

American Artists at the Metropolitan Museum

An Exhibition in Memory of the Late Albert P. Ryder—
Contemporary Sculpture From Representative
Hands—The Fletcher Collection

By Royal Cortissoz

THE primacy in matters of art which the Metropolitan Museum has developed in recent years has never been better illustrated than at the present moment. Four new exhibitions there await the visitor, and all four are of serious interest. In memory of the late Albert P. Ryder a loan collection of his paintings has been assembled in one of the galleries, a collection of forty-eight pieces which must represent very nearly his entire life's work. In two spacious rooms on the main floor, near the Park entrance, a special exhibition of American sculpture has been organized. Upstairs, in the gallery which was occupied by the Eakins pictures a little while ago, the Mr. and Mrs. Isaac D. Fletcher collection of paintings and miscellaneous objects has been installed. Near by, where the new print department makes its exhibitions, there is a brilliant group of the etchings and drawings of Rembrandt, arranged in view of the lecture on the subject which Mr. Kenyon Cox is to deliver at the Museum on March 24. Two paintings, the portraits given long ago by Mr. Marquand, are also displayed here.

Taken all together these episodes point in a decisive manner to the liberality of Mr. Robinson's administration. If people are increasingly willing to give or lend their treasures to the Metropolitan (of its 2,675 objects acquired in the last year only 3,628 were purchased) it is undoubtedly because the policy now controlling looks all the time, in a broad and effective way, to the best interests of the community.

THE VISIONS OF A MAN OF GENIUS

In the catalogue of the Ryder pictures a number of his verses are printed, and we can sniff the offence they would give to a certain type of artist. Clearly, such a commentator would tell us, they indicate that he had in his temperament the taint of the literary man. There would be, too, the further justification for this view of

ing rather than retarding the flow of his inspiration.

He had inspiration—that is the all-important point. Where many painters infinitely better equipped, technically, have nothing whatever to say, and consequently bore us to death, Ryder was so rich in imaginative thought and feeling that we almost forget his technical limitations. He had personality, the mysterious magic which in some indefinable way communicates to the beholder a sensation of beauty. Perhaps the most eloquent proof of this lies in the least obviously imaginative of all the works here shown, the landscape called "Weir's Orchard." It is a simple pastoral motive, the sort of thing almost any landscape man might have chosen to treat, and, subjected to the test of technique, the first impression it yields is that almost any landscape man might have made a better job of it. But what of the atmosphere enveloping it and the personal note it strikes? When Lowell heard Emerson lecture in the time of his declension, when vagueness had descended upon him like a garment, he could not make head nor tail of the discourse; but he left the place feeling that "something beautiful had passed that way." That is the conviction with which you turn from this landscape. It is a sadly fumbled affair, but Ryder has passed that way and you are inordinately glad of it. We have alluded to his skies. Look, for example, at the marine, "Under a Cloud," in which a dark sailboat scuds over a dark sea, beneath a darker cloud. As a study of natural phenomena the picture is hopelessly inadequate, but as a bit of poetic symbolism it is so thrilling and so beautiful that one would not exchange it for a dozen of the finest marines Dupré ever painted.

How potent is the sway of the artist who dreams exquisite dreams and paints them with sublime sincerity! Ryder's handicaps were of a nature to have discouraged most men beyond all patience. Even in the field of color, where he was the more favorably endowed, he was confined to a rather narrow scale, and he had a tendency to muddy the deep blue-green, the tawny reds and the golden yellows with which he dealt. At times he seems to have practically lost control of color, as witness the "Macbeth and the Witches," in which figures and landscapes are withdrawn into an almost impenetrable penumbra. Yet from amongst the thousands of Shakespearean illustrations we have seen we can recall not one that is even to be compared with this. Indeed, its only rival as a footnote to the play is that amazing essay of De Quincey's, "On the Knocking at the Gate, in 'Macbeth,'" with its kindred spiritual insight into

