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Bulletin of the City Art Museum of St. Louis

The difference between really good lacquer-work and that of inferior quality is not often appreciated by western peoples; if pictorial standards had little to do with the question there would still be the standard of the craft of the *nuri-mono-shi* in whose hands is the "forwarding" so to speak, of the structure on which the artist *maki-ye-shi* is to give the pictorial value to the work; this "forwarding" in the old more leisurely periods differed greatly from later, more commercially impelled ones.

With us, no doubt, prepared lacquer would be sold by the pound without regard to the diverse qualities of the sap which must be considered by artist and artisan in the effects they both wish to produce; for lacquer, we are told, varies in qualities according to the age of the tree from which it comes, and varies in the different parts of the tree; that from the branch hardening more slowly and with greater hardness than that from the trunk; and lastly, that the final coating, *suki urushi*, must be, or should be, made from the sap from the oldest trees.

The temptation to hasten the hardening of the several grounds by artificial means is one to which the modern artisan and artist often yield under commercial pressure, and the test, sustained by the old work, of hot liquids, alcohol and acids, is usually too much for modern lacquer. Among the reasons for general use of this material were, its permanent character, the precision with which joints and covers could be made to meet and the consequent almost air tight compartments for medicines and scents provided, to weather tight and water tight virtues, and finally its adaptability to decorative use in the hands of a tasteful and patient people.

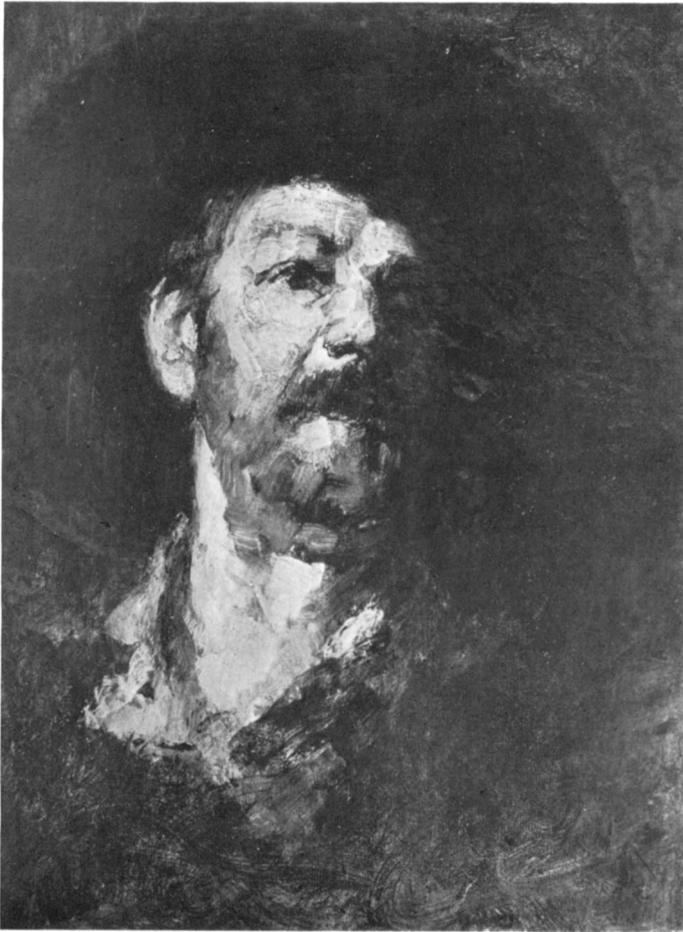
C. P. D.

A PAINTING BY FRANK DUVENECK

IT seldom happens that an artist is given due credit or is appreciated by his contemporaries throughout his entire career. In reading the lives of the great painters, one is impressed with their struggles for recognition. Some few have had the good fortune to live to see their work,—once disliked and rejected,—appreciated and purchased at prices not dreamed of in their early life; but these are rare exceptions.

