It is little short of impertinent to write of a painter who, in his own work, has already expressed himself a thousand times better. But there are many who never see his pictures, and many who, seeing them, lack the habit of judging and do not understand. The natural refuge of the writer on art is the commonplace of praise, extracted either from the comments of the artist on his own productions, or from utterances, private or public, on the part of his friends. For who cares to be dogmatic in the analysis of work which the painter alone understands, and he not always thoroughly? By much more is the hazard greater when one comes to consider the subtler processes which go before the work—namely, the mental and moral processes which give that work its value. We meet with a picture that gives us a pleasant feeling; it is a graceful figure that one would like to have in one’s home; or a landscape that recalls memories of happy days. Having become possessed of it, there
is a period of enjoyment which ends either pleasurably or ill. In one case, it fits into place and becomes a spiritual comrade; in the other tedium sets in, and one feels that its absence would be a relief. But now and then we come upon a picture that may not be certainly and at once pleasurable in its effect, but it arrests the attention with a shock. We may be troubled before it; but if we are not hampered by prejudices or schooled learning,—if we have resolved not to take opinions at second-hand, but to be brave enough to admire what gives us sensations of pleasure, or akin thereto,—we may be sure that, to us at least, the work of art is a masterpiece. Our taste may change. Ten years hence we may have come to other conclusions, sounder or less sound. But, for the time being, this is the picture that reveals to us a glimpse of that shadowy paradise of which the gate-keeper is genius.

Some such shock has befallen the writer while looking at more than one,—yes, more than ten,—of the landscapes of George Inness. A private opinion, to be sure, and perhaps worth no more and no less than that of anybody else. But when one has such a sensation, it is interesting to follow it back and see if there is not good reason for its existence. Are the technical processes by which the artist reaches these effects marked by the freedom and variety, the grasp and certainty, which characterize a master of his profession? And behind the technical work does there lie a mental labor which will explain to some extent the excitement produced in the mind of the observer? These few pages are scant space in which to make the trial, but possibly a more pretentious medium would only serve to show more plainly how threadbare is the attempt.

Looking at the life of Inness from the outside, it is merely that of a thousand other artists. He had few advantages of education; became an engraver; was overtaken by ill health. He had his days of enthusiasm and hope. He married and brought up children—one a painter of promise, with children of his own. When fortune smiled he enjoyed three stays in Europe—the last, and most fruitful of beautiful work, being of four years’ duration. He shared the struggles of American art before the war—its well-meant but not always wise encouragements after the war, its period of dejection and loss of prestige. There have been years in his life when he sold pictures quickly at very high prices, succeeded by more years when he made nothing. He has felt the fallacious stimulus of our “good times,” and endured the wholesome discipline of our “hard times.” And what is the upshot of it all? Well, for one thing, the lack of pettiness seen in his work might reasonably be attributed to this varied experience. As devoted to his studio as J. J., the painter drawn by Thackeray, and as careless of the
GEORGE INNESS.

business portion of his profession, nevertheless, Inness has not been able to escape the usual lot of men. Black Care has peeped over his shoulder and insisted on having a hand in his work. Another thing is the ab-

hood, which answered scorn for scorn, and social snubbing by artistic snubbing. Elastic, like our government, the social atmosphere in which he found himself was full of crudities, but full of life; if there was no great support

ience of early paintings. What has become of all the pictures painted before 1860, when the pre-Raphaelite movement was beginning to have its echoes on this side of the water? Sold to all sorts of people, at all sorts of prices, in all sorts of ways; destroyed, many of them, painted over by their maker, scattered to the four quarters of the earth. There would have been no chance for this artist to coddle his pictures and concentrate his art upon itself, even if it had been strongly in his nature to do so. Another result: no possibility of becoming self-conscious and affected, like too many of his English cousins in art. Severely as the social fabric of New York handled him, there was breadth in its treatment. If it did not buy his pictures, it was either because it was honestly ignorant of their value, or because it thought it could not afford the money. But there was no social caste to drive artists and writers into one of two fatal paths—either into revolt at the fretting and pervasive tyranny, or into those grimaces which often prove a passport to success.

Inness has suffered; but there has never been a necessity here, as there was in England, that painters of genius should band themselves together into a Pre-Raphaelite Brother-

in it, there was no demoralizing influence exerted by it upon his art. He fought his way along by his own methods, without the depressing feeling that, let his genius be ever so great, nineties were being born every day whom a large body of his fellow-citizens would rank above him. The acid that bit into the soul of Carlyle was present in America in such a feeble, dilute condition that the painter need never feel its presence.

