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THE
NEW PATH:

A

MONTHLY ART-JOURNAL

DEVOTED TO THE

ADVANCEMENT OF TRUTH IN ART.

“He that feeds men serveth few;
He serves all who dares be true.”

EMERSON.

VOL. II.

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THE NEW PATH.

VOL. II.]

MAY, 1864.

[No. 1.

WITH the present number THE NEW PATH begins an entirely independent existence. It will no longer be published by the Society for the Advancement of Truth in Art. That association has voluntarily relinquished all authority over this journal. It is thought that this change will give to THE NEW PATH greater opportunities for usefulness, and to the Society greater freedom to pursue the other objects of its foundation.

Our journal is therefore free from any alliance with any body of artists or art critics. For any statement of fact or opinion made in our columns, no one is responsible but we who make it.

In announcing this change in the management, we wish it to be understood that there is no change in the position of THE NEW PATH. The convictions of the founders of the Society for the Advancement of Truth in Art, which convictions have been declared in these columns from the first, will still be urged in them. The society above named is our fellow-worker, its members are among our best friends and most earnest helpers, the division of labor which we have announced is for the better advancement of our common cause.

THE NEW PATH is now free to criticise all works of art whatever, those of its avowed friends in common with others. The paintings and drawings of the most faithful students of nature,—the sculpture of the truest

realists,—the architecture of professed restorers of the Gothic is precisely that to which it is most necessary to call attention. This is true on account both of their merit and of their possible deficiency or faultiness. In the first place it has been our constant experience that it is almost useless to demonstrate to any one the badness of this or that work of art until he has been shown that which is better. For instance a friend buys an ugly vase, a clumsy cut-glass claret-jug, or a tasteless and gaudy carved bookcase—and wonders at our hypercritical dislike of the coarsely-painted medallion and vile gilt ornaments, of the exaggerated shape and cold glitter, or of the bad and wasteful construction and the ornaments badly copied from bad originals. We cannot make our meaning clear to him by anything we can find in the shops, there is very little good painting on china, still less well-modeled or delicately-engraved glass, no good furniture whatever to be found there. But this difficulty is less insurmountable in the case of pictures, of statues, or of buildings. Pictures are painted in this country in the right way and in a right spirit, drawings are made which are honest and earnest studies from Nature; they are few enough, but they exist and are exhibited to the public. Photographs from drawings are beginning to be popular. Statuary is now and then to be seen which is worthy of great admiration and love. There are buildings and parts of build-

ings which we can point to as good models. To call attention to these and to their merits will hereafter be one of our most important and most pleasant duties. In the second place it is necessary to point out and insist upon the faults of every such good and true work of art. For the imitation of the faults of the good is the most easily found and the most alluring path that leads away from the right road. Here then is another duty not less important than the other. It has not been in our power, until now, fully to perform either of these duties.

It is with a full sense of shortcomings that we look back upon the year that is gone, during which the first volume of *THE NEW PATH* was begun and ended. We know very well that our journal has not been as good as it ought to have been. We alone know how far it has fallen short of what we wish to make it. Our contributors and Editors are all actively engaged in other pursuits than writing on Art; the evidences of haste in composition and of imperfect proof-reading are therefore to be found on almost every page of our journal.

But our retrospect is not without comfort, for the articles that have thus been often faulty in style, have been written with the single purpose of telling the truth about art, and have been true and right in the main. There is very little of the subject matter that we would change, were it possible, none that we would exchange for anything but a more cogent statement of the same truths. Our journal was started and has been continued without the slightest hope of pecuniary success, without even any reasonable likelihood that it would pay its expenses; it is the best means we have of advancing the cause of True Art, and we willingly give our time and money

to that end. Our work therefore has this advantage over that of other writers for the periodical press, that we have no temptation whatever to try to catch the popular ear or to please the popular taste by what we print. Our subscribers receive the conscientious, carefully-considered and entirely outspoken opinions of earnest and radical students of Art.

Our success has been exactly commensurate with the scope and intent of our work. Our circulation has been small,—though steadily increasing, more subscriptions coming in during the eleventh than during the first month of our existence,—but we have met with the heartiest and most grateful welcome from those whose opinion we regard and whose good wishes we most desire. Both in this country and in Europe, those men who are known as the true reformers of Art have sent us kind words and encouragement and offers of assistance. It is with sincere pleasure that we turn once more to the letters we have received, and note the honored names of the men who have assured us of their sympathy and friendship.

It is since this paper was begun that we have received, addressed to the Editor of *THE NEW PATH*, a letter from Mr. Ruskin, so kindly, so pleasant to receive, and—as coming from our leader, so important to us his followers, that we are glad to have his permission to print extracts from it.

DENMARK HILL, *5th April*, 1864.

SIR :

I have been occupied lately with painful business, and have too long delayed the expression of my sympathy with you, both in the labor you have set yourself, and in the feelings with which you undertake it:—no less than of my thanks for the help you are giving me in carrying forward and illus-

trating the views which I have hitherto endeavored to maintain almost single handed. * * * * *

I have only time to-day to ask your pardon for my apparent neglect of your efforts, and to express my thankfulness for courteous references to my own work—which I ought to have specially acknowledged—because here in England, it is somewhat now the fashion to repeat what I have said, without thanks, or even to abuse the first sayer of it as if he had said the contrary. * * * * *

Very respectfully yours,

J. RUSKIN.

If these words are kinder than we deserve, we shall try to deserve them in the future.

