THE WORLD OF ART: *Dwight W. Tryon—Summer Exhibitions*

"A Clearing—October," by Dwight W. Tryon.
Courtesy of the Macbeth Galleries.

PAINTINGS by Dwight W. Tryon are in most of our public museums, and he occupies a prominent place among the few American painters included in the Freer collections at Washington. The list of prizes given to his works in various exhibitions is so long that it would seem as if he had found it more difficult to elude than to win such honors. When he died in his seventy-sixth year he had spent thirty-three years of his life as head of the art department at Smith College and nearly half a century in the practice of his art. He was a bookseller at the time he decided to give up business in order to study painting, and the story has been freely told of Mark Twain's disapproval of the bold step and prediction that it would mean starvation. His popularity depended upon his gift for appealing to the dreamy American mind with very delicate portraits of the familiar American scene at its dreamiest moments.

His favorite theme was the year at the Spring and morning at 7. He was profoundly interested in suggesting the thin, blue vapors that rise from the moist ground and form a light veil over young woodlands. He liked a line of slim veiled trees in the distance and a little stretch of angular, rugged fence or stony patch of land in the foreground.

It was his very good fortune, when he forsook his bookstall for painting, to work out-of-doors for a while with Charles François Daubigny. He kept something of the French painter's influence. One seems to see it especially in the careful silhouette of tree branches and foliage against the sky, however misty and close in value. Even more than Corot, Daubigny had that scrupulous regard for precision in design however idyllic the scene he desired to record. Given his own natural tendencies, Tryon hardly could have had a more sympathetic and helpful guide.

When Smith College comes into its inheritance of the paintings he has left, these, in all probability, will be found to contain the best he could secure. He more than once attempted to buy back for this bequest works that he thought most successfully realized his ideal.

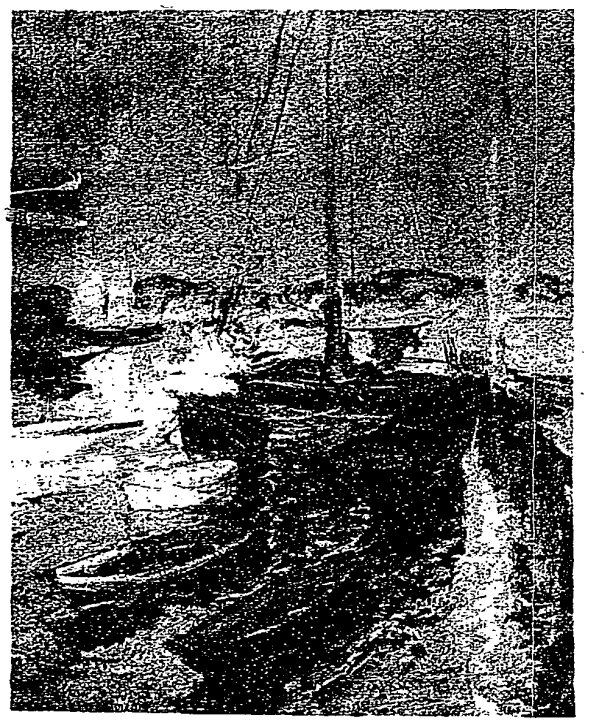
The Summer exhibition at the Milch Galleries contains one of the richest and freest of Tryon's landscapes, painted in 1896-97, at the height of his powers and of his enthusiasm, an "Early Morning," trees in full leaf and a green foreground well-filled with interest in spite of its emptiness of detail. This is one of the tests seldom applied to landscape paintings by a careless public—the filling every inch of a foreground, however generalized, with suggestions of the life of the earth going on, thrilling, humming, pushing on and giving to the quiet surface the vital quality of nature and of all great art.

