

OPEN LETTERS FROM NEW YORK.

I.

THE topography of New York is simple. The island is as near in plan to a "leaf cake," known to bakers and children of the old school, as may be; a good deal of perpendicularity, moderate width, and a graceful twist. You can stand upon a centre line and stretch out your hands towards the two flanking rivers and feel that none of it can get away and elude you, as cities constructed upon the radiating plan are in the habit of doing. It proceeds by layers instead of concentric rings. If you want any particular one of its leading activities, you have only to look a little further up or down the line for it.

If you are inclined to be figurative, you may call it a plant. Down in the first ward, from the Battery to Liberty Street, are the finances, the exchanges, insurance companies, the sub-treasury, Wall Street, which may be fairly spoken of as the roots. Then come substantial matters, — the municipal buildings, the markets, the great central post-office, Printing-House Square. A long stalk of heavy mercantile business follows. At Astor Place it begins to blossom out into the libraries, publishing houses, theatres, clubs, picture-galleries, and fashionable hotels with dazzling restaurants and titles borrowed from foreign royal dukes. Mingled with this and now clustering close about the Central Park, the bright particular sunflower of the whole, is a vast leafage of decorous and comfortable private residences. The fringe of docks and piers, which mounts only a certain way, may be looked upon as *cilia* sucking in sustenance for the shrub from foreign parts. This seems to me to be a very complete figure, to be relied upon by strangers and others as correct; but I shall not dwell upon it, since there are other matters of moment in the map that call for attention.

When you take a map of New York

and fairly sit down over it, there is a moral to be drawn from no more than two of its streets, which leaves all the rest of the four hundred miles for future use. Note the relations of Broadway and Fifth Avenue. For a long distance the central thoroughfare pursues its way up town, beamed upon by the brightest smiles of fortune. Colossal, solid, roaring with trucks and stages, gay and bustling, nothing more prosperous could be imagined. All at once there is a change. Nobody follows it, — nobody cares for it. No more stately magazines of granite and iron; no more Wilton carpets, Worth's costumes, decorated dinner sets, frames of actresses in diaphanous muslin; no more confectionery fresh every hour; no more perambulating banners with Gulmore's bargains, and no more mothers of families rescued from sudden death by stoical policemen. It makes an excellent attempt, it is true, to keep up appearances for a few blocks further, but after Thirty-Fourth Street all is over. It staggers away, as one might say, to nobody knows where, — to Eleventh Avenue and One Hundred and Seventh Street, — and appears to be making for the bluff to hide its humiliation in the North River. What has happened? Simply it has diverged from Fifth Avenue. Up to this point, to Madison Square, as you will see, it has been making directly for it; the ideal which it proposed to itself was Fifth Avenue. But here it reaches and abandons it. Relying, doubtless, upon its acquired popularity, it believed it could carry its constituency with it whither it would. Like many a famous politician and public journal it had to learn the ephemeral nature of the most flattering popular sentiment. One may fancy it looking back from One Hundred and Seventh Street to this point in its career, and sighing, "Ah, if I had only done differently then!"

Thus, it seems to me, the end and aim of existence in the metropolis is indi-

cated by the topography itself, if there were nothing further. While you are on the way to Fifth Avenue you are entirely commendable; when you abandon it you are out of the usual categories. It is difficult to keep account of you; nobody can say what you will come to, but most likely nothing good.

What then, I say, is this Fifth Avenue, so pointed out by the map and by social pressure as the sublimated reward of the species of virtue recognized as the highest in the commercial metropolis of the great commercial republic? Mr. Joaquin Miller has included in his latest issued volume a poem to Fifth Avenue. He speaks of it as "a calm contradiction," a

... "beautiful, long-loved avenue,
So faithless to truth, and yet so true,"

an "iron-faced sphinx," which may have been suggested by the Egyptian reservoir at Forty-Second Street, abandoned as a reservoir and now puzzling the community as to the use to which it shall be put. He apostrophizes it further as "so grand as a sinner, so good as a saint," and he asks, —

... "Say, what art thou
But the scroll of the Past rolled into the Now?"

I would not care to say it is not this, nor to differ with the poet as to representations based upon something more than the very superficial acquaintance which is all I profess to have. The idea of writing poems to streets seems to me, in passing, a good one, and to enlarge a field that is becoming uncomfortably restricted. I believe feeling poems could be written to both Third and Sixth Avenues, — now being rapidly converted to the uses of the rapid transit roads, — which would appeal to every property owner. I should like to write a poem to the erectors of new buildings in Union Square, who have the right to make all New York walk a narrow plank, and shower down mortar and bits of brick upon it for months at a time.

Fifth Avenue takes the centre of the island, where Broadway leaves it, and continues straight on — with only the interruption of the ambitious hillock of Mount Morris Park, at One Hundred

and Twentieth Street, under which it appears to dive — as long as it has any dry land to go upon. In spite of its distinctively residence character, a prophetic soul might seem to see the interrupted march of trade follow this line, so convenient for distributing its supplies on either hand. There are already invasions, always of the most insinuating character, — a store front of rare jewelry and bronzes, a confectioner whose place might have been taken bodily out of the Champs Élysées, a quiet family bank, — but still invasions. As trade advances, private life flees before it. It escapes in two directions: towards the upper end of the island, to the limit to which the lack of transit facilities permits it to be endurable, and up into the air in the new French flats. Outside of the provisions beginning to be made for them in these, I learn that the middle class are hardly expected to stay on the island at all. They spread out into the country by rail, and form vast settlements of ornamental cottages, while New York itself is given up to the rich and poor. The average "brown stone front" in the good locations will cost fifty thousand dollars; on the avenue, it will cost nearer one hundred thousand dollars.

The leading aspect of this favored section is an elegant gravity. It is a vast area of sombre brown stone, brightened by the flash of squares of immaculate plate glass. There is an echo of it in the Back Bay district of Boston. As things are, I am in favor of this dark tone. In lighter material I fear its ornamental details would be less passable than they actually are. The façades differ in degree rather than in kind. The style is a kind of builder's Renaissance, varying by stages from plain architraves over the windows to the full magnificence of triangular and circular pediments, and detached porches with Corinthian columns. Monumental flights of steps, giving access to narrow fronts, are the most conspicuous feature, typical, perhaps, of the excessive difficulty of attaining to fortune, and its comparative unsatisfactoriness when you get there. The building lots grow more scant as

you ascend, the price of land having apparently increased out of proportion to the increase of fortunes, in the desire to crowd as many people as possible on to the avenue. In everything except proximity to their business, — and there is not so much difference even here, — it seems to me the suburban people, in their spacious houses, designed often by the best professional skill, and affording in their interiors light for works of art and room for the varied activities of a refined life, have the best of it. I cannot but think that a depressing influence upon pictures in particular must be exerted by the contracted apartments of these barrack-like structures, which could accommodate but few of them even if funds remained from the original investment wherewith to purchase.

But little as its architectural details are a theme for enthusiasm, to one strolling there on a sunshiny day in autumn — when I like it best — the sober, unattractively treated avenue may be generally gay. Its long stretches of broken façades fall into agreeable masses, as if in the imperative order of nature harmony could not but result even from a multiplicity of mistakes. The shadows lie broadly across the roadway; bars of white light come down the side streets and divide them. The striped awnings are not all taken in. A soft sky mingles its blue with the latent red in the dark stone. A procession of church steeples, like a more colossal system of telegraph poles, marches down till the last is lower in its far perspective than the steps of that near at hand.

The quiet of your walk is little disturbed. There may be a group of strangers looking up with wrinkled foreheads at the gairish white marble palace of Stewart at Thirty-Fourth Street, a well-dressed young man walking briskly with a light stick grasped exactly in the centre, a French nurse going of an errand, a boarding-school of girls looking very slight and young in the wide empty spaces. Then, if it be late afternoon, the street is filled all at once from gutter to gutter with a torrent of equipages, returning from the races or the park:

broughams, landaus, clarences, phaetons, their varnish and mountings twinkling back to the polished windows, equestrians in boots and corduroys, slim-waisted equestriennes with blue veils floating from tall silk hats. In the midst, heralded by a bugle, a ponderous coach supplies the salient mass, corresponding to the turreted elephant and the triumphal car in the processions upon the Appian Way, which we are fond of studying in art and elsewhere to the exclusion of such sights as this, which it seems to me are quite as worthy of attention.

But the readers of a Boston magazine must be already asking their consciences whether it is right to be interested in these exterior matters, and wondering when I am coming to the pictures, the drama, and music, in New York.

If there were an exhibition in progress, my comment on the first of these matters would be simplified. The old winter exhibition at the Academy of Design has been abandoned for some years. It was found that the receipts from two exhibitions were rather less, if anything, than from one. I am assured that if the Academy were to be kept open all the year round there would probably be a further reduction. The sentiment for pictures is still largely at the "positively for one night only" point. There is a rush to see them when they are invested with the attractions of novelty and rarity, and all the enjoyment is sucked out of them at once, so that a second visit would be as tame as to the two-headed calf or the tattooed man. While there is so little disposition to return and study at leisure these carefully prepared works which belong to one as fully for the time being as if he had paid for them a hundred times over, it is not strange that the expenditure of several thousand dollars for a single one, to be kept permanently at home, should be looked upon as an eccentricity. I suppose a good picture ought to give time after time the same feeling of refreshment and pleasure afforded by the repetition of a fine musical composition. It ought to have an attention correspond-

ing in some degree to its durability. This durability, on the other hand, ought to impress a sense of responsibility upon the artist, who has no business to give us mere tricks and flippancies in a form rather more enduring than monumental brass.

As there is no exhibition, I naturally frequent the shops of the dealers; there are five or six of them at least who always have some meritorious works. Their displays, either in tastefully arranged windows, to the crowds who are always lingering there for a moment in their hurried passage on the streets, or in their galleries, to the more leisurely, whom they good-naturedly admit, knowing most of them not to have the remotest intention to buy, seem to constitute the important and permanent influence at work for the education of the public.

If one is to judge from the collections of the dealers there is no American art at all. Everything is foreign. Where, then, are American pictures to be seen? A few may be found at a *bric-à-brac* establishment in Union Square. The rest are at the studios of their authors. It is etiquette, I believe, to knock at an artist's door and walk in if you like, but it is rather a formidable undertaking. He may be engaged with a model; he may be cool, as to a mere idler, of whose appreciation he knows nothing; or he may fill you with compunctions by taking you for an intelligent patron from whom a lucrative commission is probable. There is no adequate provision for the stranger who wants nothing of him except to establish his rank. It would not be unappreciated by the floating population, nor without distinct influence nor perhaps financial returns, if there were some head-quarters where a good specimen of the work of each of the local painters were accessible.

The market of the resident artists seems to be made chiefly by private acquaintance. The clubs of late offer a resource in receiving works, which they are glad to place before small but select audiences at their art receptions, held by some as often as once a month.

This question of better exhibition facilities is just now a leading one, though it is hardly a secret that it connects itself with something else quite as important. You do not have to be here long to find that the guild of artists is divided into the younger men who have lately studied abroad and acquired a decided foreign manner, and the Academicians of the old school. The first have within a very recent period collected their forces, and are now represented by a brand new art association, which has secured the Kurtz Gallery for an exhibition in March. Prominent among them are Shirlaw, a recent acquisition from Munich, and Wyatt Eaton, a pupil of Jules Breton, both making a marked impression in the community apart from their works, one as the director of the Students' Art League, the other of the classes at the Cooper Institute. Saint Gaudens, a rising young sculptor, is another. La Farge, with whom he is associated in the novel work of the decoration in progress at Saint Thomas's Church, is one of a small number of regular Academicians who give the enterprise their sympathy and countenance. It disclaims the idea of opposition to the Academy of Design, — and, indeed, it would be a pity to detract from the efficiency of an institution which has never been too strong, — yet it decidedly means to do something apart from it, and, if successful, to show that the Academy in some respects is making a mistake. A committee in Paris will select and forward works submitted by our students across the water. There are a great many of them, and they do quite striking things, often in a wonderfully short time after they have set out from home. There is an instance of two pleasing German landscapes, depicting nature in the full bloom of summer, coming back in time for the spring exhibition, though their author had only sailed in July, with scarcely any previous knowledge of painting.

The conservative Academicians say: "This is all very fine, but we must move slowly. We see here the influence of the master, perhaps even his original

sketches worked over. Let us wait till these young men have been at home a while, and see what they can do on their own account, before we crowd our pictures off 'the line' and over the tops of doors for their accommodation. We have traveled and studied abroad in our time ourselves. Are we not entitled to some consideration, too?" This view was embodied in a resolution that each Academician should be entitled to at least six feet on the line in the annual exhibitions, which passed, but was rescinded in consequence of a lively hubbub which followed its announcement. Its occasion was understood to be the too unstinted liberality of the last hanging committee, who gave the foreigners about all the desirable positions. It was withdrawn, and the action of the innovators cannot be said to be dictated by any unfair treatment. There may be a slight fear of it, but at bottom it is a consciousness of not being sufficiently appreciated. There are new ideas afloat, — dash, breadth, freedom, originality, — to which old fogyism, by constitution and for self-protection, is naturally averse. They propose, perhaps, to lay the difference fairly before the public and have it passed upon.

From a disinterested stand-point this slight jar in the family is not unpleasing. Anything is better than stagnation. It will act as a stimulus to both sides to the production of their best work. Each will endeavor to show that it is the only original and all others are spurious, while the public can come forward and adjudicate upon a financial basis. Only, it would appear that the sympathies of the public are likely to be already enlisted and the old school considerably handicapped by the prevailing influences. Upon the surface these are all foreign. If the new men do things in the way we are every day taught to believe the best and most fashionable, shall we not give them the preference? You can have now, if you choose, a scene on the Delaware, which you would take for the Loire, by Daubigny; or a view of farm life on Long Island difficult to distinguish from rural Brittany.

Here is Goupil's, the leading picture establishment and one of the standing attractions of the town. Let us step in. Here you may learn both what is fashionable and what is a good investment. For there is a practical side to this refined pursuit; there are even collectors of pictures who have no further interest in them than is involved in one of these considerations. If Vibert or Tissot is "the thing," the votary of fashion in this department cannot afford to be without one. Or again, some keen-scented connoisseur fancies he detects symptoms of a rise in Duprés or Diazes, and then a Dupré or a Diaz is got, to be held until the corner in Duprés, as one might say, is worked. The trade has its seasons of activity and dullness, like dry goods and pork. The season centres about the period of cutting off of coupons for the January interest. It is inaugurated at Goupil's towards the last part of November, by the rearrangement of the pleasant little gallery and the presentation of the latest novelties on a stated "opening day."

Previous to this, and familiar to strangers during a considerable part of the autumn, the position of honor was held by a large Lesrel, with its number as a contribution to the Paris Salon still upon it. It is a group of chess-players, in the costume of Louis XIII., about a gold-cloth-covered table. The light promulgates itself vividly, but without glare, upon the figures, which start out of an atmosphere of tones of amber brown, like the shadows in the bottom of a brook. There is expression, archaeological correctness with spirit, breadth with plenty of detail. The composition is full of art: a double pyramid above the table; a hat and stick and rumpled rug breaking the perspective lines of the floor; here an agreeable complexity, — a head painted against another or against a doublet, wherever it happens to come, — there the contrast of a bold, uninterrupted outline. It seems to have about everything such a subject could have. I do not care, myself, very much about the period of Louis XIII., nor particularly about chess, but if anybody

did I should think he ought to be satisfied here. I suppose there are fifty or a hundred contributors to the same exhibition who can do as well as Lesrel; he is young and not an exceptional genius. Hence this picture is fairly typical, in its line, both of what is going on over there and of the kind of models that will continue to be presented for our inspection. If there are native artists who expect to enter into competition in this branch, they will always have just as stiff work cut out for them.

