

FAVORITE PICTURE OF VISITORS TO CORCORAN GALLERY IS THE "HELPING HAND," WORK OF LESSER FRENCH ARTIST

CHILD ROWING BOAT WITH FISHERMAN IS FIRST WITH PUBLIC

"Oyster Gatherers," a lovely picture of many colors, by Sargent, is perhaps most prized of works of American artists in the public eye. Victor Flambeau describes other great canvases in city's famous gallery.

By VICTOR FLAMBEAU.

"WHAT is your favorite picture?" There are in every gallery certain paintings of peculiar interest to the public. In the Louvre at Paris, no doubt Leonardo's "Mona Lisa" is the popular work, most often inquired for. In Dresden it is Raphael's "Sistine Madonna," that gracious presence which lends such a benediction that visitors enter and leave in silent meditation the room where it is displayed alone.

The great Dutch gallery, the Rijksmuseum of Amsterdam, has Rembrandt's "Night Watch," a fantastic group of the city guard in picturesque attire going out to their evening duty late in the afternoon, a painting which was ordered as a portrait, but when the artist made it a story he was unable to dispose of it, so it went begging in his lifetime, though it has since become his masterpiece.

In our own Corcoran Gallery, too, there is a popular favorite, not a great picture, perhaps, like those mentioned, but one which the people of the United States prefer to all others in this collection. During the recent biennial exhibition of contemporary American oil paintings the permanent collection of the Corcoran was banished for several weeks, while the other pictures were displayed, and the guards say that visitors from the West and South, and others who had come a long distance, expressed deep disappointment because they did not find hanging in its usual place "The Helping Hand," that large genre picture by Emile Renouf of a little girl with her hand on the oar, aiding a sturdy old fisherman, perhaps her father or grandfather, to pull the big dory home. The old man is smoking a pipe, and his tender glance at the child shows that she is very dear to him.

PUBLIC TASTE SOUND.

The public taste, in preferring this picture, may be more sound than critics have been wont to think, for when M. Gillet, a distinguished French painter who came here to make a picture of the disarmament conference, visited the Corcoran Gallery, so his guide told Victor Flambeau, of all the pictures there he preferred Renouf's "Helping Hand," and this, of course, without knowledge that it was the people's favorite.

"True interestant," was M. Gillet's comment on this work, which is high praise from an artist and a Frenchman.

Emile Renouf, who was born in Paris in 1845 and died in 1894, was a landscape, marine and genre painter, who won many medals during his career and was also decorated with the Legion of Honor. His famous "Helping Hand" he painted in 1881, when it was purchased for the Corcoran Gallery, and in 1889, at the artist's request, it was loaned for exhibition in the Exposition Universelle, at Paris, after which it was returned safely to the Corcoran Gallery.

No doubt the picture was a favorite, also, with our great benefactor, the late William Wilson Corcoran, through whose generosity the Corcoran Gallery and Art School were founded about 1869. Mr. Corcoran, who was born in 1798, died in 1883, at the advanced age of ninety, so that he had the pleasure of many years of enjoyment of his gift to the people of Washington and the United States. A gracious figure of the old school he was, as we know him from Charles Loring Elliott's large standing portrait in the gallery. The Corcoran collection, which was at first displayed in the old building at the corner of Seventeenth street and Pennsylvania avenue northwest, was transferred in 1887 to the fine Neo-Grecian palace of the present gallery on Seventeenth street. This structure, of white Georgia marble, on a basement of Milford pink granite, is guarded on the front by the famous colossal bronze lions by the great Italian sculptor Canova, replicas of those which guard the tomb of Clement XIII in St. Peter's in Rome.

THE VESTAL'S TEST.

Another old favorite picture of the Corcoran Gallery, according to the guards, is "The Vestal Tuccia," by Hector Leroux, also of the French school and a con-

temporary of Renouf, since he was born at Verdun in 1829 and died at Angers in 1900. In this composition an old Roman tradition is presented. The cult of the Vestal Virgins, which originated in Athens and Sparta, reached its height in Rome.

But, according to the story, the virginity of the priestesses was in question, and the test offered was that they should be able to hold water in a sieve. In the picture we are shown the Vestal Tuccia, who, standing by the River Tiber, holds aloft the sieve of water without spilling a drop.

The figure, though well developed, is exceedingly graceful, and has been sometimes copied as a separate detail. Other maidens watch her from a temple or palace, no doubt the Atrium Vestae, where the Vestal Virgins lived in Rome. The style is quaint and academic, yet the public loves this picture, which was painted in 1874, when it was exhibited at the Paris Exposition and received a second-class gold medal. Hector Leroux, the artist, was awarded many medals and other honors during his career, including, like Renouf, the coveted decoration of the Legion of Honor.

Still another of the old favorites here is "Charlotte Corday in Prison," by Charles Louis Muller, who was popularly called "Muller of Paris," and who also received similar honors to those of Renouf and Leroux. The public knows this picture well, and it has been a special favorite with painting teachers, since the composition of the beautiful face behind the prison bars lends itself very readily to copying by a student, so that perhaps almost too many copies of this subject may be found in Washington homes—that is, by seeing it so often we are likely to forget that the original is really a remarkable picture of great beauty.

