

Art.

What Is Art? By John C. Van Dyke.
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
\$1 net.

The title of Professor Van Dyke's new book suggests a treatise on pure aesthetics; it is rather an attempt to meet certain current misconceptions. We get, Mr. Van Dyke fears, our notion of art chiefly from museum officials and dealers, and that means that we indulge both the historic and commercial fallacy. Art is neither a curiosity nor a commodity; "art is primarily a matter of doing, somewhat a matter of seeing and feeling, and perhaps not at all a matter of theme or thinking." If the dealer and the pedant have variously misled us, the modern artist also has often been faithless to the tradition of his craft. For pungent good sense commend us to the chapter on The Use of the Model, which is incidentally a quiet but scathing exposure of the literalism that afflicts modern art. A tour through a gallery might almost persuade the visitor that memory and invention had been stricken off the artistic vocabulary.

Towards the connoisseur who treasures what is rare and the Philistine who adores only what is dear, our author is impartially severe. Both are enemies of sane art appreciation. Mr. Van Dyke deprecates the creation of fanciful personalities in art. It offends him, for example, that Mr. Berenson's Amico di Sandro gets into the art histories and even "influences" artists who are there by grace of documents. It seems to us that these ingenious reconstructions stand or fall by their own credibility. If Mr. Berenson has correctly assembled the works of an unknown personality, that artist, whom we may call Amico di Sandro, or Master of the Chantilly Esther—the name not mattering—may perfectly well have influenced a contemporary. Objection lies, if at all, to the reconstruction, not to the name or imputed influence.

To feel quality is the chief business of art appreciation, and while Mr. Van Dyke may not have successfully defined quality—an almost impossible task—he sufficiently intimates how it is to be looked for. What we want is the immediate effect of the work of art itself. A connoisseur of our acquaintance asks himself on entering a gallery, What are the two finest pictures in this room? and arrives at results often contradictory to catalogues and guidebooks. Mr. Van Dyke deplores the craze for old masters and urges an intelligent patronage of our own art. Here it seems to us is some neglect of fundamentals. A really intelligent patronage of our own art might leave nine-tenths of it wholly unpatronized, while the grievance against the plutocratic collector is not

that he affects Rembrandts, but that he does not love those he owns. Any kind of honest love of art as art must work for the artistic good of the country. A fine work of art, we think, is never expatriated where it finds a lover. And quite practically it has been the enlightened collectors of older art among us who were the best patrons of Whistler, Puvis, and Manet. We heartily wish that the tyranny of the dealer and art historian may be abated, and we feel deeply the insincerity of much collecting, but we are convinced that the only salvation is to eschew the bad and hold fast to the good art of whatever period.

Throughout this little book, Mr. Van Dyke shows his familiar qualities of literary distinction and clear thinking. It will do good wherever it is read. Whether a prophet of the beautiful who consents neither to bait with florid phrase nor yet to adopt the yawp barbaric can make himself heard in our particular desert, is quite another question.

The whole period in which Gothic architecture arose, found a completer expression than other styles have ever attained, reached its limit of possible development, and then suddenly declined, was less than four centuries. To study its essential features we need seek no example outside the narrow geographical limits of the old Royal Domain, whose structures have been very happily described in "Cathedrals and Cloisters of the Île de France," by Elise Whitlock Rose, with illustrations from original photographs by Vida Hunt Francis (2 vols., Putnam). All the genius of the northern French—a race whose daring imagination and undeviating adherence to direct and logical expression fitted them to measure themselves with the noblest problems of architecture—was concentrated on these buildings. In the other arts they took no such significant part. Thus they expressed a deeper religious sentiment than Europe had yet known, and demanded of common and often inferior materials a long series of constructive *tours-de-force*. In the fact that nothing was built purposelessly or fantastically lies the interest of their work. Huysmans has found from the patient examination of a single cathedral that every detail of carved stone or painted glass is to some extent a mystical exposition of the history and doctrine of the Church; Viollet-le-Duc and Choisy show that every moulding was cut in conformity with an underlying constructive idea, and even in the matter of contemporary history the stones of these churches are more truthful witnesses than the written records. The author of the present volumes has a scholarly historical knowledge, and, better still, she shows an intimate acquaintance with the buildings themselves. The work of the illustrator is in sympathy with the text. Besides the familiar general views there are many charming details of porches, chapels, and galleries.

