NEWS AND COMMENT IN THE WORLD OF ART

By HENRY McBRIDE.

NINE paintings and a number of drawings by Rockwell Kent, all of which are upon the imaginative order, are being shown in the Daniel Gallery.

In each picture there is something to astonish or offend the lovers of the academic, and this is balanced by passages of undeniably good painting. Whether the unsual manner and the clever technique are secondary to a message of profound spiritual importance or not is something the present writer has not yet discovered. The cleverness and the strangeness, however, are acknowledged with gratitude.

The "House of Dread," which was reproduced upon this page last Sunday, is perched upon a desperately steep cliff by the sea. A brilliant light as from a calcium in a theatre beats upon the far corner of the domicile, where a man, nude, leans against the wall in a dejected attitude. From an upper window a woman bends, her tumbling hair obscuring her head. Only sufficient touches have been bestowed upon these figures to indicate that they are meant for human figures.

The sea is dark and forbidding. The horizon line wabbles, but the uncertainty of its edge does give an extra vastness to the ocean. Instead of focusing at a given point the eye wanders around the sea as it does when searching the actual sea, and greater space is felt than had the horizon line been done in the approved fashion with a ruler. The sense of space and loneliness upon the sea is all I got from the ture. The troubles of the man and woman and the calcium light upon the house scarcely awakened my interest.

In the "Voyager Beyond Life" a man, nude, sprawls along the bowsprit of a ship and there is a green sky, studded with stars in odd constellations, and a forbidding sea below. Odd constellations of the stars appear in

Photo by Vollard.

Self portrait by Cezanne.

most of the pictures. The stars are trickily conventionalized. They twinkle cleverly, however, from the funny circles in which they are imbedded like jewels. In another canvas a small ship is about to sink with conventional circles of water about it, and shafts of light stretching down from a leaden sky. In still another, a young sailor appears to be crucified upon the top of a bare pole, which may possibly represent the mast of a ship. A landscape, and I think it's the picture I like best of the series, has corrugated ridges of rusty rock stretching across the picture in parallel lines, and above the sea horizon the leaden clouds that hover over Mr. Kent's dream country continually are also in corrugated ridges.

This is a hasty and hurried description, but it is perhaps sufficient to indicate that the pictures are odd. The reader has also read between the lines that I was not frightened to death by the pictures as I sometimes am by a tiny scratch from the pen of William Blake. Mr. Kent is far cleverer than William Blake when it comes to a representation of things, and each of his pictures has something that seems vividly realistic in spite of the artist's evident desire to shun representation. But in qualities of soul, or even in command of a mood there is no excuse to bring our artist's name into comparison with that of the great English mystic.

Mr. Kent, it seems, has been sojourning for months upon one of the bleak northern American shores, Labrador, Nova Scotia, or somewhere. He has communed with himself and apparently has been interrogating the stars. All that I like and commend him for. I am continually beseeching our artists who find themselves in a rut to get out of the rut. There are too many agencies, particularly in New York, that are calculated to make artists think alike and to think like the mob. Artists have no business to think like the mob. They must think for the mob. The regularity of our streets, the similarity of our buildings, with elevators and studios all of the same boxlike pattern, and the same reading matter for all; and is it a wonder that no one dares to be a Daniel, and that artists yearn to have motors and wear spats like the dealers?

But the gift of the spirit does not descend upon one the instant one quits Broadway. It takes time to shed old habits. However, the door will not open at all unless one knocks—and Mr. Kent may be said to have knocked.

Puzzling over the question as to why Mr. Kent's pictures only impress me upon the technical side, I have come to this conclusion in regard to them—that he is still too much in love with that popular and entirely worldly quality known as "the punch." Most of our hasty artists are enamored with the thing they call "the punch," and I think more of our bad pictures have resulted from this fad than from any other recent one. "The punch" is something that affects the unthinking, the torpid, the heavy souled. Blake in a whisper can breathe you into heaven or blast you to hell; but a cheaper artist with a "punch" merely causes you a temporary pain.

