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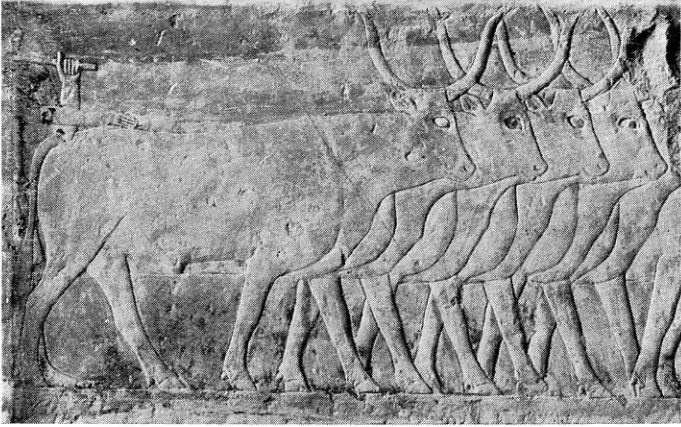
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DETAIL FROM AN OLD KINGDOM RELIEF

EGYPT. 2750-2625 B. C.

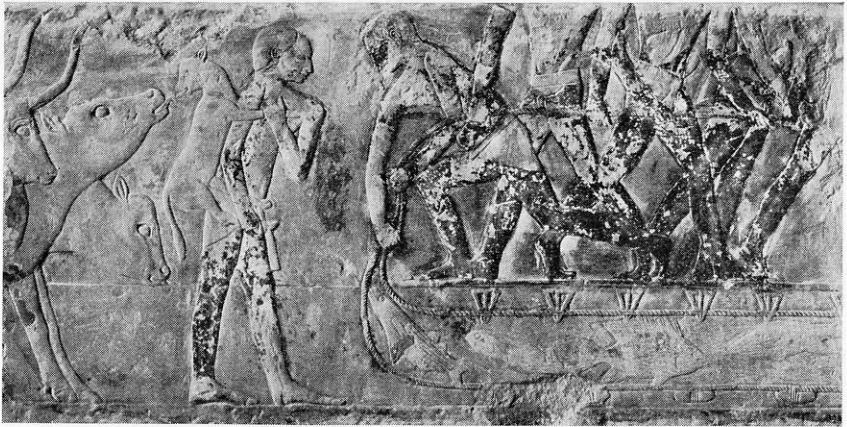


AN EGYPTIAN OLD KINGDOM RELIEF

Two limestone slabs carved with a relief of peasants driving cattle and fishing, from a mastaba of the Fifth Dynasty at Saqqara, have been acquired by the Art Institute through the agency of Mr. Howard Carter. The sculpture of the Old Kingdom in Egypt is so extraordinary, both plastically and culturally, that representation of it in the collection is of the first importance; the example now added to the Art Institute comes, in addition, from the period between 2750 to 2625 B. C., in which the art of low relief reached its finest development. There is a limestone relief from Medum of about 2800 B. C. in the Berlin Museum, which represents fishermen drawing a net in a scene very similar to this. The Berlin sculpture is, however, very simple, with isolated and rather static figures, between whose contours the surface of the body is almost flat. In our sculpture of the next dynasty, this style has given way to a very subtle modeling of details within the contour and (especially in the fishing group) to a boldness in representing action and overlapping figures within the limits of almost imperceptible gradations of relief that is one of the triumphs of the sculptor's art. This example has the additional interest, also, of

retaining traces of the color which originally covered it like a painting. The bodies of the men still show the flat earth red which was the conventional color for male figures; remains of blue around the fishnet and between the legs of the cattle show that a band of flat blue was carried across the base of the two scenes.

The mastaba tomb, of which this was a decoration, is so remarkable a structure and its reliefs are so definitely a part of its larger effect, that this detail cannot be fully understood without taking the rest of the building into account. The Egyptian tomb is rightly considered one of the strangest of human works, and yet it had its origin in a thought so natural that each one of us shares it today—the wish that our personality should not altogether be snuffed out at death but should be preserved to gain happiness and reunion with those we love in another life. The longing that life should not come to an end, the hope that families may somehow meet again beyond the grave, is no stranger to any one of us. What was unusual in the Egyptians' belief was their inability to conceive of life detached from their bodies and the routine of their familiar



