

Auguste Rodin

THE WORK OF AUGUSTE
RODIN. BY GABRIEL
MOUREY.

EVEN NOW, in writing of Rodin, I cannot recall without emotion the impression of grandeur, and beauty, and mystery—mystery especially—produced within and by the mere name of this great artist, before I had so much as seen any of his work.

The triumphant success of some exhibition, held, if I mistake not, in the spring of 1888, at Georges Petit's, where Rodin and Claude Monet for the first time gave a public display on a big scale, reached my ears far away in the provinces, and aroused in me a feeling of enthusiastic interest. The illustrated papers, the art magazines of the time were full of reproductions of Rodin's sculptures. Not a day passed but one came across the names of the two artists in the newspapers—lauded to the skies by some, consigned to perdition by others. For a battle royal was raging over their productions. There were those who proclaimed Rodin the finest sculptor of the century, and declared that since Michael Angelo himself no one had wielded the chisel with such power, or had gone so far towards investing his figures with life; that, in a word, the great tradition of heroic sculpture—lost awhile—had revived in him. On the other hand, those who remained imbued with the spirit of traditional art, with its academic *formule*, resented his amazing fertility, accused him of coarseness and extravagance, and even went so far as to deny his right to handle the chisel at all, dubbing him a morbid madman, who, while ignorant of the very alphabet of his craft, sought to hide his want of knowledge beneath a mass of the most presumptuous aspirations that ever came into an artist's brain. To others again, Rodin appeared simply an eccentric

XIII. No. 62.—MAY, 1898.

person, anxious to make a stir by his peculiarities, but destined, when once known to the public at large, to settle down and produce sculpture *like the others!*

It may be imagined how great was the impression made on the mind of a young man who, even then, was an enthusiast in all that concerned art; how this alternate praise and censure fired his imagination. May I therefore be pardoned these personal reminiscences. My only reason for thus mentioning myself is that at this moment there may be young people living remote from Paris who have come across photographs of Rodin's work, and are experiencing the same feelings of awe and admiration and mystified respect I once knew so well.

In the main I still feel as I did then every time I find myself in the presence of this mild yet wayward genius. Whenever I enter that studio away there in the Rue de l'Université, close by the Champ de Mars, the old sensations—which have not changed, but only taken fuller form—come



BUST OF A WOMAN

BY AUGUSTE RODIN

215