And I fear our artist has been levelling a blow that was meant to be dynamic for the mob. Did Blake or any other genuine seer secure the mob? The desire for applause upon the part of the artist is innocent enough. There are writers who say it is necessary for their sustenance. I only know that some of the greatest get along without it.

It can be argued that Christ himself spoke to the mob. But the mob understood only the miracles. "Immediately His fame spread abroad" when the man in the synagogue with the unclean spirit became cleansed. Once the multitude assembled came the sermon on the mount, but in spite of the extraordinary clearness of the words there is no hint that they alone made converts. The people were astonished at the tone, not at the words, "for He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes." There is no indication even yet that the mob understands the sermon on the mount, but it is sufficient that a few get it. For the really supreme artist how can there be a large audience?

Important Cezannes in Arden Galleries

"J'ai voulu faire de l'impressionisme," said Cezanne toward the end of his life, "quelque chose de solide et de durable comme l'art des musees," and if he could have seen his works installed as some of them now are in the Arden Galleries he would have felt that he had achieved that end. Furthermore, it would have been generally felt.

Not before in this country, and possibly never before anywhere, have pictures by Cezanne been so well shown. I missed seeing the famous Cezanne exhibition that set London by the ears so long ago, but I saw all the best canvases in the Vollard Gallery in Paris, and can't say that I saw them well. There was a pleasurable sense of discovery in locating such great works of art in a dingy and dusty shop, turning them over to the light as they lay stacked in the corners or upon shelves, but it was rather the pleasure of the hunter tracking his quarry to its lair than the finer excitement that comes from true possession.

Some of the Cezannes in the Arden Gallery (although I had seen them all before) I felt I was seeing for the first time. The gray of the walls happens to agree to perfection with Cezanne's palette, and two pictures in particular which I had thought brownish in tone now turn out to be studded with opals. The ample space allowed about the pictures is another advantage, and there is nothing to interfere with the greatness of the style of the works. The general effect is monumental and serious even to churchliness. It really seems that the people who go about asking "Is Cezanne great?" will be able to answer the question to their satisfaction in the Arden Galleries this time. They will not dare to ask the question once in the gallery, though. It would be just like listening to a Beethoven symphony and asking "Is it great?"

The still life that appeared in the Montross show is there, and two other large still lifes that have great qualities. There is a large portrait of a man, one of Madame Cezanne, a self portrait, some landscapes, a landscape with figures, and two flower pieces. They all seem astonishingly fine in color, astonishingly strong and astonishingly true.

To individuals like the present writer who have gone through the Cezanne induction years ago and have Cezanneism in the blood it is almost difficult to recall the charges that the philistines make against this work. It seems absurd to have to refer again to the perspective in the tables of the still life pictures, and yet there are people, I suppose, who when I tell them that the only sensation I get from such a rendering is one of intense realism will put me down as a romancer. Yet such, I insist, is the case. At a little distance the objects seem solid and the big relationships masterly. It is only when my attention is called to the inverted perspective that I notice it, and then only to take pleasure in its naive sincerity. The fact is the picture is so consistently and insistently well painted throughout that it might have as many technical errors for a picture as Shakespeare's "Hamlet" has for a play—I've been told it's faultily constructed—and I would still love it for its greatness of spirit.

Cezanne was another like Blake who knew what it was to exist without the applause of the careless. He once declared, "l'artiste ne s'addresse qu'a un nombre excessivement restreint d'individus." And as a matter of fact he was just about as despised and rejected of men as He who was mentioned in the previous article.

The story of his steady rejection at the doors of the annual salons has already been recounted in these columns, but possibly his unhappiness at being barred from the "Salon of Bouguereau" has not been explained. Certainly it is quoted from time to time by writers of the opposition as an indication that Cezanne would if he could have been a Bouguereau himself. Emile Bernard, Vollard, Guillaumin and all of Cezanne's friends agree to the contrary. It may have been naive, but there is scarcely room to doubt that the poor man believed that if he could once have his pictures in the Salon he would be acclaimed and the vogue of the puerilities of the official set would be lessened. He knew his own power, like most geniuses, but he was alone in the knowledge for the greater part of his career.