existence. The soul, they believed, left the body to journey to the west into an existence among the gods, but it needed to return at times to its old home, while the *ka* or double continued in company with the old physical self. Hence the care given to the preservation of the mummy, the provision of an auxiliary body in the form of a portrait statue, and the extraordinary effort spent upon ensuring their safety. The Pharaoh of the Old Kingdom built a pyramid to hold his mummy. The noble had to be content with a less grandiose tomb, the mastaba. It was from one of these that our relief came. The mastaba was a massive rectangular structure with sloping sides and flat top, sometimes as much as thirty to forty feet high, one hundred fifty feet long and eighty feet wide. It was almost entirely a solid mass of stone or brick, secreting a shaft, at the bottom of which the mummy was placed. But the *ka* or double was thought to live within the tomb (*eternal home* is the Egyptian name for tomb) and to retain the capacity to feel all wants and satisfactions of ordinary daily life. On the east front of the mastaba were two doors, one a real door for the entry of descendants to an inner chamber, one a false door for the use of the *ka*; on some Old Kingdom tombs the occupant is represented

looking out from a window in the façade upon a world which he had left but still wished to enjoy. Within the mastaba was a small chamber to which descendants and priests came on stated days to offer prayers and to lay presents of food upon a little table that stood before a false door in its western wall. Sometimes the statue stood within this door, as if the occupant were stepping out of his mysterious home to receive the offering of his descendants (as he was supposed to do after their departure); but more often it was sealed within a niche or *serdab* that communicated with the reception hall by means of a narrow peephole through which the savor of the feast could enter. Then, to make sure that the *ka* might not be left desolate should these offerings for any reason be stopped, all the things which a man had enjoyed in life were represented on the walls of his offering chamber to serve as eternal supply. His rank, his relations with the Pharaoh, his wife and children, friends seated at his table, his pleasure garden and his estate, with servants cultivating the fields and providing for all the needs of his existence, even his sports such as hunting on the desert and fishing and boating on the river—row above row, all these things were represented in scenes of delicate relief and color, all moving toward the

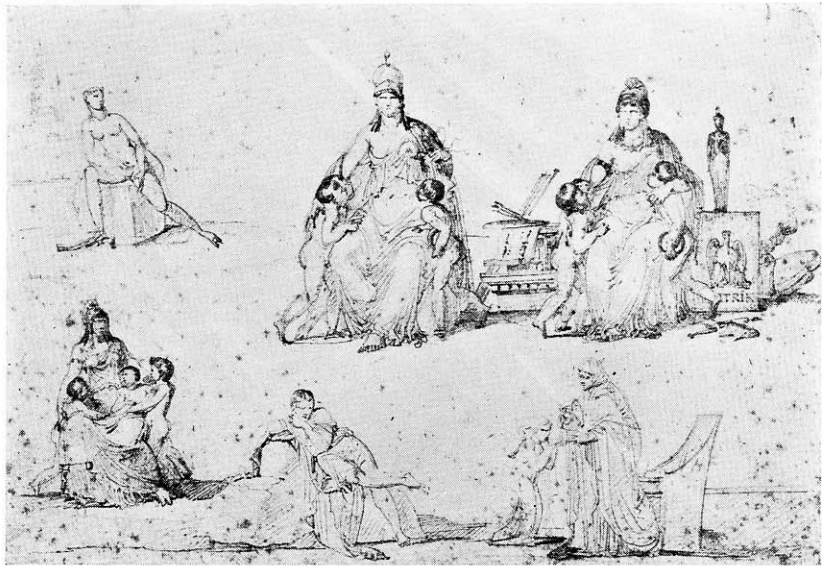
door in the western wall. It was from one of these attempts to see that life should suffer no diminution in the other world that our relief came.

A servant is driving forward a troop of long-horned cattle while another has picked up a calf, carrying it on his back, evidently as an easier substitute for driving it. The frightened little beast strains its head backward towards its mother, who lifts her head to lick its face. Next to this scene men are drawing a siene full of fish from the river. Old Kingdom sculpture at this period showed a lively observation of nature which is wholly charming. The solemn, slow-footed walk of the cattle, the mute dialogue between the calf and its mother, the greedy heifer trying to browse by the roadside as she walks along, the quick action of the men hauling in the fish net, are all represented with great vividness. But as always in Egyptian art, observation is stylized and put into generalised, plastic form. The color is flat, decorative and conventional. The two groups are held together by the design of strong parallel horizontal lines which run through them both: one line is formed by the backs of the animals and the rope in the hands of the fishermen; another follows the line of the animals' bellies and the ground on which the fishermen stand and forms the upper edge of the blue stripe; the shoulders of the fishermen make another parallel and the missing heads would also be on a level. The man carrying the calf and the first fisherman lead the eye easily from one group to the other. This structure of the design gives an effect of continuity and uniform movement to the two scenes, just as the repetition of identical figures (as in the case of the cattle) gives an impression of limitless quantity; and the visitor looking at a mastaba chamber covered with band over