Frank Duveneck was an exception. From the very beginning of his career his work received the highest praise both from his fellow artists and the critics. His first exhibition, held in Boston, in 1875, to quote one of his biographers, "proved more than a success, coming near a sensation." From that time down to the present day the works of Duveneck have been sought after by collectors and museums, and it is a lamented fact that there are not enough to supply the demand. The question may arise in the minds of those not familiar with his work as to the cause of this continued and almost universal popularity. The answer is the same were it asked of Rembrandt, Hals or any of the great masters. They were concerned with the representation of Life. They had discovered the secret of great art and went to their work in the most simple and direct manner. They were not concerned with technique or color except as a means to an end.

Duveneck studied the works of these masters, not to imitate their style, but to discover the secret of their power. His early training in Munich under his German masters was thorough with emphasis upon good draftsmanship and the correct estimation of values, and the road to success was not an easy one. It was



STUDY HEAD

FRANK DUVENECK

his method to attack a canvas with a brush loaded with color,—drawing, defining planes and modelling with certainty. His color, while not brilliant, was rich and vibrant.

The Study Head recently acquired by the City Art Museum is a sketch, probably executed while in Munich in the seventies. It bears an inscription upon the back of the canvas stating that it was presented in 1881 to Walter MacEwen. As will be seen in the accompanying reproduction, only the head and neck are visible, or

rather one side of the face and neck, the left side being lost in the dark background. This in a way makes the sketch more interesting, as it demonstrates the painter's mastery of his medium. With a few strokes of the brush he has given us a perfect impression of the living model. One does not feel that it is a trick or that it is insincere. One also feels that the artist had the ability to have carried the picture farther had he chosen to do so. He was not giving us an exhibition of his cleverness.

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The picture will appeal to the artist, student and layman with equal force. The artist will be pleased with the consummate skill and facility displayed. It will be of great value to the student as an exemplification of the artist's method. The layman will enjoy the character and lifelike portrayal of the subject.

Duveneck's better known works were carried much farther, with great care given to the modelling and textures. To obtain a true conception of the art of Duveneck, one should see the collection of his paintings in the Cincinnati Art Museum. It was to this institution he gave the greater part of his life's work.

Duveneck was not only a great painter. He was an etcher of distinction, and of his etchings it is enough to say that some of his prints, exhibited in London, in 1881, were mistaken for those of Whistler. In the memorial to his wife and a statue of Emerson, he has produced sculpture which ranks with America's best.

Frank Duveneck was born in Covington, Kentucky, in 1848, and died in 1919. He was employed while yet a boy by a decorator, learning something of the handling of paint before he went abroad in 1870 to Munich, at that time the leading art center of Germany. While a student he captured most of the prizes offered by the school, and it was during his stay in Munich that some of his best pictures were produced. It is to be regretted that one possessing the rare ability of Duveneck did not produce more. On the other hand, it will be impossible to estimate his far-reaching influence upon American art through those who were fortunate in being his pupils. He devoted the greater part of his life to teaching and many of the best known artists of today owe their success to the training received from him.

AN EGYPTIAN STELE

THE souls in Dante's Purgatory, creeping upward under the weight of ponderous rocks, seem to be fit types of the old Egyptians bearing the burdens of their temples and their tombs in life and in death. "To live is the greatest good: to die the greatest evil: the great affair of the living for whom death lies in wait is to prepare the means for a rebirth to eternal life."

An almost universal belief: but to prepare such means was a weighty matter to the Egyptian: holding his peculiar belief that if the body were destroyed, or if his spirit had no image or other memorial of the body to inhabit, one part of his individuality, his Ka, was blotted out, he became a shining mark for the temple shark, the embalming corps, the image maker, the amulet carver, and every species of leech. His tomb, the House of Ka, must be filled with inscriptions, images, furniture, food and other offerings prepared for that, to us, incomprehensible mystery the semi life in the tomb with the privilege enjoyed by the justified spirit of "Coming out by Day."

His preparations for immortality have been scattered to the ends of the earth: no fragment is too insignificant to find a place in some collection. Who can say that his object, this preservation, has not been as fully attained in this way? Few of us can sympathize with his belief in the efficacy of memorials, but one of his ideas is not unfamiliar to us, that of honoring the dead that the survivor may have a better chance of justification when his turn came to stand in the "Hall of the Two Truths" and plead his claim to be justified.

A Theban stele from the XVIII Dynasty (XV century B. C.) in the Museum illustrates these view points and leads to some interesting conjectures. It is the customary limestone