. At the very beginning of the first review Reid criticised the quality of the exhibition in general, and wrote:-

"Here, as in every modern exhibition of the kind, mediocrity is rampant; and few and far between are the pictures you care to return to, and study and enjoy again and again. Our nineteenth

century art, as a rule, is sadly wanting in earnestness and purpose - wanting in what the French call *motif*." 154.

This use of untranslated french as technical or critical terms became very common in Reid's writing. This is one of the first examples of it.

In early May 1867, just five weeks after the publication of the final Montrose Standard review, Reid went to Paris to see the International Exhibition for himself; further practical knowledge to add to his studies in Utrecht and his second-hand periodical information. In addition to seeing at first hand the French pictures he had read about, being in Paris opened up the possibility of Reid seeing still more French "Realist" writing on art. Again this was not specifically commented on, but there are a number of well known statements which would appear to have had an effect on Thoughts On Art. The pamphlet can now be examined in the light of all Reid's experiences and studies in the period February 1864 to May 1868. The opinions, convictions, bias', likes and dislikes, the entire artistic doctrine, can be examined for indications of its origins in the Dutch practice and French theory discovered by Reid in the previous four years.

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#### Thoughts On Art in the Context of European Developments

Thoughts On Art bears the mark of Reid's practical training in Holland under Mollinger. The Utrecht artist's works, and those of other young Dutch painters were highly praised and praised specifically for putting into practice the very methods Reid himself had recently learned. As well as

this obvious reflection of Reid's Dutch studies there are other signs of the effect they had on his views. By 1868 Reid knew the Dutch had learned from contemporary French painters. Therefore in his technical remarks he went back to the original source for his observations. <sup>155</sup>. After praising Harvey's landscapes, but criticising his "unsound system of execution" <sup>156</sup>. [he painted with varnish and megilp mixed through his colours] Reid went on to praise good technique. He wrote "The dry, solid style of painting adopted by the French landscape school, may result in less brilliancy and colour, but their pictures have a soundness and healthiness of constitution which Harvey's lack;" <sup>157</sup>.

The practicalities of picture making appeared again later, and again revealed Reid's debt to Mollinger's practice. Noel Paton's technique was heavily criticised. Reid, wholly converted to Mollinger's mediumless painting abhorred Paton's miserly use of pigment. "The manner of painting is thin, and too large recourse seems to have been had to mere glazing. Some feeling of texture is given to parts, but by rather doubtful means." <sup>158</sup>. The technique was central to Reid's ends. Therefore, the result of what Reid felt was poor technique, that is, not Mollinger's, was also severely dealt with. The heavy paint, with its inherent lack of very finely painted detail, and its potential for emotional suggestion rather than factual description, was an essential for Reid. Consequently anyone who painted in well thinned fluid colour with sharp attention to detail could not but paint bad pictures. Reid saw John Faed's The Ballad as displaying all these "faults".

"Why should Mr Faed strive so manfully to be clear: He is making no statement about facts which are held to be doubtful; the shelves, with their candlesticks and crockery, are as clearly laid down in a proposition in Euclid; the details of chair and table legs, the stripes on stockings and corduroy, have not been overlooked by him. There is nothing in this sort of art; it is narrowed and restricted, the eye can comprehend all at a glance; there is no doubt or mystery, but finality everywhere; one innate longing of the mind, the desire for infinity, [in art mystery], has nothing to gratify it, nothing to retain a hold on its affections." 159.

The theory acquired since 1864 was also very much in evidence in Thoughts On Art. Sometimes the sources would appear quite readily identifiable. Reid's view on the dilatory effect of public taste on art has already been discussed; Ruskin appearing to be the source of the painter's argument, with Philippe Burty reinforcing the approach in his review of the 1866 R.A.. There are other instances of very close connections. Reid and White's answer to the unstated question "What should an artist paint?" is at the heart of Thoughts On Art. There are other issues such as "How should an artist paint?" as discussed above. But, it is the debate about subject matter that is really the raison d'etre of the entire work. The answer is a "Realist" one. The answer is that an artist should paint what he sees round about him, should paint his own age, and should not seek to re-present history.

By 1868 there were innumerable sources on which Reid and White might have drawn. As already established, much of the author's arguments about history painting were drawn from Ruskin. However there are instances where individual sections of French writing appear to be very close to Thoughts On Art. By again limiting the possible sources to writings known to have been consulted by Reid and White, and, to readily available pieces in locations they are known to have frequented, a group of potentially seminal works and their results can be identified. Although the basic statement regarding the pointlessness of attempting history painting was repeated in innumerable articles and strongly pushed by Ruskin, it is at least possible that Reid and White read it in its original form.

Having initially rejected the request of a number of dissatisfied students from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts to open a studio, Courbet changed his mind and set out his beliefs in an open letter. The letter dated December 25th 1861 appeared in the Courrier du Dimanche. It is virtually impossible for Reid and White to have seen this original publication. However, Courbet's friend, the critic Castagnary, reprinted the letter under a different title in Les Libres Propos of 1864. Since the Scots were in Paris just two years later, and, with an avowed interest in "Realist" issues, it is possible that they saw the volume. Furthermore, when it is taken into consideration that Reid and White were taken by Mollinger to the studios of artists at least on the fringe of the "Realist" debate, the chance of them coming into contact with "Realist" literature is relatively high. Courbet wrote:-

"I hold the artists of one century basically incapable of reproducing the aspect of a past or future century. It is in this

sense that I deny the possibility of historical art applied to the past. Historical art is by nature contemporary. Each epoch must have its artists who express it and reproduce it for the future." 160.

Sections of Thoughts On Art read almost as a paraphrase of Courbet.

"We believe the time will yet come when artists will see that the only true historical painting, and the only kind that is valuable and enduring, is that of contemporary events. \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ there is another consideration in favour of the painting of contemporary history. The artist is able to get at the absolute relative truth of things which compose his picture." 161.

Parts too of Champfleury find a strong echo in Thoughts On Art. "The serious representation of present-day personalities, the derbies, the black dress-coats, the polished shoes or the peasants sabots', had a far greater interest than the frivolous knick-knacks of the past." 162. That was part of a letter written to the novelist Georges Sand published in Le Realisme in 1857. In Thoughts On Art Reid and White wrote:-

"'Shopping in the 15th Century' [No. 735], would have been quite as much to the purpose, and fully more interesting, had the scene been laid in the 19th century instead. \_ \_ \_ \_ We regret that he should so persistently choose his subjects from a past age rather than from the present. If he would only look a little

nearer home, he would find subjects in the everyday-life around quite as interesting, \_ \_ " '63.

Similarly Castagnary's 1863 Salon review for Le Nord of Brussels stated:-

"The object of painting is to express, according to the nature of the means at its disposal, the society which produced it. \_ \_ \_  
\_ Each era knows itself only through the deeds it has accomplished\_ \_ \_ [which]\_ \_ \_ distinguish it at once from the previous era and the era to come." '64.

Again this is very close to Reid and White's attacks on history painting.

Sometimes the examples used by the Scots were the same as those used by other critics to make the same point. Hogarth is a prime example; Reid and White's remarks probably being drawn from Ruskin. Hogarth however was one of the very few English painters capable of being interpreted as a painter of "modern life" and he was linked to nineteenth century "Realism" by other critics as well as Ruskin. Burty in his 1866 R.A. review wrote approvingly of the painter, as did Paul Mantz in his article written for the Gazette des Beaux Arts on the English paintings shown at the International Exhibition. '66. Thoughts On Art probably reflects an amalgamation of all these sources.

These general points then may well be the result of external influences. There are many individual examples, arguments and statements made by Reid and White that were in agreement with periodical articles that they are

likely to have seen. These include, contempt for Benjamin West in the Gazette des Beaux-Arts; mountain scenery and how it should be painted, and, landscape painting as an activity in The Fine Arts Quarterly Review, sentiment and meaning in landscape, in The Gentleman's Magazine; the links between Breton and Mason, and, a contempt for "finish" for its own sake, both in The Fortnightly Review. All the views expressed in these instances are repeated in Thoughts On Art '66. The pamphlet though is not simply an uncritical compilation of other writers' opinions, not just a precis of the articles read by the Scots. Frequently, in the articles which would appear to have influenced Reid and White, there appear opinions which Thoughts On Art contradicts directly. There are however, many examples of articles where, with regard to Thoughts On Art, both concurrent and widely divergent views appeared.

The most striking example of Reid and White's independence in the pamphlet appeared in relation to an article in The Fortnightly Review. Just prior to the Scots leaving for Paris in May 1867, The Fortnightly Review printed the first of two reviews of the International Exhibition there. It is virtually certain, with his established knowledge of the journal and his particular interest in the subject, that Reid saw the article. '67. Indeed certain portions of it bear comparison with Thoughts On Art. Henry O'Neil (1817-1880), the author of the articles and himself a painter that Reid admired, thought Jules Breton the greatest French painter at the exhibition. '68. Everything about him O'Neil found admirable, the subject, the tone and colour of his painting, and, his "taste". Daubigny he thought the greatest living landscape painter with Rousseau and Dupré also deemed worthy of admiration, In general O'Neil attacked English painting for its failings in

terms of "truth to tone" '69. and held up French painting as the ideal model. All these points concur precisely with the views of Reid and White as expressed in Thoughts On Art. The difference however between O'Neil's view of painting and the Scots' could not be greater. O'Neil's concerns are almost entirely technical. He had no committed belief about the role of art in society, as did Reid and White. For O'Neil subject was not a determining factor in judging a painting's merit. The only consideration was the technical abilities of the artist. This allowed him to admire Breton, Daubigny and Gérôme, but to decry Millet, Corot and Meissonier. He could admire Breton's Les Sarebeuses and Faruffini's Sacrifice of an Egyptian Virgin to the Nile almost equally. They were examined on technical grounds only. The approach manifested by Thoughts On Art is exactly the opposite. Any painter not conforming to the preconceived notion of correct subject and correct treatment of subject, could not help but be dismissed. Equally a painter with technical faults who painted, as Reid and White saw it, "honestly", with "truth to nature" and the correct "feeling", was deemed, if not entirely successful, at least worthy of note. This is precisely how Chalmers was criticised in Thoughts On Art. "His composition looks more like chance than the result of earnest study, and the drawing has little vitality or purpose in it." '70. These faults were rectifiable however.

"Mr Chalmers, by care and study, could easily acquire a mastery over drawing and composition to which he is as yet in great measure a stranger. Academic training can do much for an artist in that way; and if he lay his mind to the study of form, and become, for a time, a definer instead of a suggester, the result to his art would be of infinite value. If he could compose a

picture, and draw a figure with the academic accuracy of John Faed, and paint it with his own delicious feeling in colour, what notable results might we not look for!" 171.

Thoughts On Art was an original work. Its authors borrowed selectively and consistently from other writings but were not afraid to express their own opinions vigorously, even when they disagreed with established wisdom. For example The Athenaeum heaped praise on Daniel Maclise' A Winter Night's Tale (Illustration 56.) . Stephens felt the work worthy of "earnest study", and destined to "win very great applause." 172. Reid and White loathed the work. They described it as "\_ \_ \_ setting an example of everything that in painting should be avoided. Hung in the place of honour in one of the rooms, it is sure to vitiate and pervert still further public taste;" 173.

Landseer received much the same treatment. His pair of equine portraits Prosperity and Adversity were much admired by Stephens when he reviewed the R.A. of 1865. 174. When the works appeared in Scotland three years later they were dismissed by Reid and White. Stephens felt "The artist never told a tale better than by these pictures, and probably never painted a horse's hide better than that of the youthful model. One would rather be a dog, or a horse, than a man in this artist's hands." 175. Reid and White wrote:-

"\_ \_ \_ 'Prosperity' [No. 688], and 'Adversity' [No. 726], are forced, and inclining to vulgarity. The sentiment, if any, in both pictures is commonplace, the workmanship is too smooth and oily, and the background in 688 is feeble in the extreme. But it would be unfair to our veteran animal painter to carry comparisons

further. These works cannot be regarded as true specimens of his power." 176.

Even the Gazette des Beaux-Arts was not followed uncritically. Paul Mantz' view of the English school at the International Exhibition criticised Orchardson, and regarding his work The Challenge (Illustration 57.) concluded:-

"\_ \_ \_il nous est impossible de prendre M. Orchardson pour un colouriste, car le ton qu'il emploie ne s'enchaînent pas les uns aux autres dans une ordre bien musical. Son procédé de travail est d'ailleurs des plus singuliers. Cette méthode égratignée qui juxtapose patiemment les petites touches, ressemble plus à de la broderie qu'à de la peinture. Metsu s'tonnerait de ce système; Van Ostade en serait profondément révolté." 177.

The Scots singled out Orchardson as one of the few who had learned from the tonal painting of the French.

"\_ \_ \_ Many of the most promising of the young painters including Calderon, Orchardson, G.D. Leslie, Mason, Yeames and Wells, shew evident traces of French influences in their work, and greatly, we think to its advantage. \_ \_ \_ [They] \_ \_ \_ have infused into it [their work] many of the best qualities of French art, and, notably, the important element of tonalité. The later works of Orchardson \_ \_ \_ \_ 'The Challenge', and 'Talbot and the Countess of Auvergne' \_ \_ \_ may be cited as examples." 178.

There are then, specific instances of influence to be identified, and, equally, areas which demonstrate the free thinking of Reid and White. The most common form of influence found in Thoughts On Art is the influence of primary ideas. These ideas then being adapted to fit, or applied to specifically Scottish situations. At the most basic level, this was what was happening when the "Realist" methodology of attack on history painting was used as the basis to comment upon James Drummond, Daniel Maclise and George Hay. Or, when the principles of tonal landscape painting were used as the basis for analysing all current Scottish landscape painting. There were other more specific adaptations of European ideas. The French promotion and use of popular songs and verse as a source of "Realist" imagery reappeared in Scottish guise in Thoughts On Art. Champfleury, for example was opposed to poetry as a medium of expression on the grounds that it sacrificed the thought to the form. The only exception to this belief was his support for vernacular verse where the sentiment was not inhibited in any way by rules of poetic construction. <sup>179</sup>. Ribot painted pictures based on popular ballads, The Little Milkmaid (Illustration 58.) of the mid 1860's is thought to be based on the folk song Il était une Bergère, the beginning of which seems particularly close to Ribot's image.

"There was a small shepherdess

Who tended her sheep

She made cheese

From the milk of her sheep

A cat who eyes her

Has a mischievous air \_ \_ " <sup>180</sup>.

Songs by writers such as Pierre Dupont were written for popular performance and often revolved round peasant life and work. The work of

writers such as Dupont was clearly known to painters and to "Realist" critics. Popular and folk culture was an accepted source of "Realist" imagery. Reid and White appear at first glance to have adopted this entirely, and simply restated the proposition in Scottish terms.

"There is no part of the literature of a country that shows the national bent of a people better than its Songs. 'Give me the making of the songs of a country, and I care not who may write its laws,' is the trite but true saying of Fletcher of Saltoun. The songs are the outcome of the feelings of a nation, revealing its tastes, sympathies, and aspirations. They are the glass in which we see mirrored the whole character of the people. The wealth of Scottish song makes it an easy task to decipher the national characteristics, for there is no country in which there is a greater outpouring of feeling in regard to the domestic affections, the incidents of simple every-day life, with its pleasures and sorrows, and the cheerful influence of the cottage fireside." 181.

However the argument was rapidly converted into a plea for Scottish artists to turn to the writings of Robert Burns and Walter Scott. These were seen as a source which expressed the true nature of Scotland. Almost inevitably Burns was linked to the "truth to nature is the only real path to great art" argument. Reid and White wrote:-

"\_ \_ [Nothing can] \_ \_ bind us with hidden words more closely to nature than the songs of Burns, \_ \_ \_ \_ With what pathos

does he indicate the harmony that must exist between the human heart and the face of nature, as he plaintively sings -

"Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,  
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?  
How can ye chant, ye little birds,  
And I sae weary, fou' o' care?  
Thou'lt break my heart, thou warbling bird,  
That wantons through the flowery thorn;  
Thou mind'st me o' departed joys,  
Departed - never to return."

Or, again -

"Ayr, gurgling, kissed his pebbled shore,  
O'erhung with wild woods, thickening green;  
The fragrant birch, and hawthorn hoar,  
Twin'd am'rous round the raptured scene;  
The flowers sprang wanton to be prest,  
The birds sang love in every spray -  
Till too, too soon, the glowing west  
Proclaimed the speed of parting day."

In these love songs nature seems to become part of the poet, responsive to every shade of feeling. But, in addition to this poetic power of making himself one with nature, Burns depicted her beauties with consummate skill. From the conditions of his verse, as lyric poetry, elaborate description seldom finds a place, for the mood is too tame for him. More frequently his touches are like lightning flashes, rapid but far-gleaming. When he does condescend to the descriptive, how rich and true, as well as powerful, are the tones. Witness the 'Birks of Aberfeldy'-

"Now simmer blinks on flowery braes,  
And o'er the crystal streamlet plays,  
Come, let us spend the lightsome days  
In the Birks of Aberfeldy.  
The braes ascend like lofty wa's,  
The foaming stream deep roaring fa's,  
O'erhung wi'fragrant spreading shaws,  
The Birks of Aberfeldy.  
The hoary cliffs are crowned wi' flowers,  
While o'er the linns the burnie pours,  
And rising, weets wi' misty showers  
The Birks of Aberfeldy.'

'The scene is beautiful' says Allan Cunningham, himself a painter, 'and the song rivals in truth and effect the landscape.' --[Bohn's Burns, p65. ]" 182. Or take his 'Bruar Water' -  
'Here foaming down the shelving rocks,  
In twisting strength I rin;  
Then high my boiling torrent smokes,  
Wild roaring o'er a linn:'

which is as vivid and vigorous as a Highland Spate by Peter Graham. But it is as a painter of Scottish character and manners that Burns is best known, and it is in this direction that his influence on Scottish art has been greatest. He threw a halo round the simple cottage life, which has made it, and every representation of it, dear to the heart of the people.

\_ \_ Burns gave insight into the very heart of nature," 183.

Thus an idea stemming originally from French "Realist" theory was adapted to suit Scottish conditions and bound up with another borrowed vision to create an original manifesto for the progress of painting that was peculiarly Scottish. There is French precedent for "Realist" recourse to Burns, but it was unpublished and it is highly unlikely that it was ever seen in Scotland. 184.

Thoughts On Art was not the end of Reid's writings, nor was it the end of his learning from Europe. It was however a summation of all his studies up to this point. The spur of having to write twenty-five thousand words of internally consistent criticism, served to coalesce all the disparate parts of his eclectic "Realist" education of the preceeding four years. The act of writing Thoughts On Art welded everything into a single coherent system of thought which formed the basis of the artist's next period of learning,

and, ultimately, for the rest of his working life. The nature of Thoughts On Art as a watershed in Reid's development can be assessed by looking at the change that occurred in the artist's letters immediately the pamphlet was produced.

In examining the developments of Reid's published writings up to and including 1868, his gradual introduction of new terminology has been briefly mentioned. He used the term "motif" in 1867 for example. <sup>105</sup>. "Effect" appeared the same year. <sup>106</sup>. This change in the language the artist used to discuss paintings is very marked in his private correspondence. The change centred around the publication of Thoughts On Art in May 1868.

Reid's first use of "effect" in his letters occurs in March 1867, just after he had written the reviews of that year for The Montrose Standard. He described "effect" in something he saw in real life, and compared it to his own "effect", with his own coming out very much second best. <sup>107</sup>. The big difference occurred in the immediate aftermath of the pamphlet's publication. In the very letter that Reid wrote to his co-author describing the consequences of their work, he announced:-

"I was rather taken with the look of the peat moss at the back of it (Mr Duguid's house at Auchlunies) and on Saturday I made a tonalité study of some women working among the peats which I think will perhaps be the making of a picture. I followed this up with sketches both on Monday and Tuesday - but will lay them aside till the end of the summer. If I am still in the same mind

I may then paint a picture of "peat casting" -as far as I know a new subject among painters." 188.

This revealing paragraph not only shows Reid using the term "tonalité" for the first time, it proves in addition that all the theorising regarding technique and subject matter that Thoughts On Art indulged in was directly relevant to Reid's own painting. He was fully aware of the innovative nature of his proposed painting, and the work demonstrates him painting in exactly the same manner as he wrote. Just as Reid and White adapted what they knew of "Realism" to Scottish ends, so Reid took European precedent in the form of the rural labour themes he had read about and had seen in Paris, and gave to them a particularly Scottish slant.

By July 1868 he was writing of tonalité regularly. In a letter to Walker from London Reid criticised the watercolours at the R.A. for their complete absence of tonalité.<sup>188</sup> In August, in a letter from Peterhead he wrote of making a tonalité study of a fisher-boy at Buchanhaven. <sup>189</sup>.

(Illustration 59.) The term and the method had passed into Reid's regular written and painted vocabulary. He had surely read of tone studies and tonal landscape painting in the preceding four years. He had definitely read articles in which tonal painting was discussed. What finally organised his rather haphazard education into a system that he could use in his own work was the discipline of writing Thoughts On Art early in 1868.

In 1869 Reid travelled abroad again; again specifically to study. <sup>191</sup>. He went to Paris in February 1869. He was met by John Dun who was already studying there, and by D.A.C. Artz the Dutch painter whom he had met

through Mollinger and who was then based in Paris. Reid arrived in the city without having made any definite arrangements regarding studying. He hoped to enrol with any one of the painters he admired but was to be disappointed.

"I had a talk with Artz about matters (presumably with whom he should enrol) on Saturday evening. Daubigny he says does not keep an open atelier or take pupils - neither does Jules Breton. However Artz is to get me an introduction to Daubigny through a mutual friend." 192.

