

WEIRD AFRICAN SCULPTURES THAT TYPIFY CONGO SPIRIT ARE MOUNTED IN WASHINGTON WHILE EUROPE ENVIES GIFTS

ENGLISH EXPLORER, COMRADE OF STANLEY, PERPETUATED BLACKS

Widow of Herbert Ward, Knowing That Husband Would Sanction Her Action, Gives to Smithsonian for the American People, Collection of Art That Has Been the Admiration of Old World Artists—Flambeau Writes Graphic Account of Its Unique History.

By VICTOR FLAMBEAU.

THE envy of London and Paris! That's what we were last week at Washington, when the great Ward collection of African sculptures and weird relics was presented to the American people by Mrs. Ward, the artist's widow, and accepted by Vice President Coolidge as chancellor of the Smithsonian Institution.

Many notables, American and foreign, were present, the British ambassador, the French Ambassador and Madame Jusserand, the Swedish Minister and Madame Wallenberg among others, and several English visitors of distinction. A reception was given by the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and Mrs. Charles D. Walcott in honor of Mrs. Ward, who made an address, presenting her husband's wonderful gift of sculptures and African souvenirs to the American people. She had come all the way from London for this purpose, and to assist in the arrangement of the exhibition, perhaps the most unique ever shown by the Smithsonian, which has been favored with so many others, including the splendid Roosevelt animal groups, from the Colonel's African tour.

Herbert Ward, a young English explorer with Stanley in the Congo of "Darkest Africa," the very heart of the great continent, from 1884 to 1889, brought back from his travels and life with the natives there material of such value that he wrote several important books, arranged perhaps the greatest of African ethnological collections, and produced art of a high order in the heroic sculptures at first exhibited in the Royal Academy at London, later at the Salon in Paris, where they were awarded distinguished recognition, and now they come to America as Herbert Ward's gift to the American people. It was in this way that the Englishman came to present them to us instead of to the British Museum or the Louvre in Paris.

GENEROUSITY OF WIDOW.

While visiting Washington, during a lecture tour in the United States, Mr. Ward was a guest of Thomas Nelson Page, and he became interested in the Smithsonian Institution, founded by another Englishman, James Smithson. Ward had determined to give his priceless collection to America, but death came before he had made his will. So, through the generosity of Mrs. Ward, his desire is now carried out, and the great exhibition, just opened to the public, attracts every day throngs to the National Gallery, where it is displayed in the division of ethnology. Not only the American public, always keen for a sensation, is in evidence, but scholars, scientific men, anthropologists, ethnologists, from all over the world, with artists, sculptors, painters, craftsmen of the plastic arts, besides collectors, connoisseurs, and tourists, a new crowd every day clamoring for admission to see this strange assemblage of the odd and the ugly, the grotesque and the beautiful.

"We always knew there was beauty in the African figure," says Dr. Walter Hough, curator in whose division of ethnology the collection happens to fall, "in fact, the African figure is the most beautiful in the world; but Herbert Ward has dignified the face, too, and given it beauty."

Men, women and children of Africa, they stand, heroic figures, crouch, squat, sit, or even lie prone as in the case of "Sleeping Africa," a young girl reclining with the map of Africa as background, an accidental facility, as the sculptor did not perceive until he had completed it that he had shaped the map behind her.

UNIQUE DEDICATION.

In Herbert Ward's book of alluring adventure, "Five Years With the Congo Cannibals," which he published in London in 1890, he tells the story of his travel and exploration with Henry M. Stanley in the unknown continent. He inscribes the book to his mother with these words:

Uncivilized lands have caused her much anxiety. To Her I dedicate this book. H. W.

Only once in this land of cannibals did Mr. Ward see a father kiss his child, though he records in some detail the culture of daily life among the natives. Six hundred miles in the interior of the Congo, in western Africa, these natives, Ward records, though not cannibals, yet take the keenest delight in sacrifice of human life. Slaves are decapitated on the death of a chief so that their spirits may accompany the deceased potentate for prestige.

As a symbol of covenant between two hostile tribes, a slave may be tortured, the bones of the arms and legs broken. Then the victim, or scapegoat, will be carried to some open well-known spot, and buried, leaving the head just above the surface. Any person giving him food or water is liable to be served the same way.

The number and variety of knives in the new Ward collection, daggers, scimitars, swords, dirks, javelins, stilettes, spears, sabers, poinards, rapiers, two-edged blades, curved, straight, notched, long and thin, short and sharp, an endless assortment, some bright and shining, others dark as though still stained with their latest victim, all attest the truth of Herbert Ward's observation.

