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By HENRY McBRIDE.

IN another column in a letter from Mr. Max Weber there is a compliment, friendly enough in intention, that I cannot accept without a reservation. Mr. Weber bails me admiringly as the professional antagonist of the academy. If I have given him, my friend, this impression it is clear I should qualify my true position.

It is true that for several years in succession I have found the exhibitions on Fifty-seventh street so dull that I have been forced to conclude that the committees went out among the hedges and byways especially to seek dulness—it was impossible to believe that such lifeless productions could come together in the Vanderbilt Gallery in any ordinary way.

It is true that I believe that the academy, in the nature of things, must play a minor role in the history of arts, and in particular always has been and must always remain hopelessly out of relationship to the march of events. This is no new thought. My ideas on the subject have all been excellently expressed in William Hazlitt's essay on "Corporate Bodies." Read that and read Lord Macaulay and hundreds of others who have left nothing new to be said upon the subject. Read the life of any genius since academies flourished and see how the nearest academy treated him.

But granted all that—I have no wish to play the role of perennial scold to the academy. I have no anger for the institution, but only for the situation that permits it to remain in exclusive possession of the public field. My blood does sometimes mount, not at the sight of the Lethal activities of the academy, but at the thought of all the time we Americans are wasting. The moment we have an Independent Society of Artists firmly established in America, we shall all have so much occupation in watching its manœuvres that there will be little time for inconsequential things. In the meantime, faute de mieux, I have sometimes scolded the academy, but really, Mr. Weber, I haven't liked it.

I have been somewhat concerned to note that the announcement of the Independent Artists is of a tentative sort. If a certain number respond the exhibition will be held! There should be no "if" about it. The exhibition should be held if only two independents can be found in the country. It is not the size of the exhibition that counts, but the principle.

The immense size of the first Independent show last year was sufficient indication of the necessity for such an opportunity for our young people, but the ocean of work defeated itself in a way. If the exhibition were to continue upon such a scale, it was obvious that new artists might have to wait some time for recognition, for not only was the size of the exhibition beyond the grasp of most human beings, but the percentage of instances where work was so badly placed that its true character could not be discerned was high. It is not a tragedy, however, for an artist to wait for his chance. With an open show sooner or later his chance is bound to come.

This year it is reasonable to suppose that the military service will cut most distinctly into the output. It is among those eligible for military service that the artists whom it is most necessary to assist—namely, the young ones—are to be found. But however much the exhibition may be curtailed it should be continued. This country will not have an art life worthy of the name until an art society can be assured that will accept ideas.

**Mr. Pennell, Mr. Weber,  
Mr. Chase, Mr. Whistler**

66 Post Ave., New York, Feb. 19, 1918.

DEAR Mr. McBRIDE: I was much amused when I read Mr. Pennell's brief letter to you, asking what you and your

readers think of Chase's portrait of Whistler. Now, this is a real serious challenge, you know!

In writing to you Mr. Pennell must have said to himself, "Now, I've got him, this sponsor of the foul modernists, this brazen knocker of the faithful and pious academicians. How will he and his admiring readers dare to say what they think of this masterpiece!"

It is sad and hopeless for the academicians who stop with Velasquez and swear by Sargent's superficialities to uphold and believe in such frailties as Chase's Whistler and Sargent's numerous portraits.

Chase's Whistler is like a bare, naked pin floating in the firmament, flirting with the law of gravity. It is colorless and formless; it is silly. No serious person

at the same time the master's unfortunate picture of Miss Connie Gilchrist skipping a rope, which also now hangs in our museum.

The strange twosidedness of everything in this world is instanced by this ingenuous defence of Whistler's memory by his Boswellian friend. Nothing in the Chase portrait deserves notice. It has no quality as painting, drawing or caricature. It is not even bad enough to deserve a line of reproach. It is merely commonplace. No one might ever have considered it again had Mr. Pennell kept quiet. But he blurted out his protest, and Mr. Weber writes in reply that the Whistler is a "bare, naked pin floating in the firmament, flirting with the law of gravity." That's such an amusing dictum that I find myself forgiving the picture and all the circum-



Courtesy, Durand Ruel.

