

would have been a relief to see him dispatch one of his tormentors.

The profoundest impressions left with one were of the weary monotony of the show, and the utter tameness and cheapness of most of it, and the character of the spectators. There were a good many children in the crowd, having their worst passions cultivated by the brutal exhibition. It is an important part of the national education, and the fruits of it are plain to be seen. I am glad to record that a little girl, seated near us, who had enjoyed the grand entry and the excitement of the scene, was quite broken up by the disgusting details, and frequently hid her face on her father's shoulder, crying nervously at the distress of the poor horses. But the great, roaring crowd heartily gloated over all that was most revolting.

Long after we left the arena, there was ringing in my ears their barbaric clamor.

We went out from the blazing light and tumult of the ring, glad to escape from the demoniac performance, and sought refuge in an old church near by, to bathe our tired eyes and bruised nerves in its coolness and serenity. Here, at least, was some visible evidence that the Christian religion has still a foothold in Spain.

We tried to console ourselves for the part we had taken in the day's sport, by the thought that we had once for all discharged the traveler's duty in a study of the great national pastime—the pastime that royalty encourages by its presence, the pastime that reveals and molds the character of a once powerful people.

Charles Dudley Warner.

AN AMERICAN ARTIST IN ENGLAND.

MR. WINSLOW HOMER holds, as to time, an intermediate place between our elder and our younger painters. He cannot be classed with those who won their position and gained their chief honors before the War of the Rebellion; nor is he identified with the later generation which has so rapidly grown in numbers and in influence since the appear-

ance of a few clever Munich and Paris students on the Academy walls in 1877. And not only in time, but in the character of his work, he stands apart from both these well-known groups.

Mr. Homer was born in Boston in 1836. At the age of six his family removed to Cambridge, where country life fostered



A CHARCOAL SKETCH. BY WINSLOW HOMER.

the tastes and feelings he reveals so clearly in his art. Never was any painter more rurally minded. Never did any dweller in cities more completely ignore on canvas not their existence only, but also the existence of the human types they foster. This would not, of course, be remarkable if he were simply a landscape painter; but while landscape elements are very prominent in his work, humanity is rarely absent, and is usually his chief concern. But it is rustic humanity always. The rural American of his earlier pictures is shown with a persistence, a sympathy, and an artistic clearness and directness of speech quite unequaled in our art. We get the very essence of New England forms and faces and gestures, and of New England fields and hillsides, in this early work, and just as truly the very essence of negro life and its surroundings. No man could mistake the home and people of this artist. No man could doubt his being an American by birth and nature. This national quality it was—always a precious thing, but never so valuable as now when art has grown so eclectic and cosmopolitan—that caused his pictures to be so much noticed at the Paris Exposition of 1878, so much praised by critics who saw their technical peculiarities quite clearly, but forgave them, prized them, indeed, for the breath of genuine transatlantic sentiment they preserved.

Mr. Homer's taste for art seems to have developed very early, for we are told that by the time he was twelve years old he had already accumulated a large stock of crayon drawings. He was encouraged in his efforts and ambitions by his father,—a fact in refreshing contrast to the usual course of artistic true love,—and at the age of nineteen was apprenticed to Bufford, the Boston lithographer. The first work of his apprenticeship was in the shape of title-pages for sheet music. The most important, perhaps, was a series of portraits of all the members of the Massachusetts Senate. When he was of age, Mr. Homer abandoned the lithographer's craft, the mechanical and business requirements of which he had found alike galling, and set up a studio in Boston. He designed much for the Harpers' wood-engravers, and the firm soon offered him a permanent engagement. But he refused to bind himself in any way again, and worked on quite independently, studying diligently all the time. In 1859 he removed to New York and attended the night schools of the Academy. In 1861 he began to use color for the first time, going directly to nature for his models and to his own instincts for his methods. With the outbreak of the war, he went to Washington, and thrice accompanied the army of the Potomac

in its campaigns, the first time as artist correspondent of the Harpers, and later for his own private purposes. His first oil paintings were war scenes,—among them the famous "Prisoners from the Front," than which no American picture is more familiar to his countrymen.

