

JULES PEQUIGNOT FILS.

From collection of George B. De Forest. (13 × 42 inches.)



THE BILL-STICKER.
BY BOUCHARDON, 1742.

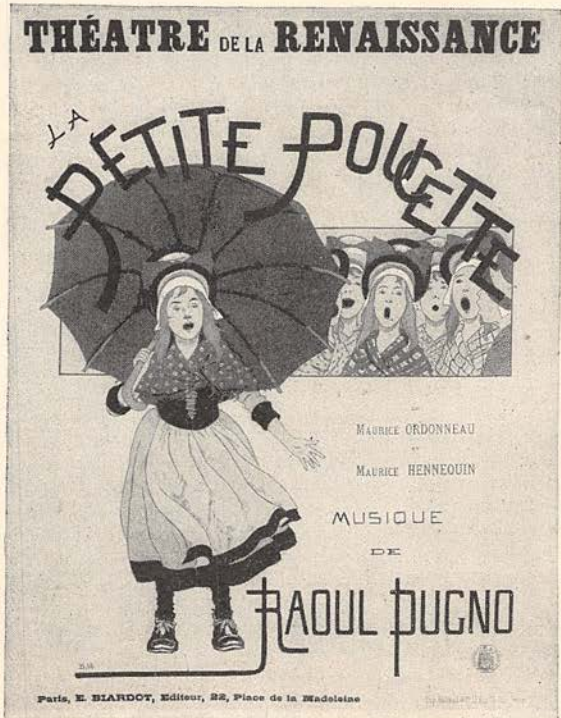
THE PICTORIAL POSTER.

“Post no Bills” were the universal law nowadays, those of us who have the good fortune to live in Paris or in New York would be deprived of one of the most interesting manifestations of modern decorative art. Perhaps it is not wholly

the Oriental worker at the loom cannot guess the pleasure we shall take in his subtle commingling of color in the wools of the rug he is weaving. So it is small wonder that the pictorial posters which adorn our blank walls pass unperceived, and that we do not care to observe the skill which has gone to their making. Yet the recent development of the pictorial poster in France and in America is worthy of careful consideration by all who take note of the artistic currents of our time.

unfair to suggest that this nineteenth century of ours is a day of little things, and that our silverware, our pottery, our tiles, our wall-paper, our woodcuts, our book-covers, each in its kind, and when it is at its best, are better than our historic painting, our heroic sculpture, or our grandiose architecture. The minor arts have their place in the hierarchy of the beautiful; and more often than we are willing to acknowledge, they have a charm of their own and a value likely to be as lasting as those of their more pretentious elder sisters. The idyls of Theocritus and the figurines from Tanagra — are these so tiny that we can afford to despise them?

We are all of us prone to underestimate the value of contemporary labor when it is bestowed on common things. Often we fail altogether to see the originality, the elegance, the freshness, — in a word, the *art*, — of the men who are making the things which encompass us roundabout. Possibly the Greek did not consider the beauty of the vase he used daily, the form of which is a pure joy to us; and probably



BOUTET DE MONVEL. From collection of George B. De Forest. (21½ × 29 inches.)



J. CHÉRET.

From collection of George B. De Forest. (46½ × 67 inches.)

This development has not passed wholly without notice. In 1886 M. Ernest Maindron published in Paris a sumptuously illustrated volume, "Les Affiches Illustrées," in which the history of outdoor advertising among the Greeks and the Romans and the modern French is set forth with the aid of colored engravings. Then there was an exhibition at Nantes in 1889, and one at the Grolier Club here in New York in 1890. Next there was held a special exhibition in 1890 at the gallery of the Théâtre d'Application in Paris, devoted entirely to the extraordinary posters of M. Jules Chéret; and in M. Henri Beraldi's "Graveurs Français du XIX^{ème} Siècle," M. Chéret's works were carefully catalogued. Finally, in the fall of 1891, M. Edmond Sagot, a Parisian dealer in prints, issued a priced catalogue of pictorial posters, prepared with conscientious care and serving as an iconography of the art in France. Also to be noted are articles in M. Octave Uzanne's "Livre Moderne" for April and May, 1891, as well as essays on M. Chéret in the "Certains" of M. Huysmans and in the "Figures de Cire" of M.

