

# "The Fine Arts: Exhibition of the Society of American Artists." Critic new series 23 (March 30, 1895), pp. 250-51.

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this god with feet in the mire. Hilda is like an apparition in the poem, the embodiment of Halvard's dream, the essence of his higher aspirations. There is something here of the influence of mind upon mind, something that eludes us as we think to grasp it. But the dominant idea is the development of this strenuous, ambitious character, crushing everything that comes in its way, fortunate, successful, yet morbid and miserable. There is some kinship between these two tragedies, after all. The irony of fate which sends men "climbing to their fall" is in them both, the suffering which is often the accompaniment of success. "He shall count no mortal happy," chants the old Greek chorus, "till he gain a happy end."

Mr. Hobart Chatfield-Taylor's new novel will be issued at the end of the week, and this afternoon *The Chap-Book* gives a tea in the Caxton Building, at which prints on large-paper of Gibson's drawings illustrating it will be shown for the first time. It is hardly necessary to say that the drawings are clever; Mr. Gibson is always that. But in this case he has not expressed the author's idea of his hero, attractive as he has made him, and the single drawing of the model heroine is neither pretty nor is it art. Some of the minor characters, however, like d'Argenteuil, are alive, and several of the groups are obviously handled by an artist. The best of them illustrates the tilt between Moira and her manager. The figure of the man, distressed, anxious, obsequious, is capital, an admirable foil to the disdainful beauty he is pleading with. Mr. Chatfield-Taylor has adopted new tactics in "Two Women and a Fool," which will be issued in Stone & Kimball's prettiest manner. The story is told through the mouth of the hero as he pursues his reminiscent reflections alone in his room at night. He recalls in this way scenes and long conversations, going over them in the present tense, beginning with the interview just passed, which starts his meditations, and wandering back along the lines it suggests. The book has more spontaneity and buoyancy than anything that Mr. Chatfield-Taylor has heretofore written, but it is not easy to succeed in such a task as he has set himself. To rescue a tale of this kind from vulgarity, to give its creatures action and fascination, to make us feel the genuineness of the struggle that is going on in the man's mind, to show him a human being strongly masculine and yet the victim of his passions—these are things that require the trained literary artist. This painter-hero analyzes his emotions too carefully to be completely controlled by them; he forces one to disbelieve either in his feeling or in his perspicuity. It is an ordinary, frothy French tale that he evolves, with much gaiety and vivacity, but leading one to wonder whether, after all, it is worth the telling again. For the tone of it is anything but healthful, and, little as one desires an ethical sauce for fiction, it must be in some way stimulating or it fails to be artistic. If Mr. Chatfield-Taylor would be truer to his own ideals, would allow himself to be simple and natural, his work would bear more enduring fruit.

Clement Walter Andrews, M. A., Librarian of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has just been appointed Librarian of the new John Crerar Library. Mr. Andrews did not know that his name was even being considered by the Trustees until informed of his appointment, but it is believed that he will accept. He could hardly do otherwise, indeed, in the face of such an opportunity to shape and mould a great work. This selection emphasizes the decision of the Trustees to make this primarily a scientific library. (See Boston Letter.)

The Antiquarians gave a reception at the Art Institute yesterday, at which a collection of textiles was first displayed. They are chiefly Italian of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and are presented by Mr. Martin A. Ryerson. Mr. Arthur J. Eddy entertained the members with a clever account of his recent intercourse with Whistler. A water-color and three of Whistler's lithographs were exhibited, and, in addition, a fine marine belonging to Mr. Thomas Lynch, and "The Fire-Wheel," a companion to the painting which caused the famous suit against Ruskin.

CHICAGO, 26 March, 1895.

LUCY MONROE.

## The Fine Arts

### Exhibition of the Society of American Artists

A WHOLESOME HORROR of the Philistine seems to be the ruling sentiment in the Society. There is some bad work at this exhibition, much that is only middling, and a large share of what is best has plainly been done under the influence of this or that successful foreigner; but there is evident everywhere the desire to paint rather than the desire to sell. The "business artist" has seldom gained admittance to the Society's exhibitions. In time, the clever execu-

tant—usually a person with a talent for mechanics who has taken to manipulating paint—will be "fired," and the faddist will follow. Then, the yearly exhibition will be wholly enjoyable by those who like earnest and intelligent work in study, sketch or picture.

