

Mr. Eidlitz and Mr. Flannery should create a Committee on Disposal Problems to work out an enlightened plan and meanwhile should take precautions to prevent any action that might invalidate such a plan.

RICHARD S. CHILDS.

Renoir and the Impressionists

THE group of painters known as the Impressionists have been at the centre of the stage or near it for almost a generation. Theirs had been the dominating influence in most radical enterprises during that time until the moment when the cubist experiments in pictorial absolutism turned painting entirely aside from its traditional aims. But though the impressionists had been for so long first in contemporary influence, there had been changes in the prominence of the individuals of the group. The emergence as of primary importance of Manet, Monet and Degas in the earlier period, and of Cézanne and Renoir in the later, is significant of changes in pictorial purpose and interest.

Before their coming, the immensely robust Courbet had broken with the romantic tradition in its current forms and was busily presenting to the eyes of his shocked fellow-men the substance of actual things. He showed the volume and weight of solid flesh, the density and mass of green foliage, the heavy roll of waters, and the juicy fulness of red apples. He was a wonderful master of the painter's craft who saturated his canvases with the amplitude of objects realized as valid in their own right. But like all the greater realists he was a romantic at heart, that is he strove to project a world of his own which should be the proof of his creative impulse, of his feeling that the artist did not paint merely what he saw, but that in satisfying his own spiritual demand he saw the truth of things. His buoyant arrogance proclaimed the spiritual Jehovah, proud in the consciousness of his creative temper and will.

All the impressionists were deeply influenced by Courbet, some more and some less directly. In the case of Manet, where Spanish influence—especially that of Goya—was added, there was the purpose to reduce Courbet to terms of simpler pictorial means. Courbet had modelled very elaborately with all the nuance in his forms that studio light would give. Manet tried for greater simplification in the masses by adding to the silhouette so much of modelling only as was necessary for giving essential character to the form. In view of what has since been done the modelling

of Manet seems elaborate enough, but in comparison with Courbet and the others of his time, its flatness was conspicuous. His broad masses of color fitted together with subtly adapted edges, broke with the traditional, enveloped figure and the atmospheric bath of the older art. There lay in it fresh possibilities of a painting that should have the clarity of definition of the early mosaics and frescos, with the least sacrifice of realistic rendering. Manet was furthermore the least romantic of his group, the one most simply a realist and most easily content with setting forth the things as he saw them. Of course there was an individual vision which every artist has, but Manet's was to an unusual extent impersonal. His transcriptions were colored more by his technical than by his emotional qualities.

While Manet was building up his masterly constructions, Pissaro and Monet were exploring the possibilities of color in the open air. In this apparently Pissaro was the leader, though the more energetic and assertive Monet is in general regarded as the greater man. He is indeed the greater force, but as unquestionably he is the lesser artist. Pissaro's gentle serviceableness, his modest readiness to learn new things even from much younger men, and the restraint always to be found in his expression, have lessened in some measure his reputation. His work is quite uneven and at his best his line and color are fine and pure rather than powerful. His most successful pictures establish a rarely sympathetic contact with their subjects, but like Manet, Pissaro is lacking in profound conception. He also is quite limitedly a realist, though in his case the realism is soberly refined.

Monet on the other hand is vigorous and emphatic. Gifted with great power of optical discrimination and analysis, inexhaustible in industry, sturdily honest and unalterably convinced, he got something more than a fair share of credit for his moderate creative gifts. He too was a romantic, but of the shallow kind, in whom romantic magniloquence disguises the flabbiness of line, the lack of tang in color, and the essential commonplace of composition. He profited by the fact that his subject was almost exclusively landscape, which is so readily evocative of feeling, so near to music in its capacity to move, that it serves favorably to cover over an artist's vital limitations. A comparison of Monet's landscapes with his still life and his few figure things, will make evident the spiritual and imaginative poverty of a very capable painter.