One word to our friends. Will you not help us to enlarge our circulation? It is circulation we want, not pecuniary success. We propose so to conduct our journal that all those who desire to see the truth told about Art—and who know it when they see it—will be among our friends and well-wishers. And we ask all our friends and well-wishers to help us increase our circulation.

OUR ARTISTS AND THEIR CRITICS.

It is not to be denied that the fine arts occupy, day by day, more and more of the attention of our American public. The indifference of that public to all questions connected with Art and to Art itself, whether as a means of enjoyment or a theme for the speculations of connoisseurs, has long been a fruitful subject of sneer to the unfriendly and grave regret to the kind observers in Europe. Americans who knew enough of Europe to understand that our American indifference was not a necessary or natural state, have been perfectly aware that we must all think more about Art, before Art will give us much that is worth thinking about.

Not that the opinion of "society" is likely to be valuable, or its discussions productive of sound views. It is not to be expected that the gossip of drawing-rooms—the chatter and flirtation of picture-galleries—the competition of auctions is now or is likely soon to be inspired by true feelings and real knowledge. But from the constant and continued discussion of any topic truth will be

evolved. There was meaning in the old cry of the anti-slavery reformers, "Agitate the question!" From stagnancy falsehood is the only possible precipitate. When the papers report the doings of artists, that is a good sign even if the report be false and be of things not worth reporting; time was when the papers did not concern themselves with such matters. When we mark our catalogue of some auction sale, and note how the battle was fought over some very careless or very bad picture, until it was sold for a score of hundreds,—we find cheer in that waste of money, and promise for the future. It is sad enough to think that every such sale causes the painting of numberless bad pictures more; it is sad to think of the worthy men who make of themselves mock-heroic artists, it is sad to think of the waste of time and money and brains and opportunity. But through that valley of ignorance and false admiration lies the only road to good Art that modern times have discovered. For long years we have asked nothing from artists, and nothing was given us; now we begin to

demand pictures, and pictures begin to be painted by hundreds,—let us admit that the majority are bad, the minority remain which are good,—*il vaut bien la peine*. For long years we have refused to believe that there was good art in Europe: now we turn our thoughts thitherward, there come to us a host of spurious old masters, but among them a precious Velasquez—a precious Giotto; there come to us modern pictures by hundreds, rubbish in plenty, but among them a picture or two by Frere—a picture or two by Willems—a few Turner drawings—one noble Holman Hunt since lost because there had not grown to be *enough* gossip about Art. For long years our book-world did not concern itself about Art; now books on the fine arts begin to find publishers and a sale, the majority tolerably shallow, but among the lot are reprints of Ruskin's books, and one or two American volumes of a character quite unique and a value altogether beyond our deserts. For long years the periodical press, with its fingers on the popular pulse, thought nothing demanded of it concerning Art but silence; now the columns crowded with war-news and advertisements of prosperous trade must be crowded a little more to make room for the almost daily record of the doings of artists and their friends.

It behooves those whose duty it is to take care that this opportunity to teach the truth is not left unimproved. For they may be sure that the opportunity to teach falsehood will not be left unimproved. The experiment of leaving to chance or the first comer the education of a child, though tried without ruinous effects by the elder Mr. Weller in the case of his son Samuel, is not repeated by those parents who desire for their children an education somewhat different from

that which is to be secured by such means. Those who like the views of art at present popular among us,—those who look to popular ignorance for their living, may well be content with applying Mr. Weller's principle; both these classes are pretty sure to find things daily more and more to their liking. Those, on the other hand, who think there are improvements possible, have now their opportunity to speak and write and "agitate the question" of truth in Art.

We are of those who think very great improvements possible. We are trying to improve our opportunity. Once in a while we have help. Sometimes there is sound criticism of some picture of more salient merit or demerit than usual; the *New York Times* has several times during the past year given us a little of such, just enough to make us wish for more. Sometimes those who mean heartily to oppose and to thwart us, find the truth too strong for them, and publish sound doctrine enough,—we greet such accidents with joy as friends in the enemy's camp; the *Atlantic Monthly*, has been publishing excellent articles on The Relation of Art to Nature. But we have never had such help, such hearty assistance from any fellow soldier, as has recently been given us in the columns of the *New York Tribune*.

In the *Tribune* for Saturday, April 9th, appeared a long and elaborate criticism of some of the pictures exhibited in the Picture-gallery of the Metropolitan Fair in this city. In the same journal a week later another such article appeared. As we read these notices, not knowing and hardly able to guess who the author of them might be, we experienced the new sensation of reading in a newspaper criticism meant to be true and not popular, teaching for the popular judgment, not flattery of it.

It was, of course, to be expected that the artists most severely criticized would disagree with their critic, and that some of these would be weak enough to be angry and resent plain talk. Forseeing this, a second reading seemed advisable, to decide how far resentment could be justified by anything contained in the article named. And it certainly appeared and now appears to us that there are no evidences of unkindness or unfairness or even of a carping spirit on the part of the author.

