

Erik Lassen: Thorvaldsen and Hans Christian Andersen

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Unlike many other Danish artists and poets, Thorvaldsen and Hans Christian Andersen both came from the lower classes of society. A common origin and fate united the elderly sculptor and the young poet in a relationship of mutual friendship and trust. However unlike they were in physique, character, and temperament, they had, despite their straitened circumstances, scaled the same steep cliffs on their path to a fame unparalleled in the history of Danish art and literature.

Thorvaldsen's views on life have never been recorded. It was only with reluctance that he put pen to paper. Andersen, on the other hand, was in no doubt. On the centenary of Thorvaldsen's birth he wrote in his diary: "I dare not conceal on these pages, which will never be printed, but are born of my daily thoughts, that my life has had so much in common with Thorvaldsen's – our birth in poverty, our struggle, and our worldwide recognition."

Andersen could scarcely have had any influence on Thorvaldsen's person and œuvre, but the great sculptor's gentleness, wisdom, and cheering words warmed the poet's tormented soul. He who was so vulnerable to criticism received every morsel of applause with gratitude.

On the other hand, Hans Christian Andersen helped considerably to throw greater light on Thorvaldsen's life history. In his monu-

mental biography, J. M. Thiele was greatly indebted to Andersen's good memory, and gradually – as the latter's diaries and letters have been published – subsequent generations have gained knowledge of Thorvaldsen's nature and character traits, including many lovable feature which supplement Baroness Stampe's incomparable recollection, the reminiscences of the sculptor's valet C. F. Wilckens, and the Danish actress Johanne Luise Heiberg's shrewd observations in her famous memoirs.

RESUMÉS