Since studying under either Daubigny or Breton was impossible Reid went with Dun to enrol in the atelier of Adolphe Yvon. The choice of a battle painter as master appears strange considering Reid's pronounced "Realist" leanings. He was not sure he had made the correct decision.

"I went with Dun on Monday to see Yvon's atelier - but it is not that in the proper sense of the word - it is simply a life school in a large shed in which a model stands nude for four hours a day. \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Twice a week Yvon comes to the place \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ I don't know if I have acted wisely in rushing into it so but at all events one has nature pure and simple, and Yvon only twice a week so no great harm can come of it." 193.

Reid did not like Yvon's painting but as he explained to Walker "I don't much admire his style of painting, but as he is powerful in drawing I am sure I will be all the better for being under him for a little." 194. Reid's

"Realist" tastes had not changed at all. He wrote for example of his dislike for the work of an ex-pupil of Gérôme's whom he met through Artz and declared. "Artz on the other hand works away at the quiet little bits of domestic life which is much more to my taste." 195. (Illustration 34.)

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### George Reid's Realist Subjects of Rural Nostalgia

The "Realist" beliefs which had grown up over the previous five years were by now unshakably entrenched in Reid's conception of painting. Working with Mollinger gave him a painting language. Writing Thoughts On Art had clarified and organised his theoretical knowledge and beliefs. The studies made under Yvon were for technical ends, aimed at improving his physical skill. It was in studies that he undertook outside of studio time that his own predilections again came to the fore. Above all it was still Jules Breton that he admired from among contemporary French painters. "I have \_ \_ gone to the Luxembourg gallery and intend making studies for tone off several of the best modern pictures of the French School which are there. I have begun with a picture of Jules Breton's 'The recall of the Gleaners'" 196. The elements he found most significant had also not changed. "I hope I will be able to get at the tone and feeling of it. It is so charming in both respects." 197. It was still tonal land based painting as learned from Mollinger that was Reid's technique of choice. It was still the achievement of the ill-defined "feeling" - emotional empathy - that remained his ultimate goal. His belief in the superiority of European training over British training was also still intact. 198. In letters to White and Walker his "Realist" views come across again and again. David and Ingres were

dismissed as "cold, heartless, dead", <sup>199</sup>. while Breton, Daubigny, Frère, Daubigny's son, Corot and Lépine were admired. <sup>200</sup>. Reid got on well with Yvon and was delighted when the painter took time personally to make alterations to a proof engraving of the first of the Scots works ever to be reproduced. Yvon drew on the proof to demonstrate how improvements might be achieved. Reid wrote:-

"\_ \_ \_ his goodness did not stop there, he got hold of a piece of chalk and fell to work on the proof himself and in a few minutes it was all right. I wonder how many of our Edinburgh masters would have done so much for a student? I really felt it very kind of him and told him so." <sup>201</sup>.

Never the less it was first and always Breton that Reid admired and wanted to meet. Just before leaving Paris he wrote in resigned fashion in a letter to White:-

"Jules Breton does not live in Paris so there is no getting at him - he stays away down at Courrières - Pas de Calais. I believe he has a large farm there - curious mixture farmer and painter! but this gives one a glimpse into the quiet and delightfully simple life that finds its outcome in such pictures as the 'weeders' - the gleaners etc. He lives in the midst of it all." <sup>202</sup>.

Returning to Aberdeen by way of a week's stay in London, Reid finished off his French studies with a thorough examination of the R.A.. "I hope also to

see the Royal Academy next week and when I have done so I will have seen all the best current art of Europe in 1869 - and one may form opinions about the right and wrong in painting with some amount of confidence. 203. The opinions he formed changed not at all. He was now just broadening his base of knowledge, looking out for more and more examples of work which fell within the compass of his own personal "Realism". The R.S.A. of 1870 was viewed by Reid from a wholly "Realist" standpoint. He even stated in one letter:-

"Dun has made great progress this year and I think is now in a thoroughly healthy way of working. His largest picture shews some fifeshire coalminers returning home in the gloaming - twilight - sky - ripe corn - horned moon - wives and children coming to meet them. There is something really very nice about the picture and much genuine painting. Only I can feel that he has drawn quite as much of his inspiration from Jules Breton's 2 pictures in the Luxembourg, as from nature. Still, it would be cruel to say so to him. He will get to be himself by and by. It shows he has the right stuff in him when he chooses such an artist for his model." 204.

Still Reid was not satisfied with his own work. In September 1871 he again travelled to Holland to study, this time with Josef Israels. Reid's first trip to Holland, five years previously, was educational in a practical sense. It was aimed at changing for the better his oil-painting technique, and his painting language. He also learned from Mollinger a new subject matter and an emotionally expressive approach to representing these subjects. In short

he was studying contemporary Dutch painting. In Paris in 1869 he did none of these things. He studied technically with Yvon, and, albeit at a distance, theoretically with Breton. France was the primary source of great painting for Reid. It was the basis on which a modern art could rise. But it was always the Dutch adaptation of French painting that provided the first hand model for the Scot. For all the reasons already noted it was to Holland that these nineteenth century Scots looked to learn practical painting. <sup>205</sup>. Accordingly when Reid returned there in 1871 he once more went as a painter. He took materials with him, expecting to paint with and for Israels and to learn from him just as he had done from Mollinger. From Paris in 1869 Reid wrote:-

"I will bring nothing home with me in the shape of pictures. I have kept most rigidly to my resolution of making my visit here a purely educational one. I have been ground at the mill since ever I came but I hope to find the result of it all afterwards." <sup>206</sup>.

In Holland his aims were different. Within a week of arrival he wrote to White to tell him that he had begun work on three paintings and to describe in detail the effect that Israels was having on them. <sup>207</sup>. Like Mollinger Israels was a conscientious master. He gave a lot of his time and energy to his pupil. Reid wrote

"I have had many long and pleasant talks with Israels about art matters and he has been chalking out the course I should follow,

telling me what I have and what I have not and what I must hereafter try to get at. It has been most comforting at times and seems to open up the way and clear the mists from it." 208.

The advice given to Reid by Israels was not always very clear. At times he was in despair over the pictures he painted under Israels' tutelage. However the effect of Israels' painting can be seen in the paintings, just as Mollinger's could. Reid worked on three principle paintings while he studied with Israels; a rural interior based on a house he knew in Pennan; a landscape, Gamrie; and Broadsea (Illustration 9.). While he was working on Broadsea he wrote to White describing it. 209. "\_ \_ \_ a lot of red roofed and whitewashed houses upon a low rocky point running out into the sea - a sky full of light clouds overhead - and in the front some women seated on the grass mending herring nets." 210. A week later he wrote again concerning the painting's progress.

"I never saw such a mess in my life. The picture of Broadsea has been nearly finished two or three times and Israels has always come and "stirred" it up again. It has been under all kinds of effects - the sky at one time full of light rolling clouds - then all the clouds away and clear blue - and now it is all over dark clouds. Then there have been fleets of herring boats which have come and gone, and groups of figures which have strutted upon the stage and then disappeared giving place to others who have in like manner gone. How many people, as Israels says have been killed - all buried away out of sight. Then nets have been spread down to dry in the foreground and taken up again, and pailings

have been erected and pulled down - and the weather too has been full of change, from warm to cold and back to warm again. One morning the picture looked almost complete but in the afternoon Israels came in in rather an excited state, looked at it and said no, there must be still another throw of the dice and in half an hour the whole thing was smashed up and the process was going on all day yesterday till darkness put an end to it." 211.

It was the attempt to create the indefinable "feeling" or "sentiment" so praised and so sought after by Reid, that led to this constant reworking. Because of its ill-defined nature, it being a balance between representation of fact and evocation of emotion, it was something of a chance occurrence. "Feeling" was at the core of every work of rural nostalgia, without it a painting was meaningless. Therefore, while superficially successful and technically sound paintings might be destroyed in "still another throw of the dice", the process was inevitable. The technical achievement was worthless without the empathy.

Broadsea bears the mark of having been worked and reworked again and again. It also shows Reid putting into practice some of Israels' practical advice. The Dutch artist described Reid as an economical painter and told him that this was wrong. His advice in painting a sky was that it could never have any light in it "without putting thereon first much paint." 212. And that "The sky must at all times resemble the Great French Republic - like it it must be une et indivisible." 213. Broadsea gives a very clear account of its creation. All the reworking and all the individual elements

of Israels' advice can be seen in it. The painting looks heavily overworked and has a very turgid foreground. There is a poor integration between its parts. For example the division between land and sea in the foreground is very awkward. The painting is almost three separate pieces, with the device of using virtually two horizons leading to problems of unity. Only the woman's head breaks through this foreground line and it is not enough to marry the two separate pieces together. Similarly the horizon line is very hard in the right hand half of the picture, at variance with the broken skyline over the houses and the relatively soft painting of the textures of the land, sea and sky. The painting reveals how Reid struggled with the individual parts of the composition and really lost sight of the whole. It was an educational picture for Reid. He would have learned a great deal by going through the trial and error process of painting it. He acknowledged this in a letter of October 28th 1871, when he wrote regarding which of two of his Aberdeen patrons was going to buy the works he was then painting in Holland. He felt that "They are really not worth anyone's quarrelling about. They are merely experiments - and done for the sake of obtaining a little insight into certain matters." 214.

Reid's appreciation of Israels' advice concerning the sky being a single unified mass can also be seen in Broadsea. The Scot received a practical lesson in the tonalité he had been praising and writing about for three years. Through a desire to avoid any violent shifts in the tone, Israels advised painting a sky as "une et indivisible". The results, for Israels, can be seen for example in The Drowned Fisherman (Illustration 60.), a sketch of which Reid owned. (Illustration 61.) Such a sky reveals the quality and colour of the light in the entire picture because the light comes from the

sky. A lot of colour or tonal change would have disrupted the tonal unity of the painting, to borrow Hamerton's metaphor, the key in which the painting was set. Reid achieved that unity of light in Broadsea.<sup>215</sup> "The sky full of light clouds" which Reid described to White, disappeared. In its place is a heavy sky overall grey in colour and sombre in tone. The sky set the mood for the picture. Israels' extensive use of white, at one point Reid recalled Israels using two large tubes of flake white in half an hour, is again a practical link to the theory of tonal painting. Liberally mixing all colours with white on the palette before starting to paint would inevitably produce a tonally unified colour scheme.

Israels' instructions about using a lot of paint do not seem to have been so readily accepted by Reid. Israels was a gestural painter. The thick paint and the marks of the brush on the canvas were fundamental to his way of painting. The emotion of the painting's subject matter was heightened and emphasised by the marks on the surface and the roughened surface itself. Broadsea is quite gently painted. The handling in the immediate foreground is the loosest in the painting and even there it could never be described as gestural. Both Israels' teaching and the example set by earlier Scottish painters, pushed Reid towards a more aggressive use of paint, but he resisted it. This was probably the result of Reid's work with Mollinger and that artist's more controlled style of painting.

Reid's work then was radically affected by external influences. His landscape and rural painting embodied all those ideas inherent in nineteenth century Scottish society and frequently expressed by Reid himself.<sup>216</sup> The paintings implicitly contain an anti-urban pro-rural bias

and reflect the painter's attitude both to his being a Scot and to his living in the specific conditions of Scotland in the 1860's. However the language Reid used to discuss painting, and the techniques he used in producing the paintings were European. Even his subject matter was a Scottish version of that practised by French and Dutch contemporaries. The European influence was principally the theoretical background to French "Realism" as understood by the Scot, and the practical example of the contemporary Dutch interpretation of nineteenth century French painting. The Dutch version of "Realism" was different. It eschewed the political relevance of Courbet and in general it tended to be more emotionally explicit. The Dutch felt a greater affinity for Breton, Millet and Frère than for Courbet and Daumier. <sup>217</sup>. Theoretically it was France that was important, but it was the "Dutch Realists" and not "French Realism" that affected Reid's work in practical terms.

In November 1871 Reid returned to Scotland to work and to try to make his reputation as a painter. He was successful relatively quickly and by October 1872 was able to repay all the money he had borrowed from John Forbes White since 1867. After taking into account pictures that White had bought from him Reid repaid £114. He felt that a great burden had gone and that he could go on to paint better paintings. <sup>218</sup>. Although he did not study abroad again, in April 1873 he travelled to Pau in the French Pyrenees to paint a portrait commission and travelled frequently in Europe with his wife over the next thirty years.

The final pieces of written criticism that Reid produced were two more collaborations with White written in August and September 1873. Between

August 6th and September 10th their six reviews of the "Aberdeen Art Exhibition" were published in The Aberdeen Journal. Between August 5th and October 13th they published eight reviews in The Aberdeen Daily Free Press. Although very similar, the pieces in The Aberdeen Journal were more thorough in their discussion of the paintings. They no longer expressed the crusading zeal which had been the corner-stone of Thoughts On Art, but the 1873 writings are assured and confident. The two men were certain of their position and presented it with authority. The arguments which they advanced with aggressive defiance in 1868 were now set forth in a more relaxed manner. They were so confident that they knew the correct path for painting that they no longer needed the rather bombastic style of five years previously. Having discussed the "old masters" in the first review in The Aberdeen Journal, the second notice turned to the contemporary European paintings. The tone for the consideration of the "modern" painting was set right at the start. There was no haranging of collectors of bad work, no wild condemnation of individuals. Instead there was a calm certainty that here was the truth about what was worthy in art.

"One of the most striking features in the present collection is the large number of high class pictures by artists of the modern Dutch, Belgian, and French Schools. Of Israels - the greatest living Dutch painter, and indeed one of the greatest living painters of Europe - we have five very fine examples. Of Mollinger - one of the most promising and original of modern landscape painters, whose early death was to art a loss of no common kind, - we have some splendid specimens, one of which (The Heath, Drenthe, No. 10) is very remarkable for its

successful rendering of space and light. Of Clays, Bosboom, Corot, Aubert, Roelofs, De Haas, Auguste Bonheur, Von Moer, Frère and Artz, there are also choice examples - the two marine pieces by the first named being almost perfect of their kind, while the small works by Bosboom and Corot - Nos. 32 and 179 - are gems - precious, almost priceless in some of their qualities. The works of the artists named above are the best among those of the Foreign Schools in the Exhibition. There are others not quite so choice, the chief characteristics of which are smooth prettiness, falseness of colour, and mechanical detail, resulting from the want of earnest and honest study of nature, and a slavish following of conventional rules." 219.

There then followed an explanation of tonalité. This time not quoted from Hamerton as in Thoughts On Art but certainly a paraphrase of Hamerton. In fact Reid and White's explanation is so close to the English critic's that they even retained his musical analogy. This time motif was explained as well. For the first time the aim of creating an emotional response in the viewer was written about. The entire orchestration of all the elements of the painting towards this end was described.

"By "*motif*" is to be understood the leading thought or sentiment pervading a picture, to the full and perfect expression of which everything in it ought to contribute. Light and shade, line and colour, down even to the detail and manner of execution, it may be peaceful and gentle, or full of vigour and storm and passion; and one never failing sign of masterly work is its possessing

this unity of purpose and definiteness of aim, never lost sight of, and never weakened by the presence of useless accessories and needless detail." 220.

The absolutely essential nature of having this unifying concept in any painting was heavily stressed. As well as promoting the physical nature of what they saw as great painting, Reid and White in 1873, were assured enough to lay down the requirements for the psychological intent behind any great painting.

"In much, even of the best of our English and Scotch painters' work this want of motive, of definite purpose is painfully evident, many of them never going beyond mere imitations of places or persons - simple transcripts of nature, more or less successful - the amount of success being generally estimated by the closeness of the resemblance obtained. But true artists' work means something far higher than this, which, after all, is but a very secondary quality. Mere imitation is not art; however successful or however wonderful it may be, it is lifeless - dead - the body without the spirit. The true artist must be an interpreter. Imagination, feeling - deep penetrating intense - is needed. \_ \_ \_ \_ Without this power his art becomes a mere mechanism, and remains so, however great the skill and cunning of his hand may be." 221

Having clearly defined the basis on which they intended to examine the paintings before them, Reid and White then began to analyse the works of

individual artists. Israels' Sleepers (Illustration 62.) was acknowledged as depicting an unoriginal and well worn subject, but that was irrelevant. The artist had the ability to infuse the scene with an over-all "feeling", to have a clear "motif" which transcended the literal depiction of nature and imparted a "quiet simple pathos \_ \_ \_ \_ through the whole work." <sup>222</sup>. All five paintings by Israels were then considered in this way. All were found supremely successful technically, tonally and above all emotionally. Mollinger was also represented by five works. These landscapes were discussed and praised in like manner: so too the same cast of European painters lauded in past years; Frère, Corot, Roelofs, Artz and Bosboom. In the second of the Free Press notices, on August 11th, Mollinger's landscapes were highly praised. Rather than discuss the works themselves Reid and White quoted first from Tom Taylor and then from F.T. Palgrave, all the time lauding the artist for his observation of nature and the truly Dutch nature of his works. <sup>223</sup>. Of the three remaining Aberdeen Journal reviews, one concentrated heavily on the watercolours in the exhibition, and the other two dealt with the contributions of English and Scottish painters. The same "Realist" analysis was present throughout. As in Thoughts On Art George Harvey's landscapes were highly thought of and read as paintings of "feeling", while his historical figure subjects were rejected on the grounds that they were not. On this occasion the painting singled out for attack was Quitting The Manse, one of the historical genre works highly thought of by Reid in early reviews. Chalmers' large landscape The End of The Harvest (Illustration 20.) was praised for its emotionally expressive qualities and Reid's own landscapes were discussed in the same manner. Broadsea, painted with Israels, was discussed, and its "motif" explained.

"In 'Broadsea' No. 107, the intention evidently is to represent the rest of the fisher village after the toils of the night at sea. The boats lie deserted in the open harbour with their masts projecting against the sky. No stir is to be seen about the village which seems to sleep, overshadowed by the dark cloud. This effect is heightened by the lonely woman mending the net in the foreground." 224.

Numerous new discrepancies between the 1864/5 reviews and later writings emerged here. E.W. Cooke, for example, praised in 1864, was condemned in 1873. However the same general outlook, established in the later 1860's, still prevailed. Public taste was still seen as having a bad effect on art in general. Many painters were still criticised for painting "pot-boilers" and for working only for profit. One newly stated change of opinion is interesting. In 1864, having begun to discover Ruskin's work, if not yet French criticism, Reid wrote:-

"Pre-Raphaelitism and photography are doing their work silently but surely; and we think that in the course of a few years, the influences of the two, combined, will solve at length that most difficult of art problems - the possibility of uniting breadth with finish and detail." 225.

By 1873 Reid's opinion had changed. By now he had linked his "truth to nature" opinions with his newly expressed but long credited views on "motif" and "feeling" in landscape. The result was that Pre-Raphaelitism and photography were no longer seen as a boon to landscape painting.

"Pre-raphaelitism (sic) and photography have brought about great changes in the landscape painter's art and in the public taste regarding it, changes not wholly for good, we must add, for the minute rendering of detail and mere topographical accuracy are accepted as the great thing, while sentiment and grasp and breadth of pictorial treatment have been too much lost sight of." 226.

Both in fact and in the theoretical development of the authors, the 1873 reviews were the culmination of Reid and White's critical writing. They are a lucid declaration of the views of the two men and of the intellectual background to Reid's own painting. The peculiarly Scottish blend of debt to French theory and praise for Dutch practice emerged very strongly in the 1873 works.

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#### G.P. Chalmers and European Art

This chapter has concentrated heavily on George Reid's ties to Europe. Although less extensive, the links that G.P. Chalmers had, particularly with Holland, both personally and through his close friend Reid, are worth examining. Again, although limited, there is evidence too of Chalmers having access to and consulting contemporary periodicals which would have discussed European painting. As an associate member of the R.S.A. from 1867 he would have had the library at his disposal. More specifically it would appear that Chalmers' patron G.B. Simpson of Broughty Ferry fulfilled something of the same role as did Alex. Walker for George Reid. In November

1866 Chalmers wrote to Simpson saying "Received the two numbers of 'The Athenaeum' all right - many thanks. I will return them very soon." <sup>227</sup>. There was no suggestion that this occurrence was anything out of the ordinary. Although it is the only reference to a periodical in the letters from Chalmers to Simpson, it is at least possible that the collector was supplying Chalmers with contemporary periodicals on a semi-regular basis.

Chalmers' links with Holland are likewise considerably less direct than those of Reid. He travelled abroad only twice. In the autumn of 1862 he visited the popular painting location of Brittany with John Pettie and Tom Graham. <sup>228</sup>. In May 1874 he travelled to Paris and The Hague with Joseph Farquarson. <sup>229</sup>. In between, in June 1870, he had met and travelled round Scotland in company with Israels. <sup>230</sup>. Because of the relative lack of definite information it is not possible to trace precise areas of influence and advice adhered to or ignored as was the case with Reid <sup>231</sup>. Chalmers' own dilatory nature as a letter writer and his failure to keep any letters he received, also leads to a shortage of primary source material regarding the painter's own views on European works which he saw and admired. At the most basic level it can be established that the painter did admire contemporary Dutch and French painting. The sale catalogue of his studio contents reveals that he owned works by Mollinger, the Maris brothers, Artz, Frère and Mauve. Furthermore, on the night he died Chalmers had made a long and impassioned speech praising his friend John Forbes White's large Corot landscape Souvenir d'Italie. While there are some relevant written sources, in general the majority of conclusions in Chalmers' case must be reached on the basis of purely formal evidence.

