



THE WOOD NYMPH

*From a photogravure by the Berlin Photographic Company, New York,  
after the painting by Burne-Jones*

## EDWARD BURNE-JONES

BY ROYAL CORTISSOZ

THE ENGLISH PRERAPHAELITE PAINTER AND HIS DREAMS—  
A MAKER OF POETIC AND ROMANTIC PICTURES WHO NEVER  
GRASPED SOME OF THE ELEMENTS OF GOOD ART, YET  
CREATED IN HIS WORK A COMPELLING SPECIAL GLAMOUR

**T**HIRTY years ago, when the famous case of Whistler *versus* Ruskin was tried in England, the late Edward Burne-Jones appeared in court as a witness for the defense. Ruskin had been moved by one of Whistler's "nocturnes" to accuse him in print of "flinging a pot of paint in the public's face," and though in after years Burne-Jones came to wish that he had never meddled in the business, at the time of the trial he ranged himself with those who thought Ruskin was right. The incident throws a flood of light upon the English ar-



MARY MAGDALENE AT THE SEPULCHRE

*From a photograph by Hollyer, London, after the painting by Burne-Jones*

tist's attitude toward painting as the modern schools understand it. Any one hearing of it would naturally surmise that Burne-Jones was not one of the great technicians of his time, that he sought in art for something quite apart from those beauties of pure form and color, those qualities of pigment manipulated for its own sake, which most painters to-day make the principal objects of their ambition.

What was it that he sought? In the "Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones," which his widow published in 1904, there is a description by him of two pictures he was commissioned to paint early in his career. In one of them, he says, "I shall make lovely heaven." That it was that took his imagination captive. He strove all his life long to paint a lovely heaven, a dim world, a strange No Man's Land, peopled with the figures of romance and poetry.

Of course, Burne-Jones could not side with Whistler. While Whistler was putting his whole soul into the creation of an exquisite harmony of tone upon his canvas, and giving not a moment's thought to his subject as a subject, Burne-Jones was, with equal devotion, endeavoring to body forth his dreams of Merlin and Vivien, of Circe and her panthers, of the Garden of the Hesperides, or of Galatea stepping down

from her pedestal to make Pygmalion happy.

#### A SINCERE DREAMER

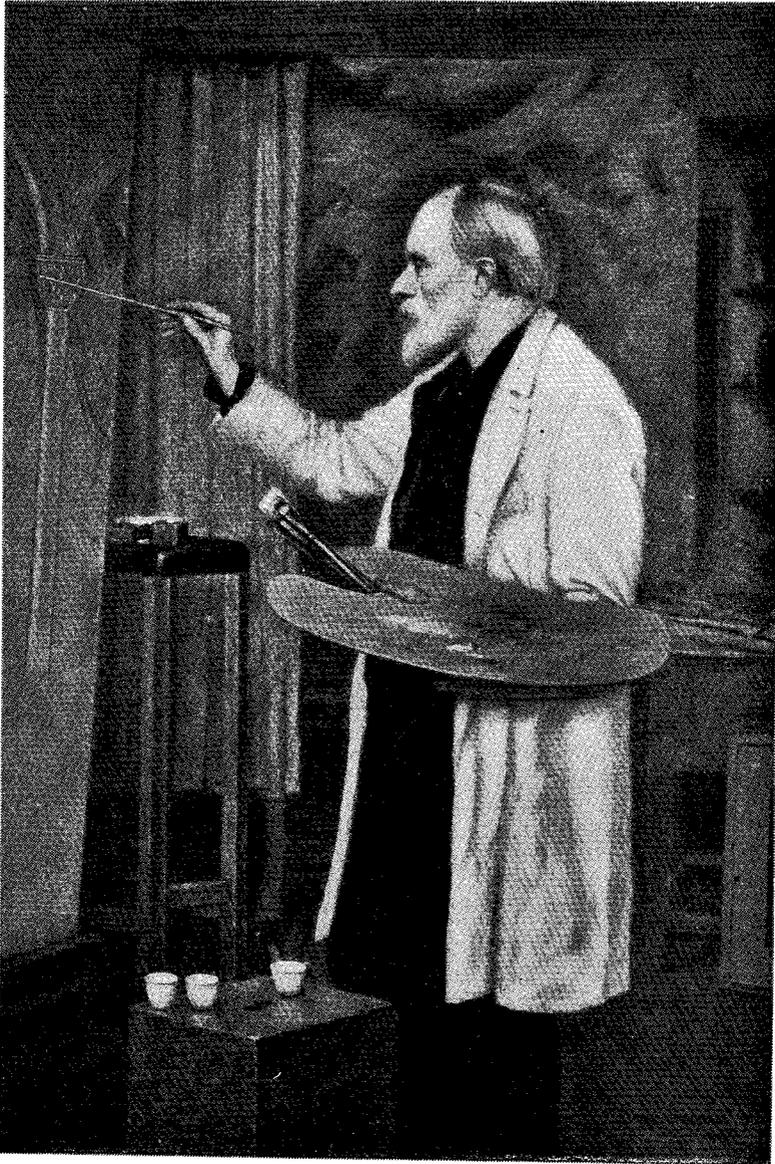
The influence of literature has been greater than the influence of art upon modern British painting. The school has been addicted to the "painted anecdote," that kind of picture in which the appeal to sentiment is everything and the appeal to our strictly esthetic emotions secondary, if not actually non-existent. There is a distinction to be observed here, however, of which Burne-Jones gets the benefit. It may happen to one painter to be so constituted that, whatever his technical resources may be, he deliberately adopts the painted anecdote as his stalking-horse. He is conscious of a choice in the matter, and may be said to be flying in the face of what he knows to be a better law. To some other artist it may happen that the painted anecdote is as natural an expression of his whole character as was with Whistler the production of "symphonies" of tone. Thus it was with Burne-Jones. He was sincere in his dreaming, and in approaching his works it is well to remember that the literature in them is the main thing, that questions of technique in one latter-day sense fall necessarily into the background.

