Marion Hepworth Dixon

Marion Hepworth Dixon (1856-1936)

‘The name, of course, […], the name counts for something,’ declares an editor in Ella Hepworth Dixon’s renowned New Woman Novel, *The Story of a Modern Woman*, but there is occasionally some confusion about the spelling of her older sister’s name. On her birth certificate (she was only registered on 26th April although born on 17th March 1856) her name is given as Marian, but on her death certificate she is called ‘Marian, otherwise Florence Marian Hepworth, otherwise Marion Hepworth’. Some have suggested she preferred to sign herself ‘Marion’ as the masculine spelling of her name to hide her gender for publishing reasons. A more straightforward explanation might be that she was simply distinguishing herself from her mother who was also called Marian, but usually spelt Mary Ann or Mary Anne.

Like her more famous sister, Marian Hepworth Dixon began life as an artist and studied in Paris at the famous Académie Julian at the same time as Marie Bashkiertseff. In fact, the first evidence of her signature that I have so far found is an article entitled ‘Marie Bashkirtseff: A Personal Reminiscence’ published in the *Fortnightly Review* in February, 1890. Both sisters contributed to exhibitions in London, but owing to the sudden death of their father in 1879 which left the family in dire financial straits, their artistic careers had to be abandoned, and, again like Ella, Marian took to writing to earn her living. Both sisters are mentioned in the *Lady’s Pictorial* series on Lady Journalists which appeared from November 1893 to February 1894, but the fact that the older sister is mentioned second and with a smaller, less well-placed photograph would imply that she remained, without doubt, less well-known than her sibling. From correspondence with Chatto and Windus, it would appear that she acted as an agent for a short time for Ella. In her memoirs, when discussing the success of *The Story of a Modern Woman*, which, incidentally, she had dedicated ‘To My Sister Marian’, Ella Hepworth Dixon mentions being invited out a great deal with her sister, perhaps as chaperons for each other. Marian also wrote several short stories, including two for *The Yellow Book* (in Volume IV ‘A Thief in the Night’, described as ‘gruesome in the extreme’ by the critic in the *Lady’s Pictorial*, and ‘The Runaway’ in Volume XIII), and contributed book reviews to her sister’s magazine *The Englishwoman*. The majority of her output, however, dealt with Art and Artists, as her regular articles in, for example, the *Magazine of Art* and *The Studio* would testify. The *Lady’s Pictorial* describes her as ‘one of our most successful and sympathetic art critics.’
Brief Chronology of Marion Hepworth Dixon’s Literary Career

1890s
‘The Runaway’, *The Yellow Book* Volume XIII (April, 1897), pp. 110-120.

1900s
‘Miss Lucy Kemp-Welch’, *Lady’s Realm* (March, 1903), pp. 575-582.
‘Herbert Schmalz and his work’, *Lady’s Realm* (February, 1904), pp. 431-438.
‘The Landscape Paintings of Mr H. Hughes Stanton’, *Studio*, 42 (January 15, 1908), pp. 269-278 and *International Studio*, 34 (February, 1908), pp. 269-278.
‘Visiting Cards a Hundred Years Ago’ *Connoisseur*, 23 (January-April, 1909), pp. 192-200.
1910s

(From 1897 *Studio* was republished as *International Studio* in New York with volume one corresponding to volume ten of the original.)