Manet's portrait of his wife, in the Degas sale.

can stand before this portrait and keep a straight face.

Had Chase and his colleagues discarded earlier in life the cheap, hackneyed mannerisms, the virtuoso's technique, and busied themselves with vital plastic problems of art as striven for by the younger men, the so-called cubists, the outcasts, we would now have strong works of art full of freshness, power and renewal, though, of course, at the cost of a place in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and all that goes with it. MAX WEBER.

No, no, Mr. Weber, you wrong Mr. Pennell. He is not so base as to have set a trap for us, and besides, on this occasion—did you not read his letter of December 30?—he is one of us. He loathes the Chase "Whistler" more even than you do. He wishes, if I read him correctly, he wishes the Metropolitan Museum of Art to make an auto-da-fe of the picture, to destroy it utterly, to wipe it from the tablets of men's memories.

Now, while I am quite willing, nay, desirous, that the "Whistler" be forgotten, I'm not sure that the auto-da-fe is the best method of accomplishing the result. For one thing, it would be establishing a precedent, and in the history of auto-da-fes the "Whistler" would be eternally cropping up, with photographs, and Mr. Pennell would be continually turning in his grave—for possibly by that time the dread metamorphosis may have taken place—or worse thought yet, Mr. Pennell may pursue the subject from the nether world by means of the "ouija boards," which I hear have lately been marvelously perfected. The auto-da-fe is scarcely the thing. The best way to drop this very feeble art effort is not to do anything to make it historical, but simply to drop it.

Whistler himself, I am sure, no longer suffers from this caricature. "If the dead see at all they see truly," as a very great knighted English Hebrew said when he married the gentle lady with whom he had long been in love, shortly after the funeral of his orthodox mamma, who for years had forbid the banns. Whether this portrait by Chase caused acute anguish to Whistler in the flesh I do not know, but I feel quite sure that it no longer matters to him. In life Whistler must have been astute enough to recognize what an assistance to fame a good caricature is, and how more than negligible a poor one is. If he be troubled at all it cannot be for the sins of others, but for his own. He sometimes travestied himself. If Mr. Pennell, for instance, insists upon the auto-da-fe doubtless he will be willing to burn

stances that led Mr. Weber up to it. If the museum officials will but consent to quote Mr. Weber's remark upon the gold label underneath the portrait perhaps Mr. Pennell will agree to call the affair "quits."

**Rare Belgian Laces  
at Arden Galleries**

Miss Frances Morris, the expert of the Metropolitan Museum, has written an appreciation of the Belgian laces now on loan exhibition in the Arden Galleries. She says:

"A casual glance at the charming display of Belgian lace opened at the Arden Studios during the past week convinces one, above all, of the indomitable spirit of the Netherlandish stock; for, subjected to-day to all the horrors of modern warfare, to a cruelty that has never been paralleled in the history of world warfare, with 'cultural' possibilities not even dreamed of in the days of the Spanish Inquisition, they are yet able to maintain successfully, in the heart of the war zone, an industry fundamentally dependent upon a patient and unswerving perseverance on the part of the worker.

"To the many Americans who have known and loved Bruges, the next few weeks, with the probable renewal of activities in Flanders, are tense with forebodings; for, lying as it does in the direct line of battle, its fate seems sealed. Among its picturesque features none has a greater fascination for those who love the click of the bobbins than the Beguinage. Here for years on the border of the famous Minnewater, or, as the French call it, the 'Lac d'Amour,' the aged lace-makers have lived in happy seclusion, comfortably housed in the little brick dwellings that form a part of the enclosure where the conscientious sisters of the hospice have long ministered to their welfare.

"The charm of this old town, once a seaport and the trading mart of mediæval Europe, has always been irresistible, and many a dust stained traveller, wearied with a frenzied perusal of guide book annotations, has gladly lent himself a willing victim to the subtle enchantment of the place and found in it a haven of rest.

"As one recollects the joy of its leisurely life, the summer haze with its drowsy hum of insects, the limpid waterways reflecting the quaint architecture of a home-loving people who went their way in neighborly intercourse unmolested by the din of commercial traffic, one sees again the

(Continued on following page.)

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