It seems a little odd that with so ro-

mantic a soul as he possessed Burne-Jones should have first seen the light in the utilitarian city of Birmingham. He was born there in 1833. When, in his

banish from his mind all thought of taking holy orders.

The two young men were born heroworshippers, and just at the moment



SIR EDWARD BURNE-JONES

*From a photogravure by the Berlin Photographic Company, New York, after the painting by the great artist's son, Sir Philip Burne-Jones*

twentieth year, he went up to Oxford, he seemed destined for the church, but already he had developed artistic aptitudes, and in the companionship of William Morris he found a stimulus for them which was in the long run to

when they were most bubbling over with enthusiasm for art they fell in with Rossetti, and under the spell of his dominating personality were swept into the Preraphaelite movement. There is a boyish glow about the records of



TEMPERANCE

*From a photograph by Hollyer, London, after the painting by Burne-Jones*

this period in Burne-Jones's life which is very ingratiating. He wrote a letter to Ruskin, and when he received the reply he sent this outburst to one of his intimates:

I'm not Ted any longer, I'm not E. C. B. Jones now—I've dropped my personality—I'm a correspondent with RUSKIN, and my future title is "the man who wrote to Ruskin and got an answer by return." I can better draw my feelings than describe them, and better symbolize them than either.

Underneath, he sketched himself prostrate at the feet of Ruskin, whom he piously dowered with nimbus and aureole.

#### BURNE-JONES'S WEAKNESS OF TECHNICAL RESOURCE

It was at about this time that some of his drawings were shown to Rossetti, who, with the generosity for which he was noted, said to his young friend: "There are not three men in England, Ned, that could have done these things." Is it any wonder that, being what he was, a devotee hanging upon the lips of an adored oracle, Burne-Jones should have turned professional artist on the spot? But it was unfortunate for him that he had not another master. Rossetti did little to set him in the right path as regards technique—he was himself, indeed, sadly to seek in that direction—and though we hear of the eager aspirant joining a life class, the impression that he leaves upon us thenceforth is of an ambitious designer doing everything to foster his imaginative powers and leaving the training of his hand to take care of itself. Rossetti thought that early study of the antique was apt to crush out a man's individuality. Accordingly, Burne-Jones neglected the antique, where he might have learned lessons of inestimable advantage to the formation of his style.