Yet we hear such violent language used, we hear of such threats against the censor, that we are compelled to conclude *first* that the censured ones and their friends feel their cause a weak one, and such attacks too damaging to be allowed, if scolding can prevent them; *secondly*, that the same censured ones and their friends have an extraordinary notion of the nature and uses of criticism.

A word about the article itself. The first name mentioned is that of Mr. Leutze. It is quite unnecessary to quote at length; of the readers of this article all those who have ever seen Mr. Leutze's work, have certainly ere this read and re-read the criticism of which we are speaking. The *Tribune*, fortunately, circulates everywhere among those who are likely to care for pictures. We submit that there is not a proposition concerning these pictures made in the article under discussion which is not demonstrably true. "We dislike exceedingly," says the critic, speaking of the enormous picture, "Washington Crossing the Delaware," "the spirit in which the subject is treated, the arrangement of the figures and the style of the painting." That is not a statement, except of opinion, and therefore is not susceptible of proof; but is there anybody at all ac-

customed to pictures who disagrees with the critic and *does* like the "spirit," "arrangement" and "style?" It cannot be. There is no one good quality necessary to a good historical picture in which this one is not very visibly and markedly deficient. Of the "Florence Nightingale at Scutari" it is said "it is absurd in conception, melodramatic in treatment, and in the badness of its drawing a comprehensive miracle." Well, is it not? Is any one prepared to say that it is natural in conception, vigorous and powerful in treatment, and tolerably well drawn? Probably not; and yet, if any one objects to the criticism we have quoted, he must be prepared to say something very like this. We repeat that the criticisms on Mr. Leutze's pictures are substantially just. Now it is just possible that it may be bad taste to say that a picture, even the very bad "Florence Nightingale" is "beneath contempt." (Beneath *notice* would be strictly true, and a perfectly exhaustive criticism.) It may possibly be unwise to speak jocosely of pictures criticised, as in the reference to the large picture, "a drop scene, with the mythical Washington striking an attitude." But such phraseology seems natural to all newspaper literature, the best and most courteous; and, even were it not, there is nothing in it to indicate ill-feeling or hasty judgment.

We find, continuing on, very positive fault found with Mr. Hicks' "Iago," and some wonder expressed at the reputation he has acquired. We find hearty praise of Eastman Johnson. We find the unclean vulgarity of Beard's "March of Silenus," fitly spoken of and called by its right name. Then, after a brief allusion to Mr. Bierstadt, we find a comparison between Mr. Church's two celebrated pictures "The Heart of the Andes"

and "Niagara," greatly to the advantage of the latter; and it seems to us that very just notices of both are here crowded into fifty lines. Then some deserved ridicule of Mr. Lang's "Last hours of Mary Stuart;" four lines of praise of Hays, four lines of hope for the future of Hennessy; and the article ends.

If those who disagree will come out and say so, and say why, and argue the case, and help their cause by all the *argumenta ad hominum*, and *tu quoque* abuse, and sneers, jeers and ridicule they think useful, we should look upon such self defence and counter attack as fair fighting, and as only next best to friendly discussion. But, that is not tried.

There have appeared in the *Evening Post* two attacks, one of them apparently an editorial, on the unknown author of this criticism, which are fair enough exponents of the feeling shown in all the remarks on this subject we have heard, heard of or seen. From the first of these, (*Post* for April 12,) the editorial, we extract,

"A truce, then, to this petty dealing with a great social interest and a delicate personal vocation; point out faults if you will in a picture, gently and wisely; eloquently vindicate your special preferences if you choose, forbear to decry by wholesale, to insult with unjust and vulgar abuse,—to condemn indiscriminately; it proves a lack of love as well as of wisdom."

Perfectly good advice, applicable to all critics of books or of pictures or of criticisms. Forbear, critics all, from any such improper behavior! In the above extract there is only one phrase to which we do not at once cordially assent; it is that one which calls painting pictures "a delicate personal vocation." Is it meant that it is more delicate or more personal than other vocations? Yes! It is claimed for the painters, claimed

by themselves and by their indiscriminating admirers, that the freedom of criticism, which is all very well in the case of books, is quite out of place when pictures are to be discussed. It is claimed on this ground—that a book is circulated in many copies, and sown broadcast over the world, while a picture is one; therefore that criticism may prevent the sale of the picture when it could not much retard the sale of the book. Bad logic! But we have nothing to do with the logic. Our answer to the whole argument is simply this:—all vocations are delicate and personal. Every man's business is of the first importance to him. "Forbear to decry by wholesale" any man's efforts to do his work in this world. To our mind there is no spirit more important to us all—more desirable to cultivate and encourage, than that pride of craftsmanship which bids the craftsman do his work always as thoroughly and perfectly as his skill and materials admit. To our mind there is no man more to be respected than the carpenter who *cannot* leave anywhere in work of his a badly-fitted mitre, or an edge that is not square and true. Of any accidental slips of his, and imperfections in his work we should speak, if at all, very briefly and without insistence. And, exactly in like manner, if a careful and right-working painter shows in his work signs of less care than usual, or is in any way less successful than usual, the gentlest hint and the most guarded suggestions are the courtesy we owe to him. But painters who deliberately try to make their work not true but showy, not instructive but popular,—who paint to sell,—whose art is based upon false principles and pursued for unworthy ends,—these painters put themselves in the same category with the makers of cheap and tawdry furni-

ture, all clay ornaments and weak joints. All such work as this is to be spoken of truly and without reserve.

