American Painter Finds Lost Pigments

By SANFORD GRIFFITH.

AN American mural painter, Gardner Hale of New York, has rediscovered and perfected the color medium used by the early primitives of Italy on tempora painting. For centuries the formula was lost. The colors of the artists contemporaneous with Fra Angelico and Giotto have a purity and brilliancy of color which their successors have never realized. A chance discovery in the book stalls on the banks of the Seine in Paris gave Mr. Hale the key to their secret.

Mr. Hale has more than the color medium of the early Italians. He has much of their direct unsophisticated simplicity of expression. But with him it shows a high degree of sophistication rather than the contrary in that he has tried and found that he can shed much of the useless luggage of modern art. His pictures are expressionistic in that they have more to do with the expression of man's character than with his deeds.

American artists are reviving the art of mural painting in Italy which the Italians let fall to the level of house painting, and for two years Mr. Hale has been finish frescoes in Florence, and is now living under the high walls of the medieval fortified town of San Gimiano in Italy.

He told me that he had long been experimenting with crude colors in the hope of finding a clearer tempora than that reached by shop colors. I found him at work pounding crude colors with a pestle. As other artists have done, he tried various egg mixtures—the basis of a tempora. Artists used the yoke of the egg, the yoke or the white with fig juice or with rubber spirits. The great old art critic Vasari had what he called an egg oil emulsion which had much the luster but not the durdurability of the tempora of the early masters.

The primitives hid their secret so well that it was nearly five hundred years before it came to light again. Mr. Hale picked up an old book on the banks of the Seine containing formulas by an early Florentine artist, Cennino Cennini. Cennini had written it during his imprisonment, and out of revenge disclosed the secrets of his craft. Hale was the first to find the formula again, although since then the book has been reprinted and translated.

The formula was nothing more or less than a mayonnaise. Instead of the white or the yoke of the egg alone as a basis for tempera, Cennini used both together, mixed with them a little oil and vinegar and, presto! he had an excellent mayonnaise and the ideal tempora medium.

Mr. Hale has made excellent use of the simple Cennini formula, improving and adapting some of it to modern needs. Pounding and mixing all of his colors himself, Mr. Hale puts emphasis on the craftsmanship side of his mural painting. He mixes his plaster with the proper color and then lays it on bit by bit, working from the upper corner downward.

The artist has returned to the best spirit of the early mural artists. He starts from the idea that frescoes should first of all be decorative. He is not interested primarily in reproducing nature nor in telling a story. He sees his problem as a space to fill in a pleasing fashion.

There was a time when artists regarded it as their highest achievement to paint what they felt rather than merely what they saw. They painted aspirations rather than things. They glorified and idealized Man in the image of God. Anatomists find that the primitives elongated their saints and made their martyrs too thin. All this suggested aloofness from carnal things rather than fidelity to anatomy. Realists laugh at these early landscapes because they seem unreal. The artist, however, was expressing the mood of his saint, and his landscape usually reflected some inner soul struggle.

This modern man, too, disdains landscape and anatomy as such. He is interested in the mood of his picture and gives it the landscape which best harmonizes with it. At the same time he does not forget that he is decorating a room and not preaching a sermon. His panels are essentially decorative. He conventionalized mountains and water better to block out his color. He sprinkled little flowers here and there to break the harshness of banks of foliage with the density and sharpness of line of a brick wall. The secret of mural painting, as he explained it, is not to open wide vistas but to be decorative and to close a room much as tapestries would close it.

Last year completed a series of panels in the library of the Spellman villa in Florence; the legend of St. Julien. This unhappy saint passed from a life of regal splendor with his young and beautiful wife to the most abject misery and suffering. Returning home unexpectedly he found two people in his room. Imagining that his wife was receiving a lover he killed his own parents who had come on an unexpected visit. Julien then did penance, finding ultimate redemption through repentance, misery and finally through pity for another more unhappy than himself.

Hale tells the story with a simplicity and directness which a child could follow. His panels have much delightful detail. There is a greyhound which dashes gayly after his master's horse at the hunt in early pictures and finally gazes after him with a mournful eye as Julien departs on his last journey. There are bright colored daisies and mythical jeweled fish. The latest series of panels, representing the four seasons, which Hale has done have been on canvas in an entirely different mood and were designed for a breakfast room in the Spaulding villa in Florence. These panels have something of Watteau in the diversions of elegant ladies and gentlemen in a pastoral landscape. Dining on the grass, the young swain playing a guitar; fishing in a fountain belong to the graceful, futile pastimes which were dear to Watteau. But the toilers in the background are plowing a real field, not a Watteau mist. The olive trees are laden down with garlands of real grapes and the plowed furrows have more in them of Van Gogh's hard lines than of the soft dawn of a court painter in the rococo period. The costumes have something in them of the period.