That style, as he laboriously built it up for good or ill, was, by a kind of paradox, in great

measure realistic. This painter of visions set out to paint the things that he saw with the inner eye with a zealous care for detail. That was an important point with the English Preraphaelites. They executed their compositions piece by piece. Sometimes Burne-Jones saw the unwisdom of this. Writing about his efforts to complete one of his pictures, he says:

"You see, I began to play with it, and filled it with little houses and fields and roads, and walled gardens and mills, and bushes and winding shores and islands, and one day the veil was lifted and I saw how every pretty incident helped to ruin the thing, and I had three days of havoc at it and took them all out."

Too often the veil remained unlifted, which is to say that the art of Burne-Jones did not mean the broad realization of a definite impression, but the elaboration, little by little, of a scheme which might or might not be characterized, when all was done, by unity of design. We must see how this mood of his, a mood of poetic reverie, reacted upon the foundations of his art, upon the drawing and modeling, which do more than anything else to reveal a figure painter's individuality.

#### AN UNREAL TYPE OF BEAUTY

Burne-Jones, like Rossetti, seems from the beginning to have made his technique the slave of a type of corporeal beauty. Form as he dreamed of it was an affair of slender grace, a wistfully lovely and almost unreal thing, which, I suppose, he felt it would have been positively blasphemous to express in the direct, accurate terms beloved of Parisian studios. So he drew and modeled his nymphs and goddesses and allegorical personages with a delicate, and even timid, touch. He did not inquire too curiously into the secrets of anatomical construction. Outline meant more to him than those subtle undulations of surface in



FAITH

*From a photograph by Hollyer, London, after the painting by Burne-Jones*



THE HEART OF THE ROSE

*From a photograph by Hollyer, London, after the painting by Burne-Jones*

the handling of which you need not only a sense of beauty, but scientific knowledge of truth.

At the Ruskin trial he expressed the opinion that Whistler "evaded the difficulties of his art." A fellow feeling ought to have made him wondrous kind, for, whether he knew it himself or not, it is the testimony of his works that the evasion of difficulties was his constant practise. You would never guess from his nudes that the beauty of the human body lies, not in its contours alone, but in the complexity of planes, in the magic of light and shade which can be traced to the character of bone and to the play of muscle. Slowly following the silhouette of a form with a feeling for linear effect rather than for effect of mass, Burne-Jones forgot the solidity of flesh and the energizing influence of blood, and, instead of portraying men and women, created images peculiar to himself, images drawn from "a lovely heaven."

The loveliness of that heaven, the thing that gave this painter his celebrity, making him one of the most conspicuous individuals in Victorian art, is well hit off in a letter written to him by George

du Maurier years after they had been youths together. He speaks of "your special glamour (the Burne-Jonesiness of Burne-Jones, if I may coin such a word), the gift you always had among others of so strangely impressing the imagination and ever after haunting the memory." It is, indeed, a glamour by itself, and potent enough to win admiration despite technical limitations in the artist which practically always make themselves felt.

#### THE APPEAL OF BURNE-JONES'S SPECIAL GLAMOUR

It seems to me to amount to a great deal that Puvis de Chavannes had a high regard for the work of Burne-Jones, and upon one occasion himself took pains to obtain an example of the English artist for exhibition at the Salon of the Champ de Mars. That master of the grand style must have known perfectly well that Burne-Jones wanted heroic elements in his technique to match the often heroic elevation of his themes, but he saw equally well that there was virtue in his contemporary's "special glamour," in that "Burne-Jonesiness of Burne-Jones." To put it to the test, look at