In later years Mr. Homer has, I believe, lived chiefly in New York, though making trips to various places at home and across the water. He has been extremely prolific in oils, in water-colors, and in black-and-white. Most of his work has been, as I have said, in the line of outdoor *genre*, though he sometimes gives us landscape by itself, sometimes interiors, and occasionally figures without surroundings of importance. We all know the little water-colors he sent by the dozen for many years to our annual exhibitions,—the bare-footed, sun-bonneted little girls; the flocks of ragged sheep; the Yankee boys playing by the gaunt little school-house or under twisted apple-boughs through which the sun was sifting; the negro urchins eating water-melons; the tanned hay-makers in their shirt-sleeves and their coarse hide boots; the thousand and one rustic scenes—pictorial scenes merely, without incident or story—that were recorded with so much freshness and so much truth and strength, if often with so little beauty. Among his oil paintings we find, as is but natural, many subjects of more ambitious sorts, though almost always conceived from a pictorial and not a literary point of view. Just as well as we know his little water-color sketches, we know his thoroughly studied interiors of negro huts or New England rural homes, with the characteristic human types they shelter, and the groups of blue-coats that were prominent in war days. Even here, it is interesting to note, Mr. Homer is still the painter of character or simple incident, never of "story" or dramatic effect. His soldier-boys are shown in their more peaceful moods, there being, so far as I remember, no battle scenes among his military paintings.

With all these things every visitor to our galleries had been long familiar—every visitor, though of the most careless and unobserving sort. For a noteworthy point about Mr. Homer's work, one that proves its inherent originality of mood and strength of utterance, is that it always makes itself felt, no matter amid what surroundings. Every passer-by marks it at once, and is apt to give it an unusually decided verdict in his mind, whether of approval or dispraise. No one can be blind to it in the first place or indifferent in the second, as one may be to the things by which it is encompassed on the average ex-

hibition wall,—things probably more “pretty” or more “charming,” possibly more polished, but in almost every case much weaker, more conventional, less original, and at the same time much less truthful. As an instance in point, I may refer to the way in which it affected my own childish eyes, in days when I dared to hold very few positive opinions in such matters. As a youthful visitor to our exhibitions and student of our illustrated papers, I remember to have hated Mr. Homer in quite vehement and peculiar fashion, acknowledging thereby his individuality and his force, and also his freedom from the neat little waxy prettinesses of idea and expression which are so alien to true art, but always so delightful to childish minds, whether in bodies childish or adult.

Two or three years ago, Mr. Homer must have astonished, I think, many who, knowing his work so well, thought they had gauged his power and understood its preferences and its range; for he then exhibited a series of water-colors conceived in an entirely novel vein. No one could have guessed he might attempt such things. Yet the moment they were seen no one could doubt whose hand had been at work,—so strong were they, so entirely fresh and free and native. They were marine studies of no considerable size, done at Gloucester, Massachusetts. Never before had Mr. Homer made color his chief aim or his chief means of expression. In his paintings his scheme had usually been cold, neutral, unattractive. In his aquarelles he had often used very vivid color, but rather, apparently, for the purpose of meeting that most difficult of problems, the effect of full sunlight out-of-doors, than with an eye to the color in and for itself. And the result had usually been strength not unmixed with crudeness. But in these marine sketches color had been his chief concern, and there was much less of crudeness and more of beauty in the result. They were chiefly stormy sunset views—glowing, broadly indicated, strongly marked memoranda, done with deep reds and blacks. A sweep of red-barred black water, a stretch of black-barred red sky, and the great black sail of a fishing-boat set against them, with no detail and the fewest of rough brush strokes, gave us not only the intensified color-scheme of nature but nature’s movement, too,—the slow rise and fall of the billows, the motion of the boat, the heavy pulsation of the air. The hues were a palpable exaggeration of the hues of nature; but then all color that is homogeneous and good on canvas is and must be an exaggeration, either in the way of greater strength or of greater weakness. No one can paint nature just as she appears;