"The Whistler Book," by Radakichi Hartmann (L. C. Page & Co.) bears an over-ambitious title, and is here and there marred by phrases more florid than exact or expressive. On the whole, it is a sym-

pathetic and judicious criticism. It takes courage to assert the comparative emptiness of the famous "White Girl," and independence to write that technically Whistler was probably not "the best etcher of his day." In the nocturnes and lithographs our author finds the most individual and exquisite expression of Whistler's genius. The entire book is an odd combination of real perceptiveness, with extravagance of statement and allusion, but it has the virtue of readableness and enthusiasm, and often it cuts to the heart of the matter. It is carelessly printed, proper names being frequently disfigured. Monet for Manet, on page 79, and Walter Gray for Gay, on page 226, are perhaps the worst instances. There are fifty-seven illustrations, a bibliography, and a list of paintings not quite complete or up to date.

"Peasant Art in Sweden, Lapland, and Iceland" is the attractive title of the special Autumn Number of the *International Studio* (John Lane Co.). On inspection one regrets the prominence given to Swedish art, much of which seems derivative from southern models. In silver-smithing and weaving, however, we have the true primitive note. Whatever is given from Lapland and Iceland seems pure gold. Especially the bed panels of Iceland preserve a robust tradition running back to the so-called dark ages. Beside the illustration after peasant objects there are photographs and color-prints after paintings depicting the houses and the peasants themselves, in all six hundred cuts.

The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts announces its one hundred and sixth annual exhibition, which will open to the public Sunday, February 5, and close Sunday, March 26. The exhibition will consist of original works by American artists in oil painting and sculpture, which have not before been publicly shown in Philadelphia. All works intended for exhibition must be entered upon regular entry cards, which must be properly filled out and sent to the academy by Monday, January 2. The jury of selection consists of the following members: Painting—Willard L. Metcalf, chairman; George Bellows, Adolphe Borie, Joseph De Camp, Daniel Garber, Walter MacEwan, Carl Newman, De Witt Parshall, Henry J. Thouron, and J. Alden Weir. Sculpture—Hermion A. MacNeil, Bela L. Pratt, and John M. Bateman. The hanging committee is composed of Willard L. Metcalf, Charles Grafty, and Adolphe Borie. The academy's committee on exhibition has as chairman Clement B. Newbold.

Richard La Barre Goodwin, the landscape painter, died at Orange, N. J., last Saturday, at the age of seventy years.

From Paris comes news of the death of the landscape painter Jean Emile Renié.

The death is announced from Berlin of the artist Ludwig Knaus, who, in the seventies of the last century, was considered one of the great *genre* painters of the world. At the Metropolitan Museum are to be found his *Repose in Egypt of the Holy Family*, *The Old Woman and Cats*, the female figure of *Peace*, and a *Girl's Head*. Other important pictures by him are *Funerail in a Hesse Village*, *His Excellency Travelling*, *The Village Musician*, *The Inn*, *The Refractory Model*, *Solomon's Wisdom*, and *Peep Behind the Scenes*. He was born in Wiesbaden in

1829, and from 1874 to 1884 was professor at the Berlin Academy.

Finance.

WALL STREET AND WASHINGTON.

That financial markets should have excited themselves, both before and after Mr. Taft's message to Congress, over what the President would advise regarding this session's company legislation, was in reality quite needless. The Stock Exchange (which may have got a peep at advance sheets of the message) professed cheerful expectation that the President would advise against further restrictive laws as to corporations. The expectation was fulfilled, to the extent that Mr. Taft declared his opinion that "the existing legislation with reference to the regulation of corporations and the restraint of their business has reached a point where we can stop for a while and witness the effect of the vigorous execution of the laws on the statute books." Since, however, the President not only assumed that existing laws would be enforced, but also declared that he should not renew his former proposals to authorize railway "pools" for establishing joint rates, the message, from Wall Street's point of view, contained bitter as well as sweet. When it was published in full, the stock market lost all its advance of the two preceding days.

But the concern of the market, over either sort of recommendation, was superfluous. It is true that laws of the first importance have on rare occasions been enacted in the final three months' session of an expiring Congress—even after an "opposition landslide" in November. The passing of the Specie Resumption Act in 1875 is a notable case in point. But in 1875 the dominant party, though defeated at the polls, still had a workable majority of 100, good until March 4. The dominant party of to-day has less than half that majority, and such majority as it has is not workable, in the face of the schism in the party.

The points of interest which were lacking in the President's message were to a certain extent provided in the Department reports. One introduced the remarks of the Secretary of Agriculture, repeating enthusiastically the Secretary's well-known views on the crops of 1910. We have produced this year, he points out, farm products "with a value reaching \$8,926,000,000," which "is larger than that of 1909 by \$305,000,000," and is a sum the meaning of which "nothing short of omniscience can grasp." The value of the corn crop, in Mr. Wilson's language, "belongs to the stories of magic"; the value of the cotton crop is 13 per cent above the five-year average.