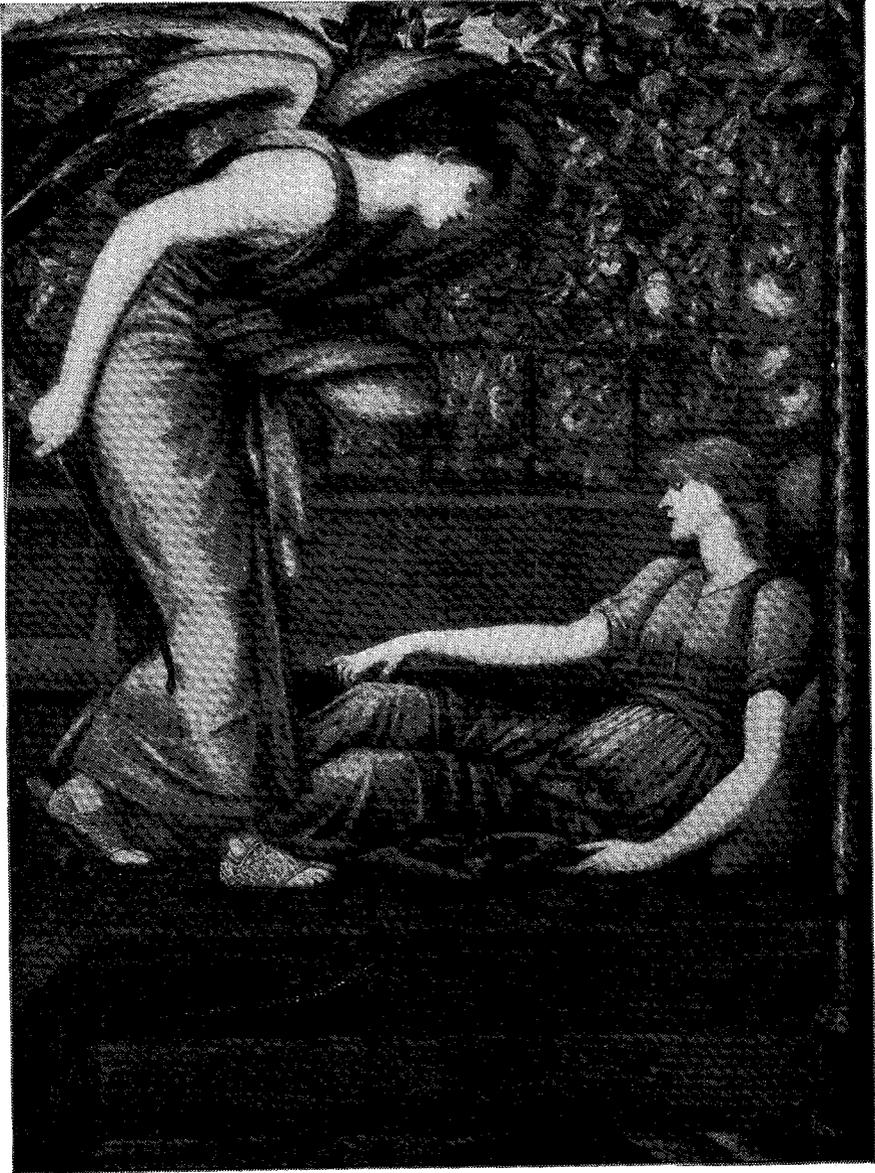
THE PRIORESS'S TALE—SHOWING THE RESTORATION TO LIFE OF THE MARTYRED  
CHRISTIAN CHILD, AS RELATED BY CHAUCER

*From a photograph by Hollyer, London, after the painting by Burne-Jones*

one of the most famous of his pictures, the "Aurora." As a study of form it is flatly indefensible. The height of the figure is exaggerated almost to absurdity,

suggests anything save a transcript from life.

Burne-Jones must have worked from a lay-figure, you say, when he painted



CUPID AND PSYCHE

*From a photograph by Hollyer, London, after the painting by Burne-Jones*

and in length of limb this personification of the Dawn inclines the beholder to reflect, in a state of acute bewilderment, upon the painter's indifference to proportion as it is studied in the schools. The arrangement of the drapery, too,

this picture—a lay-figure especially elongated to suit his conception of female beauty. He must have arranged the drapery, you add, in the still air of the studio and with absolutely no thought of what movement would do to the light



THE PILGRIM AT THE GATE OF IDLENESS

*From a photograph by Hollyer, London, after the painting by Burne-Jones*

folds of a woman's garment as she walked rapidly before us. Yet the glamour is there, the sense of something poetic and beguiling, the sense of a figure and a scene created with true imaginative instinct. We criticize, but we value, a work of art like this.

