

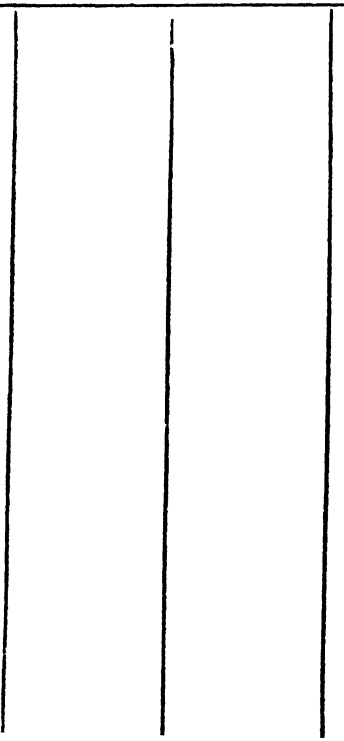
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THE EMERGENCE OF AN AMERICAN ART

The Emergence of an American Art

By

JEROME MELLQUIST



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New York
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1942

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A



To Lucie

WHO GUIDED ME THROUGH THIS BOOK

Introduction

YOUNG AMERICAN art students in the Nineties had two eminent countrymen whom they might emulate. One was John Singer Sargent, a transatlantic portraitist who had become court painter to the rich. Estimable and proficient, he compelled attention wherever he went and was never at a loss for a commission. Surely the attractions of such a career were apparent. James McNeill Whistler had other recommendations. A butterfly turned hornet, he had stung the very people Mr. Sargent celebrated and he had antagonized more often than he had ingratiated. Long before, he had captured the French, and although later he would often suffer insecurity, he had at least one satisfaction—that he never lost the admiration of the sensitive. Students admire the challenger, and in this sense, certainly, they could follow Whistler.

Yet, in either case, they did have a model, and an American one at that. The same could not be said for preceding generations of American painters. Before the Civil War, they could turn only to the itinerant portrait painter, who was in most cases but a Yankee peddler with a less disagreeable occupation. (Surely they could not esteem those Americans who had abandoned themselves to the Court of St. James.) After the Civil War, only Europe beckoned.

The eager-minded went to Munich, to Dusseldorf, to Paris, even to Antwerp, and there they found the prototypes for what they wanted to do. Returning, and in many cases becoming teachers, these men—Chase and Duveneck, and, somewhat less prominently, Twachtman and Weir—did much to prepare the coming generation. Yet still they bore witness to a foreign example. It was two Americans themselves—Sargent and Whistler—who convinced the young that there were alternative paths which possibly they might follow. How this affected them can be appreciated only by remembering that, after all, they were, in some cases, the generation following the pioneers, and that in consequence virtually no tradition had been created to sustain them. But how can art arise as the social expression of a whole people, when the foundations for it have scarcely been commenced?

In photography, however, a stirring already was evident. Alfred Stieglitz, an American back from his training in Europe, had, early in the Nineties, been sponsor to a movement which, before the decade was out, had blossomed into a full-fledged school, the so-called Pictorialists. Presently a more advanced wing, again under his sponsorship, had established the Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession at 291 Fifth Avenue, where paintings as well as photography might be displayed.

In any case, revolt was imminent. In 1908, it burst. Under the leadership of Robert Henri—though anticipated by Childe Hassam and The Ten—spunky young Realists trampled through the parlors of American art, and upset many of their elders. A little more light and heat were

engendered in the process. These same Realists, many of them, were part-time illustrators, which accounts for both their limitations and their strength. Essentially they were snipers in advance of the main army. Their fellows among the cartoonists strode along by their side, also firing away at the enemy and trying to ensure that new life should have its say.

But the memorable charge was led by the men who gathered at 291 Fifth Avenue, that tiny perch above the marts, where pictures were exhibited to stimulate the public and artists were sheltered regardless of the ridicule from the populace. Here the French Moderns were first introduced to a scoffing people. Here glowing young Americans—"Alfie" Maurer, a one-time Carnegie prize-winner, John Marin, a "piper" of the seaboard landscape, Marsden Hartley from Maine, and many, many others—were encouraged, and fed, and upheld against every kind of attack. This truly was the beginning of Modern Art in America. Five and a half seasons later occurred the Armory Show, which many still mistakenly assume to be the starting-point.

But if the Armory Show did not launch the movement over here, it did prompt certain Americans to take up their spiritual residence elsewhere. Modernism flourished. Veteran painters became Cubists, young ones imitated the latest from Paris. For a good fifteen years—up until 1929—it sometimes seemed that the country's art capital was upon the Seine instead of where it belonged. How could anything genuine persist in such an atmosphere?

Yet persist it did—though not without having to over-

come two additional confusions in the Thirties. The first of these was the American Scene cult, a form of special pleading from the Right which insisted that only an Iowa cornfield or perhaps a sugar plantation in the Deep South, were fit subjects for a truly American painter. Such half-truths could get a following only from the befuddled, or from those who had previously flocked to Paris. From the Left came another plea. Spokesmen of Social Consciousness, so-called, argued that painting was a weapon in the class struggle and that it must find its justification in the achievement of a greater economic and political justice. Neither of these movements swept away the more level minds among our artists, and by the end of the decade both of them were already subsiding.

Meanwhile, our more independent men—chiefly those who had emerged as early as 1900 and in the next dozen years thereafter—continued to produce the work which will appeal beyond the spasmodic issues of their time. They obeyed no propagandists for the cornfields; they attempted to be no political spokesmen in paint—they adhered to a more central identity, regardless of what such a devotion might cost them. These are the men whose achievements constitute the Emergence of this book. The present volume, in order to show fully what they have done, cannot afford the space for most of the men born since 1900. Neither can it discuss certain other figures—notably Albert Pinkham Ryder and Thomas Eakins, for instance—who, though still alive and working in the present period, were more typical of a somewhat earlier one, and in any case had rather little effect upon the central personalities in the

present discussion. Architecture, it might be added, would require no less than a volume to itself.

Here the only object is to delineate an Emergence which has already taken place, and to establish its meaning in the mind of the public. For if America is capable of a spiritual affirmation, then it has nothing whatsoever to fear. And what is more, it can assist in that rebuilding which will become necessary when present aberrations abate and men will once more seek the light and not abhor it.

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PART ONE

The Forerunners

CHAPTER

Whistler, the Progenitor

IT WAS a custom in the Whistler household to recite a Bible verse before eating. When it came the turn of Jemie, the future painter, he would compose a passage which had the rhythm and the flavor of the Scriptures, and then, while the heads of the others were bowed, would run his eye over the table to see what he should make for first. After grace was over, his mother would praise her darling.

What the father thought about this little ceremony has never been recorded. Perhaps his mind was elsewhere. . . . She, Anna McNeill, daughter of North Carolina Scots, was the one who had introduced such Puritanical observances into his home. Not Mary Swift, his first wife. She had never emphasized piety. She had not frowned when he played the flute. She had not remonstrated against a lark on Sunday. She had not preferred gray to color. She had loved joy as much as he had. From the time that he was a troubadour cadet and she the belle of West Point, down through their marriage and the subsequent birth of their three children, they had always been attuned to each other.

Mary died, and four years of loneliness had followed. His only comfort in this period was Anna McNeill—Mary's best friend. She was ever at hand. He came to rely on her. He observed, too, how she hovered over his children. For nearly four years she persisted. At last the Major surrendered and they were wed, in 1832. . . .

James McNeill Whistler was born in 1834. The place has been definitely established as Lowell, Massachusetts, even though later he misled his questioners on the subject. Here Major Whistler was an engineer of locks and canals who had already become recognized as one of the best supervisors of railway construction in America. This was not his only distinction. He surpassed most employers of the period in his solicitude for his men. He sensed inequities, and resented them. But not his wife. Her whole preoccupation was how factory-girls could stay moral on $2.50 a week.

In 1842, when Czar Nicholas I was ready to construct a railroad from Moscow to St. Petersburg, he sent two representatives to find the best man for the job in the United States. They chose Major Whistler. He accepted a salary of $12,000 a year, and left at once for Russia. In 1843, Mrs. Whistler followed with the family.

It was in old St. Petersburg that young Jemie first became the cosmopolitan. He admired the helmets and the horses of the officers. He adored the lanterns and the music of the summer fêtes. His cavalier streak found beauty in the manners of the court. It was an Old World. At the same time, the Major took pains to preserve American customs in the family. Even though it was difficult, he

tried to maintain their Lowell cuisine. Pumpkin pie was a favorite dish. And all during these years, the child ever declared that he was an American before anything else.

Jemie was already in the drawing class at the Academy when his father died from the after-effects of cholera, in 1849. The Czar offered to educate James and his younger brother, William, in the page's school, but Mrs. Whistler steered straight back for America. There, despite a reduced income of $1500 a year, she maintained her family at Pomfret, Connecticut, until James was ready to enter West Point.

James did not distinguish himself at the Military Academy, and at length was dismissed, so he said, because he mistook silicon for a gas. He had other interests. Like his father he loved pranks. And he had his urge for drawing. He had been drawing since childhood. Once, indeed, in Russia, an English *connoisseur* had told Mrs. Whistler that her son was uncommonly gifted, but that he should not be permitted to overstrain himself. Now, discharged from West Point, he was persuaded to join his brother William at a locomotive works in Baltimore. But Jimmie could not tolerate the grind to which he was sentenced. He worked only at his drawings.

"I had a beauty," remarked a friend on a drawing, "a cavalier in a dungeon cell, with one small window high up." No doubt this image signified Jemie felt himself in jail. Shortly afterward he joined the Coastal Survey. Here he received his real training as an etcher, for the preparation of government maps and plans required an unfailing accuracy. He remained six months. Two of these govern-

ment "jobs" can still be seen. They show that by the age of twenty-one he not only was a well-trained etcher, but he also had a refreshingly vagrant disposition. Heads of soldiers—Arab perhaps or medieval figures—such are the subjects bitten on one of these plates. Evidently Whistler played, when the exigencies of his job permitted.

Early in 1855 he resigned and, despite the misgivings of his mother, went to Paris. He was to have $350 a year allowance to continue his art education. At last the young "minstrel" was free—he could play to his heart's content. He frolicked with the students at Gleyre's, he went on picnics, he sang with the other Bohemians at Lalouette's —a restaurant where many of them assembled—he threw away his plain American hat and bought a more romantic one of straw.

The Latin Quarter was where he belonged. Nobody thought him odd there. He was admired and set on high because of his talent. He might be "un type," as the French say, but they did not hold that against him. Then, too, he found companions among his own kind. In those days, Courbet was upsetting everybody with his bulldog insistence upon Realism. The younger students followed him. So did Whistler. Truly, it was a community of artists. Here men lived to paint, and painted as their way of participation, and always enjoyed what they did. Here life was fresh every day, and every eye was kindled.

At that period he was given a name which remained his for the rest of his life—"The Idle Apprentice." Actually, nothing could be more misleading. True, he loved his little Fumette. She may have spat like a tigress (as, indeed,

she was called). She may have torn up his drawings in a fury. He may have had a circle, as he called them to Fantin-Latour, of "no-shirt friends." He may have been free with his money—when he had it. No matter. Whistler worked in these years. However vital these episodes in his life as student, they do not convey his ardor in the studio, save by indirection. Otherwise, why should he, a completely unknown youngster, and an American at that, have impressed the best French artists of the time? Why should he have been taken, not so very much later, into the circle of Manet, Baudelaire, Braquemond, and Fantin-Latour, and all that brilliant group of nineteenth-century Frenchmen? Why, if not that they had already recognized him as an equal?

And so, in some ways, he was. His four-year output through 1859, when his studenthood was ended, already proved him to be one of the most original etchers since Rembrandt. No one manipulated the needle with as much verve. Nobody had quite his dash and humor in the medium. He etched with a rare infectiousness. . . . A self-portrait in a broad hat; peasants and moonlit towns and little plazas in Alsace; Bébé, the tiny daughter of Lalouette and La Mère Gérard, who sold cakes at the Luxembourg gate—all these he had perfected by the time he was twenty-five. They are still delightful. They still chuckle and dream and fascinate. They still tell us that a young man was buoyant, and that wherever he went he found joy. They declare an astonishing virtuosity. They say, too, and for that reason, that here, at last, an American artist had an improvisational genius indubitably like his own

country's. This etcher dared: he did what no etcher had ever done before. He caught the wayward, the fleeting, the evanescent—impaled it—and left a twinkling pleasure in the consciousness. But he did something more. He actually reflected the new experience of the eye as it was being reinformed by photography. Each one "focussed." Each one selected precisely. Each one stated itself in black and white. Here, again, Whistler pioneered, and in pioneering brought something of the plainsman's spirit to the development of modern art.

Student days ended, Whistler divided his residence for some years between London and Paris. In England he had a half-sister, Deborah, who was married to Seymour Haden, a surgeon and etcher. He expected to find in London a better market for his work than across the Channel. So he lived there much of the time. At first he relished the companionship of his brother-in-law. Both being etchers they would work together. Sitting around the reading-lamp on a winter's night, they would try to outdo each other as they made etchings of the family circle. Certainly he incited the less impetuous Haden to more forceful strokes upon the copper. Whistler, in turn, acquired delicacy from Haden, who eventually was to produce a whole series of distinguished landscapes.

Yet chiefly it was London that stirred Whistler. Docks, masts, shipping—all the *mystère profond* of a great port, as Baudelaire said of his work in 1863—the waterside at dusk, the towers and slag and winches of a great maritime city—all these he saw, and could penetrate in the name of

beauty. Whistler in retreat? The fact is that Whistler was one of the first modern painters to take the blackened, leaping, grotesquely beautiful nineteenth-century city and translate its combination of grime and silver into terms of etching.

And now, he was emerging as a painter. On a trip back to Paris, in 1859, he carried along a picture entitled *At the Piano*. It was a household portrait of his sister. . . . She is playing the piano as her little daughter listens. The child is dressed in white and stands at the bend of the instrument. On the wall behind, gold-framed pictures discreetly echo their accompaniment. The tone is further muted by the low red rug on the floor. Everything sings. . . . It was a chapter in affection, this domestic interior by which Whistler reminds us of the nineteenth century. Yet it had no stuffiness. Instead, it seemed to glisten faintly at the meeting of its tones. This was a Victorian parlor, all excess furniture eliminated, warm despite its polish, and somehow musical in its taste. It had an aristocratic tone about it. And yet it was neither strained nor thin. No wonder Courbet was impressed. No wonder that for some years henceforward, he and Whistler argued and struggled and painted together.

While Courbet inspired the artist, Jo Heffernan nourished the man. She was a mysterious Irish beauty with a perfect aureole of red hair. He painted her in a canvas still famous today as *The White Girl*. It radiated a light as from impacted jewels. The subject stood on a bearskin rug, tall and absorbed, her eyes peering out as if they

were those of a being in a trance. She seemed to be rooted in a dream, for she dipped others, who beheld her, into that dream. She was the image of love.

The French artists were captivated. But the Salon rejected it. Sent later to the Salon des Refusés, in 1863, it was, along with Manet's *Dejeuner sur l'Herbe,* the sensation of the show. Every one took sides, but the artists, of course, were with Whistler. Hence the American became a comrade of the Impressionists. Fantin-Latour painted him in a celebrated group portrait of that year—a young dandy with a naughty eye. Whistler now belonged. And he continued to belong, at least as far as these particular artists were concerned.

Meanwhile, he saw more of Courbet. Two summers in succession (1864, 1865) they painted on the shore of Trouville. One reminder of this friendship is a large canvas of a peasant asleep among the rocks, with a glinting sea in the distance. If only for its attempt at the rough-hewn, it bears evidence of the stalwart Courbet. Another canvas presents a sea which chills. It is called the *Blue Wave.* Perhaps its piercing color proceeds from an experience of that summer. Whistler had almost drowned in those waters he had pictured.

Returning to London, Whistler met with still other influences. For some time he had been associating with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, poet and chief of the Pre-Raphaelites, whose esthetic program was to effect a sentimental return to the Middle Ages, transmogrifying nineteenth-century life into a prettified copy of the long ago. Whistler acquainted Rossetti with Japanese woodcuts, then

popular in Paris, and the two in conjunction began to work out some unique decorative schemes. Porcelain dishes, for example, were to furnish the key-motif for an entire room. Always pioneering, Whistler soon was resolving all these influences in *The Little White Girl*, which again was in celebration of Jo. Jo gazes into a mirror on a mantelpiece; her dress is white; in her hand she holds a painted fan; across the corner a spray of blossoms bends into the picture in the Japanese fashion. Exhibited at the Academy in 1865, this picture was denounced by the critics, with the single exception of Rossetti. The poet Swinburne, however, was stirred by it to write the following lines:

"Come snow, come wind or thunder
High up in air,
I watch my face and wonder
At my bright hair."

It had taken the young American only ten years to prove himself in the art world of Paris. He was supreme as an etcher. He had compelled admiration from the best French painters for his oils. He had worked intimately with Courbet. He had rid himself of the far away and long ago—still the twin preoccupations of his haunted countryman, Poe—and, in his gypsy verve, had found at least the start of a greater development which might be his. Such was Whistler in the mid-sixties, before the break in his life.

II

What caused this break? Primarily the substitution of a sentimental attachment for the more emotional ones of his earlier European years. Whistler's mother was a Southerner with a Puritan streak. Her set-mindedness would in many ways become his own. His Cavalier code, his stories, his prejudices, often seemed to be those of a person who had come from the Old South. His single surviving brother, William, a doctor in the States, had served throughout the Civil War in the Confederate Army. Once his mother had crossed through the lines. Did Whistler feel guilt at not having joined his brother? One can only conjecture. Nevertheless, only a year after the war was over, when a band of ex-Confederates set out to assist a revolutionary uprising in Chile, Whistler volunteered. He saw no fighting (though he did the first of his nocturnes while watching the bombardment of Valparaiso harbor from his vessel, which was at anchor). What did this episode mean? The departure of his youth? And what was his state of mind upon his return to London? He never committed himself. But he was different.

Another change was his rejection of Courbet. He told Fantin-Latour, in a series of letters, that to seek literal reality in painting was ridiculous. He also declared to his French friend that line came first, and color afterwards. Color, indeed, was to be used repetitively—woven, as it were, into a canvas. It should have the same function as a fine accompaniment to music. Color no longer meant —if it ever had—the direct penetration of experience.

These letters imply an even more startling development. It is as if Whistler disowned himself. He rejected the entire man of the preceding ten years. He disavowed, not his impulse or his accomplishment, but something in his very springs which had made them possible. No biographer has probed this question. Nevertheless, an answer may be suggested. Whistler had been pampered all his life. He had merely skipped about the rules which his mother thought he obeyed. He had always followed his own will. In a way, so does every artist. But Van Gogh, in addition, crucified himself to acquire proficiency in draughtsmanship. Cézanne labored like a truckhorse to drag forward an immense weight of compositional law. The artist's will had superseded the personal one. There has been a submission before there was an accomplishment. Whistler never had such humility. He was a special case.

Consider his third *Symphony in White* (the other two were his earlier portraits of Jo, retitled). This product of 1867 is composed of two young women with the now familiar Japanese appurtenances. But the outstretched arm of the one who half reclines, seems not sufficiently to belong to her body. Some essential articulation is lacking. Whistler knew this and worked a long time to correct it. He was unable to do so. Doubt as to his own powers may have gripped him. In fact, there is a lessening of vital contract throughout. He sought to eliminate all signs of the brush-stroke. He would have the pigment smooth. The flesh of the painting, so to say, is gone, or at any rate is disappearing. One can only conclude that there was some weakening in the springs of the man himself, and

that the buffetings, and the exacerbations, and the hurtful episodes which followed, arose in no small part from his unadmitted discovery of insufficiency in himself. In short, the Puritan in Whistler was winning at the expense of the artist. (But, being still Whistler, he would continue to produce, always, the inimitable work which could belong to him only.)

Presently he painted his mother's portrait. The careworn face, the quiet hands, the tight-lipped resignation, these have made him, as well as her, world-famous.[1] Millions throughout the world have acclaimed this portrait, and justly so, for it is, in its own special way, a masterpiece. Yet what does it say about the painter's development? In what terms does he state his mother-love? Essentially, it is a silhouette which fluctuates through passages of gray. The wall behind furnishes the low accompaniment for these tones between black and white. Her wasted figure has just enough width to rest firmly on the chair. These formal limitations, seldom noted because of the universal appeal of the subject matter, prevail even more unmistakably in the *Carlyle*. Here, again, an aging figure poses in silhouette against a muted background. Only now, because not much of the artist's humanity has gone into the portrait, it tugs at us less than the *Mother*. We can therefore perceive the shallowness despite the taste.

These portraits of the early Seventies culminated in the little *Miss Alexander*. She is a lovely child brought to England from the court of Velasquez. Whistler had been

[1]It was first exhibited in America at the Pennsylvania Academy in 1881.

commissioned to paint the entire family, but he took her first. The way she stood, she was just like one of those butterflies which he now affixed as a signature. Her dress of fluffy white muslin, which he had selected, might well have been her wings. Inside that dress was a rare little being, fragile, trustful, and fluttering as she stood there before him. She adored the painter, and he reflected it. They had over seventy sittings. No doubt she tired, and wanted to play, and wondered why it took him so long. But Whistler had a way with children. He never let them wait, he played with them, he dealt with them as equals. Children find such treatment irresistible. The picture, therefore, was anchored in sympathy. He brushed busily, and at last he could say, "You may go now." The very essence of the little girl was on his canvas. All accorded —Japanese elements in the decoration of walls, panels, and floor—tonal justness in the transitions from the petals of the daisies to the apple-greens and blacks, and Velasquez touch. Whistler never resolved them better, and a masterpiece of child portraiture stands as the result.

These portraits had alternative titles. Eventually, for example, he was to call his mother's picture *Arrangement in Gray and Black,* while the Carlyle also was renamed. Why did he do this? The answer again bears on the shift taking place in his life. Whistler was living in Victorian England. Here a picture had no life of its own. It was an appendage to history, literature, or to morality. This offended Whistler. Striking back, he simply tried to rid his pictures of all connotations save those strictly of the medium. At the same time, he might have the fun of con-

founding the uncultivated. Had he remained in France, no such steps would have been necessary. Nor was there to be any abatement of this antagonism, which was to reach its bitterest some time later in the Ruskin trial. In any case, by the time of the early 70's the shape of the Whistler that we now know had become ineradicable. Undoubtedly a less sympathetic Whistler, but, under the conditions, an inevitable one. Henceforth he engendered and encountered less sympathy, and even where relationships were tolerable they sprang from admiration rather than fellowship.

In the early 70's he began to explore the Thames each night with the Greaves brothers, who were boatmen. At twilight they would row him out along the dim-lit river. Then Whistler would arrange his color notes. Turning his back, he would repeat to his companions the tones and arrangement before him. They would correct him if necessary. Then they would row him home. The next morning he would approach the bare canvas and paint a Nocturne of London. These appeared more frequently after 1872. Here again he disembodied the paint. The very pigment had a dream quality.

Incidentally, the Greaves brothers became Whistler's followers. They emulated him. They bought pigments and canvases and tried to paint as he did. He, in turn, became a kind of dock-inhabitant, a prowler of the London dusk, who sought to steal the gold in the lamps aglow upon the river, and to treasure it until morning. Sometimes he would alter his procedure and do a lanterned fête at the Cremorne Gardens. The falling rockets at-



Courtesy of Miss Gertrude B. Whittemore, owner, and The Art Institute of Chicago



From a print in the possession of M. Knoedler & Co., Inc.

The Beggars

tracted him. He gazed with satisfaction as they speckled out against the night-time blue. He never depicted the crowds with exactitude. The same was true of *Old Battersea Bridge*, which bore the alternative title, *Nocturne in Blue and Silver*. The pier of the bridge stands like a huge, solitary stilt, just off the center of the picture. The bridge itself is but a bar at the top of this pier. Misty figures traverse it. Beyond, the stars spill down the sky, and quivering lights stud the water front. In the foreground, a spectral figure guides a boat. One almost hears the foghorns and the occasional clank of a winch.

These pictures were exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877. Ruskin, the critic, eyed them with repugnance. Presently, in *Fors Clavigera*, his "circulating pulpit," as Whistler called it, he screamed forth his denunciation. "I have seen and heard much of cockney impudence before now, but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask 200 guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face."

Coxcomb indeed! Whistler would show him. The old man would have to pay. Accordingly, he brought suit against him. He was sure that the artists would support him. Only one of them did. After all, was he not the Yankee? Had the English not always been against him because he remained, in looks, in thought and behavior, the outlander? All right, then—he would show them that he had "the constitution of an army mule."

The trial took place in 1878. It made all the papers. It scandalized the town. Nothing was fair about it. The prosecuting attorney insulted him. Even the judge was prejudiced. Once he inquired, "Is this part of the picture

at the top Old Battersea Bridge? Are those figures on the top of the bridge intended for people?" But Whistler did not retreat. Like an embattled Twain, he thrust back all the more fiercely. "They are what you like! The picture is simply a representation of moonlight. My whole scheme was only to bring about a certain harmony of color." These English, he thought, could not understand painting. They had no feeling for it. So he cut and stung, and made a spectacle of his accusers. True, he received only a farthing damages. But he had done something more important. He had silenced the Academicians. He had fought —and outfaced—the Philistines.

This trial took place at a time when cultivation in the art of painting had seldom been lower; its champion had never flinched; his principles had had the transparency of ice, and he had phrased them like a poet. His whole conduct had been such that, in the Anglo-American world at least, he had impressively asserted the autonomy of the artist.

He had appeared, let it be remembered, at a time when the rigid and the didactic were in control. He was not dismayed. He charged with greater fury. Almost alone, he had made a new niche for the artist and had compelled a fresh recognition of his importance. No less valuable was his new conception as to painting. His original and only preoccupation was the picture itself. This may seem elementary today. But if it is, Whistler deserves his share of credit. For he first championed the principle at a time when the moral dogmas of Ruskin had authority among the cultivated.

But it was for other reasons that English society sought him out. There had always been something of the dandy about Whistler. This had been further encouraged by Maud Franklin, who, some years before, had supplanted Jo Heffernan as his mistress. Jo, somebody said, had been a fine woman—Maud was the fine lady. Certainly Maud did accentuate his vanity. As for Whistler, himself, he could sparkle even amid the gaudy ones of society. He could cut with his tongue. He had made a feature of his white *mèche*, and always carried a cane. On the boulevards he was not Whistler the painter, but James A. McNeill Whistler, the wit and man-about-town. No rapier quicker than his tongue. It flashed, it leaped, it darted straight to the mark. Beware its wielder! Only Degas, in later years, ever could hold his own in such exchanges. "Mr. Whistler," he once said, "you *behave* as if you had no talent."

Unfortunately, such antics did not forward the painter's work in his studio. They deflected and diluted his energies. They gave him a dual object in life. As he pirouetted in Vanity Fair, he thought of some other audience than his own integrity. This suggested a mask. Behind this mask was a wound. He no longer had the irresponsible joys of his gypsy days. He had imbibed too much bitterness. He had suffered. But the butterfly still wavered up towards the sunlight. As an artist, he would forever throb when he felt, or saw or captured, the beautiful thing. But now something was hurting him. Certainly that environment was enough to madden a man of his sensibility. Still, that does not explain the energy which went out to

impress his enemies, rather than hew ever more closely to the center of his own devotions.

Undoubtedly, Whistler had an aptitude for trouble. There was the Leyland case. Originally, he had done many portraits for this Liverpool shipowner and his family, who, for a number of years were Whistler's most faithful patrons. Unfortunately, it had occurred to the painter that one of Leyland's finest rooms should be redecorated, so as to furnish a more fitting matrix for a Whistler portrait. Leyland gave him *carte blanche*. For weeks Whistler worked. He daubed the expensive Spanish leather with which the room was furnished. He did over the walls. He introduced his own color arrangement. Then he painted peacocks on the wall. After many weeks, during which Leyland was never permitted to see the room, Whistler presented a bill, considerably in excess of the original amount. Leyland objected. Thereupon Whistler satirized him, in the mural, as a peacock with gold coins in his tail. It is hard to see how such episodes derive in any essential way from his more positive gifts as an artist. They merely suggest that he could be vain and irascible, and, on occasion, as insensitive, in his way, as the Ruskins were in theirs. Incidentally, it was not until many years afterwards that Whistler was ever again offered a mural commission.

Soon his financial difficulties were multiplying. Not only had he lost his patron, Leyland; he had built himself a white house, which, like the Peacock Room, had much exceeded his estimates. When the court costs, the lawyer's fees, the bills from his new house culminated with

the loss of his best patron, Whistler no longer could withstand his burden. He underwent bankruptcy. He no longer even had a market. The trial had seen to that. A penniless pariah forty-five years old, what was he to do now?

Fortunately, he received an offer from the New English Art Club to do a series of etchings. And it was now an American critic who, at the moment when he most needed it, stood up for him. William Carey Brownell, in 1879, wrote one of the most discriminating—and appreciative—of the many essays on Whistler. Unquestionably, this had much to do with his ever-increasing reputation on the other side of the Atlantic. As early as 1867, Samuel P. Avery, when on a trip to the Paris World's Fair, had bought some of his etchings. Always, during the Paris and London years, there had been adventurous Americans —not numerous, to be sure—but open-minded and generous men—who were not afraid. They had often furnished support when he needed it.

Yet at this juncture there was no further assistance from American sources. His back was against the wall. Aside from his one small commission, he had no assurance of any kind when he went to Venice. Now he might well recall Becquet, the musician whom he had etched in his happier days at Paris. Becquet, with his beard, his cello and his deep-peering eyes. Becquet, whom one of the artists had claimed to be the greatest of them all, *pour la morale*. For, in such a crisis, a man—let alone an artist—has no reliance but those inner resources which tell him to go on, regardless of the defeats that may await him.

Whistler had rock-bottom courage. When it came to the test, he could face desolation or poverty and never flinch.

In Venice it was cold. Sometimes he etched with numb fingers. It was difficult to handle the copper plate in such weather, and especially difficult in view of the fact that he etched directly on the metal, using it just as other artists did a sketch-pad. He said that he would exchange the cold of Venice for the fog of London. He declared that he lived on "cheese rinds and cat's parings." He knew want—but never submitted to disallusionment. Years later he was to say:

"It is better to live on bread and cheese and paint beautiful things than to live like Dives and paint pot-boilers. But a painter should not have to worry about 'various,' you know. Poverty may induce industry, but it does not produce the fine flower of painting. The test is not poverty, it's money. Give a painter money and see what he'll do; if he does not paint his work is well lost to the world. If I had had, say, 3000 pounds a year, what beautiful things I could have done."

Truly, he was an artist to the core. It took a real test to reveal his purity. When stripped of eccentricity, of pose, of littleness, he sang. He showed a big Venice, so he called it, with the "whole skyline round" and the ships and the distant church of San Giorgio. He loitered in the canals and etched the marvellous filagree of delicate doorways. He caught a pulsating populace. It was no traditional Venice that he pictured. Not the vital port of Tintoretto, or the febrile one of Guardi, not the opulence of Titian, or the *brio* of Tiepolo. It was not sixteenth- or seven-

teenth- or eighteenth-century Venice which he saw. It was the nineteenth-century Venice, beautiful as old lace, ragged in its populace—a city where life flickered rather than strove, where the beggars in the doorways were the more obvious signs of human habitation. Thus Whistler rendered the supreme gift of the artist—to *see*, to see in all fidelity, and then to report. A new Venice was born of his experience. Ruskin might have piled his pillars of prose, and measured patiently the capitals on the Ducal Palace, and recorded it all in his *Stones of Venice*. But Whistler caught the living instant—the gloom in a vaulted passageway, the diners in a *trattoria*, the children who begged for pennies beneath fantastically beautiful doorways, the weave of light across the bay, the throbbing of the crowds upon the Rialto. Nineteenth-century Venice—or, better, Whistler's Venice—was represented in his etchings. As some one has well said, he found a "Venice within a Venice." And thus, as the artist always does, he conferred his beatification upon the life that he saw.

The etchings of this period have another importance. They advanced the medium several points ahead of where it had been before. They may lack the verve of his Paris plates, they may have insufficient body—as was characteristic of much of his work after his trip to Valparaiso—but they do incontestably present a new development in the possibilities of etching. Here, his drawing was mere flecks and curves, he had reduced the number of strokes to be taken, he left great areas in the white. He had arrived at an art of elimination. A rustle had written upon a metal plate, a blade of grass had had its say, a bird's wing had

brushed a surface. Evanescent things? Yes. Unimportant? No, because these, too, are part of the world, and within our experience. Perhaps it was but a segment of the universe that Whistler captured. But he sang to the very top of his note in that segment. Nothing was held back. It was slightly intense but not tragic. He did not offer the whole vista of life. He did not reflect the appetites, or the daily chores, or the struggles of men. He did not pierce to the terrors of a Goya, nor rise to the exaltation of a Rembrandt. But within his range he was no less true. Whoever sings with such eagerness has always his communication to make. And therein lies its value.

To the medium as such he added another value. Young Americans who were then residing in Venice—Duveneck, for instance—were affected by what he did. No etchers, indeed, could proceed from where they formerly had left off. Henceforth the point of departure was to be Whistler. He had altered the medium. He had given it a new grace, flexibility and improvisation. How did he do this? His own words provide the answer:

"I began first of all by seizing upon the chief point of interest—perhaps it might have been the extreme distance —the little palaces and shipping beneath the bridge. If so, I would begin drawing that distance in elaborately, and then would expand from it until I came to the bridge, which I would draw in one broad sweep. If by chance I did not see the whole bridge, I would not put it in. In this way the picture must necessarily be a perfect thing from start to finish."

In other words, Whistler focussed. His whole art is that

of focus. He is concerned with an original nucleus. Everything webs out from there. This is a modern method of composition. It stems from photography. Rembrandt conveyed a flux between black and white, a kind of contest between light and shadow. In Goya, a thrust is always proceeding towards a dramatic center. But by the mid-nineteenth century the artist's eye had been conditioned differently. Already it was responding to the camera.

Indeed, Whistler reflects its influence in his very earliest etchings. It is not difficult to see a likeness between his Paris plates—especially in the portraits—and the daguerreotypes of the time. The tonal variations are similar, as is the feeling for textures; so is the placement of figure against background. Now, Whistler was an American. He had been more exposed to technological developments than his comrades in Europe. He was therefore one of the first to introduce corresponding innovations into the plastic arts. It has been said that Impressionism would not have been possible without the camera. This is true, in that the scientific study of ocular phenomena had been made more practicable by the use of photography. But Whistler takes another step. He spots an area. He himself functions, to that extent, as a camera. No Impressionist built a picture in that way. Not until Degas, most notably in his pastels of the late 70's and 80's, did a French artist begin to compose in this manner. Where Whistler departs from photography is in his elimination, once he has chosen his "spot." Then everything followed that lyrical breath that blew through his work. A faint scoring suggested an aroma, and then the fragrance

was complete. Thus Whistler made the technical processes his own without sacrificing to them his own slight afflatus.

It was at this time, too, that he first began to produce his lithographs. Much earlier in the century, when the process was still new, the more conventional artists had looked down upon the medium as a vulgar newcomer. Not until Daumier was shaking France with his cartoons did the élite accept tracings with crayon on stone. Whistler was fortunate in that, while located in Venice he made the acquaintance of the Ways,[2] who were skilled lithographic printers. From them he acquired the process more quickly than would otherwise have been possible. But, once learned, it was that inimitable "signature" of his—the slight imprint, the whiff of lyricism, the vagrant impulse—which made his work in this medium as indu-plicable as it is in the etchings. A number of friends have testified to his care—how he wiped the stone, how he eliminated in the drawing, how he employed tracing after tracing to get just the effect that he wanted.

A perfect little picture of how Whistler worked is to be found in T. R. Way's reminiscences on the artist. "One afternoon," says the son of the lithographer, "he suddenly started drawing my father. In the office were two rooms, with a door between, and he stood in one and his model at the end of the other, where a gas stove was burning close to the ground; hence the face was lit from below, and a big shadow thrown upon the wall behind. Three

[2]Two members of the Way family—a father and son—were lithographic printers. But the son wrote the memoirs hereinafter mentioned.

successive drawings did he make; the first not carried very far, he scribbled over; the second he completed but was not satisfied with, and then he began the third. It was a winter's afternoon, and I was in the inner room with my father, and at work myself, and did not notice how the daylight was failing; but at last it dawned upon me, and I went to Whistler to light the gas for him. Then I realized the position, for the bright light of the stove in the inner room had filled it. 'Why, Mr. Whistler, you have no light—you cannot see—you are drawing by feeling!' 'Almost, Tom, almost!' was his answer, and it was literally true." Here one catches that dashing eagerness which made Whistler so enjoyable to those with whom he was sympathetic. He flew when he worked. As a matter of fact, when painting a portrait he darted to and from the canvas, like a bee to a flower. He would also, according to the subject of the famous *Miss Alexander*, eye the results from a mirror suspended behind.

What was it that he sought? Why did he look back into that mirror? Whistler's objective was to render faces, harbors, or little ragamuffins within a containing envelope of atmosphere. This atmosphere was gray, but not dull. It bore tints of rose and touches of pearl. It contained those afterthoughts of color that are to be found as evening darkens, though the sunset still lingers. These were the fugitives that he would capture. Hence he is a poet of the mysterious. He is a musician of the overtone. He works within the modulation. He would even paint in the dark. Everything was more elusive then. Once a sitter asked him how he could work under such conditions. "As

the light fades and the shadows deepen," he replied, "all petty and exacting details vanish, everything trivial disappears, and I see things as they are in great strong masses: the buttons are lost, but the garment remains; the garment is lost, but the sitter remains; the sitter is lost, but the shadow remains; the shadow is lost, but the picture remains. And *that* night cannot efface from the painter's imagination." Such predilections would eventually lead to his being taken up by the French Symbolists.

But now, returning to London, he found nothing but enthusiasm for his latest work. His diminutive pastels, which are hardly more than pollen dust breathed on paper, were, of course, too much for the British. But the etchings they welcomed. He had stood fast in Venice, and the contest was his. He made another series of etchings for the Fine Arts Society. Soon he was accepted into the organization, and before long was elected its President.

Such understanding never lasted long. "During his brief reign as President of the British Arts of Suffolk Street," writes W. Graham Robertson, "he devised for the Gallery a very quiet scheme of gray-brown with just a hint of gold here and there, but while it was being carried out he was perforce absent for a few days. On his return he found that gold was being used freely, to the complete undoing of his design; but the artist in charge, much disappointed at his President's disapproval, explained that there *was* the gold, and in his opinion, it ought to be used.

" 'After all,' continued the well-meaning man, 'You're *using* gold in the decoration, so I don't see why——'

" 'Look here,' said Whistler impatiently, 'suppose I'm

making an omelette and you come along and drop in a seagull's egg. I'm *using* eggs, but—see?' "

The English, Whistler felt, would never see. Simplified hangings, walls in accord with the paintings, decoration which effaced itself—the attempt at such objectives merely antagonized them. A counter-revolution took place. Whistler was ousted, and his followers resigned. He had hoped, he confessed, to make the British Artists into an organization worthy of its name, but had failed. "The artists came out," he remarked, "but the British remained."

Whistler was always fighting. A little earlier he had announced his *Ten O'clock*, a lecture to be delivered at that hour of the night. Despite the unusual time, the carriage trade flocked to hear the fierce little artist. Mixing poetry with vitriol, he excoriated his enemies and set forth the true principles. At no time was he more clear as to his own being and function. "This man, who took no joy in the ways of his brethren—who cared not for conquest—and fretted in the field—this designer of quaint patterns—this deviser of the beautiful—who perceived in Nature about him curious curvings, as faces seen in the fire—this dreamer apart, was the first artist."[3]

And then, as if forever to dispose of all the meddlers and moralists who had tried to draft the artist into the Sunday School, he gave his own creed:

"For Art and Joy go together, with bold openness, and high head, and ready hand—fearing naught, and dreading no exposure."[4]

[3]From *The Ten O'clock*, one of Whistler's writings. [4]*Idem.*

The pampered ladies, the titled gentlemen, the snobs of every kind—what did they care for these principles? What did Whistler's own life—small parable of the artist's destiny that it was—mean to them? But they were entranced by the way he handled his monocle, by the glittering eye, the unexpected thrust, the pauses, the hands which made, as it were, their own punctuation marks. They gazed at his patent-leather shoes, his forelock, and his dandified waist. They were titillated by these extravagances, and they let him know it.

So did Oscar Wilde. But Whistler knew the worth of such admiration. Before long, he had completely reduced the ebullient Oscar. "What has Oscar in common with Art?" he demanded, "except that he dines at our tables and picks from our platters the plums for the puddings he peddles in the provinces." On another occasion, he said that Wilde had "no more sense of a picture than of the fit of a coat." Oscar could not compare with him as an antagonist. Other young men joined the Whistler retinue. And it must be confessed that he gave too much of himself to them—out of vanity, no doubt. By the late 80's, a wand which he habitually carried about with him was virtually the scepter of London. Yet even his foibles cannot obscure the fact that each day he poured forth his more essential self in the studio, constantly turning out his etchings and lithographs, his pastels and paintings, and—when he went to the beach or country—his water colors. This was the central life of Whistler, and the irreducible which remained when the performance was over.

His mother had died at the start of the 80's. He grieved over her. Considerably after his "polenta and macaroni days," which Maud had shared with him, he tired of her. That episode was over. Whistler was never explicit about these relationships, and it is only with difficulty that one penetrates to the truth in the official biography by Joseph Pennell. But where Fumette and Finette had been the tigress and the cocotte, and Jo the blooming Irish beauty, Maud had been his stability and his reassurance for many a year. She had borne him a child out of wedlock. Another child, which he called an "infidelity" to her, she had brought up. She had been generous, self-effacing, and obedient. Her story might tell much about a secretive Whistler whom few, probably, knew as well. In 1886, Godwin, the architect who had planned Whistler's white house, died, leaving behind him an attractive widow. Less than two years later, she and Whistler were married. They were well suited to each other, in interests, in temperament, possibly even as to social connections. It was her encouragement which now led him to increase the output of his lithographs, a medium which she especially liked. In fact, most of his 160 specimens were done after they had become husband and wife. Some of them pictured her. Others portrayed scenes in Venice, in Holland, Belgium, England, and France. All were distinguished.

Getting restless, Whistler decided that he would once more take up residence in France. Soon he and his wife were established there. It was the time of the Symbolists. Famous salons met weekly at the home of Verlaine. Whist-

ler was invited. Here he did not have to walk the tightrope for the spectators. They accepted him as an artist. He consolidated a particularly rewarding friendship with Mallarmé. Mallarmé, that Debussy of poetry, whose whole effect consisted in the elusive overtone, was an English tutor by profession. He had lived in England, and he still made his livelihood by teaching the language. He had read Whistler's *Ten O'clock*. He admired it. Accordingly, he translated it into French. This furthered Whistler's reputation with the group. Whistler, in turn, prepared a lithographic portrait of his friend, the poet. It may seem, as one glances at it in the *Collected Poems of Mallarmé*, to be a spontaneous sketch. It has an air of the unpremeditated. But the fact is that Whistler tried again and again until he got what he wanted. The sparse lines in the ultimate delineation were the result, as so often, of many previous efforts which had failed to satisfy the insistent eye of Whistler.

But the painter's kinship with the Symbolists was not merely one of personal sympathies. This has been pointed out with great skill by Mr. James Laver, whose biography, published in 1930, is now the most provocative on the painter's life. According to Laver, "Whistler's art, which had drifted so far away from the main current of French painting, was for many reasons particularly likely to appeal to the littérateurs of the Symbolist movement. They were tired of crude colors and fond of twilight. So was Whistler. Their taste was perfect, but lacking in all robustness. So was his. They delighted in the suggestion of mystery, in contours lost in shadows, in figures that emerged from a

misty background like the people of a dream. Whistler's later portraits satisfied all these requirements. Sometimes a whole school of literature seems to possess a definite color, and the color of symbolism is gray-blue, just such a shade as Whistler mixed upon his palette when he sat down to paint a nocturne."

No less important is the fact that French artists and writers ever since Baudelaire had been praising his work. They appreciated its *finesse*, just as they admired the esthetic logic of Poe. In the mid-Eighties, Théodore Duret, one of the most effective champions of the Impressionists, published an estimate of Whistler's work in the influential *Gazette des Beaux Arts*. Much later, he was to write the biography which still remains the most intelligent on Whistler as a painter. In his pages, the eccentricities of the American were not emphasized. Instead, more sensibly, he stressed his alternation between painting and the graphic arts, and sought to locate the nexus of them both in Whistler's delicate probing of the penumbra. Duret saw him as an exponent of the mysterious. And it is this aspect of the artist that he understood better than any one else.

Few critics, however, have said much about the water colors. They were generally inspired by vistas of the sea or meadow. One of the most animated "describes" a photographer and his group upon the shore in midsummer. It is like a twinkle. He plotted to obtain such effects. According to one of his apprentices, a Mrs. Addams—"When the wave broke and the surf made a beautiful line of white, he painted this at once, then all that completed the beauty of the breaking wave, then the boat passing, and

then, having got the movement and the beauty that goes almost as soon as it comes, he put in the shore on the horizon." In his water colors, therefore, Whistler is out-and-out the Impressionist. But he was not attached to nature as they were. He saw nature only as a repository of new suggestions, not as in itself a source. Its fecundity was denied to him. Yet in a water color of 1894—*The Convalescent*—this limitation is not apparent. It was impelled by the affliction of his wife.

She had been stricken with cancer. Often in the mornings he would sketch her as she ate her breakfast. He told himself that she would recover. In *The Convalescent*, this hope speaks through the pearly glow which lies about her face. . . . At other moments, he would peer down from his corner window at the parks and roofs below. It was a gemlike Paris that he saw—not the soiled, the tramping, the busy metropolis. It was the finer stitching, one might say, of that old, old counterpane. The sun glinted on the tiles, distant pedestrians moved along the streets, perhaps a bird circled in the sky. For not only his wife was dying. The little master was dying with her. Her death occurred in 1896. And even though he lingered a few years more, Whistler was never the same again.

He opened a school. Many came at first. Among them, the inevitable Paint-quick Americans. He told them that he had no use for "cow-punchers" and their "two-bit paintings." When he frowned at one young lady's work, she said, "I paint what I see." "My dear lady," he replied, "wait till you see what you paint." More important was

his emphasis on the palette. He compared it to a musician's instrument, and urged the students to give it the same care. That was typical of Whistler. He had lived, often, as a performer, and his art, on its weaker side at least, bore relation to the virtuoso's. He was playing upon a theme, not recreating his material.

Soon the students fell away. The novelty was gone. No longer was Whistler spruce. He lacked the old glitter. The champagne effervesced no more. Some sparkle had gone out of him. As his verve declined, so did he. He became a little unkempt. He no longer was the dandy of the boulevards. He failed day by day. He sought the warmth of Corsica and the South of France. He declared that he never had rested before. Yet he still persisted in his drawing.

His last important set of etchings had been done in Holland and Belgium, in the early 90's. They surpassed even the Venetian series in suggestibility. Here windows were bordered reflections; canals, bounded flows; bridges, the shadowy connection from one shore to another. Houses, too, were more like jewels than habitations. This heightened elusiveness again was present in his final drawings. They never lost their delicacy. Only, the touches became fewer and fewer. As if every stroke corresponded to his increased difficulty in breathing. Finally there were no more strokes. In 1903 the master was dead.

It was expected that the funeral would be large. Extra police were detailed to hold back the crowd. But such preparations were unnecessary. Whistler no longer was a

front-page figure. He long since had ceased to fascinate. Society folk knew him no more. Even the American Embassy sent no representative.

III

Yet a tribute was demanded. Whistler had participated in the central movements of the nineteenth century. He belonged, and fully. He also stood for an individual accomplishment. He had become the master of elimination (or, as some one has said, of punctuation).

This particular kind of achievement is best suited to the small dimension. Hence his superiority in the black-and-white. Here the scope was precisely his own. Here the imprint was unmistakably that of the Butterfly. Etching, until the 1840's, had not been an active medium for many years. Not since Goya's satires on the war in Spain, had any major figure impressively attacked it. In the single decade of the 40's it had been renewed. Charles Jacque, a Frenchman, did a whole series on pigs. He knew them as a farmer might. No Angelus tolled over the fields, as in the country meditations of Millet. God was not speaking through the clods. But the animals of the field were rooting, rolling in the earth, and fulfilling their appetites. Daubigny, also, had a country inspiration, although the salt breath of the sea swept through his meadows, and a downiness, as of the clouds, was in his skies. Then appeared Charles Meryon. Meryon was the Poe of etching. The gargoyles groaned in his depictions of *Notre Dame*. In the *Morgue*, stark men, far down, wandered as if in a cataleptic

state. Even when he depicted a balloon rising over Paris, later in the century, an essentially medieval spirit was at work. Horrid creatures lurked at the margins. Somewhere the pressure was too much. Stones mewed a man up, and lungs smothered in the unventilated passages.

It was in the midst of such a revival that Whistler appeared. But he had been differently conditioned. He had an effortless precision, which the discipline of the Coastal Survey had sharpened and made exact. He had a new technical adroitness, just as if he were an inventor with a freshly perfected instrument. With this precision he combined a perception of mystery. Light and shadow shuttled through his prints. He was ever the imaginative at the fireside, gazing at the boundary between the dark and the light, and tracing the merest flecks of one upon the other. He can stand as the artist of the marginal.

Baudelaire, in 1863, noted that etching was *à la mode*. And he saw Whistler's part in this development. He remarked, too, that the poetry of a vast capital was in his works. Here Whistler joined hands with the moderns. It was nineteenth-century London, a contemporary Venice, palpitant France, which spoke through his etchings. He did not look back. He registered the living day. Henceforth no etcher could ignore him.

Nor have they. He aroused Seymour Haden. He affected a whole school of Scotch and English imitators. In America, which Haden visited in 1881, a perfect vogue for the etching sprang up in the years immediately thereafter. Every one was using his medium. To all of them, Whistler was an example.

He also enhanced the medium of lithography. Earlier in the century, when it was still new, established artists looked down upon it. They thought it encouraged carelessness of workmanship, and that taste would be sacrificed to mass production. Daumier showed that they were wrong, even though he used the lithograph almost exclusively in terms of the daily cartoon. Considerably later, Fantin-Latour began to explore it as a means in itself. He composed pictures on a theme, usually of musicians or fellow-artists. Arcadian scenes appealed to him. Best of all were his domestic interiors of women sewing. From these, Whistler set forth on his own accomplishments. He made the lithograph an affair of skips and rambles. He merely flecked the stone. He conveyed a new delicacy. Less numerous than his etchings, his lithographs nevertheless did push out the boundaries in this medium as well.

Whistler's contribution to painting was of another order. Here he was the refiner. He mixed an incredible dish from French Realism, from photography, from Japanese decoration, from the Velasquez touch, from the Pre-Raphaelites. He subtly seasoned this dish with condiments from the *petits maîtres* of Holland and Italy. Out of this emanated a flavor now known as Whistlerian. It was essentially a product of taste. Indeed, he sacrificed almost too much to taste—to the pursuit of the brush stroke which left no mark, to the ever more subtle arrangement, to the very transparency of things. Such a pursuit approaches the dissoluble. Now, inasmuch as painting is above all the art of materiality, such a procedure was continually drawing him away from the more productive channels. His objec-

tive, if realized, would have meant the gradual disappearance of the pigment altogether.

His goal was rooted in his Puritanism, and the Puritan shuns the flesh. The material envelope is not for him. As W. C. Brownell has so well said, Whistler sought the *idea* and not the stuff itself. In this he was related to the Transcendentalists of Brook Farm and Concord. But with a difference. They were imbued with a deity which overlay all things. Whistler, though he remained a believer throughout his days, found elsewhere the props for his being. He was a gentleman, a Cavalier, a descendant of soldiers. He possessed a code. That is why he resented attacks so much. That is why he fought so unforgivingly, and it is why he never questioned himself. He was a D'Artagnan out of his time. Yet he never compromised with the nineteenth century—he fought it. But the essence of art lies in its motivation. There, Whistler differs from the Emersons and Thoreaus and the later Ryder. It was not an Oversoul that sustained him, but an ancestral sense of military obligations.

His Puritanism further inhered in the fact that the juices flowed less readily in the latter part of his life. Substance was not in his canvases. His whole object was away from the substance. He did not sink his fingers in the paint to love it the more deeply. He did not embrace and penetrate the material. He did not experience the profounder passages which regenerate the human being. Instead he bickered, and cut, and evaded. It was an injured egotism that he defended, and not the total personality.

Roger Fry has pointed out, that the one abiding emo-

tion of Whistler was art. He was not identified with another soul, nor another body, nor a country, nor a people, nor a deity. He gave himself solely to art. He was its priest. He disciplined himself for it. He immolated himself, and each day gave a life as token of his devotion. But such a basis is insufficient. Art does not feed upon itself. If it does, it becomes something less than life, instead of its fulfillment. This, then, was his essential Puritanism. His studio was his chapel, the daily rite his approach to the canvas. As for his most intimate loyalties, they went to his mother. Hence his addiction to gray, to the silhouette, to the insubstantial. Her influence was persistently increasing after his thirty-third year. Therefore the attenuation in both the man and his work.

IV

It is now time to appreciate Whistler as an American. Thirty years ago, Meier-Graefe, the ponderous German, provocatively declared that Whistler was a Frenchman, a Japanese, an Englishman, and a Spaniard. Only as an afterthought did he consider him an American.

Too much has been made of Whistler's expatriation. Did Dante become the less Florentine because of his exile? True, Whistler left America at twenty-one, and never returned. But he never disowned his country. He denounced its artists, he condemned its stupidities, but in a crisis he was always the American. He knew why the English were against him at the time of the Ruskin trial,

and he fully realized what he was doing when he requested the inclusion of Americans among his pall-bearers. No, the cause for his permanent exile was that only abroad, where art was already developed, could he find the surroundings suitable to him.

It should be remembered that the Hudson River School dominated the American painting of the time. Huge canvases of a virginal countryside were in favor. This type of sentiment, legitimate enough in its place, had nothing to offer a painter who was eager for new ideas and a sympathetic matrix. From this point of view, it might be questioned whether he chose well to live so long in England. Yet the Continent was always at hand. And even Ruskin, despite his pulpiteering in the guise of esthetics, offered more of a foil than he could find in America.

Again, in his specific qualities, Whistler was the American. His buoyancy, his verve, his flair for the unexpected often typify the citizens of this country. His technical preoccupations related him to the American capacity for invention. One may overlook his itch for publicity. Why insist on that? Essentially it was his talent for the improvisation that renders him an American. Compare his etchings to the Europeans'. Do they not as a rule seem less premeditated? Was not the very object of his art to give the impression of being casual? The very way in which he began his etchings is revealing. He sketched on copper as others do on paper. He always had a plate in his pocket. It is this volatility of Whistler's which demonstrates that he had come from a new country.

V

And that country had a new art. Even now we hardly know its name. But Whistler was certainly a progenitor of that art. He served as a bridge from Europe to America. He made past accomplishments real to us. Even more, he coped as an equal with his contemporaries abroad. Think what that must have meant to the young who were coming of age around 1900! An American was a first-rate figure in the world of art! An American could make them all sit up and take notice! His performances in Vanity Fair need not distract today. They impressed merely the public. But the unfledged generation of 1900 felt a new tremor as it regarded his art. Certainly some of its adherents felt that they, too, might proceed to the heights as he did.

Many, if not all of them, were influenced by his work. John Marin's early etchings—his water colors, too—have frequently been termed Whistlerian. The cartoonist, Boardman Robinson, has admitted that when he studied in Paris, early in the century, the young Americans were all trying to break away from the Whistler influence. John Sloan, usually considered a social painter, affirms, in his early canvases of New York harbor, a tonal kinship with this nineteenth-century predecessor. All the way, then, from the lyricist to the social commentator, Whistler inspired the younger men.

Whistler taught some of these eager painters, in advance, principles which the Moderns would merely recapitulate. They are beautifully presented in a passage

from *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, a collection of his writings which, along with *The Ten O'clock*, merits a special sheaf—not received as yet—in any anthology of American prose:

"My picture of a *Harmony in Gray and Gold* is an illustration of my meaning—a snow scene with a single black figure and a lighted tavern. I care nothing for the past, present, or future of the black figure, placed there because the black was wanted at that spot. All that I know is that my combination of gray and gold is the basis of the picture."

For the average nineteenth-century illustrator, such a scene would have meant a snowball fight, or a little match-girl shivering in a doorway. It might have made a good Christmas postal. But not for Whistler. He sought in the picture itself the whole reason for his attainment. And because of that, he was both the prophet and the progenitor.

CHAPTER II

The Magicianship of Sargent

NO CHILD can forget the first time he saw a magician. What a wonderful man he was! As the theatre was dark, and all the lights were concentrated upon the stage, he could surely hide nothing from the public. Yet cards would flutter from his coat sleeves, he would draw endless handkerchiefs from his palm, he made a wand do what it did in fairy-tales. Nobody could follow his hands—they were too quick. Yet every one marvelled at those hands. They were more skillful than hands had any right to be.

In the same way, critics have marvelled at the hands of John Singer Sargent. They had an incredible dexterity. They were swiftly certain. They could not be followed. But they never failed. He too was a magician. He too performed sleight-of-hand. Only, with him, the magicianship exercised itself in paint, and the public, which gazed in such enchantment, was composed, not of children, but of one full generation of the Anglo-American ruling class.

Sargent was the perfect mirror of these people. He had been born to picture them. By origins, by taste, by association, by every conceivable tie, he was intended to be their interpreter. He could not escape success. Success, indeed,

was traditional among the Sargents of Boston. They had accustomed themselves to it during four generations in America. His father, for example, who was a doctor, had developed a rich practice before his graduation from medical school. In 1844 he was attached to the staff of a Philadelphia hospital. He had even published works on surgery, which he had illustrated himself, and which were adopted as textbooks in medical schools throughout the country. No doubt it was these accomplishments which had attracted his wife. She had come from the upper circles of Philadelphia. She was a good musician, she painted water colors, she glittered in society. She considered the America of the 1850's uncouth. She yearned for Europe. Four years after her marriage, therefore, in 1854, she had persuaded her husband to retire from practice and live permanently abroad.

Their son John was born in Florence, in 1856. Apparently the mother had ambitions for him from the very beginning. They took form as soon as the boy showed a talent for drawing. Each day, when they went on walks, she would say that he might do as many drawings as he wished, but on one condition—that he brought back one that was finished. The father had visions of a more practical career. He intended that the boy should enter the United States Navy. Yet it was the mother, despite the seasonal shifts from German watering-place to French resort, to Italian city, and the social affairs appertaining to each, who finally made the choice, when the boy was thirteen.

The following year he was enrolled at the Accademia,

in Florence. Four years later he went to Paris, many sketches under his arm, and knocked at the studio of Carolus Duran. The master admitted him, considered both him and his work, and accepted him as a student. John Singer Sargent was diligent. He was confident. He was obedient. He excelled in his class. No wonder he satisfied his teacher. In other ways, too, he was not the typical student of the Quartier Latin. No Whistler pranks for him. Nobody ever saw *him* in corduroy trousers, a sash at his waist. He was busy working. He had office hours. He was bound for success.

It came remarkably fast. In 1877, when he was but twenty-one, he sent a picture to the Salon. It was a capable canvas, this *En Route pour la Pêche*, depicting, as it did, a fishing expedition with a method appropriately cognizant of the Impressionists, and yet not too unsettling for the academic mind. It won an Honorable Mention. The following summer he vacationed with his parents at Capri. Once more he painted busily. The result this time —a scene of olive trees in the Italian Paradise—was such as to arrest many an interested eye, when it was exhibited at the Salon in Paris. He was on his way to a reputation. Still later, in 1880, he journeyed to Morocco. Here again he painted—*El Jaleo*, an exotic dancer with guitarists behind, the *Spanish Dance*, and other canvases of the sort. But desert poetry was not for him, declared Sargent in a letter to a friend. "Of course the poetic strain that writers launch forth in when they touch upon a certain degree of latitude and longitude—is certainly to a great extent conventional." To Mr. Sargent all facts were equal.

A trip to Holland had another result. In Haarlem he could see Frans Hals according to the light in which he had originally worked. Every stroke was rousing. That slashing manner, that wonderful dexterity of the wrist, that supreme conviction of the moment—all demonstrated, as not even the eulogies of Carolus Duran had been able to do, that here was the painter for Sargent. Unfortunately, the American could not experience, or even discern, apparently, the pressures which had motivated the swaggering Dutchman. Mere brushwork could not account for the depth of those blacks, mere ocular efficiency would not paint such laughter, surely it was not technical considerations alone which had animated the group portraits of the declining years—those sad witnesses of deterioration. But to Sargent, Hals was only a manipulator. And it was that manipulation which, above all, he sought to emulate.

And still he advanced. In the Salon of 1881 he exhibited four more pictures. This time, probably as the result of the contact with Hals, they were all portraits. Once more Sargent scored. His *Lady with a Rose*, for example, impressed Henry James. He wrote, more wisely perhaps than he knew, that "it offers the slightly uncanny spectacle of a talent which on the very threshold of its career has nothing more to learn." Yes, there could be no doubt of it. Sargent had energy, directness, attack. He painted straight from the shoulder. No hesitations there. He knew what he wanted. He disturbed nobody by his own vacillations. The age, the income, the health, the degree of cultivation —all these spoke out in the portraits. They captured man under his social aspect. Such, presumably, was the thought

of James. And if painting is merely an instrument of registration, he was certainly correct.

By now the path of Sargent was clear. He was the coming acceptable portraitist. When two more such pictures had been acclaimed at the Salon in the following year, the recognition became unmistakable. Commissions began to pour in. Soon he was receiving 8000 francs for a full-length portrait, 5000 for a half-length, and from 2000 to 4000 francs for subject-pictures and landscapes. Already the vogue for Sargent was under way. Ladies and gentlemen were beginning to sit for him. He had found his public, and his public had found him.

Only one interruption occurred to mar this felicity. He unwisely determined to paint the queen of Parisian society, Madame Gautreau. To his friend del Castillo, he wrote, "If you are 'bien avec elle' and will see her in Paris, you might tell her that I am a man of *prodigious talent*." The emphasis, by the way, was his. He meant, perhaps, to be a little bantering. But he also believed what he said. Accordingly, the sitting was arranged. For many days he struggled with the portrait. He found the queen a difficult lady. More difficult still was it to subdue the likeness. He rubbed out, he changed, he reordered, he adjusted. Still unsatisfied, he said, "Enough," and sent the portrait to the Salon. There, it should be remembered, he now rated as a regular, a regular of seven years' standing. How, then, could he be prepared for what happened?

Flocks of women invaded the Salon. All day they raged against the picture. They jeered at him as a bad artist. That was not Madame Gautreau, they cried, it was an

ill-looking misrepresentation. It should be thrown out. Succeeding days brought no surcease. The outraged lady beleaguered him in his studio. She demanded that it be withdrawn from the exhibition. Then her parents came, also insisting upon its removal. Every one, it seemed, was against him. At length, possibly out of fear of danger to the canvas, he acceded and took it home towards the end of the show. Thus ended his Paris days. Ten years he had studied, painted, and exhibited there. Ten years he had marched from one success to another. And now he was rejected. Why? Could it be that he was not a painter? Was he possibly lacking in talent? Had he by any chance chosen the wrong profession?

These questions are not merely speculative. Sir Edmund Gosse is on record to the effect that, some time later, doubts of precisely this kind had arisen in the mind of the painter. One day, at a summer resort in England, Mr. Sargent was explosively expressing his dissatisfaction with France to the writer. "He was determined to shake the dust of it off his shoes." Gosse then declares that he could not believe it when Sargent said that he would give up painting altogether. "What would you do?" demanded Gosse. " 'Oh,' " he answered, " 'I shall go into business.' " Can any one imagine Whistler saying that? Why, when the danger was hottest, Whistler pushed forward all the more bravely. When in want, he painted still more ardently. The answer is simple. Whistler was an artist, Sargent a man of skill who had trained himself for a certain calling. Once his skill was called into question, he had no interior resources upon which to rely. That, again, is the

reason why he saw in Hals the paint-manipulator, in Velasquez the subtle wrist, in Tintoretto, Rembrandt or Titian supreme prestidigitators. He was not of their kind. How, then, could he understand them?