DUTCH SCHOOL FAVORITES.

But not all the favorite pictures of the Corcoran are by French artists. Jozef Israels' "Interior of a Cottage" is a splendid modern example of the Dutch school, by a leading exponent, a peasant painter of Holland. This is a study of mother and child, the peasant mother sewing for her little one asleep in the cradle. Light streams in from the window, where a potted plant is blooming. It is all beautifully painted in the style characteristic of Israels, always with a tenderness, a sentiment, a sympathy for his subject. Israels' most famous painting, "Alone in the World," is owned by the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, where one may see a whole roomful of splendid examples of this artist, which the guide at the gallery there saves until near the end of one's visit because the Dutch are so proud of their peasant painter.

Israels received many honors during his long life, from 1824 to 1911, and these included besides numerous medals, the Legion of Honor and knighthood in the orders of the Dutch Lion, Francis Joseph of Austria, and Leopold of Belgium. Although he became so famous, Israels never lost his modesty, and often during his later life he preferred seclusion to meeting the many people who wished to know him. On one occasion he made a journey to Spain in his old age, and some travelers whom he met said: "How strange that you have the same name as the famous Dutch painter! But, of course, you are not connected with him." They would have loved to meet the Dutch Hebrew artist, who had risen from a peasant and received so many distinctions, but they could not believe that this simple man was he, and the painter was only too glad to escape without revealing his identity. Afterward they were much chagrined at their stupidity. They had supposed that his many honors would have made Israels somewhat pompous and aggressive.

MOST popular picture in the Corcoran Collection, "The Helping Hand," is shown at the top. "Charlotte Corday in Prison," from the original by Charles Lewis Muller, is shown below. Next is "The Wood Gatherers," by Corot, which is the most valuable painting in the gallery. Directly beneath it is "The Vestal Tuccia" by Hector Leroux. At the bottom is "The Schiam" by Jean Georges Vibert. This painting attracts the attention of thousands of art lovers.



early morning falls on it in the Corcoran Gallery. This picture, while not worth the fabulous \$750,000 paid for "The Blue Boy" by Henry Huntington, of Los Angeles—though perhaps it is worth it, after all, for it is a delightful production—is no doubt worth \$150,000, if it were to be sold.

"Which is the most valuable picture in the Corcoran Gallery?" visitors sometimes ask. And then they learn that the painting on which the highest valuation would probably be placed is a lovely landscape by Corot, the great Barbizon painter, called "The Wood Gatherers." Filmy trees against the sky, luminous clouds, two peasant women gathering sticks of wood, a man on horseback, accompanied by a dog, riding away down a path into the wood, a charming composition.

For spiritual power and metaphysical quality, which pervade

this great Corot, it has somewhat of a rival in the splendid Inness landscape, "Sunset in the Woods," also owned by the Corcoran. In this rare picture the vision of the sunset is a reflected grandeur, seen against the trunk of a giant birch tree, which stands like a ghost with the gleam of sunset radiance about it. George Inness, as we all know, was the greatest of American landscapists, and his fame grows with the passing years. We are fortunate in having several fine Inness pictures in the National Gallery, besides the "Sunset in the Woods" and another "Landscape" in the Corcoran.

Inness, who was brought up to trade by his father, escaped from the grocery business which his parent had decided he should follow, and through great poverty and discouragement, after many years of struggle, had the happiness to go abroad and study, visiting by the way the Barbizon School at Fontainebleau.

While not in any way copying their work, he seems to have developed his own greatest style after he saw Corot, Millet, Rousseau, and the others, and he returned to America and painted some of his best pictures.

Of formal teaching, Inness had only about one month, when he studied with Francois Gignoux, a French landscape painter, who came to America. Inness, who was born in Newburgh, N. Y., in 1825, died in Scotland in 1894. He was a philosopher as well as a painter. "No artist need fear," said Inness, "that his own work will not find sympathy, if only he works earnestly and lovingly." Again he wrote, "Think, work, do your best. If the world does not then appreciate you, what satisfaction can a diploma or a medal bring?"

Canvases by Inness are likely to bring increasingly high prices. The story of the Corcoran "Sunset in the Woods," the artist himself told, under date of July 31, 1891: "The material for my pic-

ture was taken from a sketch made near Hastings, Westchester county, N. Y., twenty years ago. This picture was commenced seven years ago, but until last winter I had not obtained any idea commensurate with the impression received on the spot. The idea is to represent an effect of light in the woods toward sundown, but to allow the imagination to predominate."

SARGENT'S PICTURE. In thinking of our greatest American landscape painter, perhaps we instinctively recall our most noted portrait painter, John Singer Sargent, though he may not be considered so typically American as Inness, possibly, since Sargent, who was born in Florence in 1856, has lived most of his life abroad. Yet, he has kept, too, a very close touch with America, where he has received such notable honors. The Corcoran is fortunate in possessing one of Sargent's early canvases, "The Oyster Gatherers of Cancale," a group of young people on a fine spring day enjoying a visit to the seashore, all painted with life and spirit, an interesting composition, produced when our great Sargent was but twenty-two, in 1878, while he was still, no doubt, a student at Paris.