#### GOODNESS AND ART

There is in it, too, a quality which it is necessary to touch upon with some discretion, for it is a quality to give a handle to the irreverent if not clearly stated. To say bluntly that an artist is a good man is to risk the retort of the scoffer that his private virtues have nothing to do with his art. "It is no comfort to me, if a man paints bad pictures," says the critic, "to be told that he is kind to his mother." No; but it sometimes occurs that the sweetness of a man's nature will be so constant a force in his life that it will color everything he does. It is impossible to study the life and work of Burne-Jones without perceiving that the traits developed in the one had their influence in the other. Lady Burne-Jones has told us that when she first shared in the talks of her hus-

band and his friends they made her feel that their love of beauty "included the whole world and raised the point from which they regarded everything." After the painter's death, she talked of the subject with a lady who, in her youth, had excited the frantic admiration of Burne-Jones, Morris, and Rossetti. She describes the episode in this wise:

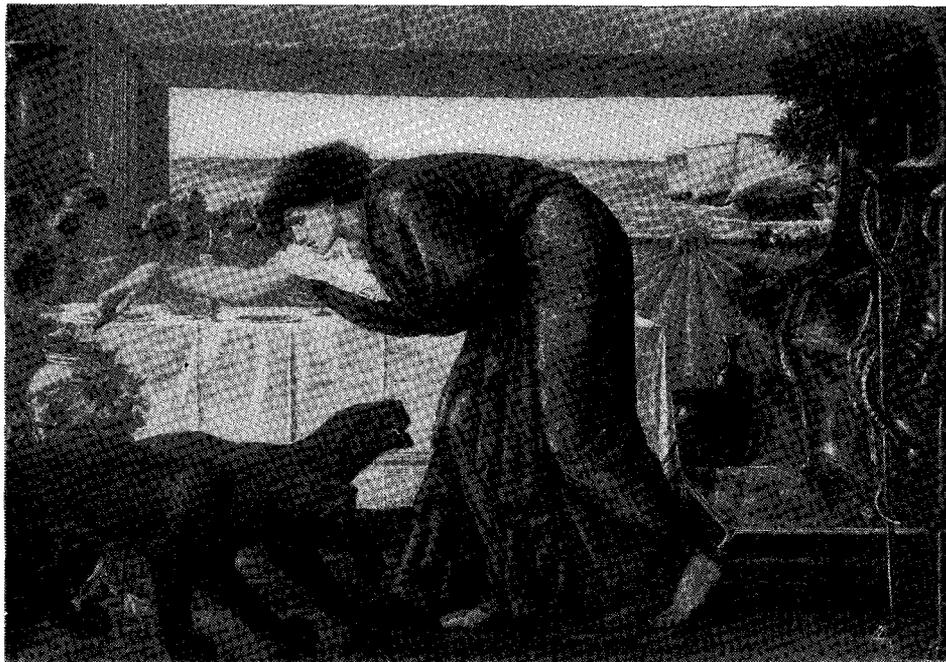
She and I sat and talked for an hour about them and the days when we were all young, and I found that she kept the same feeling that I do about that time—that the men were as good as they were gifted, and unlike any others that we knew. She had lost sight of them long ago and lived abroad and seen many people since then, but her regard for the young artists she remembered was still fresh, and she loved to dwell on their memory. "I never saw such men," she said; "it was being in a new world to be with them, and they were different from every one else I ever saw. And I was a holy thing to them—I was a holy thing to them."

Does not this little passage illuminate for us, not only the "Aurora," but all of the pictures that Burne-Jones painted? It is true that his refinement passes into weakness, looked at from one point of

view. His draftsmanship is so excessively delicate that it is sometimes feeble. But Burne-Jones, to be enjoyed, must be met half-way, and must be granted the rather nerveless technique which he chose to use. Where the impact of his refinement upon the substance and the spirit of his work is concerned, we can only rejoice that he possessed the character

unwholesome hothouse languors that you find in Rossetti. His morbidity is rather that of the temperament which is happy enough and healthy enough in its own world, but takes on a certain effeminate and slightly feverish tone from lack of occasional contact with the world at large.

