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978-1-108-07891-7 - Treasures of Art in Great Britain: Being an Account of the Chief Collections of Paintings, Drawings, Sculptures, Illuminated Mss., &c. &c.: Volume 1
Gustav Friedrich Waagen

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Treasures of Art in Great Britain

This four-volume work by Gustav Friedrich Waagen (1794–1868), edited and translated by Lady Eastlake (1809–93), was published between 1854 and 1857. As Waagen explains in his preface, he had previously published an account of his experiences on his first visit to Britain in 1835, but this new and longer work was addressed primarily to a British audience. It also differs in that the earlier work was more of a general travelogue, whereas these volumes, after an introductory essay, provide a more detailed catalogue – albeit in epistolary form – of works of art in public and private collections. Waagen was crucial to the adoption in Britain of the new approach to art history pioneered by German scholars, and his work is still consulted on matters of provenance and quality. After an essay on the history of art collecting in Britain, Volume 1 describes the treasures of the British Museum, the National Gallery and the Royal Academy.

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Sculptures, Illuminated Mss., &c. &c.*

VOLUME 1

GUSTAV FRIEDRICH WAAGEN

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY

ELIZABETH EASTLAKE



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TREASURES OF ART

IN

GREAT BRITAIN:

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE CHIEF COLLECTIONS OF

PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS, SCULPTURES, ILLUMINATED MSS.,

&c. &c.

BY DR. WAAGEN,

DIRECTOR OF THE ROYAL GALLERY OF PICTURES, BERLIN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

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P R E F A C E.

ON my first visit to England in 1835, for the purpose of examining its treasures of art, I was not able to remain more than five months, and, in spite of unremitting exertions, was compelled to leave various collections of great importance unvisited. Under these circumstances, I naturally felt very desirous to make good my omissions by a second visit to a country to which for other reasons I had conceived a real attachment. The knowledge, also, of the objects of art of every kind which since then had found their way to England, added strength to this desire. At last, in the spring of 1850, the kind invitation of my friend Sir Charles Eastlake to spend a month with him led to the fulfilment of this long-entertained plan, and the support of the Prussian Government, willingly granted for any object of art and science, enabled me to extend my stay for four months. The favourable reception given to my work, 'Art and Artists in England,' which embodied the results of my first visit, by the leading periodicals in Great Britain—the 'Quarterly Review,' the 'Edinburgh Review,' the 'Athenæum,'—and the assurance of many cultivated Englishmen that my chief object in that work, namely, that of awakening more general attention to the objects of art in this country, and by that means a more general feeling for and understanding of them, had been attended with advantageous results, encouraged me to comply with the proposal of my friend Mr. Murray, and to offer the fruits of this second visit to the English public. The translation of my first work, published by the late Mr. Murray, being out of print, it was deemed advisable to incorporate all essential portions of it in one whole with my present labours. Moreover, my first work was intended for my own country, and, therefore, originally published in German, while the present one is addressed especially to the English public, and published solely in the English language. I have,

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therefore, erased from the first work all such portions as were interesting to German readers only, and also suppressed the descriptions of collections which have been subsequently dispersed. At the same time I have retained various opinions and remarks on subjects not strictly included within the domain of the formative arts, from the belief that the impressions of an unprejudiced foreigner would possess some interest with many an English reader. I have also adhered to the epistolary form, as offering greater animation of style, notwithstanding that the usual limits of a letter are greatly exceeded by the new additions. For various reasons, also, a re-examination of the collections already known to me had become expedient; the range of my artistic studies having been greatly extended, since my first visit to England, by a year's residence in Italy, a visit of three months to Belgium and Holland, and by renewed and protracted visits to Paris, Vienna, Dresden, and Munich. These had so far ripened my judgment as to lead me to view many objects with new impressions, and to feel the necessity for altering many of my recorded opinions, and more closely investigating others. Besides, many collections had been more or less increased, or altered in arrangement; and in order to render this work in any way worthy of its title, it became my duty to visit not only these, but likewise all the more important collections hitherto unknown to me, in London and its neighbourhood, as well as throughout England, and even in Scotland, to which I was an entire stranger. In this way I have succeeded in giving an account of 28 collections in and round London—of 19 in England generally—and of 7 in Scotland, not contained in my former work. Moreover, I have endeavoured to the utmost in my power to make good one great deficiency, by devoting due attention to modern English art in its various branches. In the abundance of materials which offered themselves on my first visit, I had not found time to give this subject the attention it deserved. On my second and third visits, therefore, in 1850 and 1851, on which latter I filled the office of Juror to the Great Exhibition during three months, I exerted myself not only to obtain precise information regarding the art of Painting in England since the time of Hogarth, and of Sculpture since the time of