band of such decorations, all moving steadily toward the western door, is impressed with a sense of boundless profusion of good things pouring toward the owner's eternal home.

But stylisation went beyond this. It has often been said that the Egyptians represented animals better than men, a remark which implies that the aim of art is literal copying. Egyptian relief was, however, far closer to hieroglyphic writing than to the camera. The hieroglyph grew out of the habit of mind that selected the most characteristic aspect of a thing and used it as a symbol whenever the idea of that thing had to be dealt with. The Egyptian convention of the human figure was arrived at in the same way: the most characteristic aspects of each part—the profile of the head, the full oval of the eye, the breadth of the shoulders, the profile of legs and feet—were combined to represent the permanent *idea* of man rather than the momentary physical appearance. Vivid observation, such as caught the group of fishermen in action, is cast into generalised and ideal forms such as would hold good as symbols for all eternity. It is with this stylistic basis of the art in mind, the tendency in all oriental art to represent the idea rather than the fact, that one can enjoy in Egyptian art the union of living reality and abstract decorative form which makes possible the extraordinary combination of qualities in this relief—the fresh and delightful observation of nature, the stately rhythm of its design, the decorative brilliance of the clear and subtle modeling, as well as the mingling of the charming and the pathetic in its motives of longing that life should not have an end, and care that in the other world the deceased should not lack beefsteak and fresh fish for his dinner.

E. P. RICHARDSON.



JACQUES LOUIS DAVID
 PENCIL SKETCHES
 GIFT OF HARRIET J. SCRIPPS

SOME FRENCH DRAWINGS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

There is hardly any better or safer way of thoroughly familiarizing oneself with the art of old and modern masters than by complementing the study of their executed works with that of their drawings and preparatory sketches. The long development a work of art goes through from the moment it is first conceived in the mind of its creator until its completion and delivery does not always mean a gradual improvement of its artistic qualities. Quite often the artist has had to conform to the non-artistic wishes of other people, has had to alter his work again and again in order to effect a compromise between his own ideas and those of his patrons; or, if he was a very successful man, harried by many commissions, he had to entrust the execution of works largely to assistants, with the necessary result that again foreign elements were instilled in-

to the original design. And even if the artist works without any outside interference or assistance, he will, over an extended period of time, be subject to various moods, good as well as bad, which will be reflected in the finished product; while on the other hand we have reason to believe that among his hastily sketched drawings, most are actually the fruits of single and happy moments of creative impulse. By very reason of their spontaneous origin from an unfettered imagination, these little works are frequently apt to give us the clearest insight into the artistic principles and the spiritual character of their creator. This applies especially to the work of architects, many of whose greatest conceptions have come down to us only on paper, having been prevented from material realization through technical or financial difficulties, personal



THEODORE GERICAULT
PEN SKETCHES
GIFT OF HARRIET J. SCRIPPS

intrigues or other circumstances.

All this by way of explaining why the exhibition of a selected group of French drawings in the large gallery of nineteenth century European art might be a decided help to any serious student in forming a fuller understanding of the painting of the period. Part of the drawings came to the Museum as the bequest of Mrs. Harriet J. Scripps, while others have been acquired recently, some as the generous gift of Mr. Albert Kahn. Regarded as a whole, the small group of seven drawings, together with a watercolor by Jongkind, presents indeed in its particular medium, a cross-section of French painting of the nineteenth century that illustrates almost all of its various phases.