When Burne-Jones paints a figure or



WINE OF CIRCE—THE SORCERESS PREPARING IN HER PALACE ON THE ISLAND OF ÆEA THE DRAFT WITH WHICH TO TRANSFORM THE COMPANIONS OF ULYSSES INTO BEASTS

*From a photograph by Hollyer, London, after the painting by Burne-Jones*

which is disclosed in the anecdote I have quoted.

#### NO GLOOMINESS IN BURNE-JONES

The faintest hint of materialism would, to be sure, have been fatal to the integrity of his designs. There were no dark places in his imagination. If he had ideas at all gloomy to express, he brought them out by the simple process of giving his figure a wan, attenuated visage and a drooping attitude, vaguely akin to that which we find so often in Botticelli. I think he had in him a streak of the morbidity which is, in fact, characteristic of the whole Pre-raphaelite group in England, but it was comparatively a faint streak. You do not find in Burne-Jones quite the dark,

a group of figures set amid flowers he casts a kind of enchantment over the scene; he makes you think of some devotional recluse dreaming dreams in an old-world garden and lovingly painting the leafage and blossom before him. Then you wonder what he might have made of the same motive if before he painted it he had mounted his horse and ridden at a gallop into the sun with all the life and beauty of the world tingling in his veins. A richer perfume would exhale from the roses of a painter in that mood. Burne-Jones would have been the better artist for some such invigorating experiences as I have indicated. In the absence of them he is, as I have said, a little morbid. But the essential purity of his inspiration re-



LAUS VENERIS—THE PRAISE OF LOVE  
*From a photographure by the Berlin Photographic Company, New York, after the painting by Burne-Jones*



THE GOLDEN STAIRS

*From a photograph by Hollser, London, after the painting by Burne-Jones*

mains, its essential sweetness and refinement.

#### HIS PURSUIT OF BEAUTY

After all, though he turned his back on life, on humanity, and gave himself to the interpretation of literature and such themes as the poets love, it was beauty that first and last he pursued—beauty of a pervasive sort, signifying not only the specific symbol, but its transfiguring atmosphere. The charm of his "Aurora" is not the charm of the figure alone, but that of the quaint scene in which it is placed. Take, for another example, "The Wood Nymph," in my opinion the most satisfactory of all his productions. The dainty figure would lose half its fascination if it were provided with any other background than just the one of thick foliage which the artist selected. So, in the "Laus Veneris," the principal figure, romantic in itself, is doubly romantic because it is set against an old tapestry. So, in "Love Among the Ruins" or "Le Chant d'Amour" the architecture contributes enormously to the sentiment that is concentrated in the figures. How much of the interest that attaches to "The Wine of Circe" is due to the curious setting, and especially to the glimpse of the sea and the full-sailed galleys! In short, Burne-Jones ever made the most of his accessories on their symbolic side, though not as regarded their decorative potentialities.

When it came to deco-

rative unity, to the making of a good picture, of a good pattern, his indifference to actuality told heavily against him. He would fill a given space, not as though he had observed life and sifted out what he wanted from it, gaining originality and yet preserving balance, with naturalness and credible movement. He would fill it, instead, as if his figures were creatures incapable of instinctive volition, as if they were merely, as we have seen above, lay-figures to be moved about as he willed. Each detail is painted for its own sake, and, as a rule, with an engaging precision and finish. The composition as a whole, though romantically impressive, is not, as a web of design, felicitous.