Near by was a Schreyer, — Russian travelers pursued by wolves in a forest, in a snow-storm as wild as the foam of breakers on a reef. There was a Sword-Dancer, by Gérôme; an Egyptian cellar, with a ray of sunlight striking across it so naturally that I have seen people look to see if it came from the sky-light; a beautiful, broad Van Marcke, showing cattle coming towards you in a vaporish Dutch landscape, an epitome of Taine's Art in the Netherlands; small female heads, with milk-like complexions, by Toulmouche and Leider; a seraglio, by Richter, pinkish and pretty as a fashion plate.

The landscapes are not many, the preference of patrons in landscape being for something American, — something they can recognize. There is always a stock of German domestic subjects in the Dusseldorf style, sold largely at the West, and not so much in home demand: down-stairs, water-colors and pen drawings by Detaille, De Neuville, Vibert, Berne-Belleour; up-stairs, in the private room, Bouguereau, Cabanel, Corot, Coomans, Compté, Calix — one has only to go through a *salon* catalogue alphabetically. They are all there.

A few doors below, in the Kohn collection, the same names; at Schaus's, again the same, with here a rather more German and Flemish cast, — Diffenbach; Tiddeman; Robie's flower pieces; Willems's sheen of creamy-white satin; a lovely, odd marine, fishing boats in a Holland canal, by Clays.

This is the regular thing, every-day fare. On an opening day provision is made for epicures. Looking now at the

reconstructed gallery, what is the change in the mode? It is only one of quality. There are more and better Schreyers; figures on a large scale, by Prion and Sorbi; a garden wedding reception in modern French society, by Delort, — a crowd of high-bred figures like the best of Du Maurier's in Punch, photographic in accuracy, but also photographic in rigid sharpness; an interior, by Muncacsy, in which he applies to a simple subject of domestic luxury the power and seriousness of his greater works.

In particular there are numerous examples of the Roman-Spanish school, — the Egusquizas, Boldinis, Terrassas, Alvarezes, Madrazas, — of which I have not spoken before, conspicuous as it everywhere is, because I wished to say a word about it by itself. I have heard these pictures denounced as rank communism. There is no dignity or sentiment in them, no *chiaroscuro*, no system of color, — nothing but patchwork and chaos. Here is a notable specimen, a last century street scene in Seville, by Jimenez y Aranda, — thirty or forty figures, close by, gossiping in groups. The expressions are as finished and realistic as the signs over the door-ways and the bits of old play-bills upon the wall, whose pinks, lavenders, greens, and yellows are an echo of the costumes; yet the effect is not in the least photographic like the Delort. Distances are expressed by linear and not at all by atmospheric perspective.

It may be communism, but these works impress you, if you are one of the kind who can endure them, piquantly and quaintly. They connect themselves with dainty porcelain. They are as glowing with cheerful colors as a bit of Persian rug. They are flat and almost without shadow. The figures are for the most part small, and nothing is sacrificed to them. They depend upon their intrinsic importance, and take their chance with the accessories, like details of a mosaic. Perhaps I get more out of them than they have to give, but it seems as if there was something fatalistic in this, with all their coquettish brightness, — a recognition of the real relation of man

to his surroundings. The light is not focused upon an ordinary person, nor the furniture mistily gradated into insignificance, while he stands about in dramatic attitudes. A man is not so imposing as a book-case, and the first omnibus runs over him with ease.

It is impossible to be about New York without recognizing in it a very pervading aesthetic interest. It is not long since Sypher's *omnium gatherum* of second-hand furniture was the only establishment in the *bric-à-brac* line. Now they abound, even in the minor streets, and are presided over by discriminating connoisseurs. Establishments for artistic furniture and decorations are numerous. At every turn you encounter an auction sale of Oriental rugs and potteries, or general *faïence*, or old arms and armor, like the well-known Cogniat collection. If people find nothing better than the trash from the dollar stores for their holiday presents this year, it will be their own fault.

An event quite out of proportion in significance to its scale was the quiet exhibition at Collamore's of a tableful of ware called the "Bennett *faïence*." It is probably the stepping-stone to an American ceramic industry. Bennett, an Englishman, late of the Doulton works at Lambeth, has established himself in Lexington Avenue and begun this manufacture in a small way with pupils whom he is training to the work upon the system pursued at Lambeth. His results are admirable, and if they can be popularized would leave little to desire. There are vases and bottles of simple shapes decorated in pale greens and lapis lazuli blues, with a rich mottled texture, and strewn with white blossoms, which Lambeth has never surpassed. It is time that the caricature "art pottery" of the day should be succeeded by something worthy of the name. In the favorable temper of the public mind towards these subjects, it can hardly be doubted that an American *faïence* of a high order of merit would be profitable.

Another notable event is the establishment of the sales-room of the Society of Decorative Art, for the disposal of

such artistic wares as are within the scope of production of the feminine sex. It will not only afford the contributors of really good work in such lines as embroideries, carvings, and tile painting the encouragement of pecuniary returns, but will furnish in its classes and in the exhibited examples an influence which cannot fail to have a considerable effect in a department of activity whose achievements at present, it is painful to say, are mainly worse than useless.

Still another, — for I have the fortune to drop into quite an epidemic of novelities, — an innovation upon the traditions of Protestant worship only sanctioned, I believe, on this side of the water by the example of the new Trinity Church in Boston, from the same hand, is the mural decoration of the chancel of Saint Thomas by La Farge. It is too early to speak of it except in its conception, as a relief from the costly calico work which, until now, it has been thought evangelical church decoration must necessarily be. The circumstances are unfavorable. It is not probable that the work can ever appear to its full advantage at the morning service, owing to the dazzle of the stained glass above it, nor from the body of the church on account of the pentagonal shape of the apse on the walls of which it is being placed. Two of the sides are parallel to the aisles. One half of the mural painting by La Farge is finished. It is a Resurrection, showing that capacity for a high and serious art of which this artist has elsewhere given proofs. The centre compartment is occupied by sculpture, a hierarchy of angels by Saint Gandens. The figures are of a single type. They breathe a pleasing sentiment and are freely modeled in high relief. They are colored by still another artist, Mr. Noc, in strange metallic greenish tints, upon which the light touches with a sort of moonlight effect.

But enough for the present of pictures. There are other fine arts, symphony concerts at Steinway Hall, and the dramas without end.

The discussion aroused by the ingenious Mr. Boucicault will serve to retain for his play of *Marriage*, at Wallack's,

the prestige of the leading theatrical event of the season. Marriage is not the coming American play, and not American at all, as many were disappointed to find, but has the local coloring of the residence of its author among us. The controversy which ensued concerning it is unique. Its public usefulness was spoiled by the favorable opportunity opened for facetiousness, but no doubt it led to considerable private lucubrations of value. It came about in this way. The critics took an unfavorable view of the piece. Mr. Boucicault naturally differed with them. But instead of sulking in offended dignity, he came forward with a hardihood that cannot be too much admired, and, though having no print of his own, joined battle with them.

"One 'gainst a hundred would he strive,
Take countless wounds and yet survive."

They were used, he claimed, to fustian, or at best broad-cloth; his fabric was lace-work. The discussion widened out from this to a more general matter.

"Come, now," said he, "you say my comedy is so and so. Does one of you, in either hemisphere, know what a comedy is? Let us put it upon that ground. Define me a comedy; then I will treat with you."

Then began an era of definitions of comedy. You observe the opening. One said it was a French play and a pair of scissors; another that it was the spectacle of Boucicault trying to buck the bull off the bridge; another that it was Boucicault beating the newspapers out of unlimited free advertising. One could fancy them with hands joined in a circle, whooping tantalizingly about the unfortunate dramatist, like the Canotiers of the Seine around Papavert at the French theatre. Criticism of the piece became a minor consideration in the greater contest, and people went to see it from so many motives as to give it a very successful run.

The definition business was really a mammoth side-show. A correct feeling of what something is, or ought to be, exists extensively without accurate facility in words. No doubt the newspaper critics, though all of their definitions might

not do credit to Webster or Worcester, understand with the community in general that the substance of comedy is life apart from the emotions connected with death or prolonged or violent suffering. It deals with the smaller miseries alone, and its legitimate alliance is with the smile rather than the sigh.

This opens an immense field and leaves the critics quite enough to do without dialectics. The whole matter of subject, treatment, and quality remains. There is high comedy, low comedy, and farce. There is the judicial faculty to be exercised in separating the merits of the case from the ability of its special pleaders, that is to say from the talent of the actors.

You may imagine that I have not failed to be among the audience at Wallack's, to be impressed, if possible, by this home-made piece of lace-work. Is it lace-work? To estimate something in terms of lace-work is like estimating size in pieces of chalk. It is a variable standard. There is cotton lace and then again there is lace of excellent material, but tangled in the execution and an unfair representative of its kind. I should say that Marriage was of the latter sort.

The material is unexceptionable; the scenes and emotions clustering around marriage are matter not merely for an episode, of the kind constituting the great bulk of plays, literature, and pictures, but for something typical and of universal interest. So far, Mr. Boucicault chose a basis on which it would be possible to make not only a good comedy but a great comedy. Marriage is used not simply as the conventional closing up of a series of adventures, but as the body and texture of the piece, as is divorce in another to which it gives its title. Indeed, our American playwrights, not now speaking of Boucicault, seem to me particularly happy in their choice of a subject. Where they fail is not here, but in the important two thirds of plot and dialogue. If you will notice, almost every one of these attempts aims at something typical, the presentation of national characteristics, as in The

Mighty Dollar and The Gilded Age, or of states of society, including a large constituency, as in Saratoga, and Surf, Ah Sin, and The Danites. Most of these were objected to, I recollect, some years ago, conceptions and all, by our leading critical journal, which took the extraordinary position that Rip Van Winkle — certainly a mere episode without any claim on general interest, if there ever was one — was the only truly American subject and play.

Mr. Boucicault has a subject and many charming details. The manners and customs, if correctly displayed, are not so unlike our own, except for the legal settlements and the ward in chancery, that the whole might not have taken place here. There are four married couples, so differing as to display the subject from as many points of view: Walter and Rosalie, a run-away pair; Meek — an unfortunate name for a very good fellow — and Fannie, who marry in the regular society way; Persimmons and Virginia, an oldish couple whose union has been postponed long beyond the usual age; and the Constant Tiffes, already married, whose quarrels serve as a sarcastic commentary upon the ardor of the people newly entering upon the happy state. The preliminary drill of the wedding procession by the fashionable mother, in Act II. — a scene in its dresses and mountings like a French *genre* picture — is a most amusing and

legitimate piece of light satire. There is a poetic element in the freshness and simplicity of the youngest bride and principal figure. She nestles by her husband, and shows a romantic girlish ideal, based, no doubt, upon reminiscences of sentimental literature, but also upon a capacity for something generous and devoted, in asking him if there is not some dark secret he can impart for her to forgive, so that the bond between them may be closer. There is an element of pathos in the singular dread of Auldjo that Walter, who appears to be his son but is in reality only adopted, will, if he finds out the truth, cease to return his tender affection. The dialogue has many capital things, and there is one *mot*, "Nothing is so deceptive as proofs," worthy to become a standing aphorism.

With all this, and the capital acting, when the curtain falls over an apartment furnished in flowered cretonne, with the sea, broken by a single shining wave, showing through the wide windows as if from a drawing-room at Newport, you can feel that you go away from a profitably amused evening. But that will not blind you to the defects of considerable character drawing, which is farce instead of comedy, and especially of a plot in which there is the complication of three secret marriages, and long-lost brothers, wives and daughters to the point of distraction.

Raymond Westbrook.

EDWARD GIBBON.

THE Muse of History is a rather worldly personage, who frequently reserves her favors for devotees in easy circumstances. The pushing aspirants who seize the prizes of poetry, fiction, music, the drama, and the other arts in which genius is required, are apt to be snubbed by this more exclusive lady, whose cult

demands long preparation, costly outlays, and ample leisure. She shows to gentlemen of leisure and elegant culture a polite art, one of the very politest, in which industry and perseverance are enough for success and fame, and too often she seems to exact nothing more. A man may not say that he will be a great

Weary and homesick and distressed
 They wander East, they wander West,
 And are baffled and beaten and blown about
 By the winds of the wilderness of doubt;
 To stay at home is best.

Then stay at home, my heart, and rest;
 The bird is safest in its nest;
 O'er all that flutter their wings and fly
 A hawk is hovering in the sky;
 To stay at home is best.

Henry W. Longfellow.

OPEN LETTERS FROM NEW YORK.

II.

THE Society of Decorative Art, of which I spoke as a coming influence, made itself felt in December with much suddenness and force. It burst out of its narrow quarters in Twentieth Street, planted its loan exhibition in that artistic citadel the Academy of Design, occupied other strategic points with private collections opened for the occasion, instituted morning lectures, and was the subject of such a fusillade of newspaper comments that its objects in the community must have been greatly furthered.

The Academy presented a decidedly Cluny-ish appearance. The exhibition consisted, for the most part, of the highest types of decorative articles of the kind proposed for our emulation. We have had the exotic sensation of walking through rich, dark rooms littered with carved cabinets, ceramics, enamels, ivory carvings, illuminated missals, armor, jewelry, and laces, and hung with old tapestries, Gobelin and other, such as figure in the backgrounds of pictures. This subtle infusion, combined of age and softened glitter and harmoniously faded color, does not fail to penetrate a little even into those who venture into it for the first time and are puzzled by

its unlikeness to the spirit of the fashionable furnisher. The notable aspect of the show, next to its educating influence, is its revelation of the extent to which the appreciation and acquisition of really precious rarities has already reached in New York. The contributors themselves, I think, were astonished at their consolidated affluence. The possession of these articles argues not only money but excellent taste, and the maintenance of a scale of living somewhat commensurate with them. I wish I could think the glimpse it gave into the private life of the first families did not have so much to do with its success. This private life appears to have made a considerable approximation to the palatial scale. There are properties of noble and even royal personages in these American households, — table ware of Napoleon III., laces of a duchess of Parma, others from the wardrobe of Queen Anne, — duly authenticated by fascinating little seals. Out-of-doors the absence of a law of entail has hindered palatial development; our most ambitious dwellings hardly yet surpass the rank of large houses, but this luxurious development within will force its way outwards. The merchant princes will have, I doubt not, before long, porches to their homes, with

polished columns, as spacious as that of the Church of the Heavenly Rest, which juts out so quaintly among them on Fifth Avenue. They will welcome through such porches throngs of guests to apartments adorned in earnest with these tapestries, carvings, and *plaques* of majolica and Nuremberg brass.

The circumstances of the picture department gave occasion for an interesting contrast. The north gallery was filled with the choicest late acquisitions of friends of the exhibition. In the south gallery was shown for a while, free, preliminary to its sale by auction, the private collection of Mr. Robert M. Olyphant, apparently closed up long since. Thus could be seen side by side what a New York collector used to do and what he does now.

The loaned pictures were foreign, of course. The rainbow brightness of a Rossi, a strong representative of the Spanish-Italian school, newer than most of his contemporaries, in these parts, with a Pinchart above it, reduced almost everything else in the room to comparative middle tint. The Rossi showed one of the characteristic luxurious scenes of the school. It chooses them not for splendor alone, but splendor accompanied by a certain piquancy. This is the rococo magnificence of Louis Quatorze. In a great saloon with gilt and sprawling scroll-work decorations, an old prince, surrounded by courtiers like porcelain figurines, watches with a senile interest the dancing of a minuet, for his amusement, by two girls, one habited as a boy and one in the high heels and flowered farthingale petticoat of the date. The figures are small and flatly painted, and, the heads especially, like bits in a mosaic. Or they recall those embroideries on silk, in which the faces are painted while the garments are wrought with the needle. This came from Mr. J. J. Astor's; the Pinchart — another variation, in colors pure and unmixed to the point of chilliness, upon the classic maiden swathed in scarfs of white, pink, yellow, and violet embroidered in red, whom he is so fond of depicting — from Mr. Benjamin J. Arnold's. The critics cannot

attack the respectability of their references.