Sargent's work is of another order. The society page, for instance, exists to notify the world that the folk of Newport are on the move to North Carolina, or that the season has ended in the Ramapos. Nobody, presumably, confuses such printed matter—or even its equivalent in books—with literature. Sargent's portraits exercise a comparable social function. What did Mrs. Gifford Hammond wear at her daughter's coming-out party? What was her expression as she stepped into the reception room? Did she bear herself well? Sargent knew how to record such matters. His work, again, might be considered in relation to the financial page. What was the thrust of Mr. Harding Joel? What forces were revealed by his fingers? Did he have a steady jaw? Could his eye size up a bargain? Was he generous, uncouth, reliable, effective? These are the questions that Sargent answers in his portraits. If that be understood, the vogue for his work should occasion no perplexity. Any other reception would have been stranger still.

Shortly after he removed to London, the less rigid society folk began to praise his work. It was, they said, "chic personified in paint." The commoner, of course, did not as yet agree. Nor did the Academy. Nevertheless, having painted the Misses Vickers, a winsome family of the rich,

he successfully overcame the objections of the Academy against its being hung. The public, however, was still a bit backward. *The Pall Mall Gazette* took a poll, and it was discovered that by popular majority this was the "worst painting of the year." Yet even if he was rejected in such quarters, Sargent had arrived in England at just the right moment.

One full generation had passed since the French Impressionists had begun their work. They were by now accepted in their own country. No such movement had taken place in England. There, illustration was still in vogue. Heavy pigment was preferred. Even the Pre-Raphaelites were all but forgotten. It was the time for a new impulse, particularly if that impulse did not threaten to upset any of the conventions. And that is precisely where Sargent comes in. He imported, as George Moore has said, "l'article de Paris." He gave the impression of modernity, but no risks were involved. Ladies and gentlemen might sit for him without any sacrifice of social esteem. Aging ones might grumble that he used paint differently from the conventional portraitists of their generation. They might find him more vigorous than the Englishmen whom they admired. But Sargent's clients could reply that his newer methods were just what they wanted. Styles in painting, they could add, change no less than they do in ladies' apparel and men's clothing. One must be up to the times.

In other words, many people were waiting for just such a painter. And once the first blocks of ice were out of the way, the passage cleared rapidly. Another sign of freshening impulses was the formation of the New English Art

Club, in 1886. Its purpose was to modify English painting by the introduction of French influences. The stream was decidedly open. And Sargent was in it. A year later, and the Americans, too, were enlisted. He was invited to paint the portrait of Mrs. Marquand. Not particularly anxious to revisit his parental homeland (which he had first seen in 1876), he set such a high figure that he was sure the commission would be refused. To his surprise, Mrs. Marquand accepted.

Soon Sargent had come to America, where he spent the winter of 1887-88. He was the man of the year. Society folk mobbed him. He exhibited twenty of his works in Boston. Seldom had the city of his kinsmen been more excited. It was universally agreed that he was *the* portraitist of the time. Not to be painted by Sargent, was a social mistake. He was busier than ever. He reported for work at eight. Day in and day out, that was his routine. He would paint until late afternoon. There were no emotional complications to deflect him. No woman ever troubled Sargent. He cherished his sister, he was thoughtful of his mother. But love seems not to have been part of his life. When he seated himself at the canvas, therefore, it was, as Mr. Royal Cortissoz has said in another connection, a question of manual efficiency. He was the virtuoso. He was the painter who laid in a whole canvas as if with never a doubt. He had the sure hand, the positive eye, the complete registering apparatus. So his clientele increased, and he became an example to many in America.

Elsewhere, particularly in the summer, he would, during his travels, polish off a few water colors. High in the Alps,

he would picture a chasm or a plateau. Italy's sunshine flashed through others. If waiting for a train, he was known to whip out his water-color equipment and run off a few trills and other passages without delay. He was like a concert pianist who was always practicing. Nor was it without moment that he had come, even in his early thirties, to disparage himself somewhat. He said of his water colors that he simply "made the best of an emergency." Others have declared that he was always a little ill at ease when any one referred to him as an artist. When he descended at a railway station, loaded up with canvases and sketch books, bristling as it were with the rods and reels of *plein air* sketching, he might well have been taken for a sportsman. One could picture him sitting in some chosen place, shielded by his umbrellas, while he baited his hook and cast his fly for his impressions. Six sheer feet of man, he dominated all as he swept along in his carriage. A person of import had come to town. There was something firm about him. And surely, in this manliness of his, in this well-planted strength and punchful energy, one may find the basic appeal which he had to others of like nature, and the last proof—if any were needed—that he was an American. It was, let us remember, the day of Frick and Carnegie. Direct energy ruled. A straight shooter was wanted. How, then, could Sargent fail to impress? He was not given to introspection. He did not probe, or hesitate, or modify. He sat himself down before a scene, as before a person, and stated the facts as he saw them. Few men were ever more like their time.

His honors increased. In 1890 it was decided that the

Boston Public Library should be decorated with murals. Puvis de Chavannes, the eminent Frenchman, was chosen. Edwin Austen Abbey, the American who was always illustrating literary subjects, obtained the second commission. Who should get the third? Sargent's name was discussed. He knew the architects, McKim and White. He was the kind of man who could hold his own at the Players' Club. It was not surprising, therefore, that, despite his total lack of experience as a muralist, he secured the third appointment. Such selections were not determined exclusively by fitness. Acceptability counted also. As Mr. Abbey said, "The Boston people need not be afraid that he will be eccentric or impressionistic, or anything that is not perfectly serious and non-experimental when it comes to work of this kind." After all, the Sargents were respectable.

The painter responded with a characteristic diligence. Choosing the theme of religion and its development throughout the ages, he systematically, in the next few years, toured Egypt, Palestine, Spain and other pertinent areas, so as to steep himself in background. He was nothing if not thorough. And those who could be impressed by that kind of preparation, esteemed him more than ever before. Indeed, they declared that he had now added a second reputation to his first.

Meanwhile, he had not ceased his portrait painting. By now much of it was confined to America. Such notables as Henry Cabot Lodge, Mrs. Jack Gardner, Joseph Jefferson and Edwin Booth sat for him. He painted directors of museums and presidents of banks and leading educators and philanthropists. What notable did he omit? During

the 90's, says his biographer Evans Charteris, "it had ceased to be a question who would be painted by Sargent; the question was whom he would find time to paint." True, he was sometimes thought too severe. Thomas Bailey Aldrich, for example, advised Edwin Booth, when his portrait was getting under way, "to buy at once a piece of sandpaper, and, inside locked doors, to sandpaper his soul. All secret thoughts," he declared, "would be dragged squirming to the light." And it must be admitted that Sargent practiced a certain probity in these matters. The ladies, particularly, often besought him to alter a mouth, a line in the face, a feature. He always refused. Nowhere is this better expressed than in a letter to the husband of a protesting wife.

"Dear ——

"I have received your kind letter and if I thought an interview was of the slightest use and would not lead to a further discussion I would of course welcome it.

"But the point on which we differ is one with which a long experience of portrait painting has made me perfectly familiar. I have very often been reproached with giving a hard expression to ladies' portraits, especially when I have retained some look of intelligence in a face, besides amiability, as I consider myself forced to do in this case.

"The expression of ——'s face in the portrait is kind and indulgent, with over and above this, a hint at a sense of humor. If I take this out, it will become as soft as any one can desire. But as a matter of fact nothing will make me, much as I regret not meeting your wishes."

Like his father, John Singer Sargent was an honest practitioner.

During one of his sojourns in London, towards the end of the 90's, Sargent was accosted by Asher Wertheimer, a wealthy art dealer. Mr. Wertheimer, who was about to celebrate his silver wedding, wanted to salute the occasion by having the distinguished painter do portraits of himself and his wife. Sargent accepted. Now he was at the very pinnacle. Here, if ever, in this merchant's portrait, he outdid himself. The art dealer assesses the beholder; his eyes weigh everything; he stands inscrutably there behind them holding a cigar as if it were the badge of his estate. He has wrestled, he has won, now he looks out from his crest of achievement. Considered in such terms, this is the best portrait of Sargent's career. It impressively documents the self-made man of the nineteenth century. Were no other record to exist, one could rely on this. Yet even here no joy springs from the paint. No indictment is given. It contains not even an opinion. The facts—only the facts—are registered. For documents this is enough—but not for art. Some central feeling must exist. The given work must be the exfoliation—the very flower—of some vital inner compulsion. Otherwise there is no art.

There was no such compulsion in Sargent. This accounts for his lack of any fundamental satisfaction from his work. Even when supremely successful, he was to confess to a friend, "No more *paughtraits* whether refreshed or not. I abhor and abjure them and hope never to do another, especially of the Upper Class." Why so unrewarded? Was it the external hardness of his subjects, or a permanent smart which he had carried about ever since the days of his Paris difficulties? Honors might multiply. He would picture

Presidents of the United States and Lord High Gentlemen of England. But it was only in position that he had his rewards. Member of the Royal Academy, teacher in its school (1897), National Academician in America, decorator of the Boston Museum, war correspondent at the Front—such were his later honors. Yet, actually, as a portraitist, he declined after the turn of the century. He did few of them after 1909. He devoted himself to his murals and became merely a shell within a shell.

The new movements were not for him. When, in 1911, the Post-Impressionists were exhibited at the Grafton Gallery in London, he wrote a letter to the papers. "I am," he growled, "absolutely skeptical as to their having any claim to being works of art, with the exception of some of the pictures by Gauguin that strike me as admirable in color, and in color only." One critic, he thought, had "over-estimated the 'realism' of Van Gogh, whose things look to me like imitations made in coral or glass of objects in a vacuum." He even suggested "bad faith on the part of people like Matisse." He laid the whole affair to sharp picture dealers, who were merely booming "this new article of commerce." He might be above others of his time in recognition and testimonials. But he condemned new life. For that, at least, few will cherish him.

Certain painters—especially around 1900—would be impressed by his efficient hands, others would respond to his "American" energy, some would even seek a similar station. But they would be the little Sargents. The rest would turn elsewhere. Whistler would stimulate them, or the newer currents from Europe, or satirists like Forain,

or the men of the more venerable tradition. For all such, Sargent had ceased to fascinate.

But the old magician still had his following. One year before his death, in 1925, his Wertheimer portraits were accepted by the National Gallery. *Punch* honored him with a drawing. Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Velasquez, Hogarth, Reynolds, Gainsborough and Lely were congregated on the steps of the museum. They were saluting Sargent as he climbed up to meet them. Under the caption of the "Young Master," the chorus of the Old Ones sang out, "Well done! You're the first master to break the rule and get in here alive!" What more could Sargent ask?

If Whistler served as a bridge, Sargent was an exporter from Europe to America. He learned from Manet how a contrast of tones can give animation to a canvas. He passed on the lesson, but not by such a means as to make any further discoveries possible. Who, looking today at Sargent's *Hermit*,[1] let us say, can be kindled by it? Try to find the focus of the picture. Notice how the eye wanders, how no center pulls all together. Then proceed into the corridor now devoted to the more lively water colors. Is there not a monotony about them? What at first seems to be a flicker on the surface soon becomes, because of the identity in color and attack, repetition of experience in every passage that follows. Sargent had a formula. That is why he could be so energetic. As Mr. Roger Fry has said of his oils, "the blues of his skies are nearly always the same cobalt, sunlit

[1]Metropolitan Museum.

stone the same burnt sienna, distant mountains the same violet gray." He knew the solution before he started.

Students of 1900, therefore, had, at least so far as an American tradition was concerned, two eminent men to follow.One was a sharp relentless fighter, original in work as he was in temperament, an artist down to the tips of his immaculate hands. The other was Sargent, man of the world, manipulator of paint, magician extraordinary. One offered the way of an ever more exigent experience, the other the quicker rewards of success and affluence. One appealed to the daring who are never satisfied, the other to the energetic and the practical to whom painting is a craft, not unlike any other. Which would the young Americans choose—Whistler or Sargent?

CHAPTER III

Preparing a Generation

NOT ALL middle-class people are unsympathetic to art. The father of William Merritt Chase, for example, was a small-town shoe-dealer. He lived in Indiana at a time when the older citizen still remembered stockades and Indian fights. He probably saw few paintings. Chromos and wood-cut illustrations for religious texts educated his eye. Even his son—avid for drawing since childhood—said that his only wish was to make pictures for "books." It was not a time and place for art.

Some might have thought he had a misfit boy. For when he entered the business at the age of sixteen, William was too busy drawing on wrapping-paper to wait on the customers. He was a problem even to himself. But later when he was nineteen (he had been born in 1849), he said that he wanted to become a naval officer and obtained admission to the schoolship *Portsmouth*, out of Annapolis. This did not satisfy him. Presently his father had to travel East to get him out. He was no sooner home than he took house-paints and did a portrait of the *Portsmouth's* captain. Then he pictured the head of a calf, modelled his mother in plaster-casts, and set up a studio in his own room. Eventually a professional artist was consulted and steady lessons were arranged. When the boy sold a picture for ten dollars,

he convinced his parents that he should be sent to New York to study. There he remained for two years under the tutelage of J. O. Eaton.

At length the young man was ready to come home for a visit (his parents were then living in St. Louis). What, he wondered, would be their attitude? Would his father still expect him to stand behind the counter? The evening of his arrival he and his father were walking down the street, when Chase senior hailed a friend.

"Judge Brown," he said, "I want you to meet my son, the artist."

The son was thrilled. Some undefinable understanding had taken place. Henceforth he felt secure.

II

Nor was the general community inimical to art. When Chase, after a year in St. Louis, decided that he must continue his studies in Munich, he did not find the local folk to be against the further study which he thought necessary for his development. On the contrary, a group of St. Louis businessmen generously offered to finance his trip abroad, in return for a painting each when he returned. Such experience must have attached Chase to America. At any rate, though he studied six years abroad, he never became the expatriate either in word or deed, and when, in 1876, he was offered an instructorship in the Royal Academy at Munich, he declined in favor of an alternative post at the newly formed Art Students' League in New York.

True, he was advised in this decision by Frank Du-

veneck, an American who had come to Munich somewhat earlier than himself, and who had already distinguished himself both as a painter and teacher. Yet for Chase, the Middle Westerner, this decision was almost inevitable. He had a homespun quality about him. He was not predestined for transatlantic pirouettings, à la Whistler or Sargent. His place was at home. The very way he expressed himself was revealing. "I went to Munich, instead of Paris," he maintained, "because I could saw wood in Munich, instead of fluttering in the Latin merry-go-round." If spoken with a drawl and a back-country slowness, this statement might well have come from that other Hoosier, James Whitcomb Riley.

Unfortunately, what the Indiana student brought back with him was much less native than his own personality. He had learned to paint in the style of Munich. Chase, Duveneck, none of these young Americans, wrote their own poetry when they set themselves before the easel. They copied Leibl. This capable Bavarian, whose work had upset the academicians at Munich, was teaching the young how to "drag the paint." He prompted them to a greater freedom. His brush raced and flowed. He did not painfully block out his passages with drawing and then fill in with color, but worked at all times with color itself. A less happy effect of their stay in Munich was that many of the younger Americans brought back with them palettes that ran from brown to black. Almost every canvas seemed to have been dipped in bitumen. And again, if a young man were lazy, he could use *bravura* brushwork to cover up his deficiencies in structure. Nevertheless, the skillful in-

structor who came back to New York in 1878 had an infinitely better equipment, at least from a technical point of view, than the youth who had left it six years before.

But to what ends would he devote this technique? *Ready for the Ride*, painted just before his return, provides the answer. One can "find" the figure with difficulty in this brown dimness. Apparently the painter lacked the penetrating power. The lift of the collar, the highlight on the face, recall the early Rembrandt. Only in the gloves is there a more personal touch. Here one feels true texture, and a pleasure as if the painter himself drew them on. And, as a finishing touch, he imparts a gleam to the head of the cane which she holds. For the rest, it is merely an echo of the old masters.

And it was precisely a remark to this effect which altered Chase's art some years later. In the summer of 1881, he was on one of his periodical journeys to Europe. He had just been complimented on a portrait by the Belgian painter, Alfred Stevens, whom he much admired. "But why," Stevens suddenly added, "do you try to make your canvases look as if they had been painted by the old masters?" Chase was startled. Thereafter, he realized, he would have to drop the habits of darkness.

Nevertheless he continued, as before, to serve as a conduit to the past. Travelling in Spain that summer, he was impressed by the canvases of Velasquez. What facility, what textures! He felt as if he were actually touching silk. Upon returning to America, his teaching especially had a new-found effectiveness. He was still more fascinated by Velasquez in the two summers that followed. Then, in

1884, he visited Holland. He marvelled at the light that poured through Dutch interiors,[1] and he began to portray figures in the open. His palette remained dark, however. The following summer he obtained an impetus of another kind from Whistler.

The two of them agreed to paint each other. Unfortunately for Chase, Whistler dragged out the work. It was two months before he could finish it. Here Chase learned how to cut. For, in his portrait of Whistler, Chase was as sarcastic as his merciless subject. In this likeness Whistler smirks through his monocle, he poses with his cane at arm's length, he seems almost ready to apply the curling iron to his mustachios. Whistler never quite forgave him for it. "How dared he," demanded the little expatriate, "do this wicked thing—I who was charming made him beautiful on canvas, the Masher of the Avenues!"

It was after his marriage in 1888 that Chase's painting became more personal. Having moved to Brooklyn, he "discovered" Prospect Park. Here his wife would go boating and he would picture her in the sunlight. How could the dull thick Munich palette persist in such surroundings? He began now to paint with the same vivacity as Stevens. Definitely, he had moved outdoors. Even his portraits changed. But a shift had been discernible even earlier in his indoor subjects. *Hide and Seek*, for example, had pictured two little girls at play in a large room, one hiding behind a curtain in the foreground, the other proceeding towards a portière at the far end of the chamber. Here Chase had achieved interior illumination. He did it by the blade of

[1]In such painters as Pieter de Hooch.



Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

William Chase



Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts

light from the portière, by the gleaming white dress of the little girl approaching, by the blonde head of the child in hiding. The Munich gloom had vanished. Here, indeed, he had the meticulous glow of the sober Dutchmen.

In fact, it is his ability to develop which makes Chase an almost constantly interesting painter. He did not solidify, as Sargent did. He remained curiously fluid. He was always seeking a better accomplishment. True, nobody could accuse him of profundity. Yet his *Woman with a Shawl*, of 1893, is not a shallow painting. It springs from the depths of affection. Wrapped in a white shawl, his wife gazes out at the spectator. There is a fine tranquillity about this picture. One feels not merely textures, but the living tissue of a warm and satisfying relationship. Again, in the portrait of his mother, painted somewhat earlier, the restful eyes and folded hands are reassuring. When Chase portrayed his children, of which he eventually had eight, he was as engaging as they were. His commission portraits, too, are invariably appealing. If at times they seem a little too complacent—as if he were waiting for the applause of the admirers who stood about while he put in the final high light—nevertheless, they cut clean and their competence is not to be denied. And almost always they are lit with a flickering humanity.

His still lifes are no less commendable. These he did not begin to produce in quantity until after the turn of the century. He excelled in painting fish. Their iridescence, their wetness, the very feel of their textures, compelled him to take up a brush. Once when he was in London, in 1904, he halted before a fishmonger's shop. A great opalescent

cod was lying upon a marble slab. The painter eyed it, inquired the price, but at last turned aside. But later, he still could not forget that fish. At length he returned to ask if he might rent it for a few hours. Agreed. When the painter was overtime, the dealer went to his studio to get the fish. But he remained silent as he watched Chase at work. Even when noticed, he said, "Don't 'urry, sir; it's getting on fine." Presently it was finished—*The English Cod*—one of Chase's finest works of the kind.

He also is to be remembered for his painting of old copper vessels. Chardin, it will be recalled, gazed into mysterious depths when he confronted the pots and pans of the kitchen. Chase, however, was captured by the glisten upon the surface. This he rendered admirably. He also had an affection for stuffs and metals—for brocades and old rings and scarves and delicately patterned kimonos. He even had a flamingo hanging on his studio wall. He gleamed when he saw such things, and he knew how to make them meaningful on canvas.

As a painter in his own right, then, Chase contributed to the advancement of American technique. He emerged from the Munich shadows himself. He was sufficiently elastic to adopt the lighter palette encouraged by Impressionist usage. He captured a new distinction in the portrait. For, though he never reached into the marrow, as Hals or Goya, say, he did communicate more humanity than Sargent. And in certain portraits—especially those of his family—he warms us by the beneficence of his attachment both as a husband and a father. But above all, it is the execution which lingers. Painting, it must never be forgotten,

is *par excellence* the art of materials. An artist like Ryder, devoted though he was, paid for his lack of artisanship by a later darkening of his canvases. A Chase still-life, however —even despite its less moving genesis—still presents everything that it has to say because of an adequate technique. There was the lesson of Chase and the generation to come absorbed it.

III

But another kind of example was needed as well. Art as a career was practically unthinkable when he was a young man. In fact, when he first arrived in New York from Indiana only two buildings in the city contained studio accommodations for painters. He knew both toil and hunger those first two years away from home. Again, as a student in Munich, he felt the pinch of economic want. Yet he was not disturbed. On the contrary, he declared, once having accepted his appointment to teach in the Art Students' League, that he was going to have "the finest studio in New York." Which he did. He rented himself apartments in the old Tenth Street Studio building and immediately began to live as if he were a Florentine magnate. There was nothing apologetic about Chase. This, at the time, was an excellent thing for the American painter. Chase not merely said that he belonged to "the most magnificent profession that the world knows"—he lived as if he meant it.

He maintained a Negro servant, he entertained, he bought whatever his eye fancied. His walls were constantly

hung with new acquisitions. It was like a cross between a picture-gallery and a fine old jewelry-shop. He met the patron eye to eye. His was no artist's garret, and he a beggar with his hand out for a crumb. He could make place for a whole crowd of the rich when Carmencita, the Spanish dancer, was presented at his studio. He "rated," though he never truckled. Doubtless this was because of his self-respect. He never took refuge in illustration. He was a *painter*. His pride in that designation, and his insistence on living up to it, distinctly helped to magnify his own status, and, what is more, the status of every painter in America.

IV

As a teacher, Chase is sometimes linked with Duveneck. For Frank Duveneck, born in 1848, and already established as an instructor before Chase's arrival at the art capital of Bavaria, painted, as he did, in the thick and dark Munich manner. Both obtained distinction early. But there the comparison ends. Whereas Duveneck remained almost continuously abroad until the end of the 80's, Chase anchored himself in New York and devoted himself to America. Again, where Duveneck never surpassed his own early work—best instanced in the volatility and eager brushmanship of the *Whistling Boy*, or the somewhat graver *Lady with a Fan*—and produced less and less in his later life, Chase continued to develop. While he was still vital Duveneck, it is true, did number among his so-called "Boys" such painters as John W. Alexander and John H. Twachtman. But the list became less impressive through-

out the 90's, and by the time of his death, in 1919, few remembered him any more.

Chase meanwhile flourished. He joined the Art Students' League while it was still a struggling institution. For twenty-three years he taught its students. Nobody could forget that broad-brimmed hat (later adopted by Whistler), the spats, the imperial mustaches, the rear of the head, the grandee manner. He was almost fit to caricature. Something of the peacock there, as Paul Rosenfeld has said.[2] Yet Chase was not merely a façade. He glowed when he taught. He loved the unctuousness and the flow of paint so much that he could not help making the students feel it as he did. Likewise, he had a fatherly sympathy. He used to refer to his students as his family. It was a large one. For in addition to serving his "children" at the League, he devoted himself to many others in his twelve years at the New York School of Art (which he founded), in thirteen more at the Pennsylvania Academy (which he visited once a week), in five at Brooklyn, in one term at Chicago, and in his summer classes on Long Island and abroad.

Chase was a spur as well as a friend. This was notably true after his first visit to Spain and his intoxication with Velasquez. He no longer, says his biographer Katherine Roof, "allowed his students to putter or relax." No more could they spend a whole week on a sketch—an hour was enough. At the time this was a revolution in teaching methods. One day, entering the class, he found the men too placid. "Take off your coats!" he shouted. "Roll up your sleeves and swear at your work!" He sought to pro-

[2] *Port of New York*, p. 95.

voke their individuality. He sometimes deliberately urged them to "queer" their work. He demanded new attacks. He cheered, advised, exhorted. He would start a whole Renaissance by himself. His principles were few but sound. "Truth, quality and interesting treatment," Chase held as necessary to good painting. By truth he meant technique; quality he characterized as the ring of gold compared with that of baser metal; style encompassed interesting treatment. He never prescribed, or even emphasized, subject matter. Hence he would dismiss the American Scene cult of today. Treatment came first. And fundamental to treatment was the twinkle of life.

It is hard to recapture that clipped alertness now that Chase is no longer here. For his person cannot be replaced. But a few of his own jottings do at least suggest the glint and freshness of his mind. "Hals' work," he once assured his students, "has always the effect of a sketch. It is probable that his best portraits were done in one or two hours. But it was the result of *knowledge*. Every stroke was *right*." How his eyes glittered when he said that! Cultivate the "snapshot glance," he urged. Was this not good American doctrine? Sparkle, don't penetrate. Such was William Merritt Chase, the teacher. He did not pry the secrets of nature. But sometimes his enthusiasm would set others upon the great highway. "Great artists," he would say, "get so much done because they delight in their work." This was the central, animating principle of Chase —Chase the helpful, and generous, yes, and the somewhat superficial Middle Westerner, who never forgot those bare

Indiana days of his childhood, and always hoped that there would be more resplendent art in this country.

V

Chase himself has added a complete chapter to the story of the national taste. His own part runs from 1877 to the advent of modern art in America, because in that year a considerable group of painters, rebelling against the Academy, set up the Society of American Artists. While there was no fundamental opposition between them—as was shown by the eventual amalgamation of the two—many of the younger men felt that the movement signified a freshening of the national atmosphere. Even Chase's decision to return may be related to this impulse. In any case, he soon affiliated himself with the more progressive group. He busied himself in other directions as well. With an older painter, Church, he was the first to organize exhibitions at the Art Students' League.[3] He explored the shops for pictures as well as stones and stuffs. Chase stands, indeed, as one of the first serious American collectors, and eventually his canvases were to number six hundred in all.

He influenced other collectors, too. In 1881, while he was strolling down a Paris boulevard, he spied J. Alden Weir, an American contemporary. Weir stopped the cab and bade him get in. Chase then learned that he was on his way to make some purchases for Erwin Davis, an American collector. Why not get some Manets? sug-

[3]Incidentally, Chase's collaborator in starting exhibits at the League —F. S. Church (1842–1924)—is not to be confused with the still earlier F. E. Church, a member of the Hudson River School.

gested Chase. Whereupon Weir directed the cab to the studio of the Impressionist. Weir was fascinated by the virtuosity of Manet and bought two paintings on the spot. Before the decade was out, Davis made a gift of these two canvases to the Metropolitan. Thus Chase helped to break the insularity of American taste.

Still later, when the same institution was hesitating as to whether it should purchase El Greco's *Nativity*, Chase was called into consultation by Daniel Chester French. His unconditional endorsement probably clinched the transaction. Again, he was responsible for the acquisition of the Greco *Crucifixion* by the Wilstach Collection in Philadelphia. Some time afterwards a visitor was eyeing this work with disapproval. "Who," he demanded, "is responsible for its presence here?" Chase blazed back, "I am proud and happy to state that I am the person responsible for the purchase of that picture, and I would have you to understand, sir, that you are standing before the work of a great master." Then he fiercely turned his back and left. Esthetic convictions of this kind were all too rare in nineteenth-century America—as they still are today. But Chase undoubtedly had them, and we are the gainers.

He was always effervescing in his letters from Europe. The number of his underlinings would indicate the degree of his enthusiasm. Unfortunately, he was not equally clear as to why he felt as he did. This in part accounts for his undue estimation of Sargent. In 1902, a number of Chase's pupils subscribed for a Sargent portrait of their master. It required six sittings. "My friends here," Chase wrote while it was in process, "say it is perfect. The paint-

ing is certainly beautiful. . . . He has done me as a painter and they say that he has caught my animation—whatever that means." Yes, it was a brisk likeness, this portrait which today hangs in the Metropolitan. But is it not overbrittle? Both men seem to be showing off. But the real key to Chase's admiration was the dexterity of the painter. "Sargent is a brilliant example," he once declared to his class, "of the great artist in whom there is no intermission between the hand and head." It grieved him that as the years went on, more and more of his students disagreed with him.

Indeed, Chase could not comprehend the newer currents. He denied that Cézanne was a good painter. While he was living in Florence—he had bought a villa there in 1907—he dogmatically advised Charles Loeser, an American who was one of the first to appreciate and to buy the great Frenchman, "Sell the stuff now while you can get some money for it. You won't if you wait long." Walter Pach, who has told the story,[4] believes that Chase would have liked the Moderns had he been acclimated to them. But that is just the point—he *didn't*. When Rodin drawings were first introduced at *291*, the rebel-center on lower Fifth Avenue, Chase was horrified. He advised his students not to go there. His warning had just the opposite effect, of course. Still later, he fulminated against the vaporings, as he might have called them, of the Armory Show. On another occasion, when he was hot about the Futurists, his wife daubed up some papers as she thought they did and presented them to her husband as examples

[4] *Queer Thing, Painting*, pp. 36–7.

of the type. He thought them more legitimate. In fact, Chase would make no concession whatever to the newer order.

The year of his death[5] he addressed the American Federation of Arts in Washington. Standing before them, still erect, with upright mustaches, cultivated beard, and carnation in his buttonhole, he told his hearers that there was no hope in the new movement. "I hesitate to touch upon the so-called 'Cubists' and 'Futurists' for the reason that to be discovered is exactly what they want. . . . I have tried in vain to find out what the aim of it all is, and the nearest I have succeeded in coming to any kind of a conclusion is that any indication in a work of art that the producer of that work has had any training was proof of his failure, either in ancient or modern times. In other words the student is told that he must get out of school. . . . In spite of this I do not think there is any occasion for alarm. This kind of thing is exhausting itself."

At the time, many of the young fighters stigmatized Chase as an old fogy. They were pouring out their heart's blood, and his only response was an obstinate denial. But every generation has the same experience. The young grow old, and then they oppose that which once made them young. But a wreath should be hung for William Merritt Chase, nevertheless. As Duncan Phillips wrote in his obituary testimonial, in 1916: "The position where he held his own against all comers marks the battle front of forty years ago, where the victory was won which made possible the present and future of American painting."

[5]Chase died October 25, 1916.

Today, Chase's accomplishment is somewhat neglected because of his limitations. But he did cultivate sprouts in a relatively bare landscape, he surveyed the soil and improved it, he imported the best methods of the time from Europe. And if he did lean too much upon Munich, upon Whistler, upon Velasquez and the French Impressionists, he did nevertheless flourish and leave something admirable as to execution and adroitness. These were his contributions, and it is time to recognize them.

OTHER TEACHERS

Kenyon Cox, another teacher of Chase's generation, was the Archbishop of American painting. He thought he was born to represent the virtues. He came by them honestly. His father was a Major-General in the Civil War and later one of its historians. The future guardian of the proprieties was sent abroad for study in 1877. He returned safely in 1882, having schooled himself in the correctitudes of paint. Yet even his classical nudes—desiccated though they were—could not appeal to the American taste. But as the official artist is always the politician, this painter did not insist. Instead he turned to decorative art.

The pale, dry ladies of the mural pieces never offended anybody. They were straight from Florence, *via* the cut-out method, with all the juices extracted *en route*. But the Holy Watchman identified his own dilutions of the past with the great tradition. Mr. Cortissoz has said[6] that

[6] *American Artists*, by Royal Cortissoz, p. 85. The term "ordonnance," which presently follows, is one this writer frequently uses to denote the ordering of a canvas.

Cox mixed his palette with brains. Better would it be to say that he stirred his colors on the tablets of the Law. Then he went forth to proscribe whatever trangressed the holy "ordonnance." For many years he afflicted his classes at the Art Students' League with his pontifical pronouncements on the righteousness of *his* tradition. Some considered him intimidating. But young John Marin, a painter-student who observed this ramrod of a man in the early years of the century, did not tremble. Years later, in an autobiographical sketch, he declared:

"One year at Art Students' League. Saw KENYON COX."

This oracular figure carried on an incessant propaganda against the new, because it was *new*. He was as narrow as the novelty-seeker is irresponsible. He dismissed whatever was gay or brisk or exploratory, as being an attempt to avoid sound apprenticeship. As an official, as a participant in art-juries, as a critic, he spat and fumed and fulminated.

He has been called a good draughtsman. Today his rigid drawing seems merely measured and lifeless. To arrange the figure fittingly in the rectangle has no more to do with appreciation of the tradition—or mastery of it—than the cold, monotonous reiteration of a Shakespearean sonnet has to do with the understanding of Elizabethan poetry.

In any case, as Mr. Cortissoz has said, "right-mindedness was a passion" with him. At the Armory Show, for instance, Cox drew aside the dean of the critics and "denounced some of the fantasticalities of that enterprise.

They had upon him the effect of a vulgar affront."[6] Actually, however, his sharp smallness had been exposed much earlier. The same Rodins which had angered Mr. Chase revolted Mr. Cox. He drew his garments about him and retired to the remoter shadows of his temple. It was the old story of the Pharisee and the publican. But which is regarded today, the offering made in truth of the spirit, without respect to rules of the text or habiliments of the bearer or the arrogant classical copying of an ecclesiastical-minded art pedant?

By comparison, Chase was the liberal who hardened as he grew older. Kenyon Cox had never been open to anything except the recapitulations of his own dogma. Of his teaching, therefore, all that needs to be said is that he drilled his students into acceptance. At the very most, he insisted on a certain earnestness of attention. But those of wit could only rebel.

II

Somewhere between him and Chase stands John W. Alexander. If Cox was the Archbishop, Alexander might be dubbed the Grand Diplomat of American art. He remained so long abroad, after originally belonging to the class of Duveneck at Munich, that he had no vital American attachments by the time he returned in 1901. But he quickly joined the organizations. Soon he belonged to many of them. He taught a little, too. But he need be remembered only as a somewhat weaker antagonist to the new currents of life.

[6]Cortissoz, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

III

More admirable was J. Alden Weir. Though nineteenth-century in thought and method (he eventually became an American Impressionist) he was yet elastic enough to serve originally as a sponsor for the Armory Show. His pictures hung there. Later he supported the Independents, until forced to resign because of his presidency of the National Academy. An earlier native spirit moved in this man. He befriended Ryder. Something of the old Transcendentalists filtered through the yarny textures of his canvases. One feels a pure personality there—not a rapt one, to be sure, but still, on the other hand, not so completely unresilient as Kenyon Cox. His teaching has importance in that he collaborated with John H. Twachtman.

IV

Twachtman, another nineteenth-century figure, had, after studying with Duveneck, rid his palette of the Munich tonalities. Eventually he let in the light of the Impressionists. He was ever governed by nature. He contemplated waterfalls, winter brooks, and the harbor waters in his vicinity, all with an artist's eye and a poet's happiness. The earth, the sea, the snow, the sky, made new harmonies through his passages. Such, perhaps, more than the actual teaching technique was what moved his two leading pupils, Allen Tucker and Ernest Lawson.

Years later Tucker, in his testimonial to Twachtman,

could make the reader participate, as he did, in an intercourse which molded the very best in the human being. Lawson's work testifies to a more technical preoccupation with the lessons of Twachtman. Yet even this adherence bespeaks the intimacy of his connection. Both, as students, must have been impressed when their artist-teacher, in the final year of his life—he died in 1902 at the age of forty-nine—could not dispose of a single painting. Thus the modestly unprofessional Twachtman, who held but one class a week at the Art Students' League, set flowing an impulse of true feeling among those few students who had known him at the turn of the century. It still abides in his paintings.

V

But how were the grit and strife in American life to be encompassed in its painting? Who would go among the gravel-haulers, the workingmen at noontime, the athletes, the stevedores, and the road-menders? Who would venture the industrial scene? Again, who would depict the cafés, the plazas and the concerts, the shops, the department stores, or the little clerks? Toil and social life have their attractions for the painter, too, but thus far, among the teachers at least, the emphasis had been on the figure, the studio-piece, or the landscape. It was time that the brush and stir of daily life were put on canvas.

Thomas Pollock Anschutz felt the tug of such compulsions. Indeed, he was the first American teacher who, both by outlook and conviction, was fitted to turn the student to the scene before him. Coming far from galleries and

art shows (he was born in Kentucky in 1851), he seems never to have looked abroad for his salvation. He obtained his training here. First he studied in New York, then in Philadelphia at the Pennsylvania Academy. After six years he was appointed a member of the faculty, in 1881. He did not even visit Europe until 1892, the year of his marriage, and then he remained but a year, studying in the Académie Julien under Doucet and Bouguereau. Returning again to his post, he served as an instructor at the Pennsylvania Academy until 1909, when he became head of the faculty, which position he retained until his death three years later.

Anschutz was not a stirring painter. But in one of his pictures at least—*The Noon-Hour*—he did hear the industrial hammers. He depicted workmen lunching in the vicinity of a factory. No rhythm animates the canvas, nor is the color memorable. The anatomical poses of the figures do not convince. Nevertheless, one pauses, as it were, to exchange a word or two with these men who are at rest. A painter has at last endeavored to incorporate the millions into his work.

Walt Whitman might have been in their midst. In fact, almost every week he lunched with Thomas Eakins, who had been Professor of Drawing and Painting at the Academy since 1879, and was to remain the superior of Anschutz until he left his post in 1886. And soon, Mr. Eakins would paint his portrait of Whitman—a celebrated likeness in which the iron-gray poet beams out in contented health. The great tide of the democratic impulse was common to them all. Eakins himself, oaken figure that he

was, admitted only plain humanity into his portraits. Even in his likenesses of professional people and the well-to-do, he was a leveller in the sense that the facts superseded everything else.

As for the school itself, it was the most progressive in the country. In 1876, when it had moved to new quarters, it no longer employed dead-gray plaster casts for the drawing class, but brought in living models for direct studies from the nude. Europe did the same, it was true. But the emphasis upon anatomy was an innovation. When W. C. Brownell, the critic, for instance, visited the Academy in 1879, he was conducted to a dissecting-room, where a class was drawing from the cadaver. This disturbed him. He feared that an excessive preoccupation with such material might deflect the student from esthetic into scientific pursuits. As to drawing with the brush from the very beginning, working from the nude, and the use of clay for painters deficient in a sense of modelling, he was noncommittal. Yet he was impressed despite his doubts.

Such was the school in which Anschutz officiated. It surpassed all others of its day in America. And even though Eakins resigned in 1886, Anschutz remained to carry on what he had so well begun. He took the young recruits, taught them the principles, and then, at the end of their enlistment released genuine professionals. No less important, he gauged the personality of the young men who came to him. He fired the Realists—Robert Henri, George Luks, John Sloan and William Glackens. He responded to the slight waywardness of John Marin, and gave him a prize for his drawings. He stimulated a

young "progressive" such as Arthur B. Carles, and he gave Charles Demuth his first friendly recognition. The list is long and good. Certainly Thomas P. Anschutz did much to prepare the path on which the others would tread.

VI

A no less influential teacher was Arthur W. Dow. Born of old New England stock in Ipswich, Mass., he studied for five years abroad without finding what he wanted. Even a period with Gauguin (1887), at a time when that artist was seeking to propagate more flowing principles of design, satisfied none of Dow's demands. Returning to America, he was still an independent searcher when he met Ernest Fenellosa at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Sent to Japan as an instructor of economics in the late 70's, Fenellosa had instead devoted himself to the traditional painting of the Orient. Gathering up superb examples which were then ignored by the collectors in the Far East, he brought them back with him to Boston.

Dow was carried away. Here at last were works which exemplified the design he was seeking. For Dow, even in the fashion of Thoreau and Emerson, desired that painting, no less than literature, should spring from universal harmonies. It should reflect an order larger than the human self. Let the painter dip his brush in the sky and record; let him stroll by the waterside and be at one with its flow; let him reach for greater glory. Reverence, he felt, had been the great source of Far Eastern painting.

But how to clarify this for students here in America? It was necessary, he concluded, to dispose of the rigid perspective system descended from the Italian Renaissance, as well as of the whole conventional light-and-shade arrangement. Instead, he would have to arrive at a principle of design which would correspond to the structure of nature itself and thus reshape all known methods of composition.

Suiting his teaching to these specifications, Dow, first at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn (1895–1904), and then at Teachers College, Columbia University (1904–1922), sought by methods largely original with him to reveal to students the wonder that he had felt. And he succeeded admirably. "He would come into class," recalls Max Weber, the painter, "and make an unbounded drawing of trees and hills, or perhaps a winding road against the sky. Then he would ask the class to copy the drawing freely and to enclose it in a rectangle, to make a horizontal picture or a vertical, as they chose, and to make whatever changes necessary to fit the drawings to the frame which they had selected, to balance the drawing by making less foreground and more sky, to change the masses, and what not. He would then criticize the studies, emphasizing good design. Later the students would make similar studies in several colors, always giving first consideration to spatial organization and distribution of dark and light masses."[7]

And what were the results? Weber, having studied under Dow from 16 to 19, went eventually to Paris. New

[7] *Max Weber*, by Holger Cahill, p. 5.

men, arriving from all parts of the world, were bowled over by what they saw there. How could they have anticipated the boldness of Matisse, the seeming anarchy of Picasso, the childlike fantasy of Henri Rousseau? But not so Weber. His teacher had already prepared him. He had already learned to accept what the most advanced were thinking. Therefore, when reactionaries like Kenyon Cox later on condemned the accomplishments of men like Weber as "Ellis Island Art," they were, without being aware of it, rejecting work which, in part at least, had originated from the very vicinity of Plymouth Rock. The American fiber had stretched, but they did not know it. They thought it had shrunk to their own dimensions. Thus a vital teacher had renewed the old native capacity to react with a telling pertinence to new conditions. No less than the brave men who worked their way through the wilderness, Arthur W. Dow had equipped the Americans to come with what was necessary to their life.

CHAPTER IV

The Fight for Pictorialism

PERSISTENCE and courage are needed in any art. When photographers, some fifty years ago, told Alfred Stieglitz that it was impossible to execute a good picture of figures moving in a snowstorm, he braved a blizzard for three hours in order to refute them. At last, after having sighted Fifth Avenue and its heaving cabs again and again, he had a picture in the very center of his focus. Then he snapped it and hurried off to develop his negative. When he showed it to the other photographers they exclaimed, "Incredible!" But he merely repeated the word *Patience*—as if that were the answer to his achievement.

He well knew its meaning. A native of New York,[1] Stieglitz had gone to Germany in 1881, intending to become an engineer. But, after enrolling at the Berlin Polytechnic, he soon was utilizing its laboratories for other purposes, for he had discovered that photography was his true vocation, and he wanted to acquire the knowledge of chemistry that would be useful to his work. He worked fanatically, and he showed from the beginning a decisive independence of

[1]Stieglitz was born across the river from New York, in Hoboken, N. J., in 1864. His father, Edward Stieglitz, a woolen merchant, had immigrated from Germany in 1850 and had served as a first lieutenant in the Union armies during the Civil War.

mind. He disputed with professors who claimed that a photograph could not be taken in the dark and proved—after a twenty-four hour exposure with lamplight—that he was correct. And he insisted, though a Herr Doktor in Berlin held otherwise, that the Brooklyn Bridge was going to stand even if it were built with unorthodox suspension cables. But his real instructions came from Doctor H. W. Vogel. This learned scientist had discovered, after eight years of experiment, the means whereby to correct photographic insensitivities to such colors as red and yellow.[2] And he not only showed the young man how he might quickly adapt such findings to the best uses of photography, but trained him in that scrupulous exactitude and unremitting resolution which were later to be apparent in much that he did. The rest was sheer aptitude.

Early in 1887 Stieglitz submitted a print to an English competition. *A Good Joke*, it was called. It pictured urchins surrounding a woman at her household tasks in Italy. It was judged by Doctor H. P. Emerson, noted photographic pamphleteer, to be the only spontaneous work in the competition. Its spontaneity indeed—poor Italians who flickered, as it were, in sympathy with the light which bathed them—set the photograph apart from most others of the period. Certainly the American photographer's parlor of the time was not a place where peo-

[2]The late R. Childe Bayley, distinguished author of *The Complete Photographer*, has pointed out (in *America and Alfred Stieglitz*, pp. 89–104) that this was but one of two technical improvements which assisted Stieglitz. The other was the gelatine dry plate which superseded the more cumbersome wet collodion process—likewise in the early 80's.

ple felt natural. A pose was always associated with it. Hence, in objective as well as result, the twenty-three-year-old Stieglitz had already set off on a path quite his own.

By the end of the 80's he had produced a whole list of impressive prints. On a trip to Italy in 1887, he had been fascinated by the lovely old pumps of Venice. He would make prints of them all. Yet it was not the pump as such, but always the people in relation to it, which he registered with the greatest emotion. A universal task of mankind was under observation. In *A Venetian Boy*, he caught a curly-headed little rascal who glanced up as if he were looking for a coin. At Chioggia, he depicted a woman who seemed to be standing in a vast emptiness, as she climbed a flight of stairs against the sky.

His German pictures were somewhat more numerous. In the exceptional *Paula*, or *Sun-Rays*, he peered in at a young lady over her sewing, just as the sun shuttled in through the bars at the window. Photography had not been capable of such passages before. On a trip to the Tyrol he watched, and recorded, a peasant girl asleep on a load of faggots. This print suggested a Joan of Arc, or a gleaner from the harvest fields of Millet. But the Stieglitz productions had always their own distinct pathos. He would establish a sympathy in common with the little urchin, the poor at the pump, the peasant in the fields, or Paula in her Berlin flat. At the same time, he projected his material in terms of shadows where the center always wove back, even as the sides moved forward to envelope

it again. There was always something of a Rembrandt tenderness permeating these prints.

Later, on a trip to Europe in 1894 (Stieglitz had lived the four intervening years in America) he completed four other groups of pictures. In Switzerland he made good prints of the Jüngfrau. In the Black Forest, he pictured peasant women gossiping near their cottage, an aged grandmother at a spinning-wheel, and a masterpiece entitled *Harvesting*. Here the peasants move out through the golden fields of grain, while summery clouds ripple against the mountains behind. More gravity was apparent in the Dutch scenes. At Katwyk, a fishing village, he observed the mothers and children waiting upon the shore for the return of the bread-winners. Anxiety and resignation breathe through this print. In others, he pictured the vessel at anchor. Much praised was *Scurrying Home*. Here two peasant women trudge rapidly across a landscape, the background of which is anchored by a church. Finally, in his *Rainy Day on the Boulevard*, taken in Paris, he amazed the other photographers because of his success with moist pavements on a dark day.

But in every case he reflected more than a technical preoccupation with photography. It was the revealing relationship that he sought: the peasant reaping, for example, or a family nervously eyeing the sea. And that also explains his three-hour wait in the snowstorm. He had discovered the central fact about photography—that it can capture, as no other medium, the essence of a moment. It requires, therefore, the utmost vigilance to know the moment and to articulate it before it is gone.

II

Such, then, one might say, was this American's preparation. He knew the latest achievements—as well as processes—of the European photographers. At the same time, he had absorbed enough art to know what a good composition was. Further, he had a natural sense of balance, which, without all the rigmarole of an art school, improved from the somewhat unsettled arrangement in the early prize-winner—*A Good Joke*—to the more and more dense productions of the later years.

But Stieglitz had another role. He was to serve as the prophet of a new art. And, in seeking to electrify attention and compel support for this new art—Photography—he was to break open a passageway for a still more promising art, that of the American twentieth century.

Photography itself, of course, was not particularly new. But even though it had first been proclaimed in 1839, with the simultaneous inventions by Fox-Talbot and Daguerre, and had been practiced in the 40's by the great Scotch portraitist Hill, and, two decades later, by Margaret Julia Cameron, an Englishwoman, the process had remained too difficult for general application. Even when Stieglitz took his pictures in Venice, the Tyrol, or the Black Forest, he had to lug about a heavy camera with him. One had to be a veritable chemist to develop the pictures properly. How many had such equipment? The perfection of dry plates had helped, it was true, and when, about 1886, the Kodak was invented, the camera as we

know it was at hand. But another problem existed. This was the photographer. Good pictures were not guaranteed by an apparatus. On the contrary, the mere ease of the new process might extinguish the advances already made. The photographers must demand as much of themselves as the painters.

Hence the movement of Pictorial Photography. Its first advocate was H. P. Emerson, author of *Naturalistic Photography*, a tract issued in 1889. Soon his followers decisively acted in London. The progressives seceded from the Royal Photographic Society and formed the Linked Ring. They had a definite program. They urged an end to indiscriminate hangings with instead an annual Salon, to which would be admitted only the good *picture*, as distinguished from the technically adequate photograph. They also urged the abolition of medals and all other awards, and the acceptance, instead, of jury selection as the sole certificate of merit. In short, they wanted the photographer to be an artist.

One year later the movement was stirring in America. In 1894, Stieglitz sought to provoke it still further. "We Americans," he declared, "cannot afford to stand still; we have the best of material among us hidden, in many cases; let us bring it out. Let us make up our minds that we are equal to the occasion, and prove to the photographic world at large that we are awake, interested in the progress of picture photography. . . . Let us start afresh with an Annual Photographic Salon, to be run on the strictest lines."

What gave force to this pronouncement was the man's

own work. Photographers already knew of his European accomplishments. They were no less impressed by what he had done in America. Returning in 1890, he had found a country in which the sensitive—among writers as well as painters and photographers—spurned their own environment as less conducive to art than one in which they had no root. The expatriate was then our rarest flower. Moreover, the country itself, no doubt as a postlude to the Civil War, was dry of blood and it seemed drab to the eager eye. All this Stieglitz felt. But he also felt, as too many others did not, the coarse vitality of this American scene. That is what he had been aiming for, as he waited three hours in the snow at Fifth Avenue and 35th Street. That, perhaps, and the desolation of a scene in which the human had no part. But when he spotted the cab-driver and clicked the shutter, he had already confirmed what the others refused to recognize. Even in that wintry desolation a single cab-driver with his tugging horses gave lift to the spirit and provided sustenance for the eye. The winter, as least so far as he was concerned, had already been broken. Presently, armed once again with the hand camera, he sensitively recorded steaming horses and their attendants at an uptown terminal. The steam vaporized in the print itself. Men and beasts rested and prepared for the next round in the misty weather. Labor moved large, fumbling and powerful in this print. Hundreds more of his New York scenes were freighted with the same implications.

Such an act of affirmation is not lost. Childe Hassam, the painter and an exact contemporary of the photographer, said to Stieglitz in those days that the *Winter*—

Fifth Avenue had been an eye-opener to him. He, too, was seeking to picture the streets of New York. But, in his case, Paris was always obtruding. Pissarro was using those flecks of paint—the orderliness was French rather than American—and the forceful impetuosity which distinguished the Manhattan scene was totally missing from his derivative canvases. Stieglitz was an originator, and he had no reference but his own material.

Yet his affirmation had still another aspect. It involved the social no less than the individual. For he realized well enough that photography, as he knew it, would never thrive if he relied merely on the product of his own camera. The validity and worth of the medium as such must be recognized. For such a task, nothing less than collective action was called for. Somehow, the photographers themselves must be impelled to demand a new status for their medium. How was this to be done?

Somewhat earlier, Stieglitz had contributed his *November Days*, an evocative print of a coach disappearing down a long avenue of trees near Munich, to the *American Amateur Photographer*. He published more work there in 1893, and in 1894 he became an editor of the magazine. Soon he had rejuvenated it, largely through the many columns he granted to the unsparing articles of George Davison, one of the leaders in the English Pictorial movement. Among other things, Mr. Davison lashed the Americans for their incompetence. Subscribers objected. Stieglitz, however, defended Davison, for he knew the latter's distinctions between the art and the science of Photography were necessary to its development in America. At

the same time, he introduced the silvery work of Craig Annan, the Scotchman, and a dynamic peasant portrait by Hans Watzek, who was a prominent Pictorialist in Austria. New processes were also discussed.

But the fire was too hot for the subscribers. They could endure at most a gentle blaze. Perhaps they merely wished to toast their carpet-slippers. In any case, Stieglitz was asked to resign. Yet the movement had begun. In fact, one of the last issues to feel his influence had contained a review of a so-called Salon in Washington, the first of its kind in America. And one rebuff meant only a greater effort. For Stieglitz was not one of those tepid Americans like Henry James, W. C. Brownell, or Henry Adams, who functioned chiefly as a reflex of Europe. He generated new currents of activity because he was driven by a passion which demanded the unqualified recognition of photography as a medium.

How carry through a joint project? Goaded by this question (though meanwhile producing *Five Points,* a shadow-softened scene of New York's poorest quarters, with a clot of immigrants upon the sidewalks) he constantly sought an answer from others of a similar mind at the Society of Amateur Photographers. At length a new organization was precipitated. The Society merged, in 1897, with the New York Camera Club. A Publications Committee was appointed, with Stieglitz a member, and it was decided to enlarge the periodical sporadically issued by the latter organization, and publish it quarterly under the title of *Camera Notes.*

III

Camera Notes was the first great collective venture of Stieglitz. It was made possible in part, by his own retirement from the photoengraving business, because he could no longer tolerate the unscrupulous methods of the American commercial enterprise. Having a small income, he could now devote himself with full conviction to this new project. And devote himself he did. From the day that he took charge—in 1897—until the final issue in July, 1902, he slaved and wrote and photographed and publicized and exhorted—all to nurture a movement which soon had worked its way through the United States and then to Europe.

It was more than the rejuvenated club had bargained for. They were strong for bicycle-riding, "smokers," dilettante photography, and Sunday expeditions. Perhaps marshmallow roasts would have been agreeable to the more nature-minded. But led by Stieglitz, who, in turn, roused the more active of their own membership, they took pride in the increasing prestige of their organization, as well as in its quarterly. In these early days of their mutual congratulation, the most effective fighter to emerge from the ranks was William M. Murray. Mr. Murray slashed with a vengeance when he wrote about inferior photography. He became equally enthusiastic over the evenings devoted to lantern slides (many of which were furnished by Stieglitz), and he expatiated at length upon the new developments in the technical world. Such a man makes enemies. After a year Stieglitz felt called upon to defend what Murray was

doing. "Just criticism," he said to the membership, "is exceedingly healthy for the welfare of the Club. There is much, too much, back-patting in the ranks of photography." Murray was vindicated, at least with a majority, but some were not to forget.

Another year passed. Just when Murray, overworked and somewhat disgusted, was ready to quit altogether, a fiery new recruit came to take his place. He was Joseph T. Keiley, a New York lawyer who for fifteen years had been working incessantly in behalf of photography. Mr. Keiley first appeared in *Camera Notes* for January, 1900, with an 18-page article, perhaps 30,000 words in length, saluting the Philadelphia Salon of the fall before. He called it the first real Salon in America. Until then, he later explained, the American Pictorialists had been compelled to show their works abroad, as there was no place in their own country which appreciated, or would even accept, them. But soon thereafter the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, having consented to the use of its galleries, had invited the Photographic Society of Philadelphia to join with it in sponsoring a show of the strictest kind. The catalog declared that the pictures had been "rigidly selected by a jury whose certificate of acceptance was the only award." The very composition of the jury—Chase and Vonnoh, painters; Alice B. Stephens, illustrator; Stieglitz; and a Philadelphia photographer, Robert S. Redfield—assured Mr. Keiley of quality. He was right. And his article rang with his rejoicing.

First of all, he singled out the ten prints of Stieglitz, two of which (*Winter—Fifth Avenue* and *Reflections*,

Night) had been said to be impossible.[8] He had also praised *Bit of Venice*, in which the shadows on the water made a black, quivering lace, and where, despite the subject—a canal—no banality was suggested. *Mending Nets*—a Dutch woman, her cap nicked white against the sky, and the net like another kind of seaweed—also received his approval. Such pictures convinced him that Stieglitz was a realist, working in and through the facts.

He cared less for F. Holland Day, a Boston photographer already introduced in the pages of *Camera Notes*. Mr. Day, with his somewhat fussy prints, hinted and arranged and refined. Too much design, thought Keiley, but granted him on this very basis a place among the Pictorialists. Then came the work of Clarence H. White. White, hitherto known only to Newark, Ohio, had a "wonderful refinement of feeling with a certain positive crudeness of execution." His camera drew a veritable line when he took an indoor portrait. But when he went outside he seemed to twinkle like the early light on the grass. Accordingly, Keiley called his *Spring* a "photographic bucolic." The wistful, romantic White, indeed, expressed in his linear way a curious country idealism such as was later to be found in the early writings of his fellow Ohioan, Sherwood Anderson.

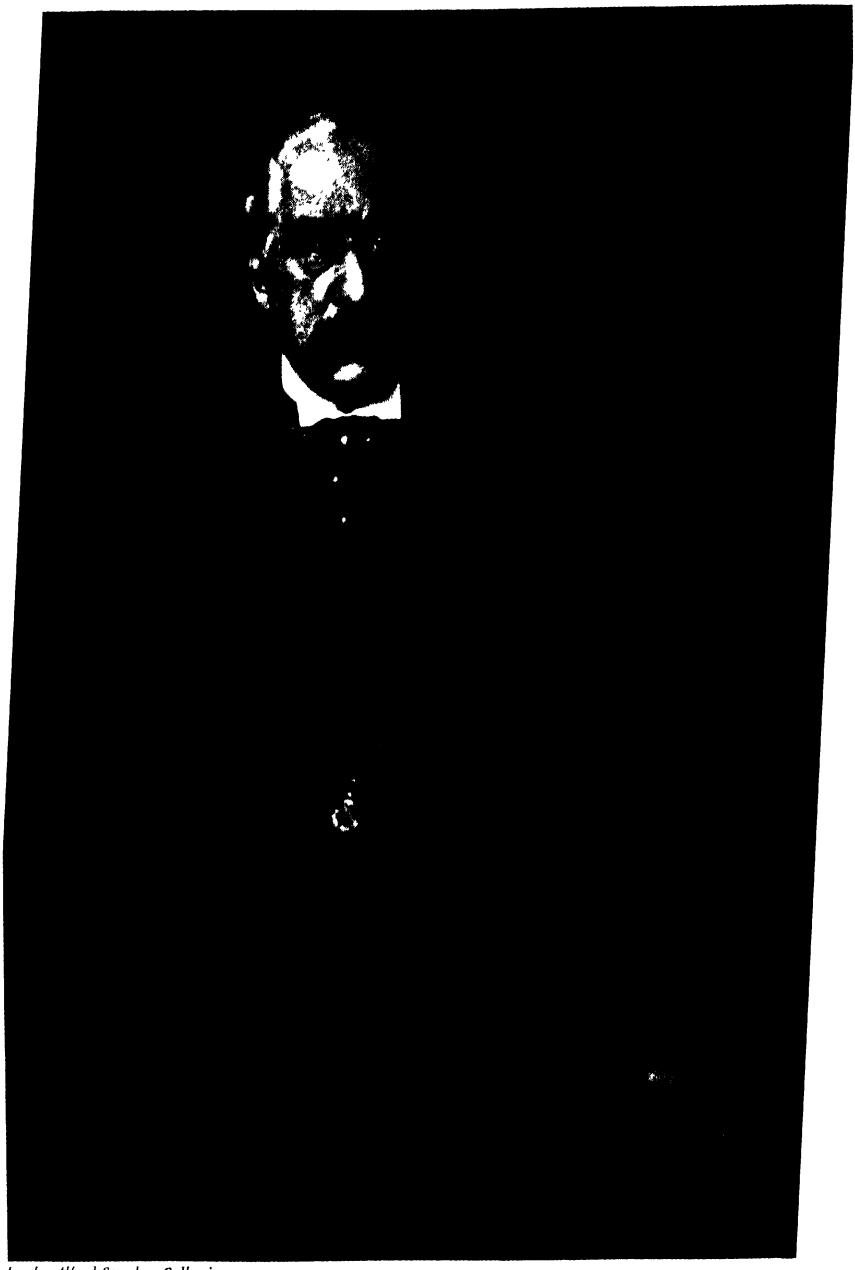
Next Keiley inspected prints by Gertrude Käsebier. Her ten works had already prompted Mr. Chase to say that they were "as fine as anything that Van Dyck has

[8]The first, as already explained, because of the snow; the second, because not until then had moving figures been successfully photographed at night.



The Terminal, New York, 1892

ALFRED STIEGLITZ



In the Alfred Steiglitz Collection

Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan—1903

EDUARD J. STEICHEN

ever done." Mr. Chase was going a little too far back into the past. If he had stopped at Mary Cassatt, he would have been more in order. For in her more personal works, such as *Mother and Child,* Mrs. Käsebier seemed to get an almost filmy tenderness, which, in effect at least, was not dissimilar to that conveyed by the American who lived in France. At any rate, decided Mr. Keiley, she was one of the most distinguished of the new American photographers. Several landscapes by A. Horsley Hinton, an English photographer who frequently contributed to *Camera Notes,* led him to a revelatory comparison with Sidney Lanier. Evidently Keiley liked the sad, flutelike piping of this minor elegist. Perhaps his Celtic soul felt at home amidst the haunted moors, celebrated by both the photographer and the poet. His own prints—nine in number—he did not mention, though the editors did. They praised them for their fresh tonalities. Thus closed an article in which Keiley had established himself as a spokesman for a movement of which he was eventually to be the chief and only historian.

It was now less than a year since Robert Demachy, a leading French Pictorialist, had justly said of the American photographers: "In their works we recognize a desire to produce the pretty and graceful in preference to the beautiful and mighty." But within a very short time this was to change. Already Philadelphia had seen the beginning. Now *Camera Notes* grew large with full-page reproductions of White and Käsebier, and then still more impressive with the much-questioned innovations of Frank Eugene. Eugene, an American who had studied painting for

some years at Munich, now had begun to devote himself to photography as well. More precisely, he combined photography with graphic art, since he introduced the practice of etching on a negative, in order to deepen his values and round out his modelling. He had originality, strength, magnanimity. . . . The development of an American school was soon recognized. Indeed, it seems that the emergence of photographers bred critics as well, for now Keiley was rivalled by Sadakichi Hartmann, an eccentric art journalist who had preceded him in the pages of *Camera Notes*, but only now was producing his most vigorous evaluations. He estimated Day, Käsebier, Keiley, Eugene and Stieglitz with sharpness and tact. And though he did not spare them, he did recognize that new blossoms were peeping out of the American soil.

Stieglitz encouraged this movement further by innovating one-man shows at the Camera Club. Here the diffident might obtain confidence by seeing their pictures on the wall. It was comparable to publishing an untried author's first manuscript. Meanwhile, in *Camera Notes*, he was also presenting the best work from abroad. Always scrupulous about reproductions—at least four full-size pages of which had been a feature of the publication since its beginning—he published the best of the French—Demachy, Le Bègue, and Captain Pujo, who excelled in printing; Henneberg, that "first photographic muralist," and other Viennese; the Hofmeister Brothers from Hamburg, with their angular figures which might have been removed from harsh German paintings, and the English school as represented by Annan, who was probably their

ablest man, Hinton, and others. No wonder the Americans were just beginning to discover their abilities. The stimulation of such examples, and the technical discussions in every issue, spurred them to surpass.

But a Mr. Young, one of the slipper-warmers no doubt, had sometime since objected that the outré and the bizarre were favored at the expense of what the ordinary eye could understand. Other members were grumbling that not enough attention was given to their efforts. Subterraneously they murmured, not yet ready to challenge a movement which still had the support of the majority.

In the fall of 1899, a second Salon was held in Philadelphia. Once more Keiley discussed it in *Camera Notes*. This time the jury, though composed exclusively of photographers, was not quite as rigorous as it had been the year before. He noted, however, a likely youngster—Eduard B. Steichen, from Milwaukee—who titled his shadowy ponds, even his portraits, *Nocturnes*, since he had almost submerged himself in Whistler. *Camera Notes*, falling accidentally into his hands, had served, it was said, to canalize more of his efforts into photography than into painting, which he still purposed to make his main life-work. The other photographers had moved forward from where they had been the year before.