Inness seems never to have had even so much of social ambition as to make him wish to knock at those doors in his city which are least ready to open to men neither rich nor well-accredited. Sufficient for him were his own family, his studio, and his private circle of friends. A steady workman at his profession, he would go to nature for impressions, simply, neither with boast nor with too much hope. Sometimes it is plain that he has labored hard at his sketches; hours and days pass while struggling at one scene. In such cases the work is minute, painstaking, almost painful. For his nature is most excitable, and can only be made to apply itself by the strongest exercise of will. But then the benefit of self-restraint shows unerringly in the sketch. On other occasions, he has been an impressionist in the fullest sense of the term.
Overwhelmed by the beauty of a scene, the play of light and shade, the balance of clouds, distant hills and nearer masses of forest, he has dashed his paint on with hardly a line of pencil or charcoal to guide him, working in that rapt condition of mind during which the lapse of time is not felt, in which the mind seems to extend itself through the fingers to the tip of the brush, and the latter, as it moves on the prepared surface, seems to obey the general laws of nature which fashioned the very landscape that is being counterfeited at the instant. These were moments of the painter's ecstasy, rare enough in comparison with cooler moods, but leaving their mark with equal unerringness. From sketches taken under such varying circumstances have arisen in the quiet of his studio the procession of landscapes issuing from his hand during the past thirty years. Grave landscapes and gay, landscapes noble and plain, expressive landscapes and those that told of indifferent moods. Some touch a height of magnificence that gives one cause to remember the great men of former days—Claude, Poussin, Rosa, Ruysdael, Constable, Turner. Others have the sturdy look of Rousseau. But Inness is not an imitator or follower of any of these; if he had one merit only, it would be originality. Genius more varied is not unknown and genius that has broader limits. But in his own lines as a landscapist and colorist he is like no one else. Consider his "Stone Pines at Monte Mario," and "Hickory Grove at Medfield, Mass.," his "Coming Storm," and "Light Triumphant."

It is only at a distance that the work of Inness seems to be unvaried. It is always landscape, and always one feels the individual manner which has not been allowed to degenerate into mannerism. But the moods in which the different pictures have been conceived are often varied, and then another key-note of color is struck. Sometimes that note is laid down on the canvas at the start; its complementary color is added; then follow the other colors and their shades of color, all with reference to the first. Again, it may seem better to reverse the order somewhat: the key color is washed over later. Inness has learned to subordinate his materials; they flow plastic under his brush or thumb. A disciple of the older school, he seldom uses the palette-knife or brushes of extraordinary character, yet, if he thought better effects could be gained through them, he would not hesitate a moment to use them. This may seem trivial; it is only mentioned to show that, notwithstanding the intensity of certain of his convictions, which will presently be mentioned, he has no narrowness regarding the methods of his work or the tools employed. When the right mood is on he becomes dra-
matic, although always as a landscapist, and reaches closely to the borders of the sublime. There is a moorland piece which shows this trait well. Heavy bowlders encumber the moor; one almost hides a farm-house, whose gray roof, were it not for the smoke at its chimney, might be taken for another mass of rock. A figure is detected in the open central space. The sky is magnificent with heavy, black rain-clouds, that reflect the ruggedness of the moor; in the center, and as a counterpart of the farm-house roof, is a brilliant white cloud that has caught the sunlight. There is a fine glowing effect in the heavens and in the distant moor that is aided by the smoke and the little curling white clouds above the heavier masses. This is not direct work from nature—it is pure dramatic imagination. It is based on a very different scene. The original is a comparatively sober copy of a real landscape, in which thickets and woods stand for the bowlders, a peaceful train of cattle fills a green meadow in the center, and in which the bed of the wild stream, that seems at one time to have spun the bowlders about like curling-stones, is a placid river. The narrow realist will be likely to object to a picture which he will say is one of chic. But what then? Suppose it is. Chic is a great thing—if you are great enough in art to use and not abuse it!
It has become almost hackneyed to divide the works of a painter into so many "styles," more or less representative of varying periods of his development. The habit is convenient as affording a method of obtaining a comprehensive view; it is also the natural method, for artists often do materially change their styles. With Inness, distinctions of the kind are not sharply defined, yet they exist all the same. His art has been very slow in development. He does not accept philosophical ideas suddenly, nor without great stress of thought—a veritable spiritual combat. Three epochs may be distinguished in his work, but their borders overlap, and it would be rash to affirm absolutely in every case to which of the three a picture belongs. With due deference, therefore, to the possibility of mistake, these three styles may be postulated: An ante-war style, consisting of painstaking, rather stiff, analytical work, similar to that of many of his comrades in the "Hudson River School," etc. Secondly, a war style, which we may consider the result of the agitation produced by the four years of tumult and national anguish, and which shows itself in fluidity of outlines, a breaking-up of the old rigidity, a new grasp of what is magnificent in landscape breadth, a throwing overboard of the pettiness of the former style. This may also be called the "Italian" style of Inness, not so much because he learned from the Italian masters,—his influences were rather French, Flemish, and Dutch,—but because he painted Italian scenes. Finally, a post-war style, in which he now works without loss of the good in his previous efforts, but with complete control of his art. If big words are not out of place, the present may be called his synthetic style as opposed to the analytic of the days before the war. In the figure he was never grounded, partly because of an overwhelming tendency to landscape, but also because of illness in youth and the lack of sound instruction to be had in New York when he was a boy. It is heresy to suggest that in the end the omission has served him. But is it not imaginable that the lack of early training, such as artists get easily to-day, kept him poor and humble and forced him to greater efforts in the only branch of painting he could follow?

