

March 9th / or better
1853

Wm J. Rock

My dear Aunt

We have a rare
big noisy little fellow
of a boy and Roschi
is doing well

My dear nephew

Just look

Come & see us in ten
days time when it
will be safe for Rose
& Chat

HOOK (JAMES CLARKE), **R.A.**

B. 1819. D. 1907.

James Clarke Hook was born on November 21, 1819, at 27, Northampton Square, Clerkenwell. His family, said to be of mixed Norman and Finnish extraction, originally settled near Wooler, in Northumberland. His father, Judge-Arbitrator Hook, was a merchant in the West African trade. Obligated to live at times in Sierra Leone, he sent his son to a proprietary school in Islington. At fourteen young Hook left with a prize for drawing, and was taken for advice to Constable and afterwards to John Jackson. He drew in the British Museum, was admitted to the Academy Schools, and worked there for three years. He won medals from the Society of Arts, and his first picture, "The Hard Task" (R.A. 1839), gained him commissions for portraits in Dublin. He contributed unsuccessfully to the Westminster Hall competition, but won the gold medal and travelling studentship at the Academy, and went to Italy for three years, with the wife he had married on getting the news of his success. From Florence he sent "Bassanio commenting on the Caskets," to the Academy of 1847, and "Otho IV. at Florence" in the following year. He went on to Venice, but was forced to come home by the Revolution of 1848. He settled at Brompton, won his associateship (1850), by other Italian pictures, and built a house on Campden Hill (Tor Villa, afterwards Mr. Holman Hunt's and Mr. Alfred Hunt's); then went to Abinger in Surrey, and began his real work by the harvest-field picture called "A Few Minutes to Wait before Twelve o'clock" (1853). In 1854 Clovelly was discovered, and from that time begins the series of pictures on the western coasts with which Mr. Hook's name is associated. "Luff, Boy!" in 1859, was the picture that made him famous. In 1860 he was elected R.A. Shortly afterwards he settled at Churt, near Farnham, and built himself the house called Silverbeck. This remained his home to the end, and it was here he died on April 16th, 1907; but painting excursions carried him to Cornwall, the Scilly Isles, to Holland and Norway. His appearance in late years, that of a weather-beaten salt, is well rendered by Millais, portrait. His portrait by himself, painted by invitation for the Uffizi collection, was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1891.