A PEASANT



From the painting by Bastien-Lepage

the matter that he had a passion for literary subjects, and to clinch the business there is the damning fact that he had, in our smart modern sense, no technique at all. What student, fresh from Paris or even from the league, could not have shown him how to draw? Are not the trees in his landscapes the wildest things imaginable? He knew nothing about Impressionism. For the luminosity of nature itself, which Monet and his followers have taught us to value so highly, he chose to substitute the light of the poet, the light that never was on sea or land. His apocalyptic skies are flatly incredible as skies in the ordinary understanding of the word, skies filled with an authentic blue and relieved by accurately modelled cloud forms. Yet Ryder remains an enchanting artist, the very fables at which we have glanced playing into his hands, assist-

THE FOREST OF ARDEN



From the painting by A. P. Ryder

the core of the drama. We can imagine Ryder's response to the poignant simplicity of the famous stage directions—"Scene, a blasted heath. Enter three witches." He is as free himself from surplussage. We behold his vision as in a flash between thunder claps; it goes as swiftly as it comes, and, thanks to the dense obscurity to which we have referred, we feel for a moment as we sometimes feel in life, as if we have imagined the thing which we had seen. Drama like this, on canvas, is surely extraordinary achievement.

There is one supreme merit in Ryder which inclines us to rank him far above any of the men with whom he might be said to have a certain alliance—such men as Burne-Jones, Rossetti, Blake, Moreau, Böcklin and Klinger. This is his prodigious variety. Take the works of any of the artists we have mentioned and you will find running through them all the "family likeness," due to persistent cultivation of a definite line of thought. Ryder's imagination has no fixed haven. He would paint a horse in his stable and then "The Temple of the Mind." In his masterpiece, the "Jonah," he seems in the mood of Michael Angelo, but presently, in "Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens," he exchanges the grand style for the truly operatic. He is lyrical, if ever a painter was, in his two versions of "Pegasus," in his "Dancing Dryads," in "The Lovers," and when he paints the "Resurrection," it is as if he had taken Milton, "chief of organic numbers," as a guide to the sweetest solemnity of his strain. We might cite indefinitely the mutations of his genius, the transition from the homely charm of such a rustic theme as is disclosed in "Mending the Harness," to the romanticism of his "Forest of Arden," from the pathos of his religious subjects to the mere sensuous beauty of his sea pieces. But we prefer to go back to the central source of all these different keys—his wide-reaching imagination, the passion in him, always leading on to some new adventure, which we can only define as the passion for beauty. We think for a moment of Monticelli, and that gift of his for color which carried him sometimes to the very borders of fairyland. Ryder crossed the borders. He got at the very heart of things fairylike, remote, poetic. Color helped him, but the genius of the poet helped him most of all.

In the support which the Museum has given to American art our sculptors have not by any means been neglected. They have been represented to a certain extent in the permanent collections, especially in the matter of small bronzes. But not hitherto, save in the case of the Saint-Gaudens exhibition, has their craft received quite the recognition which has now been paid

