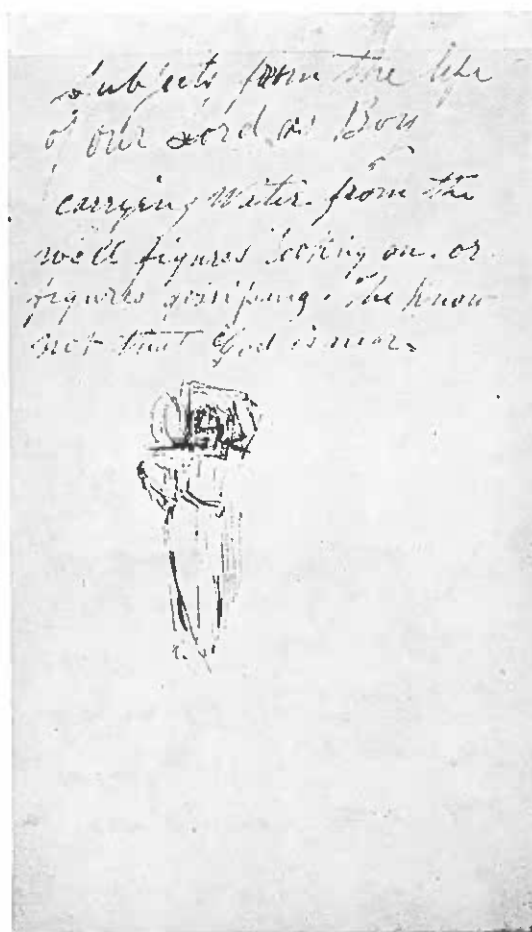


Appendix

A Palmer Notebook

Over a lifetime Palmer must have accumulated a vast number of notebooks and sketch-books, of which only the two sketch-books in the British Museum and the little notebook discussed here seems to have survived. Other artists, of course, have expressed themselves revealingly in sketch-books and journals, but seldom in quite the soul-searching way that Palmer did. It was, in fact, their intimacy and lack of reticence that made the artist's son destroy these records in that fatal bonfire at Sennen, Cornwall, in 1910. To unburden himself in writing, to sketch out the things that possessed his imagination, was for Palmer a compelling necessity all his life. His notebooks and sketch-books, these repositories of hopes, misgivings, resolutions; of careful studies and scribbled visions, were as necessary to his artistic consciousness as the confessional is to the spiritual needs of other men. That is the tragedy of their loss, and if in the tangled animosities between the Linnell and Palmer families these records were destroyed because they showed too much the emotional side of Palmer, it is surely the cause of art itself that has ultimately suffered.

The present notebook unfortunately adds little to our knowledge of Palmer the artist. But it has its value as a personal document and it provides a unique commentary on Palmer's interest in the style and technique of other painters. This tiny pocket-book, which seems originally to have belonged to the Richmond family, was presumably used by Palmer in 1865-6, as these dates are written against some of the entries. In its extant form the book contains fifty leaves measuring $4\frac{7}{8} \times 2\frac{3}{4}$ in. The original covers are missing and also some of the leaves. Palmer has begun numbering the pages at 33 and has continued consecutively to page 123. Page 126 is placed out of sequence as the last page in the-book. Here Palmer has made the enigmatic entry: 'The Park Catford



1 First page of Notebook

Bridge, Lewisham Ken[t] belongs to the blue dog.' In the middle of the book there are a number of unused pages, and in the numbered section pages 80, 96, 108, 110, 116 are also blank. Some childish scribbles here and there suggest that A. H. Palmer as a child may have made some contributions of his own.

Most of the entries have been made with a soft pencil which makes the writing, after over a century of rubbing, difficult or even impossible to decipher. This tiny book seems to have been mainly used for putting down on-the-spot notes about pictures seen at exhibitions, and some of the rubbing of the pages may be due to the fact that Palmer frequently carried the book about in his waistcoat pocket. In making these picture notes Palmer sometimes gives the exhibition numbers of the works, but omits to name the galleries where they were seen. For example:

'Solid opaque
443, 883'

'Stained drawings. Black or grey first then tints of colour—
456, 447, 384'

'Transparent way, Turner, de Wint, Havel[l], Fielding and others.'