NARCISSE DIAZ DE LA PENA
RED CHALK SKETCHES
GIFT OF HARRIET J. SCRIPPS

Most typical of the classical tendencies prevailing in the beginning of the century is a beautiful sheet by Jacques Louis David, the "father" proper of the whole movement. It shows six pencil drawings, three of which evidently represent the symbolic figure of France solennly enthroned and surrounded by her children (the liberal arts) whom she gathers to her with a protecting gesture. A fourth group of a woman giving a drink to some children might also be a version of the same subject. The meaning of the two remaining drawings—a nude woman seated and a man in a reclining position—is harder to establish. They might be studies for some decorative composition. The figure of "France" wearing the Phrygian cap proves that the work was done within the period of



CAMILLE COROT
CHARCOAL DRAWING
GIFT OF ALBERT KAHN

the first Republic (1792-1804). We know that David during the years of his own political activity as a member of the revolutionary party (until 1794) designed several decorations for great patriotic festivities. From their subject our sketches might have originated in connection with some such enterprise. The drawings are particularly interesting inasmuch as they show how carefully the master proceeded in developing a certain composition; and in their rendering are exceedingly characteristic of an art that tended toward the classical ideas of plastic clarity and monumentality and once more emphasized the line as the principal means of expression.



THEODORE GERICAULT
PEN SKETCHES
GIFT OF HARRIET J. SCRIPPS

The revolution against the tenets of classicism, against the somewhat artificial world of Roman gods and heroes created by David and his school, can hardly be better illustrated than by a sheet covered on both sides with pen drawings by Théodore Géricault, the instigator of the Romantic movement in France. A strong realism characterizes Géricault's art, as well as a predilection for heroic and dramatic themes that does not shrink from portraying the terrible and even the ugly. The very haste with which these horses are jotted down distinguishes these drawings from the carefully premeditated and neatly rendered studies of the Classicists. The horses are obviously studied from life. The drawing in detail is by no means correct, and yet how much more alive are these wildly galloping animals than the beautiful, prancing stallion in David's famous portrait of Napoleon in Versailles or the horse in our own replica

of a part of his *Rape of the Sabinés*. Géricault's great passion in life was, as we know, the horse, which he never ceased to portray. It is as a painter of horses that he is probably unequalled in the history of art, a fact that enhances the importance of our drawing as a supplement to the wonderful portrait by the master which came to the Museum last year.

We can further trace the development of French painting in two drawings by Narcisse Diaz, brilliant red and black crayon sketches of women, such as the painter used in his Romantic representations of oriental life and as phantastic staffage in his woody landscapes. The two sheets belong to Diaz's early period and clearly reveal the influences of Delacroix, the great leader of the Romantic school.

With Corot we approach Impressionism, although the master cannot rightly be counted among any of the established



JOHAN BARTHOLD JONGKIND
 WATERCOLOR
 GIFT OF ALBERT KAHN

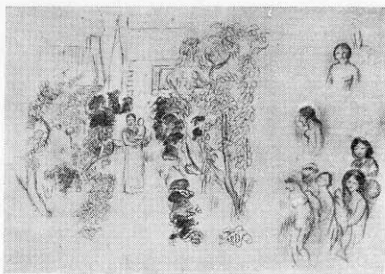
schools of his time. The wonderful charcoal study of a landscape—the subject evidently taken from the plains of Artois or Normandy — is a work of Corot's "second manner," done after 1850, most typical in its grave and poetical conception as well as in the grand economy of forms and the delicacy of its values.

Influenced by Corot but more advanced toward Impressionism is Jongkind, although he, too, never sided "officially" with the adherents of the new movement. Jongkind was a native of Holland, but, like Van Gogh, attained full development of his art in France. We know that while he painted his oils in his studio, he followed in his watercolors the practice of the Impressionists, of working out of doors, directly from nature. The brilliant watercolor of a quay on the Seine in Paris, in its non-idealizing conception, its light and luminous coloring and its broad, fluid brushwork, has in-

deed all the earmarks of the truly impressionistic style.

Renoir's delightful drawing was described in this Bulletin when the sheet was acquired (April, 1926, No. 7, p. 76). The sketches giving but slight indications of form, it is all the more amazing to see how the artist succeeds in suggesting depth and sunny light in the garden scene at the left, as well as in rendering with a few caressing strokes the softness of feminine bodies in the nudes at the right.

