

Doctor Goulding sobbed uncontrollably, his arms on the edge of Mary's bed, and his head in his arms. Irene said Peter comforted the doctor. She said Peter's own tear-streaming face was convulsed, but he patted Howard's shoulder and said, "That's no way, Howard. Take it easy! There, there, boy, Mary wouldn't want us to take on like this."

Peter and Howard cling to each other since Mary's death. Neither one has any other intimate. The factory closed years ago, so Peter potters about his garden and keeps house for himself. If he isn't at home, you can find him at the doctor's house. They go off hunting and fishing a lot. There's a new doctor from the city who is get-

ting a lot of Doctor Goulding's practice right from under his nose. Peter seems unchanged since Mary's death. It is Doctor Goulding who is breaking up. Besides neglecting his practice, they say that he takes drugs. It seems a pity—he was such a nice man—and Peter often looks at his friend in worried fashion. Folks wonder, now, what the doctor will do if anything happens to Peter, and what Peter will do if the doctor should die. They are lost without each other. And it is so, that this friendship was founded upon a deep and mystifying love for the same woman—that plain, unprepossessing, maddening Mary Barton of whom people always said, "I wonder what he sees in her!"

Sooner or Later

HARRY ELMORE HURD

Time is a rodent, hungry as a mouse,
Gnawing the beams of every old house.

No matter how fertile, a family can never
Keep an old homestead forever and ever.

Sooner or later the curtains are drawn:
Quiet-voiced neighbors trample the lawn.

Treasured trifles—things that were dear—
Delight the heart of the auctioneer.

The vultures gather from city and town—
The bids rise high—the hammer comes down.

An antique dealer buys the bronze knocker,
Two tavern tables, and a Boston rocker.

Hand-woven linen and a four-posted bed
Pass to the living from the not-long dead.

After the auction—very soon after—
The house is filled with vulgar laughter.

The cellar is cleaned—the attic is swept:
Nothing is sacred—nothing is kept.

All is flung on the funeral pyre—
Family photographs feed the fire.

Ashes to ashes—dust to dust—
Decay, disorder, ruin, and rust.

Banging shutters and broken pane—
Cluttered dooryard and unmown lane.

Thistle and burdock, witchgrass and weed,
Grow unimpeded—scatter their seed.

Sooner or later a house is alone—
Cleaned of its contents—bare as a bone.

Gilbert Wilson: Mural Painter

FRED J. RINGEL



A mural (since destroyed) reflecting Wilson's intense absorption in nature

OUT of the fertile plains of Indiana rises a young man, aged twenty-nine, with a formidable claim for recognition as one of the most potent mural painters in America. Gilbert Wilson's work consists of no more than two sets of murals in two school buildings in Terre Haute, his native Hoosier town, yet his paintings reveal a tremendous force, an enormous breadth of scope. They have the insistent power, sometimes harsh and raucous in expression, that compels attention and understanding. They look backward at the past, portray the chaos of the present, and hail the visions of the future.

Four years ago, with his final departure from all academic training and perception, he smashed the anemic little gold frames that glorified the only three still lifes he ever put on canvas. And with that, he bade farewell to a world that is ballyhooed as typical of the American scene today. The cleavage was clear and vital. He believed that the lowest form of art is regional; the highest universal.

He could not see an American world consisting chiefly of gambling drunkards and slouching Negro types, dining farm hands and dreary railroad crossings, spectacular tornadoes and quiet Sunday streets. He was not inspired by what he considered the writhing grotesqueries of Tom Benton, the papier-mâché pictorialism of Grant Wood, the dramatic sensationalism of John Steuart Curry, or the drab romanticism of Charles Burchfield. They all stemmed from the Middle West—Gilbert Wilson's spiritual climate. But their world seemed foreign and strangely un-American to him. Born and raised against a small-town

background, his world reached out toward a universal theme.

For the last seventeen years Gilbert Wilson has been a Boy Scout. It has been a life of much collective activity but very little warmth and intimate relationship. We see this boy today with his shaggy auburn hair, his old face and youthful gestures, and his deep-set, melancholy eyes. He has the earthy, homespun ruggedness of a Will Rogers, of whom one is reminded by looking at him. His spirit, too, is rooted deeply in his environment and the vitality of the people. Yet his broad, tight mouth and the inward look of his eyes bespeak a remoteness and a life all his own. It expresses a life marked by lack of fulfillment, by frustration of his normal desires, by the impatient eagerness and sinking feeling that comes to one who feels that the fruits of happiness are passing by him.

Gilbert himself is shy and timid, but his work has the audacity and self-assurance of a master. He seems orderly and exact, yet he never makes a sketch or a plan: he must face the wall directly before he can visualize his ideas. He seems naïve and childish, perhaps even petulant at times, yet his work is mature in its grasp and profound in concept. He seems arrogant, impatient, and peremptory in his attitude toward people, but he has the straightforward and simple purposefulness and direction of a man who knows where he is going and doesn't understand why obstacles should stand in his way.

It seems natural that his first murals should be a realistic statement of a world that has been a revelation to his Boy Scout past. That they should contain the simplicity