There was another smaller Rossi sent by Mr. W. B. Dinsmore, peculiar even for this peculiar kind. It is called *The Picnic*, though it is certain that only the briefest sort of a picnic, as we understand it, could ever have taken place under such circumstances. A little party of antique fashionables in Watteau costumes have thrown themselves upon a Geordez rug spread upon the ground of a sterile upland for an informal repast. Tufts of grass and a wild flower here and there spring from the poor soil, but no tree or shade of any kind. The edge of the moor is at half the height of the canvas. There is a deliciously grateful sky of rolling cloud masses about it. Two dark figures, one near and one distant, stand boldly up against it. A white umbrella, connecting with the sky, cuts a circle out of the group, and serves to bring down the lighter upper tones to the front. Minute reminiscences of the principal colors in the dresses and the carpet are distributed about in the flowers, a pale blue hill rising over the edge of the moor, and patches of blue sky showing through the gray. There is none of the seriousness of life here. The people are thoroughly artificial, and they know it so well that there is a humor in their being there instead of the honestly lumpish peasants in whom the Millets, or Frères, or Bretons would have enlisted our sympathy. But for the moment they bloom there as bright and cheerful to look at as if they had been some evanescent product of nature, like the flowers and the passing shadows.

You next turn toward a number of small pictures, under glass to enhance the idea of their preciousness, — Meissonier, Gues, Steinheil, — exquisitely finished works, with rich, dark tones suggestive of the flavor of old wines. They are archæological, but of an archæology that revives not only the externals but the human nature of bygone periods. There was a *Doré*, which would go far to convert you to the estimate that he is a great book illustrator but cannot paint, and two *Gérômes*, *L'Almée* and the

Egyptian Butcher, familiar from Goupil's photographs.

Bouguereau seems to me to pursue an ideal policy which is worth pointing out to aspirants in other fields as well as art, who are desirous of substantial returns together with the appreciation of connoisseurs. He has great ability, and he knows just where to put it. He chooses a subject that appeals to the nine tenths who care nothing about art, and then he captures the remainder, who care about nothing else, with his treatment. His *Maternal Solicitude*, from Mr. T. R. Butler's, is a mother bending over a naked infant. The rose tints and pearly grays of the tender flesh are wonderfully delicate and correct. As if the normal difficulties of the task were not enough, the soft shadow of a curtain is thrown over half the little body, and in this there are reflected lights and reconcilements of shadow with local color of astonishing subtlety. The atmosphere and roundness are almost illusive. It is not a startling projection, but winning in its soft naturalness.

You, my dear madam, would buy this picture in a minute for the consummate skill you would discover in it, and your neighbor just as quickly for the surprising likeness it bears to the latest addition to her own interesting family. When I write a book, — that is what I purpose to do, — I shall bear Bouguereau in mind. I shall strike a subject that will draw the populace away from the Red-Handed Avenger of the Spanish Main, and I purpose to treat it in a manner that will awaken the respectful attention of Mr. Henry James Jr. himself.

I have said that the Olyphant collection bore the air of having been completed some years back. It goes without saying, therefore, that it was American and mainly landscapes. How helpless our poor early attempts at *genre* looked, coming away from the modern splendors in the other room! In Huntington's Counterfeit Note, one of the first, — you know it by engravings, — everything else is positively slaughtered and jumped on afterwards in the eagerness to tell the story.

Mr. Olyphant seems to have had a *penchant* for Kensetts; there were no less than thirty. The largest of them brought the highest price at the sale, though it had the competitorship of the very much more important figure - piece of Henry Peters Gray, the Judgment of Paris. One could not much disparage this taste, however he may have been dazzled in the north room. The Kensetts have genial qualities that endure. He loved gray rocks and blue skies and water and simple lines of composition, avoided florid greens, and maintained a sobriety in the midst of his richest autumn woods. He was contented to be a poet in his landscapes, and did not try to be a five-act tragedian or a Fourth of July orator. It cannot be done. A dismal Hurricane of Thomas Cole and an expansive composition of faded topography of the old-fashioned sort by Church — so like to Cole, his master, that you could hardly trust the signature — were there to prove it. Landscapes breathe a varied sentiment, it is true, but local pride and all that kind that inheres in convulsions of nature is much better to be got out of the human figure. Perhaps with a fuller equipment in its use, fewer attempts in any other direction would have been made. As our life schools increase, an abatement in the spread-eagle style may be confidently looked for. The mission of landscape, meaning now landscape and not water, which is incarnate restlessness any way, is peace. This implies no restriction upon conceptions of grandeur. The gentlemen who desire to show that we are the greatest nation that ever trod shoe-leather, by the exploitation of our Western frontiers, need not find their mission gone. But mere topography will not do it. There is simplicity and idyllic peace in the desolation of the Yellowstone, and sunshine and shadow play as softly on the dizzy heights of the Sierras as on the flesh of Bouguereau's baby.

In Henry Peters Gray, who died the other day, departed "the American Titian." His Judgment of Paris showed the sort of work from which he derived his *sobriquet*, and its validity. Should

some of the young women who delight to do so come along and recognize it with effusion, as an old master from Dresden or the Uffizi, you would almost seem to recognize it yourself. A beautiful white goddess, a Cupid holding back her drapery, at the right; Paris, in warm shadow and a mantle of Venetian red bending forward with the apple, from the left, — one fourth light, one fourth dark, one half middle tint, all in regular form. It is one of those conventional subjects, adopted as a pretext for luxurious painting, which had a certain meaning in a Renaissance age, but not much in America in Gray's time.

It has the excuse of being a good thing of its kind, however; you know how good it is when you go down-stairs and see Mr. Page's Aphrodite, which, with a little group of his other works, constituted a private side-show to the exhibition. It is a very slim-waisted figure, posturing on a sea-shell in the mincing attitude of a pretty milliner crossing Broadway in the mud. It is highly varnished, and the cold, yellowish-green sky has the tone of an old county map. You could have paid ten-thousand dollars once for this picture. It is far below that now, but perhaps Aphrodites with better constitutions and something of the real sparkle and dainty freshness of the fabled genesis from sea-foam could be brought from abroad as reasonably, even yet.

Our ideal art is yet to come, but for the present both of these pictures seem more foreign to American requirements than the battered Venus Anadyomene in Union Square, unearthed in a New Orleans beer saloon and attributed to Annibale Caracci, — as, in a free country, there is no reason why it should not be.

Mr. Farjeon, the English novelist, is to be counted among the distinctively holiday features, by reason of his publication of a Christmas story and his attention to the charitable aspects of the season in his public readings. A good many people who had never read his books will have done so since his in-

stallment for the moment as a literary sensation of the metropolis. They have attractive titles, and are scattered about, in the paper editions of the Harpers, upon every stationer's counter.

Mr. Farjeon's notices from the press are highly eulogistic. When you really come to know the state of the case, you find it another instance of the great amiability and lack of a sliding scale of adjectives prevailing in not a few newspaper offices. He is freely compared to Dickens. By one authority he is thought to surpass Dickens in his deeper insight "into the secrets of soul life." In the thinking of the Derby Mercury (English), his stories are "the most perfect in our language."

It was at Steinway Hall that Dickens read. The spell of pathos and humor cast by that somewhat grotesque figure, with its horn-like hair, its *bizarre* waistcoat and jewelry, and its red face subdued against the maroon screen, would suffice to draw one back to any entertainment that promised a reminiscence of it.

In the corridors speculators drove a trade now as then in the author's works and photographs. But within the reminiscence was faint indeed. The newcomer is of the school of Dickens in treating of low life, in copying a few of his names, and in reading from his own works. There the parallel ends.

Mr. Farjeon exhibits in his principal work, *Blade o' Grass*, a sympathy with poverty that is very creditable; but he lectures in costume, he does not create. His personages move about for the sake of saying or doing this or that, not of being this or that. His benevolent people are so very impressible, his good children so passionately fond of rectitude and of going to bed punctually on time, that their likenesses will be eyed with distrust in quarters of average perversity. Nor has he anything but the palest reflection of Dickens's humor, and nothing at all of his weirdness.

Perhaps some such foil was needed. Were we not drifting into the habit of disparaging Dickens too sweepingly for artificiality? He exaggerates, carica-

tures; but then good caricature is only the heightening of natural features. There must be a basis to go upon. When you compare him with Mr. Farjeon you find a vital spark of something in every least one of his characters that makes them characters, and not paper-dolls.

The excuse for an author's coming forward as a reader is either some decided elocutionary talent or a reputation that makes him worth seeing for his own sake. The really first-class celebrity could, if sturdy enough to disregard the slight impairment of dignity the fastidious might deem it, traverse the country and collect gate-money everywhere for simply standing on the platform, without so much as opening his lips. In a histrionic way Mr. Farjeon falls as short of his prototype as in others, though the difficulty of throwing yourself into a conception when there is no conception to throw yourself into cannot be overlooked. His talent is confined to a facility in presenting the cockney accent and cringing servility of a couple of London street beggars, who wander through his story, hand in hand, like the unhappy De Quincey and Ann.

The Christmas story, Solomon Isaacs, has more color than the others; indeed, it is interesting new material, an account of modern Jewish low life from an understanding and appreciative witness. There are curious customs and viands, and old Moshé who has lived most of his life in Jerusalem and cannot speak English. The heroine is the daughter of one old-clothes man, and the lover is the son of another and salesman in a "gents'" furnishing store. Here is life, such as you may see it any day you like to go and look at the bargains in Chatham Street. We find that there is in it sensitiveness to social depreciation, love affairs and day-dreams, charitable impulses, and appreciation of the comparative values of life as if it were our own. The descriptions are given with a zest and reality, as if here at last the author

were upon familiar ground, with a decided tenderness for it.

A *Christmas* story composed entirely of Jews is, of course, with all allowances and without prejudice a wild absurdity. Mr. Farjeon recognizes this in a preliminary word or two in a way that reminds you of those people who preface disagreeable remarks with "I suppose I ought not to ask" or "to say so," and then go on and do it.

Blade o' Grass is a case of poverty and crime of the hopeless sort detailed in the story of the reform-school girl in *The Atlantic*, last summer. She is born in Stony Alley, nobody's child. She grows up in the gutter, with never any other ideal than how to appease the gnawings of hunger. At eighteen she is the mother of an infant, brought into the world with one more term in the geometrical progression of misery added to the curse of its inheritance. At this stage the benevolent Mr. Merrywhistle—who has had an opportunity to do so all along, and strangely neglected it—would like to redeem Blade o' Grass, but it is too late. She knows nothing, can learn nothing, and clings to her criminal associations.

The dark problem is thus opened up to the very bottom to show that duplicity and even crime ought not to be a bar to the good offices of the kind-hearted, since in the nature of things the graduates of such a life could not be different from what they are. It is true, and if this reduced estimate of Mr. Farjeon, in opposition to the *Derby Mercury*, should prevent a single person from acting upon the deductions he has made from it in this cheerful Christmas season, I shall never be able to repent of it enough. There are Stony Alleys in New York,—sink-holes where every figure and building is sinister, where you breathe gingerly as if they were filled with carbonic acid gas,—and there whoever will go in search of them may find Blades o' Grass in plenty.

Raymond Westbrook.

ered, and have since kept the majority in the councils; but the once omnipotent leader has been looked upon in the light of a Jonah, who ought to think himself lucky to be supported at the public expense. One of the dictator's earliest acts had been to draw the college of Geneva, which had existed since the time of Calvin, directly under the control of the state. The wealthy aristocrats of the town, instead of spending their substance in riotous living, had lived simply, and, to a large extent, devoted their lives to letters or to science. It was evident that such men were not at all the proper persons to conduct the education of youth, and the president proceeded to remodel the institution, called it a university, and transferred the power of appointing to chairs from the faculty to the council of state. Several professors were then removed; others avoided removal by resignation. Their places are now mostly filled by non-Genevise, but Mr. Fazy (without giving lectures) is professor of jurisprudence.

The administration has considerably improved. With the dictator fell his

gambling establishment, and the direct encouragement to blacklegs which had characterized his government ceased also. There had gradually formed in Geneva an association not dissimilar to the Camorra, the chief object of which was to extort money at night from pedestrians, under the threat of charging them with certain crimes which cannot be mentioned here. Finally, a man thus accosted resisted, and, in the scuffle which ensued, was killed by the leader of the band. This rascal was caught, tried, and executed, after which the law was reformed by the abolition of capital punishment. Before dying, however, he confessed to having practiced his little game with success upon three hundred individuals. The bad character of the Genevise workmen (as compared with the French and our own) has seriously injured the watch manufacture, the chief industry of the town; but the fortunate legacy of the Duke of Brunswick enables the government still to spend considerable sums on public improvements, among which a magnificent new theatre has already cost four millions of francs, and is yet unfinished.

Arthur Venner.

OPEN LETTERS FROM NEW YORK.

III.

I THINK I notice in the dramas of the metropolis more of a romantic tendency, and an improvement in morality. The influence on the drama of the stranger within the gates is perhaps not enough attended to. The play is aimed, not only in our own metropolis but in others, largely at this leisurely person, lounging about the hotels, in the practice of spending money on his journey more freely than at home, and without the sense of responsibility to a commu-

nity that knows him to weigh him down. The Pink Dominoes, Forbidden Fruits, and spectacular performances flourish best when he is most in town. But at present, owing to the pressure of the times, he is much less in town than usual. This makes a home constituency more of an object. Managers would like to attract the family, and the family must be delicately handled. The ballet and opera bouffe have languished, and you would have found if you had stayed through the piece that the entanglements in Marriage, which had an extremely

awkward look more than once, were all explained to be entirely honorable previous alliances.

In the amusement columns one may fancy Sleary's talking to the amusement caterers themselves. People can't be always learning, you recollect the philosophic circus-rider says to Mr. Gradgrind, nor yet they can't be always a-working. So the "variety" entertainments, that flourish in unusual numbers while their betters fail, seem to be saying that we can't be always at psychology and archæology and social problems, and harrowed by the shrieks of mothers for their lost children. The farces of our fathers are demanded back. The Crushed Tragedian, an absurd medley by Mr. Dandreairey Sothern at the Park, said to have for its principal feature the exact imitation of the appearance of a well-known eccentric character, the Count Johannes, is quoted as one of the most successful things of the season. The count went into court for redress, but only thus served to increase the interest in this new species of humor and apotheosis of practical joking. Managers are believed to be in a profoundly contemplative mood. They would like to reduce to a principle the secret of success in a play. They would like to recall the public, and put an end to the era of empty benches. I have been impressed by one item set forth as a contribution to a complete theory in these speculations. "They [the public] go to laugh," a manager is represented as saying, "but they would rather cry." This is a confirmation, from an official source, of what I have long thought of the acceptability of the gulp in the throat and the moist handkerchief. It is not I alone who have been in the way of knowing of persons weeping as if all were lost at the pathos of Barrett's unique *Man o' Airlie*, and that such evenings as these were among the most delightful of their lives. There is a kind of delicious misery that its votaries would not exchange for any ecstasies of laughter. It looks as though the excitement of emotion were the object, and it made little difference in what direction it operated;

as if, in fact, pleasure and pain were in their essence very much the same thing. There ought to be opportunities enough in every-day life for the carrying off of all superfluous sympathies. But in every-day life the element of doubt can never be quite got rid of, while in the literary work the circumstances of the character are completely presented. We know that it is just such and such a character we are pitying, and no other, and the emotion can be indulged without misgiving. The popularity of woe, since it is now openly declared to be popular, may be accounted for by the novelty of the artificial sensation to those who have little of their own. To those who have too much, it may act as a reassurance, in showing that the lot they thought exceptional is no more than the common heritage. The argument might be extended to books, particularly to some of those doleful terminations with which fault is found. A very little of it goes a great way "in mine;" but, I ask, is there not danger, in too rounded and cheerful a finish, of destroying the illusion, and with it the lessons it may have carried along, as an approximation to life as it is?