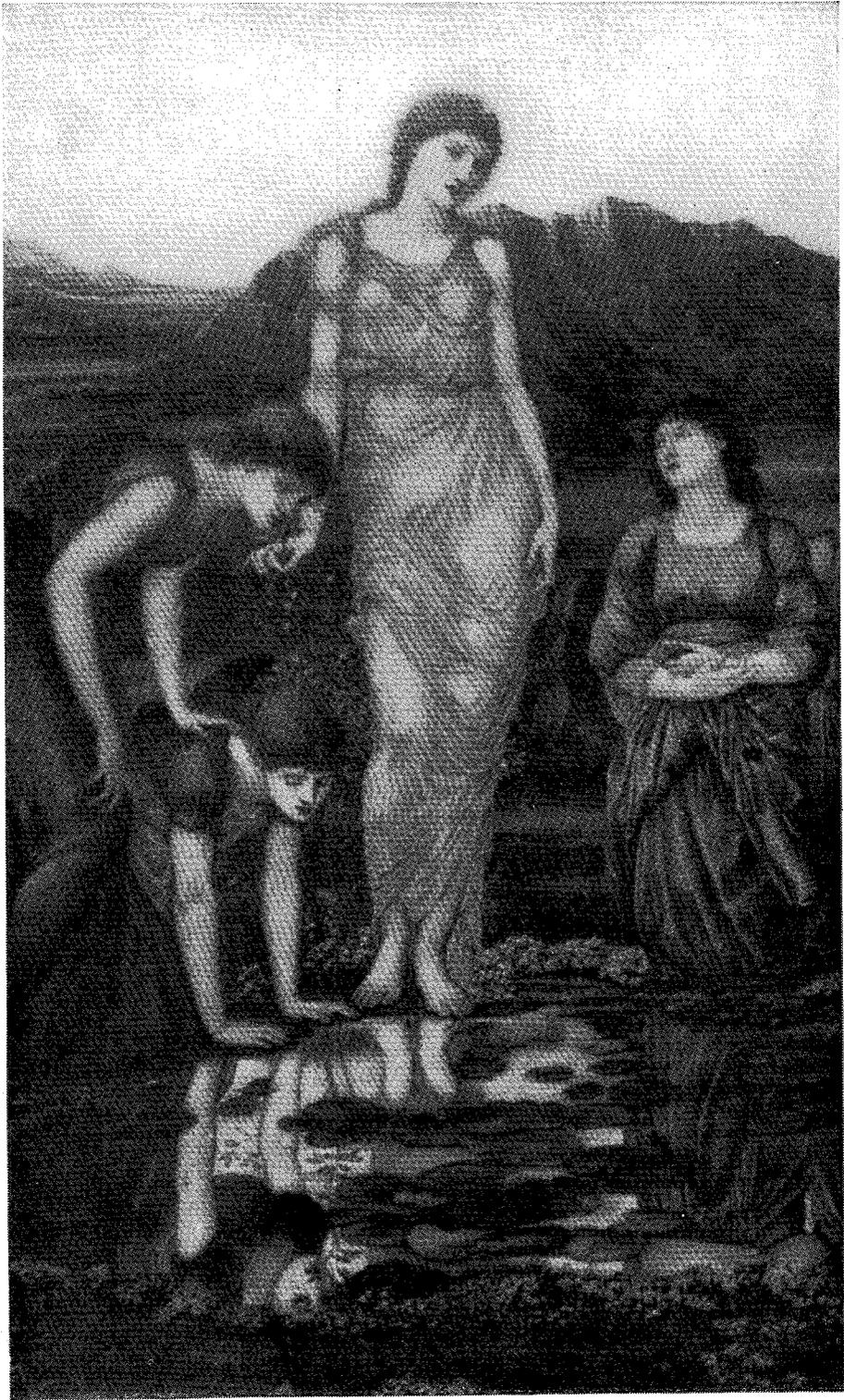
Perhaps the best illustration of this point is to be found in the well-known series of "The Legend of the Briar-Rose." In nothing that he ever did did he get more of his characteristic glamour. He realizes his dream. The spirit of the work is poetic. But nothing that he ever did more clearly shows that his inventive powers were undisciplined by study of the laws of constructive design. His grouping is made effective through sheer force of poetic feeling, through his delicacy in the delineation of graceful figures, through his knack of extorting the last drop of sentiment out of accessories. Coldly analyzed, however, the grouping seems capricious and forced.

He hovered perpetu-



AURORA

*From a photograph by Hollyer, London, after the painting by Burne-Jones*



VENUS'S MIRROR

*From a section of a photograph by Hallyer, London, after the painting by Burne-Jones*

ally between nature and art, shrinking from the robust acceptance of the former which is habitual to an entirely realistic painter and at the same time refusing to adopt the purely theoretical and artificial methods which belong to entirely academic art.

His pigment was apt to be over-kneaded and to have a grainy texture. Again, in this matter, as in that of the faintly morbid mood to which I have referred, one wishes that he could have had his eyes opened to the thrilling, transforming glory of the sunshine.