Technically Chalmers' painting is similar to that of Israels. Both artists painted on a traditional oil based ground and worked in heavy, thick layers of paint. In effect Chalmers ignored the ground he painted on. He did not use the ground or vary the physical properties of the paint. He observed in a letter to his Broughty Ferry patron, Simpson that "It matters very little what sort of surface you paint on when it is oil colour seeing that it has to be covered thickly over." <sup>232</sup>. The fact that Chalmers painted on a non-absorbant oil ground is demonstrated in a work such as Loch Lee (Illustration 63.). <sup>233</sup> Chalmers scraped his signature into the paint layer and back to the ground beneath. The signature shows up white. If the painting had been executed on an absorbant ground, the paint would have penetrated the ground layer and the resulting signature would not have been white.

Israels exhibited at the R.S.A. from 1870 onwards but Chalmers would have seen numerous examples of the Dutchman's work before this date in the homes of the collectors with whom he was friendly. White and Macdonald in Aberdeen both owned Israels'. Chalmers regularly visited Aberdeen and stayed with White. John McGavin owned works by Israels which the Scottish painter knew well. Chalmers wrote to McGavin urging him to lend The Frugal Meal (Illustration 31.), one of the Israels' he owned, to the Paris World's Fair Exhibition of 1878. "I believe it one of his best works," Chalmers wrote. "It is a pity the public should not see it." <sup>234</sup>. Chalmers' painting trip with Israels, Cameron and White in 1870 gave him the opportunity of discussing painting with Israels and of actually watching Israels at work. The artists also spent some time travelling and painting with Israels during his visit to Holland in 1874. <sup>235</sup>. As well as being technically

related, the two painters also worked in the same way. Reid watched both of them painting at different times and commented on their manner of working.

"\_ \_ \_ \_ never in my life have I seen such muddling as is practised here. Israels is the king of muddlers \_ \_ \_ Often after he has worked on a picture for a couple of months he stakes it all on a single throw so to speak. At times something splendid comes of it and at other times the whole thing is ruined and he must begin again." 236.

After helping Chalmers to finish Just Knows and Knows no More Her Bible True, (Illustration 7.) 237. for the 1870 R.S.A. exhibition, Reid observed "I knew if I went away and left him he would be at it again so I insisted on his putting on his coat and coming out to Clerk Street to his dinner." 238. Chalmers' inability to finish anything was renowned. Reid even took him to task over it in one of his reviews for The Montrose Standard. 239. In the biography of J.F. White written by the collector's daughter Chalmers' excessive reworking of paintings was the basis for the central comment about the painter.

"J.F. used to describe an exciting scene in the studio when he and George Reid tied poor Chalmers to a chair and, holding a red-hot poker nearer and nearer to his nose, made him swear that he would not put another stroke to the picture they were determined to save." 240.

The method of painting employed by Chalmers and Israels was occasioned by the way in which both painters approached their work. For both of them the emotional expressive power conveyed by the paint surface and the brush marks were very significant in conveying the message inherent in the subjects they chose. Neither artist felt able to allow a painting to rest on its illustrational or moral qualities. They had to balance form and content. This problem took on immense proportions for Chalmers. He worked on The Legend (Illustration 4.) for fourteen years. It was still unfinished at his death. White noted in his biography of Chalmers that the head of the principal figure was painted after his return from the 1874 trip to Holland "when his mind was full of Dutch impressions." <sup>241</sup>. White cited Rembrandt as the source of Chalmers' old woman's head but certainly there are strong signs of Israels' influence as well.

The unfinished child's head in The Legend with its partially painted nose is typical of the situation to which such painting leads. Chalmers worked with charcoal, pencil and oil sketches in an attempt to realise his conception of the painting. But in all of them the problems remained unsolved. In both the final version and in the detailed oil study of the group of children the difficulty was the same. In colour, in terms of the handling of the paint and in the relationships between individual elements in the painting Chalmers was successful. The problem is that passages, notably the head of the smallest of the three standing girls, do not work illusionistically. The balance between representation and emotional expression was not achieved. For Chalmers the subject itself was not enough to convey the message of the painting. Reid's identification and analysis of the "motif" of European paintings he admired is applicable here. It is

precisely what Chalmers was attempting to do. He sought to orchestrate all the elements of the painting - the subject, the colour, the tone, and, importantly for Chalmers, the expressive, romantic handling of the paint, to evoke the desired empathetic response.

Chalmers painted then with the European "Realist" methods as defined by Reid and White. His particular technique was closest to a painter such as Israels. Reid resisted the Dutch painters advice regarding the use of heavy paint and remained more faithful to the example of Mollinger. Chalmers, while it cannot be proved that he learned his technique from Israels, certainly painted in a very like manner. In Meditation <sup>242</sup>.

(Illustration 64.)Israels can be seen to have worked in precisely the same way as Chalmers. He did not feel the need to "make" objects with paint. There is virtually nothing defined in the painting. Only the bulk of the figure's body, her hand and face are present. The hand is not "made" at all. It is only by association that it becomes a hand. As with Chalmers, the emotional intensity, the sympathy with the figure depicted is the driving force behind the painting. The emotional and moral message of the two painters is very similar, as is the way they emphasize that message. The sources they turned to were very similar also and again conform to what might be considered "Realist" practice. As well as having a strong prediliction for rural interiors, as proposed by Reid and White, they both used contemporary poetry as a source for images of rural life. Chalmers was very taken with Auld John Broon as a subject and Israels actually wrote his own poetry on occasion. It is very close in tone to the Kailyard School, to which Auld John Broon might be ascribed. <sup>243</sup>.

As well as the handling of the paint stressing the emotional content of a work, the design of a picture did so. Both artists used the light in their pictures to heighten and emphasise the emotion. Chalmers actually wrote about his use of light in a letter to Simpson regarding a proposed painting of an old man in a rural interior. Chalmers was describing a watercolour sketch he had made of the proposed design.

"I imagine the light travels capitally through the picture and there are lots of subtle bits of half light and reflected light that will be delightful to paint and which will give sentiment to the picture \_ \_ \_ \_ mark how the light falls first on the chair, then on the shoulder, down the arm, thence the head [which is in the strongest light] then travels over the cheek and hitting the arm smartly, then down to the knee - caught up by the smoke and going down the leg in half light and lost in mystery about the feet." 244.

A painting such as Asleep (Illustration 65.) shows Chalmers working these thoughts through. The use of light is very Dutch. Perhaps not directly based on Israels but looking at the same seventeenth century source as Israels - Rembrandt. Like Israels however, Chalmers used the light to focus attention on the areas of the figure that were important - her face and hands. The strong touches of bright red in the hands, the way the figure holds her hands, almost massaging them, is very expressive. The entire painting tells of a physically hard life and invites the viewer's admiration and empathy. As Reid would have had it, the painting is full of "feeling".

Chalmers then, though in a less systematic self-conscious manner, learned from contemporary Dutch examples. In fact he is almost the embodiment of the Scottish relationship with The Netherlands. There was nothing concrete which pointed him to Holland as a model for his own work. He was not a great intellectual; indeed he was described in Thoughts On Art as being "intellectually nowhere". Simply the tradition of looking to Holland from Scotland, and the tremendous sympathies inherent for any Scot in Dutch culture, religion, society and even climate meant that he had a natural affinity for his Dutch contemporaries. He did not set out deliberately to study abroad as Reid had done. He did not set out to learn from Holland, and then discover and learn from French painting. He almost unconsciously looked to Holland and assimilated Dutch practice and with it Dutch slanted French theory. In the final analysis Chalmers exhibited the same essential painting characteristics as Reid; the individually Scottish mixture of combined Dutch and French influence.

## Footnotes

### CHAPTER 5

1 John Ruskin, Letter to his father, August 19th, 1853, quoted in The Works of John Ruskin, ed. E.T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, Library Edition, vol. xii, London 1903-1912, "Introduction" by E.T. Cook, p. xxvii.

2 John Ruskin, "Lectures on Architecture and Painting (1854)", Cook and Wedderburn, *ibid.*, vol. xii, Lecture 3, p. 118.

3 Correspondence G.P. Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, held by National Library of Scotland, MS 6348, copies made by G.B. Simpson, and annotated by him are held by the library of the Royal Scottish Academy, March 12th, 1866.

4 Correspondence George Reid to Alex. Walker, held by Aberdeen Art Gallery, July 21st, 1868.

5 Walker's library was sold in 1903. it contained twenty-nine volumes of Ruskin.

Catalogue of the Valuable and Extensive Library of Books collected with great taste by the late Alexander Walker LL.D During the last 60 years. Tuesday 5th May 1903 and following days in the Bon Accord Auction Rooms North Silver Street Aberdeen, Aberdeen 1903.

6 Because of George Reid's position as an an aspiring artist the pamphlet had to be published anonymously. The two men used the pseudonym "Veri Vindex", literally "Champion of Truth"

Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art and Notes on the Exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy of 1868, Edinburgh, 1868, pp. 23-26.

7 John Ruskin, "Lectures on Architecture and Painting (1854)", Cook and Wedderburn, *op. cit.*, vol. xii, Lecture 4, p. 151-153.

8 John Ruskin, "Political Economy of Art", Cook and Wedderburn, *op. cit.*, vol. xvi, Lecture 2, p. 103.

9 For a discussion of G.P. Chalmers' anti-urban views, see chapter 2.

10 John Ruskin, "Political Economy of Art", Cook and Wedderburn, *op. cit.*, vol. xvi, Lecture 1, p. 15.

11 Robert Walker, "Private Picture Collections in Glasgow and West of Scotland. II Mr. Andrew Maxwell's Collection.", The Magazine of Art, 1894, p. 222.

12 John Ruskin, "Political Economy of Art", Cook and Wedderburn, *op. cit.*, vol. xvi, Lecture 2. p. 83.

13 Correspondence George Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, August 7th, 1870.

14 John Ruskin, "Political Economy of Art", Cook and Wedderburn, *op. cit.*, vol. xvi, Lecture 2, p. 85.

15 Correspondence George Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, May 11th, 1870.

16 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

17 *ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

18 "Ruskin, in a passage of the fourth volume of 'Modern Painters,' gives full expression to this belief: 'It is not good for man to live amongst what is most beautiful \_ \_ \_ [Reid and White's omission] \_ \_ To allow him to possess in any kind whatsoever the utmost that earth can give is the surest way to cast him into lassitude or discontent. If the most exquisite orchestral music could be continued without pause for a series of years and children were brought up and educated in the room in which it was perpetually resounding, I believe that there enjoyment of music or understanding of it, would be very small; and an accurately parallel effect seems to be produced upon the powers of contemplation by the redundant and ceaseless loveliness of the high mountain districts. The faculties are paralysed by the abundance, and cease to be capable of excitement, so that it is in reality better for mankind that the forms of their common landscape should offer no violent stimulus to the emotions.'"

Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

19 Correspondence George Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, September 14th, 1881.

20 Correspondence George Reid to John Forbes White, held by Aberdeen Art Gallery, undated, c.September/October, 1870.

21 "I was with Dr John Brown at dinner one evening the other week and the talk turned upon stained glass. I happened to refer to Ruskin's letters upon the matter and he said he would like much to see them. I think I gave them to you, could you lay your hands on them easily?"

Correspondence George Reid to John Forbes White, *ibid.*, November 29th, 1870.

"I saw Sir Noel Paton this afternoon, he has Ruskin's letter, he says it is the finest thing that has ever been said on the subject. He is to return it to me in a day or two and I shall then send it to you."

Correspondence George Reid to John Forbes White, *ibid.*, January 14th, 1871.

22 John Forbes White, How Can Art be best Introduced into the Houses of Persons of Limited Income?, A Paper read before the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science at Aberdeen September 24th, 1877, Aberdeen, 1877.

23 White declined the offer because he felt that he lived too far away from London.

24 Correspondence Dr. John Brown to George Reid, held by Aberdeen Art Gallery, January 2nd, 1880.

25 Correspondence George Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, April 28th, 1863.

26 Dr John Brown, "Notes On Art", in, Horae Subsecivae: Vol. 1. Fab and His Friends and Other Papers, Edinburgh, 15th ed., 1893, p. 232.

First published Edinburgh, 1858.

27 *ibid.*, p. 229.

28 *idem.*

29 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

An obvious French source for this identification of two illustrators as architypal chroniclers of contemporary society would appear to be Charles Baudelaire's championing of Constantin Guys in The Painter Of Modern Life. The essay was published in three parts in Figaro on November 26th and 28th and December 3rd 1863, and it is possible if unlikely that it was read there by Reid and White. Since it was not reprinted until after Thoughts On Art must have been written, the Scots would have had to have seen it in its original form if at all. It is more likely that they simply knew of the piece's existence and drew directly on the more accesible writings of Dr. John Brown.

30 Gabriel P. Weisberg, "Critical Theory and the Evolution of Social Themes", The Realist Tradition, Indiana University Press, 1980, p. 1.

31 The 'Staple Port' was that European port which had the Scottish trading monopoly. Individual cities competed by offering differing commercial and social priveledges in an attempt to secure the right to be the sole point

of entry of Scottish goods to Europe. In the early sixteenth century there was considerable rivalry between Antwerp, Campvere and Middleburg. All hoped to secure the monopoly. Campvere, in Zealand, was eventually chosen as the Staple Port in 1541. It remained so for nearly 250 years.

32 Rosalind Mitchison, A History of Scotland, London, 1970, p. 164.

33 Robert Feenstra, "Scottish - Dutch Legal Relations in the 17th and 18th Centuries", Scotland and Europe 1200-1850, ed. T.C. Smout, Edinburgh, 1986, p. 130.

34 Sir James L. Caw, Scottish Painting Past and Present, 1620-1908, Edinburgh, 1908, p. 286.

35 Ina Mary Harrower, "Josef Israels and his Aberdeen Friend", Aberdeen University Review, XIV, no. 41, March 1927, p. 109.

36 W.D. McKay, the historian of the Royal Scottish Academy, describes Mollinger's two landscapes as being

"the subject of considerable discussion in art circles."

F. Rinder and W.D. McKay, The Royal Scottish Academy, 1826-1916, Glasgow, 1917, p. xc.

37 One of the two Matthew Maris paintings exhibited in 1866 came, not directly from the artist, but was lent to the exhibition by John Cairns, a friend of G.P. Chalmers and a painter of mainly marine subjects. Cairns had purchased the work in Holland the previous summer.

Mollinger certainly felt that his work was well known in Edinburgh. He wrote to J.F. White

"Sans être orgueilleux, je me trouve néanmoins fort sensible de la bonne opinion que les artistes Ecossais ont de mes ouvrages et que je vais d'après les opinions augmenter le prix, mais je vous donne en considération que les deux tableaux que j'ai destinés pour Edinbourg \_ \_ \_ \_ et que j'avais fixé le prix à 75 guines chaque tableau, mais si vous croyez, que c'est trop peu je les augmenterai de 10 guines chaque tableau"

Correspondence G.A. Mollinger to J.F. White, held by Aberdeen Art Gallery, October 19th, 1865.

38 "Je ne sais pas encore ce que je vais faire pour le Edinburgh Exhibition, j'ai exposé un petit tableau à Amsterdam, une femme avec un enfant sur le bras; c'est possible que j'envoie ça quand je le vend pas."

Correspondence D.A.C. Artz to George Reid held by Aberdeen Art Gallery, October 27th, 1867.

Apparently knowledge of the Dutch artists was not very widespread however

Reid reported on an R.S.A. council meeting to J.F. White

"There was some talk in the Council about Macdonald's Israels - they had never heard of him before and did not know that there was any celebrated Dutch artist living at present, Rembrandt being the last they had heard of. Fortunately Cameron was there and spoke and Herdman came to the rescue also - saying he knew both of his reputation and of his merits as an artist and so the council was appeased. They seem to inherit the Barbarians traditional mistrust and hatred of foreigners."

Correspondence George Reid to J.F. White, *op. cit.*, February 4th, 1870.

39 "I have enquired in various quarters about Mr. Hamilton-Bruce. All I have learned is that he is a younger brother of one of the Fifeshire Bruces - (Bruce of Falkland). That he has travelled a good deal has a number of foreign pictures - Corot's, Millet's, Maris's etc and also some very fine eastern rugs and textile stuffs - That he has the reputation of being an authority on art, especially continental art - That he has a disagreeable manner and that he is travelling about at his own expense collecting foreign pictures for the forthcoming International Exhibition farce - His authority in that department being, I understand, supreme."

Correspondence George Reid to John Forbes White, *op. cit.*, March 10th, 1886.

40 Memorial Catalogue of the French and Dutch Loan Collection, Edinburgh International Exhibition 1886, Edinburgh, 1888, p. xxxvii.

41 The figure given for the number of works lent by Scots includes those borrowed from Daniel Cottier. Cottier was living in London at the time.

42 Memorial Catalogue of the French and Dutch Loan Collection, Edinburgh International Exhibition 1886, Edinburgh, 1888.

43 W.E. Henley, A Century of Artists. A Memorial of the Glasgow International Exhibition of 1888, Glasgow, 1889.

44 R.T.H.B. "The Foreign Loan Collection at the Glasgow Exhibition", Art Journal, 1888, p. 312. The author was R.T. Hamilton-Bruce.

- 45 Doryphorus, "Art at the Glasgow International Exhibition, 1. Painting",  
The Scottish Art Review, vol. 1, No. 1, June 1888, p. 6.
- 46 The Valuable Collection of Oil Paintings of the Late John Ramsay Esq. of  
Dundee and Tayport, Edinburgh, March, 1909.
- 47 J. and R. Edmiston, Auctioneers, Catalogue of the Works in the Sale from  
the Estate of Robert Ramsey, April 26th, 1917.
- 48 Sir James L. Caw, Catalogue of the Collection of Pictures Belonging to  
John Reid, Glasgow, 1913.
- 49 Catalogue of the Cabinet of valuable Modern Pictures belonging to J.  
Charles Bell, Esq. Broughty Ferry, Dundee., Dowell's, Edinburgh, March 17th,  
1877.
- 50 Sale of Modern Pictures of the Scottish, English, French and Belgian  
Schools Belonging to George B. Simpson Esq. Seafield, Broughty Ferry.  
Chapman and son, Edinburgh, December 4th, 1880.
- 51 Glasgow Post Office Directory, 1890-1891
- 52 Ronald Pickvance, A Man of Influence: Alex. Reid, Exhibition catalogue,  
Scottish Arts Council, Glasgow, 1967, p. 6.
- 53 *idem*.

54 John Sillevius, "L'Ecole de la Haye", Mondrian et L'école de la Haye, Catalogue to the exhibition in Florence, Istituto Universitario Olandese di Storia dell 'Arte, Florence, 1981, p. 15.

55 David Croal Thomson had a long career in picture dealing. The most complete record of the man and his business dealings is contained in "The Art Reminiscences of David Croal Thomson", an unpublished autobiography edited by William T. Whitley and compiled by Lockett Thomson. The reminiscences were compiled at the requests of several friends. They were written during 1924-1927 and were intended only for family use. The introductory section to this volume contained several eulogies. The following are extracts from a eulogy written by the Scottish painter D.Y. Cameron in 1930.

"He began his business life in Edinburgh over half a century ago, when Sir Noel Paton's pictures of fairies, Scottish ballads and religious visions were in much repute, and when the "Scott Lauder" men were coming to full fruition and popular acclaim. Paul Chalmers with his enthusiasm had passed in 1878, but Orchardson, Pettie, Graham, MacTaggart, Hugh Cameron and many others were creating new life and pride in the art of Scotland, and Croal Thomson was not slow to appreciate these gifted men, whose work was eagerly sought for by collectors. These were days of much enthusiasm in Northern Art Circles, and he was wide awake to all the new movements. he knew of pictures by Corot, Millet, Rousseau, Diaz, Daubigny, Troyon and others of that group being brought from Paris to enrich collections in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen, and to the work of these men he gave much heed, till in 1890 he published the most important book of his life 'The Barbizon School'

-----  
From Allan Ramsay and Raeburn to Guthrie he knew well all Scottish painting. From Reynolds, Gainsborough and Turner to Clausen and Steer he had full appreciation of English Art. \_ \_ \_ He lived in the South for business' sake but with his heart in the Northern land, deeply sensitive to its fadeless romance and to its colour, colour which was to him 'first and last' of all other qualities in pictorial art.

In affectionate remembrance I offer this brief tribute to a friend of very many years \_ \_ \_ .

SIR D.Y. CAMERON R.A.

October 1930.

The Art Reminiscences of David Croal Thomson, Private manuscript, Thomson Family.

56 John Morrison, The Dutch and Flemish influence on Painting in Scotland from 1862 to 1901, University of St Andrews, Department of Art History, Senior Honours M.A. Dissertation, 1983.

57 Ronald de Leeuw, "Introduction", The Hague School, Dutch Masters of The Nineteenth Century, ed. Ronald de Leeuw, John Sillevius and Charles Dumas, Paris, London and The Hague, 1983, p. 15.

58 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

59 *ibid.*, p. 52.

Among the paintings seen by Bilders at the Brussels exposition were catalogue numbers

- Corot 167 Paysage Soleil Couchant
- Courbet 174 Les Demoiselles des Bords de la Seine (été)  
 175 Paysage: Hiver  
 176 Le Femme au Miroir  
 177 Les Falaises d'Honfleur
- Díaz de la Pena 330 La Charite  
 331 Le Reveil de Jesus  
 332 Venus et Adonis  
 333 La Mare au Serpents, Foret de Fontainebleau
- Jules Dupré 361 Paysage  
 362 Groupe de Chenes
- J.F. Millet 694 La Tendeuse de Moutons  
 695 La Mort et le Boucheron
- J.N. Robert-Fleury 814 Lecture, sous Clement VII, de Fameux Formulaire  
Provoque par le Livre de Jansenius
- T. Rousseau 838 Interieurde la Foret de Fontainbleau
- C. Troyon 952 Vue Prise des Hauteurs de Suresne  
 953 Chien en Arret

Quoted by John Sillevís, "Romanticism and Realism", The Hague School, Dutch Masters of the Nineteenth Century, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50, from Exposition des Beaux-Arts 1860, Brussels, 1860.

