

*Some Younger Painters and Others*

SOME YOUNGER PAINTERS AND  
OTHERS. BY CHARLES H.  
CAFFIN.

No feature of the season just concluded has been more noteworthy than the showing made in the exhibitions by some younger painters. It is not that the latter have come for the first time into notice, but that they have made their presence felt. Some of them, indeed, had proved already that they must be reckoned with, but the majority have this year, for the first time, impressed upon the student of American art the fact of their active existence, full of promise for the future.

I write this with my study window open, and the first balminess of a belated spring creeping in through it; while outside are the welcome indications of the year's new life. And one feels a similar refreshment in the evidences of perennial new life in American art.

For the conditions over here are not what they are abroad. Our annual exhibitions are not, as there, an event of absorbing interest to a very large part of the community; our people do not display the widespread interest in artists and their work, following up their favorites, and continually on the *qui vive* for new sensations. Consequently, there is little outside influence to refertilize the talent of our older men, and it must be admitted that not a few succumb to the enervating conditions, losing the quickness of their original force, or prolonging it in rather tedious reiteration of the thing that has made them famous. Wherefore, it is mainly through the infusion of new blood that our art must continue its vitality.

This is a subject very worthy of consideration, for it is the same with an artist as with any other human personality. It is from the good stuff in us that our faults are derived, and, contrariwise, our weaknesses may be a source of strength. And, sanity and sobriety being distinguishing virtues of American art, it is particularly prone to the vice of becoming humdrum. The observant visitor to our exhibitions, comparing them with corresponding events in Europe, can hardly fail at times to be impressed with the fact that, comparatively speaking, they are dull. Especially, too, by comparison with so much else in America, which is assertive and sensational; tricky, meretricious, if you will, but, at any rate, attuned to the sharp pitch of a very strenuous and keen-witted attitude toward life. American art, on the other hand, is strong in those abiding, firmer impulses which are behind the

glitter and the clatter; a thing establishing itself for steady and permanent development. We may believe this and rejoice in the fact; yet, bitten it may be by the prevalence of vim, wish that it echoed a little more vividly the quicker pulse of the national life. Particularly must one feel this in regard to figure painting, in which the American painter, those, at least, who live and work at home, have done but little to arouse enthusiasm. With the landscape painter it is different, for obvious reasons. Get away from the city life, and farther still from that of humanity, and nature mostly, with certain comparatively unimportant differences of local fact, is serene, self-contained, aloof, and passionless, save for the sentiment which man out of his experience reads into it. Accordingly, our painters hold their own in the field of the *paysage intime*; but show less aptitude for seizing an inspiration from nature and creating out of it a work of superior imagination, in the way that Corot and Boecklin did, and many of their successors in the French and German schools, respectively.

It is, indeed, a curious fact that, while in the making of so trivial a thing as a joke the American imagination proves itself to be very fecund of ideas, our artists, men concerned presumably with the ideal aspect of things, should, as a class, be so notably prosaic. There is abundance of technical proficiency, but a leanness of ideas; and it is because a good many of those younger seem to have ideas to express that they are all the more welcome.

Neither Frank Vincent Du Mond nor Louis Loeb is a new arrival or to be classed among the younger men; yet it is only a short time since they began to make a mark in work of an imaginative character. The former, after demonstrating his possession of vigor and force in a large Salon picture, representing the conflict between an elephant and a tiger in the Coliseum, trained his strength down to a quieter study of the effects of light, especially in its relation to color, and then quite recently began to put the knowledge he had gained at the services of his imagination. The result has been a series of landscape pictures, with or without incidental figures, the motive of which is the romantic suggestion that inheres in color, while the facts of nature are used simply as a scaffolding on which to hang a beautiful embroidery of color harmony. Usually this harmony is woven around a single color-theme. I have distinct recollection of a yellow picture; and of another that was rose; the first impression being of a singularly attractive decora-

cclxxix