A fascinating and almost unique figure in French art of the nineteenth century is Constantin Guys, one of whose wash drawings completes this small group. Leading an adventurous life as soldier, traveler and war correspondent, he started his artistic career when he was well beyond forty. He was entirely self-taught and active only as a draughtsman. In contrast to the Impressionists, he is said to have never worked from



PIERRE AUGUSTE RENOIR
STUDIES IN PEN AND CHALK

GIFT OF MESSRS. BOEHLER AND STEINMEYER

nature but always from memory. His drawings—of which our newly acquired piece is a very characteristic example—are consequently full of gross errors in perspective and linear correctness. And yet in their synthesis of optical impressions, in the way they catch the most fleeting movements, they are often astonishingly true to life. They are enchantingly light improvisations, giving the illusion of matter and motion, and they, somehow, offer perfect images of the brilliant and decadent life of the Second Empire.

WALTER HEIL.

LITHOGRAPHS BY WHISTLER

Nine lithographs by Whistler have recently been purchased for the Department of Prints. The impressions are of fine quality, including one proof dedicated to the English printer Goulding, and all of the prints were formerly in the collection of R. Birnie Philip, the brother-in-law of Whistler.

A new generation has arisen since Whistler's death in 1903, and it is now possible to make a dispassionate appraisal of the man and his achievements. The storm center of violent and divergent opinion during his lifetime, it is not difficult to understand the bitter hostility nor the violent admiration of his contemporaries. The personal eccentricities of Whistler, his caustic wit, his skill in controversy, his arrogance and his boundless egotism, all contributed to build up the public misunderstanding of a serious artist.

The prints offered by the artist at modest prices in the hope that the many might possess them, were indifferently received, while today constantly soaring prices attest an eager buying public. The work of Whistler has been exhaustively catalogued, countless critical judgments have been passed, and the biography by his devoted friends, the Pen-

nells, has been supplemented by a new life by James Laver which has just been published. The artist himself gave us his *Credo in Ten O'Clock* and *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, and there seems little else to do in the matter of documentation.

It is not Whistler the painter nor the innovator in the art of etching who interests us in this brief word, but rather the contribution by him to lithography, the youngest of the graphic arts. We know the low level to which English art had sunk in Whistler's day, but only infrequently do we come upon those commercial lithographs dear to the English people when the young American took up his residence among them. The bathos of these prints, published in great numbers, arouse today either contempt or ridicule, but to Whistler they were a challenge which could not be left unanswered.

Thomas Way, the English lithographer, first brought to Whistler's attention the possibilities of the art of lithography, and he began his experiments in 1878. Until his day the invention of the German Senefelder had found but few adherents. Menzel in Germany, Daumier, Gavarni, and Raffet in France had all



THE BLACKSMITH

used lithography, but its wide use for commercial purposes had completely debased the art.

Whistler's first attempts were successful. He planned to issue a limited number of impressions under the title *Art Notes*, but meeting with no response, the idea was abandoned. *The Magazine of Art*, reviewing a show of these lithographs, wrote thus; "The Notes are delightful sketches in Indian ink and crayon, masterly so far as they go, but they go such a little way . . ." If art critics showed so little comprehension, it was small wonder that others failed to realize that lithography had found a new master.

Way lists in his Catalogue one hundred and sixty lithographs made by Whistler over a period of twenty years. The earlier prints were drawn directly on the stone, the latter ones on paper and transferred to the stone. The average number of proofs pulled was about

twenty; of some only three or four were taken.

Five of the prints purchased by the Institute were made in 1890, the others in 1895. We have in these prints a joyful record of the things which interested the artist. *Tyresmith*, *Maunder's Fish Market*, and *The Smith* were studies of provincial English towns and workers. Even in these homely themes there is an exquisite sense of design, a feeling that one is looking at a decorative pattern. They give us no sense of the burden of life, none of the deep human feeling which Rembrandt would have given, but rather the interpretation of a highly sensitive artist less concerned with the immediate view than with the making of a decorative design.

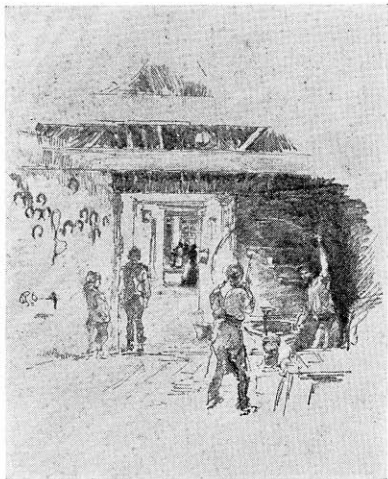
The Dancing Girl, *The Model Draping*, the *Nude Model Reclining*, have the same harmony of line, a tenderness and charm of form which makes them singularly appealing. In *Vitré* and *the Laundress* we have provincial France with its his-



DANCING GIRL

toric gables and age-old stone houses, and in the shadowed doorway the skillfully drawn figures of the workers. In these lithographs we see that Whistler mastered all the possibilities of the medium. There are the delicately drawn grey lines, the stronger blacks, and the deep dark shadows against which the figures stand.