Let us remind the *Post* that the critic's is one of the most delicate of vocations; and that it is quite improper to try to frighten the critics into silence or indiscriminate praise. The reading world ought to welcome the appearance of any criticism that seems to have thought behind it. "A truce, then, to this petty dealing with" one of the most important duties of the public press.

The second article mentioned appeared in the *Post* for April 21st. This is a letter, signed "A Lover of True Art." After a short essay on the "Three Styles of Criticism (so called,) on Art prevailing in the columns of the New-York newspapers," the writer sets up a man of straw, gifted with the personal peculiarities probably of some one whom the author either knows or assumes to be the *Tribune's* critic, and overwhelms this enemy with abuse and ridicule. "Oracular, pedantic, self-sufficient, supercilious,"—"a sort of divinely-inspired owl,"—"meagre and lop-sided knowledge,"—"supercilious and hierarchical sham-solemnity,"—"like some noisy blue-bottle fly he buzzes about the galleries,"—and so on; there is a great deal more of the same. The most important passage to us is towards the end: we quote—

"But so far the *Tribune* critic is harmless—however full of pretence to divine illumination. We easily pardon mistakes in judgment—we cannot so easily forgive personal injuries.

"What, for instance, must the art appreciating public say of a short criticism that appeared a few days ago upon the works of three of our cleverest

young landscape painters just on the eve of a sale of those pictures at auction? Even were it true that these pictures were bad and unworthy of the artists who had painted them, would it not have shown a kinder spirit not to endeavor to injure their sale—For it is lamentably true that there are not a few of our wealthy 'patrons of art' who have not sufficient confidence in their own judgment of pictures to resist a flimsy and wanton attack of this sort in a leading newspaper."

We reprint the above only that we may protest in the name of all writers on art—of all people who care for art and wish it to be understood, and who, therefore, speak or write the opinions they deliberately form, against the assertion that they are guilty of personal injuries when they criticise pictures. If a man tells his friend not to go to Smith to have his boots made, because he has tried Smith and believes him to be an inferior mechanic,—has he "personally injured" Smith? Of course he has lost him a customer,—what then? was he wrong? The *Tribune* owes a duty to the public, which we hope it will continue to faithfully perform, that duty is to say most positively what it thinks about any and all pictures which may be worthy of notice. If rich Jones who knows nothing of art, were about to buy a picture, and the *Tribune* critic were to declare it bad, it is certain that the latter would be doing only his duty, (whatever action Jones might take in consequence,) provided always that he really thought the picture bad. And there is no possible doubt that the *Tribune* critic thought the pictures of the "three clever young landscape painters" very bad indeed.

THE TASK OF THE REALISTS.

[A CORRESPONDENT in the country writes to us an interesting letter, the following extracts from which contain valuable hints to painters.—ED.]

I THINK that some tendency has been shown by one or two of our men to do slight work. * * * * *

They seem to have an idea that they have attained a point beyond the necessity of plainly making out every detail. I think it a pity that they should deceive themselves so. When a man *thinks* he has reached such a point it is safe to condemn the thought.

Of course I do not mean to assert that any rules can be given, or that a young man might not work like a master if such an extraordinary gift should be in him. Of course he can not help working quickly if his thoughts come like those of a consummate master, and if he has also attained knowledge in some extraordinary way—by vaccination for instance—but in such case it is plain to see that rapidity and apparent slightness are not affectation, for the work is *full* of meaning. * * *

It is important that the men who are engaged in the reform of art in this country should allow nothing of their work to leave them until all has been done that can be done to make it complete.

We are all comparatively young men and therefore ought never to show any signs of slightness in our work, when it is possible to work deliberately and finish faithfully. It may often be necessary to make a slight sketch in order to get all one can of some transient phase of nature. Much can be learned and great power gained by such studies; and there is no possibility of deliberate work in such a case, inasmuch as some of the grandest effects of nature last but a few minutes and can never be seen again. When such memoranda are shown, it will at

once appear from the nature of the subject that no more time could have been bestowed,—that is, on the original made in presence of the real scene. If the picture is made in the studio from the original sketch, then it *must* be finished either from help of other notes made at the same time or nearly, or from notes or drawings of such parts as may with regard to specific form, have been got more deliberately at other times,—or from accurate memory.

There is no reason why the studio work of any young man should ever be slight; for there can be no worthy object in repainting from a sketch, unless more truth can be given and consequent finish,—for “all true finish is added fact.” Every picture representing ordinary day-light and fair weather should be made as complete as possible down to the last line and touch; because it is impossible to get refinement of truth otherwise. A flat dash of the brush is vacant. Nature is inexhaustibly *full* in every particular, and our most delicate work must always fail to represent the tithe of her perfection.

