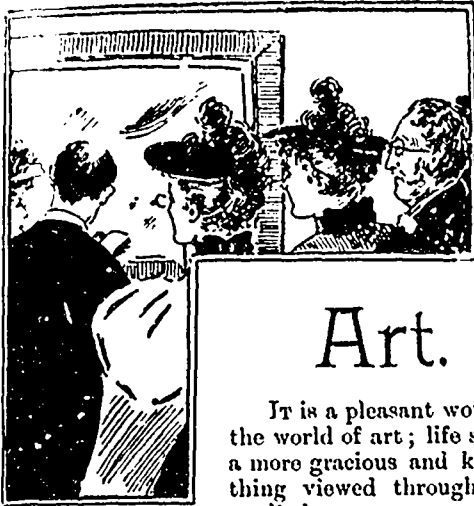




Art.

It is a pleasant world—the world of art; life seems a more gracious and kindly thing viewed through the studio lense.

Is it the close companionship with nature, in all her sunny moods, that touches the artist to a larger and gentler view; is it the big free breath of all outdoors that makes him liberal? We know not—but this we recognize, that the finest artist is kin to all that is highest in nature—and something of her sweetest enters into him.

That is rather a roundabout way of saying that studios are about the pleasantest places I know wherein to while away a winter hour; and those who once become aware of the fact appreciate Studio Day to the full.

It is a revelation to discover the many charming "places of pictures" in our city, charming not alone in the artistic arrangements, the curio corners and picture-hung walls; but also in the personality of their owners.

The artist, usually, has travelled much, and with open eyes. He carries about him a breath of foreign places, and his few words are color-full, chosen, as it were, by his brush, to bring scenes before us.

He has the easy indifference to appearances that comes of extended travel or devotion to work; and he usually seems to have absorbed something of nature's fairest elements—sunshine, sea breeze, free leaping waves, wide reaching horizons, and translucent skies, daisy fields and hillsides, hidden placid pools and fuzzy commons—one sees them all reflected in the brown or deep blue eyes of the artist.

We had a brief half hour in the studio of Mr. and Mrs. Reid one day this month—just such a studio as we have described and just such artists—only Toronto has many more which we shall chat about in turn.

Our talk was chiefly of Spain, where Mr. and Mrs. Reid spent six happy months of wandering last year.

Madrid City has no artistic value in scenery or architecture, so the lady asserts, but the Madrid gallery is valuable in its Velasquez paintings. Our artists were fortunate in being able to bring back some striking copies of Velasquez originals—the only ones in Toronto.

They are chiefly heads, remarkable for their virility. One "Æsop" a Velasquez study from some superb old Spanish model, is a splendid head, full of character and instinct with a certain fierce vigor.

A larger study—a dwarf and dog—is both strong and fascinating. Velasquez painted many dwarfs—they appear to have been Court favorites in his time—some of his studies in this direction are repellant in their realism. This copy by Mr. Reid is the softest; a dwarf—not mis-shapen, yet with fully developed man's face and child stature, stands beside a tall fine mastiff. The dwarf is in Court costume; the coloring is good.

Mr. and Mrs. Reid spent most of their time in Granada, painting various bits of the Alhambra.

The vivid coloring and deep shadows give these studies a touch of unreality to Canadians; we have nothing in our own nature world that resembles them.

A Velasquez portrait done at Julien's by Mr. Reid is studied with renewed interest in view of the fine copies of his work by which it is surrounded.

Here and there upon the walls are Mrs. Reid's realistic blossoms—yellow and white daisies—whose fidelity to nature no other Canadian artist can surpass—jars of roses and clusters of carnations. They give a touch of tropical luxuriance to the rooms.

We chatted a little about the summer home of these happy Toronto artists in the Catskills, at Onteora, an Indian word translated, "Hills of the Sky," situated a trifle over one hundred miles from New York, and over two thousand feet above sea level.

Recognizing our literary instinct, Mrs. Reid chatted about the literary coterie of Onteora. Mrs. Mary Mapes Dodge, the well known editor of St. Nicholas, has a cottage there; and literary celebrities come and go all summer. Mrs. Dodge is a grandmother, and well advanced in years, but a most charming woman to meet, simple in speech, unaffected, kindly. She has been connected with the famous juvenile magazine for over twenty-four years. She suffers much from rheumatism now. Her sub-editor is a young man, who was an intimate friend of her dead son. A close affection exists between the two, and he comes at the close of each week, through the summer months, to spend Sunday with her.



Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Hutton have also a cottage at Onteora, together with many other writers of established name.

As we bade adieu to the pretty studio and its bright hostess, a little unframed painting caught our eye—just a bit of hill top level with trees peering triumphantly over, giving hint of their steep climb; further off a wave of hills and beyond them a yet higher range, its purple heights banked mirtly against the sky. Just a bit of unframed canvas—but that was the picture that stayed with us as we came out into the winter's day again.

A number of young women artists have their studios down town, and to those who learn the way many cosy chats and restful half-hours await, in picturesque little apartments with their fair sky-lighting.

Miss Gertrude E. Spurr, studio, 9 Toronto st., is an English girl who has been only six or seven years in this country, yet she is well-known and well-liked among her fellow artists. She is an indefatigable worker and spends many hours each day in her studio, alone with her art but never lonely.

Miss Spurr has a preference for landscape work, and her studio walls hold several charming little studies of Humber scenes. She has also done many sketches about Doon and Haliburton, one bit of hill path bestrewn with rocks and showing an old barn, especially took our fancy.

Another little Humber sketch showed good free touch and color, while a miniature scene taken

from the station house window at Doon, quite captivate us with its excellent perspective and coloring.

Miss Spurr is rather fond of painting birds, although she does not indulge herself much in this direction, yet the one expression of this which we saw upon her walls—a dead partridge with delicious softness of ruffled plumage and delicate coloring—was excellent.

This young lady is showing decided advance in softness of tone and freedom of touch. We look for excellent work from her as she develops.

English industrial art may be proud of the remarkable results it is producing in Berlin. On all hands English fashions are quite the rage here. Look where you will you will see English furniture of the Clippendale pattern, English cretonnes, English velveteens, and English wall-papers. In Berlin we welcome this healthy sign, as giving promise of an improvement in taste, especially in all that concerns the interior of our houses. For if we are incapable of developing an independent, characteristic style of our own, it is in every way well that a style should be adapted, not from far-off times, when everything to do with comfort was different from what it is to-day, but from a country where the art of delicate living is thoroughly understood, and where the necessities of the age are truly appreciated, as is the case in England.

Art is no more inevitably present in a picture than in a door knocker. Examples of each exist which may be fairly held to be within the sacred bounds, but the mass of pictures, like the mass of door-knockers, are merely evidence of craft and skilled workmanship more or less good, which would be more truly described as manufactured products than as art.

In the kingdom of art are many mansions, and the taste of individuals trained, or untrained, must needs find some more satisfying than others. But to those who feel the beauty that rises to "the level of every day's most quiet need," and forsaking tragedy, or epigram, find the commonplace holds as much worth valuing as the abnormal—such who look below the surface of things recognise in the work of modern Holland a great school albeit one working in limited ways.

If the true test of a picture be the time you can live opposite to it without being wearied, then indeed the Romanticists have a chance of being ranked even higher than their already accredited position. For you know more grow weary of such pictures as these than of Nature herself.

It would be interesting, if one had time and space, to follow the evolution, say, of a young artist who made up his mind to keep to the right or turn to the left. We are constantly being moulded by our environment, and the wind, the rain, and the sun help in the shaping of artists as surely as they help in the shaping of mountains and valleys.

FUNNY THINGS COME TO PASS.

Perhaps the idea of wearing wooden socks might seem ridiculous, but it's just what some people in Germany are doing, and very nice socks they are too. The wood is reduced to a long silky fibre and made into a yarn, out of which the socks are knit, making a warmer, more durable and just as soft protection as woollen ones. In a similar way the pure spruce fibre is made into the interlining called Fibre Chamois, which provides for clothing an absolute protection against raw air and cold winds, because it is a complete non-conductor of heat and cold, keeping in the natural heat and keeping out every breath of cold. This fabric has also been made waterproof, so that the rain never penetrates it, and is so light in weight and inexpensive that a layer of it provides the acme of comfort for all outdoor clothing.