And now the counter-revolutionaries began to spit and flame. The number of *Camera Notes* which followed this report outdid all the others in sumptuousness. It contained no less than nine reproductions of Eugene. Was there no limit to audacity? This man did everything but add pigments to his negatives. But when they read the commen-

taries which defended such practices, granted a good result, they all but exploded. Today, of course, one must agree with Sadakichi Hartmann, who said that he felt a "strange vein of poetry," a "dreamy voluptuousness," and "an amplitude of masses" in the pictures by Eugene. He scratched and kneaded and piled and thickened his material, until, by the time he got through, it was "broken by speckles, flashes, passing shimmers and accidental lights." Perfectly delightful! In short, declared Hartmann, "there is a sort of language in his 'muddiness.' . . . His daubs and lines are vital." Not so to the literal-minded in the Camera Club.

Less conspiratorial members, however, were being irked by the outspokenness of Keiley. He, no less than Murray, would grant a member nothing, if he found a flaw in a photograph. Still worse, he was the co-sponsor with Stieglitz of a new glycerine process, which upset much of what the older photographers had learned. By this method, Keiley, when preparing a plate, might, by coating it with glycerine, delay or hasten the printing of a certain area. Thus he could control, to a very considerable extent, the print. This was heresy to the conventional-minded. No matter that it became internationally known. Mr. Keiley was a dangerous man, and must be got rid of. They rejoiced, accordingly, when a leading photographic journal published an anonymous satire against him and his process, calling it the "Keiley Cure." Yet still they were not quite ready to act.

Soon afterwards the third Philadelphia Salon had opened. Once more Mr. Keiley described it. He now claimed that

it could compare with anything of its kind throughout the world. For this he praised the jury, which was exclusively composed of Pictorial Photographers. They had made no concessions in their choices. Moreover, now the movement was countrywide, being led by Ohio with twenty-three examples, while Chicago, with the competent Wm. B. Dyer and Eva Watson-Schütze, the portraitist, was considerably more important than it had been before. Keiley saw young Steichen as the prince of American landscapists, and unhesitatingly predicted that the maker of these three pictures was "destined to rank among the greatest Pictorial Photographers in the world." Then he proceeded to estimate what was now coming to be known as the American School. Eugene, he said, overpowered and dazzled, whereas the less vigorous White was more subtle. He commended the latter for an industrial landscape, *Street by the Canal*, because he had plucked beauty from the very dust of American life. He found Mrs. Käsebier uneven, though sometimes compelling. He also discussed Day, praising his technique, but, as before, questioning his excessive preoccupation with arrangements.

The Philadelphia Salon was now at its crest, an incredible performance after three short years. Already an American school was associated with it. And when seventy prints, some of which had figured in the Philadelphia show, were sent to a great Glasgow exhibition by Stieglitz, it was actually admitted by the English that the Americans had surpassed them. Even the meticulous Demachy, reviewing American work sent to Paris somewhat earlier, declared, "I know of no other collection of photographs

which has given me as a whole an equal sensation of art, and individually an impression of such definite purpose and research, even in some cases when the result has not been equal to the effort." Such was the outcome of the relatively short campaign led by Stieglitz.

But the more backward-looking were not impressed. Already Stieglitz had found it necessary to reconsider his position on *Camera Notes*. Instead of remaining chairman of the publications committee, he had, since April 1, 1901, entered into a one-year contract, whereby he, as editor and manager, would be responsible for only that material which was separate from the concerns of the club as such. The fight was intensifying. On another front, real gunfire broke out in Philadelphia. There, late in the summer, it was announced that the next Philadelphia Salon would be more "broad in its scope." The enemy was at work. The issue of *Camera Notes* preceding the Salon contained, therefore, a warning. In the leading article, Charles H. Caffin, art critic for one of the New York papers, informed Pictorialists throughout the world that the Philadelphia show had dropped its standards, and that the self-respecting would have to hold aloof. Stieglitz, in a note, declared that the prospectus indicated "retrogression of the worst kind."

Nor were they mistaken. The Philadelphia Salon of that fall opened its doors to the technical, the scientific, the documentary, and the artistic photograph on an equal basis. There were no distinctions any longer. But the individual who had instigated the change—a Doctor Charles

L. Mitchell—and who had maneuvered skillfully to root out the genuine Pictorialists from positions of authority, was somewhat discomfited by the results. The show was a failure, as the intended victims refused to participate. So he charged conspiracy on the part of the movement he had tried to undermine.

It was then that Stieglitz and his cohorts delivered their blasts of war. In two successive issues of *Camera Notes*, they reviewed the whole history of the Philadelphia Salon, the accomplishments, the plottings, and the eventual downfall of a once distinguished enterprise. They showed that the doctor, though never in open opposition to the pictorial activities of the Salon—of which he was a member—had waited until he had kindled an underground fire. Then, after an interval of two years, he had attacked its exhibitions with such enlightening epithets as "Mop and Pail Brigade," "Photographic Oscar Wildes," and "Stained Glass Attitude School of Photography." Secretly Doctor Mitchell pulled the wires to disarrange the fourth Salon, but when his plot was anticipated, he could not take his medicine. His protests reached New York.

Unfortunately, men of similar mind, members of the Camera Club, decided that they had endured enough. They invited F. Dundas Todd, editor of the *Photo-Beacon*, long an adherent of the more conventional and "practical" wing in photography, to address them. After certain general remarks, he attacked the whole movement of Pictorialism and in particular Mr. Stieglitz, who, he said, "cannot appreciate facts, so he pictures notions." When his tirade

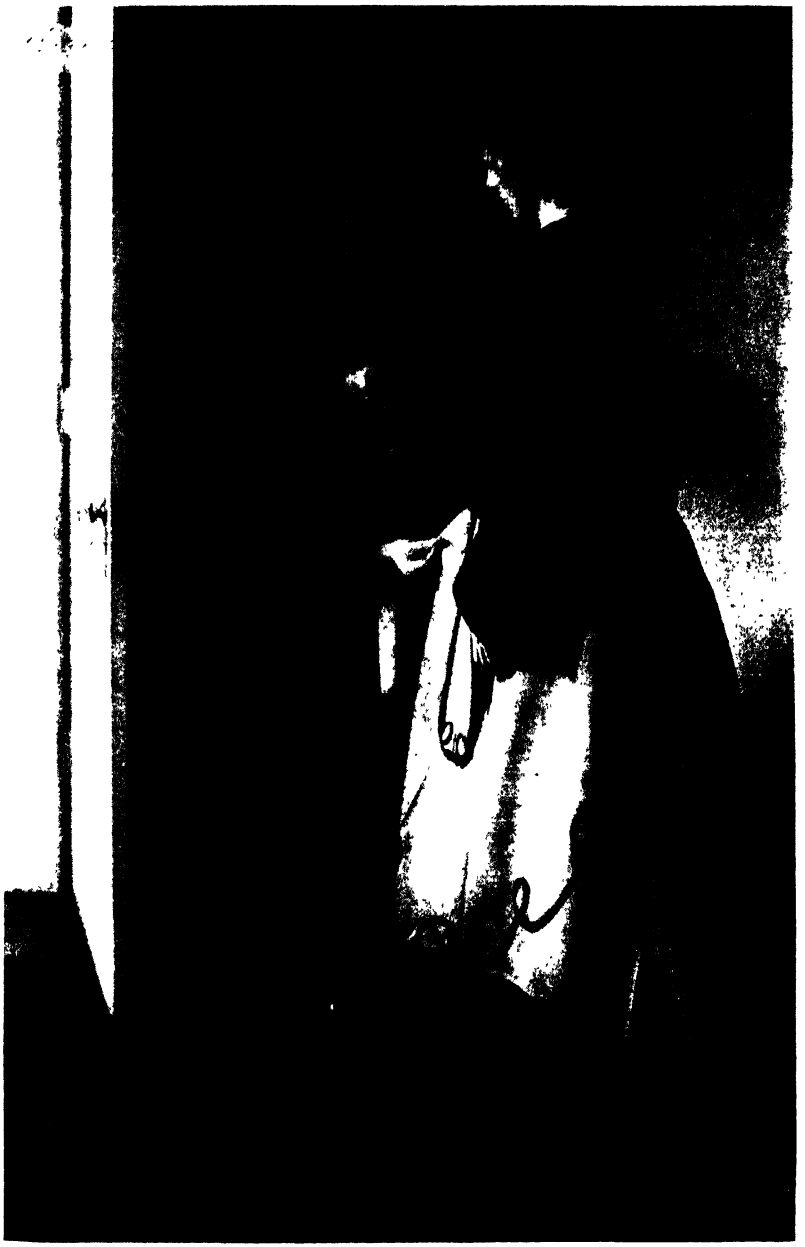
was ended he suggested, nevertheless, that all differences be "treated as a joke. It is little more than a guessing contest at best."

The delivery of such a speech at the Camera Club could have but one meaning. Soon afterwards it was announced that Mr. Stieglitz was to arrange an exhibition of Pictorial Photography at the National Arts Club. Immediately it was opened—March 5, 1902—it became known as Photo-Secession. Upon the termination of his contract, he asked to be released from his editorship of *Camera Notes*, but consented to remain for the July number. The quarterly lasted for two more issues. Its founder had departed, and with him the function of the magazine.

The fight had merely been shifted to another field. The captain had changed his strategy, reallocated his troops, and brought with him the ablest of his lieutenants. The conquest in photography was a fact, even if the battle still continued.

IV

The very terms of our metaphor imply a change in American life. Consider the scene since the Civil War. Had any one fought to the death in the field of art? Had there even been any issues? Criticism, where was it? Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne—all that galaxy of New Englanders no longer illuminated the scene, as they had before the great conflict. Discouragement was in the country. Though Whitman was writing some of his greatest poems, he had antagonistic readers. Timid men such as



From Camera Work

Illustration—1904

CLARENCE H. WHITE



With permission of An American Place

The Horse—1895

FRANK EUGENE

Henry Adams and Henry James confirmed in the country a despondency they felt in themselves. Younger Americans like Twain and Bret Harte, breezy as the Western plains or the mining camps, had a personal verve but affirmed no values. Industrialists rode the saddle, and the country was being harnessed to their uses.

More specifically, what was the meaning of Mr. Todd and his partisans in terms of photography and its development as an art? They represented, let us say, the chemical faction in their profession. They were the men who had been taught that certain methods brought certain results. They saw no reason to change. Moreover, insofar as they were professional photographers, serving the public from a studio, what were they to do if the new photography overcame them? They would either lose business or have to learn all over again. Either course would be uncomfortable.

But it should not be thought that the photographers were the only source of opposition. The painters, too, were at fault. The indefatigable Hartmann interviewed several of them and reported the results in one of the final issues of *Camera Notes*. Chase, Church, Hassam, Brush, D. W. Tryon, Dewing, all were prejudiced against the medium. Perhaps they had their apprehensions. The only resilient man was a sculptor, Daniel C. French. Therefore, the backward painter, as well as the scientific or business-minded photographer, had to be disregarded if Pictorialism were to advance.

Also standing in the way was the public. Since the 40's, it had been trained to accept the stiff studio product as

the best in photography. The invention of the Kodak had merely complicated this backwardness, since now a snap was considered sufficient. Then again, many folk, in the same manner as Mr. Todd, but more naïvely and with better reason, had confused the subject with the object. Little Chauncey was cute in his corduroys— Wouldn't he make a darling photograph? Of course he would. But unless a Clarence White, or some one with equal endowment, stood at the camera, the result might well be less interesting to the objective eye than it was to the immediate family. The subject had not been translated into the object by virtue of an emotion inherent to the arrangement itself. Similarly with mother love, a favorite subject of American sentimentality. How often has it not been celebrated in our pictures! But it took a Käsebier, herself a woman, to communicate the sentiment *through* an esthetic object. The problem, then, was to educate the public. But how could this be done, unless there were an insistence on standards to which at first it might even object?

Such were the barriers to the recognition of photography as an independent medium. But behind them lay the fortifications of old habit patterns and established performance which are always the hardest to overcome. In storming them, therefore, the movement of Pictorial Photography not only consolidated its own position, but broke a very vital sector of the whole opposition to the advance of the future. For the Scribe is the same in any profession. If he has been defeated in photography he has been de-

feated in painting. Similarly, the public is always malleable. If it is given effective leadership, it will always respond, and the rejected of one generation will become the accepted of the next.

It does not matter that Modern Art was as yet unknown. These intrepid men and women already, in their stand for the rejected of mediums—Photography—had overcome certain restrictions confronting the new century. They had fought preconceptions, championed new techniques, and had adhered to the idea that a medium could be justified only by what went *into* it. And they had shown that even the camera is accessible to a human spirit.

V

What were the specific attainments of these Pictorialists?

One of them who clearly stems from the days of the *fin de siècle*, was F. Holland Day. This discreet Bostoner, with his neo-Grec youths and young ladies beside shapely urns, was always trying to suggest the arrangement which was superior to life itself. He never quite dug to the roots. "He would have made (seriously speaking)," declared Hartmann, "an excellent manager of the supers in a dramatic company." One sees his kind in the smaller cities of the nation—the misfit musician or the arty photographer —who seeks to be refined because he rejects the community. He was, as Demachy said, a *raffiné*. And his contribution is definable in such a term.

Rudolph Eickemeyer, Jr., another of the more old-fashioned Pictorialists, contented himself with landscape lyrics. He once said that he had enough material within a two-mile radius of his Westchester home, to occupy him for a lifetime. True. The trees, the roads, the meadow-passages, the sheep at pasture—these satisfied him. He abides by virtue of character rather than any more singular properties.

W. B. Post worked early with a hand-camera, and in fact introduced its use to Stieglitz. He might be termed an intelligent *amateur*. He excelled in snowy landscapes. W. B. Dyer and Henry Troth fought for the movement in Chicago and Philadelphia respectively. The same might be said for Eva Watson-Schütze and C. Yarnell Abbott. As for Dallet Fuguet, he is to be remembered for a winter street scene of New York. He also supported the movement with his writings.

Mrs. Käsebier, already an established commercial photographer before she ever exhibited at the Philadelphia Salon, alternated between the remarkable and the ordinary. Her photograph of a mother with a child near a manger, all bathed in a swaddling light, remains one of the first among all American photographic contributions. Sometimes she was just a little too evidently telling her models what to do. Again, her composition became arbitrary, as of a schoolteacher who had a set mind, or of an arrogant Teuton who would rather be wrong than right. In portraits she might be merely pleasing. Or again, in a telling one of a mother reading to her children, she might whisper

through tones which echoed the very tenderness of the original. Certainly she was one of the most vital contributors to the whole movement.

Clarence H. White needed some of her vigor. One might say that he would have been better off with more meat on the bone. A little depleted, a trifle whispery, he was, nevertheless, capable of exceptional revelations. His career in part accounts for this. Isolated in Newark, Ohio, immured in a wholesale grocery there, for years he had only one or two female models sitting for pictures. In fact, a wiseacre of the Camera Club once declared that his had been not only a one-man, but a one-woman, show. He explored the industrial vicinity. One "steep" shot of a road descending into a shop-lined street, a local bridge near by, startled with an almost Japanese effect. His print of a canal in a manufacturing town evoked, because of its peculiar notations in the space intervals, the remark from Charles H. Caffin that it was gat-toothed. He had, as Demachy declared, a special feeling for the curve. He longed to sing, but he did not always know the notes. Nevertheless, one always felt the impulse despite the awkwardness. And the persistence of that lyricism, even when shelved off and dimmed as it must have been within the grocery-house, flavors everything that he did with a curious Midwestern idealism.

After coming to New York, White was one of the first to make it clear that photography needed good teachers. Eventually, at the suggestion of Professor Dow, of Columbia, he joined the faculty of Teachers Col

later, he founded his own school. His teaching is manifest today in the industrial photography of Anton Bruehl, Ralph Steiner, and Margaret Bourke-White.

Frank Eugene, having been trained as a painter, knew composition, understood modelling, and appreciated textures. He is best known, perhaps, for his succulent nudes (as in *Adam and Eve*), in which he surpassed all others of the movement. *Nirvana*, another of his photograph-etchings, gives a melting effect as one contemplates the young woman whose hair mingles, it might be, with the sea. His *Horse*, richly imbedded in its background by a banking of the etcher's lines, has often been reproduced. Such values prompted the remark by Demachy that there was "a special richness, a *greasiness*, in the blacks" that he "admired very much." That characterization stands. As for his "straight" photographs—largely limited to portraits—he could be no less convincing here. The fact is that Eugene was an artist, and unquestionably one of the most stimulating in the group.

Joseph T. Keiley was the brave bugler of the movement. He summoned the faltering and charged recklessly, regardless of the opposition. The volume of the man's own writing on photography is considerable. Gathered together, it would furnish the most definitive record on Pictorialism. As to Keiley's own work, his dusted cornfields, his lily ponds, or his gracious portraits, while winning in spirit, and experimentally interesting in their way, do not excite as do his own commanding attacks and judgments on the work of others.

Steichen emerged the last.[5] Influenced by Whistler, sustained also by such as Chase, John W. Alexander and Watts (whom he thought the greatest "idealist" in modern English painting), he worked more forcefully later on. In less than three years, however, he had already convinced many that he would contribute much before he was through. In France (1902), he succeeded in getting the Champs de Mars to accept his paintings and photographs equally, but apparently the academic-minded got busy, for, despite this concession, hanging was granted only to the paintings (which, by the way, were less interesting). Yet the original decision stood and became known among photographers everywhere.

Stieglitz was the generator of this movement. Sympathetic to the newcomer, devastating to the dichard, alert, trenchant, he maintained a year-in and year-out fight of remarkable effectiveness. Two setbacks from the *American Amateur Photographer* and the Camera Club merely steeled him and sharpened his weapons. Ever the standard was higher. Always the lines advanced. Limited in time for his own work, he nevertheless produced, in 1896, the first night photograph with animated figures (*Reflections, Night*), likewise a nocturnal view of the Plaza, which, amidst solitude, crisp trees and untrodden snow, depicted the beneficence of nature in the very midst of Manhattan. At the end of this period, he produced *Hand of Man*. Here a locomotive steams through the Long Island yards of a

[5]He was only nineteen when he exhibited at the Philadelphia Salon in 1898.

metropolitan terminal. Rails flash and criss-cross beneath its going. Layers of smoke cloud the sunset. But industrialism—industrialism in its very fastness—has been met and handled. No more could the fastidious turn away and say, "Not for us." A mind had perceived, an eye had seen, a spirit had gone to the very core. Through a product of industry itself—the camera—the American scene had at last been made amenable to man. Thus Stieglitz and his conquest in photography.

PART TWO

Revolt

CHAPTER V

The Realists Arrive

EVEN a mild rebellion is a beginning. Childe Hassam was no revolutionary conspirator when he proposed to J. Alden Weir, a second though a somewhat older American Impressionist, that a group called The Ten be formed to exhibit as a unit in New York. He wanted more facilities for presenting his own friends, and not a challenge to the National Academy, since they were all permitted to exhibit there. At most he wished merely to introduce a sparkle or two into the lifeless New York art world of 1898. Thus "The Ten" assembled and a new fulcrum of taste was provided for gallery-visitors of the period.

Essentially these were men of the nineteenth century —Hassam and the other three Bostonians (Tarbell, Benson and De Camp)—Weir and his fellow New Yorkers, Twachtman, Metcalfe, Dewing, Simmons and Reid. True, the landscapes of Twachtman had no public, and he died (in 1902) so inexcusably neglected by his countrymen that he was unable to sell a single canvas in the last year of his life. But even he, with his luminous landscapes and his freshly trickling brooks, was at all times an Impressionist of the nineteenth century.

But Childe Hassam, who took credit for originating The

Ten, never disturbed any one's conceptions by his work.[1] He deliberated, performed, sold. For at least ten years —since his illustrating days in Boston—he never doubted himself and soon found his market. During student days and the first years of married life in Paris, in the 80's, he had determined that he would deal directly with dealers and never with patrons. He had adhered to this decision since his return to America in 1889. He had, however, deserted Boston for New York. For the great port was now the center of the publishing and art world, and Hassam still had to rely on magazine illustrations, in part, for his living. He reacted to New York. Strolling out from his studio at 17th Street and Fifth Avenue, his feeling would accelerate as he considered the cabs under the leafage of Madison Square. Out would come sketchbook, and he would have an impression in pencil or ink—for he had an admirable facility at swift notations of this kind. Streetcars he liked, and tall buildings, and strollers in the park.

Returning to his studio, he would expand the sketches into paintings. Soon the Hassam versions of the city had multiplied and before many years had passed he could ignore the magazines and devote himself entirely to painting. But while he was still mobile, he responded to the flickering life of Manhattan, and keyed perhaps to its tempo, had proposed the formation of The Ten. He became self-satisfied later, he excoriated the young, he dismissed experimenters as his "contemptuaries," he belittled Robert Henri, he even rejected the motives of men whose work differed from his own. He became like a spluttering

[1]The dates of Hassam: 1859–1935.

banker. But an original verve remained. And if constant Appledore rocks, and Easthampton elms, and New England churches, repeated one another seemingly without difference in his later work, he stands, from his first, early affection—and a small if narrow ability—a belated Impressionist who, nevertheless, affected a movement larger than himself.

II

Another American—a Westerner—had studied in France during the 80's. He did not recall Boston complacency and the satisfaction of previous generations in New England. No, Robert Henri, with his six feet of strength and his virile straightforwardness, seemed, even as he spoke, to be taking aim on somebody out in the Western country. No politeness for him; and no smug tidiness.

Much travelled throughout our continent, he knew from childhood the frontier and the more tangled parts of America, and somehow that experience was reflected in his own identity. Born in 1865, he decided at twenty to become a painter (though previously he had been tempted by literature). He studied two years at the Pennsylvania Academy of Art, where he was taught to seek structure by the never-tiring Anschutz. In 1888 he was enrolled at the Académie Julien in Paris, under Bouguereau and Floury. He left, tried the Beaux-Arts, but there also the academic tradition irked him. He began to seek the museums instead. Fermenting—also travelling—one day in rural France he was passing a granary.

Looking in, he saw a canvas, a nude, which certainly contained much that he was seeking. Line was simple but connected, the ruddy flesh tones ever changed in their modulations, and the stroke, while broad, seemed to encompass at a single surge the entire object on the canvas. But the light passed, and shadows enveloped the picture. Yet he would never relinquish that vision. Was it an actual canvas that he saw? Or was he in a "state"—as he would later say—in consequence of his pursuits abroad? Whatever the answer, Henri was never the same again. Trips followed to Spain, to Holland, to Belgium, to Italy—he absorbed Manet, Velasquez, Hals—and his apprenticeship was over.

Returning to America in 1891, he secured a post in the Women's School of Design which was in Philadelphia. Young Mr. Henri liked people and soon made several friends. Among the newspaper men he met John Sloan, William Glackens, Everett Shinn, George Luks, F. R. Gruger, and James Preston, all working as illustrators on the Philadelphia press. He also established a friendship with Walter Schofield and Edward Redfield, who were landscape painters. All these men drank and joked together. They criticized one another's work, and asked themselves why American art was so stagnant.

Nothing was planned. But Henri, who had been enraptured the day he saw the canvas at Concarneau, now caught fire at the contact with these young men who were illustrators and professional painters. He told them to paint more boldly. He gave them both light and verve, as he described his experience in Concarneau and recalled his emotions before the great paintings of Europe. He

urged looseness and confidence. A large, raw-boned man, he spoke in a level voice which seemed to be the voice of America, telling them to transform it.

Never had they heard such gospel before. While among them were some who had studied under the faithful Anschutz and others who had at least discussed—if they had not known—Eakins, still the man who had been struck down by what he saw at Concarneau came with a vision compelling in its novelty. Their eyes were opened, their pulses drummed, their purposes quickened. They had determined to remake the art of America. Yet Henri did not so much prescribe a method—though he did advocate the tonalities of Whistler and the brushmanship of his European favorites—as he sought to present art as a man's occupation. This was something new. Previously, expatriates had been attracted to art, or bloodless chaps who had no vitality for living. Men—affirmative, clear men like Henri —were not of the American ranks in art.

Suddenly the profession of the painter had enlarged. It now showed a Whitman aspect. Even to look at Henri, or to read his recommendations—Zola and de Maupassant and Tolstoy, in addition to Whitman—was to realize that painting had been misunderstood. It was not for the fearful and the dainty, but for the commanding and the energetic. It was not a part-time occupation for dilettantes, but one which required the fully engaged strength of a man. In fact it was, said Henri, a form of social prophecy. Thus speaking, he made John Sloan, a newspaper illustrator and poster-maker in the tradition of Beardsley and the Japanese, face about and aim at something greater. And

he impelled Glackens, and Luks, and other members of the circle while it lasted, to do the same. But the Philadelphia days were ending.

Presently Shinn, one of the youngest in the group, left for New York. His reports upon opportunities there attracted the rest, and by the turn of the century the "Newspaper School," as they now are known, were all in New York. Soon Henri had transferred, too, and begun, at the Chase School, to convert another group of the young. He challenged wherever he turned. If it weren't the students or fellow-painters, it was academies and their practice of medal awards. In 1907 when the National Academy rejected a canvas of Luks, Henri became furious. He charged its members with blindness and ineptitude, and declared that the jury system was all wrong.

Others had felt the same, especially since the amalgamation of the Society of American Artists with the older institution meant virtually a closed door to newcomers.[2] How should oncoming talents obtain a chance if they didn't make it for themselves? Accordingly, the protesters took action. Emulating "The Ten," they mockingly called themselves "The Eight," and announced an exhibition at the gallery of William Macbeth, a sympathetic American dealer.

They calculated well. Not only was the Academy aghast, most of the critics also opposed these interlopers who were dragging dirt into the temples of art. In con-

[2]The National Academy of Design (founded in 1825) merged with the Society of American Artists in 1906. The second group was then just thirty years old.



In the Phillips Memorial Gallery Collection, Washington, D. C.

Along the Erie Canal

ARTHUR B. DAVIES



ourtesy of the Gallery of Fine Arts, Yale University

West Fifty-Seventh Street

ROBERT HENRI

tempt they were called "The Ash-can School." Why discredit art, people demanded, by picturing slums? What did pigs—the subject of a Luks canvas—have to do with the sacred inspiration of traditional art? This Revolutionary Black Gang—as others called them—was bringing the stokehole into the exhibition world. They were unclean, not esthetic, and it was even intimated were untalented.

But what were they actually doing? These men—Henri, Luks, Sloan, Glackens, Shinn, Ernest Lawson, Maurice Prendergast, and Arthur B. Davies—were incorporating new materials into American art. Sloan, for example, was invading Greenwich Village and depicting nurse-girls and adventurers in the city streets. Luks was wrestling with the grit and grime of city life. Henri was picturing colorful folk he knew, while Glackens was reporting upon aristocratic restaurants, Central Park and the shopping district. Had New York no beauty? Must one always travel abroad, or look into the past, to find it? Lawson, who alone among The Eight might properly be designated a landscape painter, presented, in his canvases, a swimming-hole, an abandoned farm, and a stream in spring. He found a better reception than Maurice Prendergast, whose color spotting was deemed nonsense by some of the more knowing. As for Arthur B. Davies, while it is true that his intellectual fantasies were not precisely unconventional, he had always hated institutionalism and if it were going to be attacked, he would be only too glad to help.

But one and all—regardless of character or purpose—were cried down by the narrow-minded as abetting ugliness. One of the most lenient remarks was James Hun-

eker's—that the canvases were painted "in darkest Henri." Yet the vociferousness of the reaction showed how correct Davies had been to join the group. Indeed a blow had been struck. On that day the streets came into the showplace, old walls were pushed back, the air was blown fresh again and a reconsideration of many accepted standards had been forced. And Realism had been introduced into twentieth-century American painting.

Not that it advanced alone. On another sector, Theodore Dreiser, thrown back from the walls with his *Sister Carrie*, was brooding and waiting until he too could crush Puritanism. Earlier, Jack London, Frank Norris and Stephen Crane had gone to the ships, the docks and the streets for their material and had reported without compromise. In politics the Muckrakers, likewise, were seeking to purify by exposure. Everywhere a new push was evident. The Eight stood as a counterpart in the galleries of downtown New York.

Having shaken the town, they never again exhibited as a unit. Nor was it necessary that they should. The indefatigable Henri, however, maintained the attack. Two years later he was the center of another explosion, this time in the form of a larger exhibition to which many of his students were invited. The slogan was No Jury—No Prizes. Still later, he welcomed the Armory Show, and again, in 1917–18, the Independents, of which the first president was William Glackens (and his successor, Sloan). All this activity was especially commendable because nobody could say that he fought for personal ad-

vantage. The older avenues were not barred to Henri. He had, as a matter of fact, exhibited at the Academy only a few weeks after the show of The Eight. He was a challenger, and he had to fight. Life was at stake. Not merely young men of talent, but a whole country which had been blocked by set and angular minds, was insisting upon new passages for its vitality. Art as a form of freedom was his goal. And if narrow men, or inflexible minds, or old methods stood in the way, they must be swept out. It was the urgency of this feeling which made him such a dangerous champion.

Even today, if one reads his book *The Art Spirit*, one recaptures again the ardor and the compulsion of a spirit which brought from the plains the essential breath of America. Not that he was even in his impulse—any more than he was in his execution.

"I lived once in the top of a house," he confesses, "in a little room, in Paris. I was a student. My place was a romance. It was mansard room and it had a small square window that looked out over housetops, pink chimney pots. I could see l'Institut, the Pantheon and the Tour Saint Jacques. The tiles of the floor were red and some of them were broken and got out of place. There was a little stove, a wash basin, a pitcher, piles of my studies. Some hung on the wall, others accumulated dust on their backs. My bed was a cot. It was a wonderful place. I cooked two meals and ate dinner outside. I used to keep the camembert out of the window on the mansard roof between meals, and I made fine coffee, and made much of

eggs and macaroni. I studied and thought, made compositions, wrote letters home full of hope of some day being an artist.

"It was wonderful. But days came when hopes looked black and my art student's paradise was turned into a dirty little room with broken tiles, ashes fell from the stove, it was all hopelessly poor, I was tired of camembert and eggs and macaroni, and there wasn't a shade of significance in those delicate little chimney pots, or the Pantheon, the Institut, or even the Tour Saint Jacques."[3]

Yes, some days were ashen. Some days he could not fire up. But they were intermittent. For the rest, he stood, in classroom or among colleagues, in the exhibition halls or the forums, a force for truth and goodness, and is remembered as such by all who knew him.

His message was not complicated. Aside from his daily preaching against the life-deniers, he was essentially a spokesman for good brushmanship. In his own work, for example, vivacity of execution counted for more than precision and depth of color. He fought hard to establish the Quick Sketch. Guy Pène du Bois has told how the students would expend a week on one drawing until Henri arrived. Immediately he upset them. The whole method had to change. Success must be obtained with the very first "coup." This helped to rid the students of a musty approach. Unfortunately, however, if one examines Henri's drawings today, it is all too clear that he was no master of draughtmanship. Line has no incisiveness; the body it encloses does not vibrate; edge is missing. Yet with

[3] *The Art Spirit*, by Robt. Henri. J. B. Lippincott Co.

Henri present—that encouraging, shattering, electrifying force—students did not stop to question the master's example, but created their own. That is good teaching. Again, Henri was presenting nothing precisely new when he advocated the merits of his favorites, the Proficients of painting. Esthetically speaking, it was old gospel, and had been absorbed a generation before in Europe. It was the impact which counted. For Henri championed not merely a Velasquez and a Hals, he implanted a new social attitude, particularly when he declared the values of a Daumier, a Zola or a Whitman. Students coming from his classes felt that they, too, must immerse themselves in the common life—perhaps in the near-by Alligator Bar, or among New York's own miserables on the East Side, or upon the wintry Harlem River where the cold blasts penetrated the very skin of the poor (and where, incidentally, Henri, in one of his best paintings, had captured something of the fury of that landscape). They must hug the social life and be even closer to their environment. West Fifty-seventh Street in snow—as Henri showed in a typical canvas—might be just as appealing a subject as a boulevard in Paris.

Even when he painted a portrait—Irish mavourneens, a Negro youngster, Mexican natives, old salts or young rascals, the weary, or the merely picturesque—some human contact flickered, if not in the pictures as such, at least in the implicit attitude of the man who did them. No wonder, then, that when he set up his own school in the Lincoln Arcade, art students following him from the League were tramping there as if with revolutionary ban-

ners and were all young John Reeds with a flame of a new world in their eyes. It has been called a vague socialism which Henri imbued into his students, and perhaps justly so. But the consequence was a more living contact with the soil and the presence of America. No art can live without that.

It has been thought that the Armory Show and its results served in a measure to dispossess Henri. Apparently this is true, for after 1913 and particularly in the 20's, his militance seemed to diminish. Yet it was not altogether that the world had passed him by. Dying on July 12, 1929, is it not more likely that the physical vitality which had always been the source of his appeal, had begun to ebb? Was it not that the fighter simply no longer had the strength? Possibly he questioned himself, possibly, too, that fitfulness of impulse so tellingly present even in his student days, became, as one may see in his own work, more and more his "state," so that he lost his incandescence.

III

William J. Glackens never carried a torch, as Henri did. Yet he illuminated a segment of the American scene which had been overlooked before him. Where Henri emphasized the social, he gravitated towards "Society." For example, in picturing Mouquin's, the fashionable New York restaurant, Glackens conveyed the heavy enjoyment of a couple who had just finished their meal. But he commented rather cheerfully, more as an illustrator than a caricaturist.

Now, no Frenchman would consider it strange that a painter would take to a scene like that. After all, Manet had produced an indisputably important picture of the bar at the Folies Bergères. The café furnished material for the artist in France. Not so in America. Somehow, here the most familiar did not entice. It was Glackens' privilege to give back to America such scenes and thus, to the extent of his originality, to enlarge our social understanding by means of his art.

Born in 1870 of English, Irish, and Pennsylvania Dutch long settled in his native state, his schooling soon terminated. After graduating from Central High School in Philadelphia (where he was a classmate of Dr. Albert C. Barnes, later a devotee of his work) he obtained his real instruction as an artist on the papers of his own home town. Here he distinguished himself and soon became an intimate of the companions with whom he later exhibited. Presently he was sharing a studio with Henri and possibly from him securing some of that training which he had not completed in the schools. Yet Glackens was inseparable from newspapers and illustration.

Though he went to Paris in 1895 and studied there a year and a half, and though he abandoned illustration for painting before the new century was a dozen years old, he vivified a whole area of a culture by his work in a medium which he later renounced. His illustrating, consequently, will not be forgotten. Much of it was plain reporting in the Philadelphia days. But once he got to New York on his return from Paris, he did the work for which he should be remembered. First he was assigned—

at the instance of Luks—to the "funnies" of *The New York Sunday World*. Soon he was appearing in the "class" magazines as well as the popular weeklies. Still later he was employed by *McClure's*, then the fiercest of the Muckrakers. Even that audience, apparently, still had its Victorian hangover, for Albert Sterner, its art editor, has said that complaints came in from subscribers. The young man's efforts "were not sweet enough. They were too original, too fresh and amusing to appeal to a public saturated with false illustration." The Knighthood in flower idea was more to their taste. Dirty faces, ragamuffins, straight seeing in the bars and restaurants—how could a genteel palate care for them? Better the bon-bons of Charles Dana Gibson, or the soporifics of the Age of Innocence. Glackens impaled even within his limits.

And in addition, he emanated an indefinable sparkle and spontaneity. His drawings tripped and danced. Children gambolled in Washington Square, and though they might overcrowd the picture space, the abundance of life excused the plastic overflow. Imps and scalawags these were—the kind of boys who knock off a plug hat with the first snowfall. There was an irresistible zest in them—like the snap and tingle of the air in the country. Sometimes he even seemed to be setting off firecrackers, or experiencing the glee of a holiday. Almost always he smiled. His pages chuckled and refreshed and replenished. They certainly gave something new to the eye in this country.[4]

Animation thus distinguished his personality. He de-

[4]In fact, they did much to give us a Silver Age of Illustration. *Cf.* Chapter VI.

lighted in the show of The Eight. No doubt he felt that he was throwing a snowball at the respectable. Again, when the Armory Show was being organized, he served as chairman of the American section. Later, he became first President of the Independents. Yet he could not always "see." "Certain modern artists," he wrote in 1917, "elect to disguise rather than to explain in their art. Their pictures are just working drawings, plane elevations made into a design. Of course every man has a right to paint just as he pleases, but one cannot get too far away from representation." There spoke the illustrator in Glackens.

He never did get away from illustration in his painting. Returning again to Europe some years after his marriage in 1904, he immersed himself in Renoir. Glackens became indeed his echo. His apologists have claimed that to be influenced is not necessarily to be absorbed. True. But in the case of Glackens the distinction does not exist. Regardless of the man's devotion, his zestfulness, his likeability, the fact remains that his paintings at this particular period offer nothing which cannot be seen to much better effect in the Frenchman. His attachment to the oil medium, and likewise to Renoir, unfortunately, coincided with, if indeed it did not reflect, a slackened response to American life. Interiors, family portraits, scenes at St. Jean de Luz—are they not the product of the international scene rather than of a specific locale? And was it not the misfortune of Glackens that, pre-eminent as an illustrator, he preferred, instead, a more ambitious role in which he could not completely satisfy? In that sense, he was not even up to his own best, and ceased to provoke

as he once had done. He became instead one of the complaisant against whom he earlier had protested.

IV

But John Sloan is a satirist who never lost his bite. Even in a recent interview on National Art Week he showed what reporters long ago called his "tabasco-tongue." He is a man of opinions, and he does not relinquish them. One can no more imagine Sloan without them than an Irishman without his quick tongue. And perhaps it is the cut of a mind as well—for Sloan, too, is Irish—that has kept him sharp, and yet not unkind, all these years.

"Draw with human kindness," he once wrote.[5] It well might be the masthead on his own editorial page. Pennsylvania born, Philadelphia educated, never a visitor abroad, he, more than the others, was a product of the newspapers which educated them all. He reflected the currents in his vicinity. When the Japanese Commissioner to the World's Fair, in 1893, showed him some woodcuts from his native land, Sloan promptly made some drawings which utilized flat pattern to his own purpose. Influenced also by Henri, he began to supersede his newspaper work by paintings which he composed at his leisure. One of his earliest shows a load of hay at the Philadelphia City Hall in the late Nineties. Before long Sloan, like his confreres, went on to New York, and presently was making illustrations

[5]In his autobiographical *Gist of Art* (p. 41). This volume (published in 1939) is pungent in those places where Sloan lets go of his opinions. For the rest, it presents his methods as a teacher.

for the novels of Paul de Koch. They reminded one of the earlier Englishmen Keene or Leech, except that Sloan's already were distinguished by an individual tartness. Paintings multiplied. Sometimes it was a portrait in a Henri tonality, again a tip-tilted glimpse from the back of a ferry in the muted passages of a Whistler. But always there was the assignment for the journals of the day. Even an "unorganized" drawing such as *The Steady*, for McClure's, reveals the mocker at ease. Bustles and frilly skirts, coy eyes, a disdainful cigarette—these depict not merely boy-and-girl, but also the time in which they move. Something both of spice and vigor is in them.

Sloan somehow came to a point about 1905. Literally, too, for it was then that he made the first of his well-known etchings. *Fifth Avenue Critics* it is called. A parrot-faced lady has lowered her pince-nez and is glaring with petrified disdain; beside her in the carriage, her daughter sniffs condescendingly. Both are sneering at the tempting young woman who passes in another carriage, a dog at her side. And the mule-faced coachman stares ahead. Again, in the *Connoisseur of Prints*, Sloan has pierced the sham of the picture galleries and ridiculed the sleek and the pompous who pass judgments there.

Such social commentary had been lacking in American art. A heart was behind this line—yes, "drawing with human kindness." For even though Sloan mocked, he did so as a fellow-mortal having not one tinge of superior righteousness. He was moved by satire but checked by mellowness, and it is this combination which gives him a real character. Furthermore, he had precisely the gifts for

his temperament: an unremitting slash rather comparable to Forain's, and a line which contained a sting. Yet he did not penalize in the tradition of the French. Daumier with his blacks and whites was a moralist from the depths. Sloan's etchings had sufficient line to "tell," and sufficient pointing by the dark and light to reinforce his comment. But they frequently are less independent of their maker. Sloan's work says: A man passed this way. But this is a record, not an indictment.

It was a nostalgia for humanity that always distinguished Sloan. A domestic lamplight had an affectionate glow in the etching of his mother, or again in the memory of an evening with the Henri's. He shed a tear for the poor and cried out against the molten skies of Pittsburgh. Later still, when he had joined the fearless men of the *Masses*, he damned the butchery of the Ludlow Massacre. Yet whether it was pity, mockery or anger, always a beneficence seemed to temper the drawing. He was lacking in vitriol. For that reason, perhaps, he did not become, or even seek to be, a cartoonist, but remained more appropriately the graphic celebrator of the homely dignity in life.

Unfortunately Sloan, like Glackens, aspired to another kind of achievement. He would be a painter. At first his canvases paralleled his linear productions. He capered as he laid out a scene in the pre-war Bohemia of Petitpas's. He watched a breeze drying the women's hair on city roofs. Or he followed the pigeons circling above the tenement lofts. Yet nothing that he said in color had not been better said in his effective black-and-white. In fact, the creed of Sloan as a teacher (he served many years at the

Art Students' League) has been that form and color are separate. No true painter would accept this heresy. For one issues from the other and they cannot be torn apart.

Still later, Sloan took to seascapes of the Gloucester coast and thereafter to mountain scenes in the Southwest. These works say even less in the specific language of painting than such earlier canvases as the *Scrubwomen in the Library*. The color does not vivify, the imagination is not touched through the eyes, he even seems somewhat remote from the subject.

More recently Sloan has taken to cross-hatching his nudes. This unfortunate practice has been ascribed by Forbes Watson, by implication at least, to Thomas Benton, once the colleague of Sloan at the Art Students' League. It is altogether regrettable. In these works Sloan records only his own self-consciousness.

But in his drawings and particularly his etchings he has consolidated a new point of view in American art. Where once the lily-fingered minced through the drawing rooms, making genuflections to the great, he stopped to suggest a question. Sometimes he did more than that. In the slums he found the population crowded upon the roof on a summer night. He inscribed a protest. He was struck by pity and wonder as he saw a young couple embracing in the shadow of the chimneys. Farther uptown, he tenderly drew the young woman of the gas-jet era, hanging up her dress after work. Children's play, or fashions, frolicsome girls in the park, or the hurly-burly of Fourteenth Street—all these he saw and registered with an inimitable American accent. Here is the real John

Sloan, the etcher-draughtsman who never went to Europe, and who, retaining a native approach, saw the city, and particularly its poorer districts, with a new understanding of the divisions among men which make the misery of the world possible.

Seeing, Sloan wondered, paused, commented. Then he recorded. And that record provides a new platform for the understanding of his fellow-countrymen.

V

George Luks always attracted the literary men. It is said that Theodore Dreiser modelled the hero of *The Genius* after him. He was a type to furnish copy for the feature-writer. An hour with him might provide a Masters epitaph. Profuse, meaty, and yet not inelegant, he contains the contradictions of his own best and worst, and yet suggests no conflicts whatsoever.

Born in 1867, Luks was well endowed on both sides of the family. His father, a doctor in the Pennsylvania mining-town of Williamsport, turned out canvases for his own amusement. His mother was a painter of some talent. He was weighed down with no Anglo-Saxon *impedimenta*. Dutch, French and Bavarian in his ancestry, he reverts to the days of the great Dutch drinkers, the Frenchmen who knew and saw the full range of life, the raw, beefy, life-celebrators of southern Germany. He was formed from the very beginning, and he would not have been different at any other time or place.

Study in Düsseldorf followed his instruction at the

Pennsylvania Academy. Soon he was illustrating for the newspapers in Philadelphia. In 1897 he replaced Outcault when the latter left *The New York World* for *The Journal,* and in the next years drew for the comic supplements. He never had any objections to newspaper work and he scorned the over-dainty who feared contamination from such sources. "I have utterly no patience," he declared, "with the fellows whose 'style is ruined' if they must make drawings for newspapers or advertisements, whose 'art is prostituted' if they must use it to get daily bread. Any style that can be hurt, any art that can be smirched by such experiences is not worth keeping clean. Making commercial drawings and especially doing newspaper work, gives an artist unlimited experience, teaches him life, brings him out. If it doesn't, there was nothing to bring him out, that's all."

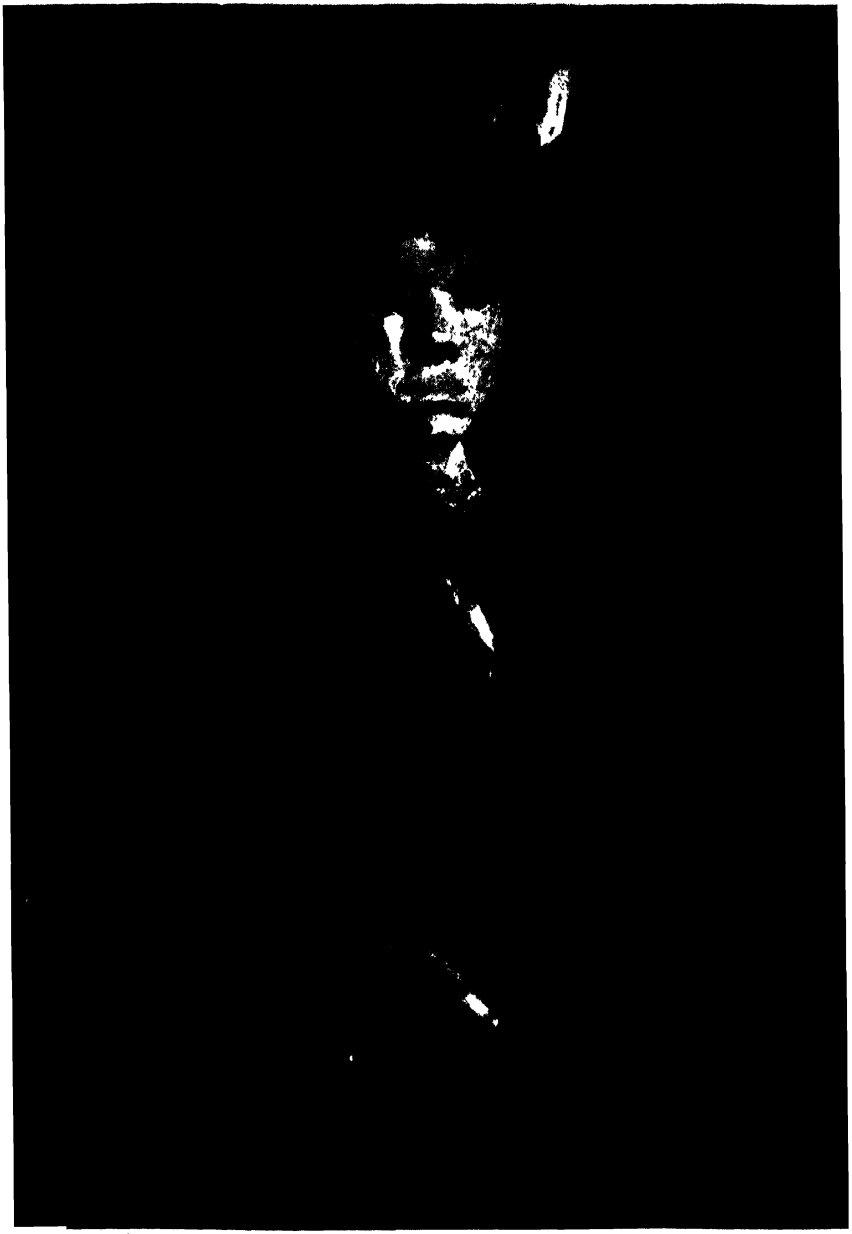
After a trip to Cuba, where he served as war correspondent, and further newspaper work, his paintings began to sell. As soon as they did, Luks quit journalism and henceforth devoted himself to the easel. He taught some years at the Art Students' League, but eventually, as was inevitable, disagreed with the authorities and was ousted. Such teaching as he did thereafter was conducted in his own studio among the lofts on Twenty-third Street.

Luks, one must admit, came from the mining country. His tonalities bear the darkness of those regions. His sympathy roots down into those chambers where pick and shovel dig away to the flare of a miner's cap. His early portraits spring from his background, and so does the

later *Breaker-Boy*, who has momentarily stepped away from his job. Hard of eye, confident, a little swaggering, he gazes back at the spectator, the image of a life which never polished, but hardened. The canvas has been projected in a clot of emotion, and accordingly it stirs our feelings—or at least burns and assaults them—while the handling has an undeniable brilliance. Luks could paint. He knew it, too. "Art—my slats!" he would cry, "I can paint with a shoestring dipped in pitch and lard. . . . Technique, did you say? My slats! Say, listen, you—it's in you or it isn't. Who taught Shakespeare technique? . . . Guts! Guts! Life! Life! That's my technique."

But he had technique. That is why he dismissed it. And in these early years he poured out canvases—the ingratiating *Spielers*, in which waifs of the street dance to a nearby organ—*The Old Duchess*, frowzy in her decline—*The Guitar*, his brother pleasing a tiny son with music. Often the very title said something about the picture: *Apple-Mary*, *The New York Cabby*, *The Bread Woman*, *Little Milliner*, *Knitters in the Park*. Each was a slice of life. Each cut right down to the bone and was then flung on canvas. No premeditation about it. A gust of emotion, a frenzy of brushwork, and they were completed. In this sense, Luks was a virtuoso of the brush, somewhat comparable with, but never once equal to, such forerunners as Hals and those little Dutch masters who repaired to the bars and sank their fingers into the low-life.

Hence his altercations with the Academy. Luks strode into American art with hob-nailed boots. He lifted a dripping stein, he roared, he swore, he used earthy words for



Mrs. John F. Braun, owner, and the Frick Art Reference Library

The Breaker Boy

GEORGE B. LUKS



Roofs, Summer Night

JOHN SLOAN

elemental needs. How could the tepid tolerate him? Till death would come, he would be the spirit and appetites which they denied. And his merriment was suspect, too. Art was gray, like life, and red blood made them shrink.

Henri supported Luks precisely because of his vitality. He resented that the Academy would not show him, and on one occasion withdrew his own pictures in protest. Possibly Luks instigated The Eight. This rude man who stood for the gristle of life; this celebrator of Gansevoort Docks in the wintertime, when skies froze the blood in the veins and the East River had the look of the Russian steppes; this fearless exponent of the guts, the loins and the bowels of men—must have his chance. He got the show when he was included among The Eight. And one may be sure that it was the very frankness—what may be termed a wholly masculine earthiness—which repelled the tender-minded among the spectators and the critics. He had nothing startling to say. He did not originate. No more than Dreiser, did Luks increase the scope of the world's expression. But both were exponents of a truth which, in being recognized, upset more than the specific content of their work. Both were levers under the layers of American dryness. Both broke fissures so that the unadmitted could come through. And that is why both were hated.

Much later, Luks did not consume his material as ardently. The coal was flung in by the fireman—Luks would never fail in sheer physical vitality. But sometimes mere lividness remains. *Armistice Day* and the *Czecho-Slovak Chieftain*, for example, do not illuminate so much as they

call attention to their own fitful surface lights. Again, there was drawing after drawing of the saloons and drinking-places—"The Bucket of Blood," "Paddy the Pig's," "High Tide at Luchow's." Men being thrown out, drunks spilling in their cups, pell-mell bodies on the floor or piled up under the table. Life rioted. Unfortunately, the draughtsmanship in these—and in many of the paintings which issued from them—did not articulate the depths from which Luks had started. The hand could not control at the moment of dissipation.

Years passed. He unknowingly showed a sadness in the *Mrs. Gamely*, an old lady who recalls more raffish days as she holds her hen. Sometimes the old fire would again ignite a canvas. But the habits told. In September, 1933, a policeman inspecting the areaways under the Sixth Avenue elevated, found George Luks, this time not drunk, but dead. A tragic but not altogether inappropriate death.

Luks bore no conflicts within himself. Even in his sixties he had no regrets. "On my last anniversary," he told a reporter, "some kind soul who evidently considered me about done for, asked whether I would live my life over if given the choice. Well, well! Here we are in the vale of tears, eh? Alas, though I roast for it, I will be guilty of no hypocrisy. My answer to life is yes."

His was an appetite living to consume itself. And while the body was vital he could paint portraits—particularly of children—as no contemporary in America. No divisions disturbed him. He was just one integer of flesh. But even as a mine begins to give when its timbers rot, so, when

his constitution weakened, he could no longer drive the brush with the old fury.

Companions built up his weaknesses. Nobody challenged his stories about his feats as a war correspondent in Cuba. Men laughed when he bellowed out that he had been known as "Chicago Whitey," the boxer, during his student days. He was coddled rather than criticized. The liverless rejected him. But his friends—the others of gusto and understanding and generosity—like himself merely fed their own extremes. In consequence Luks gradually disintegrated, and while the performance of his heartiest years will last as long as Americans look at pictures, the fire failed to mount until it burned out every last bit of dross. The crucible was flawed. Yet many a tempered product remains.

VI

Ernest Lawson was the only confirmed landscapist among The Eight. He had come from Nova Scotia (though he was born at San Francisco in 1873). At sixteen he had been attracted to Mexico by the remunerations that he would receive as an engineering draughtsman. But, though he prospered he preferred the insecurities of painting, quit his job, and enrolled for studies in Kansas City and then at the Art Students League in New York. Next he joined the class which Twachtman and Weir were just starting at Cos Cob, Conn. Somewhat later he departed for France, painting a year in that gleaming countryside which had stirred Sisley. Upon returning

he settled at Greenwich, Conn., for he wanted to be near Twachtman, the painter who meant more to him than all the rest. Later he taught for himself and soon, in 1893, moved to Washington Heights,[6] then a suburban "wilderness" where the goats nibbled in rocky pastures and the advancing apartment-houses were already crowding out the last remaining trees. For eight years he explored this vicinity, painting its rivers on either side and the creek which connected them at Spuyten Duyvil. Here he brought up his children and for recreation would often sit at the Polo Grounds watching the great Christy Mathewson twirl his shutouts for the Giants. Lawson knew many of the players by their first names.

Then he moved his studio to Greenwich village, though retaining his household in the uptown areas of New York. Soon he was associating with Glackens and Davies and drinking an occasional stein with James Huneker, the boulevardier among the critics. He lived a measured life, not aloof, but secure in his own ways. He never sparkled, though Huneker once declared that he had a "palette of crushed jewels." His was a quiet accomplishment, both dull and firm, yet meritorious and, on those occasions when fired sufficiently to melt his own *impasto*, a subduing of the bleak in nature. Year after year he had his shows, his family grew, and he continued to roam the less-habited areas of both Westchester and Manhattan. Some evenings, when the warmth of spring thawed the ice, he would see the lights like illuminated pearls beside the bridges of the Harlem River. Sometimes a squalid squatter's

[6]New York City.

shanty would set itself down in the midst of a true painter's space on his canvas. The nude seldom crossed his landscapes; when it did it seemed ineffectual. He drew without distinction, thus indicating that he chose wisely, perhaps, when he confined himself to the simple contour of hills, the margins of wintry streams, and the boxlike lines of faraway habitations.

Drowning ended Lawson's career late in 1939, on the beaches of Florida. At last he had united with the nature that informed him.

Lawson's place was not that of the innovator. He merely continued the Impressionists, fortifying in a sense the line of Twachtman. He was not a luminist, like Hassam, but more a pigmentalist with a certain rugged feeling for simple forms. Too often the theme was repeated, and it seemed that he piled on the material with the palette-knife. One of his canvases pictured seagulls circling over black stone harbors. Is this not a reflection of the painter's own spirit? A lift at times, an intimation of warmth, a flow despite the paste—then the flight was ended. For the rest, a congealment set in. But the white wings turning a moment in the sunlight—these remain. And that was the poet in Ernest Lawson.

VII

Odd, gifted, obscure, Maurice Prendergast was a man who well could use such attention as The Eight could bring. Somewhat older than his fellow-exhibitors, he had persisted despite a neglect which probably accentuated his

peculiarities. Though born in Newfoundland, he was brought up in Boston, where his parents moved when he was two. As a boy, he worked for a local dry-goods shop, tying up packages and furtively drawing when he could. Sundays he walked into the fields and sketched the cows. Presently he was apprenticed to a painter of show cards, for whom he washed out the brushes, and soon he was making show cards for himself. Much of this time he lived with his brother Charles, an expert carver and gilder of picture frames. Eventually, having saved a thousand dollars, Maurice Prendergast decided to go to Paris and devote himself to painting. He was then twenty-seven years old.

In 1886 he shipped with his brother to France in a cattle boat. Three years he remained, studying at Colarossi's and then at Julien's, where, despite discouragement from one of his instructors, he persisted until his drawing became commendable. After these years he returned to Boston. Again he drew show cards and began to illustrate books, but continued to paint. Once more he rejoined his brother.

In 1898 a second European trip became possible through the assistance of a friend. This time he visited Venice. Here Prendergast did many water colors where the filing processions and the manipulation of color recalled Carpaccio. He never ceased to exclaim about that earlier painter of squares and movement and people.

While Maurice Prendergast was still abroad, he underwent two operations. Yet he never faltered, perhaps because he knew, as did his predecessors among the New England solitaries, that he had a spiritual function, and

that fulfilling it would see him through. "It is too bad for your sake I am sick," he wrote his brother. "It would be so fine to be home in the old studio, helping you along with the frames. We were such a fine team. I am feeling strong and healthy and with dutiful trust in God am ready for the second operation."[7]

For the next ten years he carved frames—somehow recalling both a Yankee craftsman and a Persian miniaturist—and, despite all handicaps (deafness among them), continued to paint. As to subjects, nothing was better than a scene at the Bay. A four-mile walk to Revere Beach made him fresh for a good day's work. Hours later, he would walk the whole way back at night.

What were his sources? Walter Pach, for instance, has insisted that Prendergast was the first American painter to come back with "news" of Cézanne. Perhaps he was. He did refer in his odd way to "Old Paul," as if he had known him as well as his work. And possibly he had. For Prendergast had an anchor, even as Cézanne, which no blow of misfortune could loose. Again, he pertained in his work to no referable American source. One may look at an early water color of Franklin Park, and, having noted both figures and setting, inquire if he had not seen a croquet scene by Homer. Maybe he had, but the Prendergast strollers move more freely. Theirs is a more scented air, a more flowing color and a certain intentional accenting of the rhythm which one cannot assign to the more

[7]This citation is made from Van Wyck Brooks' tribute to the Prendergast—originally a booklet published in 1938 by the Addison Gallery of American Art, at Andover, Mass.

rugged American. Nor does such a work recall Cézanne.

Prendergast, despite his Boston isolation, vibrated to a current which throbbed in his contemporaries, the Post-Impressionists. A new freedom was in the air. He felt it. He painted accordingly. When, a few years later, he exhibited at Macbeth's, he was virtually ignored. Yet a few noted and observed. When The Eight assembled he was included and subsequently moved to New York. It appears that he was one of the first to inform his more socially directed brethren among The Eight as to the meaning of Cézanne. A story is told that during a talkative night, when he had been discussing "Old Paul," somebody roared out, "Who is this Cézanne anyway?" But the joke was not on Prendergast.

Until his establishment in New York, oil painting had been less accessible because of its cost. Not until the last years of his life, therefore, did he actually work consistently at his oils. Unfortunately, the texture seldom gratifies. Here Prendergast literally wove, not only with repeating horizontal rhythms, but with the very materials of his art. Paint became yarn. One thinks of the product rather as a coverlet, or at the happiest as an inferior tapestry, than as a painting. And though leisure was his, and uninterrupted concentration in the last years of his life, until he died in 1924, it is now clear that he will be remembered for his achievement in the more flowing medium.

Prendergast was not always forceful. A supreme vitality is not to be found in his numerous water colors. One does not treasure them for an impact or a revelation, or



April Snow, Salem

MAURICE PRENDERGAST



Courtesy of Mrs. Bellows

Jean, 1923

GEORGE BELLOWS

even as a moment of "information." No, their appeal is in their integrity. Looking at a Prendergast water color, one is brought to a childhood oblivious of maturity's cares and manhood's responsibilities. It is always holiday in this childhood. . . . Early in the Nineties, strolling people dot the seashore near Boston. They are captured with half-touches and sure elisions. The color glints and sparkles. It catches the lights in the water. Later the scene expands in intention, when the artist contemplates Venice. But the charm is less complete. Carpaccio intrudes, the rhythms move but horizontally and do not sing back, one might say, into space. The people remain flat. Later still, he would come back to his own powers upon his return to the Boston seashore.

What is the spell of his work? Wherein resides its permanent attraction? Sometimes *The Youth's Companion* is recalled, and one feels that light-flecked days from the seashore are not enough. Again, they cloy in numbers. Yet, taken in proportion, even as a summer's holiday, or a recollection of childhood which does not become habitual, they refresh some small and precious spring of the spirit. Prendergast drew from a personal channel fed by his own earnestness. It flowed clear and pure even in its remoteness. He never blocked it by extraneous activities. On the other hand, it never widened beyond its own rather special boundaries. Rippling, sunny and chaste it remains, a water for all to drink and a genuine source of refreshment among the American contributions of our time.

VIII

Thus The Eight both attacked and encouraged. They made way for liberty. Mere baiting, mere sociological exploration, mere charges against the boorish and the blind —these pass. But a true impulse reflected in a barbed comment on a social frailty, an assistance to the underlying, but not always operative, springs in the human being—this, once given, may help to release the more fundamental currents which bear within them the very forces of renewal.

CHAPTER VI

The Silver Age of Illustration

FROM one period to another there are survivors, and sometimes it is they who tell the story. So it was with Joseph Pennell. A Philadelphia Quaker who seemed to be all joints and spindles, he early determined to be an artist. Even from childhood his pen-line could establish an incisive mark upon the paper. Yet when he applied for admission to the Pennsylvania Academy in the Seventies (he was born in 1857), he was refused, presumably because of doubts as to his talent. Disappointed but no less determined, young Pennell got his training at a technical school and somewhat later had the satisfaction of obtaining entrance to the more pretentious institution. Perhaps he was embittered, perhaps he was just irascible by nature. At any rate, he quarrelled with Thomas Eakins and left the school.

At home he was questioned. Would he make a living out of his art? Apparently young Pennell thought so, for he went right on working. At length he submitted some of his drawings to Alexander Wilson Drake, the great art editor of *Century Magazine*, and in 1881 saw them in print. As *Century* then led all the other magazines in the country, Joseph Pennell needed no other sign to convince his parents. Naturally, other commissions followed. Three

years later, after having collaborated with Elizabeth Robins, who furnished the text to a series of his illustrations, he married her and they departed for Europe.

They settled in England and stayed many years, Pennell antagonizing with his newspaper criticism, pleasing with the probity of his work, and, above all, clarifying his own purposes, particularly through his friendship with Whistler. Whistler was precise—Pennell liked that. Whistler scorned; so did Pennell. Whistler knew everything about his *métier*, and Pennell, who was a craftsman *par excellence*, respected that insistence above everything else. So, when Pennell at last proposed a biography of his master, Whistler was only too glad to authorize it. Though published in 1908—five years after Whistler's death—that work still stands, despite its grudges, its spite, and its spleen, as the essential source on the man.

Occasionally Pennell returned for a visit. Always he fulminated against America—against its money-worship, its taste for the shoddy, and against its perpetual immigrant tides from Eastern Europe. These objurgations may rest, for they proceed from the bickering of a tired man. The skyscrapers, however, excited him. He "praised" them in his etchings. While the Panama Canal was under construction, he celebrated scaffolds and excavations in lithographs for the Sunday *New York Times*. In none of this did he forget Whistler.

If, therefore, one yields him a place in the record of these pages, it must be principally as an illustrator, and in the pen-and-ink tradition at that. For Pennell's etchings and lithographs do not inherently interest. They have no

rhythm, no life within them which today comes out to the spectator anew. But in his slighter pen-and-ink sketches —many published in the nineteenth century and others later—he still gives a pleasure. They run parallel to the printer's art. Black and white cut against one another, and a new issue is born of their meeting.