Time works curious revenges. We now have Cezanne in the most exalted ranks. He is acknowledged as the most potent influence upon the art of this time. Museum directors will shortly learn who he is and what his art stands for. He enters the museums as Bouguereau quits them. Poor Bouguereau!

Notes and Activities in World of Art

Langdon Warner, who is in the Shansi Province, China, upon an Oriental expedition, has written a letter to the *Bulletin* of the Cleveland Museum of Art, from which the following extracts are taken:

"At this moment I am sitting in a half ruined temple with the thermometer well below freezing, clad in a sheepskin. A tin plate serves as reflector to the candle by which I write.

"Luckily we are in a coal district, and I bought a donkey load of two huge lumps by the roadside as I came along. When I reached the temple I drove the donkey into my bedroom, heaved off his load and gave his master ten cents. Now the little mud oven is repaired and the boy has boiled some cocoa and eggs and fried half a chicken. I am lucky as usual—a few months ago I should not have been allowed to leave the railroads for this place, as the bandits were about. They got a white man about seventy-five miles from here and held him for ransom. But now the cold weather has driven them off. A little to the North, on the desert edge, they are still at work, the Chinese tell me, and the Standard Oil had to quit shipments.

"It is the noon rest and I have been taking measurements since six and photographs since nine. In all that time I have been able to make only four interior exposures.

"The caves are so narrow and so high that some of the best things are quite impossible to photograph without staging—and timber would have to be fetched at great expense from several days' march away. Also there are no inscriptions to rub, and very little detail within reach is in sufficiently good shape to get impressions by rubbing. I have been crawling up literally "on the knees of the gods" to find spots to rest my tripod and have come in plastered with dust and guano and my eyes blinded with the smoke from the flashlight powder; in some places the guano is a foot thick. It would be so in my hair now but for the kind providence which decreed that I should be bald.

"The farmers in the little hamlet are more like the clods they turn over in the fields than like their beasts. One has been carrying my kit for me and this is his style of drawing room talk:

L. W. Ugh!
Farmer. Ugh!
L. W. Is there any way to reach the upper cave?
Farmer. Ugh!
L. W. Is there any way, &c.
Farmer. Ugh.
L. W. Is there any way, &c.
Farmer. Ugh.
L. W. Is there any way, &c.
Farmer. What does he say?
L. W. Is there any way, &c.
Farmer. Top cave?
L. W. Yes, I say is there, &c.
Farmer. Yes, there is a top cave.
L. W. Can I get there?
Farmer. Yes.
L. W. How?
Farmer. Go up.
L. W. Are there steps?
Farmer. No.
L. W. Can I go up?
Farmer. No.
L. W. How do you go up?
Farmer. I don't.
L. W. How can I get up?
Farmer. Get up?
L. W. Get up.
Farmer. I don't know.

"And so on ad lib. You may naturally put this down to my small stock of Chinese, but I notice that they have the same trouble with each other.

"Last night was a bitter cold one, even though we dared not undress and slept in sheepskins and five blankets. My boy sleeps on the brick oven, but in spite of that his fingers are blue. Luckily there is little wind or we could not make even outside pictures and the caves would be choked with dust."

"Last night I was up on the second balcony of the temple built against the cliff looking far across the river and among the folded hills beyond. It was after sunset and the little mud huts at my feet were sending up smoke that drifted low across the valley. Suddenly below me, in the bowels of the mountain at my back, there broke out a soft resonant booming and an unutterably sad chant. It was the priest celebrating evening mass before the huge rock gods. The old man's voice was quavering among the echoes, yet powerful enough to seem to fill the valley with a sweet rumbling sound punctuated in curious rhythms by his sharp bell and great soft drum beats.

"Of course Buddhism is quite dead in China, and the poor old filthy bundle of rags was hardly worthy to be called a priest—but he seemed fitter in those rock cut chapels than the Archbishop of Canterbury would have been in his church regalia.

"I shall write you a more official report later—this is merely to tell you that I am on the job."