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Flaxman, but also devoted much time to the study of English miniatures contained in MSS. from the earliest times down to the 16th century. By this means, in the absence of all works of a larger class of the period, I endeavoured to arrive at some knowledge both of the historical progress and of the characteristics of the English school of painting. At the same time my attention was extended to the miniatures of other nations preserved in England. Drawings by the old masters, engravings, and woodcuts have also been largely the object of my studies, so that I may venture to say that, both as regards the larger class of the public who are interested in knowing the actual extent of the treasures of art in England, and also the more learned connoisseur of the history of art, this edition offers incomparably richer and more maturely digested materials than the former one. At the same time, I am well aware that in both respects much remains to be desired. For, notwithstanding the ceaseless researches of thirteen months, the aggregate time of my three visits to England, the number of collections—larger and smaller—which I heard of without being able to visit, was very considerable, while at the same time many doubtless exist of which I received no tidings at all. Nor, with all the experience in the study of the art which I have gathered since my first visit in 1835, would I have the reader suppose that I assume the least infallibility in my judgments—all I can say is, that I have pursued my researches with equal enthusiasm and desire for truth. For the many errors which this work doubtless contains, I claim the indulgence of those who know from experience the difficulties which beset the critic on art. How much even depends on the conditions under which a work of art may be viewed—on the composure of the critic's own mind—on the more or less leisure and comfort with which it is associated—on the mode of lighting, position, &c.!

In this, as well as in the first edition, the following works have been of the greatest service to me: Passavant's 'Tour through England,' Smith's well-known 'Catalogue Raisonné,' the different publications of M. Nieuwenhuys, the 'Memoirs of Painting,' by Mr. Buchanan, and the 'Lives of celebrated English Painters, Sculptors, and Architects,' by Allan Cunningham. But even

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these would have been very insufficient for my purpose had not the superintendents of the different public galleries assisted me in various ways with their knowledge, and the proprietors of private collections afforded me the freest admittance. To these distinguished individuals, as well as to all to whom I was indebted for introductions and other services, whose names are too numerous to mention here, I tender my most grateful thanks. As far as was in my power their kindnesses have found acknowledgment in the work itself. Should these pages in any way help to diffuse a pure taste and real feeling for art in England, as I ardently desire, the merit will lie in great measure with those who have thus furthered my object. In order, also, to promote the practical usefulness of these volumes as a guide to those cultivated classes from all parts of England who visit the galleries of London during the season, I have grouped together, first, all the collections in and near London, and then those in the neighbouring counties which are easily accessible by railways. Also, in the more distant parts of England I have taken the collections of each county together, and, as far as possible, added notices of such collections in the same county as I had not the opportunity of visiting. Finally, a careful index facilitates the reference to any object in the work.

Nor, as one who feels himself under obligations of the greatest personal kindness in a social sense, and that often on the part of individuals of the highest rank and distinction, can I close these remarks without claiming their indulgence for my neglect of many of those courtesies which, as the only acknowledgment in my power, I was doubly bound to observe. If, for instance, on my second and third visits to England, I omitted to pay my respects to many persons who on the occasion of my first visit had greatly facilitated my researches, I beg them to believe that it was from no indifference to such proper forms, or from no ignorance of them, but simply because, in the almost overwhelming harvest of materials which offered themselves, and in the proportionate labour of gathering them in, however inadequately, my time was utterly insufficient for those courtesies which it was a real sacrifice to duty to refrain from paying.

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ERRATA.

Vol. iii. pp. 444, 460, for "Broughton Hall," read "Boughton."

„ 444, 474, *et seq.* Luton House is no longer the seat of the Marquis of Bute. His collection of paintings has been removed, and is now, it is believed, in Scotland.

„ p. 474. Ampthill has ceased to be the seat of the Earl of Upper Ossory, and the pictures are removed.