The evidence I can adduce to the prevalence of a more romantic tendency in the dramas of the day is rather negative than positive. It is not seen in an unusual number of romantic plays, or the striking success of any one of them; Miller's *Danites* and Bret Harte and Mark Twain's *Ah Sin* are the only two new ones I recall. It is rather in the decline of the society plays. Their chief temple, Mr. Augustin Daly's Fifth Avenue Theatre, went into bankruptcy early in the season. The scene of *Pique*, *Divorce*, *Surf*, *Saratoga*, *Frou-Frou*, and *Fernandé* came to echo to the strident rhapsodies of *Parthenia* and *Ingomar*, *Fazio*, and *Guy Mannering* in the mouth of "the new American *tragédienne*," Mary Anderson. This young lady, finding the great priestesses of the tragic muse dead and gone, did a very wise and practical thing in stepping into the vacant field and securing, in the diffidence of more reverential contemporaries, a

nopoly of it. I saw her in Meg Merillies. She paints swollen veins upon her round arms, clutches a forked stick, holds in with difficulty a false tooth, and manages her eyes with a glitter like a ray of moonlight on a new tin roof. "Away! Away!" she shrieks, at every favorable opportunity, and goes off the stage with a stagger, after mouthing, in a voice that tries hard to make a *basso-profundo* of its natural pleasant *soprano*, an unmeaning couplet about

"When Bertram's might and Bertram's right
Shall meet on Ellengowan's height."

She dies in the good old physical style: down at full length, dispatched by the smuggler's bullet — up on one elbow — back on one knee — parting words — all the way up — comprehensive view of the scenery, with hands and head wavering — resounding collapse. Nobody lends the poor old woman a hand. They let her alone, — Bertram, the young heir, for whom she has sacrificed herself, like the rest. And yet one could not find it in his heart to blame Bertram and his friends so much for this, since it plainly appeared that no interference was desired in these well-calculated agonies. Never was gypsy, or what you will, so devoid of resemblance to a human being.

This you might see applauded and well paid for in the realistic precinct where Frou-Frou, the misguided pretty woman, in the impersonation of Miss Agnes Ethel, comes back after all her troubles to expire so sweetly in the arms of her friends, asking, with the ruling passion strong in death, to be arrayed in her bridal robes: "Then you shall see how pretty I will look." They are of a very different order, it is true, but there is a truth to nature even in Calibans.

It was long a source of grief to those among whom an attachment for the old traditions of the stage still lingers to see the regular drama airily wafted to the wall by the modern emanations from fashionable parlors, and paled by the dazzle of mammoth sensuous spectacles. The latter, a flimsy frost-work, disappeared before the first breath of adversity; the domain of the former is

much circumscribed, as has been said. You might suppose the traditionists would find themselves well satisfied with the revenge of time. It is not altogether so. The society play is said to have paralyzed actors as well as acting. The ranks are decimated, and when it is a question of calling the regiment again into the field there is no source from which it can be recruited. The difference seems to be the old conflict between idealism and realism. If you want real society, drop in at the first drawing-room; if you want a real landscape, take the first train for the country. But on the stage and in the picture-gallery there must be nature and something more. If you are acting, I understand this view to be, let it so appear; as with the Irishman in regard to sleep, who put his mind upon it, and showed the tallest example on record by reposing for a week.

The legitimate actor accentuates passion. He is demonstrative in his doings. He is an elocutionist. He suits the action to the word with bold and voluminous gestures. He has acquired a stage walk, toe first and then heel; and practice upon the tight rope has not even been unknown, for greater steadiness. He has made dancing, fencing, languages, posing by the hour before a pier-glass, his study. The profession was a liberal education; even more: the acquisition of noble sentiments was necessary. It will be found in *The Art of Acting*, by the Messrs. French, that "no performer can personate a hero truly unless, did events favor him, he be capable of actually becoming a hero." If you ask for names, we point with pride to the shades of those great exemplars of technique, Edwin Forrest, John Davenport, and Mrs. Bowers. The scenes of the dramas and melodramas in which, for the most part, they figured, lay in the remote past. Who could say that the manners of the periods were not such as they displayed them? Who had a right to say, judging from any modern standards he might take pains to compare them with, what they were?

Now take the society actor. It is the

way of society to rule out the expression of emotion as much as possible. A *blasé* calm is the thing. He wears a frock-coat, with a nosegay in the lapel; he has appropriate clothes—and very elegant they are—for every hour in the day. The society actress has more, but she does not keep herself in hand, in the matter of emotion, anything like as well. But can he wear a toga? that is the point. Can he wear a gaberdine to advantage, or trunk hose, and slash at miscreants with a buckler and broadsword? He walks about with his arms glued to his sides. Occasionally, he raises one to point a pistol or to order a mother-in-law out-of-doors; for he is a terrible fellow enough, I can tell you,—full of willfulness and sensibility, and a desperate courage when it is wanted, only we must divine it from fragmentary indications breaking through his imperturbable demeanor, instead of from the convulsions of Jack Cade and Metamora. His voice is low, with a tendency to a wearied drawl, as if he had seen so much, so much of life, and it was altogether tasteless. Can he bellow? Can he project stage whispers, to creep under the benches of the topmost gallery, like the subtle draughts from the corridor, and freeze the sanguine young blood of their occupants? I should think not. Society's horror of a "scene" has stifled his capacity for energetic action. Nor is this the worst. Mark well: with this type, reinforced alternately by the stage and society, and established more absolutely in force, will not all impressibility, sentiment, emotion, vanish with the processes that gave them expression? just as in the selection of species and the survival of the fittest, functions are eliminated with the flaccid members that cease to respond to their impulse. If, therefore, the world find itself, in some few centuries from now, bereft of feeling, impotent to love, or hate, or glow with patriotism, or bow in reverence, it may turn to these pages,—which, I make no doubt, will not cease to be found in every well-regulated library,—and let it not say it was not forewarned.

A visit succeeding the departure of

the young American tragédienne brought me into the presence of the Polish countess Modjeska, in the charming story of Adrienne Lecouvreur and the Marshal Saxe. It is a piece from which the makers of more modern society plays could learn. It has the rich dressing and furniture of the old *régime*, and a dialogue of considerable interest in itself, besides a love affair clearly intelligible and without morbidity, and a sufficiently exciting plot. Modjeska shows thorough training in the traditions we have been speaking of, without slavish subservience to them. She forms the third in the distinguished trio, consisting of Janauschek and Fechter, besides herself, who have learned our language at short notice, to give us a better appreciation of it and of the capabilities of their art. Janauschek and Fechter also have played engagements, not far apart, at the Broadway, and in somewhat similar creations of Dickens,—Hortense from Bleak House, and Obenreizer from No Thoroughfare,—which gives them another point of contact. As a rule, it is not a much better plan to look at dramatizations of impressive literary characters than at book illustrations of them. It is rarely that they are not shorn of their proportions when brought before you face to face, out of the far vista at the end of which you have seen them mysteriously walking. In Janauschek almost alone I find no disappointment. I never expect to imagine anything more in the way of suppressed fury, of deadly venom struggling under a hysteric attempt at airy indifference, than she presents in this tigerish French maid. The reality is assisted by the aptness of her natural accent.

"These are very long lies," she says, with a scornful laugh, to Mr. Inspector Bucket, weaving the net of the murder of Mr. Tulkington, step by step, around her; "you prose a great deal. Is it that you have almost finished, or are you speaking always?" Her eyes are softly half closed; then they open with a startling snap, as if they launched a tangible bolt of destruction. You wonder not to see it take effect. It is worth

a whole lunatic asylum of common rant. I do not think so well of Fechter's Obenreizer. There is a likeness in these characters: the same cat-like stealthiness, the same impression of dread, conveyed by slight touches and intensified by something connected with their foreignness, with that strange side of Dickens's genius that would remain if all he had in common with others were taken away, like the lime accretions in water-washed sandstone. Fechter violates probabilities; he scowls and blusters too much. Vendale could never have confided in such apparent villainy. Fechter is essentially of the dramatic and not of the subdued sort. He is of the days — if such days there were — when passion was more childish, and worked in the face and the whole person. I like him better in Lagardère, with his bold movements and his sword in his hand, and in the more demonstrative portions of Hamlet.

No Thoroughfare is a play it would be desirable to see imitated, if the romantic *genre* be indeed coming back. The characters and events are connected by a chain of fatality, to which the saying of Obenreizer, "There are so few persons in the world that they continually cross and recross," serves as a sort of formula. The action is simple but intensely sustained, the love-making honest, the humor enough and not too obtrusive, and the moral thoroughly good. An ingenious use is made of the powerful element of superstition, while appearing to allow it to influence only the character of the humblest class, Joey Ladle. A spot of the red fungus in the roof of the London wine vaults — travelers go to see still, in Saint Katherine's docks, the veritable patch that served the author's purpose — falling upon a person is made to be a premonition of death by murder. In the play, Obenreizer's motive for Vendale's destruction is reinforced by jealousy. He is represented as a lover of Marguerite's, also. The crime of the piece is not mere brutal horror. It is invested by the circumstances with a kind of awful poetry. You remember the story. A forged receipt for a large

sum of money, stolen in transit, is sent to Vendale from Neuchâtel. He must take it there, and afterwards, it happens, to Milan, to verify the writing as a means of detecting the thief. Obenreizer, ostensibly his warm friend, the unsuspected criminal, becomes his companion, with the design of getting possession of the tell-tale receipt. As they go along, the noises by the way and his own thoughts repeat to him in a sing-song tone, "Rob him if you may; kill him if you must." They come to Brigue, at the foot of the Simplon. Twice in the night attempts at robbery are frustrated by slight accidents. Then the time for robbery is past; it must be murder. In the morning there is danger, and the guides will not venture upon the mountain. They push on alone. Does not Obenreizer know this pass? Was not his childhood passed here? — his childhood, of which he delights to speak with such bitterness of mockery, betraying his malice towards the world. "Our poor hut by the water-fall," he says, "the cow-shed where I slept with the cows, my idiot half-brother limping down the pass to beg." How much of Switzerland there is in this! *He* remembers the whistle of the whip, forsooth, while Vendale, sitting on his mother's lap, in his father's carriage, rolled through the rich London streets.

Do I not know this pass, too, my first piece of Swiss pedestrianism, — when the diligence was long in coming, — from Brigue to Berisal, and the pretty pedestrianne in scarlet stockings, leaning upon her *alpenstock*, as I came up to it? Ah, the fragrance and the grateful silence; the little spots of pasture, with their red *châlets*; the cool brooks trickling from the glaciers; the savage slopes of green, the snow summits peeping brightly above them of a July day! Something of this I see, though it is winter, as the travelers climb the theatrical pass of pasteboard and canvas. Indeed, it is not badly put upon the stage. They are in a region of precipices now, high above Berisal. White woolen cloths wrinkled over the foreground give a graphic idea of new-fallen snow. Flakes of paper

sift thickly down upon their long cloaks. Vendale's head is strangely heavy; he has been drugged in his brandy, on the march. All at once the villain throws off his disguise.

"I said I would guide you to your journey's end," he cries, in a ringing voice. "It is here. I am the thief. You are sleeping as you stand. In five minutes I shall take the paper from your lifeless body."

Is that a situation, or is n't it? — the nightmare feeling of the man falling helpless into his fate, seeing in one flash of retrospect all the circumstances that pointed to this conclusion if he had not been blind.

But the acute crisis of interest is yet to come. At the last moment he musters strength enough to roll himself over the precipice, — down, down upon the spring mattresses waiting out of sight to receive him, three feet below. Obenreizer is a murderer, and yet the paper has escaped him. Vendale, you may be sure, is nursed back to life, and ultimately marries Miss Jeffreys Lewis, as he always intended to do, while the villain receives his deserts.

It is a misfortune that ought never to happen but to your worst enemies, if they are in the dramatic line, to have their works presented for the first time by inferior companies. It is hard not to identify the people of the piece somewhat with the manner of their representation. It is for this reason that I find it hard to strike the balance fairly between the Danites, which was put upon the boards at the Grand Opera House with a very good company, and Ah Sin, which had at the Fifth Avenue — Mr. Parsloe as the Chinaman excepted — quite an indifferent one. These are the Pacific-slope contributions to the subject. As such, they abound in the drawling dialect, the mining camps, vigilantes, Howling Wilderness saloons, San Francisco heiresses, and heathen Chinese natural to the style. The value of Ah Sin is in the piece of character-drawing in the Chinaman, as that of the Mighty Dollar is in the Honorable Bardwell Slote, and of the Gilded Age in Colonel

Sellers. Mr. Miller aims more at a complete story with a pathetic interest. But for the lameness of the conclusion, in which the heroine, who has been so madly in love with Sandy all the way through, simply leaves him and goes off to Chicago without being in any way provided for sentimentally, he would have accomplished it. The conception of Nancy Williams, the last survivor of a family cut off one by one by the destroying Danites, is impressive, and probably well grounded historically. Driven from place to place, like the classic Io, by this mortal terror, she takes refuge in a mining camp, in the disguise of a boy. On the deep stage, in front of the great mountain range, in the first act, Miss Kitty Blanchard, with shining blonde hair enhanced by a simple black dress, tells her mournful story to Mr. McKee Rankin. Slow music accompanies the narrative, rising wildly as he starts up and relates her flight by night in the storm and darkness. When she reappears in the camp as a boy, no one but Sandy's wife (for he has married in the mean time) discovers her secret. Some caresses between them, witnessed by Sandy, are the occasion for acute complications of jealousy, which test the nobility of several of the personages in a satisfactory manner. Apart from the central Chinaman, the piece seems more amusing, as well as more weighty, than Ah Sin, though one is prepared to distribute widely the credit for the details when he finds the whole of the capital stage-coach scene of the Danites in an early sketch by Habberton. As good a point as any is the sublime coolness of the parson who is rejected by the pretty school-mistress because he has another wife in the States, and takes it hard that a fellow should be thrown over for a little matter like that. In Ah Sin the melodramatic interest is supplied by an apparent murder: the lynching of the wrong man is about to take place for it, when the ostensible victim is produced by Ah Sin, who has brought him back to life, and kept him in reserve in his cabin.

These, I suppose, are examples, and

No Thoroughfare still more, of what Mr. Boucicault intends in holding that it is movement, a succession of exciting events, that constitutes the value of a drama. According to him it is what the personages do that is important. According to me it is what they are. One differs with reluctance from an authority whose imposing formulation of the canons of the dramatic art from the days of Æschylus down, in the *North American Review*, and whose personation of Con, the Shaughraun, in a red wig, the living centre-piece of an Irish wake, he has seen in the same week; but I cannot abandon my belief that character is the subject of the most enlightened interest both in the play and the book. Incidents are of value only as they contribute to its elucidation. To make action the ideal is to imitate the example of the archaic frescoers in the Egyptian pyramids, who show all sorts of transactions, hunting, weaving, the grinding of grain, carried on by personages without a spark of individuality or portraiture. There are diverse tastes, and no one work can suit them all; but I think its rank in the scale can be determined as it conforms more or less to this requirement.

For this reason the *Man of Success* at the Union Square, and Mr. Steele Mackaye's *Won at Last* at Wallack's, with their faults in other directions, are attempts at something higher than the dramas depending upon intricate plots and startling adventures. In these it is the aim of the action not only to present character as it is, but to show it modified and at the end changed into something quite different from what it was in the beginning. The interest is in the conflict going on in the interior personality of the leading character of each. The Union Square apparently recognizes in Paris, in the present era of division of labor, the most satisfactory source of supply for the drama as for the fashions. The *Man of Success* is simply one of the translations from the French which it is the specialty of this theatre frankly to present, as less troublesome and equally efficacious with the thin attempts at dis-

guise of the same material too prevalent elsewhere. The *Man of Success* in person, and the hero of *Won at Last*, are men of the impassive, gentlemanly, coolly forcible sort I have characterized, and so well exemplified in the handsome actors Coghlan and Montague. The *Man of Success* has set his mind upon his own selfish aggrandizement and the pleasure of mastery. He sneers at affection, moral ideas, and sentiment of every sort. He turns his wife and children into the street when they thwart him. He shoots in a duel the son of his dead partner, whom he has wronged in a business transaction. But then he finds that he has a conscience after all; the demands of affection, now that he stands so completely alone, tug at his heart-strings. He makes restitution, goes off like Claude Melnotte to the army in Italy,—only this is the campaign of the third Napoleon instead of the first,—and returns to his family a redeemed man. Mountjoye may be a little exaggerated, but he is certainly a type of something that prevails to a considerable extent, and he is a very legitimate person for stage purposes.