60 John Sillevís "Romanticism and Realism" The Hague School, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

- 61 This was stated by Mia Reid, the artist's wife, in her unpublished Journal, held by Aberdeen Art Gallery, pp. 54-55, and by Ina Mary Harrower, John Forbes White Edinburgh, 1918, p. 34.
- 62 Correspondence G.A. Mollinger to D.A.C. Artz, held by Gemeentearchief, The Hague, Holland, August 12th, 1866.
- 63 Correspondence George Reid to John Forbes White, *op. cit.*, August 6th, 1866.
- 64 Mia Reid, Journal, held by Aberdeen Art Gallery, p. 58.
- 65 Correspondence Mollinger to Artz, *op. cit.*, August 12th, 1866.
- 66 *ibid.*, October 1st, 1866.
- 67 *ibid.*, August 12th, 1866.
- 68 Mia Reid, Journal *op. cit.*, p. 62.
- 69 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, February 20th, 1867.
- 70 *idem.*
- 71 Correspondence Mollinger to Artz, *op. cit.*, August 12th, 1866.
- 72 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, February 20th, 1867.

73 Spynie Castle and Loch, R.S.A. 1866, No. 290.

74 Washing Day is now in Aberdeen Art Gallery.

75 Meerkirk. Clearing up After Rain is now in Aberdeen Art Gallery.

76 George Reid and John Forbes White, "The Arts Exhibition", Aberdeen Journal, August 13th, 1873, p. 8.

The section on tonalité relies heavily on the explanation of the term offered in Thoughts On Art.

"The feeling which strikes one, in looking at their landscapes, is the harmony of tone pervading each picture, the 'tonalité', as the French critics call it. This word may sound strange to English ears, and some explanation of its meaning may be required. In a recent volume of criticism on contemporary French painters, Mr Hamerton makes the following remarks on the subject, which are so clear and so much to the point, that we cannot do better than give his own words. Speaking of the works of the celebrated French landscape painter, Troyon, he says:-

'He (Troyon) aimed chiefly at what is called, in French, tonalité', and then continues in explanation, 'the tonalité does not mean what we are accustomed to understand by its tone, it means the gamut of tonic values. The fact that tonalité has not hitherto been an English word, results from our almost universal indifference to the thing. A picture, like a musical air, must be given in a chosen key, it cannot be painted in a jumble of keys. \_ \_ \_ \_ (Reid and White's omission) \_ \_ \_ \_ You may transpose nature from one key to another, as you may transpose a musical air written

in any major key to any other major key, but your key once chosen, you must stick to it till the picture or melody is finished."

Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51.

The quotation is from

P.G. Hamerton, Contemporary French Painters, London, 1867, p. 46.

77 Mia Reid, Journal, *op. cit.*, pp. 58 and 62.

78 To the Honourable lawyer. Mr P. Verloren van Themaat.

Dear Friend,

Below, as promised, the letter, in outline, for Alexander Macdonald, Esq. Kepplestone by Aberdeen. According to a letter from my friend George Reid, I understand that you desire to acquire a painting of which Mr Reid has let you see the sketch. I have the honour to inform you that I have sent the painting, in a gilded frame and well packed to your address. The subject of the painting: The Village of Meerkirk (Province of South Holland.)

Den Wel Edel Gestrengen Heer. Mr P. Verloren van Themaat.

Amice,

Die hier, volgens afspraak, in grove trekken de brief vor Alexander Macdonald, Esq. Kepplestone bij Aberdeen. Volgens schrijven van mijnen vriend George Reid, heb ik vernomen, dat u begeerde mijne schilderij te besitten, waar van Mr Reid u de schets heeft laten sien. Ik heb alsoo de eer, u te verwilligen, dat ik de schilderij, in vergulde lijst, goed ingepakt, aan uw adres heb afgesonden. De schilderij stelt voor: Het dorpje Meerkerk (Provincie Suid-Holland.)

Correspondence G.A. Mollinger to P. VerLoren van Themaat, Gemeentearchief,  
The Hague, Holland, October 11th, 1866.

79 George Reid, "Notes on The Royal Scottish Academy's Exhibition", Montrose  
Standard and Angus and Mearns Leader, March 8th, 1867, p. 4.

80 Correspondence Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, August 30th, 1866.

81 Evening is now in the Orchar Collection, held by Dundee Art Gallery.

82 Broadsea was purchased by J.F. White. Reid wrote to White  
"You cast money away from you like a prodigal. Then price you have fixed on  
'Broadsea' is much more than it is worth."

Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, undated, c.November 1871.

83 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, December 27th, 1871.

84 For a discussion of Reid's dislike of cities in general and London in  
particular, see chapter 1.

85 Correspondence John Dun to George Reid, held by Aberdeen Art Gallery,  
January 10th, 1867.

James May and A.D. Longmuir were fellow pupils of George Reid's and John  
Dun's at the Trustees Academy in Edinburgh.

James May exhibited at the R.S.A. between 1855 and 1879. After early works such as Neptuna, (no. 333 R.S.A. exhibition 1857) typical titles included

1872 no. 30. The Turnip Field

1873 no. 599. Washing Creels

1874 no. 546. Singling Turnips

1876 no. 426. Bait Gathering

A.D. Longmuir was, like Reid, from Aberdeen. He exhibited at the R.S.A.

between 1862 and 1880. Exhibited works included

1865 no. 297. A Market Woman

1868 no. 746. The Approach of Winter

1871 no. 822. The Woods in Autumn

1875 no. 889. The Gleaners

The Approach of Winter was owned by Reid's correspondent Alexander Walker.

86 "Maintenant à propos de mon voyage pour Paris. J'ai l'intention de quitter Florence le premier Mai, et de m'embarquer le lendemain à Livorne pour Marseille et puis de voyager lentement pour Paris, alors je crois d'arriver à peu près à la même époque que vous à la capitale de la France \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ en tout cas je vient directment m'informer de votre arrivement. \_ \_ \_ \_ je vis dans l'espérance de vous rencontrer en bonne santé en peu de temps, et de passer quelques jours en regardant ensemble les oeuvres de tout l'Europe."

Correspondence Mollinger to White, *op. cit.*, April 25th, 1867.

87 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, May 2nd, 1867.

88 Correspondence Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, May 12th, 1867.

89 *ibid.*, undated, c.mid-May, 1867.

90 Nos. 83 and 84 in the catalogue of the 1867 World's Fair Exposition.

91 Presumably this refers to No. 187 Le Printemps, in the catalogue of the World's Fair Exposition.

92 Both the Montrose Standard and the Aberdeen Free Press were radical newspapers, certainly in comparison to the competitors The Montrose Review and the Aberdeen Journal. Since Reid and White also wrote for the Aberdeen Journal it is not possible to ally the two definitively with the Free Press views. However, the fact that Reid chose to write for the Standard, rather than the Review does suggest a broad sympathy with the views expressed. At a time when many established newsagents refused to stock the Free Press at all, because of its stance on such matters as land reform and the temperance movement, both of which it supported, and hereditary privilege, which it opposed, any association with the newspaper must be considered significant.

93 George Reid, "Exhibition of The Royal Scottish Academy. (Second Notice)", Montrose Standard and Angus and Mearns Leader, March 4th, 1864, pp. 4-5.

94 Correspondence Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, March 5th, 1864.

95 George Reid, "Exhibition of The Royal Scottish Academy (Second Notice)", Montrose Standard and Angus and Mearns Leader, February 19th, 1864, pp. 4-5.

96 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

97 George Reid, Montrose Standard, *op. cit.*, February 19th, 1864.

98 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

99 George Reid, Montrose Standard, *op. cit.*, February 19th, 1864.

100 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

101 *ibid.*, p. 28.

102 George Reid, Montrose Standard, *op. cit.*, March 4th, 1864.

103 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

104 George Reid, Montrose Standard, *op. cit.*, March 4th, 1864.

105 Correspondence Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, March 5th, 1864.

106 John Ruskin "Political Economy of Art" The Works of John Ruskin, ed.  
E.T. Cook and A Wedderburn, Library Edition, vol. xvi, London, 1903-1912,  
Lecture 2., p. 85.

107 "'Ah!' said a lady in our hearing, 'what a de-light-ful picture. How  
fearless she looks,' and in very truth she does. A Joan of Arc or a

Charlotte Corday could not compare with her for one moment."

George Reid, Montrose Standard, *op. cit.*, March 4th, 1864.

108 Correspondence Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, undated, pre 1868.

The address on the letter is one that Reid left in late 1867.

109 From remarks made by Reid in a letter to Alex. Walker it would appear that he read The Athenaeum regularly. On May 1st 1870 the magazine attacked the work of Peter Graham. Less than two weeks later Reid wrote

"I wonder who the critic of the Athenaeum is? He seems to miss no chance of doing mischief to Peter Graham but he is so very venomous and persistent in his attack that they shew personal grounds of dislike."

Correspondence Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, May 9th, 1870.

The day before Reid had written to White regarding the same Athenaeum article

"I have seen him very severe on Peter before but the way he opens his first notice of the R.A. ex<sup>2</sup> by attacking Graham is quite disgraceful."

Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, May 8th, 1870.

110 F.G. Stephens, "The Royal Academy", The Athenaeum, May 14th, 1864, pp. 682-683.

111 F.G. Stephens, "French Exhibition", The Athenaeum, April 23rd, 1864, p. 583.

112 J.L. Roget, "On the Study of Nature as a Guide to Art", Macmillans Magazine, June 1864, pp. 164-173.

113 Correspondence Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, August 11th, 1867.

114 George Reid, "Notes on the Thirty-Ninth Exhibition of The Royal Scottish Academy (Second Notice)", Montrose Standard and Angus and Mearns Leader, March 31st, 1865, p. 6.

115 George Reid, "Notes on the Thirty-Ninth Exhibition of The Royal Scottish Academy (Third Notice)", Montrose Standard and Angus and Mearns Leader, April 7th, 1865, Supplement, p. 1.

116 George Reid, Montrose Standard, *op. cit.*, March 31st, 1865 p. 6.

117 George Reid, Montrose Standard, *op. cit.*, April 7th, 1865, Supplement, p. 1.

118 George Reid, "Notes on the Thirty-Ninth Exhibition of The Royal Scottish Academy (Fourth Notice)", Montrose Standard and Angus and Mearns Leader, April 14th, 1865, p. 6.

119 *idem.*

120 *idem.*

121 *idem.*

122 The ends are those discussed in chapter 1., the lauding of certain attitudes and ways of life thought to be important and felt to be being lost. ie. The ends of rural nostalgia painting.

123 George Reid, "Notes on the Exhibition of The Royal Scottish Academy", Montrose Standard and Angus and Mearns Leader, March 24th, 1865, Supplement, p. 1.

124 George Reid, Montrose Standard, *op. cit.*, April 14th, 1865.

125 "The Council have added a new feature in the management and uses of the library, by granting permission to the students attending the life school to consult the books on the Thursday evenings, between the hours of 7 and 9 o'clock during those months the class is open. The council, in making this experiment, believe it will be found a useful adjunct to the other opportunities of improvement afforded to their students.

The Council are in the hope that a larger sum may now be devoted from the funds, in making more numerous and important additions to the library."

"Academy Notes", 38th Annual Report of the Council of The Royal Scottish Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, Edinburgh, 1865, p. 12.

"The Library, besides being at all hours of the day accessible by members for reference to the books and engravings, has, as in former years, been open on the Monday and Thursday evenings from seven till nine o'clock, at which times any member may introduce an artist friend.

During last winter a new feature of usefulness was introduced, the students at the Life School having had the privilege granted them of attending on

the Thursday evenings (during the class session), for the purpose of studying and consulting books, and I am happy to report that the boon has been fully appreciated."

"Academy Notes", 39th Annual Report of the Council of the Royal Scottish Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, Edinburgh, 1866, p. 7.

126 The R.S.A. library stopped taking The Art Journal in 1877.

127 The break in the continuity of the Fine Art Quarterly Review is due to the publication itself ceasing in 1865, before commencing again in a new series in July 1866.

128 F.G. Stephens, "Royal Academy", The Athenaeum, May 6th, 1865, p. 628.

129 F.G. Stephens, "Royal Academy", The Athenaeum, May 13th, 1865, p. 658.

130 "The French Exhibition of 1866", The Art Journal, 1866, pp. 189-190.

131 P.G. Hamerton, "The Salon of 1863", Fine Arts Quarterly Review, October 1863, p. 242.

132 *ibid.*, p. 244-245.

133 *ibid.*, p. 243.

134 Paul Mantz, "Le Salon de 1863. (Premier Article)", Gazette des Beaux-Arts, vol. 14, June 1863, pp. 498-506.

135 Paul Mantz, "Le Salon de 1865. (Premier Article)", Gazette des Beaux-Arts, vol. 18, June 1865, p. 518.

"I would not wish to upset the painters of history, religious subjects, legends and mythology, but I would merely like to tell them that there is a simple genre picture in the Salon which has more character and style than their most dramatic statements or their wisest inventions. This picture is 'The End of the Day' by M. Breton: It is by no means a complex work, and it needs no knowledge of the Classics to understand it. But these humble scenes of rural life have sometimes a serenity which resembles grandeur. M. Breton, whose talent we greatly admire and who, by good fortune, has always deserved his success, excels at painting these tranquil scenes and almost noble work in the open air. In mixing poetry and reality, he achieves results which are a joy to see and feel, and even so he never departs from the humble world of rustic labourers, and the fields of Pas-de-Calais are his complete horizon. \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ The effect is absolutely right, the values, scarcely felt, of shade and of light so delicately noted, that one can feel oneself breathing more easily in front of this picture and believe one smells the fresh smell of new mown hay. The figures are drawn surely and grandly with a sort of virile elegance and a severe charm; they are part of the countryside and the countryside is part of them. All is harmony and serenity in this picture, and 'The End of the Day' is perhaps the most complete and in its apparent calm, the most moving, of the works M. Breton has exhibited until now."

Translation *ibid.*

136 Philippe Burty, "L'Exhibition de La Royal-Academy", Gazette des Beaux-Arts, vol. 21, July 1866, p. 81.

"The entire English School seems to bow down, lower than at home, in front of that tyrant, the Public: the choice of subjects, the method of working, the conversation of the artists themselves, all reveal this lasting preoccupation with the sale and paralyzes any more noble efforts. The Lord Maecenas of London just now is a picture dealer. There are hardly ever canvases which go directly from the studio of the artists. One can imagine the result."

Translation *ibid.*

137 Philippe Burty, Gazette des Beaux-Arts, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

"What is missing in the resources of this school is not talent, nor conviction for we will cite in a moment men as distinguished by their sympathies as by their education; it is the doctrine, the daring, the virility. The English public is accustomed to ask for an art which is purely likeable. It is necessary to assault the member of the public and show him that under the skin there are muscles, under the forehead a thought, in the breast a heart. It is necessary to bring onto the scene an actor who performs in a resolute way and is moved by true passion. This person is reality. Since a clean sweep was made of academic painting, genre has triumphed: it puts in the picture not, as in Hogarth's time, the dramas or the comedies of human life, drunkards, the debauched, lost girls, the insane, thieves or ministers who dishonour their calling, but an enfeebled ideal of life which is superficial and facile. There is only an appearance

of choosing subjects in real life; but in order not to offend the delicacies of ladies and gentlemen we have the little peasants well-washed, servants well groomed, the poor Irish bathed, the cattle without mud, the goats sleek, the sheep shorn, the horses' coats shining from machine made brushes and perfumed waters. All that to us seems mannered and dated is however real in England, the greenery of the trees which have never been cut or defaced, the exquisite cleanliness to be counted on in the villages, the fine tilth of worked land, the languishing looks in the blue eyes of the young girls, the lightheartedness of their games, the fineness and the gold of their blond hair, their dreamy faces and their supple necks, all that which, let us repeat, is infinitely different from that which we normally see in France, has been pushed to the extreme here and has passed into tradition. Also that gaeity of tone, of gesture, of surroundings, an artificial and immovable brightness, ends by causing trouble and anxiety."

Translation *ibid.*

138 See chapter 4.

139 "It goes sadly against my ideas to work with money in view. Indeed if I had an independant means of support ~~that~~ should never once enter into my mind. I hate it in connexion (sic) with art, it is a canker worn at the root of all goodness or truth or progress."

Correspondence Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, August 11th, 1867.

"Then as for making money - it does not seem to me that that should be the principle end and object of a man's life."

Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, July 24th, 1870.

- 140 F.T. Palgrave, "English Pictures in 1865", Fortnightly Review, August 1st, 1865, pp 661-674.
- 141 *ibid.*, p. 662.
- 142 *ibid.*, p. 665.
- 143 *ibid.*, p. 666.
- 144 P.G. Hamerton, "The Place of landscape painting Amongst the Fine Arts", Fortnightly Review, December 1st, 1865, pp. 197-216.
- 145 "Some of these days soon I will go with Mollinger to Amsterdam, there is an exhibition there just now which I have no doubt will be well worth seeing."
- Correspondence Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, August 7th, 1866.
- 146 Correspondence Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, August 16th, 1868.
- 147 H.W., "Fine Art Gossip", The Athenaeum, January 5th, 1867, p. 22.  
and "Fine Art Gossip", The Athenaeum, March 30th, 1867, p. 426.
- 148 "The French Exhibition", The Athenaeum, April 20th, 1867, pp. 523-525.  
and "The French Exhibition", The Athenaeum, April 27th, 1867, pp. 552-554.
- 149 Correspondence Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, March 3rd, 1867.

150 *idem.*

151 *idem.*

152 *idem.*

153 George Reid, "Notes on The Royal Scottish Academy's Exhibition",  
Montrose Standard and Angus and Mearns Leader, March 8th, 1867, p. 4.

154 *idem.*

155 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, pp. 50, 52 and 53.

156 *ibid.*, p. 41.

157 *idem.*

158 *ibid.*, p. 78.

159 *ibid.*, p. 64.

160 Gustave Courbet, "Courbet: His Studio; His Theories", Les Livres Propos,  
1864.

Quoted by me from, Linda Nochlin, Realism and Tradition in Art 1848-1900.  
Sources and Documents, New Jersey, 1966, p. 34.

161 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

162 Champfleury, "Letter to Mme. Sand", Le Realisme 1857.

Quoted by me from, Linda Nochlin, Realism, London and New York, 1971, p. 28.

163 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

164 J.A. Castagnary, "Le Salon de 1863", Le Nord.

Quoted by me from, Linda Nochlin, Realism and Tradition in Art, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

165 "La lutte ne dura pas moins de deux siècles, pendant lesquels l'imitation des écoles étrangères fut la règle constante; ce n'est qu'avec Hogarth que la personnalité de l'art britannique parvint à se préciser."

Paul Mantz, "A L'Exposition Universelle: VII Angleterre", Gazette des Beaux-Arts, vol. 23, April 1867, pp. 209.

166 "Une fois trouvé, l'accent anglais a persisté depuis lors, et, sauf un fâcheux entr'acte marqué par le règne de Benjamin West et de ses amis, l'évolution s'est continué, toujours libre et toujours intéressante."

Paul Mantz, "A L'Exposition Universelle: VII Angleterre", Gazette des Beaux-Arts, vol. 23, April 1867, pp. 209.

"Benjamin West affected history largely, and, in his day, it alone was regarded as worthy of a great painter's attention, and so we have, from his hand, King Alfred, tastefully attired in a Roman Toga, in the depths of his poverty and misfortune, dividing his last loaf with a singularly well-to-do-looking beggar, in a graceful well-fitting Toga also."

Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

"Mountains too, are supposed to be easy. I may be excused for feeling sceptical on that point. I lived a few years under the shadow of Ben Cruachan, and carefully observed him under thousands of different aspects, but it never occurred to me that that immense agglomeration of ever-changing, *yet always perfectly harmonious* detail, could by any possibility become easy to paint. Every separate aspect of that mountain would have cost the labour of months, and it did not last even *minutes*, only fractions of a minute. Who can carry in his memory for months the true relative colour and the true apparent form of the hundred minor hills that boss his craggy sides?"

P.G. Hamerton, "The Place of landscape Painting Amongst the Fine Arts", The Fortnightly Review, December 1st, 1865, p. 201.

"Such mountain forms as rendered by Mr Perigal are an utter impossibility. His mountains seem to have but one great object in their construction, the obtaining of the greatest possible peakiness of aspect. They literally saw the sky line. Other mountain form than this he cannot see, it is the true type of the Perigal ideal, destitute alike of form and solidity. The truth of mountain form is not to be expressed by any superficial method of work or study. If we look at mountain curvature attentively, it will be seen that, although the lines in their leading principles are continuous and full of purpose, yet within them there are numberless variations and transgressions, curve within curve, breaking and bending in a hundred different ways, seemingly yielding to every impulse. To represent this is no easy task. The roughness of the bare mountain side rising fold over fold, and ledge over ledge, with its clusters of hazel and scattered birch, the broken shadows of the cliffs, the deeply scarred ravines, down which the

winter torrent has rushed, leaving many a trace of its power and rage, are characteristics of mountain scenery unseen by Mr Perigal."

Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

Tom Taylor identified great landscape painting as that which "deals with nature as at once her master and servant, never false to her truths, never forgetful of her conditions, but yet making these truths subservient to his purpose, and forcing these conditions to accommodate themselves to his conceptions - using nature's hues, forms, and phenomena to body forth his own meanings and moods, and subduing the spectator's mind by aid of composition, colour, and chiaroscuro, as imperiously to his own will to his service the facts of the outward universe."

Tom. Taylor, "Among the Pictures. Part III, Some Considerations on Contemporary Landscape Painting", The Gentleman's Magazine, August 1868, pp. 290-291.