A young man's work therefore should show no careless strokes whatever. He ought to work calmly and deliberately, taking all the time that is necessary to do his utmost. “Whatever greatness any among us may be capable of,—will be best attained by beginning in all quietness and hopefulness to use whatever powers we may possess to represent the things around us as we see and feel them; trusting to the close of life to give the perfect crown to the course of its labors, and knowing assuredly that the determination of the degree in which watchfulness is to be exalted into invention, rests with a higher will than our own.”

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN.—THIRTY-NINTH ANNUAL
EXHIBITION.

J. F. CROPSEY, N. A.—“GREENWOOD LAKE.” 57.

Surrounded on every side by dark brown and dingy green affectations of landscape, this picture stands out like a little window in a dark room, through which we can look out on the fields bright with summer green. Not strong and earnest in its naturalism, it is yet very lovely in its truthfulness of color and form. The hill-side beyond the river is veritable nature; the warm grey lights and the purple shadows are as accurate as they are beautiful. The fresh bright color of the bank on the right is just that of sunshine on summer green.

We said above that this picture is not strong and earnest in its naturalism. For instance, the water is not sufficiently dark to be true. The surface is rippled, and the sky is clear; this being the case, the water would be much more intensely blue than the distant part of the sky which we see. Water in the foreground is almost pure cobalt on a clear day. Then, the cottage and the weeds on the right hand bank are almost perfectly reproduced in the water, but with breaks between the touches of the reflected color sometimes an eighth of an inch wide. To show such breaks in the reflection, the water must be very much rippled, and, in this condition could only reflect blurred masses of color. Reflections clear and sharp as these are possible only in perfectly still water.

In No. 219, by the same artist, THE HOMESTEAD, GREENWOOD LAKE, the painting of the water is more consistent. The picture is of like character to No. 57, and was painted, we believe, on the spot. It does one almost as

much good as a journey into the country. We thank Mr. Cropsey for his pictures, and for the pleasure and satisfaction we find in them, each visit we make to the Academy. How great the contrast between these, and the picture of Corfe Castle, noticed in the April number! It is strange that the artist who exhibits these studies, and by so doing declares his approval of them, should be willing to exhibit, and thus tacitly endorse, a picture so different in character.

E. T. BILLINGS.—“WHEELWRIGHT SHOP.” 25.

A picture painted entirely in the right spirit, but weak and unsuccessful. There is no attempt at generalization, and every part is as completely painted as is possible to the artist in the present condition of his knowledge. There is nothing slurred or indistinct, all the details are grappled with as they should be, some of the tools and other accessories are really well drawn and painted. The subject is too elaborate for the artist's present powers. He should choose simple subjects, work hard at his drawing, and study color, with the fidelity of which he has shown himself capable, from apples, peaches and scarlet or crimson drapery. So would he be in a fair way to do valuable work.

C. C. COLMAN.—“MY STUDIO.” 48.

With heartfelt pleasure we record our admiration of this picture. It is an earnest rendering of a real scene. Looking at it for the sixth time we find it loses nothing through intimate acquaintance. Like all things of sterling worth it rewards close observation and long study,—rewarding them, in this case, by that feeling of satisfaction

always given by honest, straightforward work.

The picture is very true in color. The frames on the walls, the sketches, the door—easel—figure are all painted with equal fidelity. There is no attempt to make the figure of more importance by making the surroundings unreal and meaningless. The man is more noticeable than his work because he *is* the man, and not the sheet of paper or the palette. The fact that the easel, in front of which the artist sits, is painted as sharply and is just as visible as he, in no way detracts from his importance or gives undue importance to the easel. You see an artist surrounded by his tools, the tools will produce as forcible an image on your retina as the man's form, if you look at them; if you look at him, as you are likely to the first, you will see the tools vaguely. Treat this painted painter as you would treat the real man should you see him through the open door with his yellow hair and his pipe, and we will insure you against being offended by undue prominence of his surroundings.

Neither is there any sign in this picture of that modern affectation which slurs and falsifies Nature's forms that it may pass for imagination and genius. Having chosen for his subject a portrait of his friend in his own studio, the artist has the acumen to perceive that his business is faithful record. He has chosen the good part. If he have imagination, we shall see it nobly displayed, one of these days, the more so for every piece of work he does as faithfully as this.

We rejoice to add a new name to the increasing list of earnest and conscientious young men who are destined to revolutionize the Art of our country.

J. HENRY HILL.—“THE WHITE MOUNTAINS FROM GORHAM.” 135.

If pictures can ever become popular among us by means of qualities of their own, Mr. Hill's are nearly certain to be so. There seem to be in them all or nearly all those qualities which are most pleasing to the more intelligent class of picture-buyers. It is very possible that no intrinsic merit can secure general approval, that outside influence alone can do that; but there is a public smaller than “the general public,” which really looks at pictures, judges them after its fashion, and really likes the good in them if they are not too much in earnest. If Mr. Hill's work once secures the notice of this class, it is sure to please and instruct it at once, to win its admiration and, at the same time, to teach it what could not so well be learned elsewhere.

