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978-1-107-55978-3 - A Painter's Pilgrimage Through Fifty Years

A. S. Hartrick

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A
PAINTER'S PILGRIMAGE
THROUGH
FIFTY YEARS

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VINCENT VAN GOGH

1853–1890

by A. S. HARTRICK

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A. S. HARTRICK

R.W.S.

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1939

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To

THE LADY PATRICIA RAMSAY

who gave me the title of my book,

in homage

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

	Preface	xi
I	The Painter	1
II	The Atelier Julian	13
III	Paul Gauguin	28
IV	Vincent Van Gogh	39
V	The Glasgow School	54
VI	<i>The Graphic</i> and <i>The Daily Graphic</i>	63
VII	Renouard, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Others	84
VIII	Some Black and White Artists	95
IX	The Pennells	106
X	<i>The Pall Mall Budget</i>	119
XI	The Chelsea Arts Club	131
XII	Early Days at the New English Art Club	144
XIII	Changes and Chances	155
XIV	Acton Turville	162
XV	Tresham	172
XVI	The International Society of Painters, Sculptors, and Gravers	189
XVII	Retreat from Arcady	198
XVIII	London again	207
XIX	The War Years	222
XX	The Peace and After	235
	Index	247

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[More information](#)

ILLUSTRATIONS

Vincent Van Gogh	<i>Frontispiece</i>
A l'échelle!	<i>page 26</i>
Paul Gauguin	<i>facing page 32</i>
The Atelier Cormon	48
Joe Crawhall	58
At the Parnell Commission	<i>pages 69, 70</i>
Vienna in 1892	73
Marie Lloyd at a rehearsal	91
Toulouse-Lautrec	<i>facing page 92</i>
A sketch of the author by Phil May	<i>page 102</i>
Joseph Pennell	<i>facing page 110</i>
E. J. Sullivan	156
Fry's Farm by Mrs A. S. Hartrick	166
The Wassail Bowl at Tresham	172
The Poacher	176
The breast plough	204
The Kirking of the Incorporated Trades of the Borough of Kircudbright	226
Underground in an air raid	230
A. S. Hartrick by <i>Vincent Lines, A.R.W.S.</i>	240

Except where otherwise stated all the illustrations are by the author

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[More information](#)

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[More information](#)

PREFACE

For fifty years, beginning with my student days in Paris, when I was fortunate to stray into the orbits of Paul Gauguin and Vincent Van Gogh, I have, from behind the scenes, participated in, or at least observed, the changes of standards and reputations in art. These changes were as violent and puzzling, though probably less harmful, than those we have all suffered from in the same period—War, Revolution, Politics. I loved my job, and have known it as a workman desiring no other. Therefore I have no apologies to make for recording those facts and appearances that have interested me, in the hope that, as they are sincere, they may prove instructive or amusing to others.

I kept no diary; and although I have looked at some papers and letters, I preferred not to burden what I wished to say with details already forgotten, and, except in their broad effects, better left so. In any case, my publisher said my original manuscript was too bulky and must be cut. I agreed that it should be treated “as if I were dead” for I have no pretensions as a writer and I gladly take advice from those who know. The writing proved a more formidable task than I expected. Like many others, I discovered that it is no easy matter to convey in words that which belongs to the eye. Fromentin, himself a painter, is the most successful writer on painting that I know. Somehow he is able to describe the processes, emotional and technical, that go towards the making of fine painting—so accurately that we feel it has been revealed to us why Rembrandt, Rubens, Hals and even Paul Potter are called great painters; his word-painting can always be made to work again with a brush.

The encouragement of some good friends and pupils has carried me through to the end and I hope they will not be disappointed. I feel specially grateful to my friend Mr Arthur

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978-1-107-55978-3 - A Painter's Pilgrimage Through Fifty Years

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

Preface

Morrison who not only read all the MSS. but did his best to make straight what was crooked and advised me on his own art of authorship; and also to Mr S. C. Roberts to whose skill and experience the final form of this book is due. Something more than thanks I owe to John Copley and his wife Ethel Gabain, two artists who tread the narrow way of sincerity in life and art. By their enthusiasm they sustained me in apparent defeat, and found the ideal publisher for my work. Lastly, I would like to thank Mr and Mrs Kerr Lawson as well as Mr F. E. Hansford, who all have helped in their various ways, and Vincent Lines, my friend and pupil who has drawn my portrait.

A. S. H.

March 1939