

MATTERS OF ART.

Winslow Homer—Seymour Haden
—Current Shows.

The season of exhibitions has been opened. As appears below, there is already plenty to see in local galleries. But of outstanding interest is an announcement concerning an exhibition which is still in the early preparatory stage. This is the one in memory of the late Winslow Homer, which is to be held this winter at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Many important incidents are to be expected within the next few months. It is fairly to be supposed, for example, that Mr. Frick will in due course allow the public to view his recently purchased Rembrandt, "The Polish Rider." But not even this renowned masterpiece could surpass in interest a representative show of the works of an American who was himself a master. Homer's death terminated a career which in some, if not all, of its relations spelled something like genius.

It has been customary, especially of late, to applaud him primarily as a painter of the sea, and this has been in a measure justified by the succession of pictures commemorating his long absorption in the stormy scenes of the Maine coast. But if we owe Winslow Homer a heavy

terious force of the angry waves. You delight in those deep transparent seas of his, in the rocks against which they dash themselves, and in the superb skies above them, and you are fascinated by the stern individuality with which all these things are fused together, but you are always coming back to a curiously intimate and even homely quality in them, to a kind of blunt simplicity, to the indefinable note of American truth and power that you associate, in nature, with some phases of our landscape, and in man with a character like Lincoln's. Homer could be positively playful sometimes, as in the flashing tints of his Bermuda water colors, but he did not know how to be small. The grand style was his, used without a trace of Olympian attitudinizing.

The deaths of two English artists of eminence in 1910 make when recorded together a curious contrast. Holman Hunt was a man of prodigious industry and his very devotion to his work cost him dear. By dint of unremitting labor upon a composition he would gradually squeeze it dry of such value as it originally possessed. A pathetic instance is supplied in the history of his noblest design, "The Lady of Shalott." The drawing, made a full generation ago for Tennyson's poem, is a linear masterpiece. Even in the little woodcut it makes a deep impression. But recalling it we recall also the large painted



THE GULF STREAM.

(From the painting by Winslow Homer.)

debt of gratitude for the truth and beauty with which he put before us

The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores.

We owe him even more for the sheer raciness of his art, for the splendid contribution that he made to the development of an American school of painting. What is the essential native trait of that school when the latter is seen at its best? To describe it as naïvete would be to overstate the point, for we have had too long an experience to paint in a merely ingenuous fashion and yet the epithet gives a valuable clue to the quality which is our greatest source of strength. Though European example and instruction have been precious to the American painter he has won his richest triumphs in proportion as he has beaten out for himself a style both original and expressive of the general habit and atmosphere of his native land. Some years ago, in a conversation with the late Ary Renan, then editor of the "Gazette des Beaux Arts," the present writer endeavored to point out to him the merits of certain distinguished Americans, such as La Farge, Inness, Dewing and Homer. The French critic was interested in their work, but confessed that he could not see it eye to eye with his interlocutor and it presently developed that the only American artists who really appealed to him were those who had long been practising their profession in Paris. He could not feel much sympathy for painters who had not assimilated the conventions of the Salon. His undervaluation of them for this reason seemed, as a matter of fact, an unintentional compliment. It pointed to the genuineness of the painters in question, to their profound sincerity in respect not only to method but to style.

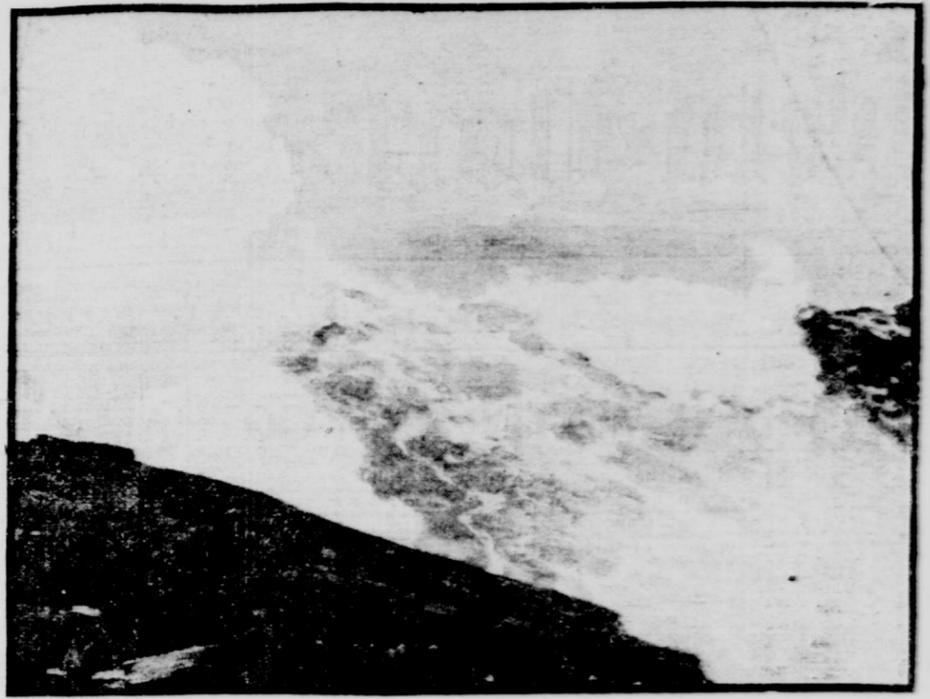
Winslow Homer had extraordinary command over the elements of design and his pictures were built up with a manipulation of line and form, color and light and shade which the most classically minded of Academicians might have envied, so perfectly balanced was his pattern and so sure was his touch. But he was never more interested in design than he was in life and you can trace the fine unity of almost any composition of his to an emotional as well as an artistic vitality. He was absorbed in nature, and a little more than incidentally, in the passion of human nature. It was the drama of the sea that interested him and with it the life of the men and women who braved or watched its perils. The tragic motive of "The Gulf Stream," as of several other of his sea studies, shows his instinct for the "human interest," so called, at its highest point of tension, but even though he did no more than to place the immobile figure of a sailor's watching wife upon one of his surf-beaten beaches he would continue to make the whole scene poignant with more than the mys-