Mr. Hill studies Nature, and Nature only. And Nature seldom looks so lovely, painted, as in these landscapes of his. This four-foot picture, and the little water colors in the Hackensack Valley which former years brought us—all are alike in their record of the beauty of Nature as this painter sees her—as few others do. Mr. Ruskin would probably call him a purist. In every landscape he sees the lovely lines, the gracefulness, the agreement of part with part, the subtle symmetry that Nature always offers and artists so seldom seize. A chain of distant hills, or a group of flowers six feet from his eye alike reveal to him their most refined beauty.

The picture before us is no misnomer. It is a picture of the White Mountains from Gorham, and of no other mountains than they, and of nothing else than they. Stand where the painter stood, and you will see—if you have the painter's eye, “a large concession”—those same great masses, lying

so, filling half the sky, dark blue below with forest, purple above with bare rock and wreathed even so with mist.

But you will also see more. Do not doubt that the painter saw more. That which he has told us is true, but there is much of which he has not spoken. The mountain mass was veritably dark blue up to that curving line which bounds the forest on its flanks. But in nature that blue was not uniform and unbroken as here, but diversified by endless change of hue and light and shadow, much of it very visible, much of it hard to seize, but all affecting the result.

The finest quality of the picture is the color. Considering the manner in which it is painted, the color is as fine as possible. But absolutely right color can never be given without most minute and delicate rendering of form, for every space of color in Nature is full of most exquisite and subtle change. Thousands of delicate tints are associated in every gradation, which help and influence each other as essentially as each individual stone in a mosaic pattern. Therefore if each tint be not laid in its own place, however small the place, its influence on its associates would not be right. It is of these minute parts that Nature's whole is made up. No single hue, slightly gradated into lighter and darker, can truly represent it. Nor can any such single hue be so lovely as the result of Nature's details.

We have hitherto considered the mountains as the picture; and they are all that is of importance and value. Other parts of the picture have no more finish than the work of the most careless of the old school men. The low hills in the middle-distance are particularly coarse and very carelessly drawn. There are broad flat touches nearly half an inch long in dead, flat

color. These touches represent nothing, are suggestive of nothing, but, on the contrary, are empty and unmeaning. The foreground is not better than much of the work around us every day in the pictures of mere picture makers, except that the color is not brown, but green and fair. In all this kind of work the feeling of multitudinous fullness and abundance, the real essence of a vast subject like this, is wholly lost.

The picture is magnificent, but a magnificent sketch; great, but a great incompleteness. How splendid a finished picture of his might be, Mr. Hill seems determined to leave to our imaginations.

That word is a suggestion. Is not this slightness—evidently deliberate—an attempt to “leave something to the imagination of the spectator?” It seems so. A word concerning that system and its limitations. It would have been possible for Mr. Hill so to paint the maples in his foreground, that no human eye could have seen from the painter's station any divisions more subtle than those represented. And it is necessary, absolutely necessary for young painters so to paint for a long time. But by doing this they would gain the power, which Mr. Hill of course possesses, to paint those trees faultlessly and tell the world all about them with much less labor. Now, let us assume that four feet is the nearest point at which this picture ought to be viewed. At that distance, then, those maples ought to look as nearly as paint could make them look like the real, green, rounded trees as the artist saw them. They do not. At four feet or at six or at eight they look painty and coarse. It is not good art to paint a thing badly, and then call on the spectator's imagination to make it look well. So of the mountains,—no human imagination could

fill that blue uniformity with the endless diversity that was in it in Nature. In work that pretends to be representative of nature nothing but facts are suggestive of facts. We find here facts enough to suggest the blueness and the shape of the great mountain; but where shall we find anything to suggest that fulness and abundance of which we spoke above?

There is one other possible explanation of the slightness which we regret,—for we assume that Mr. Hill works manfully up to his standard whatever it be, and has a reason for all he does. This explanation is that Mr. Hill may believe it better worth his while to paint more pictures slightly than fewer pictures thoroughly. If this be the case, we regret that such an opinion should be held by a man so capable of doing thorough work. For the curse of our time is slightness, imperfection, stopping short. For the curse of our art is the willingness of our artists to do less than their best. Mr. Hill might be painting pictures which would make him immortal. Is he? He knows and all who admire his power and his skill must know that the highest crown of art is not for him who exhibits pictures much less good than he could make them; that a true fame is not to be won by doing less than one's best.

T. C. FARRER.—“A BUCKWHEAT FIELD ON THOS. COLE'S FARM.” 114.

T. C. FARRER.—“THE CATSKILLS FROM THE VILLAGE.” 143.

Evidently studies from Nature, and portraits of the things represented. No. 143 hangs so near Mr. Hill's large picture as to provoke a comparison between the two mountain subjects. The comparison is interesting as showing a wonderful difference between the two great ranges, a difference which

we will warrant the artists have faithfully portrayed. The White Mountains *soar*, lift up their mass in peaks toward heaven. The Catskills “lie about like huge ruminants,” heavy and hump-backed. In other words the New Hampshire mountains are steeper at summit than at base; the New York hills steeper at base, and continually rounding toward their tops. Every one will recognize the essential geological difference between the two.