WOMAN GUARDING TURKEYS



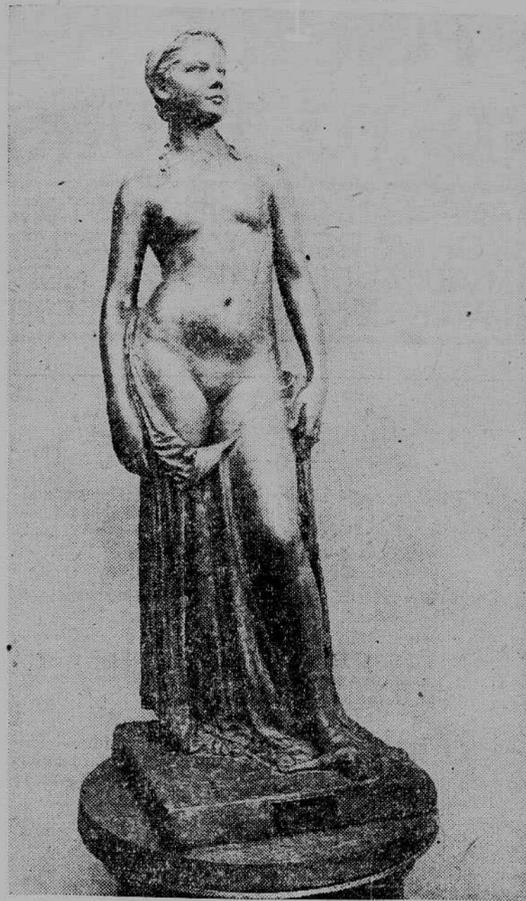
From the painting by Millet

to it. The new tribute is due, we understand, very largely to the ardor of Mr. Daniel Chester French, who in this exhibition realizes, in fact, a dream entertained for years. It is easy to understand the enthusiasm with which he conceived the idea and worked for it. Roughly speaking, the painters may be said to have everything their own way in New York. Sculpture is brought into the league and the academy, it appears occasionally in the "one man" show, as in the case of Mr. O'Connor's brilliant exhibition this season, and the dealers do their part; but we have had to wait for precisely the demonstration that Mr. French has promoted at the museum. Made chairman of the committee formed among the trustees, he has also had the advantage of Mr. Herbert Adams's association with that body, and of the special appointment of Mr. James E. Fraser and Mr. A. A. Weinman as members in an advisory capacity. In other words, the purpose of the museum has been to have the interests of American sculpture affirmed as it were, from within, leaving it to experienced practitioners of the art to assemble a body of some fourscore examples, to place them in the appointed rooms, to determine the treatment of the surrounding walls, and in every way to see that the occasion developed the right conditions. Mr. French and his colleagues are to be congratulated on the result.

Their exhibition might be characterized as a condensation of historical evidence, a tangible summary of the traits of a school. They have not attempted too much. The record does not throw back too far. In fact, the only figure from the old régime is Dr. Brimmer, whose "Falling Gladiator" is welcome as marking the point of departure from which our renaissance sprang. The late J. Q. A. Ward's "Good Samaritan" has been shrewdly selected as an illustration of the transitional period. He well represents the stage at which we were beginning to emerge from Rimmer's academic method into a larger freedom, a racier naturalism. Mr. French himself, in "The Angel of Death and the Sculptor"

We have already defined that merit. It is vital workmanship, the basing of ideas upon an instructed and skillful handling of form. Often at the Academy or in some of the smaller exhibitions of sculpture we have been

THE GOLDEN HOUR



From the sculpture by Rudolph Evans

(one of his earlier works, which remains one of his best), brings the chronology a little further forward, as does Saint-Gaudens, with the "Adams Monument" and the "Amor Caritas," and there are others present who, though still in their prime, have something of the relation of pioneers to the school of to-day. Their productions are necessary to the picture and intrinsically good to see. But it is above all things "the school of to-day" that fills the foreground, the school

constrained to visualize the American school as one devoted entirely to a facile sort of modelling, an easy prettiness, half deft technique and half Rodinesque fancy. The present collection tells a different story, emphasizing more serious characteristics. There are a surprising number of nudes which are more than gracious and pleasing, nudes like Mr. Adams's "Nymph," for example, which joins to its idealistic sentiment a remarkable linear distinction. Look at Mr. Beach's "Sacred Fire," at Mr. Barnard's "Woman," at Mrs. Burroughs's "On the Threshold," at Miss Scudder's "Young Diana," the delightful thing about them all is their vivid quality, rooted in fidelity to life and in thoroughness.