and if one could, the result would not be clear and expressive art. As a Frenchman has well said, “Art is a state of compromises, of sacrifices,”—much omitted or altered for the sake of the clear showing and the emphasizing of a little. Most artists accomplish this end, as we know, by the weakening process—by taking, to start with, a lower, duller, less positive key than nature’s, and by then still further modifying minor things in order that the chief may appear strong enough by contrast. To use the familiar phrase, they *tone things down*. But Mr. Homer had gone the other way to work in these little marines, and had toned things *up*. He had boldly omitted everything that could not serve his purpose,—which was to show the demoniac splendor of stormy sunset skies and waters,—and then, unsatisfied by the brilliant hues of nature, had keyed them to deeper force, made them doubly powerful, the reds stronger and the blacks blacker,—insisting upon and emphasizing a theme which another artist would have thought already too pronounced and too emphatic for artistic use. That he could do this and keep the balance of his work is a patent proof of his artistic power. For though over-statement is not more non-natural or less allowable in art than under-statement, yet under-statement is, of course, the easier, safer kind of adaptation. If this is unsuccessful, the result is simply weak; but if over-statement is unsuccessful, the result is an atrocity. Mr. Homer, however, was so artistic, so clear, so well poised in his exaggerations, that he did more than satisfy the eye. He opened it to the full force and beauty of certain natural effects, and filled for us the sky of every future stormy sunset with memories of how his brush had interpreted its characteristic beauty.

I would not be understood to mean, nevertheless, that even in these pictures Mr. Homer won himself a title to the name of colorist in its highest sense. His color was good in its way, and most impressive. But the finest color must always, no matter how great its strength, preserve an element of suavity; and suavity, sensuous charm of any kind, Mr. Homer’s brush is quite without. Its notes may be grand and powerful upon occasion, but, in color at least, are always a little rude and violent. Those who remember these pictures will remember also, I think, how they divided the honors of the exhibition with Mr. Currier’s, his also being color-studies of stormy sunset skies, though over moorland instead of water. In comparing them, we saw the difference between the temperament of a true colorist like Mr. Currier and a vigorous artistic temperament like Mr. Homer’s, making itself felt through color



"LOOKING OVER THE CLIFF."

which still was not its native element. Mr. Currier's drawings, in spite of their hurrying dash of method, were far more suave in tone, more subtle in suggestion, more harmonious, more beautiful. They were also more refined and skillful in handling. But they were no more artistic in conception than Mr. Homer's, — no stronger, no more valuable as fresh individual records of personal sensations in the face of nature. And they lacked, of course, the native American accent which Mr. Homer had put even into his waves and boats.

At the water-color exhibition of 1883, Mr. Homer again surprised us with drawings of a new kind and possessing novel claims to praise. They were pictures of English fisherwomen, set, as usual with him, in landscape surroundings of much importance, and were, I think, by far the finest works he had yet shown in any medium. They were lacking in but one quality we had prized in his earlier work—in the distinctively American accent hitherto so prominent. But we could not resent this fact, since, if an artist chooses a foreign theme, he must, of course, see it in its own light or do uncharacteristic and savorless work. To paint English girls as though they were Americans would have been as great an artistic sin as is the more common crime of painting Yankees to look like Bretons or Bavarians. It is a proof of his true artistic instinct and insight, and his freedom from conventionality of thought or method, that Mr. Homer, who had so clearly understood and expressed the American type during so many years of working, could now free himself so entirely from its memory as to make these English girls as distinctly, as typically English as any which have ever come from a British hand.

It is this most recent phase of Mr. Homer's work which is illustrated here,—both from his exhibited pictures and from the contents of his portfolio. "The Voice from the Cliffs" and the "Inside the Bar" were among the former, and seem to me not only, as I have said, the most complete and beautiful things he has yet produced, but among the most interesting American art has yet created. They are, to begin with, *pictures* in the truest sense, and not mere studies or sketches, like most of his earlier aquarelles. Then they are finer in color than anything except the sunset sketches just described, and finer than these in one way—as being more explicit and comprehensive in their scheme. Another exhibited picture, a harbor view called "Tynemouth," seen close at hand, with its pale sunset pinks and yellows, seemed a little crude as well as odd; but from the proper distance it was not only subtly truthful, but fine in harmony. The dark gray tone