Thoughts On Art defined the importance of landscape of lying in "what we call the sentimental love of nature, that love of nature which discerns a correspondence, and, as it were, a sympathy between its appearances and changes, and the vicissitudes of human feeling and passion."

Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 33, quoting, Guesses At Truth, p. 56. untraced.

"Much might be said of these pictures; (George Hemming Mason 1818-1872) it would be curious to compare them with contemporary French landscapes, to which they are akin, Breton's especially, without being exactly of the same

school; \_ \_ \_ \_ Mr Whistler \_ \_ \_ appears to deserve being classed with Mr Mason's work in regard to its tone."

F.T. Palgrave, "English Pictures in 1865", The Fortnightly Review, August 1st, 1865, p. 665.

"In the recent exposition in Paris, the works of D'Aubigny, Courbet, Corot, Clays, Tournemine, Jules Breton, Dupré, Fromentin, Millet, Rousseau, Roelofs and others, went far to shew that we could no longer claim precedence in this branch of art. (Landscape)

It is in France that this principle (tonal painting) has been most fully recognised in modern times, and the influence of the French landscape school in this, as in other respects, has been extending to other schools. It is very marked in the works of one of our best landscape painters, George Mason, whose exquisite poems in colour and tone, have attracted so much notice in the artistic circles of London within the last few years. We see it also in Whistler, whose 'symphonies' are so little understood when seen among the glaring colours of the English school."

Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

"Is it the inevitable result of the distraction of impressions resulting from profusion of detail, or the consequence of the painter having, in a great measure, discarded selection, and abandoned the aim at expressing a sentiment, as being in the nature of an impertinence? Are we to accept the doctrine that the landscape painter's true function is that of a faithful reflector only of the nature before him? It seems to me that both this danger in practice and this perversity in doctrine are at work, and that they play into each other. In the absence of a predetermined purpose, of

any wish even to permit a mood or sentiment to guide the eye and hand in the interpretation of the subject before him, the painter has nothing to fall back upon but detail,"

Tom Taylor, The Gentleman's Magazine, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

"Hardness, clearness, polish, finality are the characteristics of this picture. \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ There is nothing noble in this sort of art; it is narrowed and restricted, the eye can comprehend all at a glance;"

Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

167 Reid would certainly have wanted to read the article because he did not know he was going to Paris until very close to the time when he actually left. The trip was very hastily arranged. When the review appeared Reid must have thought that the only information he would get about the exhibition would have been through the art press.

168 "Attention may here be called to a really remarkable work by Mr H. O'Neill, (sic) A.R.A. - No. 196: 'A Volunteer'. Mr O'Neill may be better known to many as the painter of the famous picture 'Eastward Ho!' which made so much noise some years since. The present work will fully sustain his high reputation."

George Reid, "The Exhibition of The Royal Scottish Academy", Montrose Standard and Angus and Mearns Leader, February 19th, 1864, p. 5.

169 Henry O'Neil, "The Picture Gatherings of Paris II", The Fortnightly Review June 1st, 1867, p. 693.

170 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

171 *idem.*

172 F.G. Stephens, "Royal Academy", The Athenaeum, May 18th, 1867, p. 666.

173 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 27-28.

174 F.G. Stephens, "Royal Academy", The Athenaeum, May 6th, 1865, p. 627.

175 *idem.*

176 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 21-22.

177 Paul Mantz, Gazette des Beaux-Arts, *op. cit.*, April, 1867, p. 216.

178 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 53-54.

179 see Marcel Crouzet, Un méconnu du Réalisme: Duranty (1833-1880),  
Librarie Nizet, Paris 1964, pp. 55-56.

180 Quoted here from

Gabriel P. Weisberg, "The Evolution of Realism. Popular Types, Urban Life",  
The Realist Tradition, Indiana University Press, 1980, p. 47.

181 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

182 This refers to The Works of Robert Burns: Containing his Poems, Songs, and Correspondence with life and Notes, Critical and Biographical by Allan Cunningham, Edinburgh, 1834, p. 65.

183 Veri Vindex, Thoughts On Art, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-57.

184 J.F. Millet wrote expressing admiration for Burns in July 1863. The views were given in private correspondence however and were not published prior to 1868. Since neither Reid nor White ever met Millet it is unlikely they knew of his opinions.

see Etienne Moreau-Nélaton, Millet raconté par lui-même, Paris, 1921, vol.II, p. 145.

185 "Our nineteenth-century art, as a rule, is sadly wanting in earnestness and purpose - wanting in what the French call *motif*."

George Reid, "Notes on The Royal Scottish Academy's Exhibition", Montrose Standard and Angus and Mearns Register, March 8th, 1867, p. 4.

186 'Effect' appeared in April 14th 1865 review for The Montrose Standard and Angus and Mearns Leader, but as 'an effect', as opposed to simply 'effect'.

187 Correspondence Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, March 25th, 1867.

188 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, c.May 14th, 1868.

189 Correspondence Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, July 21st, 1868.

190 *ibid.*, August 16th, 1868.

191 *ibid.*, May 28th, 1869.

192 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, February 10th, 1869.

193 *ibid.*, May 9th, 1869.

194 Correspondence Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, February 14th, 1869.

195 *idem.*

196 *idem.*

197 *idem.*

198 *ibid.*, May 12th, 1869.

199 *ibid.*, April 11th, 1869.

200 Correspondence Reid to Alex Walker, *op. cit.*, May 12th, 1869,

And

Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, May 9th, 1869.

201 Correspondence Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, April 11th, 1869.

202 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, May 9th, 1869.

203 *idem.*

204 *ibid.*, January 29th, 1870.

205 See Introduction.

206 Correspondence Reid to Alex. Walker, *op. cit.*, May 12th, 1869.

207 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, September 30th, 1871.

208 *ibid.*, October 15th, 1871.

209 *ibid.*, September 30th, 1871.

210 *idem.*

211 *ibid.*, October 7th, 1871.

212 *ibid.*, September 30th, 1871.

213 *idem.*

214 *ibid.*, October 28th, 1871.

215 *ibid.*, September 30th, 1871.

216 See chapter 4.

217 "Rosa Bonheur and Troyon compete for the honours in their genre. For my part, I would award it to Troyon; there is more depth, air and harmony in his largest painting than in that of Rosa Bonheur. Yet her oxen, on the other hand are admirably painted, and it is a pity that the melancholy tone of the sky detracts from this. Gudin maintains his fame as a poetic, romantic colourist with \_ \_ \_ \_ earlier paintings that have already been exhibited, which are also already a bit old-fashioned. People here want at least a little more truth nowadays and the search for this comes out quite clearly in the pictures of the best French landscape painters. Rousseau stands pre-eminent; I will gladly allow that he has good intentions and that he is concerned with arriving at the plain truth, but the route he has chosen to reach it does not strike me as the best, and it is certainly not the shortest \_ \_ \_ \_ It is a shame that Rousseau himself cannot resolve to introduce rather more form and drawing into his foregrounds; the middle distance and the background are generally glorious."

T. van Westrheene Wz., "Tentoonstelling te Parjs II, Algemeene Konst en Letterbode No.26 (1855),

quoted in John Sillevius, "Romanticism and Realism", in, The Hague School. Dutch masters of the Nineteenth Century, ed, de Leeuw, Sillevius and Dumas, London 1983, p. 49.

218 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, October 15th, 1872.

219 George Reid and John Forbes White, "The Arts Exhibition", Aberdeen Journal, August 13th, 1873, p. 8.

220 *idem.*

221 *idem.*

222 *idem.*

223 "'The Heath' at Drenthe (10) was exhibited at the International Exhibition of 1862 and we cannot do better than quote the remarks then made about Mollinger's work by Mr. Tom Taylor:- 'There are no more perfect examples of literal landscape here than Mollinger's scene on the banks of a canal, with a team of horses coming along the towing path, and relieved against the bright light of the sky, silver clear in the intervals of showers; or the same painter's Heath at Drenthe with it's banked white clouds.' Mr F.T. Palgrave wrote:- 'Little equals it in close observation of Nature and faithful reproduction of her details. These works seem to form a national school in landscape based neither on the imitation of the older painters nor on the French, and carried often to a more difficult point of completion.'"

George Reid and John Forbes White, "Aberdeen Art Exhibition. II," The Aberdeen Daily Free Press, August 11th, 1873, p. 2.

224 George Reid and John Forbes White, "The Arts Exhibition. The Paintings No. 4.", Aberdeen Journal, August 27th, 1873, p. 8.

225 George Reid, "Exhibition of The Royal Scottish Academy. (Second Notice)", Montrose Standard and Angus and Mearns Leader, March 4th, 1864, p. 4-5.

226 George Reid and John Forbes White, Aberdeen Journal, *op. cit.*, March 27th, 1873, p. 8.

227 Correspondence G.P. Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, held by National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, MS 6348, copies made by G.B. Simpson, held by the library of the Royal Scottish Academy, November 26th, 1866.

228 Edward Pinnington, George Paul Chalmers and the Art of His Time, 1833-1878, Glasgow 1896, p. 114.

229 *ibid.*, pp. 182-185.

230 *ibid.*, pp. 143-144.

231 The Catalogue of the Works and Collection of the late George Paul Chalmers R.S.A., 5th April, 1878, included paintings by J. Maris, M. Maris, Mollinger, Artz, du Chattel and Mauve, and a signed etching by Israels.

232 Correspondence G.P. Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, *op. cit.*, February 26th, 1865.

233 Now in the Orchar Collection, Dundee Art Gallery.

234 Correspondence G.P. Chalmers to John McGavin, quoted in Edward Pinnington, George Paul Chalmers and the Art of his Time, 1833-1878, Glasgow 1896, p. 274.

235 Pinnington, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-185.

236 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, October 7th, 1871.

237 The painting depicted an old woman reading a bible.

238 Correspondence Reid to White, *op. cit.*, February 4th, 1870.

239 George Reid, "Notes on The Royal Scottish Academy's Exhibition. Second Notice.", Montrose Standard and Angus and Mearns Leader, March 22nd, 1867, p. 4.

240 Ina Mary Harrower, John Forbes White, Edinburgh, 1918, p. 45.

241 Alexander Gibson and John Forbes White, George Paul Chalmers, Edinburgh, 1879, p. 50.

242 Josef Israels, Meditation, now in Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

243 See chapter 2.

A poem by Israels of 1876.

"Within the fisherman's dark shack,

Lonely, decrepit, where the wind

Rattles the rafters, finds each crack,

Can there be aught to cheer the mind?

Yes! By the earth whose smoke and grime  
Bedaub the walls with murky haze,  
Amid the wrack of age and time,  
A child sits in a chair and plays."

Quoted in "Josef Israels (1824-1911)", The Hague School. Dutch Masters of  
the Nineteenth Century, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

244 Correspondence G.P. Chalmers to G.B. Simpson, *op. cit.*, March 29th, 1866.

## Conclusion

This thesis has looked in depth at a limited number of artists and patrons. Wider extrapolations may be made to allow the drawing of general conclusions. Because more work on nineteenth century Scottish collecting remains to be done the conclusions drawn must necessarily be provisional.

Certainly the period c.1860-1880 was a time of change in Scottish art. During these twenty years a number of younger Scottish artists broke with the established conventions of the day and initiated practices which were to be highly influential for Scottish art, arguably until the first world war.

Reid and Chalmers looked, selectively, at European developments and incorporated these elements with indigenous Scottish styles and subject matter. Their choice of European artists was conditioned by preconceived notions about the function of art and its place in Scottish society. Their ambivalent attitudes towards industrial progress meant that painting which emphasised and praised rural values and rural virtues found great favour with them. Convinced of the moral educative role that art had to play, and disillusioned with their urban existence, they naturally gravitated towards styles of rural genre painting practised in other European cities. They perceived it as having a relevance and a purpose not found in the romantic and historical works of their Scottish elders. Scotland's historic ties with Holland, artistically through Sir David Wilkie but also in trade, in education and religion resulted in Scottish painters looking directly at modern Dutch art for a language to express their new ideas. Through

familiarity with Dutch art and artists they were introduced to similar artistic expression in France.

Certain parallels may be drawn between the rural genre paintings of J.F. Millet and his relationship with Paris, and the rural nostalgia works of Chalmers and Reid and their relationship with Scottish urban centres; but the two cultures reflect different national preoccupations. R.L. Herbert argues that Millet's work stemmed from the revolution of 1848.<sup>1</sup> He interprets the paintings up until the mid 1860's as a reflection of with the social issues raised by the events of 1848, such as the rise of the city at the expense of the depopulation of rural areas. Herbert argues that Millet's peasants, while embodying all the virtues of the work ethic, did so at one stage removed from the realities of urban labour and thus were a more palatable personification of the working class. The preponderance of rural subjects in Scotland and the explanation of their relationship to their society reflected different social concerns. There is no need to account for the the continued significance of religion. In Scotland religion was still a integral part of society, its relevance was not in question, although further research is needed to document the religious dimension in detail. There is no need to ascribe the laudatory reading of the themes of labour to a later middle class morality imposed on the working class. Considering the conditions described in chapter one there was surprisingly little class conflict, or even class consciousness, in Scotland in the period 1860-1880. Irrespective of the realities of exploitation, and the enormous class differences in income, status, power and living standards the work ethic was genuinely shared by all. S.G. Checkland observed

"\_ \_ \_ for radical ideology to take any real hold it had to have roots in an element of the working classes. Little by way of proposals for alternative societies could be expected to come from the poor and the unskilled: effective and sustained protest had to be rooted in a group of skilled workers who felt themselves threatened with a deterioration of their condition. Such a group did not effectively appear in Glasgow, so that there was relatively little response among the workers to the intellectualism of the radical middle class, or even those who like MacLean, had come from the working class, and little incentive to propound revolutionary solutions among themselves. The rhetoric of renovation or revolution was thus unable to find real roots in group fears or disgruntlement. In this sense the Glasgow labour movement like that of Britain generally, would appear to have been much less affected by socialist ideas than were the workers in other European industrial countries. All this is, however, tentative; a study along such lines would yield interesting results." 2.

While in France working class consciousness was put to political ends which were reflected in realist French painting, the same is not true of Scotland. The parallels between Scotland in the second half of the nineteenth century and contemporary France are limited by different national preoccupations. The paintings Chalmers and Reid produced were always concerned with Scottish subjects. The artists worried about losing their Scottish identity, and even when they followed European models their paintings were always couched in decidedly Scottish terms. This can be seen by briefly

reconsidering Chalmers' The End of the Harvest (Illustration 20.) and Reid's The Peat Moss (Illustration 26.).

If the Chalmers painting is compared to Breton's The Recall of the Gleaners (Illustration 27.) then superficially the subject matter is almost identical. Both paintings depict a scene at sunset. Women are gleaning the last of the crop after the main harvest has taken place. Just after the exhibition of this painting at the salon of 1857 Breton wrote to his wife that he intended creating a purely French style of painting that recorded the traditions and practices of his country. <sup>3</sup> Chalmers' intention was the same as Breton's. For an east coast Scot nothing could be more individually local than a depiction of the "harrowins", the picking over of a potato field at the end of an October day. The region Chalmers came from, and still regarded as his home even after his move to Edinburgh, had, until very recently a highly individual custom centering round the potato harvest.<sup>4</sup> As recently as ten years ago schools on the east coast between Dundee and Aberdeen still had a break for two weeks in October to allow the pupils to work harvesting potatoes. <sup>5</sup> For a painter with very close ties to precisely that section of the east coast of Scotland the subject of the potato harvest was categorically local and individual. Chalmers, like Breton, painted a subject which documented the practices of a specific rural area.

The End of the Harvest has heavy overtones of the moral superiority of rural life, as discussed in chapter one. By 1873 Chalmers had travelled in Europe and was therefore a relatively cosmopolitan figure. Nevertheless the picture depicted a specific Scottish subject.

While Reid's The Peat Moss cannot be identified as a rendering of a specifically east coast practice, his correspondence demonstrates that he too thought of his work as Scottish. At various times Reid wrote of his desire that his painting should be viewed in national terms. <sup>6</sup> By the time he conceived of The Peat Moss Reid had seen Breton's Recall of the Gleaners at the Exposition Universelle and stated his admiration for it. <sup>7</sup> Reid's subject of female fieldworkers suggests a debt to Breton. The subject however was one Reid chose having witnessed the scene in the country immediately south of Aberdeen.<sup>8</sup>

Scottish art in the period was a separate, distinct commodity and the factors which moulded it are identifiable through an examination of the individual nature of the society in which it was produced. The available evidence supports this claim, though at this stage our understanding of Scottish art and society is still limited by the dearth of existing research. While it is a fact that some Scottish artists of c.1860-1880 looked to Holland for practical training or that significant numbers of artists in the period had well documented links with contemporary patrons, other assertions must necessarily be supported only by inference and supposition. Not all the prominent artists fit neatly into the pattern. Thomas Faed was one of the most commercially successful rural genre painters of the period under discussion. He was a Scot and yet completely failed to exhibit the attitudes ascribed to artists such as Chalmers and Reid. The explanation for this is that Faed left Scotland for London in 1852 and consequently left behind the pervasive influence of Scottish society. As well as Faed, questions might be asked of the work of W.Q. Orchardson. Orchardson was portrayed in chapter one as a "London Scot"; that

is as an artist, who like Faed, left Scotland and its incumbent social pressures and was therefore not a painter of rural nostalgia. Yet Orchardson was one of the artists whose work was collected by the so-called rural nostalgia patrons. There can be no simple dismissal of this apparent contradiction. However, in chapter one it was established that people who live through periods of great social upheaval find it difficult to identify new modes of existence, often failing to grasp what, with hindsight, appears obvious. Given a natural inclination among Scottish patrons to support Scottish painters, and further enhanced by personal acquaintanceship with Orchardson through Chalmers and other artists, the collectors of rural nostalgia bought Orchardson's work when they saw it as being close to the type of paintings they usually purchased. This accounts for I.J. Weinberg's purchase of a work such as Figures at a Cottage Door or for Reid and White's praise in 1873 for The Toilers of the Sea.

More serious questions surround Samuel Smiles, his relationship to the anti-urban argument and as champion of the rurally inspired self-help ethic. Why, if Smiles was such a champion, did he apparently betray his rural inspiration and urge George Reid to base himself in London? While there is no conclusive answer, it can be supposed that the ambivalent response to the city and to commercial and industrial success as outlined in chapter one is seen here having an effect on an individual. Just as the collectors of rural nostalgia were able to retain a belief in the superiority of rural existence at the same time as making a living running industrial enterprises in the city, so Smiles was able on the one hand to revel in the excitement and opportunity of life in London and urge his

friend to join him, and on the other hand to attack the values of the city in his writing.

The thesis has dealt exclusively with the motivations and innovations of a small group of painters and collectors in the period c.1860-1880. While 1880 was not the end of innovation in Scottish painting, after that time the artists' motivations changed considerably. The "Glasgow School" which began to emerge towards the end of the 1870's was the vehicle for that change. They introduced a higher keyed, more dispassionate form of painting, superficially very different from the low toned, overtly emotional productions of the previous generation. These Glasgow painters are frequently portrayed as radical innovators in Scottish painting, as saving Scottish art from the depths of mawkish sentimentality. The painters themselves thought of their work as breaking completely with the past. The landscape painter James Paterson felt that the "Glasgow Boys" " \_ \_ \_ banded themselves together to fight what they considered the narrow outlook and provincial aims and attainments reflected in the canons of art among the accepted painters of the day." 9. The painters of the 1860's and 1870's displayed a narrow outlook only in as far as they were strongly committed to the contemporary notion of didactic painting and fought hard for their beliefs. The great debate in English art between the didacticism of Ruskin and the aestheticism of Whistler was only just commencing at the close of the 1870's. The Scots of Reid's generation were aware of and understood Whistler even if they did not sympathise with his approach. 10. The rural nostalgia painters' outlook was narrow because it was well defined, not because it was ill-informed. The accusation that the painters of the sixties and seventies were provincial is simply wrong. The myth of the "Glasgow

Boys" as bursting fully formed upon a moribund stage and rejecting everything from the past, is very widespread. George Reid is often portrayed as a reactionary traditionalist, out of touch with current thinking and who did his utmost to thwart the rise of the west coast men. To back up this claim Reid's actions as President of the Royal Scottish Academy are cited. This is a complete misunderstanding of the issues. In 1893 Reid came close to resigning over the question of how large the annual R.S.A. exhibition ought to be, and over the unrestricted election of associate members. Reid was strongly against the practice of hanging pictures from the floor to the ceiling and moved to restrict the number of works hung. He did restrict numbers dramatically. Under the presidency of Sir William Fettes Douglas in 1886, 1167 works were hung, under Reid in 1896 there were 651. This was not an example of unwillingness on Reid's part to open up the R.S.A. to younger artists, nor a desire to perpetuate the rampant cronyism which tacitly excluded the "Glasgow School" under Fettes Douglas. (1882-1891). Actually Reid was concerned about the quality of the exhibition. He felt that the R.S.A. had to have high standards for works which it would accept and that it was positively wrong to crowd the walls simply because there were sufficient canvasses to do so. Even the 651 of 1896 Reid felt was double the number of worthy pictures that could be produced in Scotland in any one year. It was not Glasgow painters he sought to exclude by this means, only bad painters. While those two terms may well have been synonymous for Fettes Douglas, they were definitely not synonymous for Reid. Under Fettes Douglas only two Glasgow painters were elected to the R.S.A. and one of them, Arthur Melville (1855-1904), had to come and live in Edinburgh in order to do so. Under Reid three were elected during his first year of office and three more over the next six years.

A lengthy interview with Reid, published in the Westminster Gazette in 1893 has been cited as an example of how out of touch he was with more modern painting. The interview, conducted in Reid's Edinburgh studio, was given in the immediate aftermath of the hanging of the 1893 R.S.A.. Reid as President, had just forced the selection committee to accept his views on the number of pictures to be hung and the interviewer came especially to inquire into this new hanging policy. Reid quite clearly stated the type of pictures he wished to exclude. They were the productions of untrained amateur artists, not of younger Glasgow men.