Even in the present show the great majority of the paintings are of this description. Many of them may seem, to the average visitor, trivial in subject and odd in treatment, but our public is still a very ignorant one in matters of art, and painters may sometimes be justified in having a little fun with it. And, again, the only way to educate it is to show it plenty of work done with no regard whatever to its prejudices. If the public is ever to learn the language of art, it must be through attending such exhibitions as this, where, as a rule, each picture represents a different mode of rendering an aspect of nature. Nothing is more likely to get a too literal understanding—the "hole in the wall" theory—out of the visitor's head, and to teach him that, whatever degree of likeness is aimed at, choice and judgment have something to do with art. Many of the painters are still following, at a long interval, in the footsteps of Claude Monet. A little closer study of their teacher's works might show some of them that Monet does not utterly discard broken tones mixed on the palette. On the contrary, he uses such tones very largely, reserving his hatchings of prismatic colors for passages of exceptional richness or brilliancy. Mr. Philip Hale's "Under the Willows" needs the subduing hand of Time to bring the highly colored reflections on the white tablecloth and white dresses into harmony. Mr. Childe Hassam's picture of a "Midsummer Girl" looking on from a bridge at boys bathing in the creek below, is in much the same case, owing to the glitter of small lights and narrow shadows of not very well determined values. Of his other paintings, we like his "Summer," two girls and four chairs on a veranda by a river, best; his "Plaza Centrale and Fort Cabenas, Havana," which has won the Webb Prize, seems to us as faulty as the first-mentioned picture. We admit that it is not easy to render the glare of midsummer sunlight without losing something of its tone; but the artist should prefer to secure the tone of light, even if he fail to represent its intensity and glitter. In this respect Miss Elizabeth Curtis's "Naugatuck Valley," a view from a high cliff over forest and river, is somewhat better, though not to be compared otherwise with Mr. Hassam's work. Mr. Robert Reid's "Twachtman's Valley at Sunset" is much better yet, but then, the effect aimed at, a yellowish after-sunset glow, is one much more amenable to artistic treatment. The spot is one that appears to have uncommon attractions for artists, for we have seen it painted from so many points of view, under different effects, by different hands, that we have come to feel as though we had lived there.

Mr. Tarbell is still on the track of Zorn, but apparently with lessening enthusiasm. There is, however, much of the Swede's healthy, direct way of seeing things, together with a finer appreciation of beauty, in his "Mother and Child in the Pine Woods," "September Sunlight," a bit of simple landscape with a row of pine-trees by a sandy road, is more personal and stronger. Mr. Will S. Robinson, in "On the Cliff," has made an important step forward. The picture is none too well hung. It is uncommonly well held together and is a charming bit of tone, the red light of the rising moon blending with the remains of sunlight to produce those shifting hues so difficult to render justice to even with the brush. Another successful rendering of special atmospheric tone, the truth of which is even less likely to be recognized than that of Mr. Robinson's picture, is Mr. Henry G. Dearth's "The Hudson." The view is down a broad, grassy slope between wooded heights to the river, which is of an indescribable bluish grey, absolutely local and peculiar. Both foreground and distance partake of the prevailing hue, which must be due to some particular condition of the air in the broad valley, for a resident on the lower Hudson will know the effect at once, but hardly anyone else. Mr. Twachtman's "Pier on Niagara River" is a successful study in many ways, but hardly in giving motion to the water, which, we imagine, was his leading intention. Other excellent landscape studies are by Mr. George H. Clements, a broadly painted picture of "Gloucester Harbor"; Theodore Wendell, "Winter Mist"; E. M. Taber, "Early Spring in Vermont," with unmelted snow lying among the rocks; C. H. Platt, a small study of a "Farm—Monte Mario," lying on the slope of a hill; and a very large painting, a "Hillside Pasture." Mr. Henry Mosler has a very pretty little sketch, "Morning—Venice"; and Mr. John H. Niemeyer an excellent study of cloud reflections in water ruffled by "A Breeze."