In the original play of Mr. Mackaye—if it be original, for charges of plagiarism fly so wildly at the heads of all the playwrights of the day that one knows not what to think—the idea is more finical. There must be hardened men of the world capable of snorting at it as incomprehensible rubbish. John Fleming is one of the blasé kind. His experiences have left him only a heart of ashes. Having arrived at a certain age, he marries, in compliance with his deceased father's request. Grace is a New England girl, described in the play-bill as "a true woman." After the wedding ceremony she chances to overhear him explaining his position to a friend. He has married her as a wife who is so-so, rather better than the average, one who has good principles and will not discredit him. He requests to know if he is taken for an idiot that he should be in love with anybody at this time of day. Her excessive adoration of him undergoes a reaction. She refuses to go with

him to his home, but finally consents to do so for the sake of appearances, on the stipulation that they are to live in the same house, but to be nothing more to each other than formal acquaintances. This is such a new kind of woman to Fleming that, as the arrangement goes on, he becomes desperately in love.

Mr. Mackeye, who has followed Mr. Boucicault a little in the fashion of talking back to the critics, says he intends to show by this the need of a higher conception of the marriage relation, as opposed to the sensual view on the one hand and that of a mere worldly speculation on the other; and it is not a bad idea. Like the examples in Mr. John Brougham's very conventional piece of the old English school, *Flies in a Web*, and unlike that in Mr. Henry James's story of *Madame de Mauves*, this case of falling in love after marriage ends happily. Jealousy is artfully evoked by the introduction of apparent rivals on both sides. A new motive for suicide is shown in the magnanimity of Fleming, who twice attempts it for the purpose of freeing Grace from her ties to him, that she may be happier elsewhere.

Over at Booth's, at the same time, the great tragedian, returned for a short season to the fine theatre where his magnificent presentation of Shakespeare as it should be proved the wreck of his fortunes, was showing in *Richard III.* how woman can be won by a monster, steeped in the most heinous crimes both towards herself and others, by nothing more than a little smooth flattery of her charms. Ladies, is there one spark of truth in the hideous assumption, and shall we not set down this play at least to the invention of the knavish Baconians? What tokens of esteem could have remained to Lady Anne for such a one as Fleming? And what, I wonder, would have been the luck of the insinuating Richard with such a one as this exacting Grace?

Here is a desultory glimpse we have had together of the most obvious form of amusement the metropolis devises for itself as a solace for the winter evenings.

We have seen tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, and society plays, — for this form, though scotched, is by no means dead, nor will it be while the upper classes delight to see upon the stage the manners and customs of life as they know it. Is there anything of it likely to endure, to be a permanent reminiscence longer than while we are drawing on our gloves and passing into the darkness from the illuminated lobby around which the hackney coaches are rumbling and the policemen shouting? If there be, it is the *Brunhild of Janauschek*. It rises out of its surroundings as *Bartholdi's* statue is to do from *Bedloe's Island*. I have already spoken of her *Hortense*; she plays *Lady Dedlock*, of course, in the same piece; but strong as these are, the other is greater by so much as the magnificent Amazonian princess of the heroic epic surpasses the serving-woman and the modern lady. How she swells with untamable pride, and fumes at the thwarting of a will that none heretofore has dared to contradict! Her arms weave a rhythm of stately gesture about her. I cannot speak in measured terms of her attitudes. She covers her face with her dark blue mantle, bordered with barbaric red, and every line is like the drapery of a stately statue. She casts herself upon a couch in an appalling abandon of grief, her veil of black hair spread widely over her shoulders. Again she stands with superb disdain, like *Thusnelda* in the procession of *Germanicus*. See her come down the palace steps to gloat over the dead body of *Siegfried*, slain for his insult to her. "Aye, there you lie. How proudly you held your head to-day!" she scornfully begins. But she falters; there is a woman's heart too in the haughty breast, and she has loved him better than all the rest. "No," she cries, "here is only unutterable woe," and throws herself upon the bier. It is a great moment, and a very few like it go far to redeem the stage from the obloquy it is no small part of the doings of its own professional tenants to bring upon it.

Raymond Westbrook.

tired legs could not propel the tired body rapidly. She saw the boat headed for her. She turned toward the centre of the lake. The boat turned. She could hear the rattle of the oar-locks. It was gaining on her. Then there was a silence. Then there was a splash of the water just ahead of her, followed by a roar round the lake, the words "Confound it all," and a rattle of the oars again. The doe saw the boat nearing her; she turned irresolutely to the shore whence she came; the dogs were lapping the water and howling there; she turned again to the centre of the lake.

The brave, pretty creature was quite exhausted now. In a moment more, with a rush of water, the boat was on her, and the man at the oars had leaned over and caught her by the tail.

"Knock her on the head with that paddle!" he shouted to the gentleman in the stern.

The gentleman *was* a gentleman, with a kind, smooth-shaven face, and might have been a minister of some sort of everlasting gospel. He took the paddle in his hand. Just then the doe turned her head and looked at him with her great, appealing eyes.

"I can't do it. My soul, I can't do it," and he dropped the paddle. "Oh, let her go!"

"Let H. go!" was the only response of the guide, as he slung the deer round, whipped out his hunting knife, and made a pass that severed her jugular.

And the gentleman ate that night of the venison.

The buck returned about the middle of the afternoon. The fawn was bleating piteously, hungry and lonesome. The buck was surprised. He looked about in the forest. He took a circuit and came back. His doe was nowhere to be seen. He looked down at the fawn in a helpless sort of way. The fawn appealed for his supper. The buck had nothing whatever to give his child, nothing but his sympathy. If he said anything, this is what he said: "I'm the head of this family; but really, this is a novel case. I've nothing whatever for you. I don't know what to do. I've the feelings of a father; but you can't live on *them*. Let us travel."

The buck walked away; the little one toddled after him; they disappeared in the forest.

Charles Dudley Warner.

OPEN LETTERS FROM NEW YORK.

IV.

If you choose to go up the staircase with me to the eleventh annual exhibition of the Water-Color Society at the National Academy of Design, you will mount with a person who cannot tell you the justness of the prices in the catalogue; who is scarcely so sure of every name on the instant as to know whether it is that of one whose works are to be darted at with rapture, or passed by with self-respecting contempt; who has not a fund of reminiscences from every

previous exhibition in the world; and who has even had the ill luck to miss by absence more than one of this very series. But what then? All the world cannot be connoisseurs, and the regular critics have had their say in the regular channels. We can still respect each other. We can still deposit our umbrellas, if we have a taste for this kind of recreation, — I confess for myself I find it hard to keep out of a picture-gallery if there be any way of getting in, — and go up and look about us, in some lull of the courts, the coal stocks, or

Extra C sugars, and make note of our impressions, too, I suppose, if we like. If we impute to some designers meanings they never dreamed of, and pass by in others what they thought they had put most obviously on the surface; if we mistake our gradations of merit, and even expend part of our time watching the people as they move about in the broad, strong light, standing and giving place with a hitching motion like the figures in a puppet-show, why, there is a myriad of us, and what are they going to do about it?

I have even found it amusing at times to go through in the reverse order, looking for the worst things instead of the best. What in the world do they want to be artists for? I ask these observers of nature only in its tritest aspects, these druggers-about of muddy and frigid carmine and Indian yellow, these depictees of clumsy, inane figures with less anatomy to them than boneless sardines. And what can they mean by hanging them up with modest demands for sixty, seventy-five, and as high as two hundred dollars, when chromos can be had at every Cheap-John stall for the silver quarter of our fathers? But you return in a few days and find the magic placard "Sold" affixed to the corners of some of the most hopeless of the lot. Then you become reflective, and surmise family connections of unlimited wealth who have bought upon the basis of dotting fondness and pride in the achievements of their ambitious scions. Or you suspect darkly the stratagem of a purchase by the artist himself, — for all the worst are by no means amateurs, — for the moral effect.

The staircase itself is one of the attractive features of an Academy exhibition. With its oaken solidity, its easy rise, its generous width, and the flowering plants upon its platforms, it has a palatial effect and is a hospitable preface to the entertainment above. It should afford subjects. Let some observing draughtsman note the groups upon it, our expressions of expectancy and exaltation as we rise into the more ethereal atmosphere at the top, and the

shadow of returning cynicism as we come down, with the hundred rainbow impressions telescoped together, and the dissatisfied reflection that the fairest form of human achievement can after all do so little for permanent human content. If so much as this be not expressed upon our faces, it ought not to be a matter of insuperable difficulty to put it there. Mr. T. W. Wood, with the Progressive Drawing Book, can supply a formula. Expression is a matter of lifting or pulling down an angle of the mouth and the inner extreme of an eyebrow or so. You are referred for expression to Mr. Wood because I have seen his *Circus is Coming* at Mr. Edward Brown's sale, and his *Not a Drop too Much* at the monthly Union League exhibition, within a few days, besides his *Crossing the Ferry* here, and I note that he makes a specialty of it. It is the stark skeleton of expression. In the apparent fear that his meaning will be mistaken he caricatures it. Dilution is badly needed. To one part of intelligible meaning, Mr. Wood, add five parts of delicate handling; and there are indications (in the *Sick Negro* at the Union League, particularly) that the future may bring forth results not unworthy of acceptance. The ferry picture has a fixed-up air, as of a tableau. There is little pictorial in it, furthermore; nothing that could not have been made sufficiently intelligible in words. We have a right, in a time when print is so easy of resort, to demand of the language of art — and the demand defines a little the province of art — that it shall accomplish something that ordinary language cannot. This view of an every-day circumstance could be wholly embraced in a description: "I was crossing to Brooklyn," one might say, "when one of those little rascals of Italians came into the cabin. He fiddled execrably for a moment, and passed around his cap to the people opposite. An old lady from the country seemed to want to give him an apple from some she had in a carpet-bag. On one side of her was a business man in a fur cap and eyeglasses, with a newspaper. He looked at him with a

whimsical, half-benevolent air, as if he were thinking, 'If I should give you a nickel, you young beggar, I wonder what you would do with it.' There was a gaunt, wild-looking man on the other side of her, with spiky hair. He might have been the prophet of a new religion. 'Society was in a pretty state,' he seemed to say, 'that could have that sort of thing going on.' Then there was a young woman who just stared and nothing else, and a negro woman with her baby, who stood by looking on. The negro woman had a striped shawl, the old lady a florid carpet-bag, and the prophet a red necktie. If there were only more color, — the floors and white wood-work of the ferry-boats are so insufferably cold, you recollect, — and art in grouping were used, such a scene might be worked up into quite a nice little picture."

That is positively all there is of it. Every picture can, of course, be roughly described, just as it can be roughly engraved, as in the catalogue illustrations; but there are no subtleties in Mr. Wood's, nothing I have not conveyed to you. I do not wish to be understood as finding fault with it because it is an every-day subject, for I have a distinct idea that it is the business of artists to hunt out for us the beauty and impressiveness there is in every-day subjects, that they may gradually put us in the way of doing it for ourselves. We are rather slow observers out of our own line of occupation, but when our attention is called we see readily enough. The prevailing school of humorists have scarcely any other claim to an original basis than this. They draw attention to sayings and doings as old as the hills: the talk of the Smiths coming home from church or from a funeral; the horror of Mrs. Cobleigh at hearing of a suicide she thought was Augustus Kinman, and her sudden loss of interest when she learns it is George Kinman, with whom she had no acquaintance; showing that it is an excitement of the sensational order, and not a profound commiseration for the woes of humanity. "Is this funny?" we ask; "we have

heard it no end of times. Why, so it is, exquisitely funny," and we are presently put in the way of looking out for more such things. Something parallel to this process might take place in our art. There is plenty of room for it.

Now that we are up the staircase, is there anything to be gathered from a general preliminary glance? As the eye runs down the bright rooms it catches along, from frame to frame, on bits of blue sky, as a row of small gas jets is touched off by an electric current. Blue is the key-note. It indicates landscapes in full supply, and also the more coquettish and smiling composition of the water-color branch. In the oil exhibitions it is rather red. Oil-painting is like philosophy, water-color like wit; the latter loses by laborious effort more than any exertion can impart to the former. I read this in a book of Kotzebue's, who wrote *The Stranger*, and was shot, — not for that, though there are localities where they do it for less. Every water-colorist should cut out the motto, and, if the practical suggestion may be delicately hazarded, paste it in his hat. It looks like a pleasant, social, informal sort of art, but it calls for rigid accuracy and a trenchant keenness. The blots of color must be laid on with definite purpose, and once laid must be let alone. It is no time for experimenting. Dragged about, the purity of the color is destroyed, and all is over. It is a lesson that all of these exhibitors have not learned. A heavy manner, often in work of considerable merit in other respects, bears witness to attempts to repair the effects of indecision, to make the journey after the train has gone. It is too late; the most that can be done is to come down by ox-cart instead of by the through express. As might have been expected, the strongest men in the regular department have the best command of means and dexterity of hand to enable them to succeed in this. Samuel Colman, Kruseman van Elten, Wyant, R. Swain Gifford, display a notable familiarity with the resources of the art, — the slight spongings and scratchings, the use of papers of varied tints and grains by

which, in addition to the usual washes and stippings, the transparency and crisp effects of this material are arrived at. The body colorists, W. T. Richards, Bricher, Tiffany at their head, have to be put in a separate category. I am not going to lay this "body color" at any one's door as a *corpus delicti*. It is simply the expedient of mixing white with the pigments, and painting in solid substance upon the paper instead of a transparent film. There are charming things in both styles. One need not decide the question of legitimacy from the present exhibition, as if it contained the sum of all capabilities in either. There is only this remark to be made, and I will make no more: that whatever can be done in body color can be done as well or better in oil, while the other has certain felicities of its own, possibilities in the way of atmosphere, a greater air of naturalness, which constitute a peculiar province. An artificiality attaches to the body-color pictures. They never quite escape a suggestion of scene-painting.

The subjects do not contradict greatly the amiable promise of the first general glance. The minor keys are liberally touched. There is little sentiment of a profound sort, no appearance of prophets enunciating strange sayings from the retirement of their caves, no tragic figures flung wild abroad. There is mainly apparent a taste for cheerful color and the imitation of things in their pretty, ordinary aspects.

La Farge breaks the routine in one of the small things of the exhibition, unique of its kind. It is something to respect and admire, and also to wonder at, to find a man of our commonplace selves exhibiting an angel instead of a fashion plate or a butcher boy. Americans have as good a right as anybody in the upper domain of imagination, but we are so few there that the surroundings all seem to look askance at us, and we walk in it with misgivings. La Farge is not satisfied to be trivial. You can see him stretching out his neck, as it were, after the vanishing glories of a great art. But it is far distant now,

and not too distinct. He reproduces ghostly fragments which are perhaps not too well understood even by himself. His angel is a mere sketch, little white and flesh tones scattered thinly over a burnt-sienna colored paper, and framed up in a gold mat. The wings are variegated like those of a butterfly, and some original refinement is attempted in the color, which seems to have minute bits of something like mother-of-pearl inlaid in it.

The only other attempt at the fancifully imaginative is J. C. Beard's *A Child's Dream of Fairy-Land*. A hydrocephalous infant is represented as drawn through a dismal swamp, in a shell, by two vicious-looking swans. No human infant would ever trust himself in such circumstances in the wildest dream. It is worth mentioning only to show the plentiful lack of such things, and for the oddity of its coming from the Beard family, whose province is mainly the parodying of humanity by means of costumed monkeys and terriers.

Perhaps it has a snobbish sound to make so much of them, and I am sure I would not say a word in their favor if I could help it, but here are the foreigners, though few in numbers, in force sufficient to show those of us who need to learn what the standard of excellence is how to generalize and use gracefully a fund of information when we have it. A small figure of a cavalier trying his rapier, by Thomasi, emerges from the rich splashes of crimson lake, siennas, and grays in which it is formed, and with all the local tones upon the flesh and garments that belong to them laid with small, free touches, as if we saw it mistily taking shape in the creative act of the author's mind. Thomas Windt has a more finished picture of the sympathetic German type: a neat old woman in an humble interior, with a blue crockery plate softly suggested on a dresser. Degas has a spirited group of ballet-dancers behind the scenes, with the strange shadows of that chaotic region cast over their airy attire; but its pasty finish is left incomplete, and there is nothing to be learned from it about color.

