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Walter Crane
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An Artist's Reminiscences

Walter Crane (1845–1915) is best remembered today as the illustrator of whimsical stories for children, but in fact he worked in many styles and genres throughout his life. The son of a painter, he was apprenticed to a wood engraver at the age of thirteen, and his father died shortly afterwards. By the time his apprenticeship was completed, Crane was painting as well as engraving, and joined the circle of the Pre-Raphaelites, being especially influenced by the politics of William Morris and the aesthetics of the Arts and Crafts movement. This highly illustrated 1907 autobiography traces his life from his childhood in Torquay through the difficult period following his father's death to his success as an illustrator and decorative artist, describing work, politics and travel. Crane may have felt that he was not given recognition as a serious painter, but this engaging account of a happy life does not show it.

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AN ARTIST'S REMINISCENCES

BY
WALTER CRANE

WITH ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THREE ILLUSTRATIONS
BY THE AUTHOR, AND OTHERS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

METHUEN & CO.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
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P R E F A C E

WHEN Messrs. Methuen suggested to me that I might write my Reminiscences I was quite taken by surprise. In the midst of a busy life one does not think of such things, or if a thought of the possibility of recording one's personal happenings does occur, it is probably consigned to some dreamed-of tranquil time in days of retirement.

However, when a man begins to say "I remember," it is a sign that he has mental records of a different world from the present, and probably of actors long passed from the world's stage.

In these revolutionary times, when changes are so rapid, it needs no great pretensions to fulness of years to have witnessed extraordinary transformations in the outward aspects of life, in manners and customs, in dress, as well as in mental attitude. A comparatively short life would be sufficient in which to have observed most extraordinary changes in the aspects of London, for instance. Twenty or thirty years ago, measured by the changes which have taken place, might well be centuries, and this would also hold good of the less obvious and less noted, perhaps, shifting of intellectual focus, to say nothing of political and social change.

The main interest of reminiscences lies, however, I presume, in the direct personal impressions a writer may be able to give of eminent persons he has met, or of scenes and movements of which he has been a witness or in which he has taken part.

As the years roll by, and new generations arise who only know the names of certain distinguished men and women, or are acquainted with them only through their works or their fame—poets, savants, artists, statesmen—first-hand information or fresh personal impressions are apt to acquire an unusual interest. Such interest is often, too, concentrated on the not-

so-very-long-ago times, the days that are so near and yet so far—farther perhaps in some ways than much remoter periods of history. People are often said to resemble their grandparents, and there may be in consequence a certain sympathetic interest between the youngest and the oldest generation. The world before railroads and telegraphs seems lost in the mystery of fascinating romance, while the introduction of the motor marks an entirely new epoch, affecting as it seems to do both mental states and social life in so many ways. But sometimes even the very newest fashions are apt to hark back, and nothing seems so old as the out-of-date nowadays.

Life is a strange masquerade: as the procession passes in the glare of the full noontide one hardly grasps its full significance, but perchance partly lost in the mist of the past, one becomes aware of larger meanings, and in perspective both persons and events assume different proportions.

Well, I can offer no complete or systematic records of the last fifty years or so, and it may seem a rather curious medley of events, persons, and things which the following pages present. I do not even pretend that it gives a complete record of one's own artistic career. One's work as an artist is rather the warp in the loom through which are interwoven, like different wefts, the passing impressions of persons and events and of travel in various countries, coloured by those personal thoughts and feelings, which go to make up the fabric of a life.

WALTER CRANE

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