Colorful Gloucester

Fine as the Tryon is, however, eloquent as it is of a sincere talent, a thoughtful mind, a scrupulous character, it cannot be said to bound into existence with the buoyant youthful spring of the magnificent Twatchman on the adjoining wall. This painting of Gloucester Harbor is the last work to come from Twatchman's easel. It was painted in 1902, the year of the artist's death, and shows no sign of waning force. The beautiful ships ride into the picture with the ease and gayety of well-built craft. The water has the deep rhythm of the tides beneath the gentle tumult of its upper waves. The architecture of the composition is the vital arrangement of line well known to Twachtman from his earliest Cincinnati period. The color swells and ebbs, the sky is heavy with moist air and clouds move as if carrying a burden across its soft expanse. Never a more beautiful picture or one in which the splendor of Twachtman's gift appears more magically embodied. An artist who many times has been called distinguished, whose art once was labeled with the hateful tag "refined," whose asymmetries were assumed to derive wholly from an acquaintance with Japanese design, who is caught in the amber of rather dreadful praise more inextricably than any of his generation, in this picture shakes himself free and shows the powerful quality of his art, the resilience of his line, the fullness and deep-toned purity of his color, the careless mastery of his unerring execution.

When a loan exhibition of Twachtman's work was held at the Century Association in 1919 a leaflet bearing the significant initials A. T. was issued to accompany it, and among the passages of brilliant appreciation the author says: "A certain fineness that, while the men are so dissimilar, shows in all their work, makes a link between Twachtman, Whistler, Poe, Hawthorne and Henry James, and inclines one to wonder whether that singing fineness is not perhaps a dominant American trait."

As one looks from a distance greater than may be measured by time at the work of the group to which Twachtman and Weir belonged, "singing fineness" is a phrase peculiarly fitted to express American painting as this group at least understood it. Neither crude realism nor romantic fallacy marred their work. Probably it always will bring to reflective minds the quality that James has immortalized in his American characters, the quality of sensitiveness too deeply ingrained to flaunt itself. In Twachtman it was accompanied by the joyous ebullience that made Childe Hassam call him in Thoreau's phrase "a boy in the sunlight," and by the independence of convention that chilled academic favor. He was more than most painters of equally sound and stimulating gifts one to call out the liberal enthusiasm of his fellow-artists. Robert Reid's charming description of him is quoted in Elliott Clark's monograph. "Twachtman," he says, "was one of those to whom the subtle beauties of nature, which though not hidden, have been seen only by the few, appealed most strongly; and it was the element in his nature which responded to that appeal that gave the charm to his work. Enthusiasm seems to have been the keynote of his character, a singularly gentle enthusiasm, a smiling rather than a laughing sympathy with his work, his family and his friends. In his work it pervaded all he did, from the pastel note of a wild flower on a bit of tinted paper to his completest painting."



"Gloucester Harbor," by J. H. Twachtman. The Last Picture Painted by the Artist.
In Summer Exhibition at the Milch Galleries.

Another painter has called him one of the great landscape painters of the world, and Willard Metcalf used to speak of him as the greatest artist in America.

One of Mr. Metcalf's pictures also is in the exhibition and represents him at his excellent best. An affectionate, careful portrait of Kennebunkport Landing with Booth Tarkington's boat at the dock. A tree, the characteristic tremolo in the foliage, casting a beautifully drawn shadow across the foreground. A clear sky and clean air. The water cold and the sun warm. An evocation of Maine as the Summer visitor knows and loves it. Perhaps it is the knowledge that this chapter in American art also is closed which makes the painting seem more individual than we had thought it, the talent greater.

Another interesting item in the exhibition, most of which is composed of pictures seen in New York upon previous occasions, is the "Garden in Winter," by Charles A. Platt. If it is true, as certainly it is, that Mr. Platt in architecture is fundamentally a painter, seeing his building from the first as an affair of light and shadow, in painting he is fundamentally an architect, seeing his picture as structural whatever pretty draperies of color may float over it. Observe the charming character of the fence stretching straight across the base of his composition, the line of the path clearly dividing the middle space into balanced areas, the perfect proportion of the purple hills which kindly adjust themselves to the artist's requirements. The sallow sky counts practically for nothing except as another strip of space, yet its color is very nicely brought into a perfectly true relation with the rest of the palette.

Childe Hassam's "Snowstorm:

"Landscape," by Dwight W. Tryon.
Courtesy of the Macbeth Galleries.

Dawn," not a very old picture, but old enough to show a regiment of horse-drawn cabs in a New York street, is another painting manifestly the work of a master. Abbott Thayer's "Boy and Angel" has just left the gallery for the museum at Buffalo, where it will be an imposing addition to the permanent collection.