Mr. Farrer's picture is real midsummer, the foreground trees deep, rich green, soft and rounded; the Catskill Creek pure dark blue, with bare shore and purple tree-shadows falling over it; the middle distance full of incident, the mountains distant and yet perfectly revealing their minutest forms. These mountains are by far the best part of the picture, and are most admirable as a study of the anatomy of hills.

Considering this work as a picture, it seems that there never was a landscape that more imperatively demanded the medium of the artist's imagination to make it a beautiful composition. It is singularly uncomposed. There are beautiful details, the canvas is full of loveliness, but as a whole, in spite of the rich color and sunny atmosphere, it is not a satisfactory picture. That Mr. Farrer can make a magnificent picture of the Catskills is evident. May it soon be done.

No. 114 is a much more fortunate subject. The Buckwheat field that gives a name to the picture, is but the extreme foreground. It covers two hills, having between them a slight depression, and sloping down towards the river. The hither bank of the river is not seen, but the high further shore rises to match the heights in the foreground, and between lies the broad blue lake-like expanse of the Hudson, *veined* as it were, with cloudy white,

where the summer wind goes by, and dotted with snowy sails. The city of Hudson lies, a deep red seal, nearly in the middle of the picture. The high banks of the river on either side of it are divided into fields of contrasting colors, and divided by deep green belt of shrubbery. The buckwheat field, white just tinged with golden yellow, is crossed by pale purple shadows cast by three or four slender conical trees. So lovely a chord of color it is not often our good fortune to see. And all this beauty comes of copying Nature! The theorizers about color have as yet hardly reached such a result.

Both these pictures are crowded with fact, and are most delicate and careful in drawing. These facts, and the artist's singular perception of and feeling for color, give his work the importance it has.

Now, to see where Mr. Farrer gets his power of drawing, look at No. 337, *SPRING WEEDS*, and No. 343 *STUDY OF HORSERADISH*. These are pencil drawings, drawn throughout in the open air, in front of the plants as they grew. In No. 337 the large plants in the foreground are the American Hellebore, or "Indian Poke," a splendid weed, four feet high in early June, but gone before July. The drawing tells its whole story, except its dark green color. The more distant foliage is very charming. The tangled appearance of undergrowth at a little distance has never to our knowledge been so faithfully rendered. It has generally baffled the few attempts that have been made to master it. That the same thing be done in full color is now of vital importance.

No. 350. *A BIRD'S NEST*, by a new exhibitor, is as carefully drawn as Mr. Farrer's, somewhat disfigured by an excessive use of white on the dark paper, but full of promise. We

hope to see growing, out-door, wild plants, weeds or branches of trees, drawn with equal care by this lady.

Drawings like these, students should be encouraged to make, and when they are as good as this one they ought to sell. Would-be patrons of art could scarcely use their money better than in buying such drawings. The money which would buy this drawing would not probably buy a painting in the room. And how much the purchase of such a drawing would help true art! And how much the purchase of coarse and slovenly pictures by popular artists helps to retard its progress!

C. C. GRISWOLD.—"DECEMBER." 207.

It is somewhat a surprise to find so good a picture signed by a name so new as this. What we have previously seen of Mr. Griswold's work has been done in earnest and in the right spirit, and we were prepared for truth of aim and careful finish. But here is a picture of very great worth indeed. Here are accuracy of perception and delicate and complete drawing of form—here are accuracy of perception and faithful transcript of color,—a complete insight into the whole winter landscape, and a tender and artistic delineation of it quite beyond praise.

The distant hill—its grey rocks peeping out, where they are most prominent, among the red, leafless undergrowth that covers it—is as perfect in these details as in its whole anatomy, and is a triumph of good result from slight and simple means. The stream, crowded with floating ice,—the rocky point around which it sweeps, crowned with young hemlocks and a cedar or two,—the low hither shore, covered with dry long grass and dead water plants, and rising gradually to where the rocks begin to show themselves, and the road runs by,—the cottage,—

and the delicious cluster of cedars on the higher rocks to the right are all painted quietly and simply from nature, with a fidelity and delicacy as rare as delightful.

This picture does not require the effort that so many of the Academy pictures require, on the part of the beholder, to find out whether or no the sun is shining. Every object throws its natural shadow, these shadows taking the distinct form of the objects casting them, with clear, sharp edges, such as are always produced by sunlight. Therefore, though the sunlight is not brilliant, it is true and real.

We have heard several persons express doubt as to the richly colored cedars on the right,—reddish brown, very little sign of their being evergreen. But it is a characteristic fact that, in winter, the new spears of these trees that grew in the summer lose their fresh greenness, and leave the tree brown and red for the winter. As the sun gets low toward sunset, and throws its yellower light over the landscape, the cedars assume a most charming and unapproachable orange green with purple shadows, which glows and deepens as the sun goes down, until they become one burning mass of crimson and gold. This winter color of the cedars is one of the most subtle and beautiful in nature, and we think, one of the most difficult to reproduce with accuracy. When we get the orange, we lose the faint tinge there is of green, and, trying to seize the green, the gold has somehow escaped. The trees in the picture may be a little too red, as the sun is not very low. But how easy for the most accomplished artist to lose a little of their perfect truth!