All this is reassuring, but possibly just a little overdrawn. When a statistician deals with the actual size of successive crops, with their effect on railway traffic, on the country's export trade, on the cost of living in the case of grain and on activity at the mills in the case of cotton—he stands on firm ground. But when he begins to deal with values—especially with values obtained through multiplying total bales or bushels by the market price on a single stated day—he sometimes arrives at strange results. Such calculations may not belong to the stories of magic, but they are very likely to take their place in the realm of sleight-of-hand, or in the field of expert accountants retained to prove a case. Our crops of 1910, all things considered, are a mainstay of the financial situation; but the wheat crop is far more useful a contribution to prosperity because wheat prices have fallen, and the cotton crop very much less so because cotton sells at so exorbitant a figure. Mr. Wilson's line of argument lurches perceptibly over into that inverted political economy which hails with delight a deficient crop with excessive prices, and has serious doubts over a "bumper yield" sold at values more inviting to consumers.

The Secretary of the Treasury, as was to be expected, indulges in no such jugglery of figures; it is rather his conclusions which are interesting to finance. He takes up courageously the question of currency reform, and makes some really pregnant comments—as, for instance, that the present system of distributing and redistributing bank reserves is vicious, that there is no way now of suddenly increasing currency in a crisis, except through the futile and obsolescent law of 1908, and that the present bank-note system, with its requirement of government bond collateral, will not adapt itself to the fluctuating needs of trade.

But when Mr. MacVeagh approaches high economic theory in his report, he arrives at some deductions quite as novel as Mr. Wilson's. That "panics are no longer necessary and no longer respectable" is at any rate a safe assertion. No business man and no economic philosopher was ever heard to declare that a panic was needed for the general welfare, or that a run on banks, which was being chronicled in his diary, was a highly respectable event. But the Secretary's further deduction that panics are not only avoidable, but that "we can continue to have panics or we can stop having panics, exactly as we prefer," and that "it is for the government to say whether it will have panics in the future or whether it will not," calls for somewhat different comment.

A well-ordered currency and a proper centralization of financial resources would do much to mitigate the evils of those violent reactions in financial sta-

bility and financial confidence, which are partly inherent in human nature and partly, in this country, a consequence of the excessively daring use of credit by our greatest capitalists. But it would hardly bring about a financial millennium, in which fright over really alarming financial situations should be a thing of the past.

One of the strongest arguments for a Central Bank, for instance, is the prospect that it might, under wholly enlightened and independent administration, exercise over the most powerful manipulators and promoters, and over the excesses of the financial community in general, just such imperious restraint as is exercised abroad by the Banks of England and of Germany; that it might, at a moment when the strongest powers of Wall Street had overstrained bank resources to support an extravagant Stock Exchange speculation, put up the official rate of discount, not lower it, as was done in New York city, with the natural results, last October and in the same month a year ago. If a scheme for a Central Bank which, beyond any cavil, guaranteed exactly such large-minded oversight in affairs financial could be contrived and presented to the people, it would probably be accepted. But the question appears to be, can just that disinterested policy, at such times and by such an institution, be assured?

BOOKS OF THE WEEK.

- Allen, J. W. *The Place of History in Education*. Appleton.
 Ballard, A. *From Talk to Text*. Boston: Sherman, French. \$1 net.
 Bennett, A. *How to Live on 24 Hours a Day*. Doran.
 Bragdon, C. *The Beautiful Necessity*. Rochester, N. Y.: The Manas Press. \$2 net.
 Brissot, J.-P. *Mémoires (1754-1793)*. 2 vols. Paris: Picard.
 Brown, W. A. *Morris Ketchum Jesup: A Character Sketch*. Scribner.
 Cambridge Modern History. Vol. XII, *The Latest Age*. Macmillan. \$4 net.
 Cartmell, P. M. *Instinct and Intelligence*. Cochrane Pub. Co.
 Champneys, A. C. *Irish Ecclesiastical Architecture*. Macmillan. \$7.50 net.
 Coburn, A. L. *New York (Illustrations)*. Foreword by H. G. Wells. Brentano. \$6.
 Dewhurst, F. E. *The Magi in the West*. Chicago: Abbey Co. 50 cents net.
 Dobell, Mrs. H. *Poetical Works*. London: Smith, Elder.

Financial.

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