Downstairs the unobtrusive little showing of prints is worthy of attention. Conspicuous among them is one of Blampied's recent plates, in which his originality and vigor and humorous observation of the world about him are liberally revealed. The cat playing the title rôle in "Fisherman's Pet" is described as truthfully and with as much vivacity as any of his favorite horses. It proves that a tempestuous and flicking tail is not necessary to his triumphs in animal characterization. This black and thick-furred cat pushing against the leg of her admirer holds her tail as a banner descended to her from wild ancestors, for whom it was a death-dealing weapon.

At the Library

The Summer exhibition of some of the recent acquisitions in the print department of the New York Public Library is too large and various for specific comment. Among the specially arresting items are the dramatic plates by Kaethe Kollwitz, showing drudgery, violence and suffering among the downtrodden workers of her country and time. Her work has the tang of sharp emotion, the fury of feminine devotion to a personal cause; but her craftsmanship shows none of the feebleness to be expected from such conviction of mystery. No one has held a steadier needle or known better the precise effect she desired to produce with its bold and apparently unbridled stroke. Her intensity of feeling is absorbed in the intensity of her technical procedure.

There are some interesting wood engravings reflecting almost as many temperaments as artists represented, a refreshing absence of the stereotyped manner. Hunt Diederich plays with his directions, J. J. Lankes uses his material to produce richness of tone, Jay Chambers makes nice patches of flat dark in his "Wash Day" without especially emphasizing the character of the medium; Allen Lewis with his boy climbing over a fence is fearlessly dedicated to realism.

In the gallery of paintings are

"Fisherman's Pet," by E. Blampied.
Courtesy of the Milch Galleries.

the English taste for harmony and close values is dominant. They hang upon a wall like a patch of an old Indian shawl or any ancient fabric stained with the blue of indigo, yellow of weld or brown of walnut fadin only to a greater beauty.

There is also, however, the engaging charm of Morland's sentimental subjects, saved from pathos by the hearty realism and robust temper of the artist. His domestic idyls are accurate portraits of the

"The Benevolent Lady," by George Morland.

several cases filled with engravings printed in color, mostly from Morland's pictures. Occupying their place between prints and paintings, they demonstrate clearly enough the reasons for their increasing appeal to a public interested chiefly in buying what it likes.

The beauty of these engravings lies chiefly, of course, in the fine technique of the engraver and the mellow, quiet color. There are no color prints so admirable as these of the eighteenth century, in which rustic life with which he was familiar in every detail. His fine ladies visiting boarding-schools, directing servants, arraying themselves for a masquerade, &c., carry no less conviction. Morland's delight in handsome dress resulting in studies of fashionable costume that make the great hat loaded with feathers perched over the curled and powdered hair as distinctive and distinguished as the famous Gainsborough hat and the English version of the "Marie Antoinette" gown models alike for antiquarian and dressmaker.

James Ward was a less scrupulous and less gifted artist, but his work had vigor and his draftsmanship, especially in animal pictures, was excellent. Without much sense of unity or proportion he could, nevertheless, present a small scene with its local character. "The Country Butcher Shop" is all compact of his minute observation of familiar things.

At the Van Cortlandt Museum, Van Cortlandt Park (245th Street and Broadway) a small but distinguished little exhibition has been opened, to continue through the Summer.

Rare Belongings

It consists of personal ornaments, watches and snuffboxes of the eighteenth century, lent for exhibition by members of the Society of the Colonial Dames of the State of New York and other well-known collectors. Included among the items are a richly ornamented watch bearing in relief the heads of the four reformers, Luther, Melanchthon, Knox and Calvin, formerly belonging to James Haversham, Colonial Governor of Georgia in 1770, bequeathed to him by George Whitfield, to whom it was given by Selina, Countess of Huntington; a wax portrait of George Washington by Patience Wright, which was given to Governor Oliver Wolcott and is lent by one of his descendants, Mrs. J. West Roosevelt; a landscape silhouette, such as were first introduced at the time of the French Revolution for the purpose of concealing portraits of the King and Queen, and a collection of watches, snuff boxes and rings especially connected with George Washington and lent by Mrs. Crane Chadburn. Other items are an eighteenth century pocket sundial to set in a window, a silver needle shield, a silver nutmeg grater, a mourning ring, shoe buckles and knee buckles in paste and silver.