In his writing on the subject, too, Pennell has few equals. His *Pen Drawings and Pen Draughtsmen* not only chronicled the story of an art from the days of the Renaissance printers to the opening of the twentieth century, but embellished it with cuts which really enhance the printed page. But, like all survivors,[1] Pennell looked back rather than forward. Repeatedly he termed the last quarter of the nineteenth century the Golden Age of Illustration. He disparaged later work, save with such exceptions as C. B. Falls, a poster-maker, and Franklin Booth,[2] whose "mattings" of gray pleased the Quaker eye of this opinionated man. True, the very poetry of Edwin Austin Abbey, who illustrated Shakespeare, one of Goldsmith's plays and other classics during this period; the scintillation of Robert Blum, who died young at the very outset of the next century; of Howard Pyle, with his hand-set Robin Hood and other favorites—not to forget the countrified Frost and the bluff Remington—these made the period an incredibly rich one. Masterful wood engrav-

[1]Other survivors were Ernest Peixotto, a first-rate "stippler" of architecture; Walter Hale, who excelled in Old World scenes; and Vernon Howe Bailey, whose pencil sketches may still be seen in *The New York Sun.*

[2]Maxfield Parrish, with his clouds of "medicated cotton," is no less static than Booth. Competent but synthetic, and related in his preoccupations to Boecklin and the Germans.

ings in the quality magazines never were better, before or since. Granting all this, Mr. Pennell rejected too much when he dismissed virtually all of the men who followed. It is now time to appreciate this Silver Age of Illustration.

II

Contemporary with Pennell was Charles Ames Mitchell, who lacked the self-righteousness of the humorless Quaker. In 1883 Mr. Mitchell founded *Life*. Himself a draughtsman of skill, he had concluded that there was no reason why America could not support a magazine which would laugh as the sign of its conviction. Brisk and sincere, this man then founded an organ which quickly revolutionized the whole technique of drawing. It perfected the pen-and-ink with a humorous tinge. Indeed, it virtually created this kind of work.

The precept and the example of Mitchell were crowned in the late Eighties[3] by the arrival of Charles Dana Gibson. This man was born with a pencil in his hand. Before long he had projected a type which still stands as the symbol for the Nineties. One does not need to describe the Gibson Girls, save to point out, as many have now forgotten, that their creator drew them without a hint of weakness. Gibson was a talent of his kind. And it was that ability which the public, without being aware of it, accepted when it made the Gibson Girl a symbol of the American Beauty. Later he repeated them without a differ-

[3]Earlier, Reginald Birch had made his reputation with his *Little Lord Fauntleroy* drawings. Though still alive today (1942), he is inseparable from this more distant period.

ence—this, according to Charles H. Caffin, the critic, because, having decided to paint, in 1906, he was deflected from that decision when Norman Hapgood offered him a small fortune to illustrate the pages of *Collier's*. Nevertheless, these figures of the Nineties may be recommended, not merely as pretty images, but also as first-rate performances in the pen-and-ink medium.

Gibson had followers. Howard Chandler Christy did still prettier girls, while James Montgomery Flagg gave them suitable consorts. Both were more glib and less manly. Harrison Fisher had even less fiber, while Coles Phillips descended eventually into advertising. R. M. Crosby, less noticed, though he also furbished the pages of *Life* and other periodicals, stood well in the line of his master. Even better was Orson Lowell, whose illustrations for *The Choir Invisible* once led James Lane Allen, its author, to say that they actually visualized for him his own characters. Lowell never achieved quite the roundness of Gibson, in consequence of which his works seem decorative by comparison. Other men emerging early in the century were E. M. Ashe and B. West Clinedinst.

Following Gibson, all of these became adepts in the pen-and-ink. This medium had been enforced in the Eighties, and even later, by the reproductive limitations of the time. Not until 1891 did *Scribner's* first venture to reproduce a Robert Blum in color. The real color efflorescence did not occur until a good dozen years later. When it did, whole pages blossomed forth in color, with many an illustrator turning to both mediums, usually, it must be admitted, with better success in the newer

one. Others, because of technical innovations, employed washes with skill. Some virtually abandoned the pen-and-ink, though still being, in a sense, allied to the tradition of the Gibson Girls. Among these, André Castaigne should be recalled for his tributes to Old World scenes and femininity, and A. B. Wenzell, who, somewhat in a German tradition, portrayed ladies and gentlemen as if they had just come out of a duchy. Henry Hutt was a more silken American.

III

Another precise contemporary of Pennell was Howard Pyle. Pyle contributed two innovations. First he designed the page and its illustration together, so that, as William Morris urged, the two should be a unit. He actually compelled the admiration of Morris—an inveterate depreciator of America—with the estimable qualities of his volume. Pyle's other contribution was his types. He peopled the American imagination with the men of Sherwood Forest and with buccaneers of the Spanish Main, and later with the *coureurs du bois*, those romantic Frenchmen who first penetrated the fur country of the Old Northwest. Eventually he trained up a whole school of followers, whom he instructed from his own studio at Wilmington, Delaware. Into our own time the firmest of these was N. C. Wyeth, whose people always seemed to be roughing it in terms of integrity. Dean Cornwell followed his master at a great distance, while Harvey Dunn has depicted vigor without the same edge as his teacher.

But where Pyle led men back, Frederic Remington, like his fellow-reporter, Richard Harding Davis, depicted the soldiers and the frontiersmen who flourished at the turn of the century. Between them they offered an antidote to the oversweetness of the Gibson school, though Remington, it must be confessed, never approached either of his contemporaries as a draughtsman. His appeal springs from his types. Pyle and Gibson were artists of illustration, he was something less.

Belonging more strictly to the nineteenth century were the "seaman" Reuterdahl; Zogbaum, who did panoramic effects, and de Thulstrup, who had a real *flair* for the line in action.[4] They generally pictured the out-of-doors, but in the day before the bugles and uniforms of Imperialism. Alfred Brennan, E.S., Reinhart and William T. Smedley preferred the library or the drawing room. All of these really precede the tendencies here under discussion.

IV

To balance his Metropolitan Contingent headed by Gibson, Mitchell encouraged a Rustic School as well. If one says A. B. Frost one instantly recalls Joel Chandler Harris and that earlier America pictured by the folklorist and his illustrator—ungainly perhaps, drawling, sure of aim, a creature of the burrs and thickets. He, too, belongs essentially to the nineteenth century. E. W. Kemble, with his frisky Negroes who always behaved with a

[4]Henry Reuterdahl and Thur de Thulstrup were born in Sweden. Rufus F. Zogbaum came from the United States.

greater dignity than did the blackface comedians, had a real rapscallion's sense of fun. But it was the fun, not of the cackling old fellows who sit about a stove in a country store during the winter time, but of the post-frontiersman whose wit was as dry as a nut. It was a stored-up flavor, not a rancorous digging.

Among the more completely twentieth-century figures in this country tradition, the almost-forgotten John Conacher continues to appeal. In his black-and-whites he drawled out inimitable stories. He depicted old-timers by country roads, with perhaps one of "them new-fangled critters"—an automobile—chugging by. In these the line snaps and tingles. They compare to a good swift ride in a surrey. Unfortunately, Conacher worked best in small compass, for he tended to become monotonous in bigger works. A notable exception occurred in his one contribution to *The Masses*. Published in 1915, it portrayed a soldier dead on the battlefield. Beneath was the following caption: "The attack was of no particular importance and was made simply to 'feel out' the importance of the enemy. . . . News item." J. R. Shaver, by comparison, told little anecdotes while Florence Scovell pranked with tiny rascals. Later, Miss Scovell's work developed a sameness which made it less interesting. Thomas Fogarty recalled "old times" with a scene, say, in a yard. His line did not bite enough. Rollin Kirby, a frequent illustrator in the days before joining *The New York World*, performed competently in this same shirt-sleeves tradition.

V

While these two groups were flowering, a third had already sprouted. It included the Atmospherists. They worked little with pen and ink, preferring instead the washes, either black-and-white or color. Eventually they employed charcoal and the lithographer's crayon, and, when they wished, they could obtain success with the pencil, too. They suddenly blossomed at the turn of the century. Unknown but a few years before, they soon became prominent.

Ablest among them was Walter Appleton Clark, who died when barely thirty, yet by that time had already illustrated many stories in *Scribner's*, *Century* and other magazines. In his work, a lamp seemed to be illuminating a smoky room. Mellow shadows warmed the figures. He somehow surrounded them with a mood. His work will persist. F. C. Yohn, the "historian," was the knightliest one of the lot. He was addicted to far-off historical themes, or else to a Cromwell whom he tinctured with chivalry. Frank Vincent Dumond mused over his figures, stroking them with velvet. F. Luis Mora enveloped everything with a Latin aura.

Much different as Atmospherists were A. I. Keller and George Wright. At ease apparently in any medium, Keller, especially in his black-and-white washes, flickered and glinted. His line was loose with the looseness of freedom. He specialized in country scenes which stimulated him to song, or in apt interiors. Wright, on the other hand, "wrote" nervously. His line trembled. His city

streets possessed a crisp animation. And he devoted many a wiry sketch to the Paris of his affection. One might also mention J. Walter Taylor for his sober lithographic portraits, since they relied much on tonal contrasts.

Standing between old and new, always ready for the innovation, yet imaginatively closer to the troubadour times, Albert Sterner poetized with his skillful work. Yet it was a conventional poetry—a villanelle, let us say, or a triolet—capably handled, not precisely fresh in impulse, yet always with a flourish. His figures do not persist in the memory, but the touch to the material does. One might say that he was an artist in his finger-tips, but not in his conception.

VI

The Atmospherists welcomed the new century, and proclaimed it, not so much by a reversal of attitude as by a capacity for innovation. It was reflected also in a greater rapidity of rhythm. Wright's line and color for example were agitated. But among the Realists, everything changed: approach, technique, attack. They were punching direct from the shoulder, or answering wittily, or challenging, or commenting, not as their forebears had done, but with a briskness and vigor that indicated a greater independence.

Jay Hambidge stood as the Jack London to this group. He arrived just before the turn of the century. He hated the Law and "fixers," looked amiably upon the longshoremen, and could do a good creole study in black-and-white. He actually seemed to knit a cop, and hit him between the interstices. No one could ever sympathize with his judges

or lawyers, whereas his poor, though by no means free of condescension and of formula, did get better treatment. There were masculine contrasts in his black-and-white, and a preoccupation with angles and salients which prefigured his later writings on dynamic symmetry. Powers O'Malley stood up for the workmen with a good strong "fist." Everett Shinn, though professing sympathy for the poor, did so in a medium which seldom convinced. One sensed a trick rather than an urgency.

Shinn, however, was the first from the Philadelphia "crowd" to arrive in New York. He encouraged, by his reports and his own success, a wholesale hegira of his old-time associates to the larger city. They furnished the backbone of the movement. But they were also encouraged by the fact that a national weekly[5] began, under Norman Hapgood, early in the century, to outpay all others for illustrations. Then too, Hapgood welcomed the social thrust as much as the pretty girl, color as well as black and white, and gave latitude both in method and in content. He stimulated George Horace Lorimer, editor of *The Saturday Evening Post* after 1899, to do the same. Soon many of the magazines were emulating them.

Thus, from 1905 to 1915, a veritable Silver Age. Glackens "appeared" in the slums, danced beneath a Christmas tree (in a full-page drawing for *Collier's*), skipped and played in the law courts, quipped at the French and the other outlanders. He was like a kid on a perpetual Hallowe'en.

Equally humorous was May Wilson Preston. Her draw-

[5] *Collier's.*

ing, unhappily, was somewhat skimpy. She excelled in persiflage, whereas Glackens went a little deeper in his implications. One remembers in her an attitude, in Glackens a thought as expressed by a line. The talented James Preston contributed decorative designs realistic in inspiration. These owed at least part of their origin to the example of Henry McCarter, a posteresque illustrator of the Nineties[6] who was still at work in the new country. Sometimes Henri did an illustration—sardonic and pulsatile. Luks could destroy with a stroke.

More and more effective became the illustrators. By 1906, Boardman Robinson, a forceful cartoonist from *The New York Herald*, was lampooning theatrical figures in powerful lines. John Sloan stung and bit in the cause of social reform. Then appeared three recruits—all somewhat younger—Arthur Dove, Henry Raleigh and Wallace Morgan. For two years Dove fascinated with his rich, grainy drawings as he rambled through law courts, laughing with a bedraggled line. He gave off light, even as the white of the eye reflects it. Raleigh, his friend, more daringly than the others, worked direct with carbon pencil and got new effects of depth not unlike those of the French draughtsman, Forain. He observed with exactitude. He sometimes revealed too much, but a certain Western impetuosity (he was born in Oregon) carried off everything that he did. Morgan always seemed to be arms akimbo. His line cut like a scissors. He was an analyst *des mœurs*, noting down social habits in every layer of society. At first he resem-

[6]Chief of these nineteenth-century poster-makers was Edward Penfield, another survivor.



Courtesy of Mrs. William J. Glackens

Illustration by William J. Glackens

bled Glackens, but eventually his sharpness rounded out and he became like no one so much as himself.

Quieter than the rest was Frederic Rodrigo Gruger. While still a boy in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, he had been shown Michelangelos by a local stationer. Naturally thoughtful and observant, he held this example to him. He attended the Pennsylvania Academy—then, like his classmates, sought work on the local press. *The Philadelphia Public Ledger* employed him. In 1899 he contributed his first drawings to *The Saturday Evening Post*, where they still appear to this day.

His father was an engineer. To this parental side has been attributed his assurance with solids of every kind. A box by Gruger is a box, a pyramid is filled with matter. Yet there is another cause for this settled strength in the man. Gruger seems from the first to have regarded himself as an illustrator. He knew his function and sought perfection in it. First he distinguished himself in pen-and-ink drawings. Country scenes they were mostly, small in scope. Later he did wash-drawings. His observation improved with the years. No Gruger face is a replica of another. Neither is it banal with photographic recollections. The stamp is his own, but it has issued from the mill of his own imagination. He never employed a model (neither did the others of his group). His men have character, his women sweetness. There is something old-fashioned about them. They inhabit a particular land, and it never varies much. Sometimes, as in his Joseph Hergesheimer illustrations, he became romantic. Here one felt that one was within an old Colonial drawing room, an

upright man with a sword approaching in the lamplight. The ladies would be wearing crinolines. Again, in more recent years, he drew large panoramic portrayals—invading troops, hosts charging into battle, mass scenes. While less radiant than the earlier works, they do have the same fine integrity. They describe, and their drawing is self-sufficient, too. Gruger is the perfect accompanist. His pictures always balance. Light and shade agree; draughtsmanship tells. He is as sound as old silver, and frequently his drawings have a similar beauty. He stands as the fulfillment of all that these men started out to be.

Soon the group was in decline. Glackens and Sloan deserted illustrating for painting. Preston disappeared. Morgan and Raleigh, though still, today, probably the ablest after Gruger, do not possess the force they had before 1915. What happened? The illustrator, where ambitious, sought to become a painter. Or, if merely hungry for money, he placed himself in the hands of the advertisers (where the rewards were even greater), and thence to extinction. Today, the huge color illustrations in the magazines have no edge of any kind. They merely satisfy a market. Arthur William Brown, a follower of Gruger, has probity but is photographic. The rest are specialists—Koerner with outdoor scenes, Anton Otto Fischer in sea stories, Leyendecker a metallic but effective poster-maker. Illustration is now a reminiscence of its own better days.

Gruger alone retains his sound crisp excellence and expands with the years that pass. Yet even he, in his remarks about his profession, express a wistfulness as well as an independence. Too well does he recall the days when the

illustrator flourished in America. The Silver Age is as dear to him as its predecessor was to Mr. Pennell. Yet he need not fret. Once before, a group of splendid craftsmen—the forgotten wood-engravers—were allowed to languish and disappear. It was then that the Silver Age began. And if it too would pass, a later movement, in the lithographic and related media, would take its place in the years since 1915. Such arts then have the capacity to renew themselves.

CHAPTER VII

Cartooning and Caricature

WHEN a traveller gazes upon Notre Dame, it is the mass and the incredible lift of the whole structure that impress him. It is only later that he notices the doorways, the lunettes, the stained-glass windows. Sometimes he will go away without even having seen the gargoyles. They are too inaccessible perhaps, standing as they do on out-of-the-way spires—or they seem as afterthoughts, less important and but marginal to the more lofty structure of which they are a part. Yet to have seen but not digested them, is to miss the flavor of the banquet. For these original Western cartoons reveal unmistakably the quirks and ardors—yes, and even the protests—of the popular mind. They were the caricature of their day.

Political cartooning as we know it, however, is a product of the newspapers and magazines, and like them it rose within the last two centuries. Really, it dates from the mighty Daumier and his savage "demonstrations" against the Second Empire. It flourished rapidly and in France, particularly, it became not merely a tangent, but often a central force, in the culture of its time.

Thomas Nast was the first forceful American cartoonist. Lincoln called him the best recruiting officer of the

Union armies. Later, he helped to smash the Tweed Ring. The Tammany Tiger, even the Republican elephant and the Democratic donkey, originated in his "fables." He was succeeded by Joseph Keppler, the founder of *Puck*, another fighter for political justice. Despite such progenitors, the art had languished by the late nineteenth century. Only in *Life* was it still effective, and here it more persistently remained humorous. The cap-and-bells had supplanted the rapier and the broadside. Fun was enough.

Among these humorists, Oliver Herford, born in England, had an Alice-in-Wonderland touch. A momentary fancy gripped him and he drew some vagrant lines, but, unfortunately, he would quit before the effect was complete. He did not effectuate his thrusts. Another of his kind was Peter Newell, who always seemed to be like a young country upstart. He larked and somersaulted in various magazines, cheering up the "folks," and remaining, up into the next century, the all but official jester of the democracy. In 1906, Walt Kuhn began contributing. He did weird little animals for many of the weeklies and monthlies. Perhaps the ablest of these clowns was Hy Mayer. If the word did not have inappropriate connotations, he might be classified as a grotesque among American caricaturists. He could blot, eliminate, twist, smirk—do almost anything with his line. And he knew how to make the white speak just as effectively.

In the more strictly political tradition of the newspaper, F. B. Opper, as a cartoonist, hit the monopolies. His contemporary—and they were both essentially of the late nineteenth century—Homer Davenport, also lashed and

hammered because of an acute concern for the political and economic well-being of the American people. But, for the most part, the newspaper cartoonists were too good-natured to be satirical.

Even Art Young, who, today, is identified with a more "sacrilegious" view, was for many years as comfortable as the swelling Wisconsin land from which he had come. Successful early, he took the view of his time and began to question only when he had been long established as a successful humorist and cartoonist. But dissatisfaction was rising in America. And with the advent of the Muckrakers, in the early Nineteen Hundreds, the roly-poly Young began to dig, and even, on occasion, to bite. It was in *Life,* to which he was a weekly contributor, that he first struck out against injustice. Like his paper, he attacked child-labor, constantly fought the trusts, and became increasingly skeptical as to the merits of the current order.

When a journal of literary and social protest, *The Masses,* was organized in 1911, he became a contributor. Here he laughed at the overfed, whether men or women, consistently whipped the rich, and always came out for the under-dog. Why did he do this? Because, as a thinking and responsible American, still true to the simplicities of his Wisconsin childhood, he no longer could reconcile the growing class distinctions which he saw about him with the heartfelt relationships which had been his as a boy. That children must slave at sweatshop pay, and honest workingmen be clubbed by the police, and poverty fester openly in the cities—these unescapable facts changed his optimistic grin to a set determination that a more truly

democratic way must prevail. So he went on, month after month, year after year—until suppression of *The Masses* in 1917—contributing his say to the emancipation of America. He was the village boy grown up—the John T. McCutcheon thinking, and then, without fear, expressing what he thought.

Today this Puck-become-a-satirist stands venerable at seventy-five—aging but still intransigent. This is what one may admire in him. His draughtsmanship as such is not independent. While clean, true and always unmistakably the fusion of his geniality and his conviction, it does not say enough *as drawing* to make the work fully significant by that means alone. But his work does have character. It may be spotted at a glance. And it will last, at least in any record of the American impulse, because it comes from a complete integrity which is as great as it is rare.

II

Art Young actually stood as the bridge between two graphic traditions. As a humorist, he could laugh in the company of the Newells and Mayers, but he could also set his jaw and fight beside the men of social conviction. Among these latter, his companions were William H. Walker and W. Balfour Ker. Walker, who was born in the coal fields of Pennsylvania, boiled over when he saw injustices and attacked them while he was still red hot. His line, unfortunately, was not the equal of his indignation. Ker, on the other hand, as a practicing Socialist, already had worked out a concept to explain the discrep-



"What's he been doin'?"

"Overthrowin' the guvment."

Courtesy of the artist

Cartoon by Art Young

ancies between what he had been taught and what he saw. In *From the Depths*, a cartoon first printed in 1906, he pictured the fists of the hungry, driving up through the inlaid floor of a luxurious hotel, where a ball is taking place. Artistically, perhaps, it was about on a par with Ernest Poole's novel *The Harbor*, of a dozen years later. Yet Ker had put a question, as he did in his cartoons for some years, both in the humorous and the radical publications.

Meanwhile, a man of greater gift had arisen in *The New York Tribune*. Boardman Robinson, though barely thirty, was already, in 1906, satirizing municipal and other corruption with a brilliance which was almost too much for his public. Certain readers protested that he didn't "explain" enough. Apparently they thought that a cartoon must rely on its caption. With Robinson, line was enough. He hammered and scorched like a Vulcan at his forge. His ideas were inexhaustible. Likewise, when he conveyed, say, a belly, it was round and thick and protuberant, and not merely a space surrounded by a line. In other words, his cartoons were three-dimensional. This capacity as a draughtsman had been sharpened and disciplined by his attention to the vitriolic accomplishments of Forain, when he was a student in Paris. And he had studied, and assimilated, that preceptor of all cartoonists, Honoré Daumier.

Sometimes Robinson appeared in the pages of *Collier's* with an illustration for the dramatic comment of Arthur Ruhl. Here his work was less distinguished because he did



Losnitza, Serbia, 1915

BOARDMAN ROBINSON



permission of the artist

The Pirate

WILLIAM GROPPER

not excel in observation. In fact, these efforts frequently looked sketchy. Perhaps they were merely a by-product for him. His central energies went into cartooning. And the inefficiencies of Tammany, the bumptiousness of Theodore Roosevelt, the peculiarities of Mayor Gaynor,[1] were indelibly registered in his cartoons of this period.

In 1915, he was commissioned by *The Metropolitan Magazine* to illustrate a series of articles which John Reed was to write about Serbia and the Eastern Front. It is hard to tell which was greater, the reporting or the graphic commentary. One drawing in particular—a typhus hospital in Serbia—might have come from the *Lower Depths* of Gorky. It is not merely that these poor unfortunates seem like mere stumps of humanity, or that their condition is so unspeakable, but that in the composition itself there is a distance, one might say, as if one were looking down an endless hospital corridor. That is great draughtsmanship, wherefor this, and several other depictions of that journey, will live as long as others can see and pity.

Upon returning, Robinson lined up with the other protesters in *The Masses*. Full-page cartoons came from his pen. In one, perhaps the mightiest of them all, Christ is being stood up against a wall by a firing-squad of John Bull, Colonel Roosevelt, the Kaiser, a Frenchman, and a "big one" far back. He pictured Europe, in 1916, as an ass following the carrot of victory over a precipice. Later Robinson, Young and other contributors to the periodical, were tried for the crime of having used their minds

[1]William J. Gaynor was New York's Mayor from 1910 to 1913.

during wartime, but were acquitted. Young actually went to sleep on the witness stand.

The life of *The Masses* was not long—1911 to 1917. But it achieved memorably in that space of time. With John Sloan as its Art Editor, it introduced a new wit and tang into the social thinking of its era. For the first time an American periodical began to compare with its French and Germany contemporaries, *Assiette du Beurre* and *Simplicissimus*. Cornelia Barns, Sloan, Maurice Becker in his pen-and-ink drawings, Glenn Coleman in his illustrations from Greenwich Village, even Arthur B. Davies and Walkowitz with their non-political lyrics—all these made it throb with color, thought and joy.

III

Robinson's work in these pre-war years set him up as the leader of a new school in American cartooning. The rusticities of McCutcheon and his kind were now challenged by the greater economy and force of metropolitan cartoonists like Cesare of *The Times*,[2] Weed of *The Sun*, Duffy of *The Baltimore Sun*, and Fitzpatrick of *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. No longer was the text the key—drawing became predominant. After the war, Robinson gradually declined in his production, until in the mid-Twenties he quit altogether. He is now a muralist and

[2]All newspapers mentioned in this chapter—and throughout the book—are from New York, unless otherwise stated. Incidentally, the most compendious reproductions from such sources are to be found in William Murrell's *History of American Graphic Humor*.

teacher. Rollin Kirby, once of *The World*, and now on *The Post*, has continued the tradition of economy and emphasis, though on a less impressive level. Fitzpatrick is graphically more original, but too frequently his work is "sooty." Lewis of *The Milwaukee Journal* is one of the more satisfying men of the present generation. His ideas are always fresh and his rendition is equal to them. Other contributors to the conventional press of our day might be mentioned, but these are generally the most impressive.

Among the radicals, William Gropper, born just two decades after Robinson, emerged at the start of the Twenties to stab away at similar evils. His style matured so effectively that today a Gropper, with its cutting line, its charred blacks and its scuttling figures, is familiar, not only at home but even abroad, where it was once the occasion for a diplomatic protest. Unhappily, Mr. Gropper has too often of late been satisfied with formulæ, and thus the bite is not quite so intense as formerly. Nevertheless, he still has a formidable sting. Jacob Burck is probably the most competent among the other radicals.

IV

In the clown tradition, sophistication has replaced the chuckling commentaries of another day. Ralph Barton, a satirist almost continental in his outlook, had already, in 1912, been jibing with a new indifference and skepticism. He became a regular on *The New Yorker* after it was founded in 1925. A man of culture—his drawings always

showed, for example, what he had been reading—he, like Herford, never clinched his efforts sufficiently.[3]

Alfred Fruch is a "fantastic." Exhibited at "291" before the war, occasionally published in *The Liberator* (which succeeded *The Masses*), he distinguished himself in the post-war years on the *Sunday World* and then on *The New Yorker*. He stresses by an exaggeration. A line and a spot or two of black are almost enough for one of his parodies on the theatrical folk. Carlo de Fornaro, a Mexican, has worked in a similar tradition. Of late he has been published seldom. Miguel Covarrubias, on the other hand, has cavorted in both expensive and radical publications for well over fifteen years.

Another Mexican, Marius de Zayas, who was affiliated with "291" for a number of years before World War I, produced perhaps the ablest caricatures ever done in America. Not merely did the line cut and pare (and the omissions say as much as the line itself), but the very conception was such as to dissolve humbug in a new kind of acid. Though relatively few in number, his works will always stand with the pre-eminent of their kind.

Peggy Bacon, at least in the Twenties, could prick imbecility and then prick it again until it popped. Unfortunately, her designs, even in *Funerealities*, which is her best book, were too neatly stitched. In her larger drypoint etchings she found the perfect equivalent for her irritations. They are unique and, because of their sarcasm, far more estimable than her better-known cats and celebrities of recent years.

[3]Barton died too soon—a suicide in 1931 at the age of forty.

As for *The New Yorker* magazine, though Peter Arno has impressed many, the caption unfortunately is too much in evidence. How often can the draughtsmanship stand alone? And again, too many of his drawings date. Arno bespoke the cynicism of the Twenties, but what does his work say today? In this sense, James Thurber is less a victim of the topical. His *Seal in the Parlor* is funny, not merely because one laughs at the very idea of it, but also because that submarine, outlandish, incomplete drawing of his somehow says something on its own account.

It is in *Vanity Fair* that one finds perhaps the more forceful work of this caliber. Here, throughout the Twenties, and even as late as 1930, old George Luks could bludgeon a headwaiter, a golfer, a literary hack, or a drunk, and do so with a laughter which explained itself completely in the drawing. Each one had an impact. He hit and hit hard. His range was considerable, too. Once, in a page devoted to children on Washington Square, he could note the loss of *amour propre* in a tiny tot with a running nose, chuckle, and yet be kind about it. It is this larger humanity one misses in *The New Yorker* cartoons —no less than the first-thing-first of the drawing itself. Some day Luks's work in this category will be collected and it will make him a new reputation as a humorist.

V

Today few cathedrals are built in America. The Democratic Idea commands no pile of stones or vaulting spires. It persists rather in a stream of its own—a stream which,

despite all the muddiness and deviation of the newspapers, does make itself effective. Fitfully, perhaps, a flicker indicates its depth; and one smiles at a pertinent caricature. More rarely does a tremendous gush, as in a Robinson cartoon, rise up from its more dangerous depths to suggest the immensities there, and to permit the hope that some day they, too, will flow free in all their strength.

CHAPTER VIII

Alfred Maurer: A Symbol

MOST REVOLTS spring from frustration. But what of those upsets which originate in a dissatisfaction with too easy attainment? They too occur, and sometimes they are even more touching because they reveal the plight of a man who loses his life in order to save it. Of such was Alfred H. Maurer, one-time Carnegie Prize-winner who tragically symbolizes the shift to a new era.

In his case, these considerations doubly apply, for he was the successful son of a successful father. Maurer senior had delighted thousands of nineteenth-century Americans with his crack trotters and fire horses, which had been spread throughout the country by Currier & Ives. He was the master of their racing prints. So successful had he been that he had retired while still in the fifties, and had devoted himself to further study of art. He brought up his son on the West Side of New York, where the family was established in a brownstone house not far from the present Times Building. His son inherited the old man's gift, and he early distinguished himself, first at J. Q. A. Ward's class in the National Academy, and then as a pupil of that exigent, prim teacher, William Chase. He surpassed the class and presently went abroad for further preparation.

In 1900 he was awarded the first of his prizes and in the following year the impressive sum of $1500, as token of first place at the Carnegie International in Pittsburgh.

What about this work? *An Arrangement*, as it is called, did not startle even in that day. Caffin, the upright critic of *Harper's Weekly*, described it as a "picture [which], while very clever, is very far from great. Nor do I say this unkindly, for I have a very distinct appreciation of Alfred H. Maurer's talent." He held that it was "eminently a painter's picture—that is to say, it is entirely directed to securing beauty of tone." He finished by affirming that this had been "arrived at with a spontaneity and freedom of brushwork that are in themselves a very marvellous accomplishment."

In subject, it presented a woman seated upon the floor, her full skirt ranged out around her. One recalled the female studies of Chase; or again, in the face, possibly Sargent, while the panels in the background hinted unmistakably of Whistler. Tonally it was dark—competence, one might say, in the midst of fog.

Subsequently Maurer won other prizes with his paintings. But these his father cherished less than the Carnegie *Arrangement*, which he hung in the place of honor in his home. The brisk gentleman who polished his rifles every day, won his blue ribbons at the horse shows, and still twinkled when he saw a delectable female, could feel that his "Alfie" was a worthy inheritor of the family gift, and that he, too, would contribute notably to the art of the country.

It was not to be. Returning to France, "Alfie" encoun-

tered the canvases of Matisse and other "wild men,"[1] as they were called at the time. Re-examining his own work after such an experience, it must have seemed to him unforgivably tame. These French were vivid, and scintillated even as the sky on a sunny day, while what he did might well be the product of the indoors and the very fumes of the coal-stove. No, the gray and the brown would no longer do. The palette must move outdoors and a throb of color must come into the canvas. Suddenly Maurer seemed to be in the midst of a conflagration. Color crackled in the air—even as on some sultry-reddened day when a forest fire has changed the very nature of the atmosphere. Impassioned, he threw off his mantle of gray and put on another of brightest hue. As he was now in his late thirties (having been born in 1868), it was not precisely a time for outfitting himself anew. But he took no thought on prudence.

He met other American painters in Paris. They, too, had been affected as he was. A. G. Dove, who was an illustrator, had given up his certain income for the troubled way of an independent painter. Arthur B. Carles, a young Philadelphian, and Glackens, long rated among the best of American illustrators, were also beginning to think anew in terms of color. At the home of the Steins, Gertrude, Leo and Michael, he listened to arguments and saw challenging works of art. All of this persuaded him that the old way was no longer his, cost what it might to follow the new.

[1]"Les Fauves," originally a term of derision for Matisse and his followers in the early years of the century.

In America, meanwhile, a new sympathy was awaiting these heretics of the young century. At 291 Fifth Avenue, a center had been established for the display of their work. Here it might be hung without suffering derision. In March, 1909, therefore, fifteen Maurer sketches in oil, together with three walls of water colors by John Marin, another American temporarily resident in France, bravely threw their new colors at the world. Many visitors appeared. Henri and his group, peering at the Maurers, nudged one another and wondered what had happened to the erstwhile winner of prizes. Had he completely lost his head? Arthur Hoeber, *New York Times* critic and but recently elected a National Academician, ridiculed the work of his countryman. "The bacilla of the Matisse craze," he reported, "has entered his soul and, what is much worse, into his paintings. He has capitulated, horse, foot, and dragoons. . . . Frankly, of all the pure forms of imbecility that have overtaken youth time out of mind, these are the limit." It never occurred to such an authority to question himself.

One day an older man visited the gallery. He stood a long time, gazing and shaking his head. "Who will buy this stuff?" he demanded. There was something spruce and gay about him, with his cane and goatee and his crisp attitude as of one who had driven first-rate trotters all his life. He did not identify himself, but finally, as he was about to leave, he was accosted by Alfred Stieglitz, the guardian of the little center. "Mr. Maurer," said Stieglitz, "I wouldn't feel so crushed. Your son is all right."

"Who may you be?" Maurer asked.

"I'm the son of your old friend Edward Stieglitz. You used to come to the house at 14 East 60th Street, years ago. You and my father liked to ride horseback together."

Tears filled the old man's eyes. "And you are Alfred. . . . And you seem to understand my son's work."

Yet still he was worried. Once more he inquired why his son did such "stuff."

"Don't worry, Mr. Maurer," replied the photographer. "Your son will be all right."[2]

Still shaking his head, the father left. Later he said that he had "buried" his son. Thereafter he would occasionally peek in at the door of his son's third-floor studio—during those periods when Alfred was not in France—but he never entered. Mournfully he would gaze at the prize-winning piece in the place of honor.

Yet some opinion differed. That most lively of critics, James Huneker, danced and clapped for the exhibition. Writing in *The Sun* for April 7, he said, "This chap has talent as well as boldness." Then, comparing the two exhibitions, he concluded, "While Maurer could be called 'The Knight of the Burning Pestle,' Marin is the master of mists. . . . Altogether an interesting duet in fire and shadow, this little exhibition." Caffin, who had been sifting and testing the achievement of Maurer ever since his prize-winning days, contributed a foreword to the catalog. Herein he explained that Maurer was trying to hint rather than specify, and that indeed the spaces on the canvas might be compared to the untouched "biscuit" in

[2]From an unpublished story by Alfred Stieglitz.

antique pottery. Maurer, he declared, set up the scaffold and let the spectator finish the building. This was too much for some in the audience, of course.

J. F. Chamberlin of *The Evening Mail* inquired, as to a foreground area, "What is it? A bursted tomato? A fireman's hat? A red rock? A couple of people under an umbrella? Nobody can make it out." Apparently Mr. Chamberlain hadn't looked at it long enough.

Today these canvases seem less difficult. Chiefly, they were landscapes. Fields might be red, trees had a flow as if they were part of a unitary rhythm, and the whole was bathed in a surge of color. Sadakichi Hartmann, a more supple critic and an upholder of the unconventional in art, summed it all up when he said that Maurer, having tired of brown and blue shadows, "made the scarlet departure," and "introduced pink, crimson and ruby-colored shadows." True, these canvases recalled Matisse, and they were not without their intimations of Gauguin. But what of it? Maurer, having tired of his previous accomplishment, sought, even as they did, a color that would be more radiant and compelling. And even if the result did not always signify as much as his effort, he did, nevertheless, succeed in imparting a new vivacity to his canvases.

The next season he exhibited with several of the younger men at "291," and later still was accorded a one-man show at the same gallery. Then the World War came. Maurer, who had been living in Paris, returned to America, a place less sympathetic to him. Here he could not trifle in the cafés, fish in French rivers, and find companions who were nearly as delightful. He felt unhappy.

While still in Paris, he had begun to paint heads and panels of female adolescents. Now, shut up on New York's West Side, he projected still others of this type. One sees their like today: stalks of girls in the doorways of the tenements, saucy perhaps, sometimes even chipper, slight of head and slighter still of body. Such is the type as one confronts them on the canvas, too. They never fill out. The painter, apparently, could not project, because of deficient emotional power, female figures in which the volumes of the trunk and appendages would be convincing. They seem undernourished, as if their maker himself had suffered malnutrition. Yet always the color speaks. Incomplete though the realization, and somehow almost a witness, each one, to an *impasse* no less in life than in art, they do register in the color. Moreover, they stand in their workmanship. He employed Old Master methods, coating his wooden boards with *gesso*, and then painting thickly, so that chipping was rare. He designed his own frames. Whatever his limitations, Maurer never failed in these, his responsibilities as an artist.

For ten years he was obscure. Then, finally, he was introduced to Sherwood Anderson by his old friend Dove. Anderson visited his studio, saw the "little girls," and wrote a tribute to the painter. That tribute, brief though it was, moved E. Weyhe, publisher and proprietor of a bookshop, to buy up much of the painter's production. A show followed, and for a season in the mid-Twenties, Maurer again was the sensation of New York.

By now his painting had changed still further. Affected by the Cubists, particularly Picasso, he tried to build his

canvases with very little reference to objects. The intention was a composition—usually a still-life—which might stand independently of such references. These works are among his best canvases. Restrained in tone, yet disciplined and without any "spilling," they do hit the chord more often than not. It was minor music to be sure, but true to its own capacity, and always meaningful in color.

For a time he brightened. Yet he had never conveyed to his father the objectives of his work since that first change in his painting. Nor had the unhappy girls—those sprigs and dry little wisps of femininity—shrunken Modiglianis or unwatered Pascins—rootless, shrivelled and hopeless—nor had they reconciled him to the mistake of his son's turning. He now, approaching his one hundredth birthday, was copy for the newspapers: Louis Maurer, one-time Currier & Ives artist, crack shot and brisk pedestrian, lively and earnest still as he neared the century mark. But every paper ignored the son. He sat in his third-floor-back, still persisting, fighting and fighting even though complete fulfillment—let alone recognition—might never be his.

In late summer, 1932, Louis Maurer died. Newspapers commented on the death of a noted centenarian. Two weeks later his son, melancholy after an unfortunate operation, hanged himself in the room where he had bravely sought his truth for so many years. But who shall say that he was a failure? Was he not rather the combination of opposites? First he had admired, and emulated, the success of Sargent. Then he had performed with the same

esthetic fearlessness as Whistler. Both sides fought in him. For the rest—let his canvases speak.

Undoubtedly he lacked the projecting power which would have vitalized his pictorial ideas. He knew, but was unable to effectuate his knowledge. Such is the type of minor artists. A Lionel Johnson, committing suicide in the Nineties, does so because his freshness of line cannot transcend its Elizabethan source and issue forth into the world as a force on its own. Or, more appositely, life itself was the barrier, and having hurled himself against the wall, and being unable to break through, Maurer, with perhaps less motive than Modigliani, had only self-imposed death as a release. Yet his testimony stands. Greater than his weakness was his courage.

CHAPTER IX

The Challenge of "291"

One revolt breeds another. The insurgents who withdrew from the Camera Club and named themselves the Photo-Secession, in 1902, were not seeking to cut a passageway for any other medium than their own. They were protesting chiefly for themselves. But liberty is not thus to be delimited, and once having found a new channel it will flow there, regardless of any designs to the contrary.

Yet at first no photographers could object to the activities of the new organization. Loan shows were sent out to foreign and American cities, a new quarterly, *Camera Work*, was inaugurated to replace the now defunct *Camera Notes*, and in that same year—1903—meritorious exhibitions won numerous medals of note abroad. The next year both the Corcoran Gallery in Washington and the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh invited these loosely grouped dissidents to hold an exhibition and to send their own hanging-committee. Even when three small rooms were rented at 291 Fifth Avenue as the "Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession," it was still felt—and this was 1905—that these activities moved along in the proper channel. Yet an examination of the gallery prospectus might have forewarned them. There it was stated that "other art pro-

ductions," as well as photography, might be assembled at the location they had chosen in the lower 30's.

Though it was before the day of the greatest skyscrapers, even here, in this brownstone front, a tiny elevator was in use. Some one has described it as an inverted toast-rack. One stepped in, a six-foot West Indian Negro pulled the rope, and up went the antique contraption to the fourth floor. There as it still quivered, apparently breathless from that long climb, the visitor stepped into a modest hall and thence into the rooms where light presently was to explode in the American art world.

Small and gracious, they were not sensational. The walls were covered with a gray burlap which some one has described as being pearly in effect. A ledge furnished a line about the room. Below it were simple drapes. Standing upon this ledge were graceful Japanese vases, giving just enough accent to break the line of the trim. In the center a huge brass bowl bore seasonal flowers. So small the rooms —the largest but 15 by 18—that perfect intimacy was preserved and the eye was encouraged to embrace with its full attention. Moreover, the spacing emphasized each print without expense to the next. And yet the whole was a unit. Seldom had anything so conspired to enlist and fulfill at the same time.

For one full season the Little Galleries confined themselves to exhibitions of photography. The inaugural show was devoted to members' work. Then followed, at two-week intervals, picked exhibitions of those photographers, native and foreign, who had distinguished themselves in the Pictorial movement. A year later, the second season

was inaugurated with a representative members' show, and then a breach took place.

In early January, 1907, drawings by Pamela Colman-Smith—and not photographs—were displayed in the little perch above the Avenue. The "professionals" were resentful. Why? they demanded. And even though the Editors' Page in *Camera Work* attempted to answer them, they were not satisfied. "The Secession Idea," the statement explained, "is neither the servant nor the product of a medium. It is a spirit. Let us say it is the Spirit of the Lamp; the old and discolored, the too frequently despised, the too often disregarded lamp of honesty; honesty of aim, honesty of self-expression, honesty of revolt against the autocracy of convention. The Photo-Secession is not the keeper of the Lamp, but lights it when it may; and when these pictures of Miss Smith's, conceived in this spirit and no other, came to us, we but tended the lamp in tendering them hospitality." Most of the photographers were not impressed, and they avoided the exhibition.

Yet in barely two and a half weeks 2200 visitors had seen the show. Many, no doubt, came because they had been stirred by the comment of James Huneker, in *The Sun*. These works, he said, were "memoranda of spiritual exaltation, of the soul under the influence of music, or haunted by some sinister imagining. *Death in the House* is absolutely nerve-shuddering." From his remarks one visualized a nightmare chamber of Poe and haunted inhabitants. At last some imagination on Fifth Avenue! Actually thirty-three examples were acquired by collectors. But the photographers sulked.

A few months later, J. M. Bowles, a newcomer in *Camera Work*, contrasted a show of Courbet at Durand-Ruel's and one of prints at the Photo-Secession. He missed the masculinity, the largeness, the ardency of the powerful Frenchman. He found the photographers excessively fussy by comparison. Evidently something was wrong.

That summer the Director of Photo-Secession, Alfred Stieglitz, having met his tireless collaborator, Eduard Steichen, abroad, was much impressed by his enthusiasm for Rodin. Steichen had often visited the sculptor after making a celebrated portrait of him and had been inexpressibly moved by some of his virtually unknown water colors. Stieglitz was also fired up by his friend and fellow-Secessionist's researches into color-photography, which had but recently become practicable because of the process perfected by the Lumière Brothers. Late in September Stieglitz returned to New York. The following January—1908—the Photo-Secession startled the art world of New York with a display of fifty-eight Rodin water colors which had been selected by the French sculptor in conjunction with Mr. Steichen.

All the critics came. They sniffed, they applauded, they contested—but they did not ignore. Somewhat condescendingly, Mr. Huneker remarked that these were the "notations of a sculptor, not a draughtsman." Yet he also declared that "this exhibition is artistically the most important that is to be seen in the city at present." One man applauded, despite admitting his own inadequacy, while in *The Post*, Charles De Kay, who six years earlier had given sponsorship to the initial Photo-Secession show at the Na-

tional Arts Club, now was reminded of a Turkish bath, and said so. One reviewer asserted that it was a "sealed book to the general public," while another reproved Arthur Symons for a Rodin estimate which had been reprinted in the catalog. Mr. Royal Cortissoz, of *The Tribune*, held that as "studio driftwood" these might be of interest to the student of the sculptor. "Their skill, however, is discounted for the connoisseur of draughtsmanship by the scrawling and sometimes meaningless touches of the artist."

Soon the Little Galleries were packed and throbbing. Every type arrived. Society fluttered in, breathless from the commentaries of Mr. Huneker. Artists congregated, eager to see the latest from the French *provocateur*. Clubmen and gentry, teased out of their chairs for once, took the little elevator and made the ascent to the attic quarters. Having let them out, Hodge Kirnan, the West Indian elevator-operator, would, while awaiting his next call, study these nudes and horses and dancers that filled the walls with bronze and blood and movement. From morning to night the cascade continued, rippling, gushing, stormy. Arguments never ceased. Students of the bearded Mr. Cox, having heard him condemn these water colors from his "pulpit," hurried down to see them. Clergymen, editors, politicians, bankers and sportsmen came and stood and stared. It seemed that no layer of humanity was missing.

No layer, that is, except the photographers. Vitality had passed them by. Not until the next show, by George Seeley, one of the newer Pictorialists, could they console themselves. But when, after two weeks, his luminous prints were replaced by the book-plates and etchings of Willi

Geiger, a Munich artist, and thereafter by the derivative if competent etchings of D. S. MacLaughlan, a Canadian, and then by a second show of Miss Colman-Smith's, they again were disquieted. One more show would finish them.

In April, 1908, Henri-Matisse, French painter, struck their eyes as if with a hammer. This was madness, the photographers felt. They would have no more of Photo-Secession and these obstreperous affairs. They were through. And this time even the critics were estranged. Nothing like it had been seen before. For actually this was the introduction of Modern Art to America. And not merely that, but the impact of a whole new period in the world's civilization. No wonder the critics recoiled and found themselves senseless.

Mr. Joseph Edgar Chamberlin, of *The Evening Mail*, for instance, claimed that "this sort of thing should be treated with respect, just as adventism, Eddyism, spiritualism, Doukhobor outbreaks, and other forms of religious fanaticisms are. One never knows when a new revolution is going to get started." Miss Elizabeth Luther Cary, in *The Times*, discounted one point with another, and at the end conveyed a decided negative, though not an outright veto. But Mr. Huneker did not fail. "Henri-Matisse's sketches are those of a brilliant, cruel temperament," he exclaimed. . . . And more people came. And more arguments followed and the cross-currents of the world seemed to be in this rookery above the marts of Manhattan. Here men revealed themselves with utter honesty. Conservative or radical, open or shut, fiery or cool, they declared themselves on the paintings before them. It was a testimonial,

the summing up of their experience, their "Yes" or "No" to values, as they gave their opinions on these pictures. This was not an exhibition, it was a court of trial where each judged himself by his own words. If Stieglitz were there, fighting day in and day out for the right of the artist to have his say, he was, after all, but the guardian of the pictures. And at noontime, when he went out for lunch, he did not even lock the place. For this was not a "gallery" in the conventional meaning of that term. It was an experimental station, set up to test the reaction of the American people to the findings of the artist's vision. It was a social laboratory where all might experiment, even as they were impelled to do by confronting the experience of another which had been set before them in an unfamiliar form.

But since the photographers stayed away, Photo-Secession was at an end. Practically speaking it was too, for in February the landlord had notified the tenants that a four-year lease, with a raise in rent, would have to be signed if they were to remain after April. The place was in peril. Previously $300 a year had been sufficient for expenses. Stieglitz never took money as Director of the Photo-Secession, but after all there were electric light and monthly rentals and other bills to pay. He did not see how he could continue.

At this point a friend and guarantor appeared. Paul B. Haviland, collector and connoisseur, a French-American of means and generosity, underwrote the expenses of the project for the next three years. But as a lady's tailoring-shop had already rented the former quarters, a move had to be made across the hall. Thus it was that in the fall of

1908, the now historic quarters of "291"—and a considerably different phase of work—were inaugurated in the rooms that are today identified with the initiation of Modern Art in America.

These new rooms were somewhat smaller, to be sure: a large room and a small one, with a semi-private one at the back, where in the winter-time many a hot argument took place as a cold visitor toasted his feet out at the stove. Once again Steichen designed the layout, his wife stitched the drapes and curtains—and the original atmosphere remained. Thus, with the light coming down through a canopy and a back-window view of brick walls, bedrooms and clotheslines, the setting for the art of the future.

II

Without Steichen, Stieglitz never could have engendered his accomplishments. For Steichen, the young self-confident Middle Westerner, lived summers but twenty miles out of Paris; he both painted and photographed; he exhibited among the French; he knew their artists; he met the young Americans who had come abroad to study or to paint. He was the live-wire conducting to the central plant. Stieglitz, however, had to collect these "messages" and translate them for the gallery-comers. Steichen was like a scout—Stieglitz prepared the general offensive and faced the counter-attack. Each day he stood on the firing-line, replying to the critics, challenging the public, welcoming the artists, disturbing the retrogressive and encouraging the experimental. He was the effecter of what, in

many cases, Steichen originated. They were a perfect team.

But they were not alone. Marius de Zayas, a Mexican employed as caricaturist on *The New York Evening World,* now began to frequent the quarters which rapidly became known, because of their location, as "291." He was a friend of J. Nilsen Laurvik, a photography enthusiast who also wrote art criticism for the papers and fought for the men exhibited in the gallery. Paul B. Haviland, quiet and cultured, a friend to all, served as the balance-wheel. Then there was Charles H. Caffin, the gentle critic, and Sadakichi Hartmann, the unruly one, and a still younger recruit, Benjamin de Casseres. Each day they trooped along with their captain to the Holland House, where he would treat them to lunch. Then more fire and argument over the wine and the lamb-chops. This spontaneous grouping was not a club nor a charity, but an association held together by a fervor which seemed to generate from the atmosphere. It was a "movement," a fighting unit, it had a body of ideas like the Frenchmen who used to meet at the Nouvelles Athènes café[1] and press on to new paintings because of their enthusiasm. It sprang from the electricity of the New World. It had the generosity of youth. And "291" welcomed anybody.

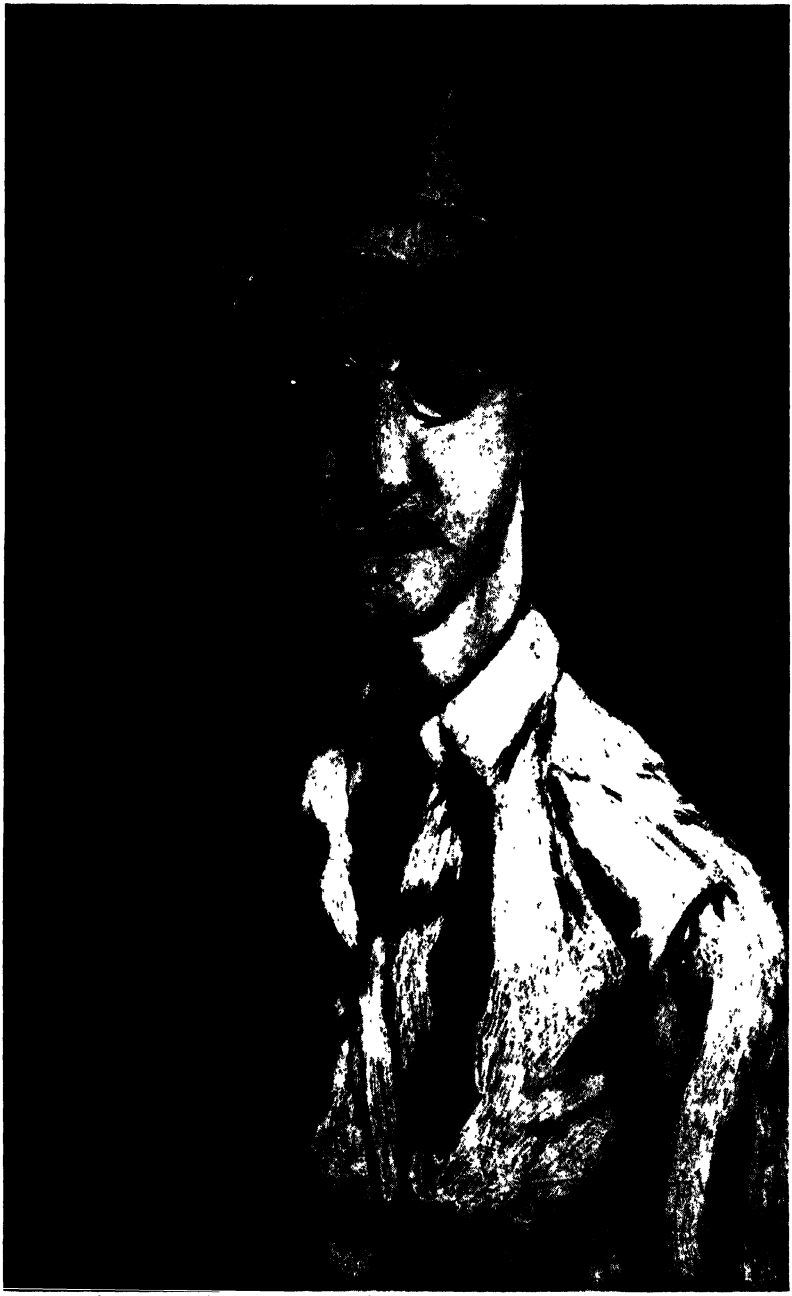
Thus it changed every one of its participants. De Zayas had come as the sardonic newspaperman. Now he was impelled to transmute his journalistic forays into more pun-

[1]Beginning in 1873, under the leadership of Manet. Incidentally, the best account of the gatherings at the Holland House is to be found in Temple Scott's article in *The Forum,* for December, 1910.



Mrs. Brown Potter

MARIUS DE ZAYAS



Courtesy of Mrs. Eugenia Maurer Fuerstenberg

Self-Portrait

ishing satire. Caffin had been a lamb, honest and all too evidently the son of a clergyman—he was sharpened. De Casseres, a spitfire of a youngster, was helped to effectuate his protests by getting them into print, and so was Hartmann. Here the potential was channelled and became a force. And it was the sum total of all who contributed that made the spirit of the enterprise. Yet a central impulse was necessary and that was Stieglitz'. He merely conveyed his impulse to others so that all could function.

When the painters arrived the "association" was complete. They were preceded by Arthur Allen Lewis, whose exhibition of etchings and book-plates showed a care not unlike that of the old German masters. Presently Marin and Maurer were flinging their brave, young colors to the world. And the work of "291" had commenced.

III

What was that work? Essentially it was a challenge for the sake of the artist. Not the artist as photographer, as painter, as sculptor—as the half-eyed would always believe —but for the artist as a liberating agent in a society which had all too much need of him. De Zayas might puncture the flippant and apply a thin acetylene torch to the cant world of the Theatre and Society (as he did in his show in 1909), but only a few weeks later all the fashionable would be packing the exhibition rooms of the Hispanic Museum, where Sorolla, a belated Impressionist, was being shown. They went not to see, but to be seen. What did they care if a new American, Marsden Hartley, was about

to be introduced to his own countrymen?[2] There was no *cachet* to Hartley—but everybody—"Everybody, my dear"—went to see the Spaniard. Never had there been such a crush.

It was no better with the museums. On December 30, 1908, Sir Caspar Purdon Clark, generalissimo of the Metropolitan Museum, had brusquely told a reporter that the doors of his institution were closed, not merely to the art of the twentieth century, but to that of the nineteenth as well. "Now don't imagine," he objected, "that I am a rabid Philistine, for I am not. I can see good in Impressionism, but only in its right place. Even dirt is but material in the wrong place. . . . There is," he continued, "a state of unrest all over the world in art as in all other things. It is the same in literature as in music, in painting and in sculpture, and I dislike unrest." He considered Bierstadt's *Rocky Mountains* the best landscape in the museum. . . . What chance did an unacknowledged contemporary have there?

As for the galleries, William Macbeth, despite his generous assistance to Ryder, and his showing of The Eight, was essentially nineteenth century in his outlook, while N. E. Montross had not as yet gone beyond Arthur B. Davies. How much support could a young struggler expect there? To live was to die. To adhere to the color that one felt, was to find no customers—not even a gallery. Why wonder, then, if the young Americans whose imaginations welcomed a newer world, accepted "291" as their very own, and brought it all their fervor? They would not have been alive had they done otherwise.

Nor could they expect any support from the critics.

[2]May, 1909.

These journalists, as a rule, would only confirm the already accomplished. They could praise Toulouse-Lautrec prints, given here their first American showing in the fall of 1909 (though Miss Cary winced at the more forthright and Mr. Hoeber did say that he might have wished for something more "optimistic"). But an impoverished American just returned from France—the etcher-painter Eugene Higgins—obtained less of their esteem. John Marin they might accept, though they disapproved of his "wilder" moments. But when, in March and April, 1910, they were confronted by a whole show of young, virile painters, they once more revealed their shortcomings. Where in the preceding exhibition—Matisse's second[2]—they had admitted at least to the Frenchman's force, if not his agreeability, now, gazing at the work of their own countrymen, they objected that his influence was too much in evidence. These young men—Putnam Brinley, Arthur B. Carles, Arthur G. Dove, Laurence Fellowes, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, Alfred Maurer, Eduard Steichen, Max Weber—needed champions in the press. They needed a Huneker on every paper, who would sing them and urge them and announce them, if necessary, until the thinking of Americans had been changed. Then, perhaps, these young men might eat from the product of their labor. But the record stands. While occasionally Huneker danced (though increasingly less as he aged), the rest were lukewarm. They seldom conveyed anything except their own tepid judgments.

Nor could they even estimate the Europeans with accuracy. Actually the redoubtable Huneker sometimes

[2]February, 1910.

faltered. In the fall of 1910, for example, he "covered" the first American show ever given to Henri Rousseau. Max Weber, the American painter who had returned from Europe early in 1909, was largely instrumental in arranging it. He had known the genial Primitive in Paris, had obtained some of his canvases, and now wished to memorialize his friend, who had died but recently. What did Mr. Huneker say? "As an artist," he declared, "he is a joke." And he belittled *La Rêve*, today a treasure in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art. The reaction of Mr. Tyrrell was even less creditable. He was reminded, he told readers of *The Evening World*, "of a kid letting off fire-crackers." More of the same might be listed. But once again, when it came to *names*, for a group show of lithographs—including the first Cézannes ever displayed in America—was concurrent with the lowly offerings of the Douanier, they spoke in a different accent.

At other times they could be positively abusive. When Max Weber obtained the first comprehensive show ever given him (January, 1911), they outdid themselves in vilification. Mr. Chamberlin admonished Mr. Stieglitz, saying that he had "gone too far in admitting the pictures of Max Weber." Mr. Hoeber confided that it was "difficult to write of these atrocities with moderation." Mr. Tyrrell descended to slap-stick. "It is a lot of fun and almost any title will fit almost any picture. . . . Instinctively you feel that the name Weber is incomplete without Fields'." It was the gypsy Hartmann, writing later in *Camera Work*, who alone delivered an intelligent estimate. He detected in Weber's show "architectural forms that, despite their extravagance and strangeness, impress

us with an indescribable something such as we may feel before some old mural painting." The much-challenged exhibition caused him no trouble at all. "Weber"—and here he concluded—"merely dissects the human form into geometrical ratios and color patterns and apparently proceeds like a primitive bent upon conquering his own knowledge of visual appearances." This still can stand as an assessment of the painter.

Was "291" becoming too much for the critics? Had they completely foundered? Some righted themselves in the Marin exhibit which followed, for, after all, three years of his shows and the continual hammering of Stieglitz, had got even the more limping minds to speed up. But they did not distinguish themselves when Cézanne had his first one-man show in this country (March, 1911). It was composed of twenty water colors. Today we know that Cézanne "constructed" in whatever he did, and sketches, wash, pencil or lithograph would not alter the gravity of his pursuit. But in 1911, when James Huneker viewed them, the much-prized aquarelles of today seemed "mere hints rather than actual performances." Was it that Mr. Huneker had remembered too well the oils of his Parisian vacations, and thus failed to catch the different values of the water colors? Only a Mr. Rockwell of *The Brooklyn Eagle,* quoting Roger Fry, presented a view which is tenable today.

But Cézanne was an interlude of complete calm by comparison with what followed. In April, 1911, Pablo Picasso made his debut in America. Oh! what a cackling and hissing and quack-quack-quack was there! One was reminded of nothing less than Chaucer's *Parlement of the Foules.*

Almost none of the critics comprehended. Many were shocked. Only a single one among them all fathomed why De Zayas had written as he did in the catalog. There he had urged that the first duty of the critic is to appreciate the artist's intention. Oh! no! these judges were wiser. A Mr. Harrington, of *The Herald*, characterized the exhibition as a "disquieting array. Persons entering this domain receive what is practically an injunction signed by De Zayas forbidding them to criticize anything which Señor Picasso has to offer. Mr. Alfred Stieglitz has taken this array into his gallery, which he calls his laboratory. He looks upon the study of this hideous assemblage as necessary to research work." Even Mr. Huneker stumbled, though he did tolerate the exhibition, despite its "appalling ugliness."

With a single, solitary exception, none of them paused to inquire why the catalog had been written. Could they not understand that it had been meant particularly for them, so that they might avoid precisely the mistakes they were making? The one and only exception was Charles Henry Caffin. He approached them with fresh eyes. How was he able to do this? Because, throughout these years, this patient Englishman would sit himself before the pictures and study them. Perhaps the other critics had less time, but it is doubtful, since Mr. Caffin, too, had to earn his living. No, it was a difference in humility. Mr. Caffin came to the artist, and that is why he alone, despite lesser gifts in other directions, never erred as they did.[3]

[3]His *How to Study Pictures*, reissued in 1941, is a fine reminder of his method.

A summer passed and again the critics assembled. This time they found themselves puzzled by the "Subjective Symbolism"—otherwise known as "Goops"—of Gelett Burgess. They laughed and let it go at that. They could accept the color of Arthur B. Carles, a young Philadelphian, exhibited until Feb. 3, 1912, because it was flamboyant and not too disturbing. Even Hartley was beginning to be "admitted," though Mr. Chamberlin was not altogether kind. Speaking as if from a height, and bending down as if it were an effort, he said that Mr. Hartley was the "gentle painter of superheated still-life and rainbow landscapes." As for the color, it "is deep and often spiritual; no man can put more of the esoteric into a cucumber than Mr. Hartley. And," he added, just to prove his tolerance, "they breathe sincerity in every line and tint." The question is, how could the last admission help the painter after what had gone before? Mr. Huneker, who was gradually to disappear from the art pages of the daily press, here justified himself, as he often did when it came to the Americans. Let it also be said to his credit that his faults arose, like those of Mr. George Bernard Shaw, from undue cleverness. The eye does not always see too deep when the tongue is too quick. But Huneker was almost unfailingly sympathetic when it came to those who were striving to create in America.

But it remained for one not a professional critic to display a complete openness to the whole series of exhibitions. Hutchins Hapgood, a *feuilletonist* on *The New York Globe*, browsed about the city seeking provender wherever he could find it. Of an afternoon he would

graze away at "291." He did not judge, though he reacted decisively—nor did he reject, even though he disliked. His attitude was so remarkable for its time—and no less for ours—that one can do justice to it only by a considerable quotation:

"My friend Arthur Hoeber, the experienced critic of *The Globe*" [he wrote elsewhere in that paper], "frankly admits that he cannot understand the work of Max Weber. I imagine that Mr. Hoeber would say the same of the Post-Impressionists in general, of the work of men like Picasso, to take the great example. Now I know that I like much of the work of these men and that a great deal of the work of Picasso seems to me beautiful. But I am not a painter as Mr. Hoeber is, nor an art critic, as he is. It is for that reason, perhaps, that I plead for a larger hospitality —for greater freedom in experiment esthetically and mentally. We have a background of support now on politics and sociology [early 1912] for the insurgent and the unconventional. It is time that we should have some respectable and official recognition of the art that is unacademic, untraditional, personal. We need hospitable circles where such art may develop; such salons, for instance, as that of Alfred Stieglitz, called the Photo-Secession, where for several years the voice of freedom has been quietly shouting in the wilderness, where art could stand on its head if it wants to, provided it is animated with a sincere desire to see straining, to feel beauty and form directly, without an undue regard for convention, tradition, and authority."