In one paragraph, after prompting by his inquisitor, Reid commented on "Impressionism". He decried the lack of drawing to be found in "the impressionist school" and noted that Glasgow contained quite a number of devotees of the movement. Certainly then Reid was out of sympathy with aspects of Glasgow School painting; and possibly with the more decorative, patterned work of George Henry and E.A. Hornel, then just about to set sail for Japan. However it is entirely wrong to portray the older painter as a bitter reactionary.

Reid's voting record as a member of the Academy destroys any suggestion that he unilaterally dismissed younger west-coast painters. In 1888 Guthrie came up for election as an associate member of the R.S.A.. Reid wrote to White regarding the election and announced his intention of voting for Guthrie, even although Reid's brother A.D. Reid was also up for election. <sup>12</sup>. In the event Guthrie was elected in 1888 and A.D. Reid not until 1892. In 1892 also, Guthrie was one of those proposed for full membership. Reid

again voted for him, this time when the election was tied and Reid held the casting vote.

Reid's own painting confirms that he did not reject the developments of the "Glasgow School". Although after 1880 he was very much a portrait painter, Reid continued to paint landscapes for his own pleasure. He was still painting landscapes after 1900. (Illustration 66.) These works show quite clearly his response to the painting of the Glasgow artists. Although he never abandoned the "feeling" he had pursued so vigorously forty years earlier, these later landscapes were considerably lighter in tone than any work of the 1860's or 1870's. This was certainly due to Reid's receptiveness to "Glasgow School" painting.

If, as has been claimed, "Glasgow School" painting was a complete rejection of all that had gone before, then Reid's sympathetic response to the painters and the techniques would be remarkable. If however the "Glasgow School" painters were to be seen as a movement which grew directly out of the innovations of the 1860's and 1870's, then Reid's acceptance of them as painters and his partial adoption of their methods, would be much more understandable. The "Glasgow School" can quite definitely be understood in these latter terms. The social concerns of the 1860's and 1870's were formalised in the Scottish Labour Party, founded in Glasgow in 1888. The urban milieu became an acceptable subject, as evidenced by some of the views of Glasgow painted, to a limited degree, by the "Glasgow School" and those etched by Muirhead Bone. The attitude which allowed Whistler, the *eminence grise* of the "Glasgow Boys" to write in 1885 "The evening mist clothes the riverside with poetry as with a veil \_ \_ \_ \_ the tall chimneys

become campanile and the warehouses are palaces in the night." <sup>13</sup> was new to Scotland. Scottish artists responded accordingly. Just as the painters of the sixties and seventies responded to the attitudes of their time, so to did those of the 1880's.

The most obvious similarity that the "Glasgow School" painters shared with the artists of rural nostalgia was their willingness to learn from abroad. The "Glasgow School" were not the first Scots artists to study in Europe. It was not the "Glasgow School" that first sought out contacts with European contemporaries. It was not the "Glasgow School" that alone developed an individual voice with which Scots artists might speak in international terms. The "Glasgow School" consolidated and expanded upon the experiences of the rural nostalgia painters of the previous generation. The Glasgow painters' success, as a group, in London from 1887, in Europe from 1890, and in America from 1895, was the result of having made an individual contribution to late nineteenth century painting. They had learned from Europe in the early 1880's and returned there in triumph ten years later when they successfully exhibited in Munich in 1890. The pioneering work done by the painters of the 1860's and 1870's pointed the way.

It was the Scots of Reid's generation who sought out French and Dutch masters and used what they learned to create a Scottish realist tradition. They encouraged a taste for contemporary European painting and effectively created a climate in which later artists would both find it natural to study abroad, and have available around them large collections of contemporary European painting. It is no coincidence that the foreign artists admired by the rural nostalgia painters and bought by pioneering

Scottish collectors were of the same generic type as those admired by the "Glasgow School". For the earlier painters it was the didactic genre of Millet, Breton, Mollinger and Israels that was admired. For the later artists it was the less emotional productions of J. Bastien-Lepage and J. Maris that provided the European stimulus. The relationship of The Legend to the work of Israels is precisely the same as that of Guthrie's Hind's Daughter to the work of Jules Bastien Lepage.

The work of the "Glasgow School" differs in appearance from that of the artists of rural nostalgia as much as the latter did from the paintings of McCulloch's generation. However there is a closer relationship between the artists of rural nostalgia and the "Glasgow School", than there is between the artists of rural nostalgia and their immediate predecessors. The painters of the 1860's and the painters of the 1880's both painted mainly rural genre and landscape. They stressed the importance of painting according to tonal values. There are even precedents, particularly in the work of Chalmers and McTaggart, for the adoption of higher keyed colour. Chalmers' Girl in a Boat of 1867 and Landscape in Angus (Illustration 67.) of 1872 are striking examples, as is Two Boys and a Dog in a Boat, by McTaggart of 1871. Undeniably, however, the main source of the "Glasgow School's" lighter palette was the "bright painting" of Jules Bastien Lepage.

Paradoxically it is the differences between the "Glasgow School" and the rural nostalgia painters that ties the two groups most closely together. It was not the methods of the earlier Scottish painters that the "Glasgow Boys" adopted, but their means of acquiring that method. Following the lead of their predecessors, the "Glasgow Boys" looked to Europe, looked to

landscape and rural genre painting, and adapted what they found to particularly Scottish ends. Both groups responded to the demands of their own society. This led to a didactic purpose for the rural nostalgia painters and to a more factual approach for the "Glasgow School". Their means to an end were identical.

## Footnotes

### CONCLUSION

- 1 Robert L. Herbert, Jean-Francois Millet, exhibition catalogue. Hayward Gallery, London 1976. and "City vs. country, the rural image in French painting from Millet to Gauguin", Artforum VIII, February 1970, pp. 44-55.
- 2 S.G. Checkland, The Upas Tree - Glasgow 1875-1975 ... and After, University of Glasgow Press 1981, p 31.
- 3 see Gabriel P. Weisberg, The Realist Tradition, Indiana 1980, p. 86, n. 6.
- 4 see page 54.
- 5 Alexander Fenton, Scottish Country Life, Edinburgh 1976, pp. 115-123.
- 6 Correspondence George reid to John Forbes White. Now held by Aberdeen Art Gallery. April 25th 1869 and September 30th 1871. See p. 218.
- 7 see page 318.
- 8 see page 418 n. 188.

9 James Paterson, A Manuscript History of W.Y. Macgregor and his involvement with the Glasgow Boys unpublished, collection The Paterson Family. Quoted from Roger Billcliffe, The Glasgow Boys, The Glasgow School of Painting 1875-1895, London 1985, p. 38.

10 "We see it (the principals of painting according to tonal values) also in Whistler, whose 'symphonies' are so little understood when seen among the glaring colours of the English school"

Veri Vindex, Thoughts on Art and Notes on the Exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy of 1868, Edinburgh, 1868, p. 51.

11 William Hardie, Scottish Painting 1837-1939, London, 1976, p. 70.

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12 Correspondence George Reid to John Forbes White, held by Aberdeen Art Gallery, November 13th, 1888.

13 James McNeill Whistler, "Ten O'Clock Lecture", reprinted as "Mr. Whistler's 'Ten O'Clock'", in The Gentle Art of Making Enemies, London, 1892, p. 144.



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RURAL NOSTALGIA:  
PAINTING IN SCOTLAND c.1860-1880

Ph.D. Thesis  
University of St Andrews

John Morrison

VOLUME 2

ILLUSTRATIONS

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Private Collection, 1872.



FIGURE 1. George Paul Chalmers, The Head of Loch Lomond

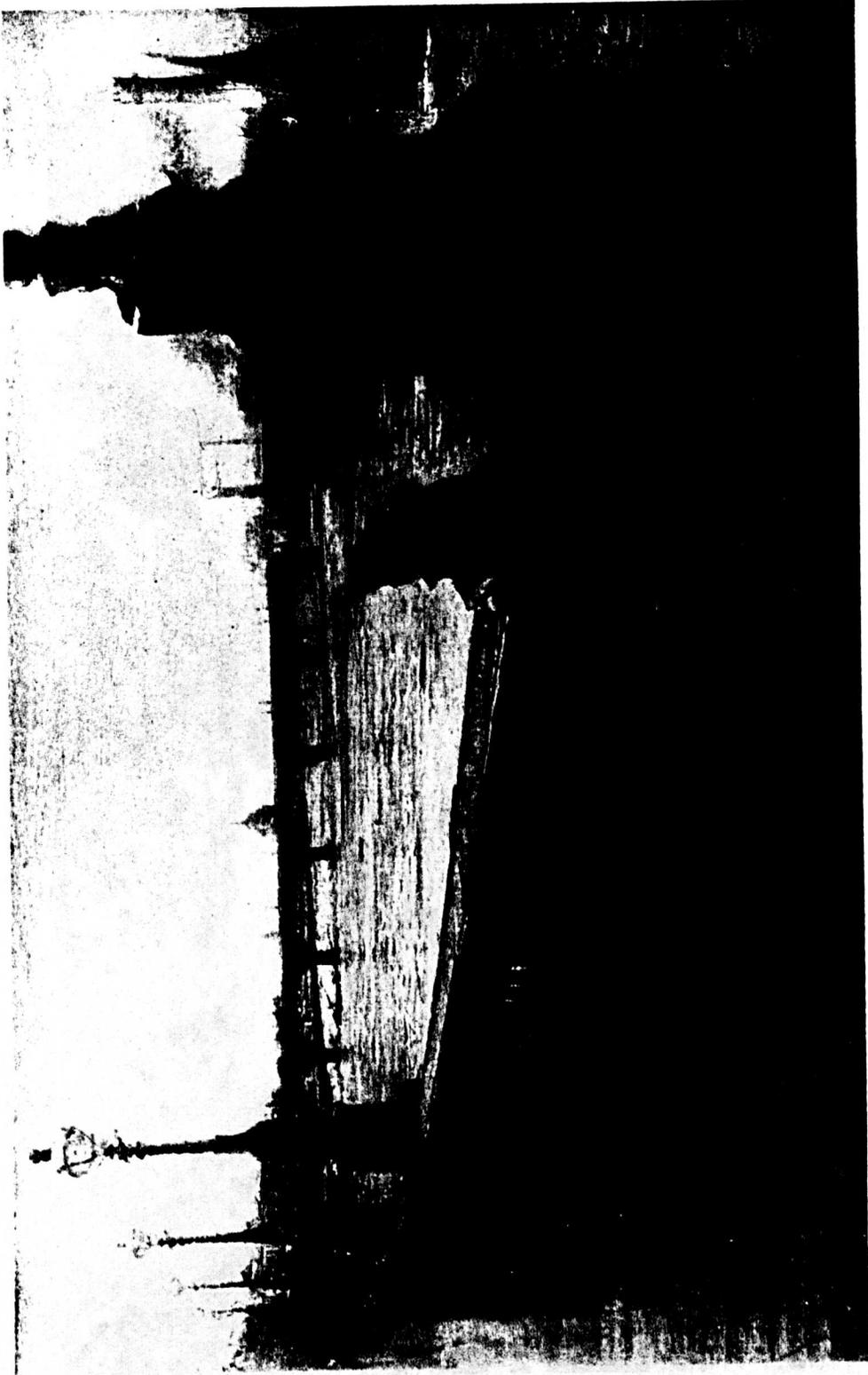


FIGURE 3    FIGURE 2. Thomas Graham, Alone in London



FIGURE 3. Miles Birkett Foster, Making Hay While the Sun Shines



FIGURE 4. George Paul Chalmers, The Legend

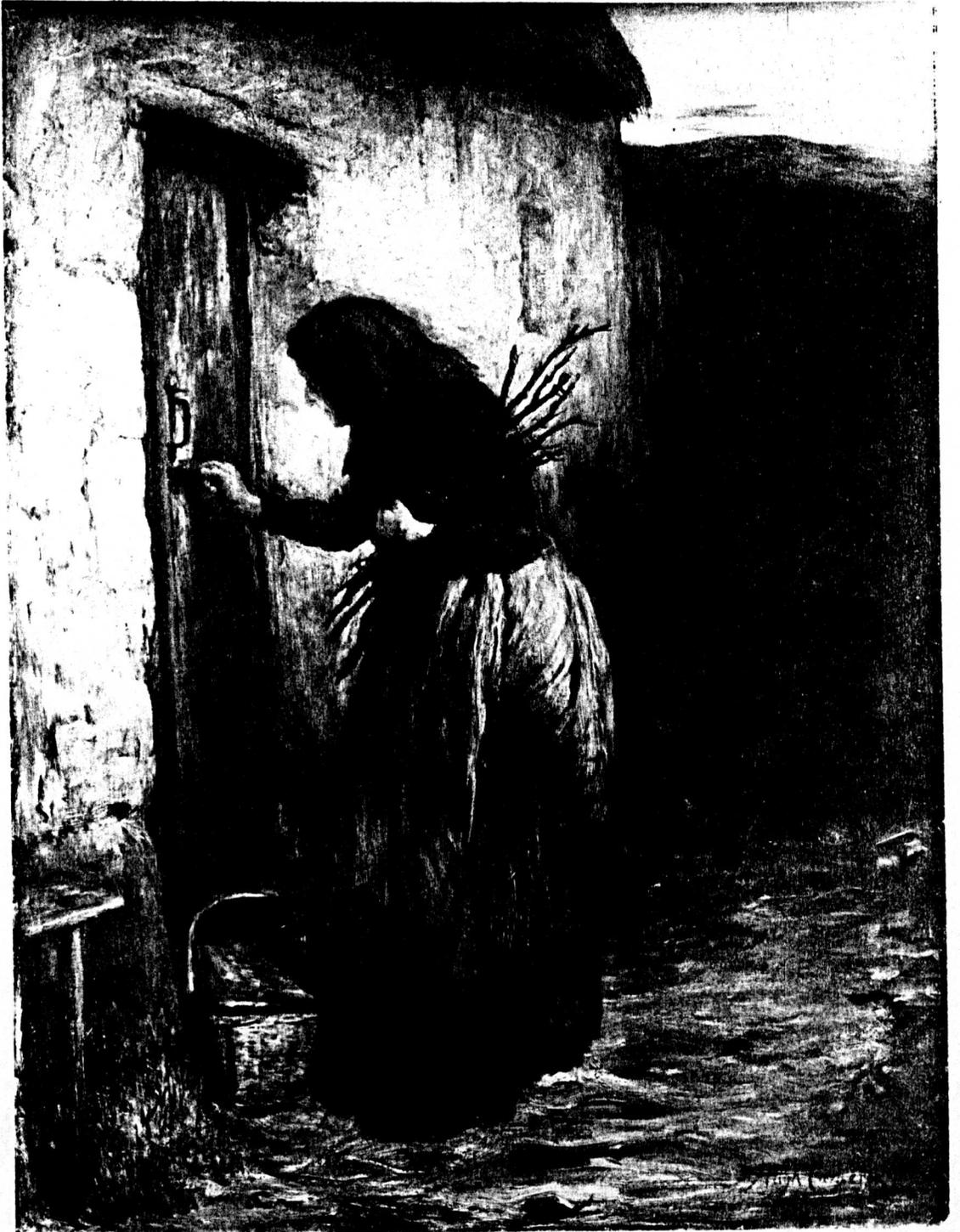


FIGURE 5. Hugh Cameron, A Lonely Life



FIGURE 6. Hugh Cameron, A Little Housewife

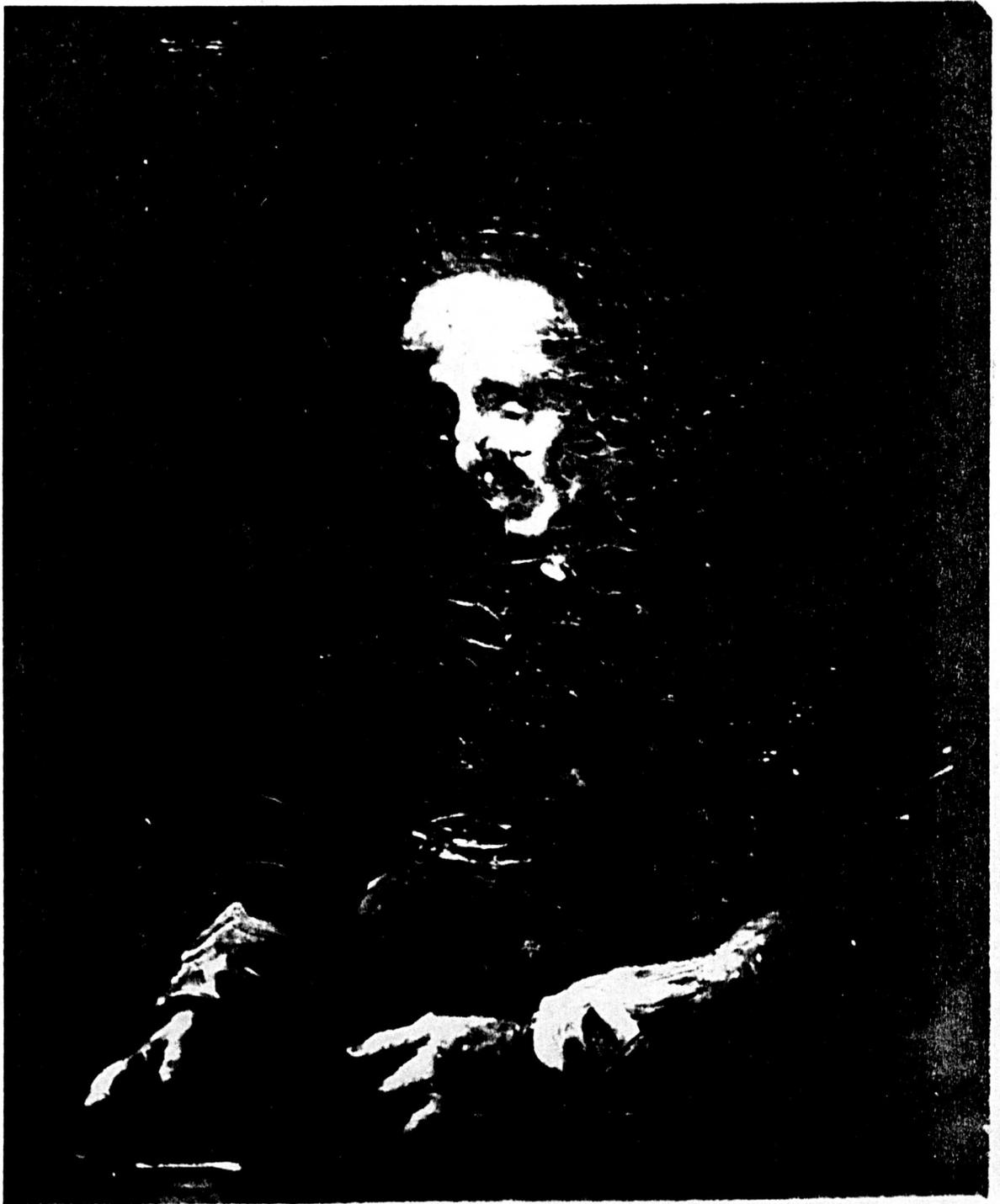


FIGURE 7. George Paul Chalmers; Just Knows and Knows no More  
Her Bible True



FIGURE 8. P.A. Rajon after G.P. Chalmers, Prayer



FIGURE 9. Sir George Reid, Broadsea



FIGURE 10. William Mulready, Train up a child in the way he should go



FIGURE 11. Thomas Brooks, *Relenting*



FIGURE 12. Sir George Harvey, The Penny Savings Bank

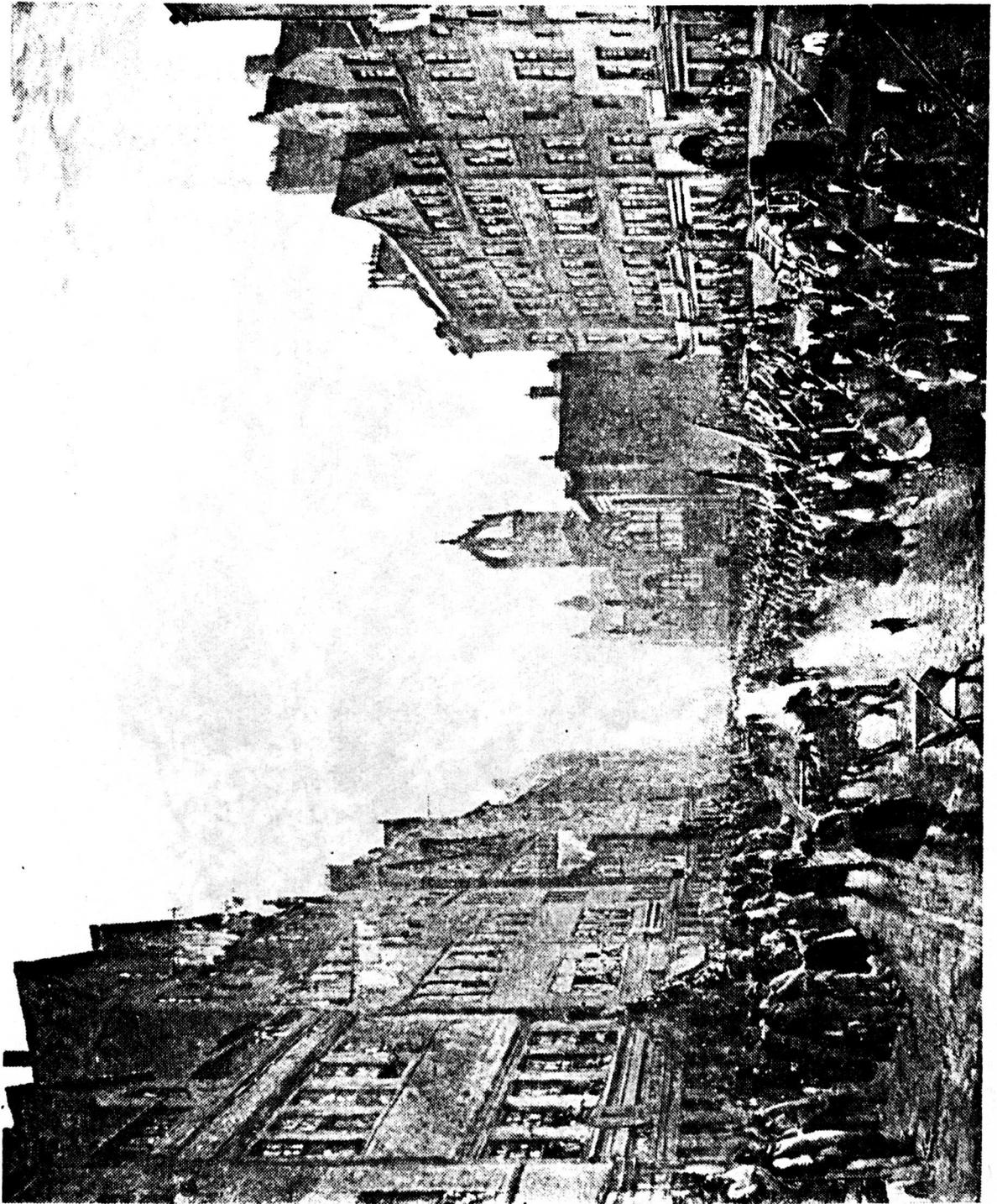


FIGURE 13. Sam Bough, An Extensive view of the High Street and St Giles with a departing column of Gordon Highlanders

