

Mr. Robert Alexander was born at Kilwinning, Ayrshire, in 1840. At an early age his Art inclinations were manifest; but he had many difficulties to contend with before getting into the fairway of his future profession. In Alexander's case the usual routine of attendance at the Trustees' School and the Academy's Life Class finds no place, and he had to approach the end he had in view indirectly by holding positions which brought him in contact with the Art world. Nevertheless, Robert Alexander is found an accomplished craftsman when he first comes before the public in the later sixties.

In 1868, and in the following year, he contributed to the Academy's Exhibition pictures the titles of which indicate the nature and scope of his work through more than half a century, during which his name was never absent from its catalogues. "Head of a Terrier," "Head of a Horse," "Stable Companions," "Pride and Humility," suchlike subjects occupied his brush to the end. The two heads of the 1868 catalogue seem to have been feelers; but his mark once made, Alexander's work so grew in popularity that, in the course of a very few years, his contributions are mostly lent by their owners.

From 1878 onwards the catalogues enable us to trace the two main lines of Alexander's practice, the subject picture, and those in which portraiture is the point of view; and from about the same date we can follow the Artist from his town addresses to the various outskirts of the city which successively suited his work. Thenceforth his pictures are pretty equally divided between the classes referred to, and the secret of his success is the sympathetic treatment which attracted alike the Artist and the lover of animals.

Though a swift and sure craftsman, Alexander's subject pictures were not so numerous as could have been desired, for it is in such works as "Wat and Wearie," "The Happy Mother," and "Two Mothers" that the Artist is seen at his best. On the other hand the true painter's technique is never absent in those portraits of horses and dogs which figure so largely in his life's work.

Alexander was elected Associate of the Academy in 1878, and Academician ten years later. During those earlier years, as through his whole career, his best works were almost invariably first seen at the Academy, and no member did more to sustain the interest of its Exhibitions. A short visit to the continent in 1875 was followed by many subsequent visits abroad, which developed his delightful faculty in water-colour, a medium he handled with great facility, alike in his foreign

sketches, and, during quite recent years, in those interpretations of the landscape of our undulating southern moorlands which had such a unique and personal charm.

Though not a man of affairs in the usual sense of the term, Mr. Alexander took his full share in the duties of membership of the Academy, and when on the Council he was seldom absent from its meetings. Of strong personality, and difficult to move from opinions once formed or positions taken up, his eager and ardent advocacy of his preferences in Art, and in other matters, attracted even those who differed from him. Though well over the allotted span of years, his hand had lost little of its cunning, and his death on 2nd July came as a surprise to his extensive circle of friends and admirer.

RSA Obituary, transcribed from 1923 RSA Annual Report