We know that in a year or two after that time Sargent's painting began to attract much praise and to excite the scorn of Whistler, who unconsciously recognized, perhaps, a dangerous rival, for the two were so unlike in temperament, yet destined to be named as almost the greatest of American painters. So bitter was the animosity felt by the author of "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies," that when he

aw Sargent's painting, "Carnation Lily, Lily Rose," a group of two little girls lighting Japanese lanterns at a garden fête by the Thames, Whistler dubbed the picture "Damnation Billy, Billy Pose." And this famous Sargent is now in the Tate Gallery in London.

Still another of the old favorites is Jean Georges Vibert's "The Schiam," a picture with much humor, representing two dignified prelates who have quarreled over some question of doctrine. The heavy books have been cast aside, the symbols of conviviality on the table are forgotten, and they sit, back to back, in stubborn silence, meditating on the sardonic problem which has presented itself in their argument.

The Corcoran Gallery has recently received as a gift from an anonymous donor a portrait of "Little Girl Sewing," by Mary Cassatt, a leading American woman painter, closely identified with the modern French school.

The current exhibitions come and go at the Corcoran, a changing round of new pictures during the season. For April the great attraction is the Washington Society of Artists, a display event of the year, especially to the members in Washington, but of wide interest as indicating the progress of art in the National Capital, which should be the natural art center of the United States, as is the capital of every other large country. The increasing number of visitors in the Corcoran Gallery of Art, especially on Sunday afternoons, suggests the growing interest in the subject and the steadily developing appreciation of the aesthetic in America.

Mike Collins Pleads for Irish Peace

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presses faithfulness only as a symbol of association, and is, therefore, really a declaration that each party will be faithful to the compact.

The Irish plenipotentiaries have been described as "incompetent amateurs." They were, it was said, cajoled and tricked by the wily and experienced British prime minister.

By means of the fight we put up in the war, by means of the fight we put up in the negotiations, we got the British to evacuate our country. Not only to evacuate it militarily, but to evacuate it socially and economically as well. In addition, we got from the British a signed undertaking to respect the freedom which these evacuations give us.

King Only Figurehead.

We acquiesced in return to be associated with the British commonwealth of nations for certain international purposes. We granted to Britain certain naval facilities as described above.

That is the bargain. It is for the Irish and for our friends the world over to judge whether the "incompetent amateurs" who formed the Irish delegation of plenipotentiaries forgot their country in making it.

If our national aspirations could only have been expressed by the full republican ideal then they were not, and never could be, reconciled with what was understood by "association with the group of nations known as the British Empire."

By accepting that invitation we agreed—however some now deceive themselves and attempt to deceive others—that we would acquiesce in some association. In return for that acquiescence we expected something tangible—evacuations, abandonment of British aggression, etc.

If we had been martially victorious over Britain there would have been no question of such acquiescence.

Now if that is so, and it is so, the surrender of some national sentiment was for the time unavoidable. The British Empire, the British Commonwealth, of the British League of Free Nations—it does not matter what name you call it—it what it is. It is what it is with all its trappings of feudalism, its symbols of monarchy, its feudal phraseology, its obsolete oaths of allegiance.

Its King, a figurehead having no individual power as a King, maintains the unhealthy atmo-

sphere of mediæval subservience, translated into modern snobbery. All this is doubly offensive to us—offensive to our Gaelic instincts of social equality, which recognize only an aristocracy of the mind, of hundreds of years of tyranny and offensive from the memories carried out in the name of the British King.

Calls Critics "Unfair."

Those who could not, or who would not, look these facts in the face, blame us now and more than blame us. They find fault with us that in agreeing to some kind of association of our nation with the British nations, we were not able, by the touch of a magic wand, to get rid of all language of Empire. That is not a fair attitude. We like that language no more, perhaps less, than do those who wish to make us responsible for its preservation. It is Britain's affair, not ours, that she cares to preserve these prerogatives.

Let us look to what we undoubtedly have gained and not to what we might have gained. Let us see how the maximum value can be realized from that gain. If we would only put away dreams, and face reality, nearly all the things that count we have now for our country.

What we meant is that Ireland shall be Ireland in spirit as well as in name. It is not any verbiage about sovereignty which can assure our power to shape our destinies. The important thing is to grasp everything which is of benefit, to us, to manage things for ourselves, to get rid of the un-Irish atmosphere and influence, to make our government and restore our national life on the lines which suit our national character and our national requirements best. It is not only fratricidal strife which can prevent us from making the Gaelic Ireland which is our goal.

The test of the government we want is whether it conforms with Irish tradition and national character; whether it will suit us and enable us to live socially and prosper; whether we can achieve something which our old free Irish democratic life would have developed into.

We have shaken off the foreign domination which prevented us from living on our own life in our own way. We are now free to do this. It depends on ourselves alone whether we can do it.

(Other articles by Michael Collins will follow.)