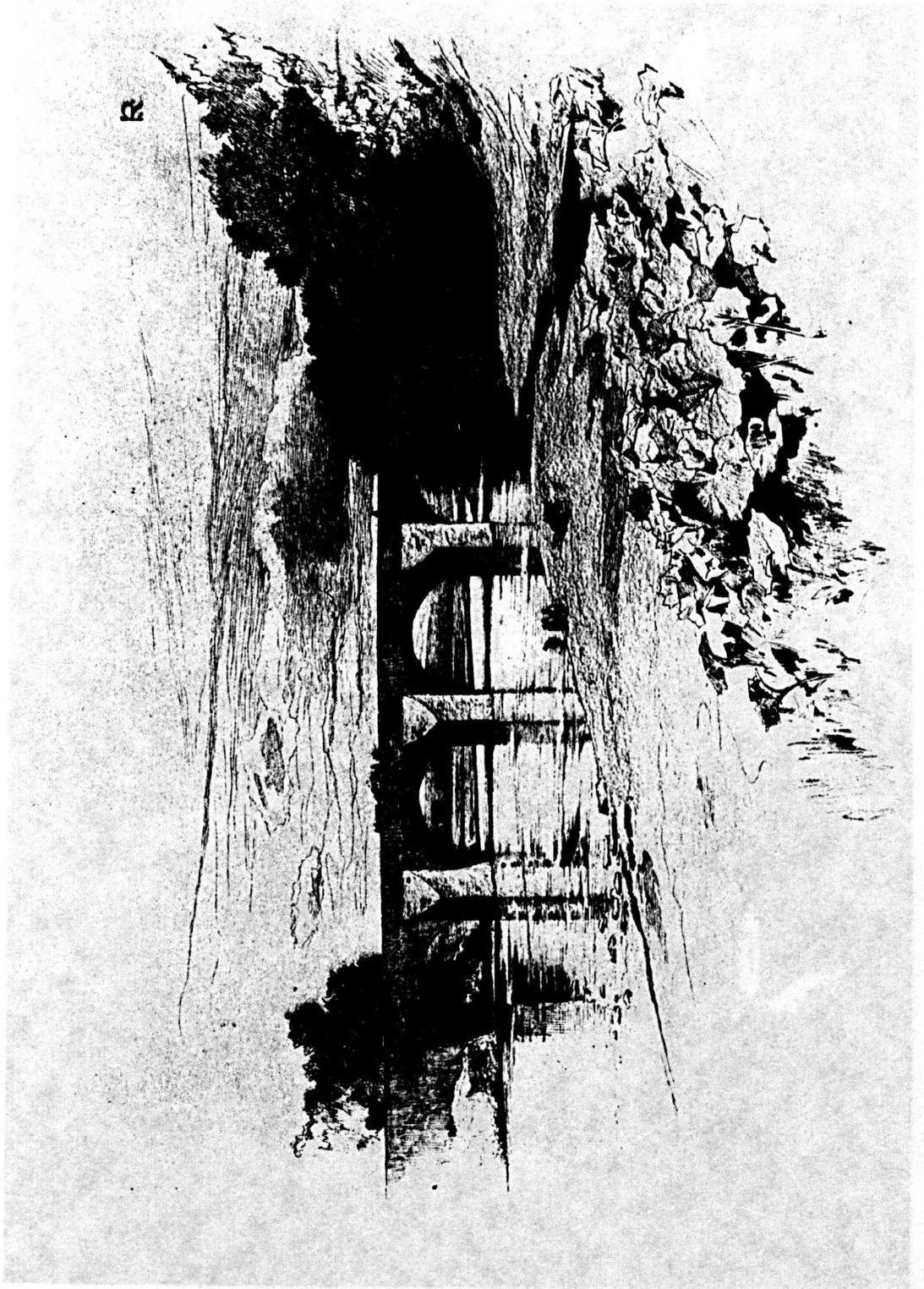
FIGURE 14. St Giles Church, Edinburgh



BOTHWELL CASTLE

Engraved by J. G. Macdonald

FIGURE 14. Sir George Reid, Bothwell Castle



BOTHWELL BRIDGE

FIGURE 15. Sir George Reid, Bothwell Bridge



FIGURE 16. Sir Luke Fildes, The Widower



FIGURE 17. George Paul Chalmers, Study for 'The Legend'



FIGURE 18. George Paul Chalmers, Study for 'The Legend'



FIGURE 19. George Paul Chalmers, charcoal Study for 'The Legend'



FIGURE 20. George Paul Chalmers, The End of the Harvest



FIGURE 21. George Paul Chalmers, The Ford



FIGURE 22. William McTaggart, Enoch Arden



FIGURE 23. Sir John Everett Millais, Chill October



FIGURE 24. George Paul Chalmers, Running Water

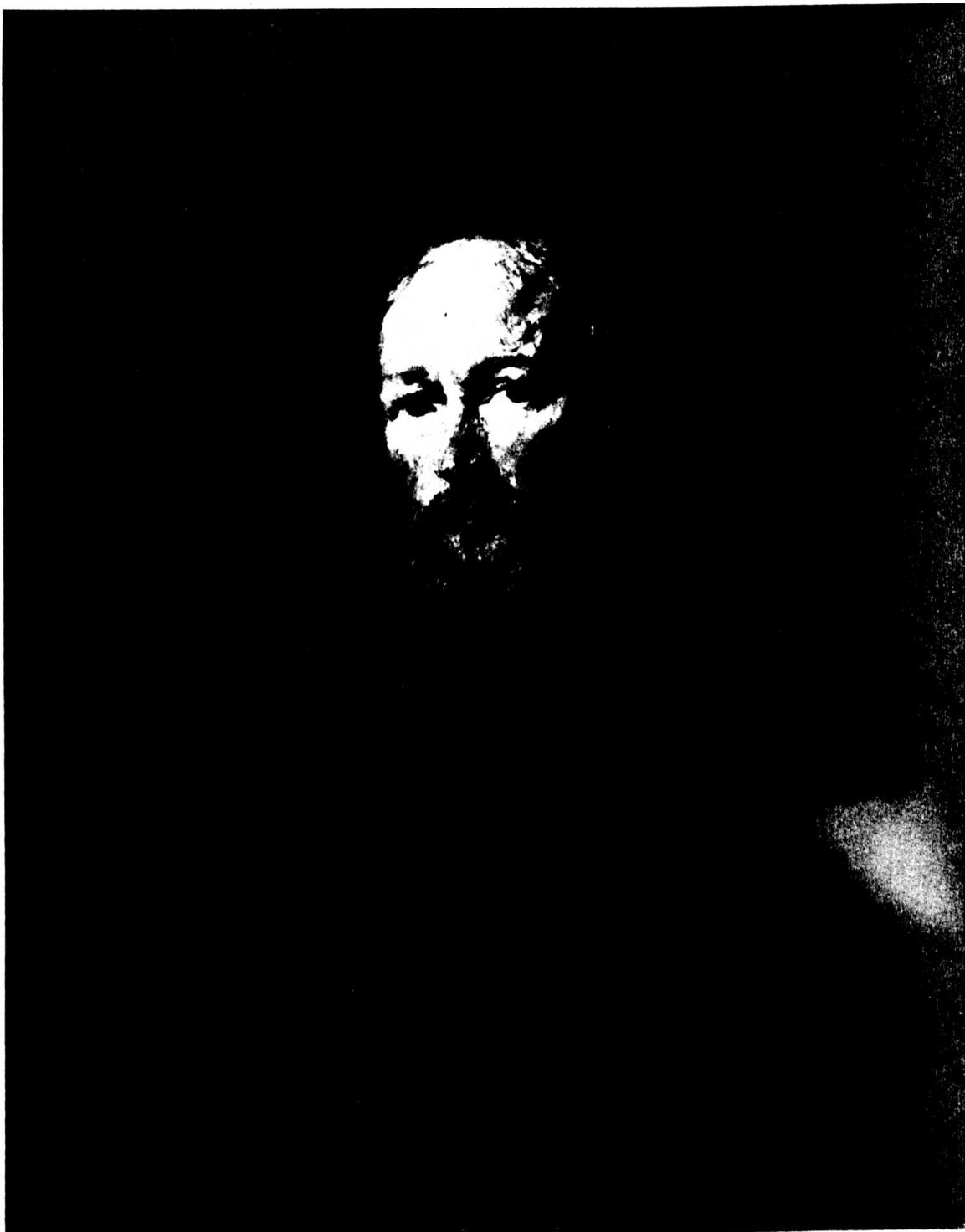


FIGURE 25. George Paul Chalmers, John Charles Bell



FIGURE 26. Sir George Reid, The Peat Moss



FIGURE 27. Jules Breton, The Recall of the Gleaners



FIGURE 28. Sir George Harvey, Sheep Shearing



FIGURE 29. William McTaggart, Villie Baird



FIGURE 30. Alexander Davidson, The Broken Doll



FIGURE 31. Josef Israels, The Frugal Meal



FIGURE 32. Gerrit Alexander Mollinger, Drenthe



Rajon aq. f.

FIGURE 33. P.A. Rajon after G. Reid, George Paul Chalmers



FIGURE 34. D.A.C. Artz, Mother's Joy



FIGURE 35. Sir George Reid, Samuel Smiles



FIGURE 36. Sir George Reid, Bakehouse Close

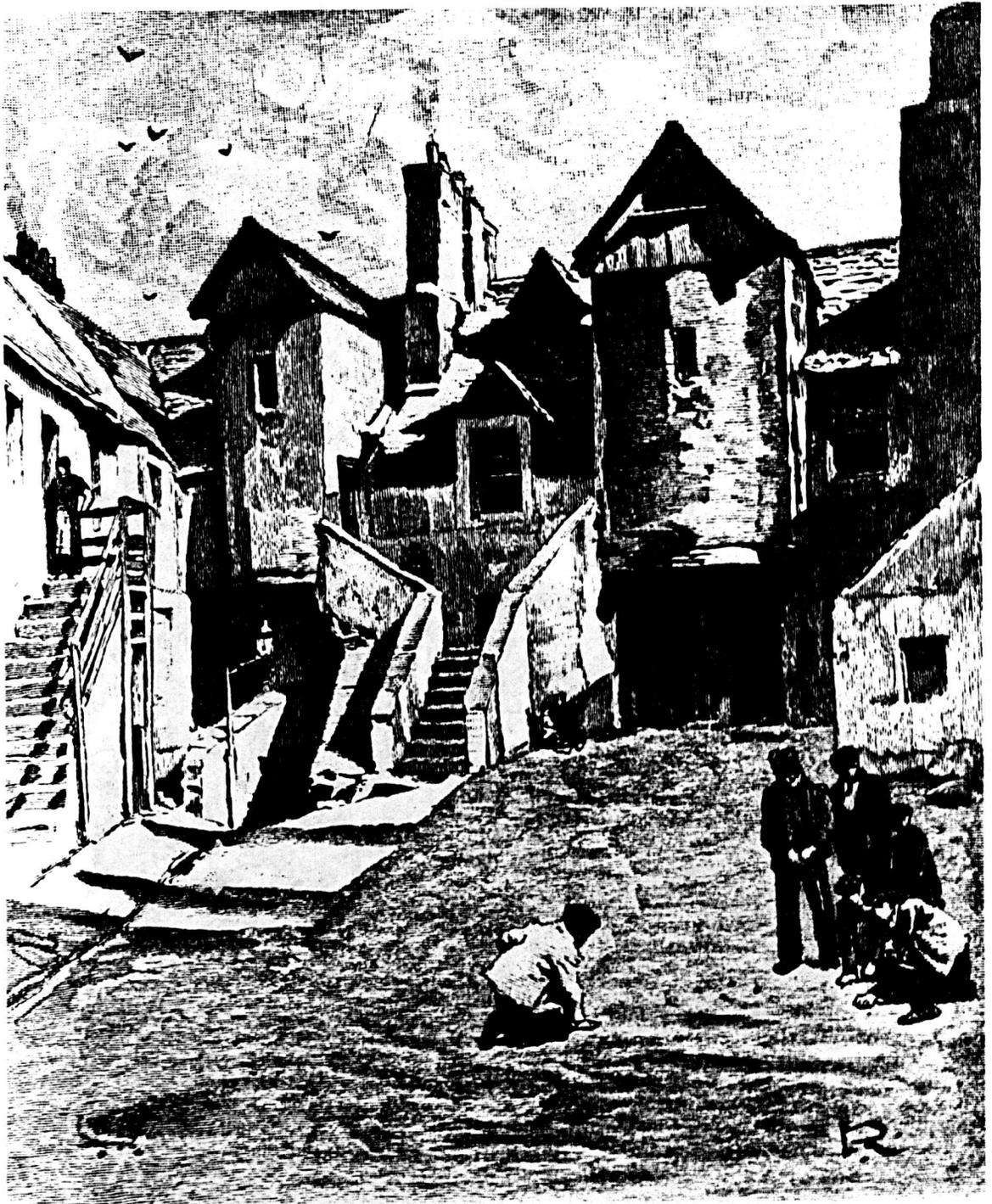


FIGURE 37. Sir George Reid, White Horse Close



FIGURE 38. Sir George Reid, Reid's Close

FIGURE 39. Sir George Reid, Lady Blair's Close

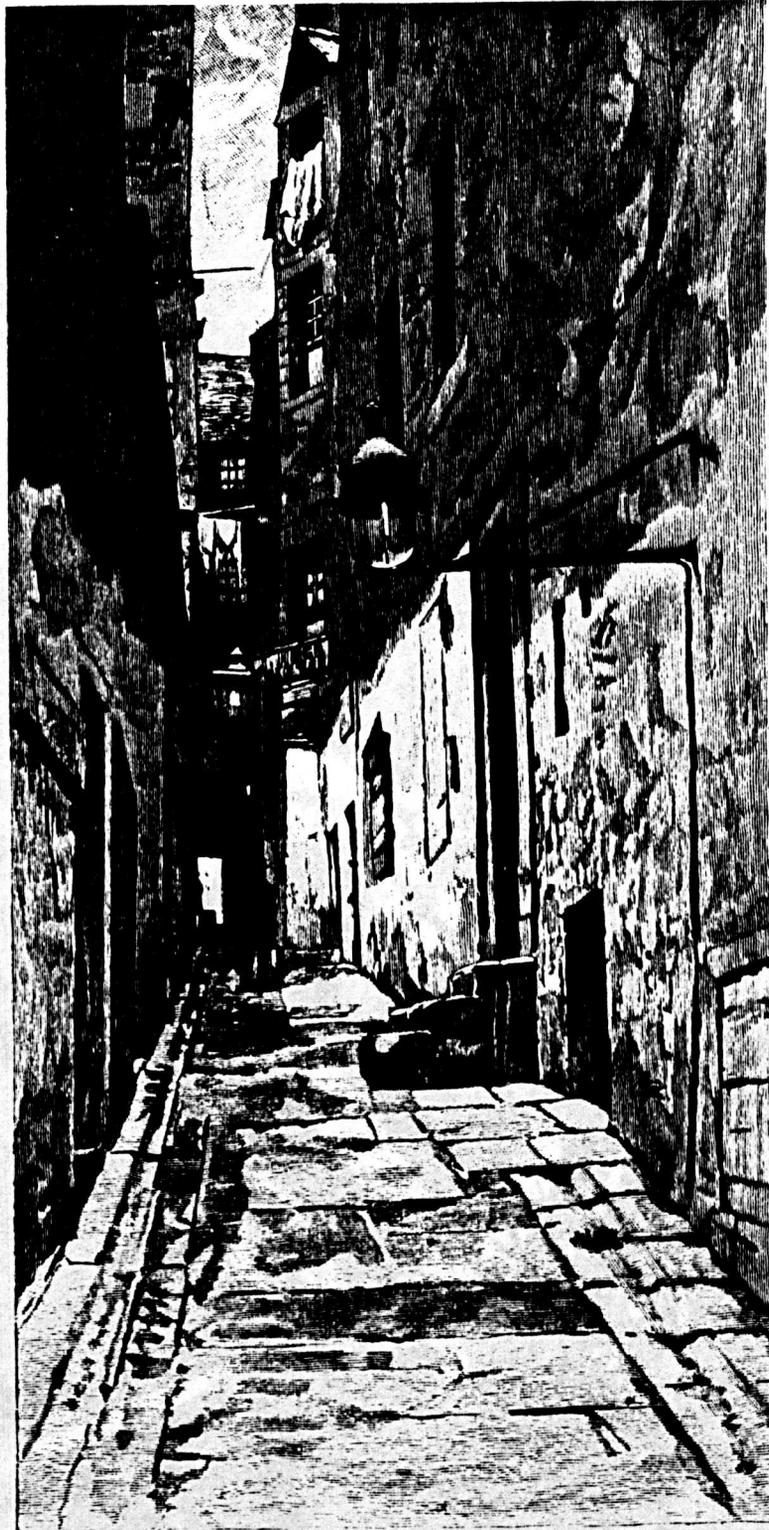


FIGURE 39. Sir George Reid, Lady Stair's Close



FIGURE 40. Sir William Quiller Orchardson, The Toilers of the Sea



OUR LATEST ART-DREAM.