The time had come in the course of the eighties and the early nineties when the influence of Manet, Monet, and of Degas also, had been quite fully absorbed, and when the need of other things than

these men had to offer, was felt by many. Both Manet and Monet were superficial, with little sense of deeper fact or feeling. Pissaro was too slight. In Degas there was more profundity, but it was largely critical in temper. He influenced mostly the satirists in art but did not lead far in the direction of the general heart of man. Those young men therefore who were seeking for a creative inspiration, turned to Cézanne, that strange man secluded in the south, at Aix in Provence, who with eager passion sought to make reality more real, to make into a picture the very substance of God's word. Cézanne's eye was not turned to nature in admiration of the world of things; there was no simple joy in things; there was no taking anything for granted. Here was again the romantic temper at its deepest, the wish to recreate a world near to the heart's desire, a world that should be the symbol of a forth-reaching passion, of the will for a profounder emotional and intellectual life. But to Cézanne, unlike Courbet, the world was a means and a means only. He had much affection but very little sympathy for men and things. His eyes indeed looked outward, but his soul's vision turned within and he sought with endless, passionately impatient insistence, to make the outer world the carrier of his inner need. He did not paint most of his pictures for the picture's sake but rather from a desire for the mastery that would permit of adequate self-expression. The only picture that for Cézanne really counted was the picture that he would paint when, like a god, knowing and compelling to the uttermost, he would fling forth his definitive creation. Cézanne was a kind of Faust who never knew despair, but strove indomitably to be master of the moment when he could say to that which he had made, "O still delay, thou art so fair." In the meantime he was almost indifferent to the stuff that he actually succeeded in producing, for it was so hopelessly unlike that which he longed to see. Although he never lost his faith, he recognized that he himself would not in the flesh enter the holy valleys of the promised land. "I shall die," he said, "the primitive of the way that I have discovered."

No greater contrast to Cézanne could be found than Renoir, the last of this illustrious group to come to recognition, and in whom the blend of the romantic with the realist is almost perfect. Whereas Cézanne was always painting on tomorrow's picture with passionate aspiration, Renoir with equally passionate joy was busy with today's. Whereas Cézanne despised even his best, Renoir enjoyed all that he did when he was in the right mood, and he was almost always in the right mood. Although a lifelong student, constantly occupied with the problems of the painter's art, he did not

let those problems stand between him and his pictures. His every canvas was an experiment, not because he treated it as such, but because his mind was open to what was growing under his brush. At times he worked hard at particular problems, but even in the pictures that were most definitely records of such hard work the joy in the thing overcame and crowned the product with the crown of sympathetic pleasure. Cézanne cared for nothing but his soul's purpose and his soul's salvation, while Renoir finds his soul wherever he looks abroad, in the fair faces and the warm bodies of women, in the delight of children, in the light and life of field and sky and water, and in the freshness and glow of fruit and flowers. Never has there been a more outward turning mind, a more cheerful and joyous devotion to the visible world. Nor is this visibility a superficial one. With few exceptions every picture of Renoir's is an individual thing, even when there are a score of almost exact replicas. His endless buoyancy thrills through the products of his brush in the flood of an indivisible life. Therefore his pictures so wonderfully supplement and sustain each other, and Renoir lovers are insatiable. Collectors of his pictures have them by the scores and find that each accession adds not itself alone but gives addition also to the life of all the others. To Renoir so richly endowed, fulness has been given in the way of achievement, and despite retarded recognition, the hideous pain of a prolonged and afflicting illness and a crippled state of many years' duration, his artist's life has been one of quite singular fortune.

Renoir is so far the fullest synthesis that has appeared of the various strivings of Courbet, Manet, Pissaro and Monet. His modelling is full and rich and yet translated so perfectly into terms of color, that it functions as a flat decoration. Year by year, decade after decade, his progress in the mastery of these characters has continued till in the first twelve or thirteen years of this century he reached supreme achievement. Since then with failing strength there is some falling off in completeness, although there is in some respects progress even in the latest. But his joy has never waned. He is, in theological language, a man once-born, one who has never trafficked with sin but who came to birth in the full light of grace. A greater than he may come when one with equal gifts shall plunge to deeper spiritual levels and make manifest the more inclusive drama of life, the victory of the powers of life over the powers of death. But the shadow of death has never clouded the art of Renoir and if he has a limitation it is the very simplicity, the serene graciousness of his pure and noble joy.

LEO STEIN.

Ellie

ELLIE is vivid to my memory. She stands distinct against a background of reformatory women, defined with delicate decision. Not alone her charming appearance, the winsome little face, the exquisitely slender wrists, the grace of the blue-ginghamed figure; but the inner spiritual quality of something not tamed. Ellie was ever poised for flight—you know that when the wild ducks flew north, calling her, Ellie's soul must follow them.