Towards the end of the book there is, however, a reference to an exhibition held by the famous Victorian art dealer Ernest Gombart in 1866. Miscellaneous entries include times of trains to Epsom and the name of a doctor in Cork Street, London, whom Palmer perhaps intended to consult about his eyes.

The pitiful fees that Palmer got as an art master are shown in the following memorandum:

'Aug 22^d, 1865 Miss Kershaw first lesson. Of more received up to and inclusive of Saturday Dec. 2nd, 1865. 2/6 per lesson—£1-5
2 sheets of tinted crayon paper 10d. 2 Conté crayon chalks 2d—£. .1.'

On page 64 there is this curious note:

'Thinks the Col. might have the black and white bitch painted. *Myleptha Brindled*.'

'Sorais
[Here slight sketch of dog's hindquarters.]
eyes dark rich yellow brown.'

'Two middletoes of both back feet white. Both Col. North's dogs.'

One of the few entries in ink is a four-stanza sea-ballad entitled 'Under the Black Flag'.

'Oh, ever a rover's life for me,
A gallant bark and a rolling sea;
On my own proud deck like a king I'll stand,
While brave hearts bow to their chief's command.'

This may be something that Palmer has copied down, or it may possibly be one of his own

compositions. In the Ivimy sketch-book in the British Museum, Palmer has tried his hand at poetry in the Miltonic style, but here he may be attempting verse in a lighter vein. It is perhaps worth noting that in 1860 'A Book of Favourite Ballads' was published, two of the plates being provided by Palmer. But the most interesting sections of this note-book are those in which Palmer has made detailed analyses of works by other artists, with thumb-nail sketches of the subjects added to his notes. The cursory nature of the writing and the almost complete lack of punctuation suggests that these notes were hastily jotted down in the crowded *milieu* of exhibition rooms. In making transcripts here I have added punctuation and capitals in many cases to improve the sense.

Only on the first page of the book do Palmer's notes have any reference to his own work. The list of subjects set out here are clearly intended as a personal memorandum. The sketch of Christ carrying water, the tiny blotted ink sketch of what is presumably the Palm subject and the final slight pencil outline of a girl wiping a child's eye—these, and a slight pencil sketch of grass and herbage on a later page, are the only original drawings in the book.

'Subjects from the life of Our Lord as Boy: carrying water from the well, figures looking on; or figures gossiping, the[y] knowing not that God is near.'

'Subjects.

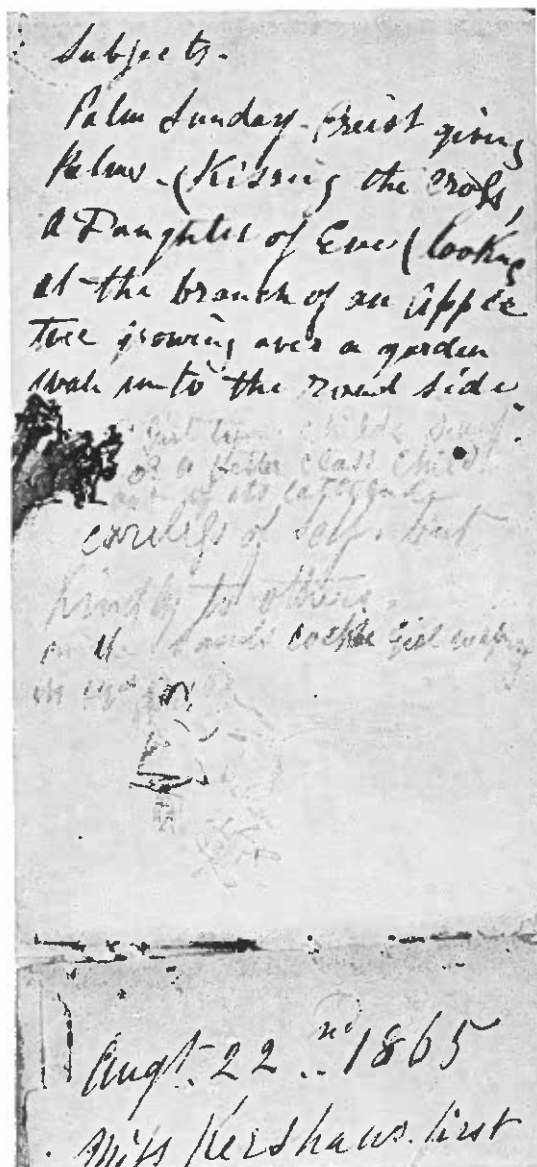
Palm Sunday—Christ giving Palms (kissing the Cross)