The Salmagundi Club one of the oldest and best known artist clubs in America and the oldest in New York, will shortly give up its old home at 14 West Twelfth street, where it has been for so many years, for new quarters at 47 Fifth avenue. The new home, purchased from the William G. Park estate, is on a plot between Eleventh and Twelfth streets, 39x100 feet. The cost, including alterations, will bring the total expense for the club up to approximately $100,000. The old home of the Salmagundi Club has been the scene of many famous exhibitions and has witnessed the rise of a number of its members from obscurity to fame. Its roster embraces the names of practically all of the noted contemporary artists.

C. Calusd is showing in his gallery a collection of nineteen of his paintings, principally marines. The pictures vary in subject from the turbulence of the tempest, with its shipwrecked men, to the beauty and romance of moonlight nights. Many of the subjects show the Bosporus, with the domes of Constantinople in the distance, with the colors of sunrise and sunset. Mr. Calusd, who is an Armenian, lived for many years at Constantinople.

Some of the pictures show Mr. Calusd's interpretations of what he has seen in America. "Castles of Wealth" is his impression of lower Manhattan seen from the waterfront. "Our Pride" is an American warship dimly and impressively seen resting in a fog.

Besides these are a few of Mr. Calusd's chicken subjects, done in humorous moments. "The Duel" is a fight between two cocks, while a bevy of admiring hens look on.

On Monday March 5 Louis Weinberg begins his series of twelve lectures on the "Evolution of Style in Nineteenth Century Painting" in the extension courses given at the College of the City of New York. Invitation is extended to the general public for single lectures; for the course a nominal registration fee is charged. In this series of lectures Mr. Weinberg, who is a leading expositor of the modern spirit in art, traces the changes in aesthetic viewpoint from the pseudo-classicism of the "Empire" period through romanticism, the Barbizon school group, the Pre-Raphaelites, Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Cubism and Futurism. These are discussed in relation to their social and intellectual backgrounds; the underlying aesthetic theory of each is analyzed and the leading historical examples of each are shown in slides. In this manner the "correctness" and formal beauty of David and Ingres, the impulsive and passionate art of Delacroix, the deliberate poetry of the Barbizon men, the passion for "truth" of Daumier and Courbet, the sun worship of Monet, the form worship of Cezanne, the sophisticated naivete of Matisse, in all of these and others the constant search of a restless century of experiment is traced.

Although the course aims at an appreciation and understanding of the intentions and realizations of nineteenth century art the lecturer places emphasis on the quickened sensitiveness to life itself which is to him the message of art. Students of literature, music or even of history will find in this course the interest of parallelism, as the lecturer develops the evolution of style in painting by parallel references to other arts and to the trend of social thought as well.

"American Painting from the Originals in Current Exhibitions, including the National Academy of Design and the Metropolitan Museum of Art," is the subject of a new course of six lecture promenades offered by George Kriehn, Ph. D., on six Thursdays in Lent, beginning March 1 at 10:30 A. M. in the Metropolitan Museum. Another course announced is "Old Dutch and Flemish Masters, From the Originals in the Metropolitan Museum," which is particularly rich in these subjects. It is held on six Thursdays at 2:30 P. M., beginning March 1.

At Columbia University in the Avery Architectural Library is now to be seen a most interesting collection of drawings, the work of Carrere & Hastings, architects, designers of the New York Public Library, the New Theatre, the hall of the House of Representatives, Washington, D. C., as well as a number of other structures.

In addition to those above mentioned there are drawings of the Tower of Jewels, Panama-Pacific Exposition; Black, Starr & Frost Building, New York city; Andrew Alexander Building, New York city; the Whiting Memorial, Cathedral of St. John the Divine; Ryan Gallery, New York city; Globe Theatre, New York city; Pulitzer Fountain, New York city; Memorial Amphitheatre, Arlington, Va., as well as a number of others, all demonstrating the utmost facility of drawing, fertility of design and accuracy of draughtsmanship. One rarely sees even in New York so varied a collection of drawings of executed work. There are included several renderings by Jules Guerin.

