

William MacGregor Paxton

or by sickly sweet color, but what comes from a healthy, intense sentiment of nature. Too many of our exquisite painters "die of a rose in aromatic pain." Well, it would be a rude rose that could make our Paxton sneeze.

So it is with what is called "good taste." This is, too often, mere mental squeamishness. Personally I think Mr. Paxton's pictures are in better taste than say those of Burne Jones; because the first man's work is healthy, that of the second a little *pourri et faisandé*. Mr. Paxton shares with the Venetians and the Dutchmen their liking for broad forms, full lines, and fat facture, and for big, healthy, cheerful women. He's interested in the life, the character and the joy of the thing.

It is one of the defects of many of our American painters that they think too much of sentiment, quality, distinction, and not enough of getting the thing like. If Mr. Paxton had every defect attributed to him he still ought to be welcomed as an admirable counter-irritant to our green-sickness. But as a matter of fact, he hasn't these defects; that is, to the extent charged. I don't mean at all that he's an impeccable painter. Like all strong men he has the defects of his qualities. But his work is true, sincere, brilliant, well made, and, best of all, it's vital and sound.

We hear a good deal, in Boston at least, about the famous binocular vision theory. It's as simple as this. One day in painting, Mr. Paxton had trouble in making the line of a picture frame against the model's head in the right place. He would close one eye, as artists have a trick of doing, and the frame would seem to be something to the left, then he would close the other eye and the frame would seem to be more to the right, then he opened both eyes and the frame seemed in two places at once. So he tried this experiment, which

is easy enough for all to try. If you hold up your finger at arms length and focus both eyes on it, you will note that the things behind it seem to be double. On the other hand, if you focus on some object in the distance with the hand still outstretched, you will notice that there seem to be two fingers. Drunken men at times observe a somewhat similar phenomenon because their eyes refuse to focus on anything. From this our painter deduced the rule that upright lines behind or before the focusing point go double. And he painted the picture frames in his background in this way. The joke of it is that he painted in this manner for years without any one noticing what he was up to; they only perceived that his backgrounds had a remarkable quality of "staying back." When at last he told his discovery some applauded him, others said he was an idiot and went home and did it themselves, and still others have never quite understood what he was talking about.



CHERRY

BY W. M. PAXTON