Suicide with the Bakongo, a tribe of this region, so he tells us, is attributed to anger, an emotion they feel very powerfully.

"THINKING BLACK."

All Africans, Ward discovers, reason well and are born debaters. The African emphasizes each point in his argument by sticking upright in the ground a bit of bamboo, a supply of which he holds in his hand. Should he refer again to the same point, he will invariably pick up the same stick, and if his opponent happens to make a mistake in such reference he will instantly correct him. They like to argue interminably about little matters connected with daily life and the tribe, hunting and their food.

The charm doctor, or "Nganga Nkisi," is a powerful member of the clan. When his aid is sought he may direct the client, "before eating in the morning, to put a mark of red chalk on his face; and before drinking, to tie a piece of string around his big toe, stick a pin in between his second and third toes, hold a knife in his hand, and have somebody close by with his eyes shut, and another to poke at him with the branch of a tree."

The tradition is, among the Lutete, that far away in the interior a race of dwarfs have such large heads and hands that if they fall they cannot get up without assistance!

Another legend is that there is a tribe called Avumbi (from Vumbi, which is Kikongo for corpse) that feeds on dead bodies. Stanley's expedition through Africa was led by Tippe Tib, a renowned African chief, whose large harem accompanied their guide. These women had their faces partly concealed and their bodies were draped in gaudily colored cloths.

On his return from Africa Herbert Ward married, in 1890, the beautiful Sarina Sanford, an American. They settled down to a very happy life in England, where Ward pursued his art, a taste which, with gymnastics, had been his leading passion in youthful school days. In these later years he also enjoyed hunting, fishing, and the varied sports of English country life. He was supremely happy, and he produced, one after another, these splendid sculptures now in Washington, his precious legacy to the American people. The works were displayed first in the Royal Academy at London, and

PRINCIPALS AND THEIR GIFT TO AMERICAN ART TREASURES



"Defiance"



"Sleeping Africa"



"The Forest Lovers"



Mrs. Sarita Sanford Ward.



Herbert Ward at 27 by Sir William Goscombe John.

variably based on drawings he had made in Africa during his explorations. For the rest he found his models here and there, in the cafes of Paris, wherever he detected a typical African figure.

One peculiarly mild and courteous negro, who posed for the magnificent "Defi," a defiant and menacing character with savage, protruding lips and bulldog facial attitude, was so far from the actual barbaric "Defi" that it is said Mr. Ward, to obtain the desired effect, said to him, "How would you look if another man stole your wife?" and presto! Defi! Defiance! Look out, my knife is sharpened for you, and my sinews are tense and strong!

A READY RESPONSE. When Mrs. Ward spoke to the gathering in the Smithsonian Institution at her reception the other day, she uttered a message for the whole American people. She looked charming in black, with lovely violets, standing on a little platform, with her friends and the visitors about her.

"I deem it a great privilege," said Mrs. Ward, "to have this opportunity of explaining to you this collection of African weapons and sculpture."

"I will begin with the boy. 'The boy is father of the man.' From an early age my husband showed a dual development, the love for sport and also for art. In school he had two accomplishments—drawing and gymnastics.

"His father had mapped out for him a business career, so he went in search of his own fortune. After several years of adventurous experiences, he first found himself in Central Africa, with the Belgian Exploring Company. While returning to England, he heard that Stanley was in Africa in command of the Emin Pasha relief expedition, and was in need of carriers. Mr. Ward collected 400 natives, marched down to meet Stanley, and offered his services.

"During those five years in Africa, from 1884 to 1889, he learned to know the African savage and to love him. He lived among them, shared their food, went through the ceremony of blood brotherhood with the chiefs, became almost one of them. In spare moments he

ful to him later on. They gave him many a knife and spear. TEN YEARS' HARD WORK.

"Soon after this expedition he married, and then art dispelled the desire of travel, and he spent several years living in England, hunting and fishing. He modeled in plastiline, and finally resolved this into the composite of the "African Savage" (chief), which was sent to the Royal Academy and exhibited; then to the Salon, where it was exhibited and was awarded an honorable mention. This was great encouragement. The next ten years were spent in hard work. One by one all of these studies appeared at the Paris Salon. He received the highest award ever given to any foreign sculptor.

"The last statue was 'Distress.' 'We were guests of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Nelson Page in Washington. My husband was impressed with the Smithsonian, its atmosphere and the fact that it was founded by an Englishman. The idea came to him to present these, his collection, to this museum because he thought it would be appreciated and would interest, and also because of the ethnological interest.