At the City Club a Summer exhibition of paintings is open and consists of paintings lent by the Babcock Galleries. The artists represented are John Folinsbee, James Scott, George P. Ennis, Sigurd Skou, Gerald Leake, Joseph Boston, Herbert Meyer, Edward Dufner, George H. Bogert, Carl J. Nordell, Carl Rungius, William R. Leigh and Frank De Haven. The exhibition rooms are open daily and ladies are admitted between the hours of 11 A. M. and 4 P. M.

A number of other Summer exhibitions are opening as the season advances; among them the seventeenth annual Summer exhibition of American paintings at the Knoedler Galleries. These will be noticed later.

The July number of the American Magazine of Art contains the annual report of the Secretary of the American Federation of Arts describing the work of the federation along its regular lines and also the several new activities taken on by it.

Among the latter the following are conspicuous: The appointment of standing committees on Art Museum Extension and War Memorials, the first to promote the establishment of art museums, the second to render expert advice and assistance in furthering the erection of "permanently meritorious memorials"; a series of fifteen-minute radio talks on "Art in Everyday Life," broadcasted from station WEAF one evening each week; the appointment of a special committee on pictures and works of art for schools which has issued a letter to all chapters and members, urging their cooperation and recommending suitable casts and color prints, commenting at the same time on the desirability of original works wherever they are within the means.

A letter also was sent to the secretaries of 2,000 boards emphasizing the action of the Chicago Board of Education in requiring all school buildings erected in the future in that city to provide wall-space in every classroom for the appropriate placing of a picture or other work of art and a room suitably equipped for an art gallery. Additional suggestions were made, and in preparation for constructive replies to the inquiries following the sending of this letter the Federation secured a blueprint of the Chicago schoolroom design, a sketch from Mr. Huger Elliott for possible arrangement of wall space, and advice as to colors for walls and woodwork, and began to assemble pictures and plans of well-designed school houses.

Miss Mechlin also records forty-two exhibitions circulated this year to 123 cities in thirty-five States and the District of Columbia and 132 engagements for the illustrated circulating lectures originated by the Federation. An especially interesting addition to these various services is the inclusion in the portfolio service of original prints in addition to mechanically made reproductions. Forty portfolios containing works of thirty-three American, British and French contemporary artists were sent out this year to federation chapters, art clubs, schools and individual members in as widely separated places as Spokane, Washington and Mexico City.

Testimony to the interest felt in the field of prints is found in the fact that when the issuance of a catalogue of all prints included in the print exhibition was mentioned in a popular magazine over 500 requests for the catalogue were received, and these came not only from all parts of the United States but

(Continued on Following Page)

(Continued from Preceding Page)

from South America, India and other distant places as well.

The American Federation of Arts cuts a wide swath. It has now 396 chapters in forty-four States and has added during the year 1,300 individual members to its former number. What it does inevitably exercises influence over an extensive area. Its efforts to spread knowledge of art and to awaken interest in art have been especially appreciated in the many sections of the community into which this kind of discussion and interest have not yet entered except through tiny avenues of individual experience. Not long ago an artist trained in New York and later moving to a Western city, where art was still a foreign interest, declared that it was impossible to realize the refreshment of spirit brought by the work of the Federation merely through its ardent assumption that art was one of the essential elements of life. This artist had little to learn of the history and current movements of art as these were brought forward by the federation. An unusually thorough and stimulating training had made equally superfluous any spur to the appreciation of esthetic appeal and response in a cultivated mind. What was wanted as a cure for a deep spiritual nostalgia was just this convinced assumption that art is worth while everywhere, in everything and at every period.

In the same issue of the magazine, which is the official organ of the federation, an account was given of the annual convention of the federation held this year at Cleveland. The papers read at this convention covered such important subjects as the museum of the small community, the small museum in any community, the position of art in industry and the relation between the handicrafts and industrial art, community art, billboards and outdoor advertising, education of children in art, the conservation of talent, the lighting of sculpture. The speakers were men and women of broad and practical experience, each well grounded in a special subject and aware of its relation to the general theme.