

DEATH OF MR. R. T. PENTREATH, FORMERLY OF PENZANCE

On the evening of Sunday, in last week, after a brief illness, at the age of 63, there passed from among us a gentleman of unblemished character, possessing great mental abilities, and who was an honour to a profession which was the pleasure of his life. Mr. Pentreath was born at Paul, near Penzance, and descended from a family of high respectability. Very early in life he displayed great capacity for sketching, which he prosecuted eagerly during the intervals of business, until he was fortunate enough to be enabled to adopt it as a profession. He was essentially a self-educated artist, and excelled in several branches of his favourite study. His reputation was, however, greatest as a portrait painter, in which, among local draftsmen, he had no equal. The fidelity with which he realised the individual traits of his subjects, the mental character he imparted to them, adds a value to his portrait productions of which it would be impossible to form too high an estimate.

Long before Photography had been employed to illustrate landscape art, Mr. Pentreath made us familiar with every aspect of the coast scenery of his native county. Paying great care and attention to his outlines, he always rendered his forms with unerring precision. His colouring, though quiet and subdued, was always judicious and abounded in passages of great beauty, being absolutely true to nature. In the use of the coloured crayon, as applied to landscapes, he was unrivalled, and may be said to have originated this branch of art in his native county. This much is, however, certain – that he carried it to a perfection which has never been equalled, much less surpassed here. That he should, with a dry material, express so perfectly the power and the character of water in motion was an achievement which only an accomplished artist could perform, and which he did in such a manner as to leave nothing to be desired.

He also had great understanding of tree drawing, and never failed to delineate accurately their graceful forms, nor ever missed their subtle changeful characteristics.

His lithographic examples, published by Mr. Rowe, are familiar to our readers, and, when first produced, were eagerly sought after; but his most valuable series in this branch of art are those small but faithful illustrations which adorn Mr. Courtney's "Guide to Penzance." His landscape painting in oils were often given on a large scale. Noteworthy among these, are those charming pieces depicting the homely fishermen's occupation, as seen at early morning on the beach at Newlyn, when the busy bustling aspect of the various picturesque groups were invested with the reality of life. From time to time Mr. Pentreath paid frequent visits to Wales, in company with the present Solicitor-general, Sir R. P. Collier, with whom he was on terms of intimate friendship. On other occasions he extended his visits to Switzerland, where he enriched his portfolio with many valuable studies, showing that his range of subjects was by no means restricted to the illustration of coast-views, but that he was quite capable of portraying the majesty and the beauty of mountain scenery, as well as the more unpretending aspects of nature. His reputation as an artist was not in any sense confined to his native county. In London he had considerable occupation as a portrait-painter, and, year after year, his productions were admitted to the walls of the Royal Academy, where they frequently occupied commanding positions, and found ready purchasers.

Such, very briefly, are the chief points in Mr. Pentreath's professional career, which may be said to have terminated when, a few years since, he left Penzance and betook himself to a quiet residence at Exmouth, where the delights of gardening (of which he was always fond) occupied the greater portion of his time, though he retained an undiminished love for this first and favourite study to close of his life. In the domestic circle he was uniformly kind and amiable. Possessing an even and well-balanced mind, gifted with pleasing conversational powers, enriched as they were with a delicate tinge of humour, he was delightful companion, and those who knew him best appreciated those qualities most. He has been removed from us at a period of life when his mental faculties were unimpaired, and his physical strength might have led us to indulge the hope that his days would have been prolonged to a good old age; but an all-wise Providence has decreed it otherwise, and it behoves us to submit to His will without repining.

Mr. Pentreath leaves a widow and two sons to lament his loss – the elder, Rev. Frederick R. Pentreath, of Market Reason, and Mr. Richard Pentreath, of Portsmouth.

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