

PICTURES OF ENGLISH SOCIETY

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Pictures of English Society by George Du Maurier

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GEORGE DU MAURIER

**PICTURES OF
ENGLISH SOCIETY**



A Disenchantment.

VERY UNSOPHISTICATED OLD LADY (*from the extremely remote country*). "Dear me! He's a very different-looking Person from what I had always imagined!"

© *Pictures of
English Society*

BY
GEORGE DU MAURIER.

FROM "PUNCH."



NEW YORK:
D. Appleton & Co., 1, 3, & 5 Bond Street.
1884.

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15 Sept. 1890.

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George du Maurier.

GEORGE DU MAURIER, as we learn from an article in *THE CENTURY MAGAZINE* of May last, written by Mr. Henry James, was born in England, of a French father and an English mother. He was taken to France in his early years, and educated there; later he returned to England, where he has since resided. He gave no early evidence of the remarkable talent which has made him world-famous, and was educated for a chemist. He had no inclination for this science, although he came to have a laboratory of his own; but a passion for art had now become awakened, and his laboratory was converted into a studio. He studied art at Paris and at Düsseldorf, but suddenly, without warning, a great calamity befell him. His eye-sight became so seriously affected that he was obliged for a time to abandon all work.

George du Maurier.

"He was condemned," says Mr. James, "to many dark days, at the end of which he learned that he should have to do his work for the rest of his life with less than half a man's portion of the sense most valuable to the artist." But for this misfortune the world would probably be admiring Du Maurier as a painter of *GENRE* subjects rather than simply as a draughtsman in black and white.

The earliest sketch, according to Mr. James, contributed by Du Maurier to "Punch," appeared in the number for December 5, 1863, now just twenty years ago. John Lecch died in October, 1864, and soon thereafter the hand of Du Maurier became frequently apparent on the pages of that comic journal. "The finish and delicacy, the real elegance of these early drawings," says Mr. James, "are extreme; the hand was already the hand of a brilliant executant." The larger part of Du Maurier's work has been done for "Punch," but he has designed many illustrations for books. He has been a regular contributor to the "Cornhill," his first work for that magazine being a

George du Maurier.

series of designs for Mrs. Gaskell's "Wives and Daughters." In 1868 he made a number of drawings for a new edition of Thackeray's "Esmond," which are considered among the most charming of his book illustrations.

It is certainly remarkable that "Punch" should have been so fortunate as to find as a successor to the inimitable John Leech an artist no less admirable and inimitable. It is not too much to say that the principal attraction of "Punch" for many readers has been the exquisite social satires from the pencil of Du Maurier. There is nothing comparable with them elsewhere. Du Maurier's fineness of perception, to quote from Mr. James, his remarkable power of specifying types, his taste, his grace, his lightness, and an indescribable refinement in his art, are due possibly to a Gallic element in his nature, but they are essentially English in spirit and thought. English life and character have never been more faithfully depicted, never presented with keener insight into peculiarities of types either by English novelists or artists; and

George du Maurier.

this striking fact gives to Du Maurier's drawings a permanent charm wholly independent of their humorous or satirical element. He gives us most delightful young women, and sketches of young Englishmen that are as accurate as photographs; and his portraits of all the various social grades are wonderfully to the life. "The pretty points of children," quoting again from Mr. James, "are intimately known to him; he understands, moreover, the infant wardrobe as well as the infant mind. His little boys and girls are 'turned out' with a completeness which has made the despair of many an American mother." As Pictures of English Society, therefore, his drawings are a lasting study. They reveal the current "craze"; they show the tendencies of social refinement; they indicate social usage; they open to the foreigner the English drawing-room, the English nursery, the English playground; they show us the amusements, the ambitions, the aptitudes, and many of the virtues as well as the foibles of that remarkable people.