We underline the last word because in the mass of sculpture nowadays there is so little knowledge, so little grasp upon structure. Cleverness is everywhere, surfaces are adroitly touched. But too many contemporary figures have no bowels—they are hollow, empty shells. The best service rendered by this exhibition is the emphasis it places upon work not improvised, but modelled with as much care as sensitivity, as much strength as facility. There are some glorious pieces done by men long since gone from us, the late Olin Warner's bust of Alden Weir, the last John Donoghue's "Young Sapphoes," both, we like to believe, well remembered by every one interested at all in American art. And to match them there are things by living men, Mr. Gray's busts of Paul Bartlett and Frank Duveneck, Mr. O'Connor's virile "Soldier" for Worcester, the nude by Mr. Evans cited above, and Mr. Weinman's "Descending Night," which is almost, if not quite, as beguiling seen close at hand in the bronze as it was when it soared into the air at the San Francisco exhibition. The object of the show is to make plain the solid achievements in American sculpture, the firm establishment of high standards of technique, the effective play of imagination in the embodiment of fine ideals. It is successful in this. The school has never before been so creditably illustrated, so cleverly revealed as one in which men of ability are thinking grave thoughts and expressing them with sincere emotion. The bright flame of originality may visit few of them, the gesture in modelling which stamps the rare creative artist may be slow in making itself felt, but that our sculpture has in it the principle of growth these performances make exhilaratingly manifest.

We have but little space left in which to speak of the Fletcher collection. Its

SIEGFRIED AND THE RHINE MAIDENS



From the painting by A. P. Ryder

antiquities are of a high order, notably the Egyptian statuette of a priest of the Ptolemaic period and the Apulian vases. The ancient glass is also of great interest. The paintings form a curiously mixed yet attractive collection. They range from a few old masters, good if not remarkable examples of Rembrandt, Rubens, Reynolds, Gainsborough and Constable, through a brilliant specimen of David's academic portraiture and a fine group of Barbizon pictures to paintings by Raffaelli and Bastien-Lepage. Of the modern works the "Woman Guarding Turkeys," by Millet, is the most important, a thoroughly characteristic painting. Gothic and eighteenth century French sculpture is represented, there are tapestries, pieces of old stained glass and other works of decorative art. After a year or so this collection is to be distributed through the Museum according to departments. In the mean time it is very handsomely displayed, the temporary concentration bringing out the full value of an important bequest.

Notes

The late Carroll Beckwith's finished pictures and studies are to be sold at auction. They will be placed on view at the American Art Galleries on March 15, the sale following on the evenings of March 20 and 21.

The annual exhibition at the Macbeth gallery of thirty paintings by thirty artists has just been opened. It will last until March 27. The Montross gallery has an exhibition of pictures by Anderson, Bellows, Du Bois, Glackens, Pach, Perrine, Tucker and others. It continues until the end of the month.

Recent paintings by John Sloan may be seen at the Kraushaar gallery. Monotypes by Gustave Verbeck are at the City Club.

The American Federation of Arts announces that it will hold its ninth annual convention in Detroit. It will last through two days, May 23 and 24.

How the Kaiser's Poisoned News Weakened Russia

(Issued by the Committee on Public Information)

ONE OF THE most potent means by which the morals of the Russian army and people have been undermined has been by systematic work in propaganda among Russian prisoners. Like most other German activities, this has been highly organized, and it shows a greater psychological insight than many of the German methods. This work falls under several heads; it is quite as unscrupulous and unrelenting as the measures by which the Germans crushed the physical powers of their prisoners.

There is a little illustrated newspaper in the Russian language, printed by the Germans, "Russki Vestnik," which is industriously circulated in all the prison camps and barracks and was circulated in the Russian army. The prisoners read it, since they have nothing else to read, and they fall under its spell. The selection and arrangement of illustrations and the tone of the accompanying news and short stories are calculated to produce feelings of gloom, hopelessness, homesickness and thoughts of dear ones at home. They picture the life of the lonely Russian people as it is affected by war; it lays emphasis on the poverty everywhere, the sick, hungry children, the sobbing mothers, the war cripples neglected by all and begging at the crossroads and in the streets. There is never a cheery line to be found in this German-made Russian literature given to the prisoners of war. Its tenor is always the same: German strength and prosperity; Russian weakness in the field and weakness at home.

