

CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor,
The Pre-Raphaelite Review.

Millais' Blind Girl and John Miller of Liverpool

I was interested to see that the original Millais letter published by Mr. Epps in Vol. II/1 had re-emerged. I published a line or two from a copy of it in my article on The Pre-Raphaelites and the Liverpool Prize in Apollo magazine, December 1962, page 750.

The Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, has long owned a manuscript copy of this letter, together with one by D. G. Rossetti and one by Ford Madox Brown, both of the latter dating to 1857 and both addressed by name to John Miller, the Liverpool merchant patron (who had no connection with T. Pitt Miller of Preston). Our copies were probably made at the turn of the century by the then curator, E. R. Dibdin for his own work on the circle, and I had assumed that the originals were then borrowed for transcription from one of the Miller descendants, most probably the Munns of Liverpool. I do not know the present location of either of the other two letters.

Millais's letter is undoubtedly also to John Miller, who by May 1857 owned The Blind Girl (the provenance of which I give in my exhibition catalogue on Millais of 1967). Except that our transcriber read one phrase as 'extraordinary mistake', his reading is identical with that of Mr. Epps. The picture was first bought by Gambart, the dealer (see Millais's letters to Effie, 9 and 11 April 1857, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York), and Miller recounts his own purchase of it, though not who from, in a letter to Ford Madox Brown of 17 May 1857: '...his Blind Girl, to me a picture as full of feeling as anything he has yet produced became mine a day or so ago in exchange for a Constable and Rosa Bonheur, some beautiful drawings being thrown in with it, but no money passing.' (Original in the Madox Brown family ownership). Miller tended himself to act the part of an amateur dealer and certainly bought, sold and exchanged as the market seemed ripe.

Thus, it was he who lent it to the Liverpool Academy held in the early autumn. At the Academy Council meeting of 14 September 1857 (Minutes, Liverpool Record Office) it was one of three candidates for the £50 prize: Mr. Hunt (Andrew Hunt) proposed Solomon's Waiting for the Verdict, but this was defeated. It was then proposed by Mr. Pelham and seconded by Mr. Robertson that the prize be given to Millais's Blind Girl and it was proposed by Mr. Campbell and seconded by Mr.