The Ring, by the English artist Killingworth Johnson, and The Reverie, by a Frenchman, Tofano, are naturally contrasted as examples of treatment of nearly the same subject, — a single figure of a young woman in two diametrically opposite styles. The style of Tofano, the broad, free, ornamental manner, the theory that delight in the physical aspects of nature is the legitimate object of art, is the one most defensible; but, thank Heaven, I am not *doctrinaire* enough to quarrel with such an exquisite piece of character drawing as that elaborated by the other. Tofano's young woman is disposed diagonally across the paper in a flowered robe, in a boudoir with bouquets, a tiger skin, and flowered wall-paper. It is very pretty, but she is a surface, and that is all. What do you know about her? It may be a simpering, shallow nature, or one of that kind hard as steel, that inhere not rarely in just as dainty bodies. The other has been pronounced not a picture. It might have been made so, I doubt not, by scattering some repetitions of the central features about the parallelogram; but for the present it is simply a figure in a plain room, standing facing us, in front of a mirror in which she is reflected. She holds up to the light her left hand, foreshortened towards you, contemplating the glitter of a new ring, — let us suppose, since the tender expression is by no means that of mere delight in finery, an engagement ring. Here is the subtlety we have missed in our friend Wood. It could not be put in print; no, not if Open Letters from New York were an encyclopædia long. You divine, and yet by an imperceptible influence, the whole nature of this gentle girl, her refinement, innate and of surroundings, her trusting and affectionate disposition, her mind of moderate compass, her playfulness and sedateness. From the slender figure, not too well fitted for rugged circumstances, a keen practitioner could gather its constitutional story as well as the family physician. I recollect this Killingworth Johnson. In my catalogue of the London water-color exhibition of '74, which I had the good fortune to see,

I find I had marked his two contributions with a triple star of enthusiasm. He was an artist there. If he be not here, let this be one of the places where we kick over the traces. I have sometimes thought, narrowed down as our subjects are by the smoothing out process of civilization, that the art of the future might consist more of this sort of individualism, an intenser insight into character and rendition of it, as mere externals become less available.

Magrath, to give the foreigners no more attention, is a close finisher too. He is a devoted expositor of the charms of robust, barefooted Irish maidens. Sometimes he locates them among the ragged picturesqueness of the Central Park shanties, but not this time, Shelton being the only one who makes use of this very available material, in his nice Winter Twilight; at other times, in the white stone cottages of their own country, of which we have a charming view in his No. 202. His On the Threshold is one of these maidens leaning in a pensive attitude half in and half out of a flood of daylight coming through the open door, through which also a graceful small landscape is seen. The figure is finished to the last degree, yet without the sacrifice of breadth. It detaches itself with perfect relief and brilliancy. It is a piece which leaves little to desire, and would do us no discredit anywhere. His larger Kelp Gatherer, out-of-doors, has not the same opportunity for an ingenious play of light, and has only its intrinsic attractiveness as a character to depend upon, which I do not find great. Though the figure stands against a bright sky the coloring is not more sombre than usual. Jules Breton and Millet, who treat such figures, or gleaners coming home with bundles of grain on their shoulders, project them darkly against the sky, as the case would be, and put something strange and melancholy into the faces.

Miss Jacobs's girl looking for her cows has at a distance an air like a figure of Magrath's, but when you come closer it is a Yankee girl, and a work of less though sufficient finish. She is coming down the hill from the farm-house with

a milk-pail, and shading her eyes with her hand. You would wager that her name is Almira, and that she expects a young man along before a great while, if this milking business can ever be got through with, to take her to singing-school. It constitutes a pleasing whole, and is a kind of thing we need as much as possible of, — bold, large figures uniting well with their surroundings, not too large to be able to dispense with accessories, and not too small to be mere accessories themselves. Symington has a number of commendable attempts in this direction, but still crude. He is on the way, but has not yet arrived. The pretty child in blue swinging in a hammock and gazing out at you with blue eyes that match the ribbon in her blonde hair is the best of his five figures. The Sewing-Girl, with a pensive but not the traditional miserable air, is good; and the senile chuckle of the well-cared-for old gentleman engaged in paring apples, in his *Not too Old to be of some Use*, is capitally managed. The point to note is the feeling for a bold, impressive mass. It is, on its side, the same characteristic exhibited in the best marines and landscapes of the exhibition.

Pranishnikoff is a naturalized Russian, who studied in Italy and is perfecting his powers in the training-school of the *Harpers' illustrated paper*. He ministers to a fancy stronger in its devotees than that of mere beauty or sentiment, namely, intense action. His *Birthday* is a wagon-load of drunken peasants lashing a jaded horse over the steppe with maudlin shouts. Another piece is a pair of smugglers furiously urging their three horses, harnessed abreast, to escape the pursuit of revenue officers galloping up from the distance. They are an epitome of the most brutal chapters of *Tourguéneff*. They give *Tiffany's Algerian Cobblers*, a row of dark, savage men mending shoes in front of a tent in the desert, quite a human air by contrast. It is not an easy matter to judge of the accuracy of such action as this. These plunging legs in actual practice do not wait to be counted. The effect is seemingly natural, however, and there is a

thoroughness of elaboration in the whole that rivals the usage of *Detaille*. A want of sympathy in the encompassing circumstances with the flying groups may be noted. In the pictures of *Schreyer*, to take a large example, and the woodcuts of *Kelley*, in the "black and white" room, to take a small one, everything goes with the travelers, — dust, clouds of flying snow, or whatever it may be; the entire view is put in motion. I should think with works of this kind in full view upon a wall continuously the sense of motion would cease after a while, as if the headlong rush were stopped by some *Merlin's incantation*. They ought rather to be hung a little aside, where they could be happened on when one was tired of the ordinary tameness of things, and enjoyed as a refreshment.

Eakins is commended for his action, though I think his quiet old lady knitting has more of the qualities of a picture. He shows us a couple of adult negroes, one perhaps the grandfather, the other, with a banjo, the father, educating a small scion of the house to dance the break-down. It is a serious business, and by no means mere levity. The boy has a perfunctory air, as much as if it were an arithmetic lesson. The aged instructor looks on, and doubtless recalls certain classic traditions of the art and laments the degeneracy of times which can of course never equal the old. Still, such as his limited capacity is, the pupil must be taught to do credit to his family and his bringing up. The banjo player's head is too large for his attenuated limbs, but he plays away gayly all the same, and the action is not vitiated. Mr. Eakins is one of our delegates to foreign schools. He has come home from abroad, and is commendably looking for subjects in the line I have indicated.

Abbey's *Rose in October*, a still blooming elderly young lady standing by a country gate, supplements his revolutionary New Year's callers in the black and white room as evidence of a painstaking intelligence not quite ready yet for a dashing short-hand.

This black and white room is a charming department. It is hard not to over-

estimate its comparative importance, with its pleasing sketches in charcoal, crayon, and India ink, its etchings by Haden, Whittler, Farrar, Gifford, P. Moran, and Miller, its proof engraving by Marsh, and the simplicity and seeming completeness of its means. It has all those broader aspects we understand as distinctively artistic, and which are such a perpetual miracle to the uninitiated. The useful influence of the publishers of our best illustrated literature, the Scribners and Harpers, appears here. There is a reassurance in witnessing the good imaginative work, and such good *genre* as that of Reinhart, for instance, done here to fill hasty orders. It ought to result at the proper time in striking and original works in a more important field.

Here is a group of animals and figures by Darley, in his recognizable *bourgeois* style, recalling the drawing book. P. Moran's painted horses in the stable, and cows and sheep, are of the same academic, Dusseldorfish sort. One longs for some of the sharp angles of a streak of lightning to run crinkling through them.

But let us leave the figures. From this door-way we can see at once the effect of the two principal architectural subjects at the bottom of different rooms. Colman's is a transparent, bright picture, a view down a Brittany street of irregular open-timber-framed houses, terminated by a cathedral bathed in the atmosphere of distance. Tiffany's is a Brittany church also, — nearer at hand, its dark tower threatening against a disturbed sky, — at the top of a flight of steps on which market people offer their wares. Its semblance of the texture and heaviness of stone is an argument for the advantage of the solid method in this kind of subject. The white caps of Colman's peasant figures in front are got by scratching off the surface of the paper instead of by blots of paint. It is a trick of the trade, but to be satisfactory you ought not to know it. One wants to think that a picture is a mysterious work perfected by means altogether beyond him: if it is to be reduced to a matter of penknives, he feels as if he could do something in

that line himself. Sartain's Street in Venice is a simple rendering of a pleasant effect of shadows and perspective with common buildings. I see plenty of as good opportunities, and better, in my walks every day. I wonder they are not taken advantage of. Silva's small houses and Moran's Stable Door, with the calcimining on the wall imitated by the body color, which is indeed itself of the same substance, are suggestions to amateurs and will bear much more treatment by professionals. Arthur Quartley's Old Fishing Town of New England shows a row of weather-beaten gray and red clapboarded houses. There is a very nice feeling in the run of the lines, the curve of the railing, echoed by its own shadow on the ground, which runs around the edge of the wall where it abuts on the beach with its sea-weeds and rocks. Walter Paris's Lenox Iron Mill shows how a good subject can be spoiled by a commonplace way of looking at it. You are perfectly certain that by climbing around a little, something imposing could have been got out of this irregular collection of stacks, sheds, and gables. As it is, it is only the kind of a view the foreman would like to frame and hang up in the foundry.

Bricher goes much beyond the point of cleverness. It seems as if he could go very much farther yet, but for an over-conscientiousness which leads him to finish everything too completely and destroy the quality of mystery. There must remain something unknown to engage our permanent interest. He delights in silvery reflections, the mirroring of dark objects, the greenish light through the crest of a coming wave. His foregrounds show accurately stratified rocks, and beaches of sand with all their *débris* of sea-weeds, pebbles, and bleached clam shells, each with its particle of water and sand left in the bottom by the departing tide. They are admirable. But the whole is too distinct. It is a *fault of too much*, not of too little knowledge, and should be easily remedied if it be recognized as in need of remedy.

R. Swain Gifford's contributions are slighter, sketchy works. There comes

from them—this is the merit of the transparent washes in part—a stronger breath of real nature. Let us compare him a little with his equal, Wyant. The quality of mystery, the quality illustrating Emerson's definition of art as "nature distilled through the alembic of man," is better exemplified in Wyant than any other contributor. His attractiveness is of an entirely different kind from Gifford's. The latter is a more cosmopolitan artist in his susceptibility to impressions from many climes and seasons, but not so sentimental in a limited branch. The impressiveness of Gifford as represented here is in his forms. He likes large bowlders, and cedar-trees with a distinct outline. His best piece is some salt vats. They are simple, grayish planes of light and shadow, thrown out from a clump of brownish trees which are filled up solid against the sky. The sky line is important with him, and you could draw out separate pleasing details. From Wyant you can take out nothing but the whole. Neither foreground, middle distance, nor background is especially important. An atmosphere of melting, unobtrusive colors in small intermingled patches drifts through and suffuses the whole. The craving for texture is satisfied. Have you ever stopped to analyze it? Do you note how we cannot get along without it? how nothing is so dreary as large, unoccupied, smooth spaces? The human brain seems irresistibly driven to put upon everything it originates an uneasy and endless congeries of grain and surface decoration corresponding to the convolution in which it is itself twisted up. The plan of all of Wyant's pieces is pretty much the same. There is a spot of blue in the centre of the sky surrounded by whirling grays. Below is a delicious intermingling of soft blues, grays, and green, with a few dashes of red, and in the midst perhaps a spot of warm white. Then a thin tree or two standing up towards the front, darkened to throw the distance off. The scene itself is not of importance, as it is not in so many charming landscapes of the French school, whose effect is obtained by casting some sort of tender sentiment

over agueish marshes where one would not think of lingering in person. It is the way of our own artists, for the most part, to make a physical appeal to us; to make us say, like Bellows in his elm-shaded village street, and Robbins with his farm-house embowered in lilac bushes, "How I wish I were there this very minute!"

Newell has a pair of good figures that recall Birket Foster; Hopkinson Smith, numerous landscapes in which the neat draughtsmanship is much to be admired. Some sketches by Stacquet and Ciceri show the best kind of water-color short-hand, and some by Marny the heartless conventional kind. The studios of Vibert and Berne-Bellecour, by Bourgoin, are an interesting exhibition of the luxurious influences by which these strong colorists surround themselves. They suggest the speculation why it is that our own interiors are not turned to artistic account in this era of decorative furnishing. In an age when more startling ideas are in abeyance, the domestic idea is worthy of homage. Nothing offers a more legitimate field than these apartments newly revised in accordance with correct principles. There should be family groups of small size, disposed about them like genre figures, in the style in which Guy and Wilmarth have sometimes succeeded; except that these latter have never shown any appreciation of the kind of glowing richness I have in mind, but of a puritanical inharmoniousness instead.

I reserve a paragraph for the vestiges of the once powerful and aggressive pre-Raphaelites. "Pre-Raphaelitism," I say, "thy name is frailty," as I arrive before a frame of T. C. Farrar's, who went away long since and settled in London. He used to draw every leaf in the heart of a sun-lit, tremulous forest. Where now are the quivering aspen-leaves, the arrow-headed water-plants, the long grasses, the lichens, and the geological strata of the rocks? What little appearance of them there is is scratched out white with a penknife on a brown, muddy ground. Scratch, scratch, the water comes down the rocks,

from step to step, like the marks of matches on sand-paper. He has elsewhere a Rochester castle. The Turnerian lines of composition of the castle and the bridge, the repetition of the battlements by windmills on the distant hill, and the run of the ground, are pleasing, but the color is phenomenal. Where it is not it is of an insuperable heaviness. The castle, which rises out of a clump of red-roofed buildings, is of a cold pink, and the ivy of a pure yellow, both unlike anything else in the picture, and unlike any light that ever was on sea or land. That would not make so much difference if it were a decorative passage in itself, but it is the antipodes of it. Still, Farrar never was a colorist. John Henry Hill was more of a colorist. He retains the faculty. His Sunnyside is as cheerful a picture of a blue sky and green grass and a white house, with the sunlight touching it in patches, as you would wish to see. But it is hardly pre-Raphaelitish, and his view of the Natural Bridge of Virginia not at all so. There is hardly more stratification than in a pile of building sand. Some figures he has put in to give the scale are so far distant as to be scarcely perceptible, and of course do not accomplish it. These are the only two representatives of the original band, and it will be seen they no longer bear its banners aloft. Occupied in detail, to the neglect of more general qualities, it seems that when they come forth into a broader field they totter with weakness. The conventional people they used to abuse have kept along in the old ruts, and may not have improved much, but now, at the end of ten years, appear quite favorably in the comparison. Yet this is not a just tone of comment. The prospectus of the movement distinctly stated that the truth to nature at which it aimed would "with sympathy and reverence make happy and useful artists of those to whom imagination and inventive power are denied." We ought rather to conclude, not that the principle was not valid, but only that we have happened upon examples from the non-inventive category, whom it would be desirable to see back

at their honest vocation at once. The history of this enthusiastic movement for "truth in art," and the tracing of its permanent influence upon the community, would be an interesting theme. I am sure it would be found to be a powerful influence, although there are those of its disciples who talk lightly of the Ruskin they once believed to be a prophet raised up to enlighten the nations that walk in darkness; and others of them, who have forgotten their strenuous asseverations that the only hope for the future was in the domination of Gothic architecture, are designing buildings in the Queen Anne style. Enthusiasm and really definite ideas are so rare that when once aroused they do not easily subside. There was something very fine about this movement, and the ardent publishing and painting, for principle and not for pay, by which at its height it was characterized, and you may be sure the participants in it were persons of calibre.