There is also a system of "letters from prisoners" intended for Russian soldiers at the front, the purpose of which was to widen the gap between the soldiers and the Kerensky government, to estrange the Russians from the Allies, Russia being urged to free herself from all engagements, and to repudiate all financial obligations, and finally, to induce the Russian army to "shoot for peace." These letters aim to vilify the English and French, in the endeavor to kill all desire in the Russians to fight on their side, to call a halt to the Russian offensive in Galicia. "Since Russia does not need anything from the Central Powers," the letters evidently having been written at the time of that offensive and finally to draw the Russian and German people together.

"Russki Vestnik" and other literature like it accomplished what the German armies alone could not accomplish. They shattered the Russian front, and they, or other devices like them, helped weaken the Italians.

The articles and poetry in the "Russki Vestnik" are full of high sounding appeals to man's highest instincts—peace, brotherhood and the equality of nations. Kerensky is accused of militarism. The Russian people want "peace without victory." An issue of this newspaper which has reached government officials at Washington typically represents the work it does.

The address of "Russki Vestnik" is not to be found in the usual places, but at the bottom of the last page appears this: "Printing House of Otto Drevitz, Berlin, S. W. 61, Glitschinerstrasse," which makes the origin of the sheet reasonably clear.

The Cousin of Madame Moreau

By Frédéric Boutet

Translated by William L. McPherson
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Here is another Boutet story—in Boutet's best vein. This author has a singular capacity for grasping an incident or a situation and presenting it with remarkable succinctness and economy of details. His style also has the great charm of sobriety—of abstinence from mere surface effects.

It is a pleasure to know that the translations of Boutet in this series have met with genuine appreciation in this country. All four of the Boutet stories which appeared last year were placed high on the honor roll of best short stories published in 1917 in American magazines and periodicals, which Mr. Edward J. O'Brien, the literary editor of "The Boston Transcript," issued a few weeks ago. One of them was triple-starred and the other three were double-starred. American writers and critical readers of short stories will appreciate what that listing means.

SEVEN or eight ladies, important personages in the little city, were assembled in Mme. Delaporte's salon when Mme. Moreau entered, followed by her two daughters, fresh-looking young women of eighteen and twenty years. Mme. Moreau, who could remember the time, not very long ago, when she entered this salon with great humility, enjoyed the grateful sensation, not yet dulled, of being received with marked consideration and of seeing the imposing Mme. Delaporte herself, whose social distinction was unchallenged, manifest a certain eagerness to greet her. This lady, who was usually the reverse, now seemed full of animation.

"Well! well!" she exclaimed, "he is here. He arrived this morning. And you didn't tell us."
"Didn't tell you about what? Who has arrived?"
"Your cousin! Lieutenant Maximilian Moreau, the famous aviator. He is coming to be treated at the hot baths near here. As if you didn't know it, you sly fox! Have you seen him yet?"

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repeat, our family is perfectly respectable. No one need blush for us."

"Madame, I do not doubt what you say, I assure you of that," began the officer, somewhat nonplussed. "But why all these details?"

"They are indispensable, monsieur—indispensable. You will see why. Our name is Moreau—Monsieur and Madame Adolphe Moreau."

"Your name is the same as mine."
"Exactly," broke in the husband. "So you will understand?"

"My dear, please let me talk," said the wife.

"But I don't catch the point at all," interjected the officer, whose growing astonishment was now complicated with a sense of amusement, which he tried to conceal.

"Monsieur," continued Mme. Moreau, with a sombre air, "it is your glory which is the cause of everything. They drove us into it, monsieur. When your name appeared in the newspapers they overwhelmed us with questions. They thought we were related—we and you. And so, in the end, we let them believe that you were a relative. It was not premeditated. It came about of itself. We were caught in the whirl of other people's imagination. The consideration shown us increased as your fame spread. They kept asking us for details, and we gave them details. We told anecdotes about you. And we were proud of you, monsieur, as proud as if you were really our cousin, as they all believe you are."

"How is it?"

"I don't know. It is terrible!"

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