

INTERNATIONAL  
STUDIOART and OTHER THINGS *By GUY  
EGLINGTON*

I AM APPALLED at the ingratitude of mankind. Have I not reason? Impelled by the generous spirit of the New Year, I presented to Professor Riefstahl, out of the kindness of my heart, and also by way of a tactful rebuke for a most unsuitable calendar which he had just given me (unsuitable, that is, for a bachelor), a copy of the December INTERNATIONAL STUDIO. That was January 4, 5 P. M. Here, dated January 4, 12 midnight, is all the thanks I get:

Dear Eglington:—

*As a member of the now defunct Luncheon Club to which you referred in the December STUDIO, I feel obliged to make a rectificatory statement. The most generous contributor to the cigarette fund was not one of the female members, but no other than our distinguished president, Mr. E. Weyhe, who, in spite of the costly fines imposed, persisted in the frequent and convinced use of the word "artistic." This regardless of the fact that he was absolutely unable on any occasion to give a satisfactory definition of what he meant by the term. May I also recall at this occasion that you, my dear Eglington, were at that time successfully, if at great cost, cured of the habit.*

Yours,

R. M. Riefstahl,  
Treasurer.

Now there are several ways of rebutting an accusation. I could give Riefstahl the lie direct. That were perhaps a trifle crude. More subtly, I could launch counter-charges, remind him of the many and costly fines he himself had to pay for attempting—in vain, need it be said?—to clothe his own impudent inventions in scientific jargon and put them over as facts. That method would savor too much, I fear, of the Hylan administration. Or I could call witnesses: The President, Mr. Weyhe; The Secretary, Mr. Zigrosser; The Toastmaster, Mr. Arthur Pope; not to mention our brilliant Ladies' Gallery, Mary E. Titzel, Mary Morsell and Dr. Phyllis Ackerman, Ph. D. These would support me, I am sure, even at the cost of admitting an occasional frailty on their own part. But why should a mere professor of Oriental Textiles be thus honored? No, I will be dignified. Let the Sometime Treasurer of the Luncheon Club produce the books!

Alas, the Luncheon Club. The food was only moderate, but the talk was good. A little peppery perhaps, but keen and intolerant of long phrases and undigested ideas. In its small way, which, in view of the fact that everyone in the art game was dragged in sooner or later, was not so very small, it played the much-needed role of satirist.

It laughed unmercifully and its laughter bit home. The offensive little word "artistic" was but one of its *bêtes noires*, a symbol, if you like, of the kind of thing it wouldn't stand for, the heavy earnestness of the second-rate painter, the breathless enthusiasm of the neophyte connoisseur, the candy-coated phrases (*schleim* in the language of the Luncheon Club) of the professional critic, the pompousness of the new dealer, just fresh from Europe and all set to teach America the meaning of art. In the process, of course, we all lost our halos, but it is amazing how well we got along without them. Forbidden to speak *ex cathedra* we had to re-examine all the old words and phrases that had done such yeoman service, discover what, if any, was their exact meaning and hammer them into new shapes to approximate as closely as might be, new thoughts. It was hard work, but it did us good.

Now, since Pope went on his travels, Weyhe became prosperous and Riefstahl domestic, there is no one left to poke fun at the absurd characters that strut their little hour upon the boards. Even McBride becomes solemn, or oversubtilizes his wit, so that no one shall be hurt. And Forbes Watson's pen has become so attuned to moral issues that it will not dance for him. Since Hamilton Easter Field died art criticism has become a dismal thing.

And yet—Heaven knows—there is no dearth of comic material, had one but a tenth of Field's gusto. Tangible material, needing no wit for presentation, but crying out to be quoted. Four catalogues. De luxe, if you please. Lying on anyone's table. The catalogue for the Paolini Sale of Italian Primitives, plastered all over with Certificates, de Niccola of the Bargello, Perkins, van Marle. On every page a great master, and yet in the whole collection barely half a dozen pictures that one would thank the giver for. The catalogue for Mestrovic at the Brooklyn Museum, for Zuloaga at Reinhardt's, both masterpieces of Brinton's art. Then, as if to prove that Paris is not to be outdone by New York in the manufacture of fine phrases, the document Beltran-Masses, newspaper size, sixteen pages of *schleim* by the greatest drawing room critics of Paris. One is staggered. Is the public's appetite for ice-cream insatiable?

Meanwhile, in a charming little gallery on 57th Street, history repeats itself with inexorable logic. The genial Mr. Neumann is the latest to

four sixteen

FEBRUARY 1925