terious force of the angry waves. You delight in those deep transparent seas of his, in the rocks against which they dash themselves, and in the superb skies above them, and you are fascinated by the stern individuality with which all these things are fused together, but you are always coming back to a curiously intimate and even homely quality in them, to a kind of blunt simplicity, to the indefinable note of American truth and power that you associate, in nature, with some phases of our landscape, and in man with a character like Lincoln's. Homer could be positively playful sometimes, as in the flashing tints of his Bermuda water colors, but he did not know how to be small. The grand style was his, used without a trace of Olympian attitudinizing.



THE ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN.

(From the painting by Benvenuto di Giovanni)



NORTHEASTER.

(From the painting by Winslow Homer.)

what was left of the artist's idea, his wonderful arabesque. Decidedly, it was Hunt's misfortune that he did not know when to leave well enough alone.

The late Seymour Haden was a wiser man. He knew what to leave out and when to stop. There is an exhibition now open at the Kennedy Gallery of his etchings, dry points and mezzotints, an exhibition containing many important plates in interesting states and fine impressions, and taken as a whole it forms a beautiful memorial to an artist whose hand and mind worked in perfect unison. The trouble with Hunt was that all his life long he was obsessed by the theories with which he and his comrades started the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Misled by those theories, he neglected the true significance of the art of painting. Haden had nothing to do with the theoretical aspects of the art of etching. It was enough for him to take the needle into his hand, whereupon he instinctively drew with the technical rightness of a Rembrandt or a Whistler. His inborn gift for technique, too, he employed in a treatment of landscape subjects amazingly sensitive and thoughtful. The student of etching, lingering among these plates, dwells upon the brilliant line in them, the almost uncannily skilful modelling of ground and cloud forms, but one might be completely ignorant of technical processes and yet lastingly rejoice in the sylvan

loveliness of Haden's pictures. They are pictures in the finest sense of the term, not fragmentary impressions, but bits of nature wisely selected and handled with a consummate feeling for just the right point of view, just the one vein of sentiment that will never lose its charm. Not the Barbizon school itself has ever produced, with all its resources of color, more exquisite landscapes than the "Dundrum River" or "A Sunset in Ireland," and Rousseau alone, in all that mighty group, could equal Haden in the delineation of a tree, bringing out alike its anatomy and its subtle, imponderable beauty.

To return for a moment to the Metropolitan Museum, it will be observed that we reproduce to-day, in addition to two of the Homers belonging to that institution, a notable example of Siennese art, lately presented by Mr. J. P. Morgan. This admirably illustrates the manner in which the museum is being enriched. Every month the Bulletin records some such memorable acquisition. With this very important example of Benvenuto di Giovanni there is also to be recorded among the current accessions an interesting altar piece by Taddeo Gaddi, and valuable additions have been made in the classical and textile departments, and in those of furniture and ceramics. Of these and other museum matters, including the new loan exhibition of early Oriental rugs, more may be said in detail upon another occasion.

At the Fine Arts Building the New York Water Color Club is holding its twenty-first annual exhibition, and at the same place there may be seen some paintings by A. L. Kroll, who was awarded the Mooney Travelling Scholarship at the National Academy of Design in 1908. Recent paintings by Charles W. Hawthorne are on exhibition at the Macbeth Gallery, pictures by Jules Guerin, principally of Egypt and the Holy Land, are shown at the Montross Gallery, and at the Folsom Gallery there is a collection of portraits and paintings by Piero Tozzi. The Madison Art Gallery has been opened for the season, and begins by showing a number of pictures by George Bellows, Karl Anderson, Ernest Lawson and several other Americans. At the Haas Gallery there are paintings by A. G. Schulman, and at the Katz Gallery there is a group of works by Bolton Coit Brown, accompanied by paintings from several other hands. A collection of an unusual character is presented at the Cottier Gallery. It consists of original drawings by the painters of 1830, generously illustrating Millet, Rousseau, Delacroix, Corot and all the rest. English mezzotints and stipples of the eighteenth century fill the Keppel Gallery.

The first of the sales at the American Art Gallery is announced to take place on November 16 and following afternoons. It will dispose of the art and literary collections left by the late Mr. and Mrs. J. V. L. Pruyn, of Albany. Porcelains, silver, watches, ivories, paintings, prints, letters, books, and many historical relics and curios are contained in this mass of material. The exhibition opens next Thursday.

At the end of this week there will be opened with a reception at the Pennsylvania Academy the annual exhibition held by the water colorists and miniature painters of Philadelphia. From Washington comes the news that the third exhibition of contemporary American oil paintings, organized by the Corcoran Gallery of Art, will be opened there on December 13. It will last until January 22. As usual, four prizes will be awarded.

R. C.

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