We object to the covering of the near rocks (which, however, are true in structure,) with little circles of a

pale yellowish green,—we count twenty of them on one of the nearest,—to express the wonderful lichens that clothe every decayed tree-stem and bare face of rock with their delicate tracery. Every person who has studied nature sufficiently to paint such a picture as this, must often have been charmed with the wonders of their structure, and the glory of their color, passing from pale golden green to violet blue and deep purple. In the painting of the ice in the stream another splendid opportunity has been lost to give subtle and delicate color. But these are only shortcomings, parts in which the hand and eye have failed, from inexperience, to tell the whole truth. There are no real faults. There is no setting aside of the truth to make the picture “artistic.”

How perfectly simple and beautiful are all the lines of the picture! And how harmonious! How every line and tint has fallen into its proper place! And all this, as in all good and healthy work of whatever kind, without heartrending effort. The beautiful result has been achieved with ease and pleasure to the artist. Here is nothing brought in from afar to “give force to the composition,” no exaggerated rock, no weather-beaten tree stems. We earnestly recommend this work to the study of all our artists who try so hard in their studios to make fine compositions and to bring into a harmonious whole a sketch from Catskill, one from the White Mountains and a third from Berkshire. They have never, with all their efforts, produced so good a composition, and never one in which less thought has been given to the composing. Whether this picture was painted without change from Nature we do not know. If so, the artist was fortunate in finding a scene needing no change to make it so interesting,—if

he has chosen as well as copied, and combined as well as recorded, his art has been that highest art, unconscious of itself and involuntarily doing right.

No. 43 by the same painter, "Spring Time on the Hudson," is a lovely little picture, true and pure in color, and forestalling by only a month what we shall all see if we look with Mr. Griswold's eyes.

W. J. HENNESSY, A.—"THE MOTHER." 41.

Mr. Hennessy's work is steadily improving in worth. Not that this attempt to make a Yankee garret look French is to be commended; it is the *work* of which we speak; and the delicate truth of surface and texture which he often gives us now is worthy of great praise.

ELIHU VEDDER.—"THE LAIR OF THE SEA-SERPENT." 297.

A desolate sandy shore, gathered up into irregular hillocks of sand, their tops overgrown with dry red grass, and scattered over with stunted bushes; a narrow ridgy point of the same sandy barrenness running far out into the sea; the sea soft and blue, under a hot summer sky; such is the landscape. The serpent lies in perfect repose, his head resting on the largest hill of sand, directly in the centre of the picture; the flexile body, indolently lying where the last undulation left it which brought the creature up from the water, appearing and disappearing in long perspective among the sand hills, until the tail appears again under the serpent's throat. Cold, pitiless eyes, —long pointed head, like a snake's but longer, a thought of a crocodile in it, slender neck with coarse thin mane, the body suddenly enlarging so as to form a square shoulder.

It seems we have described a somewhat powerful picture. So, to our

surprise, the picture has proved to be. It is not often that this painting of monsters results in other than a most lame and impotent conclusion.

In the first place the technical merit of the picture is considerable. The work is not careful, it is merely a sketch of land and sea, but a sketch that suggests real sand and sea. The drawing is good. The exaggerations are intended and have a purpose, namely the inconceivably long point of sand, and the proportionate serpent himself.

Here we might leave the picture but that it has given us a chance to discuss the matter of truth of Imagination.

Although we call the Imagination "creative," we do so only by courtesy, she can produce only what has been suggested to her. Shakspeare does not imagine beings of a race hitherto unknown, but men such as we all might meet. Dante producing Centaurs has imagination and to spare, but produces no new thing, only gives life to an old Greek fable, which fable only combined the bodies and nature of man and horse in one. We try to give aerial motion to angels,—we can only give them wings.

Our conceptions of the unseen, being derived wholly from the familiar,—the more closely we follow nature up to the point where we must exceed her province, the more real-seeming will our so-called creation be. If we want a monster to look huge, we must give to it the traits which nature gives to her huge monsters. Do not imagine Behemoth as an exaggerated mouse, but give to your ideal the character of elephant or megatherium. Do not support your angels on the wings of a gnat made large—give the angel wings borrowed from larger creatures. Moreover, the smaller animals magnified, would not look so imposing or terrible as the large. There is one flesh of

whales and another of minnows; a minnow sixty feet long would be a very trivial creature compared to a whale.

As regards this serpent, then, it was a great mistake to make him so wonderfully like an enormous eel. He is an eel in color and texture of skin, and the square shoulder confirms the resemblance, by catching the eye at first and inevitably suggesting decapitation and the market. The first impression made is, that it is meant for an eel, and that somehow the surroundings are so

badly drawn that the eel looks as large as a sea-serpent.

Again,—the sea-serpent, whatever he be, has probably the power of rapid swimming. But the square shoulders of this creature would forever prohibit him from making any good progress in the water. But enough,—imagination properly so called, was not concerned in this picture at all,—imagination does not fall into such mistakes as these. Imagination sees everything as it might exist without violating those radical laws of structure to which all nature conforms.



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