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978-1-108-05955-8 - *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable: Composed Chiefly of his Letters*

Edited by Charles Robert Leslie

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Memoirs of the Life of John Constable

First published in 1843 and reissued here in its expanded second edition of 1845, this biography represents an early and informed portrait of the prolific landscape artist and draughtsman John Constable (1776–1837). An upbringing in the East Anglian countryside and his first sighting of a painting by Claude Lorrain inspired his lifelong dedication to capturing scenes from nature, reflected in early works such as *Dedham Vale* (1802) and in his mature masterpieces, notably *The Hay Wain* (1821). Prepared by Charles Robert Leslie (1794–1859), a close friend and fellow member of the Royal Academy, this work is based principally on his collection of Constable's letters and papers, drawing also on friends' accounts of the artist. Illuminating his relationship with Maria Bicknell and the influence of early mentor Sir George Beaumont, the book details the development of Constable's career, revealing the nature of his opinions and anxieties.

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EDITED BY
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John Constable

DRAWN BY C. R. LESLIE R.A.

ON STONE BY R. J. LANE A.R.A.

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MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE OF
JOHN CONSTABLE, ESQ. R.A.

COMPOSED CHIEFLY OF HIS
LETTERS.

BY C. R. LESLIE, R. A.

“HEAVEN AND EARTH, ADVANTAGES AND OBSTACLES, CONSPIRE TO EDUCATE GENIUS.”

FUSELI.

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P R E F A C E.

IN the first arrangement of the papers of which these Memoirs principally consist, many passages were included that, from the fear of making the book too long, were afterwards omitted. The interest, however with which the retained portions of Constable's correspondence were read, has encouraged me to restore, now, much that had been left out of the first edition. To this I have added a few of his early letters, recently placed in my hands, and by a careful examination of some of his papers, which I had not before seen, I have been enabled to make a few additions to the notes of his Lectures. I have also added to the quotations from the letters of Archdeacon Fisher, some passages which assist the narrative, and others which appear to me well worthy of preservation on their own account.

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PREFACE.

In changing the form of the volume to one more adapted to general circulation, while I cannot but hope that its additional pages will be found to add to its value, I regret that it must appear without the beautiful engravings from Constable's works, with which in its first state it was adorned.

I must again offer my thanks to the members of his family and to others of my friends, for their renewed assistance in a task, to me, far less easy than interesting, although, now as before, it has been little else than that of an editor.

C. R. LESLIE.

July, 1845.

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CORRIGENDA.

Page 35.—At the conclusion of the first paragraph, for “have contributed,” read “must have contributed.”

Page 85.—The letter dated March 6th should be placed after the one which follows it.

Page 153.—Line 14th from the top of the page, for “professor,” read “possessor.”

Page 213.—Line 7th from the top of the page, for “we never see but through a medium,” read “we never see her but through a medium.”

Page 220.—The enumeration of the contents of Chapter XIII. should end with “*Englefield House.*”

Page 226.—In the note at the foot of the page, for “the following chapter,” read “Chapter XV.”

DIRECTIONS TO THE BINDER.

Portrait of “JOHN CONSTABLE,” to face the Title.

Portrait of “JOHN CONSTABLE, aged 20,” to face page 4.

“SPRING,” to face page 5.