A Daughter of Eve looking at the branch of an Apple tree growing over a garden wall into the road side.

A girl tying child's scarf, or a better class child out of its latitude [?], careless of self, but kindly to others.

On the sands cockle girl wiping an eye.'

A surprising entry is a long analysis of the technique of William Orchardson's picture, 'A Hundred Years Ago'. This painting was not exhibited in the Royal Academy until 1871, so if we assume that Palmer used the notebook in 1865-6, he must have seen this picture, or a sketch for it, on some previous occasion. 'Orchardson. 100 Years Ago. (William Orchardson 1835-1910.)'



2 Verso of first page of the Notebook

Seems all done in one day, no joining or glazering [?]. Flesh laid in first stiff white, then pure pearly, stiff tints dragged over, but the flesh realized at once on this: the ground slightly showing, thereby background all streaks. With the brushwork stiff colour at once. A wee bit fractious, the background is stiffly painted. It may have been laid on first then tinted slightly. Some parts seem to have been juicely worked and lights glazed over some parts which were laid a little darker. The head of hair tells dark against the wall. The lights of flesh is [*sic*] perhaps a little lighter than wall. Lakey tints for flesh, bones through like bituminish[?] shadow. Flesh peony in parts—tints of this kind seem passed over half-tones of flesh. Cool grey shadows on wall a good deal removed from white. Cologne earth and Brn. Pink might make it. The earthen floor is a sweet pearly ashy colour. Cologne earth and Vandyke Brn. might make it.' [Here small sketch of seated woman, with colour notes.] Note continues: 'Child's dress flesh colour, red stockings.' Over a slight indication of a shaded area, the words—'bituminous green'. And below this: 'Woman's dress modification of Cologne earth. Van Brn. Little stripes [Here stripes indicated by a few short pencil hatchings] lighter and lakey touches. Broad stripes of bitumen brown with yellow okr. mixed—in fact bits of broken colour drag[g]ed about.'

Palmer follows this note on Orchardson's picture with another on the style of the Yorkshire artist Francis William Topham (1809–77), who became a member of the Old Water Colour Society in 1848.

'Topham

His manner is not so much stipple as a look of it. He seems not to let any wash stop without taking the top surface off it, even in flesh. And moreover his background is touched after it is done with a broad [Here rough outline of broad, round brush tip.] brush and done in a fluffy manner, but very little except in foliage. The other parts, such as earth and shadows, are massive wash^d. or varied, depending on the first rubbed paper. His greens are generally yellow, inclined to gamb^g. and yellow mixed. A little blue. Some of his shadows on earth are first put in rich and then done cool, blue passed over here and there. Washes in the background are broad and massive washes. Only the . . . [The writing at this point is much rubbed and only a word or two can be read.] . . . there seem a few blottings out here and there. Scarcely any attempt to make grass except in masses and a few small bits taken out. All seems to melt off from his figures, but nothing darker than wash-leather except in a small touch or two. His rocks are inclined to blue, remember[?]. Indian R^d. looking indeed grey in shadow. The lights seem cut out and a little . . . ' [Here the writing becomes completely illegible through rubbing.] After this note there is a pencil sketch, with written colour notes, of a woman arranging her hair—probably a copy of a work by Topham.