I have good reason to remember Ellie. But three days after my bewildered arrival at the reformatory farm I had not yet noticed her—singled her out from her background. She was still to me “one of the inmates.” Hence the following poster, scattered broadcast throughout the country, failed to recall Ellie to my mind's eye:

\$10.00 REWARD

For the Return of ELLIE HIGGINS

Escaped October 22nd, at 8 P. M. from the Gardner
Reformatory for Women

Age: 26.

Height: 5 ft.

Weight: 95 lbs.

Build: slender and wiry; very small boned; hands and wrists noticeably slender.

Coloring: dark hair and eyes, clear, pale complexion.

Features: small, delicate, distinct. Looks like boy of 16.

Voice: high like a child's.

Nationality: American.

Appearance: neat—quick in movement.

Clothes: blue striped gingham dress, dark blue sweater, black shoes and stockings, probably no hat.

Ellie and Ruby Ruggles had not come in to evening prayers Friday night with the other “kitchen girls.” The entire reformatory was agog. It was agreed that Ellie must have gone to find her child—her own child for whose kidnapping she had to serve a long term; and that as for Ruby, “why, she just naturally *would* run away.” They had ten minutes' start. Then ensued a royal game of hare and hounds. Until the village “central” went to bed, the farm telephone did furious business. All night the handy-man's Ford clattered round the countryside. Saturday morning every station agent on the rural line had descriptions of the two fugitives. If Ellie remained vague to my mind, it was easy to single out of the chaos of my new impressions a concrete memory of Ruby, a loutish damsel, wearing around her fat neck a black velvet band which displayed a crucifix under her double chin; Ruby whom some weary judge had given a year so that the public highway might forget her silly face; Ruby the street walker, Ruby the clown.

By Sunday I had become aware that a splendid

public opinion among the women in this reformatory had almost eliminated runaways. The institution could have been run on no other basis. Handicapped as it was by legislative frugality, it boasted a bare handful of officers. There were no effective locks or bars, save in the emergency “thinking room.” Inside the two farmhouses which had been remodelled to house the state reformatory, and which were now known as “Hill” and “The Farmhouse,” there was not enough room for the constant inflow from the courts; “honor girls” *had* to sleep on the porches. And runaways *had* to be prevented. Making a virtue of necessity, Miss Clervel, the resourceful young superintendent, had launched self-government at Gardner. Thanks to her, public opinion—nothing else—had made escapes almost unknown. At our first meeting, the previous Wednesday, she had made me think of a steady sea breeze, tonic and tireless. Not until later did I understand the terrific strain under which she suffered while Ruby and Ellie were roaming. She saw the implications of their treason.

So she made things happen. On Sunday afternoon she drove her automobile to Finnburg. One of the landed aristocracy of this metropolis of seven farms said he would let on that two stranger gals were working in his barn at that minute. Ruby, slower than her elfish comrade, trundled into the nearest stall, which, however, proved to be already occupied by one mule. With astonishing celerity Ruby bounced out again! Meanwhile, into the farmhouse dashed Miss Clervel, up the stairs in time to see Ellie dive in between two feather-beds which lay as level as before. Miss Clervel dived in, too. Hares and hounds turned home again.

The dormitory doors of Hill had been locked lest this community of lawbreakers take into its own hands revenge for privileges lost by these betrayers. The superintendent, returning from the chase, bounded into my room, glowing. We danced for joy. Yet I wonder if I *was* glad. Ellie was going to pay for wanting her baby.

All the honor girls from the Farmhouse gathered with the “student officers” on the Hill porch. The runaways approached with their bodyguard. Ruby squealed with panic; Ellie shrank close to Miss Clervel, but her white face was defiant. Instantly I remembered Ellie. Then reformatory wit broke loose.

“Hi! Who take a vacation! *Ruby 'n Ellie!*”

“Who thinks they're smart? *Ruby 'n Ellie!*”

“Who tried to take our privileges away? Hi! Yi! *Ruby 'n Ellie!*”

“Who thought she'd take a ride on a mule! Ha! ha! ha! *Ruby Ruggles!*”

“Say, got a reg'lar stylish ride home in a auter, didn't you?”