In a series of mural paintings for a private house in Florence, Italy, Gardner Hale has produced results after the manner of the primitive and rediscovered some of the secrets of tempora painting. This example is used in the library and music room

The Buying Power of France's Paper Francs

By STERLING HEILIG.

I KNOW of a great American business in France that had to be closed up some time before the war. The turnover had been annually more than 3,000,000 francs, then equivalent to $600,000. Accounts were settled slowly but steadily until the impatient head office in New York ordered that everything remaining should be written off as bad debts. Now the amount still outstanding is 13,000 francs, or about $2,600. The representative in Paris insisted that efforts should still be continued to collect these small accounts, saying: "It would be a scandal for American business not to do so." Before the business year was over all had been collected with the exception of 300 francs, or $60.

This is a striking example for the present difficulties—after the war. The French complain that they are not having a fair deal in the foreign press. It is forgotten that before the war they had the most money per head, and money most evenly distributed among the population, of all nations. In proportion to their number, they loaned more money to other countries, governments and public works and companies than any other people. The great loan bank, the Banque de Paris, which is now behind the French Standard Oil, was perhaps the first in Europe to place United States Government bonds during our civil war.

In our bank panic of 1907 the Bank of France placed tens of millions of dollars in American gold eagles which were in its vaults at the disposition of the Bank of England, which was trying to ease the strained situation.

In spite of the gold indemnity of $1,100,000,000 which she had been obliged to pay Germany, after the war of 1870, and in spite of having had to pay by herself for her own reconstruction, France before the war was, as the United States is now, creditor of all nations and debtor of none. She paid her debts then and her people earned their own living; and they are earning their living now, and expect to pay their Government's debts. They only ask that English and Americans shall not mix up very different things to their disadvantage when talking about them.

When it is said that the French Government faces a deficit and that its budget does not balance that means it does not receive enough money in taxes from its citizens to pay its expenses. Now, the French people do pay enough money in taxes to Government to settle all such expenses as the Governments of the United States or England have to meet. The deficit—less than 4,000,000,000 francs or, at this year's rate of exchange, about $300,000,000—is entirely due to interest on reconstruction expenses, which the peace treaty said Germany should pay.

When it is said that the French Government is getting money to pay these reconstruction advances on what ought to be German payments, the French people answer that it is they who furnish the money by buying up their Government's bonds just as the North did for Lincoln's Government. And when this is charged with "inflation"—that is, the French are charged with using what is merely paper or flat money—they point out that the French franc is about where the American dollar was after our own war until specie payment was resumed.

In point of fact, the franc to-day purchases about 40 per cent. value of its par at gold—and the equivalent gold cover of its entire paper currency is still over 10 per cent., or what the New York law not so many years ago thought enough for trust companies. If the Government advance of paper money furnished by the Bank of France for reconstruction is deducted, the gold cover for currency in normal circulation is over 30 per cent.

When this is brought home to their critics, some—particularly in England—urge: "The French are so thrifty that in ten years they will be able to pay all their own reconstruction and so let's cancel the German reparations debt."

Chronicle and Comment

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"Lorna Doone," Ivanhoe and the Black Knight from "Ivanhoe," and D'Artagnan, Athos, Porthos and Aramis, were of course the famous four of the Dumas romances.

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AT the time a very sound criticism of that first "All-Fiction" eleven was offered by the late J. William White, long associated with the athletic activities of the Universitiy of Pennsylvania. Mr. White wanted an eleven that was 100 per cent. American, and offered as his lineup:

Left End	Magua.
Left Tackle	Dick Bullen.
Left Guard	Natty Bumpo.
Center	Chingachcook.
Right Guard	Hugh Wynne.
Right tackle	Harry Hurry.
Right End	Uncas.
Quarterback	Van Bibber.
Left Half	Specimen Jones.
Right Half	Jack Hamlin.
Fullback	Richard Carvel.

Head Coach—Mr. Dooley.
Assistant Coach—David Harum.