Yet even the jesters learned. Five seasons of proselyting were having their effect. When Arthur G. Dove was first shown in March, 1912, he was upheld, of all people, by the same Mr. Chamberlin who had scoffed at so many of

the others. Said he: "What is it all about? No one can tell —and yet the result is singularly agreeable. It makes us feel as we felt when we were six years old and gazed through a kaleidoscope—the weirder the better." Anticipating for a moment the close of a season which next included Matisse sculpture—his third exhibition at "291"—consider the first showing of Children's Drawing which was presented in April, 1912. The critics enjoyed it. Of course Mr. Harrington, who was the funny boy of the lot, could not refrain from saying that "291" was a "Nursery of Genius. One of the young artists," he concluded, "saw a painting by Mr. Max Weber and made one just like it—only better."

Few of the critics appreciated the demonstration they had just seen. Repeatedly it had been said, from the time that Matisse first showed at "291," in April, 1908, that a "child could do better." Now they had the chance to make the comparison. Did they take it? It is not recorded if they did. It should also have been clear that these children, aged 2 to 11, had something that no artist could afford to do without. They felt and the drawing quivered with their feeling. No preconceptions could prevail at "291."

Before the season had ended, Alfred J. Frueh, a young caricaturist, had been exhibited, and then, just before the children's show, came the first extensive presentation ever accorded Abraham Walkowitz, an East Side boy who had been the earliest of the American rebels to return from France. He had been praised by Hutchins Hapgood, who, several years before, had written a series of articles about

the Ghetto and its inhabitants. These drawings, wavering, fragile, almost like threads in the wind, were not without their relationship to the sensitivity of childhood. Walkowitz, in fact, was the one who had first brought in the children's work.

One phase of the "demonstrations" at "291" was almost finished. For in that same spring (1912) it was announced that an International Exhibition of Modern Art would be held sometime within the season to follow. Representatives had already been sent to Europe to gather pictures. So, even if the critics—and the public—and many of the painters—had resisted the offerings which saw the light in the simple little rooms of the brownstone front at "291," the general intelligence now admitted that something vital was going on in Europe and it was time for the American people to see it. But if the French were already aware of it, and the English had been informed by the Grafton Gallery Show of Roger Fry, in 1911, New York at least had already been introduced to Modern Art. For five full seasons Stieglitz had pioneered. For five long years he and his cohorts had faced condemnation, abuse, laughter, and epithets as to their sanity. Half a year more, and larger numbers would go to a bigger show, but what did it matter? They, like all true pioneers, had the satisfaction that they had got there first.[4]

[4]The total attendance at both Photo-Secession and "291" for seven seasons—from Nov. 24, 1905 to April 27, 1912—was well above 167,000. (*Cf. New York Evening Sun*, April 27, 1912.)

IV

With the arrival of the Armory Show, one whole phase of "291" had ended. Now it was no longer necessary to introduce the country to Modern Art. That had been attended to, and it would never need to be done again. More imperative was it to shield the man who, because he stood alone, might suffer contempt, to insist upon his getting a fair hearing, and, at the same time, while watching always for the currents of the future, never to be swept away by them. The pursuit was the same, the emphasis had merely shifted.

Shortly a new man had arrived for the huge affair at the Armory. He was a painter and an experimenter, this Francis Picabia, and he had for some time been a friend of Picasso's. He had an intelligence and, it might be said, an inquisitive brilliance. One of his pictures, exhibited at the Armory Show, was dismissed almost as often as the more famous *Nude Descending the Staircase*, by Marcel Duchamp, who was also a Cubist. It was simply an image of nudes dancing beside a spring. But inasmuch as Picabia delineated the figures by interweaving color-planes, which one had to contemplate for a time in order to see how they built up into what he wished to say, he was much derided by those hasty folk who know all about a canvas after a single glance. Presently, in March, he was the recipient of a one-man show at "291." Here he displayed his "cryptograms," as Mr. Samuel Swift, successor to Huneker, labelled them in *The Sun*.

Now in these works Picabia was expressly seeking to evolve a non-objective art. That is to say, when he depicted his impression of New York upon arrival in the harbor, he did not render skyscrapers, water, tugs, or bridges. Instead, working perhaps from certain planes derived from the deck of his own ship, he endeavored to give the effect upon *him* of this titan city of the New World. Later, when he walked the streets of Harlem, he tried not to catch the strut of the colored man, or the voluptuous curve of its women, but a swirl of rhythms which would convey what he *felt* about it. Non-objective art this, in his meaning.

Shortly after becoming acquainted at "291," he made the comment that of all the Americans he had seen, Arthur Dove alone, because of his "interpretations," would get attention in Paris. He said this, presumably, because Dove's color fantasies related back to the mind of their creator rather than to the external object which had prompted them in the first place, and for this reason, no doubt, they seemed parallel to his own. Be that as it may, where Picasso, even in breaking up forms, was always remaining strictly within the discipline of a problem, Picabia was seeking, as it were, to flow out of the problem by following a fantasy of his own. At length he returned to France, leaving some of his canvases behind him.

Expounding a related tendency, De Zayas had declared in *Camera Work* that "Art is Dead." He wrote a whole series of articles to demonstrate his conviction. He claimed that since art had once been the offspring of religion, and that since religion now was fully dead, it could

have no further progeny. Then he scoured both past and present for authorities in substantiation, elucidating, among others, the dubious pseudo-psychologist, Gustave Le Bon.

Certainly his own work did not support him. Instead of limiting himself to satires on the metropolitan pageant, he now attempted to reduce the human face to a mere line or two, and then if possible to make that almost abstract. Going even further, he would convert such material into a mere "theorem," in which the human countenance was supplanted by mathematical scorings. Yet it all sprang from an incessant antagonism to hateful types, and it never relaxed in its meaning, although it took an acute intelligence to follow him. But the fact that his third show, held in April, 1913, once more was virtually ignored by the press, did not stimulate him to go on. More and more he steeped himself in his defeatism.

The last pre-war season, which followed, was signalized by the first one-man show ever given anywhere to the Roumanian sculptor, Constantin Brancusi. A plaster-cast of his *Mademoiselle Pogany* had been almost universally ridiculed at the Armory Show the year before.[5] This had encouraged Stieglitz to fight in its behalf, particularly inasmuch as the birdlike intensity at the brows gave it a delicate point which the unimaginative were unequipped to see. But in the setting of "291" it flourished. So did the other works. The polish and the lift of the Roumanian registered. But how had it been done? So in-

[5]Somebody called *Mademoiselle Pogany* and the *Nude Descending the Stairs* the two leading ladies of that "engagement"!

quired Henry McBride, new critic on *The Sun,* and attempted the answer: "Now that it finds itself in the sympathetic guardianship of Mr. Stieglitz in the little gallery of the Photo-Secession, which seems to have no secret architectural differences from other galleries, and yet has the faculty of showing off modern wares that seem dubious in other places to extreme advantage—like the tailor's mirror in which you never can locate the imperfections that you fancied in the glass at home—the Brancusi seems to expand, unfold and to take on a startling ludicity." Once again the artist had been vindicated. This last prewar season ended with a tasteful show of work by Frank Burty, brother of Paul (Burty) Haviland.

As the war advanced, so did the little gallery. It inaugurated the 1914–15 season with a show of African Negro sculpture, the first of its kind ever arranged. De Zayas, who had been instrumental in arranging the exhibition, prepared the catalog. In it he said that "Negro art, product of the 'Land of Fright,' created by a mentality full of fear, and completely devoid of the faculties of observation and analysis, is the pure expression of the emotions of a slave race—victims of nature—who see the outer world only under its most intensely expressive aspect and not under its natural one." Few have better understood the genesis of these works which today may be found in leading museums through the world. Undoubtedly De Zayas relished a later exhibition of Mexican pottery and carving, which was relegated to the smaller room so as not to interfere with a major exhibition. For here again he could demonstrate that perforce Modern

Art had to look back, since only there could it find the elements that had once made for life.

He must also have responded to the exhibition of Picasso and Braque, both Cubists, later in 1914. He had known and admired Picasso in Paris. He could not help but respect the mind of that agitated man. (At the same time, he was one of the first to point out, in America, that Picasso could provide no "root," because he was merely analytical.) It was when Picabia arrived for a second visit—months after a show of his had ended, in January, 1915—that the tendencies of which De Zayas had been the exponent, culminated.

But first it is necessary to describe a project which had originated during Picabia's absence. While *Camera Work* had never ceased publication in all these years, Stieglitz did feel the need for a sprightly magazine which would attack the American art scene with satire. Accordingly, he, along with De Zayas, Agnes Ernst Meyer, a one-time[6] reporter on *The New York Sun* who now sometimes did translations and art criticism for *Camera Work*, and others of his collaborators set up a new publication which they named *291*. It was more like a series of handsome posters—so far as the covers were concerned—except that it bore reading matter as well. The first issue ridiculed the conventional galleries and their visitors. It also reproduced a memorable Picasso abstraction and published some writings on music by one Alberto Savinio, an Italian.

[6]An extract from Van Gogh's journals, translated by Mrs. Meyer and published in *Camera Work* No. 40, was the first of his works to appear at any length in an American periodical. Its date: October, 1912.

It contained the following on "291" and its work: "You are at the end of your first period; you have gathered your data, you have made your observations. You are about to enter your second period, in which you will arrive at the laws which govern the phenomena you have observed." So Paul Haviland. Steichen did not agree, and on the back cover he said as much with a satire. Nor should one overlook the starry "picture" in word and type by Guillaume Apollinaire, French poet and classic expositor of Cubism.

The second issue concentrated more on Picabia, though it also had a place for the musical modernist, Leo Ornstein, and impertinent caricatures by Katharine Rhoades, a young painter only then exhibited at "291." Issue three was devoted to Walkowitz, who portrayed the city in the form of trembling skyscrapers with agitated, tiny swarms below. Steichen celebrated the Gallic cock. Number four was embellished by Marin.

Now in June, 1915, Picabia, returning from France, had already, by his war-participation, experienced that life-weariness which was to characterize the period of the Twenties and even the Thirties. Seeing what *291* the magazine was doing, he became excited and threw himself into the project. He helped much in the remaining issues (the publication terminated in March, 1916).[7] Then, when he went back to France, he brought copies along

[7]Other contents: A commending photogravure of Stieglitz' *Steerage* (Nos. 7–8); a Braque drawing (No. 9); a Picasso (Nos. 10–11), and (in No. 12) a superb reproduction of a Congo figure. Numerous De Zayas caricatures throughout the twelve numbers from Feb., 1915–Mar., 1916.

with him. Next he was founding a French likeness called "391," run on a similar plan, which became one of the antecedents of the so-called Dada Movement, which in turn anticipated the noxious Surrealism of the post-War and Depression periods. When De Zayas presently entered the art business and withdrew from "291"—his was the first up-town gallery devoted to Modern Art—and Haviland was called to France—and Mrs. Meyer increasingly absented herself in Washington—this phase of "291" also had come to an end.

But not until something had been clarified. For the "intellectual" and rootless side—so definitely expounded at first by De Zayas and so relentlessly eventuating in his retirement to business—had been permitted full expression and had speedily withered. Thus nothing remained but the Americans. It is important to understand this for two reasons. In the first place, if certain intelligent people had only noticed the blind-alley end to these excursions by De Zayas and Picabia, they might have been less quick to embrace the Surrealism of the Twenties and Thirties. Second, proponents of a suspicious patriotism could never have claimed that Stieglitz was subscribing to a rootless internationalism which had flourished but briefly and then had dropped from the branch. "291" had merely seen this tendency through to a finish, and had shown, without necessity of a repetition, the limitation at one extreme of twentieth-century art: over-intellectualism.

V

A "negative affirmation," it is true, but one that was more than counterbalanced by a virtual prophecy elsewhere—in that an incessant encouragement was given to the young Americans by "291." Even in the last two years of its life, the list is impressive. Two women, Marion Beckett and Katharine Rhoades, Oscar Bluemner, an architect turned painter, Walkowitz and Hartley, Marin, and finally, at the very end of its life, Paul Strand, photographer, and Georgia O'Keeffe and S. MacDonald-Wright,[8] painters—all of them were upheld and supported by the conviction which they found at "291."

Here Marin's first, faint pipings gradually gave place to trumpetings in downtown New York, and, later still, to the thunder of the Maine coast. Here Hartley, a landscapist if there ever was one, found succor when he lived on but $4 a week. Here the pathetic Maurer was helped, not ridiculed. Here a whole generation of talent—as in the show of "Young Americans"—confronted the impenetrable steel and stone of New York and found them no longer inimical to life. Here Dove disengaged himself from illustrating. Here Walkowitz and Weber first obtained considerable audience. Here O'Keeffe and Strand and S. MacDonald-Wright established an initial footing.

Yet the spirit of "291" remains, greater than the artist or art—even though these are perhaps its most permanent

[8]Mr. Wright's exhibit was preceded by one for Gino Severini, Italian Futurist (March, 1917). The next and last show was Miss O'Keeffe's, which followed in April.

embodiments—more lasting than movements or manifestoes or catalogs or conflicts or theories—more than the arguments about the stove in the back room, where critic and painter matched one another and young America faced old Europe and first found its strength—more, too, than the occasional, fine stabs at the truth by a critic. All these, while important, and good, and unforgettable, do not constitute the challenge of "291."

"291" was a lift towards light, a demonstration that, as Stieglitz once put it, even a tiny sapling might grow in the midst of city pavements. It was an experimental station to show what might happen if men truly cooperated. And it was composed, by some strange process, of all who had ever visited there. . . .

An up-State preacher who found new sermons in its exhibits. "Big Bill" Haywood and Emma Goldman, appearing, perhaps, in the midst of a strike. Walter Lippmann, a young editor, pausing a moment before his next equivocation. Emile Zoler, who, like a stoker, worked far under a ship as it steamed ahead. Adolph Wolff, writing a testimonial to it from a prison-cell on Blackwell's Island.[9] Gertrude Stein, Mabel Dodge and the suffragettes who came in with their parasols. Resilient and generous "Hutch" Hapgood. Leo Stein and Willard Huntington Wright, critical lancers who sparred about the stove in back. Charles Henry Caffin (dying in poverty, later). The children who

[9]See "What is '291'?" (*Camera Work*, No. 47, dated July, 1914, published January, 1915.) All the others here named contributed to this symposium. Zoler, who wrote one of the best contributions, is still, after nearly three decades, associated with Stieglitz. Though a gifted caricaturist, he has never cared to exhibit.

frolicked in joy when their pictures were hung. The society dame and the tortoise who crawled his way up from the club. Hodge Kirnon. And the unknown man from the street. "291" sprang from the very essence of America—expansive, vitalizing and free like the Western spaces. And it still stands as a spiritual challenge to all those who must fight for their ideas.

CHAPTER X

The Armory Show

UNREST typified Arthur B. Davies. Even as a boy on the ball-field he was differentiated from his fellows. His first painting instructor, Dwight Williams, once recalled that "he appeared to have a sylvan look and the illusive fleetness of a deer." His mind outran the teacher's. Only fifteen years old—he had been born at Utica, N. Y., in 1862—he would receive a suggestion and then race on to the next point before his preceptor had even started there. He retained an impression. Seeing his first show at twelve—it included the American landscapists Homer, Wyant, Inness and Martin—he never forgot it, and even in farthest Italy, where he often travelled in later years, his most eclectic canvases would recall something of that earlier and less complicated America.

He could not stand still. Moving with his parents to Chicago in 1878, he soon was doing clerical work for the Board of Trade, at the same time studying at the Academy of Design under Roy Robertson. Two years later he dashed off to Mexico to become a draughting-engineer. Undoubtedly he was awakened by some of the ecclesiastical pictures he saw there. Returning to Chicago two years later, he entered the Art Institute School as a pupil of Charles Corwin. By 1886 he was on his way to New

York. There he illustrated for *St. Nicholas, The Century* and other magazines, and enrolled at the Gotham Art Students' School and then at the League. Two years later, visiting the little basement gallery of William Macbeth on lower Fifth Avenue, he interested that sympathetic dealer in his canvases. His work was shown to collectors, and in 1893 Benjamin Altman, the merchant, was persuaded to finance his first trip abroad.

Returning, Davies exhibited some of these new, ethereal landscapes at Macbeth's in 1894, and thereafter, though struggle lay ahead, was sure of at least attention whenever he showed. Academicians sensed a nonconformist, for they gave no support to his work. Nor did he ever speak a good word for them. He had to fight his way alone. Presently, having married in 1892, he settled in Rockland County, New York, where for twenty years he earned part of his living from the soil. The dipping valleys of that upstate country often persist in his canvases, and somehow they convey the airy quiet of a spirit which would fight the earth, if necessary, before subduing itself to the demands of the tepid conventionalists. Undoubtedly life was not easy. Always reserved—indeed, American art offers no more reticent a character—he masked, or at least seldom was open about—the activities of these difficult years. He did admit,[1] however, that once, for a year, he had painted Bull Durham signs on barns throughout the country. Davies knew the price of independence. And he had the strength to pay it.

He was almost forty when he enjoyed his first official

[1] *Artists Say the Silliest Things*, by Guy Pène du Bois, p. 192.

recognition, a silver medal from the Pan-American Exposition in 1901. He travelled to California four years later, and upon returning, exhibited in Boston. It was in 1907 that he won the patronage of Miss Lizzie Bliss, thereafter one of his most persistent supporters. By 1911 he was exhibiting twenty-five works at the Art Students' League. This was the background for the great venture of his life, The International Exhibition of Modern Art by the American Painters' & Sculptors' Association (otherwise known as The Armory Show).

But what about his own initial work? Davies began as the depicter of an immediate countryside. Who, looking at *Along the Erie Canal*, can fail to transplant himself to an upstate New York landscape? Precise and pellucid, yet singing, it enchants one at that same time that it recalls, not discreditably, an elegant New England sampler, or the fairy tales of a child's dreaming. But the origin is the Mohawk Valley, and there it has its reference. Again, in *Every Saturday*, *Dancing Children*, and *The Sisters*, Davies would lyricize the surrounding countryside. At the same time, he would preoccupy himself with rhythmic fluctuations throughout the picture, in relation to which the personages were merely agents. Eventually his trips to Italy and an intense curiosity led his searching mind to refine these rhythms until they animated everything within the frame. Gradually, thus, he sought to convert the plastic material of a picture into the musical one of an elusive rhythm. Nor were these rhythms physical in their origin. Apparently they sprang both from the mind and a most acute intuition of inaccessible harmonies. Like the Welsh

poets W. H. Davies or Henry Vaughan, he sang as if he were gazing from a highland into misty spaces. The structure would be visible only if the clouds passed—but they never did. More fortunately for these particular poet-dreamers, they worked actually with the music of speech, or the visual imagination as one understands it in the writer. Arthur B. Davies tried to transmogrify his imaginings into paint, and there he fell short. For in this art the material is indispensable. Ignore that, and no other virtue will avail.

Now, Davies did have a "touch." Looking at *Tissue Parnassian*—and at many of his nudes, particularly those in the black-and-white—one feels that his fingers accented the material here and there. Unfortunately, the hands did not mold it. Mere fantasy was the governor. Thus the plastic sense—the assurance of actual physical shaping to the material—was insufficiently present. This defeated Davies as a painter. What was the reason? Perhaps it can be found in his nudes. They are always "safe." They droop, they languish, they draw back, they are always preparing for flight. This is not the fullness of life, but its attenuation. And the artist pays for such weakness, as Davies did.

On the other hand, an intensity of mind always impelled him to penetrate new material intellectually. Correctly did Sadakichi Hartmann, as early as 1902,[2] declare that Davies was the "most intellectual painter we possess." Not a master, Hartmann added—merely an adapter—one who painted without concession—only for those who would seek as he had. So Mr. Davies pursued, on successive ex-

[2] *History of American Art*, by Sadakichi Hartmann.

peditions to Italy, Giorgione, Piero di Cosimo, and other Renaissance favorites, and later, when Cézanne impressed him, sought to add greater weight to his composition. When Cubism crashed the country at the Armory Show, he surrendered himself to it and endeavored to reform his whole attack. His intellectual courage was irreproachable. Few artists or men of any kind have such fearlessness. And because of it Davies was equipped for the formidable role which he was at last to assume.

II

For he made the Armory Show.[3] Until he appeared, the Association of American Painters and Sculptors—formed to assist artists for exhibition and professional purposes—was but vaguely seeking a show for their own work. Once he was enlisted, the purpose of the projected exhibition changed. He broadened it, interested financial supporters, vitalized his collaborators, urged something really imaginative, and began to push with all the force of his mind and will. A lease was signed for the Armory of the 69th Regiment, at Lexington Avenue and 25th Street. Walt Kuhn, painter and caricaturist, serving as secretary to the organization, was dispatched abroad. But not until Davies had sent him the catalogue of a big modern exhibition in Cologne, Germany (the "Sonderbund," held in the spring and summer of 1912).

[3]This project, as originally discussed by Jerome Myers, Elmer MacRae, Walt Kuhn and others, envisaged only a better recognition of American art. It was about to be dropped when Davies was called in. He enlarged the project to one of international dimensions.

Kuhn saw this show before it closed and contracted for certain of its canvases. He visited The Hague and Munich. At Paris he met Walter Pach, American art writer and painter, periodically resident there for some years, and through him obtained further advice. Then he cabled Davies, urging him to come at once. One week later the commander-in-chief arrived. In the swift week that followed, he and Kuhn practically lived in taxicabs. They visited London before they returned, and made other decisions upon seeing the second of Roger Fry's Grafton Gallery shows devoted to the Post-Impressionists. But Davies came not as a stranger. He knew the art of the past and the French periodicals. Moreover, he had attended the exhibitions at "291," and thus had seen at first hand what many of the Moderns were doing. At any rate, after a tempestuous week—it even included a trip to Berlin—Davies, along with Kuhn, returned to America. Pach was left behind to send over further material from Paris.

What was the Association's attitude now? Impressed by Davies' conviction and his organizing ability, it agreed to his demand that the project become international rather than local. For Davies envisioned nothing less than a *complete* presentation of the movement which had emerged since the French Revolution. American accomplishments were to have their place, it was true, but they were only part of the story, and the Germans and the English must be included as well—whoever, in short, had contributed to the developments of the past one hundred years.

Publicists were hired. Frederick James Gregg, editorial writer for *The New York Sun*, and Guy Pène du Bois,

young disciple of Robert Henri and editor of *Arts & Decoration*, soon had "plastered" the town with notices of the coming circus. The public was as eager as a small boy when he sees the first posters predicting the coming of Jumbo, the almost human elephant. For days they handed copy to the press—both national and local—to magazines as well as newspapers—and at last, February 17, 1913, the main tent was ready for the crowds to enter.

Yet the more carnival aspects must not obscure the steady hand of Davies. He compelled the essential arrangements of the exhibition. He insisted on free way for all who had a say of their own. He obtained cash. He clarified and objectified and raised to a significant level the whole affair. Nowhere did his spirit better reflect itself than in the Explanatory Statement which was issued as the Great Insurgent Show commenced:

"This is not an institution but an association. It is composed of persons of varying tastes and predilections, who are agreed on one thing, that the time has arrived for giving the public here the opportunity to see for themselves the results of new influences at work in other countries in an art way.

"In getting together the works of the European Moderns, the Society has embarked on no propaganda. It proposes to enter on no controversy with an institution. Its sole object is to put the paintings, sculptures and so on, on exhibition so that the intelligent may judge for themselves, by themselves. . . ."

III

Opening night arrived. Suddenly, as before the curtain goes up, a pause—and then the public entered. Imagine a great Roman hall, or rather a vast modern drill-room covering a city block with its steel and stone. Within this area numerous subdivisions have been made, so that the largeness is no longer oppressive. The military aspect of the walls has been modified by burlap coverings, and higher up, where the brick still obtrudes, festoonings of green lighten the eye and relieve it so that it returns to the more gracious spectacle before it. Alcoves have been made for the display of the sculpture and there are benches on which the weary may sit. Even ushers have been provided.

And what pictures! What a cataract of color! Multitudes and multitudes of pictures[1]—linear masterpieces by Ingres, the agonized protestations of Delacroix, giant scenes from nature by Courbet, and then the battling Impressionists, suddenly sweeping the spectator into the industrial steams and sunshot vapor of the French nineteenth century, with Paris always at hand or the gracious rivers of its outskirts. Degas, with his piercing mind, too, was present, and the celebrations of the aging Renoir, and all the rest of their contemporaries. These the conservative might accept. But when they encountered the thunderbolts of Cézanne, or his immediate successors, Van Gogh and Gauguin, they suddenly fell back. Even so, they had to admit their force.

But the rest was Bedlam. So the papers said, repeating

[1]2000 of them, including Americans.

the term over and over, as if to make their own reactions more comprehensible. Milton's most awesome passages seemed a picnic by comparison. Had the world gone mad? These pinwheels, skyrockets, explosions—what had they to do with painting? Their authors—Pablo Picasso—or "Paul," as he was called in *Everybody's Magazine*—and Henri Matisse—and Marcel Duchamp—and the Cubists—why, these men were revolutionaries igniting a bomb under the populace. So thought Kenyon Cox and Royal Cortissoz. Frank Jewett Mather, also a conservative, recoiled at the "epileptic Matisse" (though he had written with much greater intelligence upon the French painter following his second show at "291") and he declared that "Post-Impressionism is mostly ignorant splurge and Cubism merely an occult and curious pedantry." Yet he admitted that the Association had "done a valuable service in bringing over a full representation of this latest eccentric work."

And how did the layman react? Theodore Roosevelt, who was piloted through the show immediately after the inauguration of his rival, Woodrow Wilson, objected to what he called the "lunatic fringe" in this exhibition. Yet on the whole he was much more responsive. He at least admitted doubts. Others laughed. Above all did they laugh at the "conundrum"—that picture of pictures, *Nude Descending the Staircase*—by Marcel Duchamp, visiting Frenchman. Thousands stood before it, baffled, irritated, angry, surprised, but seldom pleased. Some shook their heads, as if wondering what was the matter with the painter. Mr. Julian Street, writing in *Everybody's*, com-

pared it to an "explosion in a shingle factory." For after all, where was the Lady? These customers had paid to see her, hadn't they? And then, confronting the picture which had excited the papers, they sought but couldn't find. Perhaps it was a hoax. Many left, convinced that the whole thing was only a stunt. Others, remaining, merely laughed themselves into forgetfulness.

One other popular reaction prevailed. It was expressed in *The Saturday Evening Post* for August 10, 1913, by Irvin S. Cobb, who entitled his piece "Old Masters and Young Messers": "I like," he affirmed, "to be able to tell what a picture aims to represent just by looking at it. I presume this is the result of my early training. I was reared in the Rutherford B. Hayes School of Interior Decoration. . . . I distinctly recall the time when upon the walls of every wealthy home of America there hung, among other things, two staple oil paintings—a still-life for the dining-room, showing a dead fish on a plate, and a pastoral for the parlor showing a collection of cows drinking out of a purling brook." Mr. Cobb was a perfect index to the limitations of the popular magazine readers. Indeed, he defined the Cubist as one who, "for reasons best known to the police, has not been locked up yet, who asserts that all things in Nature, living and inanimate, properly resolve themselves into cubes." Concluding, he declared that when "Remington painted an Indian on a pony it was a regular Indian and a regular pony. . . . I should like to enroll as a charter member of a league of Americans who believe that Frederick Remington and Howard Pyle were greater painters than any old Master that ever turned out

blistered saints and fly-blown cherubim." Quaint, was it not? Yet more alive than the reaction of the conservative critics, and more indicative, too, of the attitude in the country at large. For Mr. Cobb spoke, not as he had been taught, but as he had experienced, and he had therefore the advantage in vitality. And if he confused painting with illustration, he did so not because of rote and dried old maxims of the past, but because he really liked something and upheld his right to like it as he did.

Another observer, Professor Joel Spingarn, lecturer and esthetician from Columbia University did, however, see the real import of the show. "The opening night," he was quoted as saying, "seemed to me one of the most exciting adventures I have experienced, and this sense of excitement was shared by almost every one who was present. It was not merely the stimulus of color, or the riot of sensuous appeal, or the elation that is born of a successful venture, or the feeling that one had shared, however humbly, in an historic occasion. . . . What moved me strangely was this: I felt for the first time that art was recapturing its own essential madness at last, and that the modern painter-sculptor had won for himself a title of courage that was lacking in all the other fields of art." Yes, courage had come to American art. That was the meaning of the Armory Show!

IV

AFTERMATH

Counter-attack was organized. Scarcely had the show left town when Mr. Royal Cortissoz exploded a few car-

tridges in the direction of Chicago, where it had now set up its tent. "Cézanne," he charged,[5] "had never quite learned his trade, and accordingly in his dealings with landscape, still-life and the figure, was not unaccustomed to paint unsuccessfully." He could admit only that the *Provençal,* along with Van Gogh, made "lucky hits." As for Matisse and Picasso, "their entanglements in the eccentricities of a kind of Barnumism is visible at a glance." And, as if to dispose of these interlopers with a really devastating volley, he discharged the two following remarks: "This is not a movement and a principle. It is unadulterated cheek." Is Mr. Cortissoz quite so sure today?

He was answered by William D. MacColl, a young Australian, in the July, 1913, issue of *The Forum.* Eloquently MacColl declared that: "They give us something that was not in our life, that was not in that of painting before." Almost profoundly he noted that: "There is no more beauty now than there was before; but there has been a quickening. It is this *quickening,* this sense of change into something rich and strange, which we feel as beauty of life." And then, before concluding, he sang the mind and the qualities of the French as if a quiver of light invaded his pages and they exuded an almost unimaginable aroma. Rarely did he speak, and well did he know, and he shall not be forgotten.

Even a year later the controversy was not ended. In *Scribner's* for April, 1914, Kenyon Cox protested against Cézanne for a lack of training, against Rodin as head of the "Shock-your-Grandmother" brigade, against Matisse

[5]"The Post Impressionist Illusion," *Century,* April, 1913.

as being without any talent. He assailed Modern Art as "putrefaction," and insisted, in closing, that there was only one word for the whole development—"and that word is 'anarchy.'" Once again a counter-attack was answered when James Huneker, back from Europe, where he had been at the time of the Armory Show, upheld these disturbers of the peace as being, on the contrary, essentially lawful elements which would strengthen the body social. And after all, he added, they had just as much right to the platform as the older generation. "What matter the tools, if they have, these young chaps, individuality? Must they continue to peer through the studio spectacles of their grandfathers? Art is not a fixed quantity, but a ceaseless experimenting. . . . The question at issue is whether our new men have anything to say, and do they say it in a personal manner? I think the answer is a decided affirmative."

Meanwhile, a Chicago connoisseur and progressive, Arthur Jerome Eddy, angered by a student agitation to burn Matisse in effigy and also by the blinkered stiffness of the official mind, had written a book entitled, *Cubism and Post-Impressionism*. Here, with a refreshing directness—refreshing because it had the wind-blown quality of the Western plains—he examined the origins, accomplishments, and limitations of the newer schools, and placed them in their historic development. At last a structure was on the way up! *Camera Work*, too, though somewhat earlier, had published an essay by Oscar Bluemner, the painter, in which he pointed out the omissions and misemphases in the Armory Show (among others, the insuf-

ficient space to Van Gogh). Such comment, of course, was overlooked by the bulk of the citizenry—and even by the critics—because the initial impact had been too great. But in retrospect these shortcomings are clear.

The Armory Show uprooted the old foundations. What did it put up in their place? And to what extent did it encourage the American artist? Unfortunately, the answers to these questions are not altogether favorable. There was no follow-through, no consolidation to make sure that the backward-lookers would not again entrench themselves. Was a mere explosion enough? In point of fact, once the American artists had the enemy on the run, they should have pursued him and clung to their advantage until they were sure of a better position on the next encounter. This they did not do. The Painters and Sculptors Association disbanded. Davies was left to pay the bills (which he did). And for two full decades the Americans lived all too much in the shadow of the latest paintings from Paris.

V

It was a layman who made the most of the occasion. John Quinn, a lawyer and member of the Democratic National Committee, sponsor of Oscar Underwood in the Baltimore Convention of 1912, collector and devotee of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, tall and aristocratic, with a profile like a Roman coin's, only finer, had felt, as he participated in the preparations for the Armory Show, that it was a shame that art less than twenty years old had to pay a duty at the Customs House. Therefore, later in 1913, when Senate hearings on the tariff were being con-

ducted, he testified to the effect that such imposts favored the rich—who could afford the older and more expensive art—and that hence, this being a democracy, they should be abandoned. He was successful.

This sterling man and sportsman-backer of unpedigreed classics, succeeded, before the time of his death in 1924, in assembling perhaps the greatest of all collections of Modern Art. It numbered over 2000 pieces. Quinn was the counterpart of Huneker in our criticism. For when it came to his auction—one of the most notable in our history—it could be noticed that comparatively few American canvases were included among his stunning purchases. He had a number of Kuhns—the two had established a friendship at the time of the Armory Show—a few Prendergasts and Webers, two or three Marins, a couple of Hartleys, and a sprinkling of others. But his eyes were overseas. This does not take away from the greatness of his initiative, nor does it in any way suggest that he should have done otherwise. But it does demonstrate the dilemma of the American artist. He had become less provincial, but he was still isolated. Who would support him till he had full strength of his own?

As for Walt Kuhn, he assimilated new tendencies and reflected them in strident paintings which neither mellow nor deepen with the years. Intelligent but brittle, he confesses nothing more than a ready eye and an obedient hand. As Lewis Mumford has well said in *The New Yorker*, "There is no hinterland beyond that invites exploration."

Mr. Pach, on the other hand, while assiduously painting, did, by many years in France, familiarize himself with

the French tradition and then, by books, lectures and criticism, inform the American public as to the nature of that tradition. Most notably, he translated Elie Faure's *History of Art* and the Delacroix *Journals*, and thus further helped to bring America of age.

Davies, meanwhile, gazed anew at his canvases. Putting on, as the painter Walkowitz once expressed it, "an adjustable Cubism," he flashed new patches upon the skins of his figures. For a time they danced in a perpetual harlequinade. But the innovation was never structural. Eventually he resought his Italians or flirted with extraneous notions of inhalation and its effect upon painting. He did, however, decorate the music room of Miss Lizzie Bliss in the Cubist style, and thus undoubtedly was instrumental in inducing greater sympathy, on her part, for a rarefied development in painting. He also advised her much on her collections. Nor was she the only collector to feel his influence. Everywhere, quietly, effectively, confidently, Davies spoke the word that often confirmed a decision. He lived out his own injunction: "Let us be emancipated."

Why this influence? Surely not because of his will, nor his probity, nor even his intelligence. Others possess these, yet have no such effect. It was rather—and here the words are Henry McBride's—that "anything fine and unearthly and mysterious and melodious seemed to be his by right." A peculiar refinement was his—a compound of idealism, courage and independence. Greater than Davies it was, and it will live, even after his canvases are forgotten, because of what it compelled him to do towards liberating the mind of the American people.

CHAPTER XI

An American Classic

WHAT are the classics in American art? And what is the nature of a classic, anyway? For the last dozen years, and particularly since an important show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, it has become fashionable to say that Ryder, Homer and Eakins[1] provide a trinity on which we can base something fundamental, and on which, presumably, we can build more magnificently in the future. But there was always something factitious about this quest. Classics are not made by promoting them. They arise from life and frequently in opposition to the very forces which later seek to glorify them. They are genuine and not synthetic. And too often they do not get their recognition for precisely that reason.

But *Camera Work* may be considered a classic. Founded in January, 1903, by Alfred Stieglitz, edited by him and his associates, Dallet Fuguet, Joseph T. Keiley, J. B. Kerfoot, and John I. Strauss, this American art and photographic quarterly persisted until 1917, producing some fifty numbers in all,[2] and completing before it ceased pub-

[1]The show of these three nineteenth-century men was held from May 6 to June 4, 1930.

[2]*Camera Work* issued fifty numbers, together with two special supplements, one devoted to Steichen, the other to Post-Impressionist and Cubist art.

lication, a work of the very first order. It had substantially no change in the editorship, Paul B. Haviland alone replacing Strauss in 1910. It never paid its editors (though it did compensate its contributors). Yet *Camera Work* was not a philanthropic enterprise. Again, while it accepted advertisements—chiefly from photographic supply houses—it was not commercial. Nor was it, strictly speaking, an art journal. Yet it stood for issues that made it a permanent standard to esthetic accomplishment. This it did despite the fact that when it suspended, in 1917, it had a total subscription list of thirty-six. Though world famous, it couldn't live. And even today its contribution is not understood.

From its very first issue it announced a standard:

"It is proposed," declared the magazine, "to issue quarterly an illustrated publication which will appeal to the ever-increasing ranks of those who have faith in photography as a medium of individual expression, and, in addition, to make converts at present ignorant of its possibilities.

"Photography being in the main a process in monochrome, it is on subtle gradations in tone and value that its artistic beauty so frequently depends. It is, therefore, highly necessary that reproductions of photographic work must be made with exceptional care and discretion if the spirit of the originals is to be retained. Such supervision will be given to all the illustrations which will appear in each number of *Camera Work*."

And fifty issues later it still maintained that standard. No wonder the Royal Photographic Society of London was

able to honor it, in 1923, as "the most artistic record of Photography ever attempted."[3]

II

What was the feel and look and layout of *Camera Work?*[4] Each number was devoted primarily to the work of a single photographer, or to a school, though additional illustrations often appeared. Thus the fifty-odd numbers constitute a history of Pictorial Photography, since they include workers from all countries of importance. In addition, the comments focussed on the works each time reproduced, or on issues related to them, so that they too contribute to the understanding of this photographic movement. But more than this, *Camera Work* represents the ideological battleground between the process-minded and the photographic liberators. Though later[5]—beginning with Number XXII—it did begin to amplify its purpose, it did not swerve from its original objectives, and in its final number, before sinking out of sight, it devoted an entire issue to the prints of Paul Strand, thus, at the last, re-emphasizing the importance of photography.

Yet it would be a mistake to assume that *Camera Work* was limited to photography as such. It championed the medium merely as the symbol of a larger freedom. Photog-

[3]This citation is made from *America and Alfred Stieglitz*, a panel biography edited by Waldo Frank, Lewis Mumford, Dorothy Norman, Paul Rosenfeld and Harold Rugg. It was published in 1934 and it still remains, because of its historical and critical material, the essential source on its man.

[4]The publication as a whole was designed by Eduard Steichen, including the cover and the marque.

[5]See third section of this chapter.

raphy could say things, but few admitted its voice. It could "draw" and sift and record, yet painters denied it. It could affirm the human spirit, yet the unimaginative said No. Hence a fight was on. The campaign was promoted in several directions. Some who participated were scouts, some were raiders, some publicists, some poets, some satirists—all were engaged in a single battle, to crush prejudice.

Among the scouts and raiders none was more effective than Sadakichi Hartmann. Sometimes he would tell how, coming to Boston seventeen years before—the issue was dated April, 1904—he had found himself marooned in a cultural backwash. Inquiring of a Boston dramatic authority his opinion on Ibsen, he received only a dry and complacent stare in return. Not only was America twenty years behind Europe, its best painters—Ryder, for example—doomed themselves by long isolation to an inbreeding that militated against good textures in the canvas. For, as Hartmann then said, painting was the marriage between the inner and the outer, and unless the two combined fully the issue could be incomplete at best.

Sometimes he merely darted forward on a swift foray, naming Pictorial photography as a possible source of stimulation to interior decoration. Again he nimbly sketched Steichen's studio, or memorialized a suicide sculptor, John Donoghue. Still later he cast a strange fragrance as he wept over the death of Whistler in *White Chrysanthemums*. But the main charges of this restless intelligence were elsewhere. As early as 1903, in an essay entitled *The Value of the Apparently Meaningless and Inaccurate*, he unforgettably identified the magazine with an objection to

the merely accurate in art. For, said he, "the love for exactitude is the lowest form of pictorial gratification." Thus he had already forecast the fighting-lines of a decade later.

Still more prophetic were his writings on the Flatiron Building. Inspired perhaps by Whitman, whom he had known long years before, but more directly, in this case, by a photograph of Stieglitz, he saluted the new skyscraper as follows: "It is a curiosity of modern architecture, solely built for utilitarian purposes, and at the same time a masterpiece of iron-construction. It is a building without a main façade, resembling more than anything else the prow of a giant man-of-war." Yet the advance and soar of the Flatiron Building provided not the only push to his imagination. Gazing at a bridge, he would praise its "iron-construction which, as if guided by a magic hand, weaves its network over rivers and straight into the air with scientific precision, developing by its very absence of everything unnecessary new laws of beauty which have not yet been explored. . . . And," he insisted, "it is from the bridge, that hammock swung between the pillars of life, that New York seems to become intimate to you. The bridge gives back the thrill and swing to thought and step that nature gives in youth. Who can delineate in words the monstrous cobweb of wire that clings to the turrets, rose-colored in the setting sun, or the steel-lines linking the shores, that hover like the wings of a dragonfly above the stream?"

He seemed to have forgotten the Paris salons of Mallarmé and the other poets—mentioned by him elsewhere—and though he later would sear with a Nietzschean irony, he had here, no less than the bearded Walt and the archi-

tectural genius Sullivan, projected a new esthetic for a young people. And that esthetic was the underlying preoccupation—whether consciously so or not—of the magazine and those who guided it. For how would America ever be rendered livable unless men felt it and put that feeling into form?—and felt it, not in images of the past, but in terms of the fact before them.

Advancing more quietly, Roland Rood, a painter and esthetician at Columbia University, and son of the Rood whose researches into the phenomena of light, a generation before, had implemented the reconnoiterings of the Impressionists, expounded in his articles fresh justifications of photography, and even explored the origins of art in the light of it. Presently Charles H. Caffin, author, in 1901, of a *Handbook on Photography*, was humming his little song and further analyzing the Pictorialists. Sometimes the photographers contested with one another; sometimes a European reported on American Pictorialists exhibited abroad, and on occasion there were expressly literary contributions. Maurice Maeterlinck celebrated the photography of Steichen. George Bernard Shaw, himself a photographer, evaluated the medium as skillfully as any one ever has done.[6] Later still, the pamphleteer Irishman was attacked by Robert Demachy, the French gummist, and urged, in the light of the former's objections to that fallible instrument, the human hand, to amputate it so as to obtain more perfect photographs. Mr. Shaw never answered him.

And yet it must again be emphasized that *Camera Work*

[6]John Galsworthy and H. G. Wells might also be enumerated among these contributors.

was not a literary journal. If one looks at it in that way, he will be disappointed. Commentary, such as it was, merely enforced the reproductions and the total spoke to the eye—even in the printed matter—and through the eye to the visual imagination of the beholder. Thus, a panel of Käsebier's "Madonnas" and children was enhanced by a written appreciation; Steichen's portraits or woodlands were illuminated by an accompanying personality sketch; or again, Shaw, describing the interior of a bookshop, where Frederick H. Evans the proprietor sat with the "eyes of an aziola," merely clarified what the latter was presenting in his architectural prints, reproduced in the same issue. Or, if the chic French gummists "held" a certain issue, they would be balanced by an industrial landscape from the American, Prescott Adamson. Strenuous Germans such as the Hofmeisters—who to the writer recall, at their best, the enlarged, gripping "folk" of Hauptmann's *Weavers*—would be placed historically by a Berlin correspondent. Sometimes an experiment was published—Dwight Dugmore with a fish reminding one of a carp as portrayed by an earlier Japanese master—Harry Rubincam recording the shielded light effects within a circus tent—or even James Montgomery Flagg lampooning the Pictorialists with a brace of cartoons which said, in effect, "Before—And After!"

The crest in this phase of the project was reached with the golden, dense Annan of the *Dark Mountains* and a whole sheaf of his masterly photogravures, together with a later issue, likewise owed to him, on the first great photographer, David Octavius Hill. For Annan, through his

father, a fellow-countryman of Hill's and for years one of the photographer's best friends, had the advantage of working direct from the master's own negatives, which eventually fell into his possession. Engaged in the photo-engraving business, Annan produced, at the request of *Camera Work*, fresh impressions of his predecessor's work, many of them on Japanese tissue, which have made the numbers containing them priceless to the collector.[7] Annan also wrote for the same issue of *Camera Work* perhaps the finest brief evaluation of the pioneer Scotsman's work and thus, biographically, gave new eyes to the understanding.

Possibly no magazine was ever prepared with such care. In Number V, for example, inferior reproductions of Evans's cathedral interiors were published. An editorial note explained that unpredictable difficulties had compelled their printing even though unsatisfactory, and promised that it would never happen again. Then, a year later, one of these unsatisfactory prints was published in a fresh photogravure with the following notation: "We were pleased that we could thus present to our readers an object-lesson in the great difference in reproductions." Whence this perfection? Why this insistence? Because Stieglitz, no less than his precise contemporary, Thorstein Veblen, was a protagonist of the instinct of workmanship. He was obsessed with getting the best out of the task. He filed and filed to an ultimate point, because, just like an exquisite jeweler, or a fine carpenter fitting a joist, he wanted the

[7] A later number on Julia Margaret Cameron completed the presentation of the best in the English school.

work right and no other. And for that reason the quarterly presents an otherwise inexplicable accomplishment.

III

These standards prevailed after a shift in the magazine's intention. For after the first Pamela Colman-Smith exhibition,[8] and particularly after the Rodin show at "291,"[9] it was increasingly given over to press commentary and controversies on the modern movements in painting and the other arts. Even though photographs still occupied the principal reproduction sheets—Seeley, Coburn, Herbert French, De Meyer and Brigman being among the fresher arrivals—the professional minded had ceased their allegiance and departed. They were interested in photography, and not in art, and when *Camera Work* refused to become narrow they showed themselves narrower and left.

As for the later years—1908 to 1917—*Camera Work* is the real repository for the Modern Movement as it originated in America. Here the critics are printed. They seem on perpetual parade—cajoling, academic, forceful, clear, or perceptive. Here they stand, permanently recorded, indicted or justified in their own words. Here again Huneker shouts and runs when he becomes enthusiastic, and halts, too, when he fails to "see." Here the humble Caffin, ever close to the object, tries to sing through his prose. Here Miss Cary and Mr. Cortissoz seek to reconcile tradition to the eccentrics and the *revoltés*. Here the young Benjamin de Casseres froths and bubbles like a premature Mencken, also the victim of an unassimilated Nietzschean-

[8]Early 1907. [9]Early 1908.

ism. Here De Zayas writes in courtly disdain and is scoffed at for his Picasso notice by quick journalists who stand ridiculous by time's passing. Here again and again, the same and always different, ending but always beginning they parade—the critical intelligence of their period in America. And what is one to conclude? That almost always they sat in judgment. Few, very few, followed the artist. Hartmann, De Zayas, Henry McBride—artists themselves—wrote with the fire and the humor and the unassailable perception of men who have been within another's mind as his hand drew. These yielded themselves to the stone, the line, or the pigment before them. Huneker, a trifle too assured, a little too plump with Pilsner, tired perhaps from the journalistic treadmill he paced in his later years, and just a little too self-sufficient in his summer trove brought home from abroad, does not quite equal them. When the man *felt*—instead of capering for his audience—he could impart a grace and a quality of spiritual audacity unsurpassed by any critic of his generation. And he could flail a reactionary until the fellow ran for his life. But as to America—the America still dormant, though already shimmering, as it were, through the trees of a landscape, he was no prophet. Closer came Sadakichi Hartmann. And closest of all came William D. Mac Coll, young critic now dead, who, as early as 1910, writing on John Marin, walked with him as beside an inspired companion, compared with him the crests and hollows of a Tyrol landscape, and went breathless or cold or tear-shot as the javelins of the light pierced his very being and he exclaimed at what he saw in a landscape.

His writing anticipated the reproduction of Marin water colors in a subsequent issue. These were prepared in Germany. Later came Matisse drawings, sensitively printed on best Japanese tissue. And many De Zayas caricatures, each lancing with a supreme delicacy. And then, in the summer of 1913, a Special Supplement filled with reproductions of many of the first Moderns, along with two pieces of writing. These, both by Gertrude Stein, represent her first publication anywhere. And no wonder. For wasn't she, in her way, doing what the revolutionary painters and sculptors and draughtsmen were attempting in theirs? Of course she was, and that is why she first won acceptance here.

Yet still the wonder of this achievement remains. What accounted for *Camera Work?* What makes it live anew and give off fresh luminosity today? Surely it must have been the complete devotion that went into it. From the proofreader Fuguet to the columnist Kerfoot, to the other Associate Editors, Haviland, Keiley and Strauss, certainly to Fritz Goetz, technical director of the Bruckmann Verlag, in Munich, who supervised many of the reproductions, and to Stieglitz, the Editor, chief and passionate instigator of the whole enterprise—to all these go the credit for this imperishable classic and veritable collective of the twentieth century.

PART THREE

Culmination

CHAPTER XII

The Lift of New Ideas

In November, 1913, two young Americans upset the art world of Paris. Exhibiting at the gallery of Bernheim-Jeune, one of the more advanced in the French capital, S. MacDonald-Wright, who was only twenty-three, and Morgan Russell, who was but three years older, charged forward with a new color theory and canvases to support it. *Synchromists*,[1] they called themselves. They held that the logical succession to Cézanne was a pure art of color wherein, purged of all subject-matter, the painter should handle his tones in terms of a kind of celestial mechanics. He should play "fugues"—icy perhaps—high above the level of previous accomplishment. He should be a Bach at a new keyboard.

The French resented these intruders. Not, however, because they were Americans, nor even because of their theories—for Paris is always hospitable in such matters—but because they advertised themselves excessively. Not only did they claim that they had outdistanced both present and past accomplishment—natural in view of their youth—but on two separate occasions they specifically proclaimed the shortcomings of another new group, the Orphists, and thus brought on a counterattack. These

[1]I.e., *with* color.

young men knew the arts of publicity. They were not going to shrink from the world. On the contrary, they had a hold on something important, and the world must know it.

Did their work justify such confidence? Parisians of good memory might have recalled a *Synchromie en Vert*, by Russell. It had been exhibited the spring before at the Salon des Independants. It was not exactly as fresh as the chestnut blossoms. A large interior, a brusque demonstration of movement, a willful distortion of studio accessories. Plenty of young men, breaking away from the Academy, and trying hard to be original, indulged in similar efforts. Perhaps the light was interesting. But now Russell and his young colleague were struggling to forget the past entirely. "There were human figures distorted almost out of recognition for the compositional needs of the canvas and painted in bars of pure color; still-lifes which seemed to be afire with chromatic brilliance; fantastic fruits; life-sized male figures in pure yellow-orange; and mountains of intense reds and purples, warm greens and violets."[2] These works were commandingly organized and it could be seen that already the color note itself was beginning to shape the volume, just as the first tones of a fugue dictate the aerial distillation that is to follow.

Who were these challengers, and where had they come from? Both were Americans, Russell partly of French parentage and Wright of Dutch. Russell had been fired by the impetuous Henri in New York, had worked hard, and then gone abroad. He rapidly went through the Im-

[2] *Modern Painting*, by Willard Huntington Wright, p. 292.

pressionists and soon arrived at Matisse. He met the leader of the "Wild Animals" and then he did some statues which, in their effortful distortion, recalled his master. Cézanne next attracted him, so did Michelangelo and others. Nights he would visit the home of Leo Stein, an American collector and art-student long resident abroad. Stein challenged him. Steeped in Renoir, in Cézanne, even in Picasso and Matisse, this stern, long-faced, introspective Stein, with his reddish beard and hairless pate, would hold virtual audience with the visitors who came to hear him talk in his impeccable English. Russell, at any rate, by 1912, when he met S. MacDonald-Wright, was ready to end his discipledom and go forward into new lands.

His fellow-explorer, Wright, had dipped into various academies and rejected them all for his own studio. There he conducted researches into distant predecessors, into the Moderns, and above all into the color findings of the scientists Chevreul, Helmholz and Rood. For these men explained to him color phenomena in terms of light. Next he "found" Matisse. "He then began the construction of form by large and crude planes, building his figures with light and dark chromatic blocks." Soon Wright met Russell.

One other American was associated with them. This was Willard Huntington Wright, brother of the painter. Born at Charlottesville, Virginia, in 1888, Willard, who was two years the senior of Stanton, was one of the most versatile Americans ever to enter the arts. After having obtained a good academic foundation in America, he had studied painting both in Munich and Paris. Once, decid-

ing to become an orchestral conductor, he had memorized many scores of music. Inspired by Nietzsche, he had grappled with foreign tongues and had sought in philology the ultimate bed of language. For six years he had been a journalist and for a period had written criticism for the *Smart Set*, in New York. A brilliant fellow, this Willard Huntington Wright, and one fully armed to lead his two friends against the hosts of the entrenched.

Moreover, he was fearless. He had fought the conventional-minded at college and in journalism. He had admired Nietzsche because he seemed to have had courage. A fight he loved better than anything. Accordingly, he was just the man to champion the two unrecognized painters.

The War sent him home to America. Arriving in New York in 1915, he presently was engaged to write a monthly art chronicle for the *Forum*. Meanwhile, he worked at a book, *Modern Painting*, in which he summed up the tendencies since the French Revolution, and capped them all with a penultimate chapter on the Synchromists. He soon discovered "291," and here he would daily stalk the combative Stein—also lately come to America. Steel would clash with steel. Then home again, only to return sharper than ever the next day.

As critic he was admirable. "I believe," he gave as his credo in the *Forum*, "that criticism should be neither a hunting for faults nor a panegyric over good qualities, but rather a cool and rational exposition of an artist's merits and defects, and, if the efforts merit it, an indication of the way which leads to a larger conception and a more

profound vision." And how he carried out this conviction! Like a lion, he tore into the enemies of the artist. In one issue of the *Forum* he assailed the Metropolitan Museum with a force that has never yet been matched. He slew the critics, right and left. Cortissoz, Cox, Mather, Caffin, Huncker—he beheaded them all. Mr. Cortissoz he described as "an industrious, sincere, well-informed, commonplace, unillumined writer, who possesses a marked antipathy to all that is new." Professor Frank Jewett Mather of Princeton, was "a typical scholastic pedant," and Caffin, intellectually speaking, "an empty larder." He knew no mercy. It enraged him when pedagogues like Cox claimed that the Moderns were decadent. "The academicians are the true decadents," replied Wright, because "decadence is the inability to create new tissue, and there is not one [of their pictures] which has not been done better by some long departed painter." He even attacked the schools and textbooks.

But he realized that the real way must be opened up in the galleries, and through them to the public. Accordingly, in March, 1916, he organized, under the auspices of the publication he served, the Forum Show. But Wright was clever as well as belligerent. Instead of presenting pointblank seventeen progressive young Americans, he first obtained a committee of sponsors, all prominent in the world of art and each representative of a different facet. There was Christian Brinton, a veteran critic who had topped all others when Wright discussed them in the *Forum;* there was Robert Henri, ever eager to help the new men; and W. H. de B. Nelson, an editor of the *Lon-*

don Studio, and Alfred Stieglitz, and Doctor John A. Weichsel, of the People's Art Guild, who had a passion for getting pictures before the poor at settlement houses. All these endorsed the show as non-commercial. "The Committee," declared the catalog, "have been animated solely by the desire to counteract the prevailing prejudices against modern painting, and to create an intelligent interest in deserving artists."

Hundreds came. Not, of course, in such droves as at the Armory Show. After all, this was not a circus. But the attendance was satisfying. Unfortunately, few among the two hundred pictures on exhibit were sold. The artist would still, in some cases, have to starve one part of himself in order to feed another. That is why the critical reaction of Professor Mather must have impressed Wright as ungenerous. Writing in the *Nation,* and noting how the exhibition's fiery young organizer had justified each of the seventeen painters on the basis of seriousness, the Princeton professor affirmed, "I think that the seriousness of these moderns matters very little." What could be the implications of such a statement? Surely, if one will not even grant the artist the validity of his seriousness, it follows that all others approaching in a like spirit will deny him too. Has an honest workman no right to bread? Who says, and why, that such an attitude is right?

Yet Wright need not have worried, for this show, despite such criticisms and all others of the kind, was the first thorough cross-section of the newer American endeavor. Here, simultaneously were presented Ben Benn, Thomas Benton, Oscar Bluemner, Andrew Dasburg, Ar-

thur G. Dove, Marsden Hartley, S. MacDonald-Wright, John Marin, Alfred Maurer, Henry Lee McFee, George F. Of, Man Ray, Morgan Russell, Charles Sheeler, Abraham Walkowitz, and the Zorachs, Margaret and William. Here young Americans stood *en masse* for the first time. Here adventurous minds congregated and asked the support of the public.

Benn, for example, was influenced by Van Gogh and Matisse—even in his latest show, he still derived from Matisse[8]—for he has a certain tropicality of color. Benton was struggling for accomplishment. "As yet," commented Wright in the *Forum*, "he has not found himself, but he has a genuine talent for decoration which will eventually, no doubt, bring him out into the light." Another man incompletely formed was Bluemner, while Andrew Dasburg "showed several tendencies," though resolving himself in terms of none. Wright and Russell were merely amplifying their Paris exploits. Maurer still was inflamed with color. McFee, essentially an intelligence, was carefully appropriating from the French Moderns and not yet sufficiently consulting himself. George F. Of recalled Renoir. Man Ray was preoccupied with textures and shapes and a gamut of gray. Charles Sheeler perhaps analyzed too much. Walkowitz "sang" and conveyed weight by his lines. The Zorachs contributed fairy-tale decorations.

Yet new currents rose through them. Ideas flourished. From abroad came fresh enterprises. Hope was in the air. And at last a goodly group of Young American Moderns had stood together. Later they disbanded, and Wright

[8] *Artists' Gallery*, New York City, March, 1941.

soon stopped contributing to the *Forum*, and indeed after 1917 virtually quit writing about art altogether. Yet it does not matter, for already a new niche had been made in the public consciousness.

Of course, not all the representatives of the newer tendencies had been included. Particularly notable among the omissions was Joseph Stella,[4] immigrant from Italy at the turn of the century, later a sketcher of peasant types for the *Century*, the *Survey*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*, and eventually, for three years (1910–13) while in Italy, an affiliate of, if not a participant in, the movement known as Futurism. Futurism sought to translate movement into a canvas. In its baldest form it recorded a dog's tail wagging by the depiction of many tails, somewhat after the fashion of the comic strips. It worked by forcelines. That is, in showing the speed of an automobile, it would have "V" designs converging at the machine as it sped along, thus trying to place the spectator in the movement.

Returning to New York, Stella, precisely in these years, passed and repassed the great Brooklyn Bridge. Looking up, he felt its controlled but dynamic power. It pulled him. Like a Futurist canvas, but more compellingly, it raised him until he sang, even as it vaulted. He rendered this in five big panels. They aspire more than they effectuate. Nevertheless, a tautness as of steel wires, a semaphore color, an industrial black, and a nobility of conception reside in these works. They do record the sweep of a great idea. Later, Stella returned again and again to this theme, as if a poet trying to recapture an earlier ecstasy. He travelled

[4]Stella was born June 13, 1880, at Muro Lucano.

abroad and to the south, he drank in the scented Italian *primavera* over the rooftops, sometimes he explored the Bronx. Often he floundered or shouted. But still an accomplishment stood—the coincidence of a fresh world conception and a specific American reference. At their best, one might say the same for many of the painters in the Forum Show.

As for Synchromism, it soon perished. Yet before it did, it had stimulated painters both abroad[5] and in America, and it had led men at least to think on the future possibilities of color. Russell had soared briefly. And S. MacDonald-Wright, gifted in intelligence, and always refined in his color placements, had, in later works—*Spring: Synchromy in Blue-Violet* (1918), for instance—touched the empyrean. Certain blues conveyed the upper air. One felt a loftiness of conception. Again, in *Aeroplane Synchromy*, of the same period, he sought to wed the technological and the explorative. He gravitated between science and the occult. Still later, indeed, in pictures shown in 1935 and '36, he esoterically conveyed Chinese sages living in the California sunshine. Perhaps he has never *quite* realized himself completely. Yet always a distinction has remained.

As to his brother, Willard Huntington, one can say that he, too, remained like his capable novel of that title, a "Man of Promise." A veritable engine of production, he issued in a few short years a book on esthetics, an analysis of Nietzsche, two volumes on painting, an anthology of French prose, and other works. Perhaps he spent himself. At any rate, a nervous breakdown followed, upon recov-

[5]Cf. *Cubistes, Futurists, Passéists*, by Gustave Coquiot (1914).

ering from which he devoted the rest of his life to detective stories under the pseudonym of S. S. Van Dine.[6] But his book *Modern Painting* will last. Here in sound sentences, thoughtful construction, and with considerable grasp of the whole field, he analyzed the development of painting from 1815 to the time of the book's issuance, in 1915. Sometimes an exaltation flushed his pages. He had new pinions then. At other times, he was too clearly the spokesman of his brother. But it is, despite these personal predilections, a solid book and one which can stand rereading for a good many years to come.

II

The preceptor of Russell, Leo Stein, arrived in America not long after Willard Huntington Wright. As by a slow, assiduous intake—a veritable osmosis—he had absorbed the French Moderns and the great traditions of both Orient and Occident for a period of twenty-five years. Shortly after his return, he began to be published in the *New Republic*. Here, from 1916 to 1919, he wrote sometimes with a strange intuitiveness. Each article was an autobiography of his mind. In *The Defeat of John Ruskin*, for example, he stated that his subject "was accustomed, within the limits of a narrow religion and an implicit obedience, to get certain experiences for himself." One glimpsed a similar restriction and effort in Stein—virtually a muscular effort of the mind to attain to clarity and freedom. He lived, as he said of Ryder, a "life of sparse, contracted solitude."

[6]Willard Huntington Wright died in New York, April 12, 1939.

Stein examined himself and his collection. He would accept nothing that he could not demonstrate. He disposed of all authorities. He would have the mind equate with the thing. Finally, in his essay on Cézanne, he arrived, to employ his own phrase, at "such reverberant rhythms" that for a moment one had a sense of locks and balances beneath the universe—as if, for example, an engineer had become a poet and had expressed the ultimates of physical force in some new terms of the spirit. Here he tapped the subterranean reaches of Louis Sullivan, joined hands somehow with William James—once his teacher—and predicated a new, though incomplete, philosophy for the American. At such moments Leo Stein wrote with greatness. Somehow, as he said of Ryder, he was "singing in his soul the old, old tunes of life and love and hope and joy."

Stein never surpassed these reaches. Unfortunately, as he wrote in another connection, "his gifts did not allow him freedom, and his febrile, tormented spirit, driven in upon itself, narrowed," became contentious, and eventually deserted its own promise for the arid considerations of pictorial metaphysics. Ten years later he produced a book, *The ABC of Æsthetics*, but it was a shrunken—though still formidable—man who wrote it. The lift of new ideas—or in Stein's case, the depth of old ones—had departed.

Yet the unique perceptions of this man should not be forgotten. Some day a publisher will find them and put them into a volume. Then it will be recognized that Leo Stein was one of the ardent minds of his generation.

CHAPTER XIII

Two Pioneers

IN LATE December, 1908, a young American boarded a boat train at the Gare St. Lazare and settled himself at a seat near the window. He was returning to the United States after three years in Paris. Watching him from the platform was a queer, happy little man, Henri Rousseau, the ex-tolls collector become a painter, and one of the most original minds of his time. He looked at the train, which had begun to move. Suddenly, a thought coming to him, he raced forward. "Weber, Weber!" he cried, "N'oubliez-pas la nature!"[1]

Such is the story as Max Weber tells it. It might be the text for his life.