Hugues Le Roux. A consideration of these scattered publications will lead one to the belief that the pictorial poster, however humble its position, has its place in the temple of art, just as the shop-card has when it is designed by William Hogarth, or the book-plate when it is devised by Albert Dürer.

M. Sagot's priced catalogue is very far from being complete, but it contains more than two thousand numbers, and nearly all these are from Parisian presses. Among the French artists of this century who have designed posters, usually lithographed and mainly placards for the publishers of books or of operas, are the Devériès, Celestin Nanteuil, Tony Johannot, Raffet, Gavarni, Daumier, Cham, Edouard de Beaumont, Viollet-le-Duc, Gustave Doré, Grévin, Manet, and De Neuville; and among contemporary French artists who now and again have made unexpected essays in this department of their craft are M. Vierge, M. Vibert, M. Clairin, M. Boutet de Monvel, M. Regamey, M. Robida, and the Franco-Russian man of genius who calls himself Caran d'Ache. Few of



WILLETTE. From collection of Richard Hoe Lawrence. (22½ × 28½ inches.)



J. CHÉRET. From collection of Geo. B. De Forest. ($32\frac{1}{2} \times 93\frac{1}{2}$ ins.)

the posters of the artists in either of these groups have other than an interest of curiosity, for the designing of pictorial advertisements is an art in itself, a jealous art yielding its favors only to those who study out its secrets with due devotion and persistence. Viollet-le-Duc's sketch of the streets of old Paris is striking; and so are Doré's advertisements for his own "Lon-

don" and for his edition of the "Wandering Jew." But for the most part the posters of the painters I have named are muddled and ineffective; they lack the solid simplicity of motive which is the essential of a good advertisement; they are without the bold vigor of design which the poster demands; and they are without the compression and relief of lettering which it requires. These are qualities which the ordinary artist, not seeking, has not achieved, perhaps because he half despised his task. These are the qualities which no one could fail to find in the work of the masters of the poster in France, M. Jules Chéret, M. Willette, M. Grasset. In their advertisements we discover a perfect understanding of the conditions of this form of pictorial art. The first condition is that the poster shall attract attention at all costs; and the second is that it shall satisfy the eye at all hazards. Thus we see that the poster may be noisy,—and noisy it often is, no doubt,—but it must not be violent, just as even a brass band ought ever to play in tune.

In the little group of Frenchmen who are developing the possibilities of a new art, the supremacy of M. Jules Chéret is indisputable. He is the pioneer, and he is also the man of the most marked originality. His is the hand which has covered the walls of Paris with lightly clad female figures, floating in space, and smiling with an explosive joy. He it is who has evoked the fantastic and provocative damsels of the most brilliant gaiety, who invite you to the Red Mill and the Russian Mountains and the other places in Paris where Terpsichore is free and easy. The radiant freshness of these flower-like beauties, and the airy ease of their startling costume, carry us back to Boucher and Moreau. As M. Armand Silvestre has said, "The French taste of Fragonard and of Watteau here lives again in a conception of woman quite as elegant, and quite as deliciously sensual." That the best of M. Chéret's flying nymphs are delicious is beyond question, but that the most of them are sensual, in the lower meaning of the word, I take leave to deny. Gallic bacchantes as many of them seem, they are never lewd, and one might venture to say that they are never without a decorum of their own: they are not immoral, like so many of the delicate indelicacies of Grévin, for example.

M. Chéret is a Frenchman who was brought up as a lithographer. When he was only a lad he went to London, and began to design and put on stone show-cards for Mr. Rimmel, the perfumer. It was Mr. Rimmel's capital which backed him when he returned to Paris nearly a quarter of a century ago, with the intention of producing a new kind of pictorial advertisement. Almost his first attempt was a poster



REVUE D'ARTS ET DE LETTRES, PARIS
E. GRASSET.