There remains the personality behind the artistic product. A painter deserving the name of artist works, consciously or unconsciously, from inner rules which he has, as it were, invented for himself. It is easily conceivable that he may be a great artist, and yet unequal in his work; a genius, and surpassed by lesser men in deftness of hand. But behind his pictures he must have intellectual and moral forces more potent than those of the ordinary craftsman of his profession, and also possess naturally either a fair share of facility
in the expression of his ideas, or else such in-
domitable will that he overcomes that lack in
his temperament by hard labor. Now, Inness
piques himself on the logic displayed in the
management of his landscapes. His methods
are the result of much observation of nature
and the pictures of modern and ancient mas-
ters. Particulars are reasoned out with a rigid-
ity of logic that sounds dry. His groping after
truth has been as constant as it was earnest.
Yet there is plenty of imagination and poetry
in the scenes. Back of the landscapes, in
whose confection rules founded on logic that
can be expressed in the mathematical terms
have been strictly followed, lies the whole
world of immaterial spirits, of whom Sweden-
borg was the latest prophet. Not for Inness
the wild extravagances of technique belonging
to the later pictures of Turner. The so-called
"Slave-ship" is a bugbear. He has a horror of
the illogical presence of floating iron
chains and of marine monsters unknown to
the merely human eye—neither fish, flesh, nor
good red herring. His contempt for the
"Slave-ship" is so great that one is half per-
suaded that there is self-preservation at the bottom,
and that some day Inness will awake to the
fact that the picture which shocked him so
much is just the picture he would prefer out
of all the other eccentricities of Turner. He
regards as unmanly, if not positively ignorant,
the fashion Turner had of placing the van-
ishing point—that point to which all the
parallel lines seem to tend—to the left or
the right of the picture, instead of near the
center, thus disturbing its repose. But—para-
dox as it may seem—along with such dry and
technical axioms, such Philisterschaft, in a true
artist goes the fact that to Inness the whole
cosmogony of inner spirits superintends the
creation of the pictures. He is nothing if not
an idealist.

He is, in fact, without being of a compli-
cated nature, an artist with more than one
side to his character. Alternately one might
take him for a poet or a Philistine; an
idealist or a hide-bound realist; an impressionist or a pre-Raphaelite. Beginning under
the influence of Durand, he saw the limita-
tions of that good but restricted painter.
From Thomas Cole he had the same repulsion
that shows in his criticism of Turner. The
pre-Raphaelite influences in their English
shape were strong enough to make him try
more than one study in that direction. But
good sense—or, shall we say, the intuition of
genius?—saved him from exhibiting much that
smacked strongly of a movement wholesome
as a preparation but misleading when taken
literally. The impressionists also leave him
cold, for has he not been, on many occasions,
an impressionist? Some of his studies are
faithful imitations of nature pursued for weeks
at a time. Others, as we have said, are
dashed in during the heat of imaginative
creation.