Deflation is the order of the day and the Whistler legend has lost much of its glamor. Despite all this Whistler is still a commanding figure. It was he who opened the European mind to the beauties of Oriental Art, who revived lithography, gave etching a new freedom, and in a sordid world preached the necessity of beauty.



ISABEL WEADOCK.

THE TYRESMITH

A PAIR OF MINIATURES BY JOHN WESLEY JARVIS

Quite aside from their esthetic merit, things done "in little" make an emotional appeal that is difficult to define. There is first, perhaps, the sense of wonderment at the technical difficulties involved in the making of diminutive things, and of delight in the cunning and dexterity displayed. From the portrait gems set into the finger rings of Hellenistic Greece and Augustan Rome, work in miniature, which since classic days has assumed so many varying phases, has never lacked enthusiastic admirers. Its most delightful manifestation was, perhaps, in the illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages, though here, of course, the purpose was different and portraiture played but a minor role, and it was not until the dawn of the new individualism which made its appearance in the Renaissance that there appeared again an interest in the miniature portrait—in Italy with the medals of Pisanello and Matteo di Pasti, in France with the Clouets and in Flanders with the Van Eycks—an interest which was

to reach its culmination in the following century in Holbein, whose exquisite little portraits are among the most admired works by his hand.

The miniatures by Holbein and his contemporaries, however, were painted either directly upon pieces of cardboard cut from playing cards or on fine vellum pasted over these cards and were executed in gouache, and it was not until early in the eighteenth century, largely through the efforts of Richard Cosway in England, that ivory came to be used for the miniature portrait. It was in this century—England's great century of portraiture—that miniature painting attained its greatest popularity.

Since the customs of the American Colonies followed in most respects those of the mother country, we soon find the fashion, which had a humble beginning in the ornamentation of bracelets, snuff boxes and match cases, taking the country by storm, so that in the words of a contemporary chronicler, "everyone had gone mad on the subject." Most of the

best painters, such men as Stuart, Sully, Trumbull and the Peales, worked in this field, and there was, besides, a group of men who devoted their entire attention to it. A number of them, e. g., Malbone, Trott, Fraser, Field, etc., attained enviable skill in the art and their work was in great demand.

Among the men who worked both in life-size and miniature portraiture was John Wesley Jarvis, a pair of whose miniatures has recently been acquired by the Institute. Born in South Shields, England, in 1780 (he was named for his uncle, John Wesley, the founder of Methodism), he was brought to America

excellent work at times, saved no money and died in abject poverty.

The charming pair of portraits, which—to judge both from the costumes and from the ages of the sitters—Jarvis probably painted during a visit to Charleston in 1810, are of the Reverend James Everett and his wife, Hannah Vincent Everett, and were secured from a direct descendant of this couple. The Reverend Mr. Everett was appointed chaplain in the United States Navy in 1818, and in 1835 was stationed on the U. S. S. "Constitution," at that time heading the list of the nine navy chaplains. The portraits are painted against



by his father in 1795, living with his family in Philadelphia, where he started his career as an engraver. He was apprenticed to Edward Savage, with whom he later moved to New York. Here he first set up as an engraver and it was not until 1804 that he began miniature painting. It is supposed that he had some instruction from Malbone. Later, he, in turn, taught Henry Inman and Thomas Sully. He is described as being "a most erratic and irresponsible genius," "a rare wag and most brilliant wit," and "one of the queerest, ugliest, most agreeable little creatures in the world," who though working industriously and doing

a light blue-green "hatched" background. In the figures themselves, particularly that of the woman, the soft color of the ivory—and this is the especial charm of work done on ivory—is allowed to show through, making possible those warm, creamy tints which can be obtained on no other surface. There is a dignity and "largeness" about the work which makes the miniatures of this period so different from those executed today, giving them much more the effect of life-size figures.

Jarvis died in 1839, the very year the daguerrotype, which was soon to replace these delightful personal mementos, was perfected.