NOUVEAU AFFICHES ARTISTIQUES ... G. DE MALHERBE A. H. A. CELLOTTI M. H. O. DES CHAMPS 54

From collection of George B. De Forest. (28 x 45½ inches.)

for the Porte Saint Martin fairy play, the "Biche au Bois" (in which Mme. Sara Bernhardt was acting for a season in 1867 while the freak was on her); and since 1867 M. Chéret has produced three or four hundred posters for theaters, circuses, music-halls, charity fêtes, newspapers, and publishers; and he has slowly gained a perfect mastery over his material, until now he can bend to his bidding the stubborn lithographic stone. With the years, and with constant practice, his style has grown firmer, and his pencil has now a larger sweep. With the years, too, has come recognition of his work, and he knows now that what he does is appreciated by those who take thought about the things which surround them.

Some of the keenest critics of Paris have joined in praise of M. Chéret's pictures, though they were merely decorative sketches, doomed to destruction by the first rain-storm, and produced to the order of any chance advertiser who had wares to vend. Some of the most prominent writers on the Parisian newspapers have thanked M. Chéret that he has enlivened the dull gray walls of Paris by lightly draped and merrily dancing figures, giving a suggestion of life and warmth to the wintry streets of the French capital.

These aerial bodies, with their diaphanous drapery and their swift movement, suggest the figures frescoed on the walls of Pompeii; and M. Chéret is not without his share of the Latin ease and *verve* which forever fixed these Pompeian girls as a joy to the world. He has also the bold stroke of the Japanese artist, and he has, moreover, the Japanese faculty of suppressing needless details: for there is never any niggling, any finicky cross-hatching, any uncertainty, in M. Chéret's work. He is an impressionist in one sense of the word—an impres-

sionist who has a masterly command of line and an absolute control of color, and who uses these to make you perceive what has impressed him. The figure he sketches may be as saucy as you please, but there is no slouch about the composition. To describe his work adequately we must needs, as M. Henry Lavedan suggested, borrow from this decorator certain of his own colors, a lemon-yellow, and a geranium-red, and a midnight blue; and even then we should lack the cunning of the artist so to juxtapose these as to reproduce his effects. Almost equally difficult is it to reproduce in a magazine what is most representative in M. Chéret's work; for above all else is he a colorist, and the attempt to translate his work into the

monochrome of typography is little less than a betrayal. The compact and skilful composition can be shown, and the force of the drawings; but the effort to transfer the charm of the color is foredoomed to failure.

In his earlier posters M. Chéret turned to advantage the old lithographic device of shading off the color of the background stone so that, for example, it might print at once the dark blue of the sky at the top and the dark brown of the foreground at the bottom. Of this sort are the posters for Hervé's "Petit Faust," for Miss Lydia Thompson's "Faust," and for the Valentino dance-hall, all reproduced in M. Maindron's book. Later came posters in which this gradation of tint was abandoned in favor of a sharp contrast of color, with the legend aggressively detached in white on the chromatic background. Of this sort are the "Tertullia, Café Spectacle," the "Concert des Ambassadeurs, Fête des Mitrons," and the incomparably vivid and vigorous poster for M. Robida's "Rabelais"; and these also may be found in M. Maindron's invaluable volume. Of this sort also is the advertisement of "Les Trois Mousquetaires" reproduced here-with. Since the appearance of M. Maindron's monograph, M. Chéret has developed a third style by simplifying his palette; with an artful combination of red and yellow and blue, he achieves a chromatic harmony which is the despair of the engraver who must confine himself perforce to black and white. Of this sort are the "Coulisses de l'Opéra" done for the Musée Grévin, the flamboyant figure which served to advertise the print-shop of M. Sagot, and the dream of happy children who got their toys at the Louvre last Christmas.