Born in Russia in 1881, he early immigrated to New York, though not until childhood impressions had imbedded themselves in his imagination—barbaric colors like crushed and dripping jewels, old cathedrals and passionate, gesticulating sufferers in the ghetto, tabernacles and scriptural readings, and above all the suffocating sense of impending persecution. These he brought with him to the new land when he was ten.

His parents settled in Brooklyn and there the boy at-

[1]"Don't forget nature." The story and quotation come from Holger Cahill's *Max Weber*, p. 20.

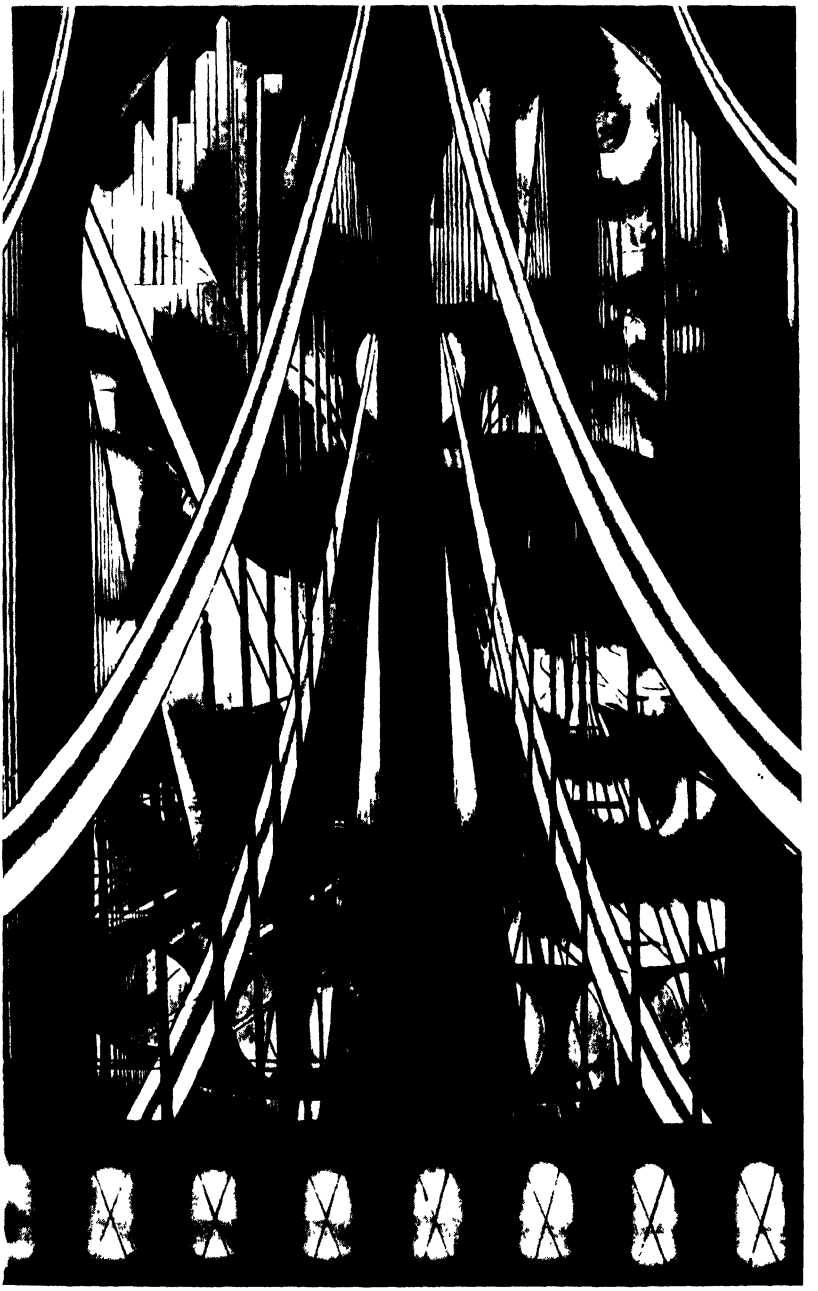
tended secondary school until he entered Pratt Institute at the age of sixteen. Here he was enrolled under Arthur W. Dow and taught by that patient and provocative man that art resides in harmonious spacing. Weber was quick and supple. After two years he earned a scholarship and after one more was prepared to teach constructive drawing and manual training in the public schools. He soon received an appointment in Lynchburg, Virginia, and thereafter at the University in Charlottesville. After two years he moved to Duluth, Minnesota, where he headed the department of drawing and manual training in the State Normal School. Two years more and he had enough money to hold him for a period in Paris.

Arriving abroad, he studied at Julien's and other academies and eventually entered a class which had been started by Henri Matisse. He also wandered into the Louvre and for days he practically lived there, absorbing Egyptian and Assyrian sculpture in the basement. He assimilated Oriental arts at the Musée Guimet, and on trips to Spain, Italy and the Low Countries searched for the roots of what the Moderns were doing. He became a catalog of the past. But meanwhile, having met the delightful Rousseau and been touched by his poverty, his improvised concerts and chiefly by his painting, in which Rousseau plucked flowers and seemed to give them to the universe, he had a direct stimulus to living as well as research. With other friends —Samuel Halpert, a young American who was painting in the wake of the Moderns, and Joseph Brummer, a future dealer but then a sculptor—he played and sang many a night at Le Douanier's, and even acquired six of his paint-

ings. Somehow Rousseau was an inspiration to the poet in him. So was Paul Cezanne, though more "constructively" so. No wonder he constantly exclaimed, "Cet homme!" meaning Cézanne, and "Cet ange!" for the blessed celebrator of the Paris suburbs, Rousseau. Other inspirations to Weber were the unpredictable evolutions of Picasso, the color virility of Matisse, and the hard-hitting sculpture of the African Negroes.

But even student days end, and Weber, with tears in his eyes, had to part from Rousseau at the station, though promising to return within a year. He never did, and two years later the humble tolls-taker was dead. Weber, meantime, had exposed a few pictures in the basement of a picture-frame dealer near 60th and Madison, New York City.[2] He was virtually ignored, though he did sell two canvases to Arthur B. Davies. But as "291" had already introduced Matisse, he did hope that there, perhaps, an unknown American Modern might get a showing. He was right, for in 1910 he was presented along with other young countrymen in a show which aroused all the newspapers. He attached himself to "291," lived there as a matter of fact, and participated in the hanging of several important shows. For example, he assisted the photographers in making the exhibition at the Albright Galleries, in Buffalo, in the fall of 1910, perhaps the most impressive of the kind yet to be given. His six Rousseaus furnished the backbone of the memorial show which "291" presented following Le Douanier's death, and Weber's catalog note—characterizing Rousseau as "a real 'primitive' living in our time"

[2]The Haas Gallery.



Courtesy of the Newark Museum

Brooklyn Bridge



Synchrony—1914

S. MacDONALD-WRIGHT

—was a bouquet of tribute to his friend. Weber's own exhibition followed, in January, 1911, and it was here that the press got to know him.

What a beating he took! What pedantry and blindness those reviewers revealed as they puzzled over works which, for them, had no precedent. One and all they castigated him. Nevertheless, appalled as they were by his "unsightliness," as they might have put it, they did have to admit that his figures had strength. (Mr. Stephenson, *Post*), that he showed a talent for "intelligent space composition" (Miss Cary, *Times*), and even, in the case of Mr. Cortissoz, that he possessed "the instinct for movement," dormant though it might be to the eyes of the gentlemen from *The Tribune*. Yet not a one had a good word for Weber's researches into the archaic past (for he had been excavating almost daily in the Museum of Natural History, and he had there dug out Indian katchinas and totem-poles, grotesque carvings from the Mayas and Peruvians, and other cultural remains less accessible abroad). Nor did they bother to read his *Camera Work*[8] contributions linking these distant products to a contemporaneous sensibility. In all this Weber was an explorer, providing for Americans an insight into the past comparable to, though less forceful than, the like investigations of Picasso and Matisse. In one of these writings, indeed, he recorded a basis for these

[8]"The Fourth Dimension from a Plastic Point of View," No. 31, July, 1910 (which is quoted directly). Also, in the same issue, "Chinese Dolls." "Xochipilli," a poem, appeared in No. 33 (Jan., 1911). These were the first published writings of Weber. Later he issued "Cubist Poems" (1913) and "Essays on Art," and divers poems and manifestoes.

researches which is still valid today. "In plastic art," he said, "there is a fourth dimension which may be described as the last consciousness of a great and overwhelming sense of space—magnitude in all directions at the same time." Weber added that he found such spatial flights particularly in those ancients who had long been neglected. Hence, as he no doubt felt, they rightly connect with Cézanne and the modern effort.

Such preoccupations are both meritorious and questionable. For surely, wherever men have built truly, there other men may learn to do likewise. And, as a matter of fact, every age has found some new sector of the past to which it corresponds and from which it can draw the key for its own accomplishment. Daumier found Michelangelo and recreated vast volumes in the cartoon. Renaissance masters, both in literature and art, captured something valuable and lasting as they contemplated classical antiquity. Cézanne fructified his own conceptions from the constructive labors of Poussin. But invariably they did so as exact *contemporaries*. That is to say, they marched shoulder to shoulder because they obeyed an identical command, not because the past was something sacrosanct in and for itself. And here one touches the deficiency of Weber, for he did not always take this most vital approach to the past.

In fact, of the three principal avenues to the past, he has intermittently, and even simultaneously, followed them all. There is the way of the archæologist who opens up new deposits and then announces them to the world. Unless he is careful he may become the pedant, unctuous in

his new-found knowledge. In part, Weber has taken this highway. The second approach is that of the theologian —he who reveres text and temples and whatever furbishes them as the revelation of a principle which he has already taken for granted. At his best, he may be informed by a kind of logical illumination, as was St. Thomas Aquinas, or he may convey a great dialectical beauty as he seeks to reason his way to heaven. At his worst, he may simply freeze into the ice, as did Jonathan Edwards. Something of this metaphysical nature is in Weber. A man who writes, as he has, that "the eternal principle, the very essence and flower of the human soul, seems to be imbedded in the antique," suggests an argument as definitely as a need. To him the past is all-sufficient as well as fertile. When it becomes the latter and flowers in the very images employed by Weber, then he has attained the third and most fruitful approach to the past, which is that of the artist. For the artist does not distinguish between the present and past. He sings them in either case, and he seeks them only in order to sing them. In this aspect of his search, Weber was then, and is now, a lifegiving intelligence. The trouble is that all three impulses are intermingled, and it is almost impossible to disentangle them without harming the most vital.

Subsequently, in his most independent work, Weber was to achieve this articulation for himself. But as yet he was the student fresh from Paris. He remembered too well the methods by which others had achieved a good canvas. Willard Huntington Wright, after having attended a show of his at the Montross Gallery, wrote in the

Forum that he was somewhat perplexed. "All the moderns seem to be here. But where," he asked, "are the Webers?" The same was said by much kinder critics at the time of his one-man show in the Museum of Modern Art, almost fifteen years later. And sometimes even today a canvas recalls a Fauve or a Cubist, and not infrequently a Cézanne. An earlier black-and-white is reminiscent of Marin's *Brooklyn Bridge*. Rousseau has not been forgotten, nor have the African Negroes. Such works merely declare an assimilative adroitness, and, to say the very least, a curious lack of wit in their inventor. For who cares about such dexterity? Why repeat an original? But in his most abstract phase Weber surmounted these limitations. And he did so—from 1912 to 1920—despite a neglect which bordered on ostracism. Here perhaps his most searching attainment was *The Chinese Restaurant*. In such works his debt to others may be forgotten, for he did solve a problem with an exacting skill and accomplished it with an ingratiating color.

Somewhat earlier, beginning about 1916, isolation drove Weber to a more personal vein. Unwanted by the galleries, compelled to teach for a living, and yet refusing to terminate his experiments, he gradually discovered that in his greatest inheritance from the past he could admit his own identity and be free. Unpretentious little pictures followed —gouaches of an ascetic dramatist musing at a café table perhaps—Talmudists explosively arguing—a wistful rabbi, smiling serenely as he muses and dreams and contemplates the day when justice will yet rule the earth. Or again, he produced a deft and sensitive woodcut. Or still again, a

rich pastel, in which the grains of the color shifted in and out of the countenance of a woman he had depicted. Such works unquestionably hold the best in Weber. They do not attempt to be too great. They stem entirely from themselves. They are underivative. In his most recent show,[4] Weber had expanded these works into large canvases devoted to ceremonial scenes from Jewish life. They had an impact, even if a less convincing one than the intimate gouaches to which they were connected by every conceivable kind of tie.

Yet, qualify though one may because of Weber's lack of spontaneity, the fact remains that he always composes with authority. One may go far back in his canvases, or from side to side, or up and down, and always there is that indispensable element of space which he has sought in the work of other men. Within this satisfying picture space the subject-matter—be it opulent nudes, expostulating Talmudists, worried refugees, or silent still-lifes—always stands in its place and does just what Weber wants it to do. One might wish, perhaps, that he would observe his gestures somewhat more objectively, so that they would be as meaningful to others as they are to himself. Yet the color is always right. Reverberant or dry, unctuous or solid, it always functions richly. As Henry McBride has said,[5] "In a way I scarcely know how to define, it seems to have come straight from the Old Testament to Weber. It is somber and with something in each tone that seems to crystallize a human experience. The faded reds are the

[4]February–March, 1941.
[5]*The Dial*, April, 1923.

stains dripping from the wine-press, the blues are dull turquoise; and onyx and lapis and alabaster and such terms spring to the mind in recalling them in preference to the prosaic qualifications of the palette."

In his color, then, regardless of his more studious propensities, Weber never has failed in his attention to that last remark of Rousseau's. Here he finds the nature that is truly his. And here, when at his best, he revitalizes his concepts, particularly when an innermost intensity leads him into some smoky and tumultuous cavern where the overbending arches are almost insupportable. Here he rises, despite the mental weight of past and present, and accepting at last a spiralled, twisting, lighted center within, embraces the rapture that is rightfully his. At such moments, Max Weber is one of the estimable men painting in America today.

II

Abraham Walkowitz has accumulated no impediment from the past. He relates essentially to the present. He immigrated to America as a child[6] and he grew up on the Lower East Side of New York. Here he watched the push-carts, the clotheslines hung from windows, the eyes of want, and vibrated to the incessant tintinnabulation of the street-cries and the hawkers. He knew what the cut of hunger meant, and he appreciated what it is like to have only a Central Park greensward for a vacation. When he looked at a workingman he did not see mere muscle and brawn. Instead, he viewed a pair of hands that were to him

[6]Walkowitz was born in Russia (1880).

weapons against starvation. Yet he observed all this not in a spirit of misery, but as if he were playing his violin at home. Out of such beginnings grew his art.

The boy was educated in the public schools, and then, for his art training, sent to the National Academy. Later he enrolled at the Educational Alliance where, among other students, he knew Samuel Halpert, a future painter, and Jo Davidson, who would eventually become a portrait-sculptor. Then young Walkowitz went to Paris, first to Julien's, after which he visited many of the important art collections throughout Europe. He welcomed the first of the twentieth-century experimenters, joined the Moderns, and became the first American to exhibit such work over here (he had returned in December, 1907). But the few canvases shown at an obscure framing-shop[7] got him little attention. He had to support himself by doing signs for doctors' offices. Then, accumulating a few dollars, he "retired" and painted again. The poor always tugged at him. He sketched subway-diggers and workmen with hammers and human beasts dragging a load. A compassion spoke through his impetuous work. For a moment one was in the hold of a ship, stoking the fires at the very pit of existence. Or, again, one was shouting through the muscles the joy of work and the confidence of all who toil. But mere depiction did not satisfy him. In these works he conveyed tension and impact, he entered the working organism in terms of physical weights and balances, and rendered them thus in his material.

Sometimes he registered a more gracious side, when he

[7]The Haas Gallery, spring, 1908.

pictured musicians hugging their violins and swaying to the guidance of their leader. Lady shoppers sometimes issued from his pencil. Once he did a tiny, loaded flower-cart refreshing a city street in the springtime. He portrayed lovers and children. He relaxed with weary people in the park. He listened for some music, and hearing it as he put pencil to paper, with some vista or personage before him, he drew with lines that seemed to record violinings of a sharp, clear beauty. Each time the pencil waited for that music. Sometimes he was idle, because he had heard not what he wanted to hear. Consequently he sought no exhibitions. He was not commercial. He was a free stroller until he felt his afflatus. Then he got busy. Eventually he gravitated to "291." There he was responsible for the first show of children's drawings, as he had discovered them in the East Side settlement houses. He argued and listened. He throbbed—for he is a sensitive man—when he looked at the first Cézannes. Later he vibrated to the Picassos. He "flowed" after seeing Rodin. He responded always, and at once. And at last he had an exhibition.

The critics were not altogether unfavorable. Samuel Swift, for instance, praised him in *The Sun* for the sculptural feeling of his drawing and for the delicacy of his crayon tints. J. Nilsen Laurvik, intelligent and watchful, and long an adherent of "291," declared in *The Boston Transcript* that here was a "power of draughtsmanship . . . seldom equalled by American artists." Mr. Caffin, of course, followed him, and Mr. Cortissoz, despite many exceptions, did grant his approval to the young man for his ability to "give weight to a body."



In the J. B. Neumann Collection

The Rabbi

MAX WEBER



Courtesy of the artist

Power

A. WALKOWITZ

Walkowitz developed, and on November 19, 1913, he saw a second show of his hung at "291." Now a virtual opalescence flittered through his drawings. They seemed to be hung in the light and to waver there. They somehow were in tune with the intangible. Yet Mr. Caffin, after a long and careful scansion of them, was skeptical as to a new objective of the artist's. Was it possible, he asked, to attain music by stroking the flesh? Could one be evoked by the other? Oscar Bluemner, the painter, writing in *Camera Work*, asked a similar question, and wondered if the musical were not superseding the "literary" as an extraneous content in painting. But then he went on to an appreciation of Walkowitz that has never been surpassed. "The simpler the lines are," he observed, "the stronger is the consonance of the white ground of the color around and between them. He can increase the vibration of strong charcoal-tones—say the motif of a muscular back—to a degree that one imagines a thunderstorm. His charcoal has often a patina-look of finish. He does not work by any set methods, of contrast, rhythm, simplification or exaggeration, but naively, surely, with a sensitive touch for the pulse-beat below the skin. Tones and lines swell, abate—undulate, contort—strain or relax; they are sharp or soft, full or crisp."

Walkowitz had other supporters by the time of his third show at "291."[8] Willard Huntington Wright found a big advance in his Provincetown watercolors—more body, force, compulsion. Henry McBride was impressed by a singular tunefulness, as if the artist, in his "faint lines,"

[8]Feb. 14–March 12, 1916.

plucked "airs upon muted strings." Walkowitz was going ahead. Yet one other observation of Wright's might well be remembered.[9] The delicacy and the force, he noted, had not yet come together. He predicted that when they did, the exhibitor would emerge as a still more important artist.

Today, considering some of the skyscraper studies then shown, one may remark that the thrust was not always central. The buildings toppled and the pedestrians wriggled quite as they do in reality, and the "heat-lines" suggested a force that was about to burst. Yet the obverse of drive, which is sensibility, was not always to be noted. It was this which prompted Wright to say that the masculine and the feminine had not coalesced. Why? one wonders. Was the agitation too great? Was there an off-center assertion? Whatever the reason, the "strong" drawings were less compelling than the sensitive ones.

It is elsewhere that one is captured by Walkowitz. In his more poised dancers, or in his figure-groupings—*Human Flowers*, for instance, or *Man, Woman and Child*—he has organized the volumes with a satisfaction such as one gets in sculpture. An organic movement is vital to them. That is, if the shoulder moved, so would every other section of the body, either giving or advancing in relation to its function. This is the secret of good draughtsmanship, and Walkowitz knows it. It is his facility for seeking out these structural workings of the human body that has made him turn again and again to the figure of the dancer, Isadora Duncan. Undoubtedly his name will always be coupled

[9] *International Studio*, Feb., 1917. This on the occasion of Walkowitz' fourth show at "291" (January, 1917).

with hers, for as records, quite aside from their other merits, one must go to them if one is to see again what Isadora was like.

Since the twenties, Walkowitz has done an immense number of abstract drawings, the purpose of which is to convey the articulative possibilities of the line. He starts with a figure. Then, eliminating lines, he depicts in successive drawings a more and more pared center, until but two lines, say, will remain to indicate the force and the volume that he is after. "With the least means"—his own words—"to give the whole thing." That is Walkowitz' objective in these, as in all his works. Sometimes, it is true, they suggest Picasso. For he, too, has practised these non-objective explorations of space. But there the likeness ends, for Walkowitz continues adding to his compendium, while Picasso conducts such forays only in the midst of other activities. As to their quality, one can say that they resemble an aerial architecture, collapsing as readily as it is built. And always there is the music. Ever lurking, it intervenes at each moment as the line disengages volumes, flows back again, and then once more resumes its quicksilvery way.

Such is the pleasure that Abraham Walkowitz bestows in his drawings. Yet they are seldom exhibited. No dealer consistently handles his work. Museums are unjustifiably averse to giving him a show. The perambulating exhibitions so much publicized throughout the country seldom announce his name. What is the matter? Here is an artist, secure in his work, accomplished and versatile and one of the best men that we have. One can take even his smallest

drawing and it has that "color" which is never to be dissociated from even the works of the masters. He has temperament (lacking by the way, in many of the American artists of today). By which is meant that when he feels, the quality darkens or lightens according to his mood. A tempest or a sun-gleam is ever in prospect. And besides—in his miniature gouaches and watercolors of the city parks in the sun—he refreshes just like a stroll by the sea. Certainly here is an unusual artist. Some day the major museums in the country will cherish him as such, and act accordingly.

III

These two—Weber and Walkowitz—pioneered in bringing the "news" to America from Europe. Walkowitz preceded all others among our painters in notifying the country *by works,* that a transvaluation was abroad. Weber, somewhat later, introduced other new currents. Then both had the courage to adhere to their way despite all hardships. Even today Walkowitz is insufficiently estimated. Yet these two men have done much to overcome a provincialism which prevailed when they first began to exhibit here. They were pioneers, no less than the men with the broad-axe and the wooden plow. Only they hewed in a cultural wilderness. If today the clearings and the paths have multiplied, these two artists have done their part. Nor is that the only reason why they should be remembered.

CHAPTER XIV

Revitalizing the Print

IF ONE had listened to Joseph Pennell in the early years of the century, the state of the print might have seemed quite hopeless. He was continually complaining that back in the 80's and 90's, when Whistler was alive, etching and lithography both had flourished as they never had since. Fortunately, there was a somewhat younger man who could not be discouraged by such protestations.

Fitzroy Carrington, an immigrant to America in 1886,[1] successively a farmhand in Minnesota and a section surveyor for "Jim" Hill's Great Northern Railway further west, had, at the age of twenty, entered the art business in Minneapolis, and then, after a seven-year connection with Frederick Keppel, the print-dealer and a friend of Whistler's, had become his partner. Twelve years later, in 1911, he had founded a publication—*The Print Collectors' Quarterly*—in which he sought to cultivate good taste rather than to claim that it couldn't exist. Indeed, when ten years later he was asked to state why he had established this magazine, Carrington replied, "To educate a continent."

That was thirty years ago. And the cultural shortcom-

[1]Mr. Carrington was born at Surbiton, Surrey, England, Nov. 7, 1869.

ings of most people were such that he could point out—in his only editorial note during an eight-year term—that "throughout the length and breadth of the United States, this prosperous—almost *over*-prosperous—country, *one* museum only, in one city, has made a beginning in the right direction [as to prints]." He was referring, of course, to the Boston Museum, which had systematically begun to assemble representative and interconnected masterpieces. The Metropolitan Museum actually had no Department of Prints, and would not have one until 1917. The record of the other museums was no better. Yet, as the editor again noted, "The remedy is simple and, I may add, relatively inexpensive. The price of a single masterpiece of painting would establish and maintain handsomely a Print Department in connection with any of our existing art museums. Such a department, wisely administered, would be of untold benefit to the student, and could not fail to improve, almost to the point of recreating, public taste." What the editor meant, as he said, was that in the print bad drawing cannot be disguised by color. There the artist is naked. And if his structure is weak, it cannot be concealed. And again, through the print, which is more intimate both in size and in objective, one frequently gets the more immediate inspirations of the artist.

Accordingly, this good editor published reproductions of the severe old Germans, the solid engravings of the French, the Italian masters of the Renaissance, the wholesome men of Belgium and Holland, as well as suitable selections from the English. Accompanying these selections were written commentaries from authorities both foreign

and domestic, along with appreciations which sometimes approximated criticism. When it came to the nineteenth century, and the great revival of the black-and-white which distinguished that period, Mr. Carrington persuaded William Aspinwall Bradley, poet and biographer of William Cullen Bryant, to elucidate a difficult and exciting story.

Bradley was a friend of Carrington's. They lived on adjoining farms in Connecticut, and on weekends, as young Bradley threshed out his essays on the mad and solitary Meryon; on that most enlightening of all art critics, Charles Baudelaire; on the Goncourts and their circle; on the whole movement which ran from Charles Jacque, "le maître du cochon," to its eclipse in Maxime Lalanne and Buhot (which later Bradley incorporated into a book, *French Etchers of the Second Empire*)—they would pace the roads together while the editor, or rather the "collaborator," as Bradley subsequently termed him—sought to bring out the very shape of his eager friend's thought. Later, when Mr. Carrington was Curator of Prints in the Fine Arts Department of the Boston Museum (1912–22),[2] Bradley worked our further essays in his office. Thus, although Mr. Carrington would never admit it—for he is a very modest man—he must be given at least a substantial measure of the credit for the fact that his companion brought out not only a first, but, in 1917, a second book on the subject of prints.[3]

[2]Today Mr. Carrington is head of the Print Department at M. Knoedler & Co., New York City.

[3]*Dutch Landscape Etchers of the Seventeenth Century.*

Bradley wrote with great compactness and taste. His book on French etchers, for example, has been compounded into scarcely more than one hundred pages. And yet it lodges one fully in the period. He was at the truly cemeterial depths of Meryon, he knew the desperate intensity of Baudelaire, he mused in the fields with Jacques and Millet, he observed the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune through the eyes of the *graveurs*. And he did so with a style which seemed to be as French as the originals whom he discussed. This style, as he once said about Lalanne's, was "remarkable for the brevity of its indications, the clearness of its evocative power, and the negligent *nonchaloir* of its flowing loops and lacets." It is a pity that he produced no more than he did. Yet with the suspension of *The Print Collectors' Quarterly* in 1917,[4] Bradley's participation in the First World War, and his subsequent sojourn in France, these achievements were never resumed, and he died in Paris, January 9, 1939, a man whose attainments had virtually been forgotten.

Yet Bradley was not the only person of talent encouraged by the magazine. It originally began with the idea of publishing one number a year on the black-and-white artists who were producing in this country. Though never devoting a complete issue to this purpose, it did publish at least three of the younger men who had emerged since the turn of the century.[5] They were Donald Shaw MacLaugh-

[4]It was revived in 1921, under the editorship of Campbell Dodgson in England, with Mr. Carrington remaining as American editor for one year. Since 1937 it has been published from Kansas City, Mo., by J. H. Bender.

[5]Two others were Cadwallader Washburn and J. André Smith.

lan, a Canadian who had become a Bostonian by adoption; Ernest D. Roth, who had been brought to America as a child from Germany, and Herman Webster, a native New Yorker. Each deserves a word, both because of his talent and his relation to a larger problem.

MacLaughlan, who first exhibited in 1900, etched European cathedrals with a certain architectural strength. His line was clean. His *Road Song* series may also be recommended. Here he toured the English landscape and would record his reminiscences of other men who had pictured it. His work changed little throughout the years. A grace of pattern in these older countries attracted him, and he rendered it in his work. Roth was praised by Frank Jewett Mather, who had encountered him in Florence, one of the Italian cities that he favored. He has never surpassed his *Grim Florence*, which he produced in that period (1905). Mr. Roth has done many cathedrals and other scenes from all the European countries, and has latterly depicted New York as well. At all times he is a serious workman. One might wish only that he had more lift. As for Mr. Webster, he liked the gabled houses in old quarters of Flemish and German towns, and medieval streets such as La Rue St. Jacques, in Paris. He recorded them adequately.

Such men are essentially transmitters. They pass on a process. They do so without adding to it themselves, but they practice it with probity and thus help to maintain the life of their medium. These, then, are good craftsmen. In fact, they, like the magazine to which they contributed, stand at their best as the continuators of a tradition.

They remind us that there are classics of the past. They may send us back to "read" those classics for ourselves. This is an essential step in education. In America at the time it was crucial. And it helped much to advance a revival which soon became general.

A previous wave had arisen in the 80's, following the visit of Seymour Haden, Whistler's surgeon brother-in-law, and the perpetuator of the English landscape in etching, and in the wake of Whistler's triumphs in Europe. Etching clubs had flourished. But they quickly declined, and it was not until twenty years later—despite Mr. Pennell and his laments—that a like vitality was evident. It was in 1905, for example, that John Sloan issued his first print, the priceless *Fifth Avenue Critics*. There followed a veritable cascade of his social criticisms. And it was in 1900 that Ernest Haskell, a twenty-four-year-old on his second visit to Paris, did the first of his etchings, then under the inspiration of Whistler. These were the more effective of the new men.

But it was among certain older men that the revival was most manifest. Frank W. Benson, a painter who had shown with The Ten since the late 90's, and who had long been successful with his oils, began in 1912, after an interval of exactly thirty years, to produce etchings. As a lark, three years later, he hung a wall with them at a show of the Guild of Boston Artists. At once the public welcomed them. Thus began his series of duck pictures. Today, of course, his mallards and pintails—whether afloat or awing—and his sedgy marshlands, too—provide a staple sporting print which only twenty-five years ago was an innova-

tion. While these works are not profound, and were not intended to be, they do convey a hunter's exhilaration in their subjects, and are quite possibly the best of their kind since Audubon.

Childe Hassam, like Benson, after a foray or two in etching many years before, had ignored the medium for his more profitable paintings. Noting the public interest, he too, in 1915, began to issue prints. By 1925 they numbered over two hundred. One can agree with William Aspinwall Bradley, that Hassam was "weakest precisely where the etcher should be strongest—in the peculiar tonic quality of the bitten line." And yet in such plates as *Old Lace, Easthampton,* and *Lion Gardiner House,* he did catch a weave of sunlight in waters, through trees, or upon New England residences. Somehow the placid quality of these etchings is more impressive than what one gets from many of his paintings.

Charles Woodbury, who had participated in the revival of the 80's, also felt the tug of new interest and renewed his output. He was more purely the etcher than his two contemporaries. That is, his effort proceeded from the bitten line as such. He depicted sea-waves dispersing, fish on the fly, or small boats near the shore. The line, while it never had the edge of final distinction, did communicate a certain movement on the face of nature.

While all of these etchers conveyed the out-of-doors, John Sloan sought his game in the city. So did Eugene Higgins. Higgins, whose line has but little more incisiveness than Woodbury's, excels him by virtue of a kind of mute sympathy which exercises itself in his dark and light.

This is the counterpart to his subject-matter—a young bride who greets a drunken husband as she bears a candle to a darkened doorway; toilers with oxen upon a prehistoric road; waifs and old women who are hungry. One cannot doubt the substance of his social compassion in these, even though one might wish for less evidence of Daumier's. In a like way. Allen Lewis, who also sympathizes with the poor and is the spokesman of a considerable understanding, never escapes the men who have preceded him. Nevertheless, whether he employs etching, lithography, "chiaroscuro," wood-cut, or even book-plate or photograph, he always works with a fidelity that must be respected. He is meritorious, whatever his medium.

But reverting again to the somewhat older men, one finds that Arthur B. Davies, in those resurgent years before the First World War, had returned to the copperplate for the first time since 1895. Much of his work after the Armory Show indeed, consisted of black-and-white in a variety of mediums. And here one is obliged to note, particularly in his aquatints, that he contributed more compellingly than in his oils of the like period. In Davies' etchings the material, if not taken up by the total organism, conveyed at least the sense of a tactile shaping in the fingers. Somehow one would always get the impression that he modelled lyrically. The same was true of his lithographs. Both are among the distinguished of their period.

Ernest Haskell died too soon. Following his contact with Whistler in 1900, and while doing his magazine illustrations of theatrical celebrities and novelists, together with slight but fine little tailpieces, he gradually per-

fected himself in his knowledge of etching. He was an exacting craftsman. He would file patiently. He was always in search of finer effects. His needle flicked his plate and really obeyed him when he drew a line. When he pictured mossy-crowned oaks in California, the texture was almost like thistledown. In his *Wildcat Canyon*; another Western piece, he seemed to follow the bends and folds of the earth with intimacy. Before the end of his life in 1925, Haskell had explored the bitten coast of Maine and the inviting hills of New England. His death at forty-nine removed an incisive man and one who had done much for his craft. Somehow one cannot escape that respect today. Somewhat related to him, at least in his predilection for New England subject-matter, is Kerr Eby, whose snowfields are at least good Americans. One is less impressed by Eby's war-scenes, which seem to be explicit beyond their means.

In the 20's and 30's a school of technical competence has arisen. Headed by John Taylor Arms, an enthusiast for all forms of the black-and-white, these men, in Demonstration Evenings to the public—which are held under the auspices of the Society of American Etchers—and in numerous exhibitions, are constantly trying to improve their craft at the same time that they awaken the public to it. They are capably led by Mr. Arms, whose etchings of medieval cathedrals, gargoyles and other such expressions of the past, are meticulous to the last degree. His work is an inspiration to better craftsmanship. Samuel Chamberlain, who has devoted himself much to the foreign scene, also seems, aside from his craftsmanship, more pertinent

to another day than our own. So does that other etcher of competence, Mr. Arthur William Heintzelman. The smudgy line of Reginald Marsh is too insistent, and his scenes remain mere documents, since he never comments upon them. Edward Hopper has denoted a certain pathos in such prints as *Evening Wind* and *East Side Interior.* Yet somehow, though this much has been felt in the respective elements of the black and the white, there is no emotional compulsion to bring them together.

Miss Peggy Bacon, already discussed as a caricaturist, might be mentioned again for her expertness with the dry-point. She can make it snap as it expresses her petulance. Harry Wickey pleasurably communicates dipping telephone wires, in his etchings of the stony country along the Hudson. Earl Horter, who died recently in Philadelphia, was commendable for his aquatints. Kenneth Hayes Miller, the teacher, and Isabel Bishop, formerly one of his students, both have produced etchings—a little dry perhaps, but rather able.

II

In lithography, Mr. Pennell was once more the prophet of the past. He cared little, if at all, for the achievements of his contemporaries. Yet here too a revival has taken place. Two men—aside from Pennell—stand as predecessors here. One is Albert Sterner. Though he had early proved himself as a lithographer, he was deflected by a long career as an illustrator and pastellist, and he did not concentrate upon the stone and the crayon until 1912. But then he swiftly succeeded. He has been praised for his "delightful

musical phrases." Perhaps they were never more than that. Yet they did help to recall what might be done with this kind of print. Bolton Brown, on the other hand, contributed principally as a printer and lecturer. He was always exhorting others to find, as he had, the delights of lithography.

This medium, it should be said, has always flourished when it conveyed a delight in the social life. Even Daumier, grim and mighty as he was, had a smile beneath—or should one say above—his anger. So did a whole host of Frenchmen in the nineteenth century. Whistler, it is true, was more dainty, and he eschewed the central preoccupations of mankind. In any case, he produced less as a lithographer than as an etcher. And while he certainly influenced Joseph Pennell, and possibly both Sterner and Brown, he did not direct them into the more popular channels where lithography seems to thrive. Pennell, of course, sought something of the sort in his renditions of the Panama Canal, which today, unfortunately, stand as little more than news reports. It remained for an entirely different group to reshape the print in terms of the common life.

At this point one must not forget the old *Masses*. Here the trenchant George Bellows flourished. He struck in all directions. (Nor did he confine himself to this publication.) And there were others. Possibly his most pleasing companion was Glenn Coleman. Coleman was an illustrator of Greenwich Village. He would watch a ghostly woman shuffling across Minetta Lane, or caper with youngsters about a bonfire on election night. Sometimes he would "cruise" over in the direction of Third Avenue. As rec-

ords, these works are valuable. Similarly with Denys Wortman, who for many years has contributed his *Metropolitan Movies* to the daily press. And Wortman steadily becomes more impressive in his observation, in his attention to his medium, and in a very direct humanity which speaks through his half-humorous, half-touching prints.

Lithography changed again in the post-war period. Here the print became the vehicle for humor. George O. ("Pop") Hart, for example, was an amiable old fellow who wandered about the Caribbean, drawing or painting as he went. Too often his work was negligent, though when not it sometimes was engaging. Miss Wanda Gág, on the other hand, convinces by a certain integrity which comes from a personal identity between herself and her medium. It is meaningful to her. And her drunken stoves, her reeling fields, her tilted el stations, are appealing within their limits. Mr. Adolf Dehn satirizes, but from a distaste which does not always reside in those whom he contemplates. He is preferable in his landscapes. Here, whether in Central Park at night or Minnesota in the summer, his technical ability has the advantage of a momentary lyricism. Yet Mr. Dehn always leaves the observer with a feeling that he has never demanded enough of himself. Mabel Dwight is constantly smiling through her prints, and this enhances what she has to convey by other means.

The motivating ideas of Emil Ganso are unpleasant, and his craftsmanship does not transcend them. Ernest Fiene recalls too many other artists, from the contemporary French to the honest old fellows who produced the now-famous prints of Currier & Ives. Alexander Brook em-

ploys the crayon sensitively, but he never does so in any terms that are more meaningful than this transitory passage of feeling. Louis Lozowick is a pattern-maker. His fellow-révolutionnaire, Hugo Gellert, seems to think that a lithograph is material upon an anvil. Much more gifted is William Gropper, who fights effectively when he lunges at a politician, or attacks the profiteers of the garment-industry. Mr. Gropper's sweatshop scenes have an impact all their own. Other lithographers of individuality are Anne Goldthwaite, Stephan Hirsch, Nicolai Cikovsky, Henry G. Keller, and Raphael Soyer, whose *Mission* is as touching as it is melancholy.

Exponents of the so-called American Scene—meaning John Steuart Curry, Grant Wood and Thomas Benton—should be considered strictly on the basis of what they *do*, not what they *say*. In that case, one discovers that Mr. Curry, despite a certain feeling for his prairie subjects, never gets through them to give back a feeling of his own. He draws too badly to justify his pretensions. Grant Wood is a stencil-maker. He has never forgotten Hodler, a Swiss, who worked in similar patterns to a better end. Even if he hadn't, no amount of protestations on his part would ever convince strict observers that Mr. Wood's "folksiness" is anything but a pose, maintained for a purpose and permissible only until the American people have their eyes opened. Mr. Benton is more talented. The more regrettable, therefore, that he should have subjected himself to too much publicity. Benton can convey loneliness at times —his sharecroppers, his desolate prairies, his broken fences. Why not stick to that?

Lithographers of a more technical dispensation are Charles Locke and Harry Sternberg, the teachers, and Stow Wengenroth, who employs his medium with rectitude and has command of many of its possibilities, particularly on the side of polish. A recent print, *City Street*, relents a little more than his previous ones, which leads to the hope that he will have something more to say presently. Related to these men is Armin Landeck, whose most forceful print is the somewhat chilly *York Avenue*.

Frequently a limitation of the print-maker is that he preoccupies himself too much with technical processes. He seems no wider than the margins within which he works. The following, in their degree, have avoided this limitation: Howard Cook, who has a good reputation for his scenes of Manhattan and New Mexico; George Constant, Lewis C. Daniel, and Isami Doi, who are all of them painters; and Don Freeman, whose "journalese" is redeemed by its gusto. Other sound practitioners are Francis Chapin, who is also a teacher; Thomas Handforth, for his exotic subjects; Rosella Hartman, for her tasteful bouquets; and A. Z. Kruze, who supplements the crayon with journalism.

Yet it is precisely because the painters do not too sedulously restrict themselves to the print, that they have surpassed many of their more professional contemporaries. Bellows, of course, was a painter; so was Glenn Coleman. And in such men as Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Benjamin Kopman, both very much alive today, one finds once more an increased expressiveness. One may prefer the earlier Kuniyoshi, when he used to balance himself on a trapeze—

which, by the way, is too often the technical point of his prints—or followed pointed cows about the pasture, or explored the ocean floor for both its fauna and its vegetation. These had an unmistakable vitality. Subsequently, while not precisely repeating himself, Mr. Kuniyoshi does not suggest an emotional involvement to correspond to his dexterity. Nevertheless, he is one of our better men in this medium. The specialty of Benjamin Kopman is the colored lithograph. Sometimes he attains a considerable beauty. Reds and blacks and greens and yellows are like a blood-flow which somehow he has caught in his prints. Too often, unfortunately, they insist upon the emotion of Daumier or Rouault, as well as their own. At such moments one wonders where is Kopman's. This exception aside, he is unquestionably an eloquent painter-lithographer. Mr. Stuart Davis's capable arrangements, which start from wit, never seem to get anywhere beyond it. To what purpose are they so accomplished? Mr. Niles Spencer gravely eyes the industrial landscape and thinks of Cézanne. Yet he always composes well, and if he were not quite so "rectilinear" might impress even more. All of these men employ the lithograph not merely as an adjunct to painting, but as a means to itself, and they have done much to increase our enjoyment of it.

III

The woodcut has also flourished within recent years. Here two traditions predominate—the urban and the rural. From an earlier America came the placid and yet distinc-

tive plates of Arthur W. Dow. He had learned from the Japanese, though without expense to his American subject-matter. J. J. Lankes, who often recalls Robert Frost, has whittled something out of the American countryside. Cottages at dusk, New England fields, up-state landscape—whatever the subject, he interfuses it with light and a quality which can best be designated as American. At one time he collaborated with Charles Burchfield, who is today well known for depictions of the American scene in water color. Another "ruralist" is Thomas Nason, the New Englander. Nason, who produced his first woodcut in 1922, issued them steadily until 1932, when, at the suggestion of John Taylor Arms, he added copper. There is an inflexible polish to his work, something unyielding but at the same time commanding. It is a stripped New England country that speaks out of his plates.

Mr. Rockwell Kent stands between these two groups. He gets his subjects in the country, or even in the wilderness (when he doesn't go to *Moby Dick* or the more distant lands of literature). Then, in his presentation, he seems to have no trouble at all in giving them an edge which fits them precisely for periodical advertisements, for book-illustrations, or for a symbolistic print which is peculiarly his own. William Blake is really preferable at this sort of thing.

In the other wing of the contemporaries, one may still regret the early death of Gan Kolski. His flaky woodcuts were *amateur* in the best sense of the word. Like Rudolph Ruzicka, who makes colored wood-blocks, he often suggested Europe, both in pattern and point of view. And so

does Howard Simon, a book-illustrator. H. Glintenkamp and Lynd Ward cut their blocks, also, more in terms of the book than of the single print. Asa Cheffetz is accomplished, if somewhat anachronistic, while Arnold Ronnebeck and Fiske Boyd have sought to assimilate a more modern idiom. Boyd commends himself with a raciness which sails, as it were, through his prints.

Thus, in the etching, the lithograph and the woodcut a transformation has taken place. All now belong to the twentieth century. No longer does an etching refer merely to the classical fields of Europe or to its venerable cathedrals. Now there are men who, because they are attached to what confronts them here, may, if that connection presses them farther, complete the revitalization of the print.[6]

[6]Further speculation upon this point is to be found in Carl Zigrosser's *brochure, Prints Old and New,* and also at repeated intervals in his *Six Centuries of Fine Prints* (1937), which soundly relates American achievement to what has been done elsewhere.

CHAPTER XV

Estimations

THE AMERICAN people today are in the position of a traveller who has been placed in the middle of a continent without a chart. They cannot distinguish between the big and the little in our painting. They cannot say if we have a central stream or merely a host of subsidiaries. They cannot know because they have not been prepared to understand. It is the job of criticism to undertake this guidance. Until it does, it remains mere compilation, valuable perhaps as an aimless catalog, but of absolutely no consequence in establishing that scale which is necessary to all understanding. Accordingly, in the estimations that follow, the writer has drawn his line. Some may object to it. In that case, let them draw theirs, and then the understanding of the public will be increased. It is time for a little clarification in American art.

II

The first in this list of estimations is given to the Disciples of Henri. They not only studied under him, they smoked cigars with him in the evening, they laid their

mature work before him, they consulted him and went forth again into the metropolitan areas, resolved to investigate them with greater daring than ever before. Not merely did Henri inspire a whole group of his contemporaries—his influence lives on in a band of younger men who sought to carry through his prophecies. Of these, one is now dead. None was loved better by his master. Brokenhearted, Henri wrote at the time of his death, "This is the most overwhelming grief that has ever come to me, because I have lost my pupil, my friend, my *son*." Such was his feeling for George W. Bellows, the most treasured of all his disciples.

This Bellows was a compound of two different elements, his background and his experiences as an artist. Both his father and mother—who were no longer young when they were married—had different hopes for him, the mother that he would become a bishop, the father that he would establish himself as a businessman. Meanwhile George, having finished high school in Columbus, Ohio (where he was born in 1882), entered Ohio State University and soon—though at first he was rejected—distinguished himself as a ball player. Six-footers as a rule do not make good shortstops, but he seemed to be an exception. Indeed, it is said that he was offered a professional career if he wished. But he had other interests, and before graduation-time had come, he told his parents that he intended to devote himself to painting. It was an unusual ambition for that time and place (though, to be sure, he had been cartoonist for a college paper and *The Ohio State Journal* during summer vacations). Large, shambling, genial, in-

herently outgoing, it was hard to associate "Ho" Bellows—that image of college popularity and wholesome externalities—with the life of the artist as it is generally conceived in America. Yet George, despite all the distractions of an undergraduate, already knew where he wished to go. He somehow had the perceptions of his boyishness, and it was, as Stark Young has pointed out, his own retention of them, amidst the experiences of his later career, which accounts for both his flavor and his limitations.

Going to New York in 1904, he almost immediately enlisted under Henri. It was the contact of his life. Two years later he opened a studio of his own, and within two more had won a second prize at the National Academy. In 1909, at the age of twenty-seven, he was elected an Associate of the same institution, the youngest in its entire history. The following year he painted and taught and exhibited at a so-called Independents' show which embraced others who, like himself, were either young or challenging. By 1916 he was secure and worried no longer about finances. The same year he made his first lithograph. He had completed over one hundred and eighty when he died in 1925, forty-two years old, the most popular Realist and certainly one of the most representative characters of his period. Even today men still remember George Bellows and those who never knew him can sense the genial wholeheartedness which made him what he was.

His actual working life was limited to a scant nineteen years. His first successful canvas—*The Cross-eyed Boy*—a testimonial to Henri as much as it was to his affection for a pathetic newsboy—was completed in 1906. Two years

later he painted *42 Kids*, a well-known picture of youngsters swimming at a New York dock in the summertime. It was the first canvas that he sold. But the one which actually established him was the *Sharkey's*, of that same year. Here he depicted a prize-fight at a New York boxing club. He was to do so frequently in the years that followed, and by the early twenties his canvases such as the *Dempsey-Firpo Fight* were almost as much awaited as the contests themselves. Sports-reporters commented on them, and it seemed that at last a painter strode shoulder to shoulder with the fans and the multitudes. Yet Bellows was also a landscapist, exploring the Hudson and the Upstate country. These lyric expressions were less convincing than his other works. Too many of the passages stopped before they were finished. But when he contemplated a river from a dock in New York City, with teams and workmen in the foreground, he almost succeeded in communicating the force of an industrial sector. Or again, in the teeming slums, he would populate his canvases with greater life. Yet he was no colorist. As Edmund Wilson has noted, "Not among the mirrors of northern lakes does his palette find its proper harmony, but in the dirty green waters of the Hudson, hemmed with railroad tracks and churned by cockney tugs. . . ." The metallic, slaty, clashing colors of the scene all echoed themselves in his canvases. Bellows tried to shape them, even as he tried to shape himself. He did not succeed, but the direction of his effort is plain.

An uncertainty pervaded him. He sought out Jay Hambidge, author of *Dynamic Symmetry*, and conferred

with him about compositional devices. Though he never went to Europe and seems not to have been deflected by the Armory Show, Bellows did understand that there was a structural deficiency in his canvases. He knew that they were not sustained. Similarly in his color, for here too he sought out a "specialist," H. G. Maratta, who had compounded a formula whereby presumably a greater brilliance and purity of color were guaranteed. Such recipes are dangerous, and they did not correct the essential weakness of Bellows, which was a lack of selection of his own good from his less effective.

As a painter he performed the most evenly when he was preoccupied with his family. Jean and Anne, his daughters, wrinkled uncles and aunts, and his wife—all these are reflected in passages of delicacy and a singular affection, though never, it must be regretted, with a color that completely satisfies. For this reason, one must turn to the lithographs for the most adequate picture of the man. Here his enthusiasm—or in other cases his fervor—could obtain while it was still warm. And even they are marred by inadequacies of drawing. But when Bellows visited an asylum, or raged at a chain-gang in Georgia, or detested Billy Sunday if reporting with John Reed, or ridiculed the fats and the leans in the businessmen's class at the YMCA, the iron was hot upon the anvil. He gave it a stroke or two, and the shaping remained. At other moments he conveyed his respect to old people, or celebrated his friends, or spoke endearments to his family. These lithographs are still moving because of the personal tenderness that is in them.

Within their own medium, they excel among American accomplishments, not only because of the talent of their maker, but also because from 1921—five years after he had first employed the stone—Bolton Brown did much of his printing. One can see the effects in the catalog of Bellows' lithographs. A necessary punctiliousness is in many that the older man printed. Ever he demanded more of his colleague. And then, even though Bellows worked but nine years altogether as a lithographer, the body of his work in this medium is considerably more impressive than that of most of our other native contemporaries.

He had a genius for titles. Who can forget *Benediction in Georgia,* for example? Or *Between Rounds?* Or *Parlor Critic?* They almost place the picture before us. He was, as these captions show, a lover and a hater, a protester and a champion. He was the embodiment of all that Henri professed—the true American, generous, impulsive, rich and spendthrift, not altogether certain of himself, but memorable as a fine expression of the native character.

His friend Eugene Speicher has become one of the most successful painters in America. Born a year later than Bellows, his student career was one uninterrupted scholarship after another. He could impress all the teachers. Something solid in his drawing, possibly pedestrian in his conceptions, yet reliable in his character, made them feel that he was deserving. And so he was. He won a prize at the Art Students' League by a portrait of his fellow-student "Patsy" (Georgia) O'Keeffe. Another portrait, somewhat

later, of Helen Appleton, is still a good example in the vein of Chase.

Speicher is sometimes criticized by younger painters for a lack of daring, and justly so. But these same objectors forget—or perhaps they do not know—that he rejected a career as a conventional portrait-painter and instead sought to perfect himself in his own way. Speicher undoubtedly has integrity. His canvases do not stir—they are much too conventional for that. But of their kind they have the same soundness which always impressed his teachers. Constructively, they record a derivation from Cézanne (particularly in the landscapes); in color (especially in the nudes and figures) they suggest a tie to Renoir. They have texture. Never yet has one encountered a single passage by Speicher which offends. And yet . . . if the man could only take a chance occasionally! The outcome seems to be settled before it is begun. It has probity, but it is academic. In such a category, Mr. Speicher is a creditable painter.

Leon Kroll, on the other hand, who in earlier days composed one of a triumvirate which included Bellows and Speicher, has much of the dullness of Speicher with none of his other gratifications. His painting always says, "National Academy of Design," and it may go on winning prizes until doomsday (as it will), but for sensitive persons at least it will have no other recommendation. As for Mr. Rockwell Kent, all that can be said is, that it would be better to let the Eskimoes alone. Still another pupil of Henri was Glenn Coleman, deceased since 1932. A pale, wasted man, he struggled for years against unpropitious circumstances, an Ohio native, living his days in the

purlieus of Greenwich Village. These he painted with affection. As documents, they stand. But the flow is greater in his lithographs, which, being of the same subjects, are therefore preferable. Related to him, though not as a pupil of Henri, was Jerome Myers, the gentle idyllist of the poor, who died in New York in 1940, at the age of seventy-three. Self-pity qualified his gayety. He undoubtedly felt his Ghetto types, but he was so overcome by melancholy that everything in his canvases seems to lie down. Such painting may claim a place for its subject-matter, but that is not enough. Still, the wooden figures of Guy Pène du Bois, spied out at resorts or night-clubs, recommend themselves not even to that extent. Mr. Du Bois, who, like all of the Henri pupils here mentioned, was born in the early 80's, has been an art journalist since 1906. He has poured plenty of acid. Not unintelligent, he has vitiated many of his criticisms by that same lack of human feeling which keeps his painted figures mere puppets to his understanding.

The last of these disciples—one can but list such others as Homer Boss, Julius Golz and Gifford Beal—is Edward Hopper, and with him one discovers another impulse besides that of adding more robustness to our painting. For Hopper, like his favorite teacher, Kenneth Hayes Miller, belongs to a Puritan contingent at work in this country. Born at Nyack, N. Y., in 1882, Hopper was first sent to technical school to learn the trade of illustrating. Five years at the Chase School followed, and it was there that he met Miller as well as Robert Henri. Later he worked in Paris, where his portrayals of the Seine and its border-

ing habitations recalled Pissarro, except that Hopper's greens were more timid. He seemed to suppress them before they had a chance. Apparently he suspected his feeling (the true sign always of the Puritan). He was represented in an exhibition which prefigured the Independents, in 1910, and a canvas of his was sold from the Armory Show. This was the only painting Hopper would sell until 1923, when the Brooklyn Museum purchased a water color. Discouraged, he supported himself by illustrating, but at last, in 1916, turned to etching. He had produced forty prints by 1923 and something of a reputation, when once more he began to paint. A sheaf of water colors shown to a dealer brought him a show, and less than ten years later, in 1933, he was selected for a one-man exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art.

Hopper remains the illustrator in his paintings. It is significant that they are always recommended for reasons extraneous to the medium. One says that he admires Hopper's lighthouses on a New England beach, another that his scroll-saw mansions ridicule the Rutherford B. Hayes school of architecture, a third will declare that the painter has "retained" a bleak Sunday afternoon on Main Street. Fair enough. But a simple test will show why it is insufficient. Remove the color and see how much is lost. Or again, substitute a photograph made by an eye that knows how to comment. The writer will wager, then, that no one will talk about painting, for it is not painting that gives these works their appeal. For that reason, despite a certain earnestness of workmanship, one can only say that too

often they remain cold—sometimes mocking—and all too plainly the witnesses to a total absence of play, without which the greatest satirists of mankind could never have enforced their corrections upon the human race.

III

Among our contemporary Puritans the chief is Kenneth Hayes Miller, a man of learning. Born in 1876, he studied at home under Cox and Chase and abroad at the various European galleries which he visited whenever he could. Early, perhaps from the romantic inclination of his Scotch-Irish side, he was attracted by the dreamy canvases of Albert P. Ryder. He knew that beloved man and painted his portrait. But as Miller continued to teach (from 1894 to 1911 at the New York School of Art and thereafter at the Art Students' League) he gradually formed other allegiances. By 1918 he was becoming a scholastic in the tradition of Renoir, and still later he sought to provoke in his canvases a sense of volumes such as one finds in the more monumental Venetians of the Renaissance. Yet such allegiances did not befit him. Renoir was overwhelming in his sensuousness, so complete indeed that flesh and spirit became one in that aroma which arises from his paintings as the token of a profound and wonderful concordance. And surely nobody could accuse Titian, Tintoretto or Veronese of lacking opulence. But Kenneth Hayes Miller, when he seeks to emulate them, recalls the massiveness but not the woman. The contact is missing. Even his

defender, Lloyd Goodrich, had to admit, in a monograph published in 1930, that "There is in him a strain of fundamental asceticism that seems to war strangely with a love of the sensuous and luxurious. . . ." But why "strangely"? It is an old New England tradition—and that is the other side of Mr. Miller's inheritance—to disembody the classics and render them genteel. Longfellow did it, Emerson certainly gave none of the salt and gusto of Montaigne in his *Representative Men,* and even the masterly Thoreau flinched when he came to Whitman's most ardent passages. Aversion to the physical too often comes natural to New Englanders, and that is surely a major reason why art has been slow to flourish in America. A generation ago, of course, H. L. Mencken flayed a resurgent of the type in Stuart P. Sherman, but since Mr. Mencken had never even opened his eyes to painting, he neglected the presence there of other counterparts to the unfortunate professor.

For some years now, Mr. Miller has been painting the ladies of Union Square. He portrays them shopping. In large, maternal rhythms he puts them into a canvas and seeks to compose them according to the order of the Renaissance. But when he finishes only the lesson remains. His is the painting of a schoolmaster. Still another example of the type, though less forceful than Mr. Miller, and certainly never as compelling in his rationality, was Bryson Burroughs. He would pipe a Vergilian eclogue in Central Park. Worse still, the postures and the figures of his nudes suggested the indulgence of daydreams not altogether becoming in the Curator of Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

IV

Third among our groups are the Cerebral Painters. These men mistake learning for impulse. They devotedly gaze at the work of other men, and then busily do their own. They are the culture-bearers in our midst. One of the most notable of this kind is Maurice Sterne. Born in Russia (1877), an immigrant to America eleven years later, a prodigious pupil wherever he went, he astonished all, and particularly the admiring Chase. But Sterne was never rooted. He lived in a monastery in Greece, he travelled in India, Java and Bali, he explored the American Southwest, he settled himself for many years at Anticoli, Italy, and there was praised by Mr. Leo Stein and others as a master of his time. He does not seem so to later minds. Undoubtedly Sterne has a fluency of line, but all too frequently it appears that he has never done a drawing which stayed in the memory. It went as easily as it came. The "architectural" canvases of Mr. Sterne are more impressive. Certain passages—a stream implanted in a wood, a road twining its way up a hillside town in Italy—these almost attain the memorable. Yet the painting as a whole does not convince. It never says, "Sterne!" but is always qualified, here and there, by other men. Therefore, able though this cultivated man undoubtedly is, it cannot be affirmed that the sum of his qualities equals anything important, or even persuasive. He is the Eclectic *par excellence* among our painters today.

Yet he has always had, at any rate, a clarity. One cannot say the same about others who dip with the same fre-

quency into the present as Mr. Sterne does into the past. Andrew Dasburg, for instance, attractive and graceful though his canvases may be, never demonstrated why they should employ the Cubist livery. They were not thought through to their consequences. Bernard Karfiol, a quiet worker, an early Modernist in America (though born in 1886), too often demonstrates a fondness for Renoir, both in his handling of the nude and in his color. Canvases of this sort—derivative, earnest, but somehow shackled—say too little on their own account. Why don't their creators free themselves? Nevertheless, they are infinitely preferable to all the little Picassos, the countless imitators of Cézanne, the linoleum designers who call themselves Abstractionists, and those befuddled contemporaries who, having scrambled up their emotions, paint them and call the result Surrealism. All these are the particular exasperations of the exhibition world, and it is about time that they should take a look at nature for a change.

Remote, solitary, self-sufficient, Henry Lee McFee, at Woodstock, New York, has for over twenty-five years been distinguishing himself with works which intelligently assimilate the best of their time. McFee, indeed, is one of those men who convey a surprising freshness in a mode which would not seem to encourage it. A native of St. Louis, Missouri, where he was born in 1886, he studied one year in Pittsburgh and thereafter briefly at the Art Students' League. The rest, according to Virgil Barker, a judicious student and critic of painting, is the "record of his self-teaching by means of his admirations." Writings—

from Roger Fry and Clive Bell, from *Camera Work*, and from Vassily Kandinsky (presumably in *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*)—nourished him more than specific paintings. Assured of a small monthly income, McFee settled himself in a definite landscape, and there dug out his art. He was influenced by Cubist reproductions which his friend Andrew Dasburg brought back from Paris. Always his understanding grasped and went ahead. Accomplishment was more slow, and then only, as McFee has admitted, after a "very trying, uphill struggle." Three withered apples became his models. The countryside sat still for him. Friends posed, and neighbors. And he developed. Eventually an unusual rectitude, both of composition and color, was his. If in later years he seems too frequently to be painting a series of propositions, and too often to be approximating the texture of wool in his canvases, there is, nevertheless, an admirable consistency in his work which predicates both a thinker and an artist. He is the most distinguished of our more "thoughtful" painters.

V

The multiplicity of tendencies from abroad has encouraged a reaction in the form of the so-called American Scene Cult. With Thomas Craven as its press-agent, these painters have rejected the Europeans who commanded them in their youth, and now maintain, in effect, that a flag should be placed on a landscape before one paints it. Such a procedure could not hurt the canvases of Grant Wood, for they are bad enough as it is. John Steuart

Curry's paintings require no more discussion than his lithographs, and this has already been given. Reginald Marsh should confine himself to monochrome illustrations, where he certainly is at his best. Thomas Benton remains. Mr. Benton's minor, decorative talent is best suited to the black-and-white. His color is never enticing. As for his murals—aside from the question of whether everything in American life is spattered as he sees it—they are forced, insecure, and diagrammatic. It is better to consider them as cartoons, as Louis Kalonyme did several years ago in *Arts and Decoration*. "It is inexcusable," he noted, "that an old hat English Royal Academician should have been commissioned by the art connoisseurs of Radio City"—for another mural project—"when Benton was available." For if there ever was an academic painter—that is, a man with a formula—it is Thomas Benton. All of his antics will never conceal that fact.

Nothing could be more different than the Midwestern protests of Charles Burchfield. They originated not in theory, but in a passionate denunciation of his surroundings. He is a genuine exponent of the American Scene (and incidentally the only one who says that such preoccupations should not be conscious).[1] Born at Ashtabula Harbor, Ohio, that grimy city where the ore-boats put in from Duluth, and the downtown streets have all the beauty of Sandusky, Indiana Harbor, South Chicago and those other industrial sinks where the lake-steamers pour out their rusty cargoes, he later moved to Salem, Ohio,

[1] *The Arts*, July, 1928.

and it was there that he protested with all the vehemence at his command against a landscape that had been scarred and gutted and denuded of everything fit for a human habitation. He was poor. He supported himself as an automobile accountant. Four years at the Cleveland School of Art under an excellent teacher, Henry G. Keller (who is one of our more capable water-colorists) prepared young Burchfield to express his indictment. Yet for a time he dallied in fantasies. After serving in the Army, he painted the water colors that made him famous. One can never forget them. . . . Sitting in the Montross Gallery, my first spring in New York, I gazed again at the railroad tracks in my Minnesota village,[2] I recalled the horrors of the lake ports where I had worked, and which Burchfield had portrayed without a tremor. I thought for a moment that I heard Whitman singing in the water color. Never again did Burchfield do as much for me, but I am grateful to him for this experience, and I record it now. . . .

Unfortunately success, though it did not dislodge Burchfield from his point of view, did serve, one fears, to mitigate his impact. He became a professional painter. He will always be "Burchfield"—a sincere, forceful, indignant voice—but will he ever again have his former eloquence? The writer hopes so, but he doubts it. The best of this man remains in the early Twenties. Then he cried out in unforgiving anger, while now he merely fulfills a demand already established. Yet perhaps the need will come again, and then once more we shall have to stand

[2]Or thought I did, for actually, of course, Burchfield's scene was from farther east.

silent as we listen to a voice that has come from his devastated midlands.