There are reminiscences of the movement in Henry Farrar, Mrs. Stillman, and Miss Bridges, if not in its actually affiliated members. The latter was a pupil of W. T. Richards, who, though not, I believe, distinctly known as a pre-Raphaelite himself, was always treated by them with genuine respect as nearly akin in practice. Miss Bridges has a series of exquisite studies in the old manner. I can only mention the subjects: a kingbird swinging on a mullein stalk, a young robin just out of the nest on a dewy morning-glory, swallows in the air, field birds in a tangle of meadow grass and daisies, a flock of bluebirds hopping among the dead leaves on an autumn hillside. If you take them for birds or flowers of the namby-pamby kind you will be mistaken. They are as free and charming as the fresh air of nature in which they revel. Mrs. Stillman's flat figure of a child looking through branches of apple blossoms shows something of the mediæval side of it. The work of Henry Farrar, a younger brother of T. C. Farrar, is among the best in the galleries. It is somewhat plodding, — he does not take easily to color, — and the

serpent-like road he is fond of running into his scenes needs a masculine straightening out. On the other hand, it is sincere, marked by a deep feeling, and evidently that of a progressive man. The low-toned autumn piece, *A Quiet Pool*, something in the poetic manner of Mc-

Entee, could hardly be better. This, and his etchings, full of the impressiveness of twilight, of long perspective lines, of the catching of light on objects in confined interiors, are the things I am most sorry to go away from, now that our ramble is ended.

Raymond Westbrook.

THE CONTRIBUTORS' CLUB.

I DOUBT if it is generally known that a Historical Manuscript Commission in England was organized by act of Parliament in 1869. Her majesty's commission appointed a board of commissioners to inquire where papers and manuscripts, deeds and other instruments, are deposited, to visit those places, the muniment rooms in old castles and manors, the town-halls, libraries, etc., and to make abstracts and catalogues of the more important material that might be found. This board began its labors by issuing numerous invitations to persons in the kingdom who would be most likely to subserve the plan. They were asked for coöperation and for permission to search their collections. One hundred and eighty prominent men, earls, lords, and commoners, replied and gave cordial permission. Since that time many more, observing the interesting success of this commission, must have responded.

The first report of its labors was published in 1870. Since that time the reports have annually increased in bulk. The material thus brought to light depends for its value upon the specialty of the reader: the historian, lawyer, antiquarian, man of science and of letters, will find his separate satisfaction; but it is safe to say that the whole matter is surprisingly attractive. Here are a few specimens, taken at random during a careful search for new traces of Shakespeare.

In the second report there is a letter of Pope to Jacob Tonson, Jr., written in 1731. Pope hopes that in Theobald's proposed edition of Shakespeare the editor will not publish any impertinent remarks on him. And on November 14, 1731, Pope writes to old Tonson: "I am almost ready to be angry with your nephew for being the publisher of Theobald's Shakespeare, who, according to the laudable custom of commentators, first served himself of my pains, and then abused me for 'em." This Tonson was the famous publisher and founder of the Kit-Cat Club. Whatever Theobald did to make Pope touchy, it is certain that some of his readings, like that famous one, "babbled of green fields," throw clear lights on Shakespeare's text.

In a large wooden case containing many hundreds of ancient deeds relating to Warwickshire property, there was found a paper indorsed "John Weale's note of the grant to me of Shakespeare's house by Goodwife Sharpe." The date stands thus incomplete, "Mar. 4, 97." In another paper we read that John Weale of Hatters had given, granted, and assigned to Job Throckmorton of Huseley, in the county of Warwick, all his right, etc., in a certain cottage or tenement, with the appurtenances in Huseley aforesaid, wherein one William Shakespeare now dwelleth; and the date of this is 1697. The name was frequent in England. There is a bond, dated November 27, 1606, of Thomas Shake-

part it will have to be still further centralized is not an agreeable result. That the attempt should be made to upset the fisheries award on such a shallow pretext as the absence of unanimity among the arbitrators cannot be considered simply as an evidence of bad faith, but of singular incompetence as well, on the part of representatives of a nation which has always resorted to arbitration as a means of settling disputes. That the question of the indirect claims should still be kept open by Congress in the

face of our obvious exposure to such claims in the future can hardly be regarded as an evidence of statesmanship. Finally, the attitude of the United States in submitting only to the favorable result of the arbitration under the treaty, and refusing in each case in which the decision has gone against them to accept the result without bluster or threats, hardly shows that the cause of arbitration has been advanced, as its advocates hoped, seven years ago, it would be by our example.

Arthur G. Sedgwick.

OPEN LETTERS FROM NEW YORK.

V.

To cover one of the prominent superficial aspects of the collision of our two art associations the dispatch might be framed, "They have met the enemy and are mutually each other's." The new society exhibited at the Kurtz Gallery during the month of March. The Academy of Design followed within a few days of its close, and is still in session. A line of demarkation between two antagonistic forces was not as sharply drawn as may have been anticipated. Academicians in regular standing, Colman, Inness, LaFarge, Wyant, Hunt of Boston, and others, formed a considerable and very attractive part of the Kurtz Gallery display. The peculiar constituency of the latter, on the other hand, made up, as has been explained, of the younger men, who have lately completed or are actually engaged in their studies abroad, musters in sufficient force at the Academy to give there also a very fair taste of its quality, and to make the regular exhibition as representative as usual of the various branches. The disclaimer, therefore, on the part of the new movement of any hostility, or of a desire to do more than furnish additional exhi-

bition facilities, seems quite sustained. I think there can be no doubt that the reasonableness of its existence has been sustained too. It has been a useful opportunity to have our attention very distinctly called to the most powerful influences at work upon our art, and to the precise manner in which they take hold of the native element sent directly into their midst. There must have been a good deal of latent curiosity on this point. Perhaps we thought it stoutly defied them. Perhaps we thought at any rate that it opposed to them something of an inherent vital Americanism that might be more or less deflected, of course, but would appear as a resultant in a triangle of forces.

If one had thought so he would have been disappointed at the Kurtz Gallery. He would have found an unconditional surrender to Paris and Munich. He would have seen Bonnat, Breton, Duran, Feyer-Perrin, Gerome, Diez, Piloty, taking as complete possession of young Americans from Connecticut as if they were of LeMans or Coblenz. Perhaps more, since the Americans are credited with a quickness at seizing the idea and a facility in adjusting themselves to circumstances which their neighbors do not

always so fully possess. The room, hung with works for the most part of considerable size, had an effect of importance in its subjects, and a well-understood magnificence of color unmistakably foreign. There were but about one hundred and thirty works, including a few unimportant bits of sculpture, against seven hundred and forty-seven at the Academy, but nearly all of them good. A number had passed the fastidious test of admission to the Paris Salon. Nothing could be more French than Pearce, Sargent, Thayer, Comans, Low; nothing more German than Shirlaw, Duveneck, Gross, Dannat, Macy. Yet it is not so easy in every case, though Pearce is readily enough connected with Bonnat, and Bridgman, in his Egyptian archæology, with Gerome, to establish the relation between the pupil and his accredited master. It is a relief to find that the result is a susceptibility to a union of impressions, and not a slavish submission to a single one. The pupil sometimes appears to have been repelled from his master, as in the case of Shirlaw, whose strong manner does not resemble that of Piloty or Lindenschmitt, but is more like Diez, with whom he did not study.

Chase, the most mature and finished of the exhibitors, is of the Germans, sending his pictures from Munich, but he is even more of the Flemings and the old masters. Permeated with the essence of the great galleries in which he has lingered, he seems frankly to have abandoned any attempt at an originality which could detract from the incomparable grand manner of the past. So perfectly does he give a sense of Rembrandt, Hals, Velasquez, Raphael Mengs, that it is difficult to see in what respect he falls short of renewing their dark, rich, full, and vivid portraiture. His work needs no provincial audience for its appreciation, but can take its chances in the markets of the world. The peculiarity is the intense concentration of interest on the points of principal importance. In *Preparing for the Ride*, a full-length life-sized lady in a black riding-habit and a steeple-crowned hat, drawing on her gloves, the head and hands

alone beam out of a rich, olive-tinted gloom. The figure is defined by a pale diffusion of light, which forms but a slight connection between these isolated points. From a distance you see in the large canvas only two white spots. The head, cut off by a spreading lace ruff, seems to float, cherub-like, in space, or, rather, to rest upon a salver. The pale face, of a milk-like complexion, with thin blonde hair fringed above it, to which the large accessories give a sort of preciousness, has once been beautiful, but there is now in it the melancholy of an unmistakable fading. The quaint separation of the parts seems less appropriate for such a subject than for the *Wounded Poacher* above, and I for one should like to have seen a stronger illumination following down the line of the shoulder and arm and connecting these detached high lights. The *Poacher* is a grim bandaged head with a ragged mustache, patched nose, and dangerous eye. Nothing is seen of him, either, but this ominous head and a hand grasping a gun-barrel—into the mouth of which you look—emerging from a thick darkness. Rembrandt, whose allowance of light was one eighth, while more cheerful colleagues take one quarter, never used less of it. Another powerful head, of a soldier in a battered steel helmet, is, by an opposite process, flat and dark against a ground almost white. The *Apprentice* is a graphic study of an unterrified young scion of the working classes, with the dirt grimed into the wrinkled skin of his wrists, who has been sent after a pot of beer. It has the reality of an actual person standing in the frame. In color it is an epitome of Munich. An affinity to the chord struck in its intelligent use of white, of soft grays and browns, the blue of the working apron, the flesh tints, warm and agreeable without floridness, is found in Shirlaw's flock of screaming geese, fed by a young peasant whose drapery twists about her with the spirit of a *Virgin of the Assumption*, in Velten's (himself a Munich master) peasant interiors at the Academy, and in his landscapes, as well as in the exquisite grave ones of the *American Macy*.

In the key of red he is equally successful. He has at the Academy a court-jester in scarlet, as rich-hued as Meissonier and on a scale that gives it dignity.

The difference between Paris and Munich, in the abstract conception, consists in a nearer relation to Italy and ideal art in the former, and to Holland and actual life in the latter. Paris is more theatrical, Munich more domestic and sympathetic. French color is more smiling, sunshiny, decorative, inclining to the whole gamut; German lower-toned, and perhaps exhibiting in its sedateness the greater depth of the national character. But in practice they are closely related, so that I can hardly see what it is that should determine a student now to go to one rather than the other. It was in fact Piloty, a pupil of Delacroix, who first brought to Munich the inspiration of the admirable new movement. On the other hand Dutch influences and the revived German seem to react strongly upon the French school. The two were not so far apart in spirit in Millet, Jules Breton, Frère, and the resemblance extends to substance as well, in such landscapes as those of Jacques, such work as that of Munkacsy, Ribot, and John Louis Brown, all of which — the last two rarer, but seen at Cottier's recent singular sale — are not uncommon among our dealers. In the remarkably fine work of Hovenden, one of the younger men and the new school, exhibiting at the Academy, the two fully coincide. His Brittany interior, with the beautifully managed confined light from a window, rounding over the massive, sympathetically felt, harmoniously colored figures, would be credited at once to Munich. Yet he is, one learns, a pupil of Cabanel, who is quite of the preconceived French order, as there was opportunity to see in his tragic *Francesca di Rimini* at the Centennial.

Of other Munich work the character heads by Dannat and Gross are typical, and interesting for their method. They obtain a great brilliancy by being forced out of an almost black ground. Shadows fall under the nose and upon one side of the face almost as strong as on a

plaster cast from an upper light in the evening. The flesh is roughly and solidly painted, the colors as far as possible being laid in patches side by side and left untroubled, or, at most, one slightly merged in the other by a dexterous sweep of the brush, for in oil scarcely less than in water-color do uncertainty and experiments destroy freshness and the highest attainable results. The practice is carried to the extreme of caricature by Currier, whose Bohemian Beggar's complexion, painted in crude stripes, appears to have been flayed.

Duveneek adds nothing to the great reputation it was his fortune to obtain perhaps in part by his early appearance in the field as an exponent of the novel German inventions. There is no doubt about his strength, but he displays a repulsive want of feeling. His principal piece, a life-size, goggling German baby in a green wooden contrivance, and beating the devil's tattoo with a hammer, is as disagreeable as a young hobgoblin.

The French method in heads is smoother, but bold enough. It avails itself too of the forcing out from black grounds. In the examples here accessible, such as the excellent study of a head and the full-length portrait of a lady by Anderson, pupil of Bonnat, and the three-quarter length by Bonnat himself, all at the Academy, it is not always done with the same artistic discretion. The figures are very real, yet have a hard, too sharply detached outline. But there is hardly anything else in portraits so satisfactory to my mind, so capable of doing good, if its easy naturalness, combined with dignity of attitude, and its skillful opposition of tones, be attended to, as the No. 453, also at the Academy, of J. Alden Weir, a pupil of Gerôme. A grayish tinge is diffused over the usually intractable black of the every-day costume. The use of frigid greenish tones in the obscure background gives it even a certain warmth. He had, it is true, in a well-preserved old gentleman with fine gray hair, an unusually good subject; so had Huntington in his No. 480 in the same room. The latter makes of it only the usual bank-president

with his boots in full, on the usual red carpet, and his arm on the usual red table-cover.

The striking novelty at the Kurtz Gallery, the feature which most marked its difference from the ordinary American exhibition, was the lightly draped or wholly nude figures. Two of these subjects may be classed as "high art." The eye was at once drawn to Pearce's Lamentation over the First-Born of Egypt. Bonnat, his master, is a brilliant illuminator and a realizer of his subject to the last degree. His famous Crucifixion, of '74, was absolutely startling. I have heard, from some who saw, that he painted it from a dead body actually nailed to a cross and set up in his studio. It might have been expected that an impressive pupil would display some of these qualities, and these are in fact just what we find. Two slightly draped figures sit upon the floor, bending over a mummy case. They do not impress you as overcome with grief. Oriental lamentation, as I understand it, is wilder, with ululations and contorted countenances. They are studio models posed for a purpose. The well-formed man has a greenish blanket thrown over one shoulder. He might do in some other attitude for a young Saint John, or anything else. The woman is more Egyptian and very ugly in figure. The ugliness, one feature of which is the condition of a thin arm painfully pinched by metal armlets, is dwelt upon with as much interest as if it were beauty. The piece is a close, life-school study, with especial attention to the texture of flesh. It is extremely well done and the best kind of practice, but it cannot be called practice yet turned to account. Miss Dodson, on the contrary, in her group of dancing maidens, led on by a Cupid pretending to fiddle by drawing his arrow across the string of his bow,—one is inclined to ask the pert young genius whence he learned the parody—aims to be an exponent of grace and the decorative qualities of soft pink and white flesh, without over-sensuousness. The difficult action of the dainty figures, springing forward through a grayish-

green Arcadia, is not quite successful. You cannot always say of a poise, as you ought to be able to do, just what it is going to be next. If you look too long at it, the middle one has more the appearance of a person who has sprained her ankle and is being supported to a seat. But it is a delicate and elegant work, a paler modern inspiration from Correggio.

The only things corresponding to these at the Academy from home sources, passing Hall's clumsy allegory of winter, are two canvases by Loop, illustrating Shakespeare. Marina walks by the seashore in a yellow chlamys, and Hermia and Helena recline in an American woodland in different hues of the same. The ambition and a certain dreamy feeling in them are to be commended, but the figures (it is always the same model in three different attitudes) are not more Greek than Shakespeare, and, smoothed down to a vapid tameness in the attempt to idealize, are not modern either.

