

**CHRIST BEFORE
PILATE, THE PAINTING
BY MUNKACSY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649319374

Christ Before Pilate, the Painting by Munkacsy by Charles M. Kurtz

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

CHARLES M. KURTZ

**CHRIST BEFORE
PILATE, THE PAINTING
BY MUNKACSY**

“NO painter of a more vigorous, intense, and truly artistic personality has been born into the world in recent years than the Hungarian, Munkacsy. I may, indeed, call him, without hesitation, the very strongest of all living painters. It is hard to say which is the more impressive in his work, his masterly technique, of a sort quite peculiar to himself, or the splendidly artistic temperament it reveals. . . . And Munkacsy is an original master—one who cannot be said to owe his qualities to the example of any predecessor.”

MRS. SCHUYLER VAN RENSSELAER.



Samuel P. Duffield

CHRIST
BEFORE PILATE

The Painting by Munkacsy

A DESCRIPTION OF THE PICTURE
A SKETCH OF THE ARTIST'S LIFE
AND NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

PREPARED BY CHARLES M. KURTZ
EDITOR OF "NATIONAL ACADEMY NOTES"

PUBLISHED FOR THE EXHIBITION.

1887

PREFATORY.



IN the preparation of this hand-book it has been the aim to present such matter as might serve to explain the picture "Christ Before Pilate" as the painter would wish it to be understood, and to give such facts concerning the artist and the painting of the picture, and such views of prominent persons regarding it, as might be interesting to those who, being impressed by the work, may desire to know more of it and its creator than is otherwise conveniently accessible.

In the compilation of the biographical sketch of the artist, the writer must acknowledge indebtedness to "*Les Artistes Modernes*," by Eugène Montrosier; "*Some Modern Artists*," published by Cassell & Co.; to a former hand-book of the painting "*Christ Before Pilate*," and especially to an excellent paper on the early portion of the artist's career, by John R. Tait, in *Lippincott's Magazine* for February, 1879.

Personal acquaintance and conversation with the artist have also given some facts.

C. M. K.

Ms
536
1879



INTRODUCTION.



THE paintings of the Old Masters treated almost exclusively of religious themes. In Italy, where the art of painting was almost newly-bórn in the Fourteenth Century, it was the aid and accompaniment of the religious feeling of the time, and partook much of the same character. The best of the old art is that which was produced for the adornment and religious purposes of the cathedrals and churches.

In these early days religion was half shrouded with mysticism; history was wedded to mythology, and the real was much confounded with the symbolical. With the springing up of the Monastic Orders came a throng of legends to be illustrated and perpetuated for the edification of the faithful; and, inspired by the spirit of the age, the painters and poets represented the real and the ideal as associated in intimate relationship. Personages of this world were mingled freely with saints and angels.

This art was usually exceedingly devotional in its character, and the pictures seem, for the most part, to have been painted by men who were animated by religious fervor. These artists were invigorated, no doubt, by the general reaction succeeding the dark ages, and we see in their paintings evidences of enthusiasm and great sincerity.

* * *

The art of our own times is inclined more toward the expression of what is actual, probable or possible. Religious subjects are rarely chosen by the painters of to-day, but when they are selected they are treated from the more strictly realistic standpoint. On this account, modern pictures of such subjects, painted by artists who have conscientiously studied the contemporaneous

history, architecture, costume and other details of the intended representation, serve much more strongly to impress the mind with the historical reality of the events portrayed, though, in many cases, they lack the devotional spirit and the superb color so often characteristic of the early masterpieces.

* * *

Munkacsy's early life was a tragic one, and the sad scenes with which his childhood was surrounded tended to develop in him a keenly sensitive and sympathetic nature, and to give his mind a decidedly serious cast. His earlier Hungarian studies and his first important picture—"The Last Day of a Man Condemned to Death"—show the direction of his feeling in these days. It was at about this period in his career that Munkacsy, who, in religion, is a Roman Catholic, first considered the idea of expressing, on canvas, his conception of Christ. The representations of the Master which he saw in the churches—reproducing the type of the old Italian painters—did not satisfy the ideal which had grown in his mind. To him they seemed effeminate—personifications of too much humility and too little inspiration and strength of purpose. The faces seemed rather to portray the character of a weak, submissive man than that of a man of strong will but great forbearance—such a man as could be severe to the obdurate wrong-doer as well as tender, sympathetic and forgiving to the repentant sinner. Munkacsy's idea, even at this time, was to represent Christ as a man inspired by a most noble purpose—the salvation of the world—his earnestness so great, and his love for lost humanity so strong, that he would willingly suffer death, if necessary, to the accomplishment of the divine purpose.

In time, the idea came to him to paint "Christ Before Pilate." In no other subject, it occurred to him, could he so well bring into prominence those great qualities of the Master, that impressed him so strongly, as in the scene which immediately preceded the awful tragedy of Golgotha, when the Saviour—forsaken, reviled, falsely accused, denied even the formality of a trial—stood before the Roman Governor to be sentenced to an ignominious death.

Wisely enough, the artist did not attempt this great subject until the maturity of his power had been attained; yet, during the years he was dreaming of the picture he should some day paint,