"He would have presented them himself, but the war came, and that changed everything. He died soon after, as a result of the strain and stress. We have tried as far as possible to arrange the things as he had them in his studio. Thanks are due to Dr. Walcott, to Dr. Hough, and Mr. Allen, and their fellow workers for their co-operation.

"Mrs. Ward paused an instant here, and then she told one of those intimate, personal things that thrilled her audience.

feel proud that an Englishman has given these to my own country."

Applause and congratulations greeted Mrs. Ward at the close, with soft cries of "Charming!" "She did it charmingly!" from the visitors.

A SOLDIER'S HERITAGE.

One important incident which she did not tell was that Herbert Ward worked so very hard during the recent war that he wore himself out before his time and died still only a young man, for he was born in 1863, in London, and so the catalogue of the collection informs us, "Died in France, August 5, 1918, as a result of hardships endured and injuries received during the great war and, after the armistice was signed, in the devastated regions of northern France." He received the Croix de Guerre in 1915.

Herbert Ward was a sculptor, writer, traveler and Chevalier of the Legion of Honor. He received two gold medals for sculpture exhibited in the salon of the Societe des Artistes Français. He published, besides the book already quoted, "My Life With Stanley's Rear Guard," "A Voice From the Congo," and "Mr. Pollu, Notes and Sketches With the Fighting French."

His art training was received at the Julien Academy, Paris, where he was a student of Tony Robert Fleury and Jules Lefevre, and in London of Seymour Lucas, R. A. He is represented by work in the Luxembourg Museum of Paris, the National Museum of Nantes, France; the Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa, and the National Museum, Carlisle, England.

His collection, with native African handicraft and sculptures of aboriginal types, Ward designed to form a complete picture epitomizing the primitive Congo native, and in this picture to suggest the primitive life of man. "It is not excessive to say," the catalogue informs us, "that no collection regarded by science as ethnological was ever illustrated by sculptures of comparable merit."

The works include at least seventeen compositions, many of them of heroic size. The titles give a hint of the subject, but no mere description could express the emotion which these eloquent figures evoke, the sense of native nobility of primitive man, his strength, individuality, character.

There is "A Bakongo Girl," a "Mask of a Negro Girl" and "Mask of a Negro Man," work of 1901; "The Charm Doctor," a fantastic figure representing a sorcerer or charm doctor performing an incantation; "Sleeping Africa," the recumbent figure of a woman in an outline of Africa typifying the dark continent, two productions of 1902; "The Fugitives," a mother, babe, and small child fleeing from

collection which comes to our National Museum at Washington, for the American people.

A gold medal (third) was awarded in 1908 for Ward's "Le Chef de Tribu" (The Chief of the Tribe), his first composition, and in 1910 a gold medal (second) for the "Descentner" (A Congo Artist).

A DREAMER PLUS POWER. Ward's life has been called an inspiration. The bust by Sir William Goscombe John, presenting Herbert Ward at twenty-seven, shows a face of idealism, with the power to dream and to realize his vision. He wears the rough field costume of the African explorer. Above the base of the bust is a scroll bearing the map of the Congo river.

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There is also "The Head of a Gorilla," the only animal sculpture attempted by Mr. Ward, a bronze, of natural size, expressive of the bestial ferocity of this strange creature.

As a setting for this grand sculptural display the African relics are arranged about the walls behind them in glass cases, with the weapons upon the walls above. Two young men, studying the variety of the latter, spoke of them as models for "trench knives."

REMARKABLE PSYCHOLOGY. A little boy, among the visitors, stared open-mouthed in rare delight. "Wonderful" was his answer when asked what he thought of the collection. "Aren't they hideous?" a lady asked her husband, and involuntarily moved closer to him, as though for protection.

The cases of idols and fetishes are of special interest, with their grotesque carvings in the cocoon wood, and the hideous masks of the African people. There is

the other compositions, "The Fugitives," made in 1903; "The Forest Lovers," 1904, representing African natives of the Bantu stock, which furnished most of the slaves brought to America; "The Wood Carrier," a Senegal girl in half life size, of 1905; "The Idol Maker," a heroic bronze representing a native carving a wooden fetish image, and a very beautiful "Crouching Woman," both of 1906, with a "Fragment," a small bronze; "The Chief of the Tribe," in which heroic bronze Mr. Ward symbolized the weight of primitive government, 1908; "Defiance," in 1909; "A Congo Artist," in 1910, typifying the rude beginning of art; "The Fire Maker," in 1911, a man making fire by the primitive wood friction method; "Distress," 1912, a heroic figure produced at the height of the sculptor's creative power and his last work; it shows the characteristic native pose in mourning or other severe mental distress.

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Photos by Otavio.

Delivered by the artist.