of "Inside the Bar" was admirably kept and modulated through the entire landscape, giving us as marvelous a sky as I remember to have seen in water-color work from any hand. And though the flesh-tones were, as so often with the artist, too purplish for either truth or beauty, yet they worked in well with the general scheme. In "The Voice from the Cliffs," the same fault in the flesh-tones was noticeable. Yet I cannot say the picture was disagreeable in color. It was pitched in a peculiar and rather crude key, but held well together within that key, and this is always the first thing that must be secured to make color *good*, if not beautiful. And in handling, these works were, I think, a great improvement on all that had gone before—more skillful, more refined, more delicate, while not less strong and individual. But the most interesting and valuable thing about them was their beauty of line. Linear beauty is a rare thing in modern art, scarcely ever aimed at even by a modern artist without a lapse into conventionality or would-be-classic lifelessness. And it is a quality which we might have thought the very last to which Mr. Homer could attain. Certainly he had never seemed even to think of it before. In his paintings the composition had been sufficiently good, but not marked in any way, and in his water-colors it had usually been neglected altogether. Never had he shown, so far as I know his work, a care for really artistic, well-balanced composition, still less a trace of feeling for the charm and value of pure linear beauty. Compare the carelessly chosen attitudes, the angular outlines, the awkwardly truthful gestures of his New England figures, with the sculptural grace of these fisher-girls, and no contrast could be greater. The novel choice of material does not explain the matter. Had Mr. Homer seen with the same eyes as heretofore and worked with the same ends in view, he would not have marked and emphasized the splendid linear possibilities of his new models, more suggestive though they doubtless were than those of his native land. For they had been possibilities only, to be discovered and utilized by artistic selection, and not persistent, evident, and unmistakable characteristics inherent in every figure and every attitude he might see. The pose of the woman in "Inside the Bar" is fine in its rendering of strength, of motion, of rugged vitality. But it is very beautiful as well, even in the almost over-bold line of the apron twisted by the wind, which gives it accent, and greatly aids the impression of movement in air and figure. The grouping of "The Voice from the Cliffs" is still more remarkable. These outlines might almost be transferred



LISTENING TO THE VOICE FROM THE CLIFFS.

to a relief in marble; and yet there is none of the stiffness, the immobility, with which plastically symmetrical effects are usually attended in painted work. They are statuesque figures, but they are living, moving, breathing beings, and not statues; and they are as characteristic, as simply natural and unconventional, as are the most awkward of Mr. Homer's Yankee children. It is interesting to note how this fine symmetry has been secured—as it is often secured in art of very different kinds, though more frequently in marble than in paint. The method is one that needs a master hand to manage it aright. It works first, of course, by making the lines fine in themselves, and then by making the lines of one figure reproduce to a great degree the lines of its fellows—not nearly enough to produce monotony and stiffness, but nearly enough to secure repose, harmony, and a sort of rhythmical unity not to be obtained in other ways. This device—the word is correct, for what looks to us like artistic instinct is always, of course, artistic reasoning, conscious or unconscious—is used throughout these English pictures and studies of Mr. Homer's, and often with the most exquisite result. In a water-color not yet exhibited,—which is a most remarkable rendering of figures seen through a thick fog,—there is in particular a group of two girls with their arms

linked together, which as a bit of linear composition could hardly be surpassed by any pencil,—so statuesque is it, so superbly graceful, yet so simple, so natural, so apparently unstudied. In “The Voice from the Cliffs,” moreover, we may note the working of the same principle of delicately varied unity in the faces themselves. Instead of the strongly contrasted types which most artists would have chosen, we have but a single type, though distinctly individualized in every case. As with the outlines of the figures, so here, also, there is no monotony, no repetition. But variety has been secured in such subtle, reposeful ways that a wonderful harmony and artistic force are the result.