In the department of more regular *genre* no word less than "exquisite" describes Sargent's Oyster Fishers at Cancale. We envy a mind, that can look thus at common life, the bliss of its daily existence. Where another would see but a group of rude fish-wives plodding heavily in the sand, he shows us a charming procession coming on with a movement almost rhythmical. The light is behind and throws their shadows forward in a dusty violet bloom. Small pools in front give back reflections. The close skirts show the action of the figures. The line of a descending hill in the background is cut by the straight sea horizon. All is as fresh and crisp as the gray and blue of the shifting sky. The light touches only in scattering points upon the forms, which are for the most part in shade. It is managed with a delicious skill. The difficult matter of the relief of white upon white is disposed of as if with an airy nonchalance. The white peasant caps are brought off the light sky with just a sufficient suggestion of detachment, here by a slight darkening of gray, there by a flicker of yellow in the light on an edge. May-

nard, with as good opportunities, in his group of Venetian water-carriers, threw them away. In Thayer's cattle piece there is a feeling and a management of light of the same nice sort. A procession of a dozen boldly fore-shortened cows is coming down hill towards you in a dewy landscape, not quite enough finished. The light again is behind and follows along their sides and vertebræ, throwing shadows forward and deep shades in the hollows of the hips. In another line, his sleeping infant with a puppy held in its naïve embrace, at the Academy, Mr. Thayer has one of the most charming things in either show.

The group of members of the Academy, who were invited to take part in this exhibition, has to be foregone, since an Open Letter from New York will positively not hold everything. They show for the most part, it is important to remark, a close connection of their own, from study and travel, with the foreign influences of which it is here a question.

It will be a useful second division of the subject to inquire what the Americanism is from which the new fashion may be thought to have reprehensibly departed. Have we developed something of value which defines our national direction? which cannot be varied from without treason? If so, it should be found among the older practitioners, at the Academy, the body which peculiarly represents American art and preserves its traditions. Let the exhibition be first examined with reference to its subjects. From a catalogue in which you may have marked the most striking works, perhaps you have derived the impression that the members are not taking part very much. But there are, in fact, forty-four out of eighty-seven Academicians, and twenty-six out of eighty-four associates represented, omitting those engaged in the rival movement. Their contributions are a considerable number of portraits, and a very much larger number of landscapes. In the latter, foreign scenery—the Thames, Brittany, the Isle of Wight—has a fair share of representation. Then, to make a general class composed of everything

else, there are large, spirited cattle by James Hart, and small, tame ones by William, dogs by Tait and James Beard, comic owls and rabbits by William H. Beard, a Seer in Israel, in crayon, by Oertel, a dismal attempt at a fairy pool by Hope, a nicely done old lady knitting by Ryder, a capital small school-girl in a pinafore, decidedly German, by Constant Mayer, two honest-looking grown-up girls by Lay, a very mediocre workingman's child preparing his lunch, by Story, and some interiors with figures, good, but of an antiquated sort, by R. W. Weir, brought forth perhaps to hang beside his son, who is a new-comer, of the later school, and of a very different force. There are a few sentimental heads,—one by Julian Scott, with a smooth, warm complexion, small blue eyes, and a coral necklace, quite quaint and pleasing,—one inferior *bric-à-brac*, and one good flower piece, Lambdin's.

The best genre things are Magrath's Irish peasant looking over a flower-fringed wall at a golden harvest, Ehn-inger's monk with a loaded donkey, and another showing peasants, in an evening light, with a curious rainbow sky and reflections, washing in a stream of the Pyrenees. Then there is a sufficient representation, in Chapman, Hall, and Cephas G. Thompson, of the feeble, old-fashioned picturesque, surviving from the days of diligences, when a contadino and a pifferaro and a lazzarone were thought to be the summit of all that was desirable to paint.

There are but five—I am keeping for the present to the actually exhibiting members—who can be called American in their subjects. The animals, interiors, domestic traits, Shakespearean heroines, even the Oneida County game probably, of all the rest could have been selected and painted in any other country as well as ours. Even Mr. Perry, who has penetrated so far into the interior as San Francisco, finds nothing more racy of the soil than an old lady telling a child a story in a luxurious parlor. I do not make this lack of "raciness" a reproach to anybody,—I am a little tired of it myself,—but I only state the fact.

The number will not even include Wordsworth Thompson and Julian Scott in their Revolutionary military pieces. There is nothing to show that they express our national character of that date. The small, uniformed figures are a good opportunity for color, but they could be French, say, of the same date, just as well. In another line of criticism, they are very much without spirit. A pilgrimage to the original battles of Trumbull, at New Haven, would be a stimulating exercise for their authors.

The five are Winslow Homer, J. G. Brown, Eastman Johnson, Guy, and T. A. Wood, who exhibits his ingenious small figure of an old negro, with an aguish expression, and a bed-quilt around his shoulders, pouring out medicine in a teaspoon. They belong to the enumeration in unequal degrees of validity, of course, — Guy and Eastman Johnson the least. I suppose the reading girl and the lazy boy of the former, — though he looks like an American boy enough, yawning over his unsawed wood, — and the row of mites of children, of the other, ranged like swallows on a beam over a hay-mow in a barn, helped up, probably, by some good-natured "hired man," might be found in England at least, also. These children, with their diminutive legs in striped stockings, and all sorts of well-used shoes dangling, are having just the best kind of a time. Even the baby is supported there, not thoroughly understanding the situation, and looks down with a monumental gravity. The question evidently is, supremely contented as they all are, what shall be done next? The leader, the roguish one of nine, with blue sleeves, and a ribbon in her hair, and her round cheek visible only in profile, will decide it in a moment, I know, by plunging down with a wild shriek, and the rest will follow after as best they can. As a picture, the parts are too much cut up; it was necessary, to convey the idea, to give too much to the comparatively vacant space where the hay is; but the figures contain all the qualities, and, in a frame by themselves, would have made a broad and charming piece.

Homer is intensely American in his subjects. He has selected types which belong essentially to us and to no others. He represents us intimately, and is original. He goes first into his field. He does not follow; nor is he himself much followed — the more is the pity. He unites two qualities not often combined: an appreciation of rugged natural character, with poetic refinement. It is not easy to be blinded to his defects. There are plenty of them. He does not know enough about either light or color. I imagine to myself, knowing nothing whatever about it, that he suffers for lack of a thorough technical bringing up. I wish *he* had studied Plagues of Egypt with Bonnat. He is possessed by his idea and puts upon the canvas, in spite of his materials, the feeling he would convey; but they resist him, they yield sullenly, they do not aid him with their felicities, which, if he had them, would make his work, charming already in its essence, exquisite. He has here five pictures. In the principal a tall, sinewy young mower has paused, looking up, to listen and to follow the flight of a lark. His scythe is held under one arm, his coarse straw hat swings loosely by his side. He is a common young farmer enough, but a good one and a real one, and a type. We have not seen him, but we know him. We know his unpolished laugh and his loud voice calling "across lots." He is a fellow who would keep a particularly nice colt for his own driving, and get, by a trade, with a moderate cash balance, a harness and buggy to match, not so very different from city style. He would cherish an opinion that he could hold his own very well with city people. He would not care to go there and enter a store, but he decidedly means to experiment with new ideas on the farm. If it were war time he is a fellow who would make a splendid soldierly corporal, and like nothing better than the adventure. Shown in the restrained light to which this artist is so partial, detached against a bosk of trees in the middle distance, the figure has a serious and noble air. A touch or two of light catches on the rings of the scythe snath.

Overhead is a cool, silvery sky with cirrus clouds. It is not of the usual dreamy sort, but accurately studied, and with a kind of *definie* poetry in it, which I should count as one of Mr. Homer's general traits.

Another picture shows a couple of mountain guides, each with a distinct flavor of the American, and no other, scenery about him. One is short, old, and grizzled; the other young, tall, majestic, almost statuesque. The talent is in finding this native dignity, in discerning in a 'Bijah of the Adirondacks something allied to the Apollo and the Germanicus, to the core of Greek art and great art of all times. They are painted against broad planes of mountains, sloping with the grateful unbroken lines for which Mr. Homer has so distinct a liking in the other mountain piece, and in the background of the one in which two small negroes and a white boy, the worst of the lot, are enjoying a water-melon, and shouting back defiance at the farmer from whom it was stolen. There is a great out-of-doors feeling in the shapes, but not in the light of them all. The color, too, which is for the most part gray and harmonious, is always apt to have random harshnesses in it, as the crude red tree on the edge of the hill with the guides, and a scarlet skirt in the centre of the other. The first is simply disagreeable, but has plenty in the foreground to keep it company. The latter is isolated, and has hardly more connection with anything else in the picture than if it were a large wafer pasted on.

J. G. Brown's American piece, though the subject is in a British possession, is a crew of Grand Menan fishermen pulling for the shore in a broad sunshine that renders their faces coppery, and the buoyant sea, in which the deep-laden boat rides heavily, green and crystalline. Each man has a distinct character. By character I do not mean simply that this man has a face different from his neighbor, but that this is George Thompson and this Rufus Warner. You could call them by name. The picture is hard, by reason of this studious finish, which

is besides not so much called for in the kind of subject, since such a tossing boat-load on a friendly sea is a pleasant thing in itself, without too much individualizing. But it is an original work worthy of respect. His other, a simple figure of a girl in white muslin walking by the sea, presents a type, blonde, slender, restrained, thoughtful rather than coquetish, which one would set down pretty unhesitatingly as American of New England. The atmosphere closes in over the vanishing beach behind her. The horizon is at the height of her waist, and the pleasing head is painted against a bright spot in the cool gray sky. There is nothing dashing in the work of this artist. You do not forget the model, but the taste in its selection and the conscientiousness and absence of ostentation with which it is wrought out are very agreeable.

If the inquiry after Americanism be widened to include the whole exhibition, the number of interesting works will be much increased, so that, with the exceptions already made, you are inclined to believe that ability is almost in the inverse ratio of connection with the ruling powers. The range of subjects we are in search of, however, is extended by but a single addition, Gilbert Gaul's *Rainy Day in the Garret*. George Inness, Jr., has large cattle, bolder in treatment and mellow in color than Hart's, set into landscapes in his father's attractive manner; Bispham, some conventional, geography tigers; Sword, some better dogs than Tait's; Miss Jacobs and Miss Brownscombe, well imagined figures — the children of the latter the best — of some size; Brundegge, Bickford, Reinhart, Kappes, figures of smaller size, each with its special merits; Mrs. Dillon, in 219 and 228, good flowers with little reflections of the windows from which they were lighted mirrored on the convexity of the vases, as in some of the still-life etchings of Jacquemart; and Harnett, some representations of vulgar still-life objects, counterfeit hills, and so on, of surprising fidelity.

It belongs to the foreign school, but I will note, in passing, an interior by

Piquet, with portrait figures on a scale which makes it genre. I said a word in favor of the style in my water-color letter, and yet I hope not to be accused of triviality. What is more legitimate? Is not the home one of the foremost objects of modern life? and look at the time and money given to its adornment! It is worthy, if not of its epics, at least of its sonnets. And its inhabitants, — why should they not be painted at length in the surroundings which make a part of them, in which they are natural, instead of always in the strange studio lights?

It would not be a calamity if there were no studios for a time, and artists had to go about from house to house like journeymen tinkers, with their easels under their arms, until some of the charming apartments, with their rugs and blue crockery, and the interesting people who live in them are properly celebrated. Walter Palmer has a very nice room, with a mysterious quality in the permeation of the light from the farther end over a complication of rich objects, and a single figure in front.

But as I was going on to say, Gilbert Gaul's *Rainy Day in a Garret* is the only thing that can be added to the list. Children elsewhere, no doubt, masquerade in the garments of their elders, but surely not in such a garret, with such a hair-leather trunk, such a handbox covered with blue and mauve paper in a large pattern, such a map and old hat and string of onions on the wall, and such a barrel and half-empty bag of seed-corn in the corner. The boy has a long-tailed coat and blue cotton umbrella, and a hat on the back of his head that would envelop him to the shoulders if it were allowed to. The girl — they are aged ten or eleven — wears a great bonnet of a remote period, with the large bows tied under her chin, and a mature shawl trailing over her short dress to the floor. In its make-up, in its light and shade, the picture is neither good nor bad, — simply neutral. Its author is young, not long out of his pupilage, which has been entirely on this side of the water. He seems to me to show much promise in a straightforward, un-

morbid field, which there is room for a great deal of without crowding the purveyors of eccentricities. He has the story-telling talent, a genuine humor, and no mean facility of execution. But there is more. The flicker of a gentle poetic sentiment is detected in the whole. The girl's face, surrounded by its preposterous trumpery, is charming. The boy laughs, but she is pensive, catching for the moment, perhaps, one knows not what premonition of a coming destiny. To gratify, too, an evident bias towards harmonious color, slight sacrifices of probability may be noted, as in the introduction of a warm crimson and gold-bordered shawl, the Curaçoa bottle, and the blue and white ginger jar, which would not occur in such a garret.

It is evident from this narrowing down that the Americanism does not consist largely in the selection of peculiarly national subjects. In what, then, is the secret, for it is certain that one recognizes at sight numerous things as American? It is, it seems to me, in efforts at imitation by the most obvious means, which are largely inadequate; a lack of appreciation of the decorative capacities of colors, even while they depict the objects; and in a thinness and smoothness of finish, in deference to patrons who are too apt to admire the imitations alone, and have only a small conception of the purely artistic qualities. Americanism of the old school in art, in short, it is submitted, is rather a form of weakness than an indigenous style of expression.

The smooth finish at its very best is seen in Guy's reading girl, and in such pieces as Sandford Gifford's mellow sunsets. There is no suggestion of paint. Only the threads of the canvas, when you approach, seem to spread like a film between you and the actual scene. Far more common is a conventionalism like that of Cropsey and Caislear, — foliage rendered by a drawing-book trick and yet not generalized. There is usually a lake in the centre of the picture, surrounded by home-made crags, and with a blasted pine-tree thrown out against it from the foreground. The style of McEntee, the poet of the late sad autumn, seems

to me the happy ideal. It is simple and right; he neither obtrudes his materials nor discredits them. The direct accosting of nature in landscape is seen again in the careful, admirable forest interiors of Fitch and Hezel, and in T. A. Richards. The last has a landscape of the unrelieved green of nature, — the hue it takes, if you have ever seen it, through the camera. Done by a tyro it would have set your teeth on edge, — the plain fields of grass and the cold gray sky without a spot of blue in it, — but it is saved here, although I would not buy it, by a certain nice feeling in its accuracy of rendition. Contrast with it and with the clear coldness of David Johnson the landscapes of Megrath, Earnest Parton, and Bolton Jones of Baltimore. Such a one as the No. 361 of the last affects you somehow as if the air were full of lilies and chiming bells on a summer morning.

If my letter were not a search for tendencies rather than an attempted account of things in their order of merit, I should not have to pass here again, with so bare a mention, Nicoll's closing in of navigation on the Hudson, in which there is a forlorn melancholy, Quartley's charming marine, and Hartley's statue of Whirlwind, — who comes bearing down upon you with knitted brows, the lithe body

twisted upon the hips, the drapery blown back in sharp curves, with immense spirit, — and much beside with none at all.

As a conclusion of the review of the two displays one cannot fail to recognize, without allowing much originality yet to the new contributions, the arrival of a period of much more thorough preparation and knowledge than has ever hitherto prevailed. It must result in no long time in the abolition of a double standard of criticism, which has had to have its tender side for a weak and struggling art, and in a production of pictures on our own side of the water able to compete with the foreign importations on equal terms. As to subjects, what ought to be demanded of the artist is to obtain the greatest possible power of execution, and to keep his sensibility open to all impressions of beauty, blow from what quarter they will. He is our delegate to expound the universe in this particular branch. If he can find beautiful impressions here, so much the better, and it is a patriotic thing to do. If what he can learn at Munich — not forgetting Paris — enables him to render them freely and joyously instead of lamely and with misgivings, then by all means

"Wave, Munich, all thy banners wave,
And charge with all thy chivalry."

Raymond Westbrook.

SPRING-SONG.

BLUSH and blow, blush and blow,
Wind and brier-rose, if you will.
You are sweet enough, I know, —
You are sweet enough, but oh,
Hidden lonely, hidden low,
There is something sweeter still.

Come and go, come and go,
Suns of morning, moons of night,
You are fair enough, I know, —
You are fair enough, but oh,
Hidden darkly, hidden low,
Lies the light that gave you light.

Mrs. Sallie M. B. Piatt.