VI

A whole group of painters born in the Nineties may be called the Middle Generation. They neither excel nor offend. They adapt and yet they do not imitate. They merely modify, and, like the *rentier*, live off the substance that has already been gathered. They do not pioneer, like the generation issuing from the Seventies, nor do they consolidate new researches as do certain of the painters who were born in the Eighties. They stand between these older, more fervent men and a younger generation which has not yet formulated itself.[3] Henry Varnum Poor, for instance, was a talented pottery-maker who regrettably quit his kilns for oil painting. Every new canvas that he shows makes it pretty clear that he should go back to his earlier vocation. Alexander Brook cannot command his own sensibilities. His talent is abundant—he knows how to paint, his color seems to dilate, he has an uncommon gift of modulation. He can draw with a measurable feeling. Yet, aside from an occasional portrait of his wife, Peggy Bacon, he too often paints with a seeming ennui which defeats his canvases. Franklin Watkins is a pigmentalist. Paint as such gives him pleasure. But he stretches out his figures without reason. They gesture as if they wondered why. Mr. Henry Schnackenberg is more convincing. Some

[3]Peter Blume (born 1906) is an exception. But he never has surpassed his first, enigmatic work of ten years ago.

witnesses still remember a winter landscape of his which nearly broke through all of the man's limitations. He needs to venture more than he ever has done. Morris Kantor manipulates materials for the sake of an effect. Yet at the finish the only residue is the dexterity of a juggler. Louis Bouché establishes no conviction, even though he suggests that he might, since he has the talent to do so. John Carroll somehow gives the impression that he paints with "cold cream and soot." Stefan Hirsch is a dry professor, while Karl Knaths has not retained the liveliness that he had ten years ago. Henry Mattson conveys a certain force. But the paintings never get out of an integument enwrapping them. It is a lack, apparently, of projective power.

VII

Proletarian painting, like that of the American Scene, was a phase of the Thirties. These are the left and the right wings of two respective social tendencies, and in painting as such count for very little. The first propulsion for the taking up of the paint-brush as a social weapon, came from that gifted showman and publicist-painter, Diego Rivera. His over-size murals convinced many that they should likewise challenge the ogres with their painting. Much harm has resulted. Nicolai Cikovsky, who was an agreeable lyricist of landscape, converted himself into a didactic "demonstrator" on the docks. Stuart Davis, whose one recommendation was wit, lost even that as he became a picket in paint. William Gropper, the fearless cartoonist, attempted murals and paintings which proved

only that he could better propagandize in his original medium. And there were many, many others. One may wish to see all forms of exploitation extinguished forever, but still it is difficult to believe that bad painting and hasty workmanship are ever going to advance us one inch in that direction.

VIII

Much has been said about government support to painting. It has been claimed that the Republic today provides the greatest patronage since the Renaissance. With this intention almost all can sympathize. The quality of the work delivered is another matter. As for the murals now being set up in public buildings throughout the United States one must confess, with regret, to a negative decision.

The great accomplishment of the government in art has not been with painting at all. Rather, by the classes, the lectures and the gallery-visits it has encouraged throughout the country, it has at last made possible that participation which alone can persuade the people that art belongs to them, and not to far-away Italy or the still more distant culture of Greece. This is an incomparable educational achievement—in fact, it is a real experiment in democracy —and it has helped more than one can say, to start and to keep going that interest which now prevails in every direction. One can only praise the imagination which could encompass such a project.

IX

Now the line has been drawn. A process of differentiation has taken place. Those who object can only be urged to proceed with their own estimations. The day for tea-sipping is past in American art.

CHAPTER XVI

Henry McBride

IN THE LATE NINETIES a group of young men formed a little eating club in the West 30's of New York, and hired two old French women to do the cooking. Most of them were artists—E. S. Hamilton, for instance, and Gustave Verbeck, an illustrator who coined fresh trifles in the image of the Japanese, and a lad named Newman, and the Pike brothers, one of whom sometimes posed for Charles Dana Gibson. A gifted writer would join them, too. He was Stephen Crane, who had already finished *Maggie, a Girl of the Streets*—the year was 1897—but who was still some distance away from his *Red Badge of Courage*. He would shake dice with the boys after eating. To one other member of the group Crane gave a copy of his pioneer novel, signed. The recipient was Henry McBride, a young man who was later to become no less the pioneer in another field of writing. The next year the feverish Crane was off to the Spanish War, and the other members would recall, no doubt, how tense he would become when he was excited.

Henry McBride was then thirty. He had been born in 1867, at Chester, Pennsylvania, and had attended the public schools there. A little later he began to do illustrations for the catalogs of George Achelis Nurseries (a local

house), and from that moment on his career was inevitable. Soon he moved to New York, where he enrolled in the Artist-Artisan Institute, in West 23d Street, under John Ward Stimson, who instructed him for the next four years. This Stimson was a wild and unaccountable man. An admirer of Blake, he preached a kind of revolutionary dissent. He wanted to upset the academics. Conventional people he abhorred, and they returned his feeling. He was never sure as to how long he could hold off his creditors and keep the doors open. But he certainly must have challenged his students, and to this extent possessed an element of greatness as a teacher.

Scarcely out of his studenthood, McBride began, in 1893, to visit Europe in the summers. Four years later, he was invited to found an art department at the Educational Alliance on the East Side of New York. He did so singlehanded, and until 1903 continued to teach the life class. By the time he left, the place had four other instructors and a total enrollment of two hundred hungry, fervent art students, among whom Jacob Epstein, Jo Davidson, Samuel Halpert and A. Walkowitz have since become men of reputation. Meanwhile Stimson, constantly in trouble and always being afflicted by unmanageable debts, had been appointed Director of the School of Industrial Design, in Trenton, New Jersey. He requested McBride to be his assistant, and for five years the younger man taught there, dividing each week between Trenton and the earlier appointment at the Alliance. He continued to visit Europe. And somewhere in these years before he entered journalism on *The New York Sun*, he decided

that he was not to become a painter. Writing was more natural to him. He is reticent about the period in which he reached this decision, though he has confessed that he was much of the time abroad, preparing himself for criticism. At any rate, by the time he joined *The Sun*, in the fall of 1912, he was already formed. And McBride has possessed this essential identity ever since.

That season of 1912–13 was probably the most crucial which an art writer could have chosen for his initiation. The long, solitary fight of "291" was now about to be consolidated by the victory of the Armory Show, and the latter event was to shake the American art world as it had never been shaken before. Yet, as "second" man, McBride obviously could not report the main events. He tramped to twenty shows a week, doing the journeyman work which is enough to wear out an ordinary enthusiasm for pictures. His chief, Samuel Swift, had succeeded James Huneker, who was then on vacation in Europe. And short though his service was, Swift must have demonstrated new potentialities to his friend, McBride, who was taking care of the secondary shows. For Swift, in the Saturday pages which he did write (he lasted less than a year) wrote with a responsibility and an understanding which challenged the very best in Huneker. Not as gifted in expression, he surpassed his predecessor in depth of understanding, and his early resignation must be accounted one of the most regrettable casualties in American art criticism.

By the time Swift retired, the Armory Show was over. Was there ever a better time for a critic to arrive? Such pathfinders as Sadakichi Hartmann and Charles H. Caffin

had already fulfilled themselves before the First World War, and their place was definitely in that earlier time. J. Nilsen Laurvik, who had upheld the newer men ever since his advent on *The Post*, thereafter on *The Times*, and later on *The Boston Transcript*, retired from journalism after affiliating himself with the San Francisco Art Museum, in 1914. McBride, arriving later than any of these, and inaugurating his work at the very time of the "shift," belonged for that very reason more definitely with the emerging men than they did. And he has persisted, in all the years that have followed, as the ablest and most persuasive expositor on contemporary art in the metropolitan press.

One cannot appreciate the meaning of his accomplishment without a glance at the pressures which necessarily conditioned it. Presumably the art critic is independent. Yet actually, if he offends the advertisers, he will soon be asked to leave. On the other hand, if he merely pleases them, he becomes but the house-organ to their activities. Again, inasmuch as social prestige is involved with pictures and the galleries which exhibit them, the touchabilities, one might say, must not be disturbed. This calls for considerable tact. Finally, if the critic relishes the new and can advance no *imprimatur* but that of his own taste, he is likely, sooner or later, to be attacked by those institutions which exist only, it would seem, to recertify the dead. Such being the limits for an art critic on a metropolitan newspaper, it must be said that Mr. McBride has performed with a remarkable consistency and with a no less commendable effectiveness during all these years.

Consider his contemporaries. Mr. Royal Cortissoz was already, when McBride joined *The Sun*, quite as much a part of the landscape as the Metropolitan Museum. Indeed, he had occupied one spot almost as long. And young men might come, and young men might go, but the sentinel of *The Tribune* would survey all as if he were the appointed guardian of the verities. He was the extreme Right of the newspaper art correspondents. And in more than one sense did he belong to the Right. He objected to the Armory Show as an intrusion of "Ellis Island Art." And ten years did not mitigate such prejudices, for he repeated the phrase in a book[1] published in the Twenties. Even in 1941, Mr. Cortissoz, still smarting because of Roger Fry's devastating criticism of John Singer Sargent, published a good fifteen years earlier, would descend to a witticism such as "smaller fry" to dispose of an analysis which has never been convincingly answered. Such remarks lead one to question very seriously how well Mr. Cortissoz has ever understood the tradition he sets himself up to maintain. For Roger Fry, also, was schooled in the past. Many worthy studies are associated with his name. And if he welcomed the whole array of Post-Impressionists, it was undoubtedly because he thought, as younger critics today are thinking, that he saw one as the extension of the other. No other view of tradition is viable. Therefore, Mr. Cortissoz might best be considered our Tory in criticism, since, like his counterpart in politics, he accepts only that change which leaves everything the same.

Another contemporary of Mr. McBride's is Frank

[1] *American Artists*, pp. 17–18.

Jewett Mather. For a number of years, earlier in the century, Professor Mather was the regular art commentator on *The New York Evening Post*. Later he did reviews for *The Nation*. By comparison with Mr. Cortissoz, he was the Conservative among the art reviewers. He never dismissed the Moderns, as Mr. Cortissoz once did, in terms of "asafœtida."[2] Sometimes, it is true, he did use strong language, but only after an analysis which had situated his objections in something more impressive than mere distaste. And then he adjusted himself as time passed. In his able *Pageant of American Art* (1927), Mr. Mather showed himself more amenable to demonstration than did Mr. Cortissoz in his supplement to Isham's *History of American Painting*, published in the same year. Professor Mather —both by his duties at Princeton and in his numerous books—is the sound academician among our art critics.

A little later appeared Forbes Watson. As art editor for *The New York World* (and later of *The Arts*), he articulated a view which had both the diffuseness and the good will of the Liberal. Essentially he was, and is, a publicist. His criticism as such has never quite satisfied the mind. He suggests more than he establishes. On the other hand, no one has fought the organized bigotry of the American art world more effectively than he. One quotation will suffice:

"The National Academy's position in the art world is the position of an institution which wishes to censor the art of a free people, that, let us hope, does not want to have its art censored. Of course, the avowed purpose of the

[2] *Idem.*

censorship which the Academy exercised as long as it could, is educational, but the real purpose, if we penetrate below all the high-sounding words about educational expansion, is to increase the market for academic work. . . . When the National Academy speaks of its 'responsibility' as a 'national institution,' of course, it infers that it is actually a national institution, that there is something officially national about it, whereas it is simply a private institution which works primarily for the benefit of its members and incidentally to gain power."

Such is the cross-section of the more important men who have served as Henry McBride's contemporaries.

And where does he stand? Quite alone, it is clear. No one even approaches him. Primarily, he is the advocate of fearlessness and spirit. McBride has almost never failed to celebrate the slightest afflatus in the men he encountered. Only two conspicuous exceptions occur to the writer. One was Henri Rousseau, whom at first he belittled. Later he freely and publicly admitted his mistake. And he never ceased to regret his critical dismissal of Louis Eilshemius, the unhappy little painter of 57th Street. McBride's amendments in these two cases more than atone for his earlier oversights. For in McBride there is a conscience towards the artist. He feels that the artist sings the glory of the world, and that it is his duty as a critic to listen. He does not stamp him then as fit or unfit, he does not "place" him, he does not state what his own feelings are—instead he presents the objective lineaments of his impression, always guiding it by what he has received. In the end, his "portrait" approximates to that of the original,

and though McBride seeks no interpretation of his own, he has given one by virtue of the very fact that he hasn't attempted any.

A peculiar conscience animates him. Best is it instanced by his remarks on Thomas Eakins, that isolated painter who was not honored even in his death by his countrymen:

"We may be quite sure, as Samuel Butler exasperatingly points out, that though we have at last caught up with Eakins we are just as heartily crushing some living 'Flower beneath the Foot' (Marin, Weber, Man Ray perhaps?) as ever our predecessors did.

"It is however permissible to laugh gently at our museum directors in this regard. It always seems possible to laugh at museum directors, though, to do the poor dears justice, every one knows that the real trouble comes from the stupid committee men who stand behind the director and hamper his every turn. These men are supposedly 'conservative,' but that is only one way of saying that they are incapable of ideas. By the time these conservative ignoramuses are educated, bullied, or swayed by fashion into a receptive mood, the real opportunity for constructive work has always passed. In the case of Eakins, all of these directors knew ten years ago that any of his pictures could be obtained for almost nothing, but it never occurred to them then that the things had merit."[3]

Time after time McBride has said the same. For twenty-nine years upon *The Sun*, for ten seasons on *The Dial*, for three years as editor of *Creative Art*—always he has been affirming the goodness and the beauty of the earth in the

[3] *The Dial*, May, 1923.

terms of the artist. If he has more recently become irascible towards the dour painters of "Social Consciousness," it is not because of social predispositions to the contrary (though here he is not without a blind spot of his own)—but rather because, and here he is completely justified, he holds that the artist, even in the midst of tenement grime, never can adhere for a moment to ugliness. The artist lifts, he does not depress. And if a painter of breadlines, say, would glorify his protest in the process of delivering it, McBride would applaud. *Because he is for the artist.* That is his only code. And it is quite enough. For followed through conclusively, it would end all stupidities and make this planet that better place which it might well be.

Yet it is not in his thought that McBride impresses most. It is rather in the impact of a cultivation—a remaking of the mind through beauty—which he gives off by his writing. It clarifies and enlightens. It drubs prejudice and it dances. It regards the snowflake as well as the mountain. It sees in each thing its quality. It is the attitude of the artist. And McBride is himself an artist. That is why, despite a capriciousness, despite a gossipy tone to many of his paragraphs, despite a slyness which is not always on the side of the major issues, he has never failed in the essential duty—to support new revelations with all of his capacities. He has enjoyed doing it. Never mind that our "superior" critics have almost without exception ignored him. Never mind that they were looking for greater structures in the sky, while he merely regarded the flower sprung up willy-nilly by the wayside. Some day he will be rediscovered. Some day an American publisher will awaken and issue

a whole compendium from his writings. Then it will be seen that the most ardent of our creators on canvas, by pencil, in stone did not lack a worthy collaborator. In Henry McBride they had a tribune in the very market-place. There, he spoke for them. There, he converted a listener now and then. And smiling shyly, spoke again, until in time, a public had been educated by his criticism. That public—the nucleus, let us hope, of a greater audience to come—will not forget Henry McBride and the smile in his paragraphs, and the cut of his tongue, and the unrelenting persuasiveness of his admirations.

CHAPTER XVII

Forms of Neglect

OUR CRITICS have been pointing out for three decades now that we neglect our artists. And it is true that a Melville declined in the customs house, that the saintly Ryder lived on crusts of bread, and that Whitman was given, instead of admiration, the disapproval and downright contempt of many people. Yet these corrections too often have been retrospective. Suppose we admit all this, but do not support our artists today. Are we then any better than the generation which we criticize? And again, what of the apparently successful man who is acclaimed for that side of his talent which promises the least to his development? Who would not exchange the oils of Winslow Homer for his water colors? Who would not gladly forego the murals of Boardman Robinson for some of his earlier cartoons? Sometimes, therefore, a man neglects himself. Our problem then is to detect every form of neglect and to correct it as soon as possible.

A minor instance of the sort is Vincent Canadé. This Italian immigrant (who was born in 1881) came to America in the early Nineties. His list of occupations—carpenter, jeweller, waiter, porter in a brass foundry, fashion-designer, bank clerk, plasterer and house-painter—would provide a Sandburg catalog. At length he deserted them all to paint. Joseph Stella found him, thirty-five years of age,

inhabiting a bare cold room, the father of six children, an unhappy man who, driven between duties to his family and his painting, could at best reflect his torture in his canvases. His landscapes, even when of Yonkers, reminded one of Italian hill-towns; his portraits indicated a hurt as he eyed his family. Yet his difficulty seems to have been no less a temperamental one than excessive pressures from without. For while a glint of truth shines through certain canvases, particularly the odd double self-portrait—*Sunday and Monday*—Canadé has never escaped a concentration upon self. That inability to lose himself in larger issues, one may say, is the chief cause of such neglect as he has suffered.

Arnold Friedman is a sincere, talented man who has never left this country. A pupil of Henri's (born in 1879), he once attended City College, thinking that he would become a lawyer. Then, determining to paint, he made his living as a clerk at a post-office. Marrying, he continued his job in order to support his family. He became a part-time painter. He worked through Monet and Seurat. He assimilated the Cubists. But meanwhile he trudged each day through the dust-mill of the post-office. His painting remained, not peripheral, but special and intimate. He was not a professional preparing for each year's exhibition. Thus a certain freshness was possible for him. Further, his daily experience as a wage-earner, and his unavoidable identification with a specific community and its labors, gave him a root which is pleasurably reflected in his painting. In Friedman's picture of a snowbound suburban residence, exhibited at the Bonestell Gallery in March, 1940,

he said something about the structure as a dwelling-place, and about a neighborhood as well, which made this canvas considerably more than a mere composition. Again, one might remember a vegetable-market—it hung in his one-man show at the J. B. Neumann Gallery, in the winter of 1936–37—which somehow was inhabited by the fruits and vegetables as he painted them. Similarly with some of his portraits.

Such a man might be called a Sunday painter. But Friedman is more knowing than the term implies, and besides he has taken too much part in the exhibition world of his time to justify any such expression. Emile Branchard (1882–1938), who took up painting at the age of twenty-five and always remained the self-taught "provincial," together with Julia Kelly, whose rain-washed Long Island scenes likewise derived their crispness from the fact that they were untutored, are more in this category. Friedman, on the other hand, is a man who aimed at painting and nothing else. The neglect, such as it is, proceeds rather from circumstances than from any omission in the public. He is a better man than some of our more celebrated painters, but the exigencies of bread-winning have kept him obscure when he should have been known. Now that he is on the post-office's retired list, he should be able to consolidate himself and secure that more general attention which should be his.

It is the homespun quality in Friedman which made him treasurable. He seems to have come from the shops and fields—a real response to the prophecies of Henri. Certain other men have been neglected because they do not appar-

ently convince the public that they relate to the environment around them. Benjamin Kopman,[1] for example, certainly knows how to use his medium. He kneads and flings and whirls and discharges his pigment. And he has a forceful intelligence: his figures stay where he wants them to stay. Unfortunately, he too often reminds one of the German Expressionists and of such men as Rouault and Soutine. Nor is Mr. Kopman unaware of Daumier. Yet there is a savagery, a hitting power, and a strange vehemence of color which are his own and cannot be identified with other men. Considering all this, it is regrettable that his recognition is not as yet in proportion to his other gifts. But this situation will not always prevail, for the American public is becoming more cultivated in the art of painting. And when it has advanced perhaps half a step more, it should be ready to accept the work of Benjamin Kopman.

Leon Hartl and Milton Avery have a similar misfortune. Hartl arrived in America from France just before World War I. Becoming an expert in aniline dyes, he continued to paint in obscurity until the mid-Twenties. Then Lloyd Goodrich praised him in *The Arts*, he was exhibited, and a few canvases were placed. He has exhibited at intervals since, never producing much (though now more than formerly) and always alternating between sentiment and poetry. His little bouquets somehow suggest a prayer in the meadows—they seem to mean more than the tiny freight can carry. Yet that is just their quality and their

[1]He was born in 1887, at Vitebsk, Russia. This and other material about the artist may be found in a *brochure* by Jennings Tofel, himself a painter and a perceptive judge of other men's qualities.

recommendation. His painting is French in its economy, its sensibility, its grace. It deserves more notice in America. And yet if it has been ignored, the circumstance of its author's understandable attachment elsewhere perhaps provides the essential reason for such neglect. Surely we can find a more mature criterion than that. Milton Avery, however, is a native of Connecticut. A certain shine and color depth almost translate his work into importance. Yet he, too, works more in terms of other men. He recalls Matisse, though he does not have the richness of the Frenchman's color. More serious is a peculiar bonelessness in his paintings. The forms seem to be commanded by nothing within them. Nevertheless, Avery is capable and devoted, a poetry animates his canvases, and he has only to lift them out into the clear air, as it were, to become the painter that he should be.

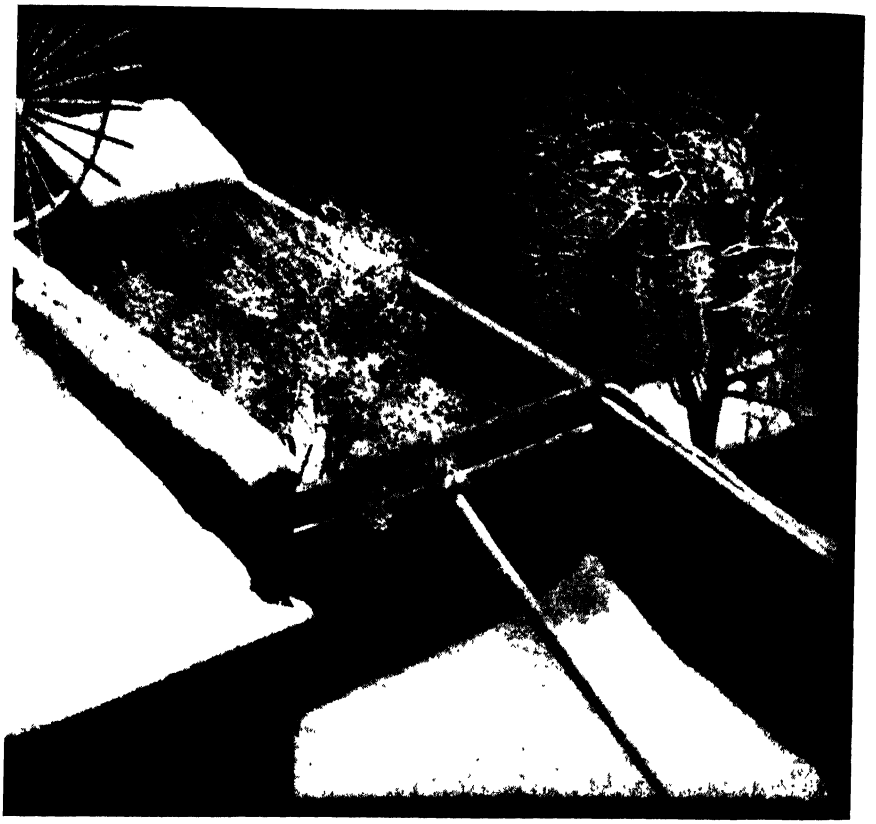
Still other contemporaries, if not precisely neglected, have, for one reason or another, never gone far enough past the recognition which they first gained. Preston Dickinson, though he died at thirty-nine (in 1930), had been known for a good half-dozen years as a painter of sound, though too constricted, intelligence. After enrolling at the Art Students' League, he had schooled himself by five years of study at the Louvre and by percipient analyses of Cézanne and the Japanese. He developed a personal style in the pastel. Indeed, he is to be noted for his production in this medium rather than for his oils. Something in his dry, precise, crisp temperament suited him to it. He was not an abundant producer. But his turning streets in old Quebec, his wintry Harlem River scenes, his clean-cut still-



the Georgia O'Keeffe Collection

Green and Red

OSCAR BLUEMNER



Backyard—Winter, N. Y.

PAUL STRAND

lifes, have, despite a certain fixity which makes them not quite complete, a singular acuity which is worth remembering. Yet they are being noticed less than they were in his lifetime, and even then they had not compelled any large section of the public. Why is this? Possibly because of a deficiency in temperament. There was a coldness in Dickinson bordering on the acidulous. His canvases cannot mobilize us because they do not surpass their own craftsmanship. And craftsmanship is not enough, even though many American painters are without it. Niles Spencer, likewise, is deficient in feeling, though one must admire a certain strictness of edge in his work. Willard Nash, who lives in Santa Fé, specializes in water colors. They remind one of Cézanne, and yet there is a personal lucidity in them. Edwin Booth Grossman also stems from Cézanne, but a long period of isolation which terminated with a show at the Marie Harriman Galleries in January, 1941, demonstrated that this attachment was now to his advantage rather than otherwise. A struggle for order was evident in these canvases, and an earnestness which was admirable, even though sometimes it did not have enough left over.

Such earnestness might well be suggestive to Arthur B. Carles. Talented, freedom-loving, a little scattered, this Philadelphian early displeased William Chase, his teacher at the Pennsylvania Academy. That elegant gentleman would have been even more disturbed at his rejection of Velasquez for Goya, when Carles first visited Spain. Upon arriving in Paris—also in the early years of the century—Carles, like so many of his young American contempo-

raries, drifted into the *cénácolo* of Gertrude and Leo Stein. He quickly embraced Cubists and Fauves, whose pictures he saw there. "It was all rather jumbled," he once said to an interviewer, "the people and the pictures—confused impressions—complex—you know," which is precisely the effect of Carles's painting. Still-lifes, portraits, compositions, the grain of the canvas, one might say, is always gratifying. The man knows how to paint. Sometimes a wild cry seems to come through it. Yet nothing central communicates a meaning to his emotional outspokenness, and the bravery of the color is only such because it is not fortified by anything beyond itself. Carles has twice won the Temple Medal from the Pennsylvania Academy, where he teaches (he was born in 1882), so he is not without external recognition. In his case, the neglect is rather one of the man towards his own gifts.

It is otherwise with Louis Eilshemius. Exasperated and spent after years of neglect, he retired at the age of fifty-seven (in 1921), quit painting (with a total production of 3500 works in oils, watercolors, drawings and pen-and-ink sketches), and from his 57th Street home in Manhattan set about informing the newspapers of both his grievances and attainments. He became a treat to the readers of Henry McBride's page in the Saturday *Sun*. In the other newspapers he was considered merely a crank. One would see him in the galleries, pointing at a Monet in Durand-Ruel's, spitting at a "Picasso-basso," as he called it,[2] in one of the

[2]For this term, and certain of my details, I am indebted to William Schack's biography of Eilshemius—*And He Sat Among the Ashes.*

near-by French emporiums, or again all but tearing off the collar of a passing stranger who might dare to praise a harmless contemporary like Childe Hassam. Years before—in 1909, in fact—the painter Walkowitz had visited his studio and become enthusiastic. Others ignored him. He had shown in the early Nineties at the Pennsylvania Academy, and then not again until almost twenty years later. He painted to himself. Not until Marcel Duchamp, the playful visiting Frenchman, singled out his *Supplication* as one of the two important paintings in the first Independents' exhibition, in 1917, did others begin to attend. But he was ignored when given a one-man show by the Société Anonyme in New York, in 1920.[3]

Meanwhile, the dust deepened on his thick-piled shelves at home. The mortgages ate into the inheritance of his brother and himself. And he no more went to the easel, aptly lyricizing as the paint flew. He published—as he had been doing for years—odd little poems, pamphlet "novels," recipes, musical tid-bits, announcements that he was a renowned healer, botanist and Grand Mahatma. People hooted, not quite kindly. These were the expressions of a man without any contacts. At length he had a second one-man show (1924), again through the Société Anonyme, and at last McBride saw him as a "genuine lyric painter." Eventually other recognition followed. But it was all too late. Eilshemius had been confirmed in his eccentricities, and he remains today, ill, bickering, frustrated, a pathetic character and 57th Street's own witness to its neglect.

[3]The Société Anonyme was founded in 1920 by Katharine Dreier and Duchamp, both painters, so as to encourage Modern Art—particularly on its abstract side—by exhibiting it in America.

And yet a singularity always tinctured his work. It was too odd in some respect. It proceeded from a peculiarity quite as much as from a talent. Only the strangeness was a progressive one, and therefore the flaws the greater as the years increased. He sang—of the Catskills and the Delaware Water Gap, of "cigar-box nudes" and Samoan witches, of old-fashioned villains and heroines, and of incandescent seascapes which were not without their reminiscences of Ryder. He was a painter all right. A skill and a shapeliness —a genuine affection for the pigment—attested to that. And his very spontaneity, at a time when calculation was at a premium, set him off from both the old academicians and the young deliberators. A more "emancipated" taste could see him. But one wonders: How much would approbation have helped? Would it have altered the personality? Surely it would have softened the buffets. No doubt it would have encouraged finer production. But it is doubtful if it could have transformed the unhappy situation which had persisted all along.

Even among the critics one finds a neglect. At one extreme Thomas Craven revels in the sunshine of popularity. But the deft journalism of his *Men of Art*, his *Modern Art*, and his picture-album, the *Masterpieces*, gave little intimation of the man who had once briefly championed the Moderns in the early Twenties. Then he was unrecognized, lived in dingy traps from one end of Manhattan to the other, and sometimes, as in his review of Henri for the *Dial*, could write an evaluation which still stands despite its sting. But Mr. Craven forgot his past (or recollected just the hardships). He became an evangelist and today he

promises salvation only to those who accept a specious cult of Americanism. This is not criticism, but the promulgation of half-truths which are no less vulnerable than, and quite as dangerous as, those they seek to displace. Yet once Craven was neglected, and all of his vehemence will not enable one to forget it. At the other extreme stands Paul Rosenfeld, whose recognition is by no means in proportion to his gifts. Other writers occupy various stations between. In the mid-Twenties Lewis Mumford, writing but infrequently on art, did so with courage and discrimination. He diluted both in his subsequent career on the *New Yorker*. Sheldon Cheney also produced his freshest work—*A Primer of Modern Art*[4]—in the mid-Twenties. Lee Simonson, unfortunately, has never written a book about painting. But judging from the capability with which he edited *Creative Art* for one year (1928–29), he might well do more art criticism. Of longer career is—or should one say was?—Murdock Pemberton. From the early numbers of the *New Yorker*, all through the late Twenties and into the early Thirties, he was constantly cheering in that periodical for the more sensitive and less recognized Americans. Beginning at a time when Mr. Craven wrote almost as much about the French as he did about Americans, this unpretentious man week-by-week extended support to his countrymen when the market was all the other way. For his eagerness, for his sincere love of painting, and for his hatred of humbug, it is now time to give this much neglected critic—Murdock Pemberton—a little of the thanks

[4]Suzanne LaFollette, on the other hand, has never followed up her *Art in America*, which was published in 1929.

that we owe him. And a word is required for Louis Kalonyme, too, whose contributions to the *New York Times*, *Arts & Decoration* and *Creative Art* were always civilized and forthright.[5]

But how shall one excuse the treatment of Paul Rosenfeld? For almost twenty-five years this generous man, as Edmund Wilson has said, has "given himself away to the artists of his period." Who has sat down to give his lifetime's work the same magnanimous attention which he has volunteered to even the least of his contemporaries? He, if anybody, is insufficiently acclaimed. Granted that he impedes himself by certain difficulties in his writing, granted also a sometimes inacceptable enthusiasm for painters such as Harold Weston (who, despite an admirable sincerity, presents no recommendations compatible with it)—still, Mr. Rosenfeld has never failed in the prime duty of a critic—to stand up, if he be alone, for the heartbeat and the glory of the men who work today. He has said, and said again, that the artist is the true savior of the world. And when men recognize this truth, they will be ready to admit that this writer has been one of the valuable friends to the artists today.

Never did he reveal his function better than in his testimonial to Oscar Bluemner. This immigrant German and architect turned painter had, after an unhappy life of seventy years (1868–1938), cut his throat. The news-

[5]C. J. Bulliet, for many years the leading critic in Chicago, should not be ignored even though he is by no means a neglected man. He has long championed the contemporary artist, and in such books as *Apples and Madonnas*, *The Significant Moderns*, and his catalog for the Chicago World's Fair of 1933–34, has introduced many to the work which is being done today.

papers printed two "sticks" among the obituary notices. If the art pages of the metropolitan press were affected, there was no evidence of it. Apparently no one cared. But Paul Rosenfeld did not forget the struggles of Bluemner. Recalling (in the *University Review*)[6] the Bohemian hats, the clownish clothing, the unkempt ties, the conversation which matched a rubicund complexion, and the blue, almost metallic eyes, he reconstructed a picture of the man who used to sit smoking cigars like some immense Uncle Fritz, and telling stories as if he were waiting for the next stroke of the cuckoo-clock, while looking at a Manhattan gallery during an exhibition. Then, having presented the character, Rosenfeld discussed the theme, stressing the poverty which finally accentuated Bluemner's unhappiness to the point of death. Nor did he hedge on the matter of domestic difficulties. But at the last it was the pathos that remained—the pathos of an honest man who tried, but unsuccessfully, to adapt himself to a callous world not his own. Thus closed the only testimonial to the most grievous example of our neglect.

Bluemner, immigrating to America in 1892, had already become a sound architectural draughtsman. (So were his father and his grandfather before him in Hanover, Germany.) Yet he had communicated a more personal sentiment in the paintings which had preceded his more formal career. Years later, happening into "291," he dropped the shell of his American "success"—he then had an office on Park Avenue—and like Sherwood Anderson striding forth from his office, resolved that he would tread another road

[6]Summer, 1939.

to freedom. The Armory Show stimulated him still further. He abandoned architecture altogether, painted vigorously, assembled a show, took it to Europe. In 1915, he was exhibited at "291," and the following year at the Forum Show. He contributed a trenchant essay on Modern *Art* to *Camera Work*,[7] and despite poverty, bad habits, dispossess notices, and even a lack of materials, he continued to paint. Stieglitz exhibited him again in 1928, at the Intimate Gallery, which was the successor to "291."

Earlier, Willard Huntington Wright had praised him. He had noted a discrepancy between the blue-print "plan" of his composition and an emotional explosiveness latent within it, though partly released in the color. Few others were interested. The Whitney Museum, it is true, eventually acquired three of his canvases. But for the last dozen years of his life in Braintree, Massachusetts, he exhibited seldom and then without much success.

Yet Oscar Bluemner was a man of merit. For years he was known as the Vermilionaire. (A debt had been paid to him in numberless cans of red paint, which he had then attempted to use up.) One could say that he was a Van Gogh without the religious impulse. A fire burned within him. It beat hot through the ruddy tones of his canvases. It derived from a heated dissatisfaction. Too seldom, however, could he find a mold wherein to pour the seething torment of his life. There was no concatenation between the experience and the material. Yet a mind was present,

[7] *Audiator et Altera Pars: Some Plain Sense on the Modern Art Movement.* It appeared in a Special Number dated June, 1913. This 7500-word analysis is still acceptable today as an estimation of Post-Impressionism and the movements that followed.

and it indicated a direction of endeavor. Bluemner was trying, in his angular Jersey suburbs, in his glassy waters of the Passaic, in the stunted trees which stood before his habitations, to find a more flourishing root for himself. He never did. But the honor of the struggle was his.

CHAPTER XVIII

Originals

THE Phillips Memorial Gallery in Washington, D. C., is a collection which has been built out of an experience. Its founder is Duncan Phillips. At twenty-eight (in 1914) Mr. Phillips had written a first book, *The Enchantment of Art*, which was composed of rather jejune essays on Victorian writers and painters and certain earlier artists. Later, following the tragic death of his father and brother, "there came a time," he has recorded, "when sorrow all but overwhelmed me. Then I turned to my love of painting for the will to live." And painting did not fail him. Day after day while he mourned it restored him, and eventually he was whole again. It was then that he resolved to establish the Phillips Memorial Gallery.

It was incorporated in 1918. Now, Phillips did not set out to amass the usual collection that dignifies the mansions of the rich. He was not seeking to impress his acquaintances with a long file of Old Masters who had already long been recognized. Instead, he would follow his own impulse, building a collection more or less as an artist completes a painting—a touch here, a touch there, until he had a unified living whole. He would hang these paintings so

that they could speak for themselves, and then he would live with them. In other words, his collection would be a part of his daily life. Then he would constantly sift so as to eliminate those works which could not justify themselves. The collection would constantly grow and change.

And it would be devoted largely to contemporaries. For it was, and is, Mr. Phillips' conviction that "The true patron of art has nothing better to give the world than the helping hand he extends to any lonely, lofty life made perilous because a free spirit cannot or will not see eye to eye with the crowd. Unhampered by timid trustees, he roamed among the most daring of American contemporaries, buying now a Marin or again a Dove, sometimes more conservatively adding an Arthur B. Davies, or again acquiring a Sloan or a Prendergast. Admiring Daumier above all other painters, he secured some of his rare canvases, and in fact embellished his collection with other examples of the French from Ingres to Picasso. He espoused no one school, holding instead that painting is "manyminded," and that it is incumbent upon the spectator to follow each artist according to his intention.

As he acquired new works, he exhibited them. He never compromised with the public. On the contrary, he subtly educated it. To enter the Phillips Memorial Gallery is like making a visit to a Victorian mansion built by people with taste. Standing on a quiet, outlying street of the Capital, it invites the visitor to inspect the pictures in a homelike atmosphere. Somehow Daumier's *Uprising* impresses one as less inflammatory when placed at the end of a darkened parlor. To see Braques and Doves alternating in a living

room convinces the beholder that here is an elegance that enhances the home, while the fruity Bonnards positively beg for a breakfast room. No one can visit the Phillips Memorial Gallery and still feel that Modern Art is completely freakish. Here it has been sensitively installated, and much has been done to win over the unconvinced.

Nor is that the limit of Mr. Phillips' work. His volume, *A Collection in the Making*, which succeeded his first book by a dozen years, not only gave forth his faith in shining words, it contributed sixty pages of text, Brief Estimates, so-called, which, of their kind, have not been surpassed by more ambitious critics. He followed this work with his two-volume *The Artist Sees Differently*, briefly published a magazine, and at length set up a school. Primarily he is not interested in producing painters. He would prefer to turn out qualified dealers and scouts for museums. In other words, Mr. Phillips is seeking to educate in the only way that counts—by making over the very quality of the appreciation.

He has learned by his own processes. He has discarded many works which formerly he admired. Where once he was the sympathetic *amateur*, today, after twenty-three years, he may be considered the most creative collector in America. And the day is not far off when the museums will have to show themselves more capable of his resilient methods than they thus far have done.

Mr. Phillips has recalled that he grew up in Pittsburgh in the gas-jet era. It is unlikely that he knew John Kane, immigrant Irish-Scotch workman who inhabited the in-

dustrial slums in a more grimy part of the city. Here Kane, who had been born at Edinburgh, in 1859,[1] had settled after a career as miner, stoker, gandy-dancer, paver and house-painter. Eventually he became a "Sunday-painter." Still later his naïve pictures of Highland Flings, strolls in the park, or the busy waters of the Allegheny, achieved an audience at the Carnegie International (1927–28–29), and he was bought by the connoisseurs. His work is a type of delightful illustration which well might be multiplied, for it does suggest a *rapprochement* between painting and the industrial community such as the sweaty advocates of the "American scene" have not even attempted.

Another painter who, like Kane, has worked much with his hands, is that inimitable carver and craftsman, Bertram Hartman. Hartman's water colors, Marin-like though they often are, have their redeeming passages. He can "pour out" a basket of strawberries that are positively edible, and his country glimpses are not without their joy. Bernard Murray, who made dental plates until his first exhibition at the age of forty-two,[2] has done something still more individual in the water color. He has compacted solid nudes in closely knit compositions which have a certain earthiness rare in American painting. Allen Tucker, on the other hand (1866–1938), who belonged to the generation of Davies and Prendergast, revealed, in his memorial show at the Whitney Museum, an unexpected talent for social commentary in painting. His *Strike*, with a vacant factory-building, and workers before it in the snow, suggested that he might have had a real career at

[1]Kane died in 1934. [2]Georgette Passedoit Gallery, 1939.

this sort of thing had he wished. Anne Robertson Moses, the York State grandmother, paints crisp scenes which have the gayety and freshness of a New England coverlet. Edwin Dickinson sees a Massachusetts landscape through a mist—as if the scenery were disembodied fractions—but a whole mind and an interesting optical experience nevertheless are apparent. Unfortunately, Dickenson's work has too seldom been available.

A more accessible surprise is contained in *The Collectors*, a little-known work by Frank Jewett Mather, Jr. First published in 1912 (republished in 1935) this charming "bibelot" narrates nine stories which, according to the subtitle, are "cases mostly under the tenth commandment." One depicts a counterfeiter of Corot situated in downtown Cedar Street, a cigar between his teeth; another suggests the discomfiture of a Tyrolean prince who has been outwitted by an American collector of armor; a third pungently observes the tilt between a shrewd dealer and an American Robber Baron who collects putative masterpieces. These tales, which are more like the scrapbook reminiscences of a scholar and collector than a purely formal piece of fiction, investigate the purposes of those concerned, and succeed, despite an occasional oddity of phrasing, in laying bare the moral penumbra of the world in which they dwell.

Even smaller than this book is the *brochure* by Virgil Barker, in which, ten years ago, he began his *Critical Introduction to American Painting*. More patiently than Barr and Cahill in their survey, and more judiciously than Samuel Kootz with his *Modern American Painters* (1931),

he considered both the past and present of American art, and sought the reasons for its inadequacy. It is a thoughtful work which needs only to be expanded to register as fully as it should. But as it is, it reveals a scholar-critic with a tempered mind and a well-adjusted set of scales. Unfortunately Mr. Barker, who formerly contributed much to *The Arts,* has seldom appeared in print since the demise of that periodical.

The general public likewise has no opportunity of contact with the three-volume work of Leo Katz, *Understanding Modern Art.* This undertaking was published privately by the Delphian Society, an organization devoted to art lectures, and it is only with extreme difficulty that one can obtain access to it. But its contents justify the search. Aside from an undue reliance upon the flatulent historical certainties of the Prussian landlord, Spengler, this work is the liveliest pedagogical treatise now available on the subject. For Professor Katz does not study the modern movement in terms of historical abstractions, he attempts to show how science, psychoanalysis, machine forms and new space-concepts (as the result of speed in living), have altered the very texture of life and therefore of art. He does not always complete his explorations. Yet if Professor Katz sometimes leaves out the specific instance and does not sufficiently establish his argument, he does, at other times, present material nowhere else obtainable. No one, for instance, has treated the post-Mexican American murals with a like inclusiveness. And though the writer cannot go along with Professor Katz in granting *as yet* the esthetic importance of these achievements, it must be ad-

mitted that no one else has dealt with them with similar fullness.

There was an admirable reticence in Charles Demuth. This artist (dead since 1935) never set out to win anybody's approval. In fact, he devised wayward titles so as to trap the literal into asking inapposite questions. Yet when his Memorial Show was hung at the Whitney Museum (1937–38), many who had not even been aware of him, now remarked his work and realized that a rare man indeed was gone.

Demuth was one of the "delicates" of American art. Born in 1883 in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, he had the misfortune, while still a child, to be rendered permanently lame. Fortunately his people, tobacco merchants to the Pennsylvania Dutch since the eighteenth century, had sufficient money so that the boy could do the work to which he was directed. He chose to be an artist, and at eighteen, having attended the Academy of Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster and dropped out of the Drexel Institute in Philadelphia, he enrolled at the Pennsylvania Academy. Here he was instructed by Chase and Anschutz, by Breckenridge in the still-life, and by that posterlike illustrator, Henry McCarter. In 1904 he left the Academy and went to Paris for two years. Again back in America, he stayed until 1912, then once more he resided in Paris for a two-year interval. He was first exhibited, in 1912, at the Pennsylvania Academy's Annual Water Color Exhibition. Two years later, Charles Daniel, a New York dealer who has said that he was converted to Mod-



Pears—1924

CHARLES DEMUTH



In the Phillips Memorial Gallery Collection, Washington, D. C

Torn Autumn Leaf—1926

GEORGIA O'KEEFFE

ern Art by "291," showed him for the first time in a commercial gallery.

Demuth himself had been influenced by those exhibitions which the fighting pioneers of "291" first presented to the American public. In particular he relished Marin. His own delicacy was attuned to Marin's, and besides he was delighted that any one should attempt what Marin was doing in the water color. He was also impressed by the Armory Show and especially by Marcel Duchamp and the cleverness which had confected the *Nude Descending the Staircase*. Demuth prized deftness, versatility, innuendo. All of these he found in Duchamp. For the same reason he was attracted to the lithographs of Toulouse-Lautrec, that unfortunate artist whose circus scenes were gratifying in their finesse, and to those silken Frenchmen of the eighteenth century, Watteau and Fragonard, whose manner belied an anguish in one case and a surprising intimacy in the other.

Demuth, too, was producing circus scenes. Somehow he identified himself with the trapeze artist who flung himself under the dusky tent to a flying mark which he had to gauge with the utmost accuracy. He visited the vaudeville and drew the clowns and contortionists who sported themselves there. Then he undertook a series of illustrations. And in these, his water color "remarks" on Zola, Balzac, Henry James, Poe, and Wedekind,[3] he not only proceeded

[3]Demuth did six illustrations for *Nana* and one for *L'Assommoir*, one for *The Girl with Golden Eyes*, four for *The Turn of the Screw* and three for *The Beast in the Jungle*, one for *Masque of the Red Death* and seven for *Erdgeist*. Also a single illustration for Robert McAlmon's *Distinguished Air*, in 1930.

beyond his influences but arrived at an absolute distinction as well. For these peculiar, disintegrative works have never been equalled in their particular category.

For example, when he did his four designs for *The Turn of the Screw*, by James, he did not build literally on the scaffold of the book; he launched himself into the *morbidezza* of the tale and the characters sprang from the bowels of his own imagination, rather than from James's. He left the circumstantial to the reader. Pockets may be seen under the eyes of the governess, the "golden" lad totters, the servant swells with sympathy. It is all viscid and evil. Somehow one shudders. And the very looseness of the drawing—visible through the wash of the water color—conveyed an uneasiness which is truly resident in the matrix of this tale. Each of the stories he chose to illustrate, indeed, abounds in this atmosphere; and the rendition is suitable.

Then, in 1919, Demuth was stricken with diabetes. His hands, as photographed some time later by Stieglitz, were those of one virtually dead. But his life was prolonged, inasmuch as Demuth was one of the first to have the advantage of the insulin treatment. But he did no more figures. Once when asked why, by Henry McBride, he said, "Because I haven't the strength." It was then that Demuth perfected his flowers. Zinnias, poppies, lilies he painted in strictest water colors. They are waxen with death, too frail to live, yet punctilious to the last degree. He painted pears on a plate and scaly squashes and ripe purple eggplants. But one did not think of "eating" them, rather one admired the distinction with which they were wrought.

Sometimes he sought utter simplification. Then it seemed that a flower had the severe rectitude of an O'Keeffe painting. Sometimes when he turned to oils, as in his *My Egypt*, an industrial landscape, his title revealed a lingering attachment to Duchamp. And in a whole series of architectural subjects—scenes at Provincetown, steeples after Sir Christopher Wren, factories in his Pennsylvania vicinity—he often recurred to a Cubist analysis in getting the structure of his work. Ruled lines pointed inward, he would appear to get a turning "fixation," one could peer through a plane and get the sense of an intersection. Yet always the delicacy prevailed. He even did a series of poster-portraits, unlike anything of the kind in America. Often the French have painted "hommages" to their living contemporaries. But these polished, stylized tributes of Demuth still seem to puzzle some of our critics.

What this artist did was to modify the old with the new. In his home the Victorian parlor contained heirlooms, horsehair sofas among others, upon which his mother had embroidered designs from the son. These designs were Cubist in their inspiration. She raised flowers in her yard. And the son, who inherited her gift, merely pressed their fragrance when he put them on paper. Beyond the wall stood a steeple, the progenitor of the Wren-like shapes which he patterned out in many of his later water colors. In the town, chimneys and smoke disfigured the sky. The whole vicinity bore the straight lines, the rectilinear shapes, the water towers and brick façades and Egyptian visages which Demuth cast into his oil and tempera paintings.

All these elements he comprehended and grasped with

a fresh lucidity. He personalized the factory-scene. He made a smoke-puff into a flower-petal. He examined the stairway of an office building and transformed it into a jewel in his painting. He accommodated himself, and us, to the industrial landscape. And all this he did as he slowly panted away his life. His art, fragile as it is, and special though it may be, was a victory over the circumstances which hedged him in. He triumphed by elegance. Severe and translucent—such is the work of Charles Demuth.

CHAPTER XIX

Georgia O'Keeffe

GEORGIA O'KEEFFE was born in Wisconsin,[1] where her father operated one of those rich farms which stand white and clean on the land near Madison. She copied pansies and roses at the age of ten. She early drew from plaster casts. At seventeen she left Virginia—where her parents were then living—and studied for one year at the Art Institute in Chicago. Her principal instructor there was John Vanderpoel, whose textbook on drawing is well known. The following year she continued her studies in New York at the Art Students League, where she won a still-life prize under Chase, took training from F. Luis Mora, and sat in lectures under the solemn Kenyon Cox. In 1908–9 she worked at advertising in Chicago. Then she ceased painting and did not resume it until she enrolled at the University of Virginia, under Alon Bement (1912–14). She again studied under Bement at Teachers College, Columbia University, where she was also encouraged by Arthur W. Dow. Then she was ready to teach. She secured an appointment in Texas, and it was

[1]At Sun Prairie, November 15, 1887.

from there that she sent her first work to New York.[2] Upon the expiration of her second year in the Southwest, she quit the teaching profession and came on to New York to paint. And there she met Stieglitz. He believed in her, championed her, and, in 1924, married her. Unquestionably, much in her subsequent accomplishment must be accredited to him. For he has been her buffer against the market-place, and he has upheld her, not only by his own example, but by a tenacious campaign in her behalf. For the rest, one must go to the pictures.

Apparently those first drawings proceeded from a human being almost torn apart by suffering. A respect is due them on that account. But O'Keeffe as painter is to be found emerging in the still-lifes of the early Twenties. In her apple "families," so-called, the brush was at the behest of the object, so to speak. Slight bouquets (in water color) suggested Charles Demuth. Plump pears, and a greater expenditure of pigment, recalled the gratifications of Marsden Hartley. Abstractions also multiplied. But it was in a pastel of 1921 that she first confirmed the existence of an independent personality. It was entitled *Birch and Blue* and it depicted a summer day at Lake George. Two trees stood upon a bank, blue air circulated behind, and a current of joy was somehow conveyed through it. Other pastels in the next dozen years issued from a similar spontaneity. They certainly expressed it. Sometimes it was by a rose with a

[2]It was exhibited at "291" in a joint show with Charles Duncan and René Lafferty (May 23–July 5, 1916). Much of Miss O'Keeffe's work was then devoted to charcoal drawings. In April of the following year she had a one-man show, which was the last to be held at "291."

"propeller," again by sweet peas, or by a bleeding heart[3] which was apparently lit from within. Each time a rare and delicate and original manipulation of the material was encountered. Skyscrapers brought a more severe elation, and once, in *Pink by East River*, one smiled at the incompatibility of a flower with the more purposive landscape behind. As for the oils, they, too, suggested, at their best, a vein of feeling which belonged only to Miss O'Keeffe. Fall leaves overlay one another in exquisitive patterns, the sky actually glistened in *Clouds* (a canvas of Paul Rosenfeld's), an abstraction would be reduced to a mere edge of statement (as in *Black, Lavender and White*, of 1924), city towers sparkled proudly at night, and modulations were palpably registered in the *Ranchos Church*. Although many other works were produced throughout the Twenties and immediately thereafter, these productions best exemplify the tremulous, the heightened and the stark which Miss O'Keeffe has the gift to communicate.

On a trip to Canada in 1932, the artist admired the spotless white barns of the farmers in Quebec. Possibly they reminded her of that other one which had belonged to her father in Wisconsin. In a painting which resulted—*White Barn No. 2*—a certain urgency obviously intensified the affection with which she regarded it. Travelling farther north, she beheld, on the Gaspé Peninsula, those crosses which stand stripped and pared as they confront the sea. These too she painted. Still later, in New Mexico (her summer home since 1929), she produced more of these crosses, the equivalent, she thought, for the country of the Peni-

[3]The flower.

tentes. And soon she was ill. Not until 1936 did she find her strength again. Then the ascending movement of the *Ram's Horn, White Hollyhocks, Hills,* seemed to signify the painter's triumphant convalescence. It was one of the most handsome in all her *œuvre. Summer Days,* of the following year, had the same lift, but with a greater coolness. So did the frail, poised *Yellow Cactus,* of 1940.

Nevertheless, that current of feeling which is Miss O'Keeffe's, more frequently was flowing in the earlier period. Looking at the works of the last few years, one too often gets an intimation of the occult, flowers are magnified beyond the spontaneity which gave them birth, there is an undue circumstantiality of detail. They still have the authority of a personal experience, but sometimes, unfortunately, the quiver of life is missing.

Yet the workmanship has never faltered. She still exacts everything of herself in relation to her materials. And on that side of painting which pertains more strictly to artisanship, she manages, each year, to surpass everything that she has done before. She is continually on the hunt for new industrial materials with which to frame her paintings. Chromium, steel and copper she puts to new uses.

Recently, there was an even more compelling demonstration of her gifts. The Steuben Glass Company had commissioned twenty-seven artists to design plates, bowls and vases. Eminent men from the School of Paris, from England and from America were included. But Georgia O'Keeffe led them all. Not merely because the design was imbedded in the glass like wax in a mold. Nor because she had observed every last glint and translucence. For it

appealed because it was shaped by character. And then, standing before it one recalled, somehow, those silvery edges and that strange, veinous sensibility which one had always associated with the best of her work. And again it was clear that here was a matured individuality.

CHAPTER XX

More Photography

VISITORS to the Albright Art Gallery[1] in November, 1910, beheld, in its International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography, probably the most complete and certainly the most satisfying display of its kind ever given. In one room they could gaze at the French—those capable "gummists" led by Demachy. In another, they might encounter murals of the Austro-German group, and this time set off with a space which enabled one to get them with the full intention of their makers. A lesser chamber, octagonal in shape, was devoted to the secondary producers of the English school. Clarence H. White had a room to himself. Other American Pictorialists were included, and even, among the 600 prints exhibited, almost 200 from photographers many of whom had not been identified with the central movement. But the axis of the whole show was the room devoted to the "Old Masters"[2]—the Scotchman David Octavius Hill, his fellow countryman J. Craig Annan, and the

[1]At Buffalo, N. Y.

[2]Atget the Frenchman was then unknown. The only other significant omission was Margaret Julia Cameron, whose eminent portraits of the Victorians were later reproduced in a whole number of *Camera Work*.

American Alfred Stieglitz. Here, in print after print, the spectator could review those noble portraits which, for Hill, were a tribute to the religious Covenanters of his time, the inkylike line of Annan, which seemed to have sprung from the very heat of the white surrounding it, and then a whole conspectus of Stieglitz from the original view of *Winter, Fifth Avenue* to the immaculate Dutch series and the New York celebrations of the early Nineteen Hundreds.

But commentators—and they ranged from F. Austin Lidbury, in *American Photography*, to a reviewer in *Harper's Weekly* and the irrepressible Sadakichi Hartmann in *Camera Work*—were impressed not alone by the individual hangings, nor by the fact that each section was concatenated with the next so as to bring out the best in all, nor even by the understanding of an American museum which would devote much of its space to an exhibition of this kind. What they all felt, but did not say, was better intimated by Joseph T. Keiley. Reviewing the exhibition for *Camera Work*, he concluded —and indeed this was his last important contribution to that organ, for he was repelled by certain of the shows at "291," (he died but three years later)—that he had visited the gallery for a final glance "on a dark, stormy day when snow and rain kept most people indoors." Sitting down to rest, he mused. And then Keiley perceived that out of each picture issued a current of life, sometimes almost jangling with the next, but all orchestrated by "some central force [which] held the mass together, drawing out and sometimes shaping the best work, helping those who stum-

bled and uniting all the complex, imaginative energy into one purposeful whole towards a definite end." Both Keiley and Stieglitz had been engaged in that 25-year fight for their medium.

They, and a handful of others, had been pioneers in the movement of Pictorial Photography. They had eliminated the false "poetic" mist which misguided romantics had considered to be effective; and they had renounced all those surreptitious retouchings by which the muddled or the incompetent had sought to enhance their negatives. They had abjured all such methods as a betrayal of photography which, they further held, could be an art only if it were true to its own possibilities. Fighting for these principles, they had produced some revolutionary works. And the show at the Albright Art Galleries was the culmination of their achievement.

II

Who were the Americans who had contributed to this "fight"? Omitting those who have already been discussed,[3] an important one, surely, was Eduard J. Steichen. Born poor in Wisconsin (1879), a photographer at country picnics and later a lithographer's apprentice, he had almost instantly commanded recognition when he first showed in 1898. He had developed since his stay abroad.[4] There he had met Rodin. He photographed him, a dark, hot lump of man against his own *Thinker*. He had portrayed Anatole France as a worldly cleric. Venturing out

[3]See Chapter IV.

[4]Again see Chapter IV.

at dawn to the hill behind Rodin's place, Steichen had pictured his *Balzac* as a force primeval with the earth. He had also continued to paint. Indeed, shortly after his return from France, he had exhibited oils at the Glaenzer Galleries simultaneously with photographs at the Photo-Secession. But his peak had come when he had photographed J. Pierpont Morgan, the elder. This massive figure, with his headlight eyes and his hand as if on a dagger, was the very image of that power-thrust which still has not been forgotten in American business. Steichen's *Duse* seized her intangible magnetism with the same skill. He could get the essence of a personality at a glance and fix it, seemingly, with the same ease. This, rather than his more dubious painter-preoccupations at other moments, is what ensures him a permanent reputation as a photographer. Later he was to drop painting, disclaim "art," and devote himself to commerce.

Baron de Meyer, though a native of Constantinople and originally a member of the Austrian school, had long since identified himself with the American Pictorialists. He possessed a peculiar elegance. Photographing a grape, he made it shimmer, a well-gowned woman recalled the grace of an old Dresden figurine, and, in a more "sultry" moment, he could portray a darkly glittering Bosphorus or a clawing countess from Italy. More surprisingly, in his Belgrave types from London, his prints were permeated with the pathos and the conviviality of the slums. De Meyer, like Steichen, was later to work almost exclusively as a commercial photographer, but even here he has not lost his distinction.

Alvin Langdon Coburn, an American born in 1883, industrious, skillful, an assimilator if there ever was one, had made a place for himself by characteristic American push and the advantage of an ambitious mother. Travelling with her to Europe in his early twenties, he had met George Bernard Shaw. Shaw, himself a photographer, was taken with the young American, and through him Coburn obtained many assignments to photograph celebrities. He is assured of a continual recognition from his contact with Henry James. The novelist employed him to make photographic illustrations as frontispieces to his *Novels and Tales* in the New York Edition. Then, in a preface to *The Golden Bowl*,[5] he made note of this relationship in a four-page acknowledgment which is best summarized in the following sentence: "Both our limit and the very extent of our occasion lay in the fact that, unlike wanton designers, we had, not to 'create' but simply to recognize, that is, with the last fineness." Coburn's bridges, London embankments, New York skylines, portraits, too often were compounded from Gertrude Käsebier, Stieglitz, Steichen, and other photographers with whom he had associated. But he was a good printer, and his plates from some of Hill's negatives will always be standard of their kind. Little has been heard from him in recent years. As for Arnold Genthe, he was then, as now, the photographer in search of the picturesque. Annie Brigman, also from California, somehow carpeted her prints with a mosslike delicacy. Her dryads amidst the hills and eucalyptus trees indicated, despite a certain operatic note,

[5]Volume 23, p. xii.

a way of her own. The same can be said of her today. Alice Boughton might also be remembered for her effective portraits.

III

Since the Albright Show, a number of younger men have emerged. Paul Strand is the most exceptional of these. Born in 1890, Strand had visited the Photo-Secession as a youngster. He soon devoted himself to photography. In the years coinciding with the First World War, he did a series of prints which conveyed an indictment on that whole period.[6] A blind woman struck one like a fist of protest, filing figures trudged past prison-like windows, their chains all but visible. Bridges made ominous shadows upon pavements. Everywhere the spirit of men seemed crushed. Yet these works never relied upon subject-matter for their appeal. They convinced also because of their excellent workmanship. Strand is patient and indefatigable with his prints. He polishes everything that he does.

In the post-war period he concentrated on machinery. A Picasso's eye might almost have arranged some of the forms. He "inspected" scarred areas of the city and left one with the impression of a wound. Later he visited the Gaspé and New Mexico. An aluminum light shone upon his fishermen's boats and a desert glare upon his adobe villages. He is now working at moving pictures. In recent years Strand has been much preoccupied with figures, possibly as part of his identification with a movement of

[6]Many of these were reproduced in three of the last numbers of *Camera Work*.

social protest. These works are more frequently static than his earlier ones.

Charles Sheeler practices both painting and photography, but unlike Steichen, he has not abandoned one for the other. Always possessed of a bent towards inquiry, he visited abroad after his student days at the Pennsylvania Academy (he was born in 1883). Having accepted Braque and other abstractionists in Paris, he became one of our first Cubists. He was exhibited at the Forum Show (also at the Armory). At that time his canvases displayed the curiosity of their maker. His career as a professional photographer began in 1912. A few years later he made a series of barns and interiors from the Pennsylvania Dutch country. These still incorporate much of the best in Sheeler. His impeccable workmanship, his somewhat dry touch, were fully adapted to such material. Here his attainments had the quality of a good, if somewhat flat, prose. Later, in his paintings, he attempted the industrial scene, the Williamsburg restoration, still-lifes, and premeditated interiors. These works impress the observer as arrangements, and photographic at that, for, when stripped of their color, they are virtually indistinguishable from his products of the camera. Sheeler has an intelligent and a responsible mind, and he certainly can be praised for his meticulousness. But he cannot rid himself of a certain emotional anemia. This holds him back more than the positive lack of other gifts.

A somewhat younger man is Edward Weston. Originally considered the best portraitist on the West Coast, he began, after a trip to Mexico, to do "art" subjects.

While they unquestionably have a technical ability, one can grant them as yet no more than that. Ansel Adams, author of a handbook on photography, is a thorough craftsman. At moments in his woodland scenes and again in his depictions of clouds, he has intimated a more forceful expression than he has yet achieved. His future is entirely a matter of greater concentration. Walker Evans, despite a genuine attachment to his subject-matter, too often leaves his pictures on the surface. But some may still remember an exception in his intense photograph of a bed in the corner of a poor man's hut. Sometimes his rows of tenement houses are impressive, too. Eliot Porter has a rare tenderness in his intimate renditions of nesting birds, babies, and northern firs. This should permit his further development.

IV

During the years when he stood every day on the firing-line at "291," Stieglitz did not have much time to photograph. Yet he reflected New York in a number of splendid prints in the period from 1902 to '17. It was the city of ambition that he saw, needle-like towers glittering in the sun, or close-packed ferryboats returning home through the haze at twilight. Once he delineated the immigrants in *The Steerage*. Again, he noted the pathos of the brownstone fronts against the encroaching skyscrapers. He photographed each of the men who frequented "291": the high-domed De Zayas; Marin, peeking from a silver mist; Zoler, with an open shirt; Marsden Hartley, a seraphic look in his eye, and even Arthur B. Carles, looking like an

escaped Buddhist with his voluminous beard. Yes, they were all fully captured in these portraits which recorded their idealisms as well as his.

The war closed the little place, but it released Stieglitz. Freed for the first time in years, he photographed with an almost demonic energy. Georgia O'Keeffe, his wife, became his model for many of his pictures. Sometimes the prints conveyed anguish. They registered new tones of gold, unspeakable explorations of black. They were volcanic and they had a pin-point delicacy. Again, viewing the hills at Lake George, the very sky line sang. In 1921, a show of such works at the Anderson Galleries signified the "return" of Stieglitz. Another showing occurred two years later. Then, as it had been charged that his success arose from undue hypnotic effect upon his subjects, he ceased doing his portraits. *Songs of the Sky* followed, and later his *Equivalents*. These were his answer to the accusation.

But in the city—the city he had seen in its three different periods of the horsecar, the tram and the subway —new and ever more spectacular skyscrapers pierced the sky line. He photographed them. Sometimes it was the iron cage, beneath which the form of the rising giant had not yet been revealed. Again it was a completed building, its windows cross-marked, and not a sign of human habitation. Sometimes a new harmony came out of a whole panorama seen from the 53d Street windows of An American Place. But usually isolation was the mark upon them. It was the frozen city of the early thirties, when the skyscrapers stood as congealments issuing from a bloodless

and dehumanized economic system. These were not merely works of art—they were records of the end of an era. Then, returning once more to his familiar Lake George, he saw skating lights amid the grass-blades, and, later yet, the distant mountains rippling against the illuminated foreground. Thereafter, he could photograph no more: a severe heart attack brought doctor's orders for a complete cessation.

