

# Samuel Hieronymus Grimm, of Burgdorf

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en considération et d'interpréter, si l'on veut nous appliquer les mesures du blocus. Tous ceux qui se donneront la peine de procéder à cette petite enquête, s'apercevront que nous méritons une entière confiance, que nous avons besoin d'aide et que nous attendons, non seulement de pouvoir nous nourrir, mais de pouvoir travailler dans la paix. Les Suisses de l'étranger rendraient un magnifique service à leur pays s'ils s'employaient à le faire comprendre autour d'eux.

Pierre Béguin.

### SAMUEL HIERONYMUS GRIMM, OF BURGDORF.

(This is the title of an illustrated volume published by Messrs. Faber & Faber at 25/- and written by *Rutha Mary Clay*; the foreword has been contributed by *Monsieur M. C. R. Paravicini*, our former Minister in London. An appreciation from the pen of *Sir John Squire* has appeared in the "Illustrated London News," February 21st, which we have pleasure in reprinting with due acknowledgment.)

There are times when those of us whose duty it is to look at the new books sigh for something that isn't about Hitler or submarines, Pitt or Napoleon, political or military affairs, past or present. So many and vociferous are the Books Which Sweep the Anglo-Saxon World, by people whose Grave Warnings were ignored and people who knew how many *éclairs* the Führer ate for breakfast, that occasionally one cannot help wishing that the publishers — kept, anyhow, very short by the waste of paper on advertisements and vulgar ephemeral sheets — would occasionally spare a ream or two for those voices which again, as in Blake's early days, are "faint but few." This time it has happened with a vengeance. Messrs. Faber and Faber, standing erect amid the thunders and lightnings, have produced a beautifully bound, printed, and illustrated book about a Swiss artist who practised, mostly in England, in the eighteenth century. It is rather as though (and he also drew romantic ruins) a life of the Reverend Mr. Gilpin were to appear. That also might be a relief, especially to such few of our fighting men who, in peacetime, took an interest in the reverend gentleman's ochreous washes of broken piles and pinacles amid lonely hills and solitary trees. It is extreme to retire into an "ivory tower" as Théophile Gautier is reputed to have done during the siege of Paris, with the remark, "*Moi je fais émaux et camées.*" But it is equally extreme, when the day's work for the nation has been done, to retire to rest and worry about what Mr. Ramsey MacDonald ought to have done about Singapore or what advice our uninstructed selves might have given to General Auchinleck — whose name, incidentally, on Boswell's evidence, should be pronounced as "Affleck." At all events, here is a sumptuous book about Samuel Hieronymus Grimm — the only painter, so far as I am aware, to bear the thundering name of "Hieronymus" except the Dutchman Hieronymous Bosch, who delighted in lurid pictures of Popes, Cardinals, Kings, and naked women being bitten and roasted in hell by fiends with eagles' beaks, ant-eaters' snouts, vultures' claws, lizards' feet, and such other infernal apparatus.

Grimm was born near Berne in 1733, and had an uncle who painted miniatures and water-colours. He ended his days in England, in 1794; and the illustra-

tions for this book are drawn from collections in all sorts of Western European countries, Windsor Castle and the British Museum being conspicuous repositories. His biographer concludes: "The Athenian, it is said, calls painting silent poetry, and poetry, painting with the gift of speech. Grimm, the poet-painter, has been but a dim figure alike in the annals of Swiss literature and of English art. His drawings are, as it were, foot-prints from at least thirty-five English shires, but he left no biographical material. He is an exhibitor, without a single critique; a teacher whose pupils are unrecorded."

"The illustrations in this volume — even though monochrome reproduction fails to transmit the subtlety of colour — prove that no excuse is needed for bringing one of the lesser out of obscurity. He may not, indeed, have influenced any particular painter — as his fellow-countryman, Louis Ducros, is said to have influenced Cozens — but he contributed to the rise and progress of the English Water-Colour School. His 'Terrace at Richmond' was painted before Girtin, Turner or Constable were born; he was drawing delightfully at Selborne when they were infants. Simple representations of nature, as seen with his own eyes, as felt with his heart, must have attracted the discerning year by year in the R.A. exhibitions and elsewhere. In such manner did Samuel Hieronymus Grimm help to prepare the way for greater masters. His art studied the lowly no less than the high-born — happy home life, cheerful childhood, places plain and beautiful. The true character of nature and man — in solitude or in the throng — this is sweet vision."

"The true character" — well, truth has many aspects, and some of them we have seen at Pearl Harbour and Rotterdam; and some, pictorially, in Michael Angelo and Rembrandt. Grimm, skilful at figures and landscapes, with a touch of Crome, of Hogarth, and of Rowlandson, was technically most dexterous — perhaps the most dexterous of all Swiss artists, unless Holbein be allowed to be a Swiss. Coming to England strengthened him; but he felt most at home at Selborne with White, for whose equable observations he did many pictures. But he remained a Swiss artist.

The Swiss artists have always been mild and have never achieved greatness. There is a race, intelligent, independent and brave, with a record of sturdiness not excelled by that of the Dutch, but they have never vied with the Dutch in the arts. It may be that the shadow of those august, inaccessible, snow-capped mountains, those awful chasms, those precipitous waterfalls, have made them feel that human art cannot compete in grandeur with Nature's; it may be that those same spectacles have made them, in their art, take refuge in the quiet snug and comfortable as, in daily life, they are compelled to do in those crag-borne chalets with their heavy eaves, and the cattle who seek green pastures in the summer but must be cosy with the family in the winter.

However it may be, at the moment one is not in the mood for the more tempestuous kinds of art, and the deft drawings of this equable Swiss, who ventured as far as Hammersmith and Chiswick, are consoling to look at. The soul of sensible and sensitive Switzerland — which existed long before tourist-hotels and still exists beyond them — is in them all, and in their presence human rage and greed seem more foolish than ever.