

The Sculpture of Daniel Chester French

THE RECENT SCULPTURE OF
DANIEL CHESTER FRENCH.
BY SELWYN BRINTON, M.A.

WHEN I was in the United States in 1906 two masters of their art stood in almost unquestioned supremacy at the head of modern American sculpture. Augustus Saint Gaudens—the creator of the *Abraham Lincoln* of Chicago Park, of that tragic figure of the Rock Creek Cemetery at Washington, of the Boston monument to Gould Shaw, with the “fateful forward march” and sloped bayonets of his advancing soldiers, of the *General Sherman* of Central Park (N.Y.)—is, unhappily, with us no more: but in these ten years which have elapsed since 1906 Daniel Chester French has gone forward, adding to the breadth and dignity of his art, to his already fine achievement in monumental sculpture.

Sculpture in America may be called a new art, even more exactly and directly than America a new country. Born, a timid growth, in the sterile soil of a Puritan tradition, under influences which were hostile even to its existence, much more its free and rich development, it has gone on from one triumph to another—it has developed into something which even America may be proud of, and which in Europe as yet is very inadequately recognised. Had I sufficient space here, I would willingly dilate upon the work which has been done for America by a few men of energy organised together in awakening public attention to the claims of sculpture. I would even suggest whether we might not ourselves borrow a useful lesson in the development of a plastic art within our Empire which has everything in its favour—except adequate public recognition and private interest. But I have a theme here in the recent sculptures of Mr. Daniel Chester French, which claims my whole attention, as well as that of my reader.

Mr. French—whether he is in his New York studio in West Eleventh Street or his country home in Massachusetts, where he has built himself a large studio for his monumental work—is a steady and systematic worker; and any complete record, even of his more recent creations, will call for all my available space.

To judge his recent work we must briefly traverse the past, and shall then form a conception of the whole of the man's art, of its technical achievement and its underlying purpose.

As a matter of fact the young sculptor's first commission was *The Minute Man*—one of those hardy New England farmers who successfully resisted King George III. and his soldiers—which was modelled when the artist was twenty-three years of age, and unveiled in 1875. A visit to Florence—where he worked in the studio of Mr. Thomas Ball, whom I remember myself as a young student in Arno's city—developed his taste; and there followed



“MOURNING VICTORY” (MELVIN MEMORIAL)
DANIEL C. FRENCH, SCULPTOR