Nor is the linear beauty of these pictures confined to the figures only. The composition of the “Tynemouth”—with its waves and its drifting smoke-wreaths and the groups of figures in the foreground boat—is fine in every way; and in the “Inside the Bar,” and other similar works, the lines of cloud and shore are arranged with consummate skill, framing, as it were, the figure, giving it additional importance, and bringing it into close artistic relation with the landscape.*

* In the accompanying sketch, which shows the whole scheme of “Inside the Bar,” the boats, owing to the absence of *chiaroscuro*, seem much too prominent. They are well in the background, and the figure dominates

In oils, too, Mr. Homer has shown one work which belongs to the same series. This is "The Coming of the Gale," exhibited with the last Academy collection. A wide, wind-tormented sweep of gray, foamy sea stretches away to a gray and cloudy sky. In the middle distance is a group of fishermen beaching their boat, and on the pier in the foreground a sturdy young woman, with her baby strapped to her back by a shawl, striding vigorously against the gale. Sea and sky are finely painted, full of color, atmosphere, and motion; and there is the same sort of sturdy beauty in the principal figure, though the attitude is less well chosen than in the water-colors just described, since with as much of power it has less of naturalness and ease.

But no analysis of these pictures, no pointing out of the elements upon which their power depends, can convey the impression that they make,—the way in which all elements work together to produce an effect of artistic strength, of artistic dignity and beauty, that fall nothing short of grandeur. They are serious works of "high art," in spite of their peasant subjects and their water-color medium. That is to say, they have an ideal tinge which lifts them above the cleverest transcripts of mere prosaic fact. And this idealism, this high artistic sentiment on the part of the artist, is of so strong, so fresh, so vital, so original a sort, that his pictures took the life and vigor out of almost everything else upon the wall. Many other things were as well done, some were better done as concerned their technique only; but not one seemed quite so well worth the doing. Mr. Homer does indeed, in these pictures, show something quite different from the fresh and individual but crude and unpoetic suggestiveness of his earlier aquarelles, something different from the prosaic realism of his war paintings and his negro interiors, something different also from the fervid, half infernal poetry of the Gloucester studies. The dignity of these landscapes and the statuesque impressiveness and sturdy vigor of these figures, translated by the strong sincerity of his brush, prove an originality of mood, a vigor of conception, and a sort of stern poetry of feeling to which he had never reached before.

I began my chapter by saying that Mr. Homer holds a place in our art apart both from our elder and from our younger schools; and this not only by reason of the time when he gained his first fame, but by the nature of his work. He began to practice his art at a

the entire picture. In the original drawing of "Looking Over the Cliff," a wall of chalky rock is seen below the figures. It was necessary to omit it in the engraving, in order that these last might be of satisfactory size.

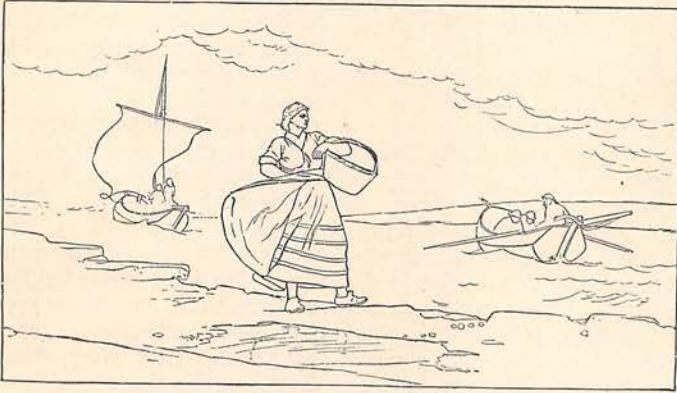
distance from the schools and the popular artists of the day, and so it was not molded into conformity with the dry, detailed, conscientious, but unindividual and inartistic methods then in vogue. And he was born too soon to be drawn into the current which some fifteen years ago set so strongly toward the *ateliers* of Europe. He has worked out his technical manners for himself. The results show something of crudeness, of rugged angularity,—are unscholarly, perhaps, but extremely original, and also forcible and clearly expressive of what he has to say. He has invented in some sort a language of his own. It is not polished, not deft and rapid and graceful. We could never care for it in itself and apart from the message it delivers, as we so often care for really beautiful artistic workmanship. But it is not hesitating, confused, inadequate. It is always sure of itself, and always reaches its end, as ignorant or immature work does not, though it may reach that end in a rather blunt and uncompromising fashion. In a word, it is not childish, uncertain technique; but it is, I think, a little primitive, a little *rustic*. It is the strong, characteristic, personal, though unpolished, diction of a provincial poet. We do not resent the fact; we are tempted to feel, indeed, that upon this unconventional, unacademic accent of his brush depends something of the interest if not the value of his work. Perhaps it is *because* of his *naïveté*, his occasional *gaucheries*, his sturdy if angular independence, and not in spite of these things, that his handling seems so fresh, so unaffected, so peculiarly his own, so well adapted to the nature of the feeling it reveals. I think it is an open question whether, had Mr. Homer been born a few years later and taken an early flight to Paris or to Munich with our younger brood of callow painters, his art would have gained or lost in value. It might have grown more scholarly, more gracious, more beautiful, more delightful to the eye and to that second sight which rejoices in work well done simply because it *is* well done. But with its polish might have come some loss of its freshness, of its genuine, spontaneous rendering of genuine, untutored feeling. No artist has a more personal message to deliver than Mr. Homer, and none tells it more distinctly or in a more native way. And we can well afford to lose a little possible technical brilliancy or charm in the gain we register hereby. No man is less self-conscious, works less as though centuries of great painters were watching him from the pyramid of fine accomplishment. And his strong freshness of mood and manner is peculiarly precious in these days when most men *are* self-conscious,—these days of