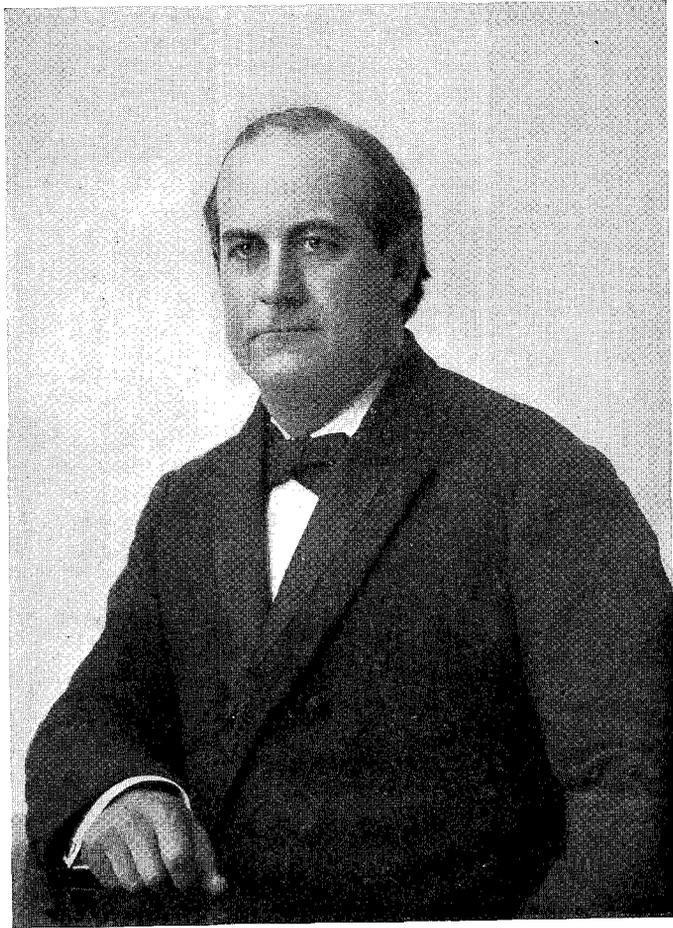


LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

*From a photograph by Hollyer, London, after the painting by Burne-Jones*

This, which is so obvious in him as a designer, is noticed also in him as a colorist. Local color is handled by him with neither the directness of the worker in the open air nor the conventionality and restraint of the man who does all his painting in the gray light of the studio. His color suggests rather an artist working in a light filtered through low-toned stained-glass windows—windows of quiet blues, somber reds, and dusky browns and greens and yellows. The tone of a tapestry is the tone that is most personal with him, the one in which he most makes you feel his own peculiar taste and sensuous emotion. He never learned—if indeed he ever cared to learn—how to make his surfaces suave and beautiful in themselves.

But, on the other hand, when all is said, does he miss his final aim? Keeping his eyes closed to the familiar friendly light of this warm human world of ours, he saw perhaps more clearly the light that never was on sea or land. He may not have been able to paint the English landscape of to-day as most moderns would paint it; he may not have been able to bring into his pictures that keen wind on the heath that Borrow talks about. But if you want to lose yourself amid the tangled thickets of the old English wildwood as Malory saw them, if you want to stand with Merlin and Vivien amid enchanted trees, with the mysterious airs and lights of faery all about you, Burne-Jones can give you the key to that romantic realm.



WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

*From his latest photograph by Townsend, Lincoln, Nebraska*

## THE HOME LIFE OF WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

BY WILLIS J. ABBOT

THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER WITH HIS WIFE AND HIS CHILDREN—THE FINE ESTATE AT FAIRVIEW, NEAR LINCOLN, NEBRASKA, AND THE BUSY BUT CHEERFUL ROUTINE OF THE HOUSEHOLD—A PICTURE OF SIMPLE AMERICAN DOMESTICITY

ONE must concede a certain humorous side to any description of the "home life" of a gentleman who, having just completed a tour of the world occupying some eighteen months, remains at home twenty-four hours and then starts off on a political pilgrimage through the Southern States by way of rest from the rigors of foreign travel. Few men in this country have traveled