M. Chéret's methods are all his own, and it would be madness for any hand less skilful than his to attempt to utilize them. Fortunately, therefore, he has not been imitated by M. Willette or by M. Grasset, the two contemporary French artists who come closest to him. M. Willette indeed confines himself wholly to monochrome, to the single impression of black ink on white paper; and it is therefore easy to reproduce here one of his most characteristic

posters, the masterly composition which advertised the striking pantomime of MM. Carré and Wormser, "L'Enfant Prodigue." M. Willette has made a specialty of Pierrot; and indeed the revival of interest in that French type of pantomimic personage is due partly to his pencil, so that it would have been out of keeping had any one but he prepared the poster for the play of which the prodigal Pierrot was the hero.



E. GRASSET.

From collection of Richard Hoe Lawrence. (33 X 49 inches.)

M. Grasset is a colorist, as M. Chéret is, but he is more complex in his style, and he prefers a Byzantine richness, as in his "Jeanne Darc." He put on paper a superbly vigorous cavalier trumpeting forth the "Fêtes de Paris"; and he has lately prepared a soft and gentle poster on the "Sud de France," enticing the chilly Parisian to the land of the olive and myrtle. So subdued and languorous is the color-scheme of this last piece that its charm is almost as difficult to render in black and white as is the fascination of M. Chéret's riot-

GRAN PLAZA DE TOROS

DE

BOIS DE BOULOGNE
Soleils et Laines — Des Français

GRANDES COURSES

DE

TAUREAUX

CABALLERO EN PLAZA
M. ALFREDO TINOCO
CHEFS DE QUADRILLES
LAGARTIJO, CARA - ANCHA
ANGEL PASTOR, MAZZANTINI
VALENTIN MARTIN, GUERRITA

TAUREAUX
Provenant des Elevages les plus renommés d'ESPAGNE
APARTADO (SELECTION DE TAUREAUX)
Pour les Jours de Courses, à la Plaza de toros.

VENTE DES BILLETS | 6, Place de l'Opéra
158, Rue Pergolèse

LE 4 MAI
OUVERTURE
DEUX
COURSES PAR SEMAINE

VOIES DE
COMMUNICATION

Chemins de fer de l'Etat | Gare de Paris-Montparnasse
Télégraphes | Gare de Montparnasse
Lignes de la Grande Ceinture

D. PENEA.

From collection of Richard Hoe Lawrence. (49½ × 99 inches.)

ers, chiefly railroad advertisements, having a quality of their own, a national note, perhaps best to be characterized as a broad richness of color not unlike that to which we are accustomed in Roman scarfs and Bellagio rugs. In the brilliancy of some of these posters I thought I detected the influence of the little group of Hispano-Roman painters; and I noted also the decorative methods of the lithographic designers who have devised the showy but not inartistic covers for the sheet-music issued by the Milanese publisher, Signor Ricordi. M. Maindron declares that Signor Simonetti, the water-colorist, is to be credited with the elaborate posters announcing the Exposition of Turin some six or seven years ago. Something of this Italian richness is to be found in Spanish bull-fight advertisements.

As to contemporary German work, M. Maindron is silent, as becomes a patriotic Frenchman; but there is little in contemporary German art which should give a patriotic Frenchman a thrill of envy. I have seen no German posters which compare with the finer French work, nor any which have the *brio* and swing of some of the Italian. For the most part the German posters are hard and dull; even when they are learned and scholarly, they are academic and frigid. In the single-sheet bill advertising an exhibition of fans at Karlsruhe in the summer of 1891, there was an ingenious combination of

ous tints; but its emblematic decoration is too ingeniously combined to allow me to pass it over in silence. Even this is less characteristic than his "Librairie Romantique," done in the very spirit of 1830. And it is M. Grasset's stained-glass manner which M. Carloz Schwabe has imitated in his "Salon Rose Croix."

Any one who spends even twenty-four hours in Italy—as it was my good fortune to do a year ago—must observe not a few Italian post-

red and black; and a poster made for the Munich exhibition of the same summer, and representing a stately winged figure of Art advancing solemnly in a chariot drawn by two stalwart steeds, was not without a certain twilight harmony of tone.

