

FOUR PAINTERS.

A Brilliant Exhibition of American Art.

At the new Montross Gallery, further up Fifth avenue, and much more spacious than the old one, there is an exhibition of pictures lent by Mr. Freer from the collection which he has given to the National Gallery at Washington, with three lent by Colonel Hecker. They represent four American artists, T. W. Dewing, Abbott H. Thayer, D. W. Tryon and J. A. McNeill Whistler, and this is to say that they illustrate four of the most distinguished personalities in the history of our school. The group is united, too, by an element which ought to be constantly in evidence among painters, but which, as a matter of fact, they often strangely neglect—the element of sheer beauty. Years ago, when the evangel of "art for art's sake" was first being preached in this country, many a young man of talent was betrayed by ardent but ignorant devotion to a catch phrase. A newly developed horror of "anecdotic" painting threw the well meaning tyro back upon the conviction that mere subject was necessarily a snare, and, since technique was all that counted, it would be fatal to give any play at all to thought and emotion. He forgot that these things, which may find their point of departure in a given subject, have their essential source in the springs of character and play an indispensable part in the expression of an artist's genius. His way of handling paint is not a question of manual dexterity alone, it is a question also of his way of thinking and feeling. In the brushwork of a true artist you may read the very grain of his nature, his whole point of view. Some such reflections as these are bound to be provoked by the present exhibition, for if it stands for the extraordinarily skilful manipulation of paint, it also stands for qualities of taste, of feeling, which run like impalpable currents of force through insensate pigment, causing it to vibrate with life and beauty. Above all, with beauty.

Perhaps the most suggestive type in the group is Mr. Thayer, because there would seem to be, on the surface, a clash of motives in his work. A man of imaginative temperament, he makes you feel in his "Head," for example, the portrait of a grave young woman, that he was preoccupied with an impression of character when he painted the work. His sitter, you say, must have been more interesting to him than the casual model could be. Was it not possible, you ask, that he painted the portrait with some more or less poetic idea floating about in the back of his mind? You note, too, that there are parts of the canvas over which he passed with a momentary lapse of the painter's respect for the medium in which he works. In short, this is the kind of painting into which more than one observer would be quick to import a literary conception. Yet, when you come to dwell upon it, you cannot but conclude that that idea to which we have alluded as floating about in the back of Mr. Thayer's mind was nothing more nor less than an idea of loveliness, the loveliness that lies in form and color and that sets a man's whole being astir. Thoughtfulness is stamped upon the portrait, but not the thoughtfulness of the old anecdotic purpose. It is simply that behind the brush you perceive the energizing influence of brains and character, a rich individuality, a creative artist as distinguished from one who mechanically reproduces natural appearances. Look, too, at Mr. Thayer's "Portrait of a Lady," and examine into the sensuous charm of the sitter's white drapery and the blue background against which it is set. It is curious to see how just these painted surfaces are somehow personalized and enriched, made eloquent of a beauty peculiar to this painter and no other. So, finally, in the single landscape of his which is shown, the superb "Monadnock in Winter," you respond to the intimate appeal of nature in the approach to the mountain through the trees in the foreground, you recognize the truth in the artist's representation of the great heights beyond, but you come back to the magic that he works in his color, filling it with his own rare distinction.

In Mr. Dewing's work the secrets of character have even more delicately to be pursued, for they are the more subtly fused. More than any other painter of our time he seeks to create beauty not precisely in a dry light, but with a kind of passion for its last and most elusive essence, for the fragrance of the flower rather than for the actual substance of leaf and petal. His figures are not wraiths; far from it. He studies form with a loving solicitude for its truths, and with what power he can grasp them you may see from the portrait of his daughter, especially remarking the modelling of the head and shoulders in that work. The drawing about the face is as sure as it is exquisite. But, to apprehend the extent to which Mr. Dewing refines upon the realism that is at the bottom of his art, recall the brilliant Franco-Belgian painter who, with the tradition of the Low Countries tincturing the blood in his veins, revived something of that enchantment of mere painted surface which has its most renowned exemplar in Ver Meer. Alfred Stevens achieved incredible things in the subduing of pigment to a purpose of pure charm. There are pictures of his which have the soft glamour of flawless old lacquer. But with his mundane temperament, mixing the traits of Brussels and of Paris, he gave his figures a measure of weightiness, a notably solid and realistic character. He is, in a sense, of the lineage of Rubens. Here is where Mr. Dewing parts company with

the great painter with whom he has been so often mentioned. He is to Stevens what Watteau was to Rubens, turning things glowing and substantial into things incomparably light, tender, and bewitching.

Is it, then, painted poetry that he gives us when he paints his decorative panel called "The Garland," with its three dainty apparitions looking like classical caryatids, stepped down from their pedestals and flushed with life in some stately dance in a green place? Had he any romantic dreams when he portrayed his "Lady at Harpsichord," sitting idly before the keys and musing, perhaps, on the quaint scenery in the tapestry covering her chamber wall? It is fairly to be assumed that such thoughts scarcely visited the artist at all. What you do not assume but take as clearly demonstrated by these pictures and their companions, "Lute Player," "Yellow Tulips," and "Portrait in Brown Dress," is that he is governed by just

shown, Mr. Tryon is plainly in the same category with Mr. Dewing and Mr. Thayer. He, too, consciously or unconsciously, has his lure beyond the things that you can touch and handle. His vision is of the woods and fields, but it embraces, if not "the light that never was on sea or land," at any rate the diaphanous and subtly touching charm which nature hides from all save the really inspired painter. He has, to be sure, his pedestrian moments, or rather, moments in which he impresses you without giving you much enjoyment. Witness, for example, "The Sea," a handsome but somehow not very delightful canvas. On the other hand, turn to his "Twilight, Early Spring," in its softly singing key, or his luminous "Autumn, Twilight," a piece as resonant as a good Dupré, and infinitely finer in tone, and you find him a positive lyrist, extorting from his themes the very last drop of a spirituelle perfume. It is important to note that he, too, embodying

dition, and the painting has for some time been accepted as a "Cleopatra" produced by Piero di Cosimo. In any case it remains one of the most entrancing souvenirs we have of the Italian Renaissance, and it is a matter for congratulation that Mr. Edwards should have given us this charming version of it.