Important figure-pieces are not many. There are good portraits by Mr. William H. Hyde, Eduardo Gordiniani ("Portrait

of a Violinist"), Cecilia Beaux ("A Study in Black and White" of a lady with a black cat on her shoulder, and a very successful, broadly handled "Portrait-Sketch" of a child), a pale blue shadowy impression of a lady with an iris, "Fleur de Lis," by Mr. Robert Reid, and a "Lady Seated," by C. Coventry Haynes, already shown at the late Women's Art Club exhibition. Mr. William M. Chase's "A Friendly Call," to which has been awarded the Shaw Prize, though it includes two well-painted figures, is, in the main, a study of an interior, and a telling arrangement of colors in cushions, costumes and bric-à-brac. His other interior, "My Home at Shinnecock," shows wonderfully clever and direct work in pastels, an almost illusory effect of reality being gained with the smallest possible amount of labor. Mr. J. Alden Weir's "An Autumn Stroll" should perhaps be regarded as a portrait-group of a mother and child. The treatment is wilfully flat, and the coarse scumbling of dark colors over light, and *vice versa*, produces greys not remarkable for quality; but the pose is dignified and simple, and there is an undeniable air of distinction about the work, which we feel sure would be more marked if the treatment were less affected. Mr. Walter Nettleton's "The Cradle" is a good study of forelight in a cottage interior; while the dim light struggling through bamboo shades on to a veranda where a lady in a hammock is telling tales to a little girl is equally well rendered in Mr. Thomas Shields Clarke's "There was a Little Girl." Mr. Frank W. Benson makes a decorative use of two pretty heads with appropriate landscape backgrounds as "Autumn and Spring." Ernest L. Major's "Flight into Egypt" is a poetic variation on the ancient theme, with a play of moonlight and firelight on the resting figures and wild landscape. There are a few compositions into which the nude enters as a more or less important ingredient. Mr. Kenyon Cox's "Temptation of St. Anthony" is mannered in composition and painting. What there is new in it betrays force of will rather than of imagination. The Saint is sour and proper, the Devil an operatic villain, the visions that he ushers in anything but tempting. The two male figures, taken separately and without any regard to their purpose, are well painted. So is Mrs. Cox's "Genius of Autumn," in which her husband's influence is very evident. Mr. Arthur B. Davies has a pretty landscape with bathers, "The Naked Moon." Mr. Herbert Denman a conventional "Nymphs and Swans," illustrating Spenser's "Prothalamion," Mr. R. Reed a figure of "Summer" painted in a very high key, and Mr. Will H. Low a wood-nymph prone on the grass, drinking at a spring. The one painting that suggests a story, and in so far panders to the buying element, is a very good one: Mr. William Ernest Chapman's two young "Orphans" do not seem to be playing a part, and the unfurnished room speaks more plainly of dispossession than any amount of scumbled snow-drift. It has, besides, pictorial qualities that are enjoyable, and, as a Frenchman might say, it is "an admirably written page" of the unfinished tale of life. A few good paintings of animals remain to be noticed. Mr. Gustave Henry Mosler carries on the Troyon tradition with marked success in his large painting of a cow "Under the Apple-trees." Mr. Horatio Walker's litter of pigs enjoying a "Siesta" is as pretty as a string of pink pearls, and the flight of swans by Frank W. Benson and the "Portrait of Judy," a black-and-white dog, by E. W. Deming, are admirable. Four charming little statuettes in bronze, of a bear cub, a fawn, a greyhound and a panther, by A. Phimister Procter, will be found in the small intermediate gallery. There is no large piece of sculpture except Mr. Philip Martiny's "Boy," for the office of *Life*, but, instead, a number of statuettes in plaster by Miss Bessie Potter, a small "Sphinx Moderne," by Rodin, and some other small but interesting figures. The exhibition remains open until April 27.

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