Like some of the great Dutchmen, like
their reverential followers Constable, Corot,
Rousseau, landscape is to this artist the high-
est walk of art. It not only represents the
nature that we see and the human feelings
that move us when we look on nature, but
something that includes both. It is an ex-
pression—feeble enough, to be sure, but still
an expression—of the Godhead. In the mind
of Inness, religion, landscape, and human nat-
ure mingle so thoroughly that there is no
separating the several ideas. You may learn
from him how the symbolization of the Divine
Trinity is reflected in the mathematical rela-
tions of perspective and aerial distance. That
such ideas are not mere whims with him is
attested by various papers published in the
magazines where he has given some of his
thoughts. He not only believes what he says,
but tries to carry out in his pictures this inter-
relation of art and religion. He is too much
of an artist to make the result hard and abso-
late, as, to choose an extreme example in the
opposite direction, Holman Hunt did in "The
Shadow of the Cross." Holman Hunt seeks
to return to the simplicity of the Van Eycks
in treating religious questions, and would like
to make himself a pious burgher of the tenth
century in order to accomplish it. Inness is a
modern to the last degree, and, thrown in
upon himself by a scoffing world, tries to ex-
press his religious opinions under the veil of
landscape. Perhaps even that is saying too
much. Do his landscapes hint of religion? Does
he try to express religion? We should say
no. It is rather the methods by which he
does them that are governed in his own
mind by religious ideas. The result is fine,
but, to the world, too far removed to be un-
derstood as religious in motive. Let us, then,
rather say of his religion that he does not ex-
press, but hides it, in his art. Holman Hunt
uses religious scenes to point a moral. Inness
uses his convictions of a "world religion" in
order to "adorn a tale." Out of all the land-

scape-painters stimulated and over-stimulated
by the civil war, a few are emerging here and
there into the position of masters. A rough
and unideal schooling has been theirs: the
public ignorant and uncritical; the press igno-
rant and hypercritical, or else fulsome in
praise. Here an artist would be ruined by the
injudicious support of friends and followers;
there another was starved mentally and
pinched actually by lack of notice. The sur-
vivors in the struggle are such landscape-
painters as Homer Martin, George Fuller, and others. Inness belongs to the scanty band.

He is often compared to Rousseau. No doubt Rousseau had some effect in crystallizing the ideas of Inness in landscape art, but the latter is in no sense his follower. The limitations of Rousseau have not been maintained—who knows whether wisely or not? Truly American in this, Inness has demanded more elbow-room than his great Parisian contemporary. Inside his own wider field he is also more versatile. Strangely enough, he approaches in temperament and physique a type that is considered Gallic. Black, slender, agile, not tall, vivacious of gesture, rapid in talk, easily moved, imaginative within sharply defined bounds, he is more of a Gaul than the average Frenchman. The name Inness means "island" in the Irish and Highland Scotch dialects of the Celtic. Mr. Inness is probably of comparatively pure Celtic blood, and may, for that reason, be dowered with ideality, opinionativeness, enthusiasm. In talk he becomes so carried away by the subject that he forgets how time is flying. What pleases him best is to have many pictures in process of making at one time. Then, having them arranged about his room, he likes to attack one or the other, as the mood strikes him. It is the insatiable craving for movement and variety which makes him picturesque even while at work on what are often considered sober landscapes. No painter labors harder; but the intensity of his work must find relief in change of mood and method. Habit has made him love the chains that bind him in his studio, but his excitable mind must have vent. For that reason one can see in his studio, side by side on different easels, a careful wood interior that has just escaped the commonplace by a happy flood of light which he has poured into a blue patch of sky, caught again on a trickling stream and reflected off on the nodding heads of blackberry vines; a wild stretch of desolation on a moor, with an accompanying drama of cloud-forms; or a railway embankment with laborers and supply-train on the long sweep of red clay, and, beyond them, the steeples of a New Jersey town. There are even genre pictures—small groups of girls at play, and such attempts at work foreign to his best vein. But in these the landscape is always the valuable part.

Inness paints Nature as the Ossian of the Highlands sang of it—in its great outer, rather than in its little inner, form.

Henry Eickford.

LOVE CROWNED.

A maiden, with a garland on her head,
Sat in her bower between two lovers: one
Wore such a wreath as hers; the other none.
But him, in merry wise, she garlanded
With that she wore; then, gayly, took instead
The other's wreath and wore it as her own;
Whereat both smiled, each deeming she had shown
Himself the favorite. Though she nothing said
Concerning this by any spoken word,
Yet by her act, methinks, the maid preferred
The lover she discrowned. A friendly thing
Or whimsical—no more—the gift she gave
(A queen might do as much by any slave),
But he whose crown she wore was her heart's king.

John Godfrey Saxe.