But the note of his achievement remains—significant to this day and beyond—particularly in *The Steerage*, of 1907. Here immigrants in shawls and shabby work clothes gazed up pathetically at a bridge above them in the sunlight. Better-clad observers looked down at them in the shadows below. Between, knitting them together hung a bridge, the passage to a better life for them all. Compact, interlinked, shining, it was the symbol of a democratic goal now almost within their reach.

CHAPTER XXI

A Visionary from Maine

AS A YOUNG MAN, Marsden Hartley secluded himself in a deserted farmhouse and struggled with a vision among the hills of his native Maine. He was gaunt and fierce and fervently determined to commit himself to canvas. He had a soaring eye and each day he confronted the mountain and the cleft of valley as if he, from his height, would dive down even deeper than the white houses perched at its very base. His needs were few, and he could live on four dollars a week. Thus he eyed the seasons, and, as fall would approach, his spirit would wing upwards, seeking the blaze of colors upon the trees or the ethereal blues beyond the mountain tops. And seeing he painted. Then, at the very summit of his feeling, he poured forth new passages of song, unpremeditated and sparkling as the trill of a bird which circles in the sky.

Hartley was then in his early thirties. He was not precisely untutored, though one might be justified in calling him unteachable. Born at Lewiston, in 1877, he had attended secondary school until, at fifteen, he had moved to Cleveland. There his devotion to art cost him his job, but won him a scholarship at the Cleveland School of Art. He read no books until he was eighteen, when a persistent

friend, Miss Nina Waldeck, loaned him Emerson's *Essays*. Here he first got intoxicated upon the Transcendentalists. He studied in New York first under Chase and Dumont and Mora at the Chase School, and then endured a few lectures from Cox at the League. A year at the National Academy of Design under Francis C. Jones, Edgar M. Ward, Maynard, Dielman and J. Scott Hartley, and he was through. Thereafter he would find his instruction only in nature and such artists as he felt to be kindred.

Chief among these was Segantini, an Italian Impressionist who had "ascended" the Engadine Alps and painted the sheep as they grazed at 2500 meters above sea level. His were pacific canvases, cool as the mountain air and as refreshing when they were not too devotional. But Hartley was attracted to them also by the fact that their peculiar freshness was conveyed in a manner as personal to the painter as his subject-matter. Segantini, though unschooled in Impressionism, had developed a veritable stitch whereby he let more air and light into the canvases than was permissible to the heavier academicians of his day. And this straight application of colors, this immersion in the out-of-doors, as it were, convinced Hartley that here was a "friend." Thus inspired, he produced some decisive paintings.

These first works were exhibited at "291."[1] Hartley had been introduced to Stieglitz by Shaemas O'Sheel, a volatile Irishman and poet, apparently in the hope that the former would present his paintings. He was not disappointed. For when the work followed, Stieglitz decided

[1]May 8–18, 1909.

within a few days that it deserved a show. It brought in, he has said,[2] a big, bold feeling of the out-of-doors. And then he could not refuse an American artist who asked no more than four dollars a week. Hartley was moved. Here he was not excommunicated, as he was later to put it in writing, but defended and given a chance to work, inasmuch as Stieglitz not only persuaded others to support the young painter, but bought some of his productions himself. A year later Hartley was exhibited with other young innovators. But not all were ready to accept the man and his work. Critics denied him, and so did certain of the exhibitors at "291." Nevertheless, Hartley continued to develop and earned a second one-man show in 1912. This time enough people were interested so that he could take a trip to Europe. Further paintings followed, and two years later the products of this journey were presented. Hartley, who had crossed the ocean with them, soon returned to Europe, where he stayed until driven back by the war in late 1915. Other shows followed—at the Daniel Gallery as well as "291"—but Hartley was disconsolate. Desperately poor, he at last travelled out to New Mexico, where he remained for the better part of a year and a half. Here he not only painted but produced considerable poetry and certain prose writings. But still finances were troublesome.

Though Stieglitz no longer had a gallery, in 1921, he arranged an auction of the artist's work through the kindness of Mitchell Kennerley and the Anderson Galleries. Here was a total disposal of Hartley's pictures.

[2]In a series of unpublished stories.

The results were bracing to the painter. He received $5000, and that night, with tears in his eyes, saw patrons slapping one another on the back and old friends rejoicing as a living American artist stirred the market place almost as much as if he had been a Frenchman. It was a glorious evening, and he felt that he no longer was neglected. Now he could work abroad without further worries. He settled in the country of Cézanne, intending, so he said in letters, to paint those blue mountains with a power worthy of the great master who had preceded him. He was exhibited periodically. Meanwhile, a book of poems and one of criticism had appeared. He began to count among his contemporaries.

But ever the old difficulties dogged him. He could not conform. Collectors were irritated by his constant vagaries. He displeased the museums. He refused to truckle to any one. With the onset of the depression he was in extreme difficulties indeed. At last, twenty years after leaving it, he returned to New England. Hartley was restored. "What was broken," he wrote, became "whole."[3] He painted the sea with surf "climbing to the sky," he met the mountains again, he observed log-jams and put them on canvas. He memorialized dead fishermen. And at last the public began to respond. More surprising, a museum—the Pennsylvania Academy of Art—awarded him a prize in 1940.

What of his painting throughout these many years? It was a combination of two elements—sophistication and

[3]From his poem "Return of the Native," in *Androscoggin*, published in 1940 by the Falmouth House at Portland, Maine.

simplicity. The sophistication occurred as Hartley travelled both here and abroad—assimilating Picasso, Kandinsky or Gris, and always, regardless of the undertaking, showing himself capable of coping with the latest tendencies. Such works were never without their refinement, if too often they leaned upon it to the exclusion of that lyric cry which first animated his canvases. These works surpassed the bulk of American painting in their time, yet they did not impress to the same extent as the more "native" expressions of their own creator. For Hartley was inseparable from the mountains and rivers of Maine. Like Waldo Peirce, another Maine citizen who had lived much abroad,[4] he needed contact with his own country to bring out the best that was in him. For that reason, the mountain passages, the sea gulls "sitting still," the wild, northern fragrance of his rural Maine, translated to canvas, remain his most convincing contributions to the American art of his period.

As a poet Hartley might be termed a gifted *amateur*. His verses have their felicities, fully in keeping with the more distinguished of the Imagists. But he possesses a more country flavor.

In criticism, Hartley will be remembered for his *Adventures in the Arts*. Here he evaluated various Moderns, really "galloped" as he described his joy at the circus or the vaudeville, and expressed his admiration for certain of his literary favorites.

[4]Peirce, who was born in 1884, returned from long residence abroad in 1930. Since then he has become progressively more concentrated as a painter.

But this book had a more fundamental worth. In it the Hartley of the vision returned. . . . Here, in his chapters on the "Red Man" as our first artist, on that remote and subtle New Englander George Fuller, and on the somewhat later landscapists Homer Martin, Ralph Blakelock and Theodore Robinson, he wrote not only with a sense of their historic place, but as if their identity were his own. Winslow Homer he praised for having caught the elemental strength of a coast familiar to them both.

Then, before arriving at his own day, he pictured the ghostly Ryder and his nocturnal passages with the sailboats gliding along. . . .

Years later—in the mid-thirties when he had once again been re-established in his own habitat—he wrote of Ryder as a hermit-thrush whose voice poured out with a singular purity.[5] This was the essential Hartley, throbbing with the same fervor as the master whom he adored.

[5] *The New Caravan* (1936), p. 550.

CHAPTER XXII

The Celebrator of the Soil

ARTHUR DOVE comes all loamy from the American soil. His works do not arise in the European experience, nor from Arcadian fancies which have charmed the mental eye of the painter, nor from observations in the cities. He expands when he sees a stand of wheat, a fungus in the middle of the woods, or a weather-beaten shanty which shelters farm implements. He is sensitized to the recording of these things. He handles them tenderly, like a Robert Burns with a field mouse, and it seems that the very fields have a new consciousness when he is done with them. He pioneers, not in the exploitation of the land, but in the articulation of it. He is fully attached to the soil of America.

Yet he paints as no provincial, sketching bucolics only because he is unskillful with the more complicated strains. He sings the earth from a central attachment and not an accidental one. His childhood was not bitten with the toil of a farm boy: he was born in Canandaigua, New York,[1] and brought up in the neighboring city of Geneva, where his father was proprietor of a brickyard and owner of considerable real estate. He was educated privately and in

[1]August 2, 1880.

the public schools of Geneva and then at Hobart College (1899–1901). In 1903 he received an A.B. degree from Cornell. Even then he had given no intimation of his underlying compulsion. He proceeded to New York City, and there, from 1903 to 1908, drew illustrations for such periodicals as *Collier's*, *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Scribner's*. Soon he had joined the best-paid illustrators—much to his father's satisfaction—and was accounted one of the most distinguished among them, even in that day of their flourishing.

Dove had an earthy disposition. He liked to chaff with the illustrators after work, and he often met them at the bars. He also established a friendship with two painters, "Alfie" Maurer and William Glackens, and soon was seeing so much of them that they became known as a triumvirate. He followed them to Europe in 1908, and then an upheaval occurred. Dove saw the work of Matisse and, like Maurer, could never forget it. Illustrating faded. He executed a few drawings—*garçons* and tipsy Americans and shimmering cafés—sent them back to the magazines and then devoted himself to painting. Upon his return over a year later he exhibited, in New York, with the "Younger American Painters" at "291."[2] Few critics praised him. Two years later, when showing alone,[3] he antagonized his own family. His father, viewing the paintings, set his jaw and exclaimed to Alfred Stieglitz,[4] "Do you mean to say that the American people will ever be crazy enough to

[2]March 21–April 15, 1910.

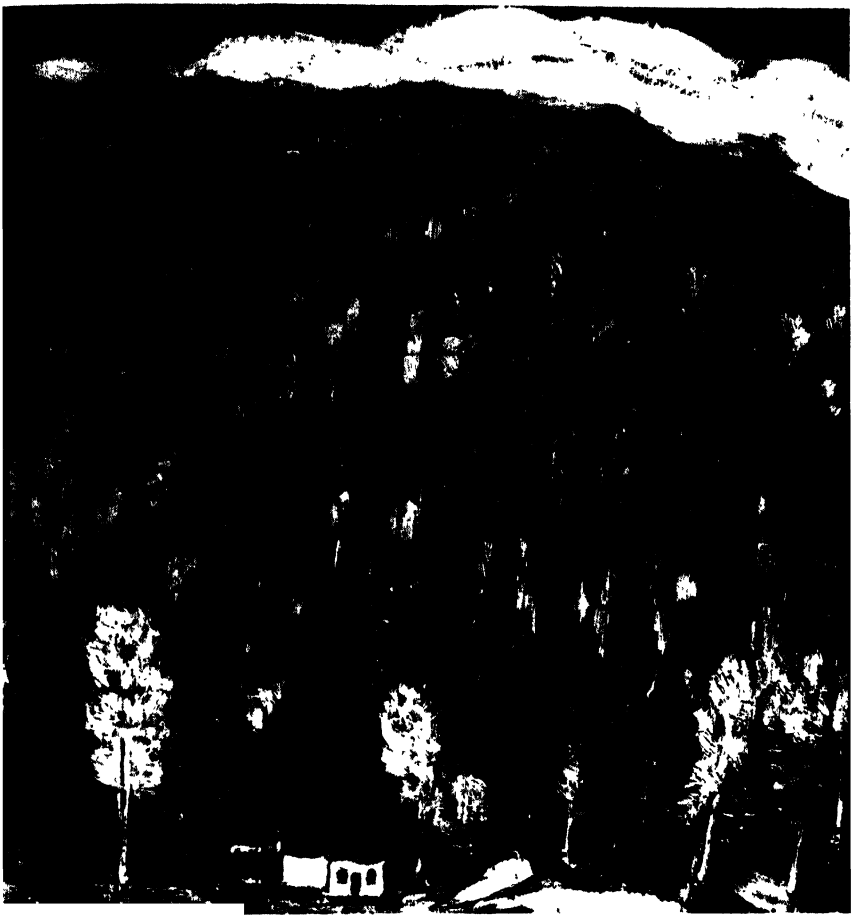
[3]February 27–March 12, 1912. Also at "291."

[4]According to one more in a series of stories by the veteran photographer.

buy such ugly pictures as you have shown me!" Thereupon Stieglitz warned the young exhibitor that his father would never forgive him. But the son had a jaw of his own, and did not surrender.

Those first paintings were chiefly pastels. They incorporated leaf-forms and other distinguishable shapes such as rooftops or sailboats. Certainly it should have been obvious that these had at least furnished his beginning. But the finished work frequently might indicate but a single recognizable frond or the edge of a sail. The rest was an abstract play of independent forms. One critic used the word "kaleidoscopic," since he was reminded of certain childhood joys when he had gazed at whirling shapes that pleased his eye. Others, more observant, understood that Dove was trying to render back "pure," in his own concatenation of forms and colors, the precise pleasure which nature had given him in the first place—or, as he put it, a "music of the eye." But few sought, or even cared, to comprehend.

His father cut him off, he ceased illustrating, his wife (whom he had married in Paris) left him. Painting was the issue. Yet, having made his art inaccessible to the public, he knew that he could not support himself by that means alone. Like Thoreau retiring to Walden pond, he must seek a more primitive form of existence. Why not try farming? Then for six years (1912–18) Dove tried, between chores, to mix agriculture and painting. And surely to this time one must assign those frolicsome cows and merry goats and old rust colors and fern patterns and tumbled waters which then first began to obtain as his



Autumn—Maine—1909

MARSDEN HARTLEY



the Phillips Memorial Gallery Collection, Washington, D. C

The Red Barge

ARTHUR G. DOVE

subjects. These years also corrected his tendency towards overspeculation. For Dove had been respectively impressed by Matisse, Kandinsky (in his "kaleidoscopic" phase) and Picabia, a Chilean from Paris. Sometimes, visualizing them, he was commanded more by the mind than the feeling. Now these preoccupations were absorbed by the soil, as it were, and given back in a more vigorous form. When he consulted the "collages" of Braque and Picasso—those arrangements bearing newspaper clippings, matchsticks, sandpaper, even strips of linoleum under the assumption, alternately serious and joking, that anything is material to the painter—he clarified his own pursuits so that here, too, his work seemed to arise out of the earth.

But the struggle had not ceased. At last he took refuge on a houseboat near the tip of Manhattan. Here, strengthened by the daily companionship of a woman who, like himself, had once been an illustrator, he imperturbably lived in the light of his conviction. The north winds raged in through the floor of their shaky dwelling. He never wavered. Fifty dollars a month sufficed for expenses, including both living and materials. Sometimes, hard-pressed, he made an illustration. But the experience deepened. Sometimes the whole sky flamed up as he did his *Storm Clouds in Silver*. He painted boats with a new solidity, because he knew them. And even his collages modified. In *Nigger Goes A-fishin'*,[5] he conveyed, by bamboo,

[5]"The word *Nigger* does not," as Elizabeth McCausland correctly insisted in *Parnassus*, December, 1937, "imply race discrimination; it is in the American language for good reasons; Dove uses it as naturally as he calls his father 'my old man.' This is the cadence of Huck Finn."

denim, a button and a line, arranged within a shadow-box, the joy of a Negro fishing on a sunny afternoon. In *Willows and Rain,* with slender twigs pelted by flecks of gelatine, against a mirror behind, he suggested a watery scene under a Chinese sky. Again, in *Grandmother,* as if singing an old Psalm, he placed exquisite wood, a scrap of prayer book and a bit of velvet within a frame, thus to recall, perhaps, a gentle person who resided in these things for him.

No dealer of course would exhibit him. But from 1925 to 1929, when the Intimate Gallery was open, he slowly impressed those who were given to more careful inspection. Murdock Pemberton cheered for him in *The New Yorker.*[6] Waldo Frank, in *The New Republic,*[7] provocatively termed him the "poet of the unborn." (Justly so too, for sometimes Dove cannot even say what he knows.) By 1930, he at last was able to concentrate uninterruptedly on painting. His development of the last eleven years has proceeded accordingly.

Today one enters an exhibition of his, feeling that the earth is just beyond the horizon. Sometimes a flash illuminates a landscape. Again the woods, the country highways, even the waters and the distant hills, have found a spokesman. Out of Dove's courage has come a new form. At last a celebrator of the soil in our painting.

[6]As early as 1924, however, Paul Rosenfeld had written a whole chapter about Dove in *Port of New York.* This sensitive estimate has provided many suggestions for the present chapter.

[7]January 27, 1926.

CHAPTER XXIII

Sculpture

THE lamplight speckled in the trees and the statue stood there, solidly planted and quite plainly Admiral Farragut even in that insufficient light. From the front, his coat blew back a little, as if perhaps he were facing a squall on the bridge of his ship. . . . This statue, standing in Madison Square Park, compels one, even at night, to recognize that here Augustus St. Gaudens, our premier sculptor of the nineteenth century, achieved one of the few public monuments of which Americans need not be ashamed. But it is not altogether reassuring to confront the other stone and metal effigies in our parks and plazas. They may remind the patriotic of past victories, or recall that Greeley was an upright editor, or bring back for a moment the presence of an eminent statesman. But as sculpture they are worthless. Again, the nymphs and portrait heads and animal shapes which flourished in the nineteenth century seldom convince one that there was any justification for them save the fact that they gratified both the patron and his servant in a common expenditure.

In the Nineties George Grey Barnard, a Middle Westerner, tried to cut through these limitations. He was ambitious. He sought, in protest, to incorporate the whole energies of America into his sculpture and to revitalize an art

which, in the days of Michelangelo, had been capable not only of invoking the flame of heaven, but of shaping the very fortifications which were to hold off an invader. For Barnard realized, correctly, that sculpture is a social art and that until it fulfills both the needs and the aspirations of a people it is condemned merely to an adventitious role. How well did he succeed? In his *Lincoln* undoubtedly he expressed the rough-hewn rail-splitter that every American loves from his third-grade reader. And the illiterate protests—mostly from second-line academicians—against this severe and forceful work when it was offered to the City of London during the first World War, merely reinforced the meaning that it conveyed to a sensitive eye. But Barnard's impressive *Lincoln* stands lonely among his more ambitious and didactic undertakings of the present century. The figures which front the state capital in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, overflow the premises as it were, and though they unquestionably intend to do the right thing, the scattering and overemphasis are all too apparent. These hewings—for Barnard's work always impresses an observer as such—were accomplished at enormous sacrifice and despite the complications which often interfere with a state project of this kind. Nevertheless, this work, first begun in the early years of the century and not terminated until many years later, involved the sculptor in strains which he never afterwards escaped. He bickered, sued, became an inveterate letter-writer, and something of a professional grudge-carrier. His north and south pediments at the New York Public Library led to unfortunate incriminations against his marble-cutters, and his huge war monument,

begun Nov. 11, 1918—and not completed at the time of his death in 1938—embarrasses one with the profusion of its figures and the pulpitlike message that it was intended to convey. Colossal though his aspiration, Barnard's achievement in the latter half of his life now seems less impressive than that in the first, and for this reason he must be considered a transition-figure.[1]

In fact, Barnard had already, while still in his twenties, accomplished the *Two Natures* which today stands in the entrance hall of the Metropolitan Museum. It was forceful carving, rightly muscled, and imbued with at least some of the force which propels sound sculpture. But its "message" was banal. After all, who wants a Sunday-school lesson in stone? And, more essential, it did not animate the spaces. Barnard attacked the stone, he did not apprehend its displacement of space with sensitivity. For this a special kind of grip is necessary. The sculptor must be ruled by an emotional-intuitive hold upon all of the areas in which he operates. Barnard, unfortunately, was dominated by forbidding conceptions as to Puritanical propriety. Thus the flow did not take place in the stone. For the feeling which pulses out of an artist takes no thought of systematic ethics—it finds the good in the shaping of the material before it. Here lay the irreducible deficiency of Barnard. Even so, he brought a formidable *hewing* earnestness to American sculpture, he helped to throw out for all time those tepid "nibblers" who merely shaped models and let more heroic workmen cut and hammer out the stone. Bar-

[1]Incidentally, though he was born in Pennsylvania in 1864, Barnard was brought up on the frontier of Iowa.

nard insisted on carving with his own hands, and for this he should be commended.

But what shall one say about Paul Manship? This earnest technician who was born at St. Paul, Minnesota,[2] won a Prix de Rome and has apparently never recovered from it. Soon after he returned, he was praised, as one might expect, by Kenyon Cox. Writing in the *Nation* for Feb. 13, 1913, he declared that young Manship furnished one of the hopes for American art. As usual, it was because he knew how to handle tools. Now, nobody can dismiss this faculty. But why is it that such academicians always make their recommendations in terms of it? Is it not because that is *all* they know? Soon Mr. Manship was being praised for his *Pauline*, a bust of his three-weeks-old daughter. Unfortunately these admirers were more dominated by the subject than the "object," for the hood which stands above her head bears no relation to the larger bulk, nor does the frame, which is "antique" Florentine, justify itself functionally in terms of what lies within it. Besides, recollections of Desiderio da Settignano spring up all too readily in face of this marble. As for Manship's bronzes, these were already being sought by the bigger pocketbooks and the more flourishing American museums. They recalled Hindu, Assyrian, even Renaissance art—and for years on end reminded one that their maker had been unable to forget the paintings on Greek vases. The best of its kind, the *Dancer and Gazelles*, was, as Royal Cortissoz long ago noted, essentially *linear* in its conception. One could imagine that it had been achieved in hard wire—certainly not

[2]In 1885.

in the round. As for the *Morgan Memorial* in the Metropolitan Museum, a work which occupied the sculptor for several years just before and into the Twenties, this is an unintentional caricature. It stands as an anthology of all the styles with which Mr. Manship was familiar. And it reminds one that he has been as good a "collector" as the financier he celebrated. The carving of this memorial, much of which was entrusted to Gaston Lachaise, shows more fancy and grace than the work as a whole. So much for this First Eclectic among living American sculptors.

II

At the very time when Manship was fulfilling this commission, a young Pole who later became an American citizen arrived for his first exhibition. He, too, carved in respect to the past. But if Eli Nadelman, in his La Mystérieuse, was not unmindful of a Greek work in the classic period, he was capable, at the same time, of making its beauty his own. That is, he commented as he eyed the past. He gave a glossy touch to marble. He followed some curiously effective but interrupted rhythm. Wherefore, looking at his work, one experienced, not only a reminder of the past, but also a reinterpretation of it. Besides, he conveyed his "examination" with such a regardful workmanship that even an academician would have to admit his skill.[3]

This exhibition also contained certain drawings, some

[3]Nadelman's first American show took place at "291" from Dec. 8, 1915, to Jan. 19, 1916.

independent, others as forays looking towards pieces in sculpture. These indicated that Nadelman, as early as 1905, was exploring volumes as a contemporary of Picasso. In fact, they were friends in Paris. Only, Nadelman was always trying to recompose, one might say, with his intellect, whereas Picasso sought to break up further.[4] Some of his horses and soldiers, also exhibited on this occasion, bore springing bodies on tapering feet. In every case they suggested a swift and sensitive spirit.

Later, Nadelman satirized certain giddy hostesses and overfed gentlemen. He portrayed tangoists and piano-players. All these, exhibited at various New York galleries during the next thirteen years illustrated rather a wit than a fundamental shaping. Nevertheless, they had the same scrupulous workmanship, and they deserve a word for that reason, if for no other. Since completing the figures over the doorway of the Fuller Building, in New York, Nadelman has been virtually in retirement. Nevertheless, today this sculptor, who is only fifty-eight, should yet be able to interest us again as he did in his more youthful days.

Alfeo Faggi, born in Italy in 1885, arrived in America only three years before Nadelman. Until then he had been an active Florentine carver too much influenced by those ubiquitous achievements which make Florence itself a city of sculpture. America stimulated him, he has said. Eventually he worked out fresh religious conceptions in his *St.*

[4]It has been pointed out by André Salmon in a just and subtle appreciation which appeared in *L'Art Décoratif* (January-June, 1914, p. 110) that Nadelman was an "investigator" and "renewer" solely in the realm of traditional statuary.

Francis and managed an occasionally pointed delicacy in his mask-like heads. Somewhat febrile and staccatto, these works have an intensity and a spontaneity, even if they do suggest more the relief than the form in the round.

Another intelligent sculptor is Robert Laurent. A protégé of Hamilton Easter Field, American patron and founder of *The Arts* (a publication which endured right up into the Nineteen Thirties), Laurent came here when he was but twelve years old.[5] He became a first-rate carver. In alabaster, particularly, Laurent achieves a honey-like penetration which is peculiarly suited to the stone. He also thinks and orders well, so that he never offends the intelligence by malaproprisms of structure. Unfortunately, he is not impelled by emotion to cut more deeply than he has yet gone, so he remains the firm and virile carver who still has not entered the more fundamental areas of plastic experience.

Alexander Archipenko, when he came to the United States in 1923, already had something of a reputation as an innovator in sculpture. His sophistication of touch, his deftness with materials, his ingenuity at portraying a round as a hollow or at doubling a proportion so that one had a sense of an agreeable stroking *in extenso*, convinced certain commentators that here was an artist of importance. But later it became apparent, by the repetition of similar devices, that Mr. Archipenko was somewhat less the *investigateur* than the *exécutant habile*. And yet he has always had a felicitous and sinuous twist to his modelling. Jo Davidson might well concentrate a little upon such

[5]He had been born at Concarneau, Brittany, France, in 1890.

gratifications. This sculptor-portraitist, who was born on the East Side in 1883, has documented many types—the tight-lipped Rockefeller, Sr., ardent Spanish Loyalists, puffy society ladies, D. H. Lawrence—in fact many of the notables of his time. He does so with both tranquillity and justice. He forces nothing. One could wish that he might expend himself more than he does. Yet Mr. Davidson never pretends to be anything except what he is, the able portraitist.

Miss Malvina Hoffman is primarily a personality in sculpture. She has ventured with courage into such projects as the assembling of sculpture to typify the principal races of man, and she has undertaken many large and ambitious works, both here and abroad. But what remains is less impressive than the force of her effort. Maurice Sterne, the painter, has frequently turned his hand to stone, and Mabel Dodge Luhan, his former wife, always insisted that he is essentially a sculptor. Certainly Sterne's own perceptions are more recognizable in his *Bomb-thrower*, his *Awakening* or the well-known *Monument to the Early Settlers* at Worcester, than they seem to be in his many paintings. Yet here again one's respect for his workmanship and intelligence is qualified by reminders of what other men have done. It is the same with Arthur Lee, a quiet admirer of the Greek classics. He models with a certain tenderness but he does not sufficiently erase from his mind, and ours, the recollections of what we have seen before. Mahonri Young, the Utah sculptor, shapes workmen which, despite a personal vigor, never permit us to forget that he has admired Meunier, the sculptor of the miners.

Hunt Diederich's decorative ironwork is well-known. Of its kind it is good, though it belongs more to the silhouette than to sculpture in the strictest sense of the word. But in William Zorach, formerly a painter and for somewhat over two decades now a sculptor, one encounters a fluescence which is not appropriate to stone. He carves, it is true, with a due observation for veining and color. And he has justly insisted to his students that they, too, should chisel directly in the material. Unfortunately, Zorach does not achieve a sculpture which satisfies from every direction. His water colors, because of their very fluidity, are preferable.

The most original American sculptors from the next generation are to be found in Alexander Calder, John B. Flannagan and Ernest Gutman. Calder specializes in "mobiles" and "stabiles." These are like the protoplasm of sculpture. Plasm-like shapes float in the wind, achieving new formations with each current which spins them around again. They suggest the infinite play of forces in nature and a curious, antennæ-like sensitivity, as of beetle forms which "think" with their feelers. John B. Flannagan has said that his "aim is to produce sculpture with such ease, freedom and simplicity that it hardly seems carved but rather to have endured so always." His unpretentious works in fieldstone and native granite might be stones long weathered in the open and which now, as one picks them up, are seen to be the shapes of goats or deer, crystallized somehow into the rock before one. They might have been incised by the wind and rain. They may seem to be uncouth but they are not. Perhaps the lack of emphasis gives this

impression. Flannagan never insists, he humorously drawls and lets it go at that. He is one of our real originals in sculpture.

Ernest Gutman has never been given a one-man show. For years his feuds with New York landlords used to provide a regular feature-story for *The Herald Tribune*. A reporter would arrive to find the crop-haired young sculptor barricaded behind his stones while the obstreperous landlord vainly tried to collect. Intransigent, he has faced the galleries and even his fellow-sculptors with the same solitary independence. His work is angular, polished, provocative. Often it shows a kind of soaringness which suggests a vision. He dreams great social monuments—one of them has been in project for almost ten years—and many of his works might be called constructions. At present he is devising traffic-lights and a sun-dial, but eventually his demonstrations of new social and material perspectives will be better understood.

III

In Gaston Lachaise, American sculpture soared to new fulfillments and amplitudes. He did not limit himself to literal public monuments of the departed dead, nor whittle out little cupids to titillate a drawing room, or remain the minor "engraver." In him great forces displaced the stone or metal and volcanic upsurges announced that a new American energy was being propelled into a somewhat unchallenging art. He assaulted the very steeps of accomplishment and at fifty-three, exhausted, came to his end. His death was an irreplaceable loss to our sculpture.



Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art

Woman—1912–27

GASTON LACHAISE



Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art

John Marin

GASTON LACHAISE

Lachaise was born a Frenchman, in 1882. His father, a cabinetmaker, sent him to the Bernard Palissy School, when Gaston was a boy of thirteen. Here he obtained that incomparable sureness as an artisan which later saved him when he was jeopardized by economic want in America. Next he studied at the Beaux-Arts, where he was a classmate of Charles Despiau, today one of the leading sculptors in France. In those days Lachaise was the indolent student of the Latin Quarter. Like Whistler, he strolled about with his rakish hat and velveteen trousers and sought to reincarnate in his person the amours and tribulations of Murger's *La Vie de Bohème*. It was a dreamy, troubadour life, and the intentions surpassed the performances. But then, one day at a museum, he encountered an American woman, Isabel Dutaud, and loved her at once. And thereafter she was an elemental force in his life.

Later he followed her to America, first having devoted a year to drudgery in the Lalique works in order to earn the fare. Arriving in Boston in 1906, he had but thirty dollars in his pocket. Soon he met Henry Hudson Kitson, an American sculptor of Civil War monuments. And then, because of his training as an artisan, Lachaise could support himself by carving out such beltbuckles, epaulettes and saddles as would be proper to a soldier dashing into the Battle of Vicksburg: For six years he continued his labors for Kitson.

How did his new country affect Lachaise? Certainly it energized him. Once he would recall that when he took his first streetcar in Boston, the conductor said, "Wake up!" During his first spring, when he settled at Quincy,

Mass., he would swim daily and soon he was doing a mile. This, he held, invigorated him both physically and mentally. He became dynamic in his reactions. He felt energetic compulsions and he rejoiced to the spread and movement of things, as well as to the sensual depth and richness which had been his inheritance as a Frenchman. But he had not yet arrived at his integral personality as a sculptor. Certain masks he carved out as tribute to the child of a friend, and he enjoyed perhaps an excursion or two into the figurine—but these off-moment undertakings did not as yet indicate the direction that was about to be his. That final consolidation of his own powers would not come about until he reached New York.

Not until 1912 did he follow Kitson there. Then he settled on 14th Street in a vicinity where the crash and rattle of the "el" trains punctuated his life with immense and stirring rhythms of machinery. He was exalted in the city of the impossibly high buildings and foghorns and merciless traffic. Something overflowed in him. It issued in the form of those small human figures which he now shaped out in rhythms of a molten and heaving beauty. In them the bronze swelled, it overreached itself in a wave—why, the very sun seemed to glimmer when he finished. It was as if a revelation became manifest beneath his hands. But always it was a woman that he portrayed, and always the same woman, the one who had captured Lachaise and exalted him ever since that first day in Paris.

Her image was now possessing him. Passionately he renounced his activities for Kitson and began to shape a huge

Standing Figure in bronze. This was the queen of the earth, balancing on delicate feet, her body a swirl of metal and its globular proportions all a-surge in a volcanic movement. Her eyes closed, her lips smiling,—as if inwardly she felt that abandon which could only mean utter ecstasy. Here stood the glorification of a woman. In a word, it was the *volupté* of the infinitely desirable. But with a difference from the French celebrations of the kind. Compare this Lachaise to a luminous nude by Despiau or even to the more drastic *Enchained Energy* by Maillol. What is the difference? Simply this: that here a naked force leaps as it were from the ground and circulates in never-ceasing swiftness throughout the figure. In this figure the more imperative rhythms of American life beat. And that is why it could have come from this soil and no other.

For six months Lachaise toiled at this figure. Penniless, he at last sought out Manship and from him presently obtained work as a carver. Manship liked his fruits and flowers. Soon began the heroic period for Lachaise as a sculptor. His daily bread he earned at his tasks for Manship, and then at night, sometimes sleeping but four hours in the twenty-four, he wrought out those figures in bronze, nickel and other mediums which were to place him indisputably with the first of his time. He entered a small work in plaster at the Armory Show. Apparently it was unnoticed. Three years later, still continuing the daily pace of artisanship for Manship and then the uplifted rigors of his own studio, he was ready to exhibit. The War prevented. At last, in 1918, Stefan Bourgeois, one of the first

New York dealers to present the Moderns, gave him a show. Two works were sold. But he gained a supporter, for Henry McBride hailed him in *The Sun*. McBride never could forget the exaltation he had received from that first exhibition and he frequently referred to it—even in his stricken death notice for the sculptor in 1935. Meanwhile, two years later, another show. This time he had no sales whatsoever.

Fortunately the *Dial* magazine, having moved from Chicago, employed Lachaise as an illustrator. It also reproduced his works, encouraged patrons and otherwise helped as the steadfast sculptor fought his daily battles on the two fronts of economics and art. That year—1920—E. E. Cummings, the poet, upheld Lachaise in an essay which for beauty and understanding has never been surpassed in any other writing on the sculptor. He properly saw his quality and comprehended that when Lachaise rose on the waves of his greater figures he was peering, as it were, to some horizon beyond the horizon's edge. He was in bliss, but also in a kind of eternity. At any rate, the sculptor was soon, after his long servitude to Manship, able to cease such labors and to concentrate on those which were exclusively his own. He now did certain decorative sculptures—peacocks or dolphins, for example—for the dealer Kraushaar, and obtained other decorative commissions whereby he could maintain himself more advantageously than by his former connection.

But let us not underestimate his struggle. In his own words he has described it. "The path to achievement, though cleared of a few stumps and morasses, is as bare and

dangerous as the trail over the plains, across the Rockies, to the Far West in 1828.[6] Financial strain from all sides, no general support for the better part of a lifetime are yours. Will-power, tenacity, pride that can disregard all humiliations conceivable, aggressiveness, essential on all occasions, long stretches of labor—day and night—twenty hours out of twenty-four, are your only assets. Hardships for all concerned. Artists' wives are assuredly the pioneer women of this era. Artists' wives will go to heaven, let me tell you."

Something vast and propulsive sustained the sculptor in these years. Rightly did McBride speak when he said that Lachaise had the *terribilitá* of the great Florentines. Some glowering passion was in the man, as in all artists who cleave a new spiritual passage through minerals, clay or the very sediment of words. This is the original creative Force —the animating power which enables a man to project a new light because of his own interior incandescence. It is a gift surely—but it is recognizable—and Lachaise had it.

But Lachaise never forgot his new land. Once, offered a possibility for a Prix de Rome, he declined because here was where he intended to stay. Why go back to Europe? Why had he left it? Lachaise had faith in America—more, it may be said, than many who proclaim their allegiance in formulations of patriotism. He believed in the spiritual potentialities of this country. "It cannot be overlooked," he urged on the same occasion, "that at present, even though neglected, the American artist, 'living and true'—

[6]Lachaise was speaking of a date precisely 100 years before the issue of *Creative Art* bearing this statement—August, 1928.

creative and bearer of fruit, has begun to grow roots and function in the rocky soil of America. At wide intervals artists do meet individuals who possess the ability to render vital support to them in addition to holding tremendous enthusiasm for them. This is marvellously refreshing."[7] Time after time he said that the "soil the most fertile for the continuity of art—is here." Such statements were not issued for purposes of gratulation. On the contrary, they were like tablets on which he had engraved with his own hand the letters of his belief.

His files contained the pictures of workingmen swung out from buildings in the perils of construction; airplanes; swift American women. Hydraulic presses and giant steam-engines sang to him. He could appreciate skyscrapers "shoulderingly upward" into the sunlight. He could halt before great derricks and suspension lifts, and witness a displacement of his own muscles with every tug of the machines. Such weights, such balances, such movements, shifts and volumes were intimate to him. That is why, at his best, he could transfigure them. Not, let us regret, in his figures on the west façade of Rockefeller Centre, nor again on the International Building,[8] nor in those excessively symbolical statues in which he lost his identity in the concept. But in the swirling shapes of his smaller bronzes, in the magnificent *Standing Figure* which he com-

[7]He was here making reference to an exhibition at the Intimate Gallery (March 7–April 3, 1927). A year later, when Lachaise was exhibited at the Brummer Galleries his more painful vicissitudes were over.

[8]At 50th Street, New York City, between 5th and 6th Avenues, west façade.

pleted after a labor of twelve years, in the striding woman belonging to Paul Strand, in an occasional portrait head—especially the provocative and solid one of John Marin—in these he expanded into new dimensions of accomplishment.

Impetuous and proud and trenchant and overwhelming —all these was Lachaise, the Hero-sculptor of America. But greatest was the very center and fire which underlay all that heroism: the intimation of suns within the shining exteriors of his figures, the assurance that the stone and the metal and the wood and the plaster and the wire were not inert things, but part, even as ourselves, of an order which can be apprehended, at its greatest, when men approach with the largeness and the generosity of Gaston Lachaise.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Master of Equilibrium

JOHN MARIN, the master of equilibrium among contemporary American painters, is a cidery man who somehow suggests a rural flavor. He lives upon the Palisade cliffs opposite New York,[1] and a mere ferry-ride separates him from Manhattan. Yet his tartness, his oblique Yankee humor, and the hitch to his gait as he paces a city pavement, imply rather the walker who prefers the quiet along the Hudson or the seashore. And even if he can flicker at the quickest glint of the city, there is some steadiness beneath, as of a simplicity which absorbs all to its own rhythms. There is a greatness about this simplicity —a greatness such as one finds in the sea, the expansive field or the mountain. And the central, progressive deepening in Marin undoubtedly arises from the experiences he has been able to get from such elemental things.

Yet his growth has been a difficult one. For somehow in his very physique Marin presents a slightness scarcely sufficient for the forces which have pulled against it. An only child, he lost his mother when he was but a few days old. Maiden aunts and a grandmother reared him. He had

[1]Marin's home is in Cliffside, N. J., and he was born not far away at Rutherford (in 1870). Most of his working years have been spent in the same vicinity.

few playmates. His greatest childhood joy came when, on Saturdays, he would be taken to New York and permitted to ride in the big new elevator at Gimbel's.

When he was a little taller, the lad often went hunting in the Saddle River country back of the Palisades. He explored the gentle declivities of that valley, with its Orange Mountains rimming one side and the jutting formation thrusting up against the Hudson on the other. Here he knew the birds and the ground, and became a hunter, not only of the wild life, but of the moods of the seasons. Rainy days he would pore through the Leatherstocking Tales, especially admiring the fine old engravings, or sketch a bird from Audubon, or complete a drawing which his aunts, in pride, would fasten to the wall.

He attended public school in Union Hill, then Hoboken Academy and Stevens Preparatory, and finally Stevens Institute for one year. It was expected, no doubt, that he would become a success. But Marin had a loitering disposition, and though he clerked and attempted other jobs, he was like a bird trying to fit himself into a dray-horse. Then, more happily, he served four years in an architect's office, where he became a draughtsman and could actually sketch out some of the giants which would soon be juggling their way into the sky above. Yet even this, as well as a free-lance effort of his own, did not satisfy him, for from childhood he had always waywardly drawn—bunnies on school slates, unnecessary figures on his architectural renderings—and he had ventured out into the Mississippi Valley and revelled in the great cut of the river in St. Paul and the blue waters of the lake at Chicago. He

had even devoted a summer to water colors in his eighteenth year, and nine years later he was out upon the Jersey shore, wheeling about in his passage to catch the sunlight on the Palisades, or to denote shipping down upon the Hudson below Weehawken.

At last he decided. At the age of twenty-nine he enrolled under Anschutz and Breckenridge at the Pennsylvania Academy. He would become a painter. It was one of those slow, difficult growths which often provide the soundest way for the artist. Yet here again his waywardness was in evidence. He cared not for still-life drawing, or plaster-casts, or anatomical studies of the nude. Instead, he drifted out to the Delaware River and let his pen follow the boats, or eyed old women in the park. Let the others study in the classroom, he was for the out-of-doors. Nevertheless, Anschutz, who was no ordinary man, knew that here he had a prize, so he accordingly made him a prize-winner in a competition. Two years at the Art Students' League followed. Marin has called these "blank."[2] And he merely recognized Kenyon Cox as some weird phenomenon who was not for him. At thirty-five he sailed for France, the home of his ancestors on his father's side, and here, in the next five years, he quickly distinguished himself for both his subtlety and his sureness .Even to examine the drawings he made on the ship going over is to discover

[2]"Notes (autobiographical)," published in *Letters of John Marin.* This collection, which was privately printed by An American Place in 1931, is a delightful record of Marin's development. It was skilfully edited by Herbert J. Seligmann, a contributor of numerous forthright essays to the *International Studio*, *American Mercury*, *Nation* and other publications.

that he could indicate a head or a body with the minimum of line which will reveal the structure.

But how was he to live? The revival of etching that Whistler had stimulated had not as yet exhausted itself. Certain dealers were in the market for good, crisp, conventional renderings of the European scene. Louis Katz in New York, for one, and the better known Albert Roullier, in Chicago, for another, were ready to requisition numerous undertakings, provided that the etcher would keep within the "lines." Soon Marin was supplying them with works of this kind. He would walk about in Paris, eyeing the façades or noting the Opéra, and then, utilizing his discipline from the architect's office, build up an adequate equivalent thereof upon his copper plate. These works were circumstantial, sound and "regular." Yet a more careful eye could find in them already a tendency to stray. The crowds before the Opéra were delineated in feverish little whisks and scratches: they moved in the Twentieth Century even if the building did not. Once when he was out at Chartres—and this is probably the most impressive of his plates on architecture—he began to scamper as he eyed a patient donkey before the venerable façade. Such peripheral intimations were more telling, at least as to his future, than the accomplishments already to his credit. Even on a trip to Venice, when he completed the *Ponte Ghetto* among other works, a certain nervousness differentiated his plate from any of Whistler's. His predecessor might have "shot" the scene at a glance as Marin did, and certainly the placement inside the borders, with more emphasis upon arrangement than penetration,

was reminiscent of the earlier master. But Marin's needle scribbled in the water, and the folk assembled in the vicinity of it talk in a more loquacious and intimate fashion than one associates with Whistler. Nevertheless, dealers would still be able to offer, and sell, this plate without misgivings. Nor could they have objected to an Amsterdam excursion of a year before. Here, in depicting a *Bridge Canal*, the etcher lit the structure as it were by getting incandescent tonal effects behind, thus limning the hucksters and market-women who are busily progressing from one side to another. It has been urged that here, because of a kind of vault by the coping of the bridge, he was already leaping out into space as he would later do. Possibly so; but the occasion for the vault is the life which patters across the bridge—the footsteps which agitate, and the figures which plod. It is doubtful, however, if a plate of his earliest Paris days[3] could have been either bought or sold by the dealers. Here the water itself wrote the movement of the lines: the lazy drift of the barges, the stationary shipping upon one bank, and the untouched spaces which seem to "pause" throughout the rest of the etching. One discerns hardly any relationship to Whistler in such a work.

Presently Marin set himself to etch a crumbling tower in Paris. All started well: no dealer could object. Then tiny "outlaws" appeared as his hand became entranced with the flight of the rooks which dipped or circled about the structure. Later, while employed on another façade, the hand got away from the prescribed task and began to frisk

[3] *The Seine, Paris* (1905).

about at its own free will upon the plate. Hurrying home, Marin pulled his proof. He was delighted. There before him was a *living line*. Not a reminiscence of a building, not a description of a scene, but a living line which was itself a beginning and an end. Yet when he showed such works—and they were multiplying—to his dealers, he was rebuffed. Completely baffled, he turned to water colors. Here, at least, in works done only to satisfy himself, he could wander about as he pleased. Nobody took water colors seriously. Indeed, he would not even attempt to sell them.

As ever he ambled about, enjoying the company of congenial men who, even if they didn't paint or etch, would appreciate as much as he did a game of pool, a cigarette, or an evening of conversation about the cafe-tables. Those were innocent days at the Dôme, when it had not become institutionalized by the influx of those hordes which later turned it into a kind of exhibition place for the "artistic." Only a few Americans knew it then. One was Arthur B. Carles, the Philadelphia painter and, like Marin, an ex-student of the Pennsylvania Academy. With such a man Marin could discuss his complaints. No doubt he showed him some of the water colors. And Carles, who had an "eye," and some feeling, moved by the birth of a poet before his eyes, enthusiastically brought them to the attention of Eduard Steichen, the photographer who was much in Paris in those days. Steichen promptly dispatched a group of them to Stieglitz in 1909. And at "291," in the spring of that year, they were exhibited—twenty-five in number—along with a lesser number of challenging works by the "new" Alfred Maurer.

What was their reception? Stieglitz did not adjure him to cease his experiments, nor did Steichen, nor did any of the courageous men gathering about "291." They welcomed these flares that Marin had ignited. And fortunate that they did, too, for Marin was at the crisis of his career. Gifted—gifted perhaps beyond his knowing—he was in the predicament of the man who, because he cannot fit himself to a mold, is at the mercy of those who can. Suppose that he continued as he had done before. Is it likely that he would have moved forward as he did? One cannot say, but certainly it is clear, by his own words, that he felt a new exhilaration which compelled him to outstrip anything that he had ever done before. Somehow the very activities of the men at "291" fired Marin into making a final decision. He would disregard the dealers and never again paint as they wanted. This, although he did not know it, was his turning point. For not only did his painting thereafter deepen, but his championship from Stieglitz became progressively more effective. Today, thirty-three years later, he is still championed by Stieglitz, who still exhibits him, still upholds him to the press and public, and still enlists new patrons in his behalf—and does it all, as he has always done, without ever taking any remuneration for his services. No wonder Marin continued to strengthen.

If, then, 1909 completes the first phase in Marin's life, it likewise furnishes an opportunity for an evaluation of his etchings and for an attempt to consider their place in his future production. In the years before he permanently returned to America—1905 to 1910—he produced almost one hundred works on the copper plate. (He added ap-

proximately thirty more in the years following.) All of these are good, but the accent is less inescapably his own than it is in the total of his oils and water colors. Sometimes the circumstantiality reminds us that the requirement of setting down a building in detail was uppermost, or again the kinship with Whistler, as in the Venetian series especially, unduly prevails at the expense of those sharp-cut notes which were Marin's own. Yet certain achievements such as the *Bridge Canal*, *The Seine*, the *Rouen Market* of 1909, and above all the touchingly humorous *Street Scene, Paris*, stand eminent and individual among not only his, but others', attainments in the medium. Whistler conveyed a figure or a scene in an envelope—an envelope of poesy which he stroked with silk and which gave off opalescent tints. Marin is altogether more vagrant. He eludes more and yet he is also more positive. Lines could not be fewer than in *The Seine*, and yet there is also an intimation of iron, or at least of some sterner reinforcement within. Marin seeks always for structure, Whistler was dominated by mood. How it would have gone had Marin continued to etch, one cannot say. But certainly his best plates are those in which he had already departed from his predecessor.

These works also subsume his production in other mediums. Too often has it been said that elimination is preeminently the characteristic of the water color. Isn't it also the paramount requirement in the etching? P. H. Hamerton, the English expert,[4] insisted that etching required even more condensation. Condensation, indeed, was a habit of

[4]In his masterwork, *Etching and Etchers*.

Marin's mind. Any New Englander commenting upon politics at the cracker-barrel, a Ring Lardner discussing a "crucial" baseball series, a Thoreau with his apothegms—are they not all characteristic of the American genius? Brevity is the thing. Say it in a word. Indicate by an omission. And Marin certainly is in the line. His etchings are compact with the compactness of the man who will not say too much.

II

The Marin of this early period was a rambler. Resuming the habits of his childhood, he paced the quiet canals or slouched at doorways upon the street, as he gazed at his enchanting world. He was absorbing the aroma of life. He was trapping impressions as it were, instead of wild game. The impulse was the same. But the second arc of his life vaults into a violent trajectory. Sometimes we cannot see its peak—it is too close to the stars, or, perhaps, too marked in its speed. But at any rate it was different both in scope and intensity, and it was this more jagged, not to say agonized, Marin who achieved the later works for which he is chiefly known today.

Indeed, the arduous ascent he soon accomplished was one of the most rapid and startling in the history of art. In 1908 he had journeyed to London, and, amid sunlight, set down a bus in such skittering colors that it seemed one could all but hear the grind of the wheels. Strokes fought each other, and an almost panting rhythm issued from them. Not that he was an Impressionist, though the ad-

mittance of the light and the choppy nature of the color might have led to such a superficial comparison. Rather, he was caught up in an industrial whirl and somehow conveyed its inmost movement with his brush. No "Whistlerianisms" now—Whistler with his pearly matching of tones and his lissome shaping of a body. This was a more steely and compulsive vision. And again, in *Four O'Clock on the Seine*, of a year later, larger structures brooded in the sky. Some aerial architecture lay behind those rain-clouds clotted over the bridge. Some remembered formation—veritable brick and piling and tower—was implied in the touches that met the eye. One might have recalled the commentary of Charles Saunier,[5] who, viewing

[5]Saunier, a French critic, wrote this appraisal of Marin's etchings as a full-length article in *L'Art Decoratif*, pp. 17–24, No. 1, 1908. This, be it observed, was before he had ever been celebrated in America. A year later, Marin, in a pamphlet issued by Roullier, the Chicago dealer, had this to say about the etcher's art: "One might call an etching a written impression of tone, more or less in the spirit of a veil to soften, as does nature's veil soften, her harshness of line. And sometimes when one would lift the covering from beauty to reveal a part, to do so—boldly here and tenderly there. Of my own manner of expression only this can be said: If I have appealed to you and have held your sympathy, then I am understood, and that is all I desire."

Concluding this letter to his dealer, he remarked as follows upon the thirty plates under consideration: "These personalities were put down at places in Paris and Vienna during my wanderings about, of things that appealed and impressed me to such extent that something had to be said, things that were seen in passage, and of an impression deeply felt. The hour demanded them to be stamped and to be done in a manner easiest seen and easiest understood. So the needle was picked up and these etchings made." This letter is quoted in full because it has never obtained general attention before and because it unveils—to use Marin's own word—something about his own processes then.

Marin's etchings, had observed that he was always impressive when he got down to the architecture of things.

A year later—and this, be it remembered, was a good fifteen months after his first show at "291"—he pictured a girl sewing upon the steps. Behind reared a freshly blossoming bush, each bloom expanded as no doubt the painter was when he did the picture. One need not speculate as to why both girl and flowers have been put down with such tenderness, nor again as to why, in the Tyrol landscapes of the same summer, the vision glistened with the ecstasies of a swift and airy joy. Soon afterwards Marin left Europe, never to return.

As he hurtled uptown in the "el" upon his arrival in New York, what must have been his impression? Surely not one of composure. Those vast plinths rising to the sky, the bridges—new-built in his absence—that soared from one shore to another, the crowds that shifted and shuttled in the streets, nothing, amidst all Marin's rambles throughout the Continent, had ever shaken him quite as these did. Again and again he looked at the skyscrapers. There was something heroic here.

And then, whenever Marin visited "291," such impressions were but enforced. Here painters were assaulting one another in combat over pictorial ideas. At last art had become decidedly vital in America. Academicians fled. And if he brought in a water color—or an etching—which captured something of the tumult which he saw outdoors, it was received with greater tumult within. And he was encouraged to do it again, and to do it better. This was a challenge to Marin. He began to unleash his colors. He

let the brush go completely free. Wildly he manœuvred it as he looked at the newly completed Woolworth Building. Then, too, he was commanded by the first of the Cézannes shown in America (the memorable show of the water colors at "291" in 1911). He would have to equal these for structure and perdurability of substance. Only, they came to his eyes not as pictures to be imitated, but, like the massive New York buildings or the Brooklyn Bridge hurling itself to the other shore, as fresh phenomena which he must somehow try to encompass and then, in his own way, to enlarge upon.

Each year these works were shown, and each year at least one of the critics would be converted. (Though all had admitted from the very first that he was captivating in his color.) But when Marin painted his staggering Woolworth Buildings, and exposed them in 1913, just before the Armory Show, it was just too much. No self-respecting observer of the arts would tolerate any such "anarchism" as this. And when Cass Gilbert, architect of the structure, pacing from the wheezy elevator and staring about "291" said, after a few moments before *his* Woolworth Building: "Is the man crazy?" it would seem that Marin had been condemned by the more recognized intelligence of the day. Yet these men were actually self-centered. They could not grasp that a Marin was merely objectifying the monolithic tension and virtual collapse which any sensitive human being feels before such structures. He was organizing in water color an equivalent, or better, was putting into a mad image the same forces that the most compelling of the architects had used. Yes, here

was the unbelievable emergence of an American art. And for just this reason Marin was denounced. Intensification-point is difficult at first acquaintance.

But Stieglitz and the men of "291" had no taste for soporifics. They proclaimed that here a compatriot was daring to put into pigment and on paper what the most impetuous of the balloonists or the first daredevil racers felt when they undertook new flights of speed. The same dash and madness was in him. Only one had to *see* it. Few did however. Yet as early as 1910 William MacColl, the long-legged Australian, correctly perceived that these works—or at least the earlier washes—were not without a relation to good and important predecessors. (But unfortunately he attached them to the line of such meritorious, if less notable practitioners as Cotman and De Wint and Brabazon and Edward Melville—all English. Even the fantastic spatial renderings of Turner did not "connect" with the Marins, for the latter were *sui generis*.) And then, in 1916, the reflective Willard Huntington Wright, who had discovered Marin only upon his return from Europe some time before, venturesomely declared that within two years he would attain *par* with some of the most important men then working.

Marin of course regarded none of all this. He never has listened to critics or other estimators. He has learned from life only. Somehow a special strength in him which had always fought to obtain better footing for itself, was immensely increased after this time. Now he had a solid shore, so that when he depicted *The Little Boat*, of 1914, he indicated, no less than the rocking induced by the

waves, the stability underfoot in the foreground. Soon he literally poured out water colors.[6] Thus, at the very moment when the Cubists were being cut short by the War, he was but beginning his more essential explorations. But it was a vast extension which took place—as if he sought to match the bow of the heavens with the very leap of his own spirit. He would project beyond himself. Typically, he often tumbled. But when he succeeded—ah! that was something to remember. And he brought in many a trophy from that first summer upon the beach. He continued to visit Maine, bought an island there, despite Stieglitz' anguish, and year by year embraced those jewel-like heavens and rocky coasts with new delight. Mindful perhaps of certain Cubists he had seen at "291," and not forgetful of the ancient Chinese whom he came more and more to appreciate, he did, in 1916, a *Scrub-pine* which, because of the many symbolic forms dancing in and about it, might well have represented every fir-tree in that region.

But not until he began his accusations—"lightning-like accusations" Henry McBride has called them—did Marin catch fire to that degree which, for him, has since become customary. The occasion for these works is difficult to make out. Were they generated from a horror for the concluding European War, did they bespeak some personal *impasse,* were they a kind of universal lament to heaven, somewhat in the manner of the more angry passages in *Moby Dick?* Whatever the inception, the fact remains that no contemporary has done anything like them

[6]This production coincided with his first visit to Maine, in 1914. Marin has gone there almost every summer since.

—nobody, for that matter, in the history of art. In the Casco *Sunset* of 1919, great stabbing rays of color poured down from the sun upon the shores of Maine. Blood-lines seemed to run from land to sky and to draw up the whole human being with them. Somewhat later, the same raging tension appeared in his pictures of a seaside village. Again and again he recurred to it in his troubled years of the early Twenties. Nor did it cease when he lived in the city. Approaching the Manhattan side on the Weehawken ferry, he would "indict" the skyline with whipping greens and steely blues and pitching rhythms. Even the *Brooklyn Bridge* was witness to this upheaval. He painted a round, red sun burning through its throbbing stays. A frisky horse pranced down in a corner. The whole structure seemed to be going up in fire. Yet a stability was greater than the cataclysm. Somewhere, even within his torment, a structural security was apparent. This made only stronger the agony of the other strains. Perhaps this period came to its peak in the *Downtown New York,* wherein the very "el" pillars have been shaken, and the thunder of the approaching train has been incorporated into the smashing passages of the color.

A few years would pass before Marin would say that amid all these pulls and tensions there must be a "Blessed Equilibrium." This accounts for a sense of anchoring in these sternest of all his works. It also reflects how he found the passage out. Gradually, some insight was granted him which went beyond suffering. Certainly in the *Maine Islands* of 1923, in the muted depths of *Becalmed*—a sailboat at rest in quiet water—and in other sailboats soon to

follow, a peace was his. One might have recalled a remark in one of his letters (for September 12, 1923): "There is plenty of light if you can see it, away way down deep in the uttermost depths." This light informed even his most piercing passages. As further relief, there was his humor. A Puck-like creature is in Marin. It peeps out from many a letter. It is to be found in many of the odd little wanderings which inexplicably appear in much that he has done.

In any case, as he outlived this siege, he inspected Maine villages with a new sunniness, trapped swift schooners from his favorite ambush on the rocks, and whistled on a frosty morning in the *White Mountains*. His development never stopped. He now built as well as sang, sought composure if he fell off-balance, and constantly endeavored, *within the picture*, to find the perfect weights and counterpoises which would anchor his findings irrevocably. For always the principal objective of Marin was a controlling equilibrium.

III

Thus searching, he could not be satisfied with his water color findings. He next must obtain that greater solidity which is compatible only with oils. Yet his turning to this fresh medium was not entirely a complete departure for him. After all, a canvas of his had been purchased by the Luxembourg as early as 1906. At times Marin exhibited works in this medium—rather infrequently, it is true, yet often enough to demonstrate that he had not deserted it altogether.

He was "organizing" his works more than formerly. Possibly this was because he worked more and more indoors—particularly in the winter months—than had been his custom in his younger days. One finds in his city scenes —those wild whirligigs of night-time life on Broadway, the fixed yet shaking skyscrapers, the tearing-down and building-up of new construction—a more insistent architectural preoccupation than was the case in the late 'Teens or the early Twenties. He would be ready for more inclusive activity in the oils after his New Mexican interlude. Here he visited for two summers, 1929 and 1930. He found the spaces more majestic and the summits more uplifting. Once in a view of a rainstorm at Taos, he seized the very sheets of water as they were descending and somehow looked through them to informing planes of light. Again, it seemed that the tablets of the Law had opened upon a mountain, while in the *San Domingo Dance* the braves and *koshari* drummed and thundered in those rhythms which Hart Crane celebrated in one of his greatest poems. Once more, as certain of the critics have noted, Marin exhibited that strange gift of his for drawing from the atmosphere the signs and symbols by which, through his own graphic shorthand, he can somehow summarize the essence of a place. He had learned this first, perhaps, from his etching. But here and throughout the works which had followed his first contact with the Cubists, it became a kind of calligraphic notation which put nature into the most compact and "transportable" of forms. These are equivalents for its shapes and figures, with each hiero-



permission of An American Place

White Mountains—Autumn—1927

JOHN MARIN



permission of An American Place

Cape Split, Maine, 1940

JOHN MARIN

glyphic reminding us of the unchanging and ineluctable realities of nature.

As for the oils, though at first they did not always satisfy—witness the grumblings of the critics who reported on them in the newspapers—they soon did show that he was going to vanquish here, just as he had in the other media. In the *Fifth Avenue at Forty-second Street* (of 1933) he succeeded. Here he had the same flow as in the water colors, with the addition of a structure which looked quite as impressive as that of the New York Public Library in the background. He continued his attacks in the years that followed, sweating, eliminating, redoing, and then sometimes, in a burst of vision, putting it all down with the same intensity and sureness as in the water colors. By the end of the decade, when he surveyed the sea in Maine one felt the rock-bottom as much as the waves over it. The ships cleaved, they did not merely skim, the sea. And finally, just before and after the great hurricane of a few years back, he began to pile his seas against the rocks with a new force within his resilience. The granite resisted the lunge of the waters. A strength of the mountains was in the shores. This was the Marin of severe formulations and tested strength, the man who had fashioned out his own character by his demands upon it.

At the decade's close, still venturing, he set out in the spring to capture the season's advance at each of its stages. In a series of seventeen small and inimitable oils he painted with the same devotion as if he had been a gardener. First the earth was bare and unsympathetic, then brooklets were

trickling, later blossoms were calling to the sky with their fragrance, and, in middle June, needlelike glints of light appeared through a thicket. It was a perfect chart of a peculiar kind.

Nor did he neglect the water colors. They became more diamondlike, as in the *Deep-sea Trawlers*, and limpid in a Hawthornesque but ungloomy New England village; again the sea would retire from a beach, leaving it cold, spent, vacant,—or a sooty coating would remain upon the waters as if to prove that a storm were imminent. Even the human figure surged through some of these works, for of recent years Marin has been more and more preoccupied with its facets and articulations. Possibly this is an indication that, like Renoir, the decade of his seventies will be one of his best.

Even today Marin's freshness cannot be sullied. He still goes to Maine for greater concentration, and there he finds—in the anger of the sea or a seagull's wing or the reconciliation which follows a storm—the impetus to set down new recapitulations of what they have meant to him. Recently he surpassed himself in one of his oils. . . . A pilot is steering a tiny power-boat through a threatening sea, but he stands as if better to demonstrate his balance. So with Marin. He too steers straight and sure for the destination that is his, and doing so, holds to that equilibrium which signifies that the creative spirit is in control, and that it will build and ever rebuild anew.

Appendix

Appendix

John Marin on National Art Week, a "Guest Editorial" which is reprinted with the courtesy of its author and the *Palisadian*, of Palisade, New Jersey, where it first appeared on November 15, 1940. This was the only positive product of that official activity.

To the public:

It is Said—We are becoming—Art-Conscious—therefore let there be an—Art Week—focused on work done in—of and by America.

That out of it all will blossom forth—that—worth the looking at—

This is the hope—

produce the artist and—presto—realization—not so fast—know you—that the artist is—not too Common—and that produced he must have Encouragement—though courageous himself—he must have—like others about him—a good living—to do good work—this the art conscious public must help to bring about by purchasing that which they profess to love.

For the public to know—to discern the artist—the one who is—from the one who professes to be—isn't too easy.

One says—"I live here"—"I use the objects of my locality—for subject matter"—it gets him nowhere—if he is not an Artist for one living in Australia may be better than he of our soil.

It is a legitimate hope though that our soil will produce the artist.

The people must gradually learn to discern the fine things—those sensitive to beauty can—those not sensitive cannot.

Those sensitive will want—and if the want is great enough—the artist will appear to supply that want and—I repeat—he's to be

helped—to withhold that is to disobey the law of human relationship—and rest assured that he being an artist gives as much as he gets—he gives abundantly.

This work, etc.—this artist is to be found in his—work shop—there seek him—expect him not to play the game social or of self advertisement—it would appear in his work and the sensitive ones will have none of it. Beware of the ambitious one and the one who works all the time—he hasn't time to think.

Go to him whose every effort is—the good job—

To him who delights in his living—to him who takes not himself too seriously and who can at times look and make faces at himself.

Don't rave over bad paintings.

Don't rave over good paintings.

Don't everlastingly read messages into paintings—there's the—Daisy—you don't rave over or read messages into it— You just look at that bully little flower—isn't that enough!

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