"INSIDE THE BAR."

cosmopolitan experience and hackneyed practice. Talents so produced and so self-nurtured are apt, perhaps, to fall into hard, unprogressive mannerisms of conception and of treatment. But we have seen that Mr. Homer

technique will not make up for conventionality of feeling, for lack of sentiment and personality on the artist's part. The way he feels and the way he speaks—these are the two parallel things which must always



OUTLINE OF "INSIDE THE BAR."

has been too true an artist to lose himself in such a way. I have already noted the variety of his work, its constant gain in poetic sentiment, in dignity and beauty of conception, and its constant growth in technical excellence as well. These last pictures are very different in treatment from those by which he has so long been known. A few years ago he could surely not have painted the fine and subtle sky in "The Coming Storm" or "Inside the Bar," or the delicate harmony of tones in "The Foggy Day." A few years ago his brush was stiffer, his tones were cruder, than they are to-day; his art altogether was harsher and more angular. That he will give us many different kinds of work in the years to come, no one who has followed his course thus far can greatly doubt. And I am equally sure it will be work that, while keeping all his early independence of mood and freshness of vision, will show an ever-growing feeling for beauty, and an ever-growing power to put it beautifully on canvas.

It may seem ungracious to have pointed out the flaws in art so good as this—so much better in many ways than much of the current work which is technically more lovely. But I have acknowledged them chiefly to get a chance of showing—no unnecessary preaching in these days of devotion to technique for itself alone—that there is something more in art than technical grace and charm. Of course, no art can be perfect, can be really great, which is not perfect and great in technical ways as well as in conception and in feeling. But even the most marvelous

be considered in judging of a painter. And when a man feels so strongly, so freshly, sometimes so grandly and poetically, as Mr. Homer, and when he expresses himself so clearly, so distinctly, so impressively, we are foolish indeed if we resent the fact that he does not speak as smoothly, as beautifully, as gracefully as he might. Beauty—sensuous charm of motive and of treatment—is a factor in art, and a factor of much value; but it is not *all* of art. There is no denying the fact that Mr. Homer's work has sometimes been positively ugly. Even the beauty of his later efforts is beauty of form, of idea, of feeling, and of strong expression only—very rarely beauty of color, and never, whether in color, in form, in handling, or in sentiment, beauty of the suave and sensuous sort; and, needless to say, of so-called "decorative" beauty we find not the slightest trace. But always, whether it be austere beautiful or frankly ugly, his work is vital *art*—not mere painting, not the record of mere artistic seeing, but the record of strong artistic *feeling* expressed in strong, frank, and decided ways. It is always artistic in sentiment if not artistically gracious in speech, always clear, always self-reliant, always genuine, and—to use again the word which comes inevitably to my pen—always *strong* to a remarkable degree. For the sake of these qualities—so important and to-day so very rare—we may a thousand times excuse all technical deficiencies we find; and the more gladly since, as I have said, they are gradually disappearing, year by year.

M. G. Van Rensselaer.