

CHANTREY (SIR FRANCIS LEGATT), R.A.

B. 1781. D. 1841.

Sir Francis Legatt Chantrey, whose generous bequest endowed the Nation with the pictures in this and other rooms, and with most of the sculpture in the Central Hall and Corridors of this Gallery, was himself a sculptor. He was born on the 7th day of April, in the year 1781, at Norton, in Derbyshire; his father was a carpenter and small farmer at Jordanthorpe, near Sheffield, and died when his son was only 12 years old. The boy had only been taught in the village school, and soon entered upon the work of life in the shop of a grocer at Sheffield. In his sixteenth year he was very much attracted by the shop window of a carver and gilder named Ramsay, and became his apprentice for a term of seven years. John Raphael Smith, the draughtsman and mezzotint engraver, encouraged him and taught him to draw portraits in coloured chalks—a pleasant art, that he made use of in his early struggling days. A statuary and stone mason taught him to carve

marble and stone; and Sam James, the son of Sam Arnold musician, taught him oil painting. Thus equipped he opened a studio at 24 Paradise Square, Sheffield, and advertised in the Sheffield "Trio," 22nd April, 1802, that he would execute portraits in crayons and miniatures from 2 to 3 guineas each, at that address. He is said to have tried his fortune both in Edinburgh and Dublin before he came to London, where he studied for a short time in the Royal Academy Schools. At this time he made his living by wood-carving for a German furniture dealer named Bojaart, and long afterwards recognised, as his own handiwork, the table at which he was dining in the house of Samuel Rogers, the poet and banker. A marble bust of the Rev. J. Wilkinson for the Parish Church of Sheffield was the first that he chiselled. He executed the colossal busts of the Admirals Howe, Duncan, and St. Vincent, for Greenwich Hospital, at the price of 10*l.* each. His pecuniary difficulties were solved by his marriage to Miss Wale, his cousin, as she brought him a small fortune, which subsequently by his exertions in portrait sculpture he increased to wealth, which grew with his fame. Perhaps his most celebrated work is the "Sleeping Children," in Lichfield Cathedral. In the National Portrait Gallery are his busts of Sir Walter Scott, Benjamin West, P.R.A., and George Canning, and a medallion of Kirke White. His statues of Wellington, Pitt, and George IV., are to be seen at the Royal Exchange, Hanover Square, and Trafalgar Square respectively. In the year 1815 he was elected an Associate, and in 1818 a full member of the Royal Academy. In 1819 he was able to travel in Italy for the first time. William IV. honoured him by knighthood in the year 1835. He was an honorary D.C.L. of Oxford, and honorary M.A. of Cambridge, F.R.S. and F.S.A. He died suddenly of spasm of the heart on the 25th of November, 1841, and was buried in his native village in a tomb he himself had prepared. There is a portrait of him painted by himself in this gallery, and two more are in the National Portrait Gallery, one by himself in black and white chalk, and one painted by Thomas Phillips, R.A. He bequeathed the reversionary interest, after the death of his widow, in the bulk of his estate to the Royal Academy under certain terms, a sum to be spent each year in the purchase of works of art to form a national collection.*