Another note describes a figure subject by William Shakespeare Burton (1824–1916). 'Burton. An Italian Girl. White head-dress and chemise [chemise] bluish white. Face brownish. A portion of lakeish apron brn. and French blue, dappled up and down with yellowish brown. Skirt vermillion Rd. with Indian half-tones, a cerulean skirt seen under this with yellow green light. Copper water jug yellowish. [Here sketch of subject.] His flesh like Topham's, with nice grey worked in, in lights there is no stipple, but only like drops of coloured water. No body of colour in it. [Here some slight indications of Burton's stipple form with a few explanatory comments.] The stipple in lights of grey wall is nearly as broad, but is not quite so apparent—seems more as though the lights were taken out at each side. Yellowish

tones put in amongst purplish greys.'

On page 48 of the numbered section, under the heading 'Mrs Masson', Palmer has made some notes which suggest that he had been commissioned to paint a portrait, or perhaps copy one.

'Mrs Masson. Complexion about Mrs G.,¹ a little warming rose in cheeks. Hair has been nearly black: a few grey hairs intermixed, very few. The flesh is seen for a little way up. [Here slight indication of hair line above forehead and outline of nose.] A little warmish colour on forehead. Eyebrows tell, darkish—not quite so black as hair.

Eyes darkish brown but warm—

Brooch a little diamond in centre, mostly dead gold;

Very little under eyelashes. Chin warm as the other warm parts.

Make the skin a little warm.'

The last note of any length about fellow artists is on Birket Foster (1825–99), a member of the Old Water Colour from 1862.

'Birket Foster. A sun-lighted plain. Seems first washed in, perhaps it may be with little cobalt gamboge and white, making it pay enough for lights; then washed or broad touches—gamboge, raw Sienna or yellow gamboge. This underground joy(?) palpitating through. In the distance there seems a little solid touch put on. He seems to use sepia in his shadows of distant trees. The lights, though warm and yellowish, seem diluted gently with blue, being also used were [*sic*] required. The sky has no body colour in, but is soft and fluffy, the clouds being shaded. [Here slight pencilling of cloud form.] Ivory Bk. Cobalt warm blue of sky. Cobalt most. The light part of clouds looking(?) as though washed with yellow ochre. Slightly dark in shadows of clouds, darker than blue of sky, these being colour of pale starlit(?) sea, a medium between colour of sky and shadow of clouds, except in foreground where it is soft(?) in



3 Page from Notebook. The sketch is a copy by Palmer of a figure subject by William Shakespeare Burton

¹ In all probability Mrs Gilerist, wife of Alexander Gilerist, the biographer of William Blake.

reflections and a little purple in shades, as though some dark clouds were reflected. [Here a few pencil lines to suggest the rounded tops of trees.] Touch in distant trees coming against sky like drops of coloured water. Touches up and down.'

Almost at the end of the book there is a reference to the work of Frederic James Shields, today almost a forgotten artist. Palmer had been impressed by some picture by Shields which he had seen, particularly by the painting of a chair—possibly the chair in Shields's water-colour, 'The Beehive Maker'. In a few lines Palmer makes a descriptive analysis of Shields's colouring and technique. But for Palmer, Shields may have been a more significant figure than the brevity of this note suggests. Shields, it seems, was an ardent admirer of Blake, and in later years was regarded as an authority on his work. Indeed, he helped Mrs Gilerist in the production of a second edition of her husband's *Life of Blake*, which appeared in 1880. About this time some volumes containing 530 designs by Blake for Young's *Night Thoughts* had come to light in a provincial sale, and Mrs Gilerist called in Shields to inspect and authenticate the new discovery. Shields wrote descriptive notes on these designs, which were included in the second edition of the *Life*. Of Shields's contribution to the new edition, Rosetti wrote to Madox Brown:

'The new Blake volumes are truly splendid. Shields had made the most wonderful cover from a design of Blake's, and has written a long paper on Young's *Night Thoughts* series, which reads as if he had been writing all his life. He has drawn a most interesting plate of Blake and his wife from Blake's Sketches, and a separate one of Mrs Blake from another sketch of Blake's. In fact he has half-made the book.'