British art is as lifeless as Teutonic; the triviality of most of it, and its dominant note of domesticity, are to be observed also in its posters, which are devoted chiefly to things to eat, and to

things to drink, and to things for household use. The brutal vulgarity of a London railway terminus, foul with smoke, is emphasized by the offensive harshness of the posters stuck upon its walls, with no sense of fitness and no attempt at arrangement. *Bariolé* and *criard* are the epithets a French art-critic would inevitably apply to the most of these advertising placards. Oddly enough, the poster is still outside the current of decorative endeavor which has given us the Morris wall-papers, the Doulton tiles, the Walter Crane book-covers, and the Cobden Sanderson bindings. So it happens that one sees in Great Britain but little mural decoration of this sort which is not painfully unpleasant. Even when the advertiser seems to have taken thought and spent money, his effort is misdirected more often than not. Thus a firm of soap-makers has plastered up all over London, and in a printed gilt frame, an elaborate chromolithographic facsimile of an oil-painting by Sir John Millais, called "Bubbles," of which the merits, such as they are, are purely pictorial and in no wise decorative. As a great price was paid for the painting, and as the reproduction was obviously costly, attention was no doubt attracted to the soap-makers, and so the purpose of the advertisement was attained; but no artistic interest was subserved. The same firm of advertisers was far better advised when it procured from Mr. H. Stacy Marks a single black-and-white sketch showing two monks washing themselves with the soap to which attention was to be attracted. Thus it is in Great Britain, in matters of art, good work is ever sporadic. There is no healthy organization and no steady development in England as there is in France; individual posters may be commonplace or distinguished or ugly, as luck will have it; and one suspects that public opinion rather resents than welcomes the stronger effort.

Besides his poster for the soap-maker, Mr. Marks did two of his quaint birds in black and white, for the backs of the sandwichmen who were calling the attention of the public to a collection of his works on exhibition at the Fine Art Society's galleries. For a similar occasion Mr. Walter Crane made one of his delightful decorative designs. For his exhibition of



CARLOS SCHWABE. From collection of George B. De Forest. (30½ × 69½ inches.)

"Life and Work in Bavaria's Alps" at the same gallery, Professor Hubert Herkomer also prepared a poster in black and white. But Professor Herkomer's most ambitious composition is the huge eight-sheet poster he designed in 1881 to announce the starting of the "Magazine of Art." Ten years later Professor Herkomer made another poster, more unpretending, for "Black

and White." These posters of Professor Herkomer were all woodcuts to be printed in black; and so were the posters made by Mr. E. J. Poynter for an insurance company, and the poster made by the late Frederick Walker for the dramatization of the "Woman in White"—a single female figure of dignity and power.

And the American posters of the last generation were all woodcuts. It was in the United States, indeed, that the art of color-printing from a set of pine blocks had been carried to

American circus in Paris during the Exposition of 1867, that opened M. Chéret's eyes to the possibilities of this department of decorative art. Probably again it was an echo of M. Chéret's success in Paris which waked up the American printers, and led to the substitution of the softer lithographic stone for the harsh wood block.

This substitution was made about ten years ago by the Strobridge Company of Cincinnati, a city to which we already owed the ad-

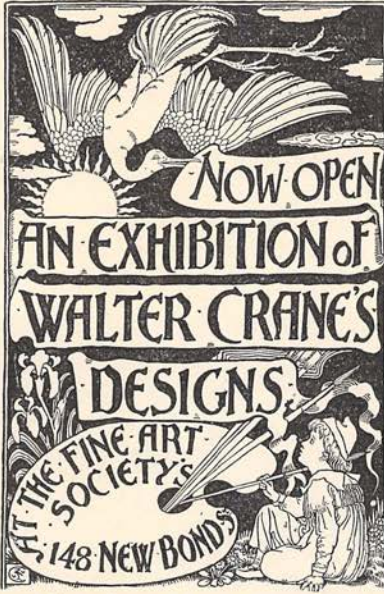


LITHOGRAPHED BY FRIEDRICH GUTSCH, KARLSRUHE.