FIGURE 41. L. Sambourne, Our Latest Art Dream



FIGURE 42. Sir David Wilkie, Distraint for Rent

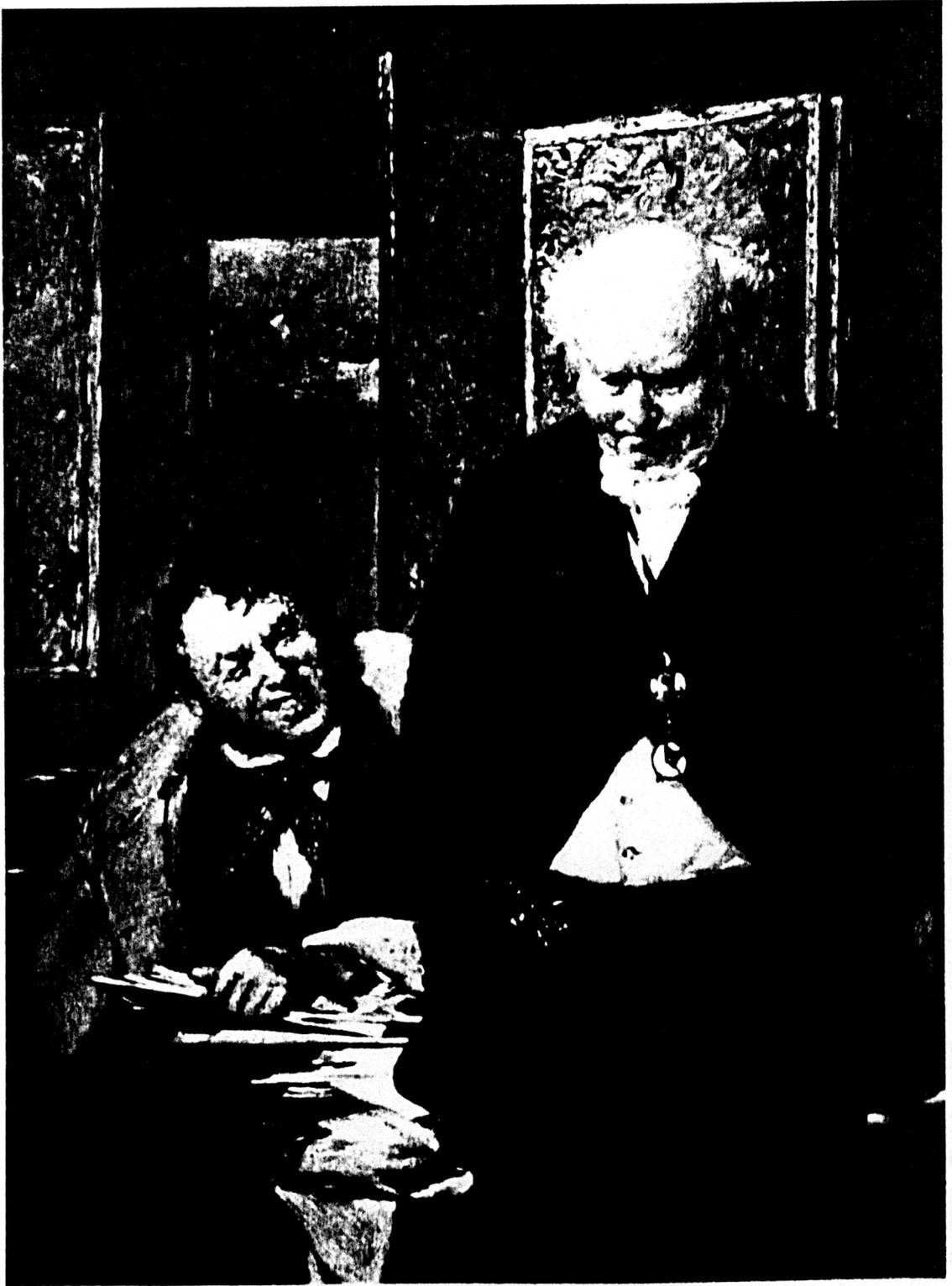


FIGURE 43. Erskine Nicol, The Tables Turned



FIGURE 44. Sir David Wilkie, The Blind Fiddler



FIGURE 45. Josef Israels, The Departure



FIGURE 46. Sir George Reid, Dunnotar Castle

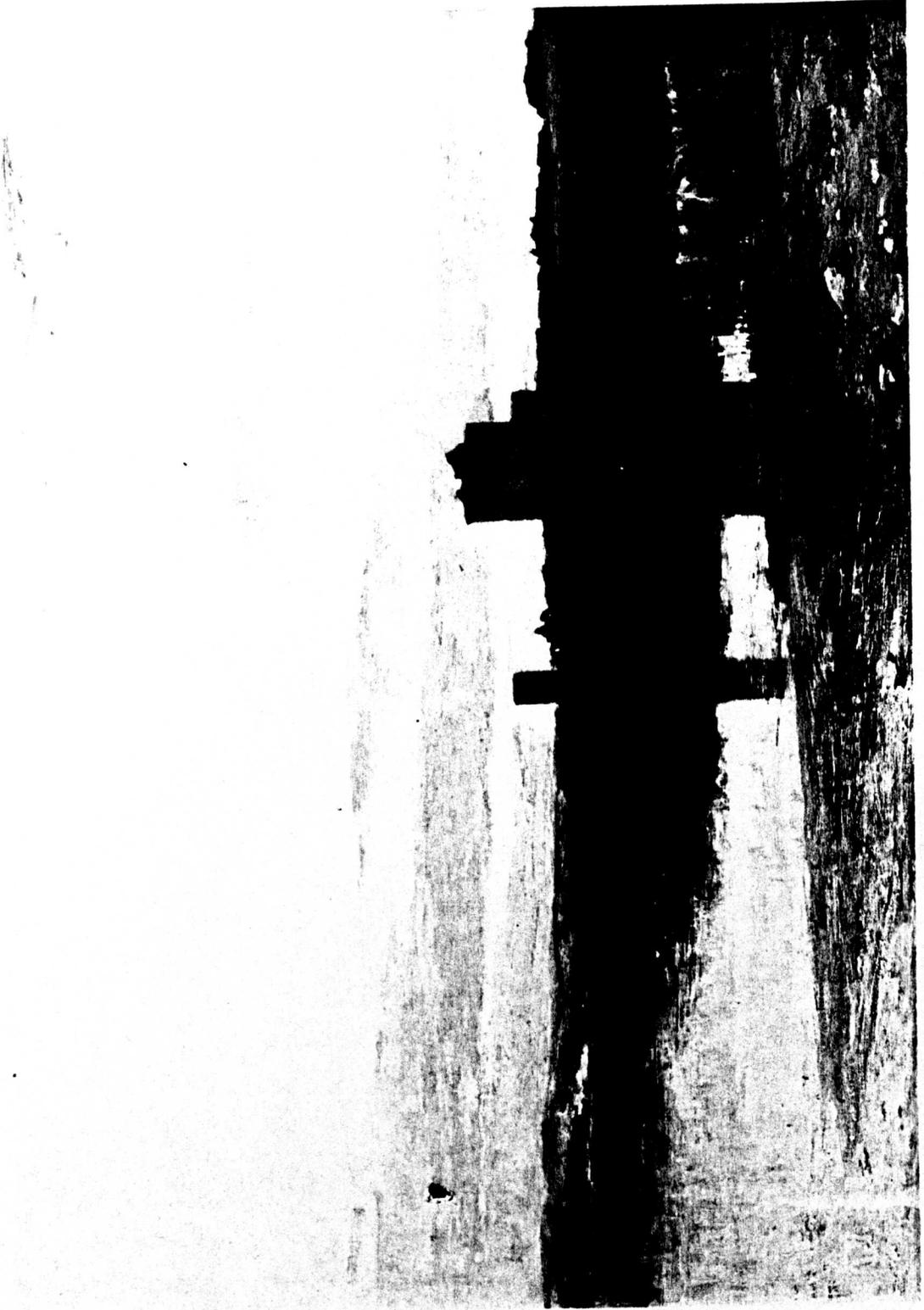


FIGURE 47. Sir George Reid, Spynie Castle and Loch



FIGURE 48. Gerrit Alexander Mollinger, Washing Day



FIGURE 49. Gerrit Alexander Mollinger, Meerkirki: Clearing up  
After Rain

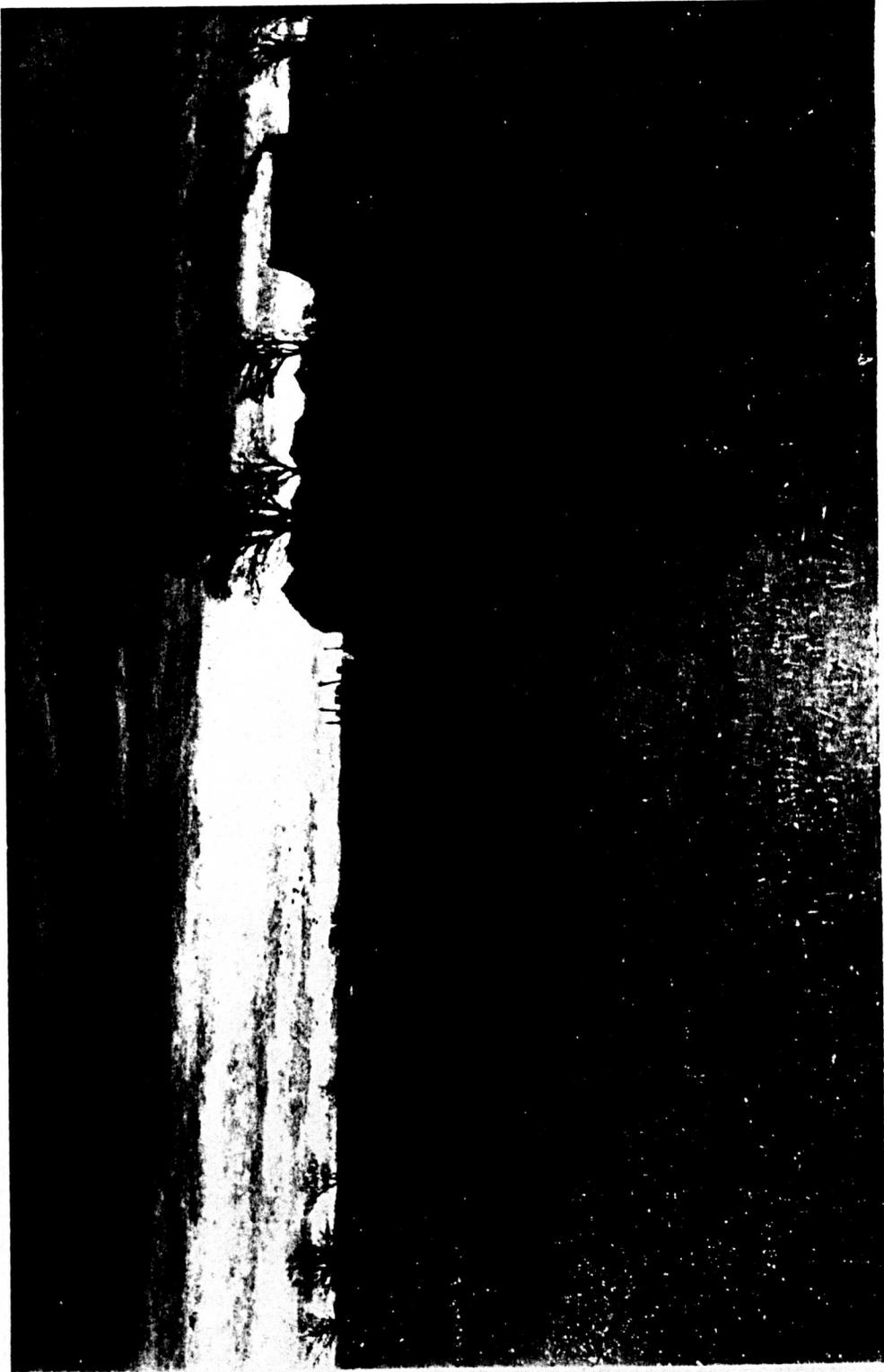


FIGURE 50. Sir George Reid, Evening



FIGURE 51. James Drummond, George Wishart and John Knox



FIGURE 52. James Drummond, Old Weird Bell



FIGURE 53. Horatio McCulloch, Glencoe



FIGURE 54. Arthur Perigal, Glen Nevis



FIGURE 55. James Drummond, Queen Mary's Last Look of Scotland



FIGURE 56. Daniel Maclise, A Winter Night's Tale

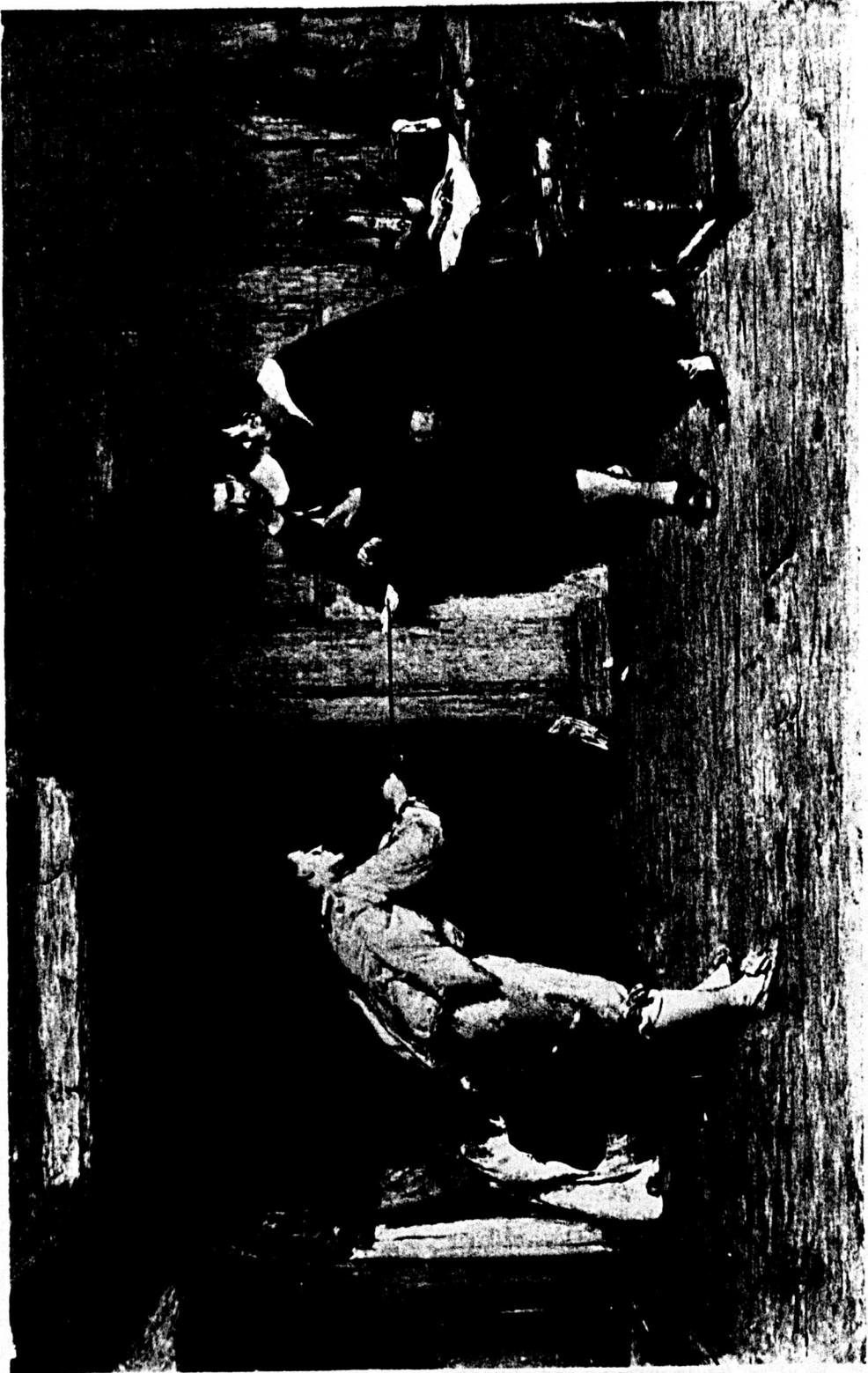


FIGURE 57. W.Q. Orchardson, The Challenge



FIGURE 58. Théodule Ribot, The Little Milkmaid

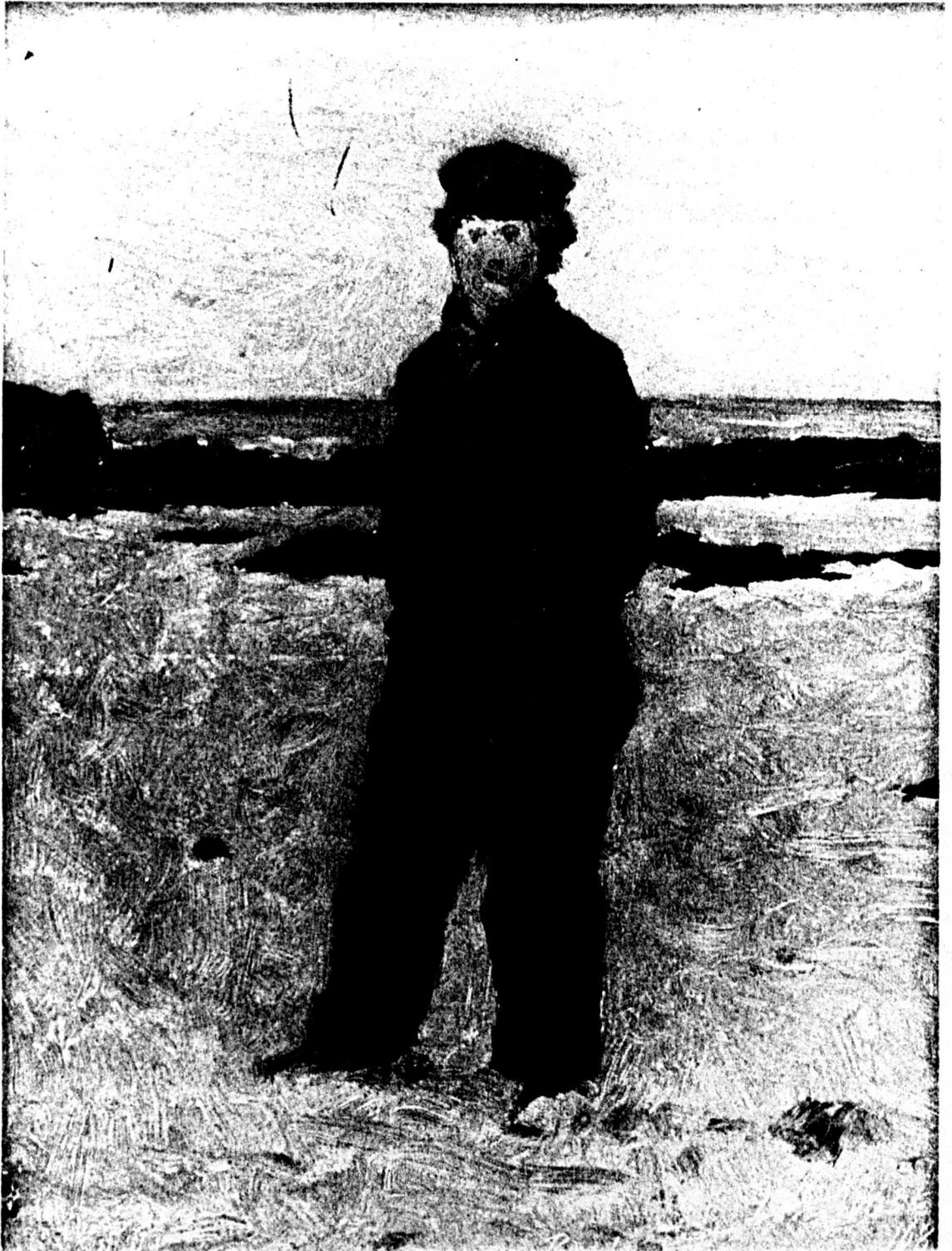


FIGURE 59. Sir George Reid, Buchanhaven Fisherboy



FIGURE 60. Josef Israels, The Drowned Fisherman



FIGURE 61. Josef Israels, sepia, The Drowned Fisherman

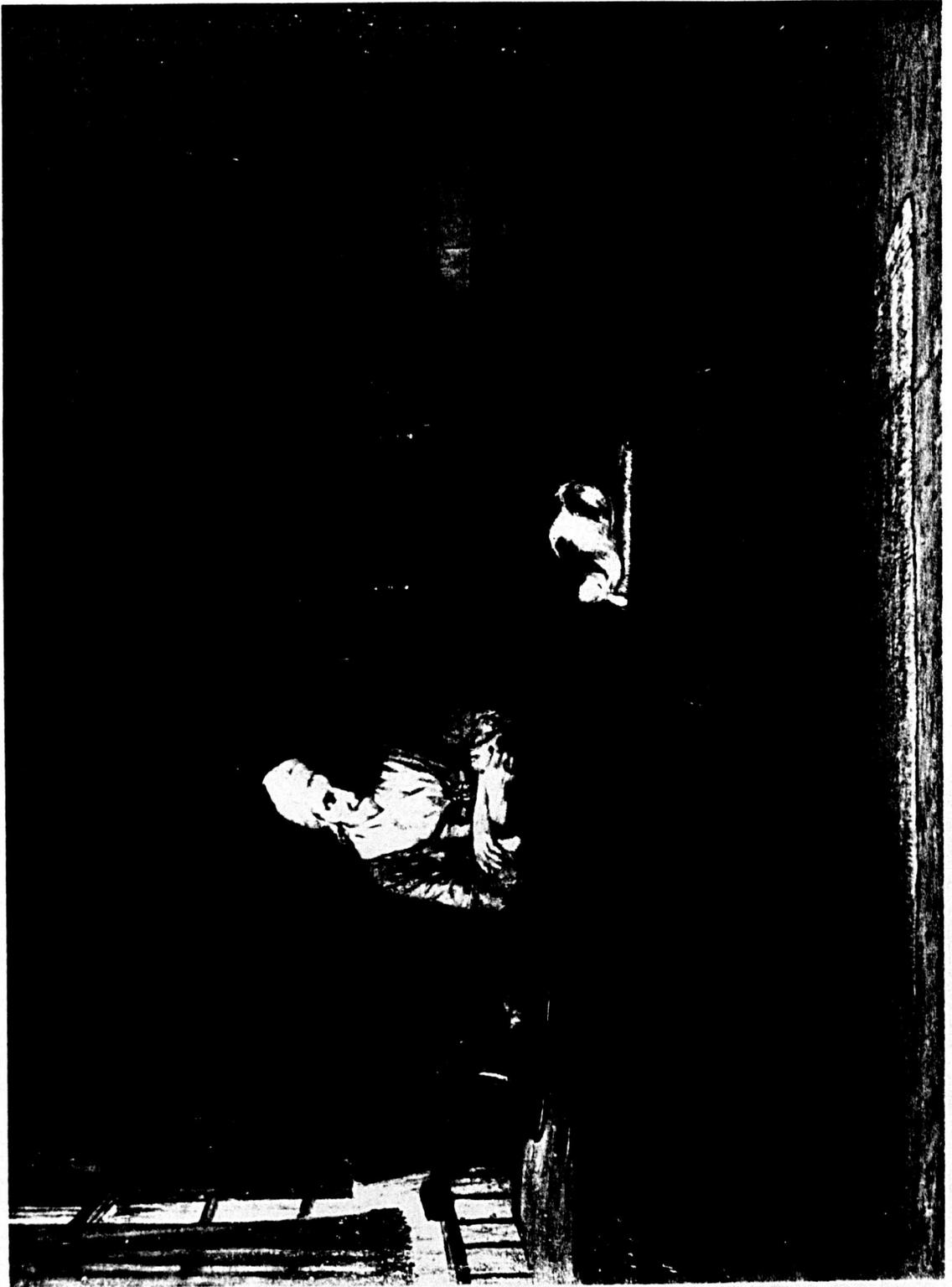


FIGURE 62. Josef Israels, The Sleepers



FIGURE 63. George Paul Chalmers, Loch Lee



FIGURE 64. Josef Israels, Meditation



FIGURE 65. George Paul Chalmers, Asleep



FIGURE 66. Sir George Reid, On the Isla below Keith



FIGURE 67. George Paul Chalmers, Landscape in Angus