R. C.

THE WHISTLER MEMORIAL IN PARIS.

An Appeal from Mr. Joseph Pennell for More Funds.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: In your issue for January 2, 1910, you state that "The Pall Mall Gazette" "disclosed the fact" that only about \$1,000 has been collected for the replica of the Whistler memorial we wish to erect in Paris. There is no disclosure about the matter, because there is no secret concerning it. The facts are as follows: The amount of fees asked for by M. Rodin to carry out the memorial for London has been obtained and is deposited in the hands of trustees here. The amount for the replica at Lowell is also raised and deposited similarly in a Lowell bank. We wish still to raise the money for the Paris replica. I did what I could a year ago in New York, and was practically assisted by the papers and the public, but for the last year I have scarcely received one cent from home, though a steady but small stream comes in over here for the Paris memorial.

We still want about \$4,000. We have all rest. Can you not help us by means of your influential paper to secure the sum—or, rather, will you not? I may say the bulk of the subscriptions have been received from Americans over here and in Paris. Cannot some of the very successful American artists and authors so much heard of, who (the artists, at any rate) owe everything to Whistler and to Paris, contribute something? Few have done anything. But if this is impossible, I am, as secretary, too willing to receive subscriptions for the Paris memorial from any one who admires Whistler and his work or cares for Paris.

JOSEPH PENNELL.

Secretary Whistler Memorial Committee,
No. 5 Adelphi Terrace House, Robert Street,
Strand, London, Jan. 21, 1910.



A PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN.
(From the painting by Piero di Cosimo.)

such an emotion as produces the poem or the romance, a zest for what is fine and inspiring, a kindling joy in grace, color, charm, the indefinable thrill that we get from nature or great music or any noble thing. It is impossible to say just where an artist passes from the contemplation of a tangible object into a sort of communion with all that it means. You cannot mark the point at which he raises his medium to a higher power, borrowing some beauty from the thing seen, but adding an ingredient out of his instinctive sense of things. But you can get a little light on the subject by looking, say, at the flesh painting in the "Portrait in Brown Dress," or that in the "Lady at Harpsichord." It suggests something of that muffled opalescence which the old Venetians developed, in contrast to the colder practice of the Florentines; it has a certain dusky glow. Does it exactly correspond to the facts of nature? Hardly. But to ask it to do so would be to ask the sacrifice of an original quality to something of lesser value. Mr. Dewing does not forget nature, and when he chooses, as in the flesh painting of his "Lute Player," he can adjust his tone to a strictly realistic key with perfect ease, but he is at his best when he overlays it with the singular bloom we have described. The main point for him is just to put upon his panel or canvas a beguiling figure, and then, with a thousand intensely individualized touches, to make it an image by itself, an image from some remote ivory tower, issuing forth to lay an impalpable spell upon the beholder.

The landscapes of Mr. Tryon are distinguished from these figure pieces by their more obvious reliance upon observed phenomena, and in some of them, such as the "Autumn Morning," or the "Autumn Afternoon," there is a free robust handling of tree and ground forms which suggest the painter of distinctly naturalistic mood. But even in these forthright canvases, and far more in the six or seven other pictures

the truth in his work, nevertheless makes it of worth through the masterly expression of that which we have sought to bring out in all of the foregoing remarks, an individualized ideal of beauty, a purely personal note. The three Whistlers, which include the Japanese "Variations in Pink and Grey, Chelsea," and a couple of small landscape studies in a simpler, more spontaneous vein, fall naturally into harmony with the works of his three companions in this exhibition, but characteristic as they are, and possessed of much artistic interest, they are not of very great moment. They give faithfully and vividly the savor of his art, but afford, after all, only a brief glimpse of him. The show, as a whole, is of high significance. It brings home the immovable truth that in painting, as in all the arts, the one invaluable gift is the gift for beauty.

We have received from Mr. S. Arlent Edwards an impression of the beautiful color print which is reproduced on this page. It is a long time since we first welcomed the work of this accomplished craftsman, and that work has steadily gained alike in firmness and suavity. The present plate is admirable in all its linear details and its tone is delightfully pure and brilliant. The portrait which it reproduces has had, by the way, a curious history. One of the salient treasures of the gallery at Chantilly, it has attracted the attention of countless connoisseurs and writers and its origin has been widely discussed. For years it was believed to be a portrait by Pollaiuolo of "La Bella Simonetta," beloved of Giuliano de Medici and the heroine of more than one romantic legend. As a matter of fact, as Mr. Horne has demonstrated, no portrait of Simonetta is known to exist. The old hypothesis that Botticelli delineated her in one of the most famous of his compositions has had to be abandoned. The portrait at Chantilly bears her name, but that inscription has been discredited as a later ad-

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