From collection of Brander Matthews. (28½ x 34½ inches.)

an extreme. This polychromatic printing, of which the circus poster of a dozen years ago was a favorable specimen, was not without a rough effect, although it was hopelessly unattractive when considered seriously. American show-printing revealed much mechanical dexterity, but little or no knowledge of the principles of design, although I can recall more than one of these ruder posters not without merit. The one which I most readily remember advertised Mr. Augustin Daly's drama, "Divorce," and its central figure was a Cupid weeping within a broken wedding-ring. Probably it was the rather startling, and somewhat violent, American posters, hard and dry woodcuts all of them, which proclaimed the advent of an

mirable Rookwood pottery; and the credit of the change is probably due to the late Matt Morgan, an English draftsman of great fertility and abundant fancy. Having caricatured the Prince of Wales in the "Tomahawk," he had come to this country to caricature General Grant in "Frank Leslie's." As a caricaturist he labored under one great disadvantage; he could never draw any but a cockney face; his Irishmen and his negroes, do what he might, were always Englishmen made up for the character: no man may step off his shadow. But Morgan was an accomplished designer with a fine sense for color, as he had shown in England by his scenery for Covent Garden pantomimes. Here in the United States he had come



WALTER CRANE. From collection of Brander Matthews. (13 x 19¼ inches.)

under Japanese influence. So it came about that he and other artists employed by the Strobbridge Company, and by the other lithographers who sought to rival the earlier firm, evolved a new style of poster, lithographed like M. Chéret's, effective and picturesque like his, and yet composed according to formulas different from his. In the ten or a dozen years since the first posters were put on stone here in the United States, there has been developed a form of mural decoration wholly unlike anything which existed before—unlike the Parisian, as I have just asserted, and unlike the American woodcut which preceded it and made it possible. The new work is founded on a thorough knowledge of design, of the harmony of color, and of the technical possibilities of the litho-

graphic press. The result is of varying value, of course. It is often commonplace, dull, empty. It is sometimes violent and vulgar. It is frequently beautiful and delightful. There are many purely decorative posters, printed in soft and gentle tones, which are a delight to the eye both in design and in color, and which now give a zest to every chance ramble through the streets of New York. Consider, for example, the striking and suggestive poster "From Chaos to Man," printed by the Springer Company. Consider, again, the "stand of bills" which Mr. H. L. Bridwell devised to announce the coming of the Lillian Russell Opera Comique Company; note the tenderness of the tints and the fastidious grace of the design; and confess that here is a brilliant mural embellishment of a new kind. Akin to this and due to the same firm, the Strobbridge Company, were smaller posters for Mr. W. H. Crane and for Mr. Francis Wilson, delightfully decorative in their simple lettering.

"That there is a character in American design which is hardening into style, I think every one who has had much to do with American designers will agree," wrote the lady who is the chief of the Associated Artists, a year or so ago; and Mrs. Wheeler went on to declare that this American style seems to possess three important qualities: "First, absolute fidelity and truth, as shown in Japanese art; second, grace of line, which perhaps comes from familiarity with the forms of the Renaissance; and third, imagination, or individuality of treatment." In its own way the American pictorial poster has felt the influence of this movement forward; and it can be called to bear witness in behalf of Mrs. Wheeler's declaration, just as her own embroideries and textiles can, or the La Farge and Tiffany stained glass, or any other latter-day development of the art instinct of the American people.

Brander Matthews.

THUMB-NAIL SKETCHES.

"STRANGE TO SAY."



A VAST network of iron rods and girders overhead; long spirals of white steam rising through the gray smoke from a score of locomotives panting and puffing as if impatient to be gone; avenues of railway-carriages in yellow, brown, and black; hurrying, pushing multitudes jostling one another; tired-looking travelers at the end of their journeys; hopeful-looking travelers braving the possibilities of the unknown; luggage-porters, in caps of flaming red and blouses of blue, staggering under Brobdingnagian loads; parting messages drowned in the babel of sounds; shrill, warning whistles of departing trains; the clanking of iron wheels on the turn-tables—then,