It will be illuminating to the interested layman to observe in this exhibition the architect's mode of attack, and above all will be demonstrated the conscientiousness and care which are among the primary virtues of the modern designer.

The exhibition will continue indefinitely and is open to the public. The Avery Library is open from 9 A. M. to 6 P. M. and from 7 to 11 P. M., except Sundays.

The fourth competition organized by Friends of the Young Artists, which is for decorators and which is being exhibited in Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney's studio, 8 West Eighth street, will be oper. Sunday afternoon from 2 to 5 and Monday from 10 A. M. to 10 P. M. Monday is the last day.

Hereafter there will be no more prizes and no more juries for the competitions held by the society. Yet there will be competitions and even greater inducement to compete. Instead of prizes purchases will be pledged, thus insuring a certain sum to be spent. The new ruling was the suggestion of Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney and was at once seen better to accord with the aim of the society to help the young artist, whose immediate need is a place to exhibit and a chance to sell his work.

The society expects soon to have its own galleries, where not only competitions will be held but what is far more important—continuous exhibitions by young artists, the walls to be allotted impartially and the prices to be set by the artist himself with no middleman's profit extracted. Later the society hopes to have its own building, where needy young artists will be provided with models, materials and a place to work and where several resident scholarships will be offered.

The office of the American Scandinavian Foundation in New York announces that in response to urgent public demand it has been able to effect the organization of a permanent room for the exhibition and sale of Scandinavian art objects. The enterprise is supported by private subscriptions and will not in any way officially be connected with the foundation. The exhibition is to be called "The Scandinavian Art Shop" and is located at 728 Madison avenue, near Sixty-fourth street. Dr. H. G. Leach has consented to act as president for one year and to assume all responsibility for the business management. Dr. Christian Brinton, the art critic, is chairman of the advisory committee. The interior of the shop has been designed by the Arden Studios, Inc., as a "Carl Larsson" room from water colors of Carl Larsson, aided by original sketches made for the shop by MasOlle. Mrs. Jessica Griffin of Boston, wife of the artist, has been appointed manager of the shop.

"The Scandinavian Art Shop" will open March 5 with an exhibition of etchings by MasOlle of Sweden and statuettes by Karl and Ruth Milles. It is proposed to have small travelling exhibitions from time to time and a permanent stock of porcelains, prints, fine books, weavings, lace and jewelry. Orders will be taken for work in northern arts and crafts, especially needlework of Swedish, Norwegian and Danish design. As the result of a contest the prize for the best design for a letterhead and seal has been awarded to M. Hasselriis. It is a Viking ship motif in a circle.

Prof. Charles Zueblin helped five art societies of New York to boom art in democracy. "Fifth avenue," he declared in his lecture, "is full of ugly things that no one wants and that no sane person should want." "That democracy were wise," he asserted, "that followed the rule of the craftsman Morris, who said he would never make things that a fool would want." "Organization," said Mr. Zueblin, "is as necessary in art as in military affairs. If we would get on in art we must organize society so that our standards of taste are not set by the foolish rich. Art is a social bond and the people have a right and the power to use it to reshape their surroundings in terms of beauty."

The meeting represented the efforts of five different art societies to arouse interest in the need of practical art teaching and the value of artistic ideals to the American people. The organizations represented were the Municipal Art Society, the Art Alliance of America, the Art in Trades Club and the art department of the high schools. These joined with the School Art League, under whose auspices the meeting was held.

"The democracy of the American people," said Dr. Merle St. Croix Wright, "is one which presses steadily forward toward an ideal. It believes in equal opportunities, but knows that equal opportunities do not mean the same opportunities for every man. In this ideal of democracy art plays a different part. It is the stimulating thing, the ameliorating thing. In this way it is a direct aid in making a democracy, and no democracy worthy of the name can exist without it. The art of a democracy should not be something aloof, but rather something which comes in friendly contact with every individual, in his work and play, in his business and in his leisure."

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Portrait of a Man, by Hals. Owned by Henry Goldman.

Still life, by Cezanne. On exhibition at Arden Galleries.

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