

AN ARTISTIC AFTERMATH

W. L. H.

I am indebted to Mr. John D. Chalfant, artist, of Wilmington, Del., for an opportunity to see a catalogue of the "First Annual Exhibition of the Society of Artists of the United States," which was held in Philadelphia, under the auspices of what is now the Academy of Fine Arts, in 1811. It was a notable and significant event in the history of the arts in this then new country. The title page of this rather modest pamphlet of forty-seven pages bears the quotation from Pope, "Dare to have sense yourselves." It was printed by Tho. L. Plowman, and sold at the reasonable price of twenty-five cents. By comparison with the recent splendid publication of our local portraiture exhibition, it presents a rather shabby appearance; but in the list of names, then perhaps obscure, but since become illustrious, it exhibits the work of eminent geniuses.

There were shown at this display 127 works of American artists and among the names since become familiar are those of Rembrandt and James Peale, Wurtmiller, Sully and Stuart. Raphael, Anna and Maria Peale all had works on exhibition. The Birches, Thomas and William, figure in this catalogue, and Denis A. Volozan seems to have been a prominent contemporary artist of classical subjects. Benjamin West's "King Lear" and "Ophelia" were there. The most numerous contributor to the occasion was F. Guy, whose landscapes made up nearly a sixth of the whole collection, and they were all "for

sale." There were several works of W. Broombridge. The feature, however, of special local interest, and recalled now with peculiar timeliness, is the fact that Jacob Eichholtz, then an "Associate Artist," appears in this early exposition with three pictures; one of these, a "Portrait of a Gentleman," was, of course, the early Nicholas Biddle picture of that period, and likely the one that Eichholtz carried with him to Boston, when he went there to interview the great Stuart. That picture, as I have heretofore reported, remains in Philadelphia, on the walls of the home of Mr. Biddle's daughter, who has been deceased since our portraiture exposition was held. Her nephew has had it carefully restored by Wilkinson, the skilled artist and finisher, and a recent view which I had of it displayed remarkable freshness and brilliancy of color, the special Eichholtz red coming out in splendid form. It would be of interest to know who was the subject of the other "Portrait of a Gentleman," then exhibited by Eichholtz, as well as his third picture, "Innocence," which was in all probability one of his own children and possibly may be identified with some of the present possessions of his work in his own family. It is gratifying to know that even at the early day and stage of his art development he had as many as three pictures in this limited collection.

Besides the work of American artists, this first annual exhibition included about 200 works of foreign artists, ancient and modern, and already in Philadelphia or other parts of the country there were owned landscapes by Teniers, portraits by Reubens, animal pictures by Paul Potter, numerous specimens of the Dutch artists as well as Rembrandts, Van

Dykes, Watteaus, Titians, Gordaens, Anglica Kauffmans, Jaen Steens, Ostades, and others, upon whom time has set its approval and enormously heightened their values.

Since the publication in the transactions of this Society of the recollections of Eichholtz and the partial catalogue of his works, I have discovered there are quite a number of others extant, which were not then known and recorded. It goes without saying that the history of his life and works, published by this society, has quickened interest in and an appreciation of him, as well as much enhanced the market value of his productions.

For example, a family portrait has turned up in Denver, Colorado. It is owned by the widow of Leonard Eichholtz, who died a year or two ago. It bears the date 1820. The subject is Henry Eichholtz, who was a brother of the artist. He moved from Lancaster to Downingtown, and there kept the hotel which is adjacent to the Pennsylvania Railroad. He was the father of Leonard Eichholtz, who went to Colorado in the early sixties. The portrait is half-length, looking left.

In the possession of J. Lane Reed, of Dayton, Ohio, there are three Eichholtz portraits. One is that of George Ford, born 1773, died 1843; the second of Mary Ann Elizabeth Hall Ford, born 1770, died 1845, grandparents of the owner. The third is that of Henry Robert Reed, his father, dated 1816. Mr. Ford's portrait was painted in 1812, and is, therefore, one of the earliest of the artist's works.

A very considerable cluster of Eichholtz portraits and the relations of a notable Lancaster family have been traced to and through Mr. Edward S.

Sayres, a prominent member of the Philadelphia Bar. He is a ~~great~~ ~~grandson~~ of Samuel Humes, who appears in the Eichholtz ledger as one of the artist's liberal local patrons. Miss Hamilton, of St. Paul, who is a kinswoman of the Humes family, has four Eichholtz portraits, viz., of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Humes; of Dr. Samuel Humes, a son, and of another son, William Humes, who married Miss Harriet Church, of Philadelphia, and was a member of the company of State Fencibles in the War of 1812, commanded by Hartman Kuhn, a Philadelphia descendant of Adam Simon Kuhn, a conspicuous figure in old Lancaster and foremost in Old Trinity.

The Eichholtz portraits owned and highly prized by Mr. Sayres are five in number, as follows:

Samuel Humes (the elder). of Lancaster, sitting, facing left.

Mary Hamilton Humes (his wife), daughter of James Hamilton, of Lancaster.

John Humes, of Philadelphia, merchant and Register of Wills, born in Lancaster, son of Samuel and Mary Hamilton; sitting, facing left.

Jane McPhail Humes, wife of John Humes, with babe in arms and her daughter. She was a daughter of John McPhail, merchant, of Philadelphia, and Ann Mackenzie, his wife; sitting, facing left.

Ann McPhail, wife of John McPhail, born Ann Mackenzie, mother of Mrs. Jane McPhail; sitting, facing left.

All these portraits, excepting the one of Mrs. John Humes, which lacks vigor, have always been considered very fine.

In note ix, page 30, of the Eichholtz biography, is a letter from a Legislative Committee of Delaware, directing a painting for the State Capitol of

Col. John Gibson, in action at Erie. I have learned that this work was executed as proposed and furnished the Delaware Commonwealth, and remains now, after more than eighty years, one of the art treasures of the State House.

According to the Delaware Legislative Journal, a joint resolution to have this portrait printed was adopted by the General Assembly February 6, 1822. The subject was suggested by the fact that Colonel James Gibson was a native of Delaware, and fell in defense of his country at the memorable sortie at Lake Erie, September 17, 1814. The committee appointed under the resolution was somewhat tardy, and the matter was renewed on February 16, 1829, when a new committee was appointed and \$120 appropriated for the purpose. No further record is made of the committee's work or report, but the picture was procured and paid for. The portrait is three-quarter length, in uniform with sword, and is in fairly good condition. Gibson was born in Sussex county, Delaware. He joined the regular army and was absent from his native Commonwealth most of his life.

The other day a portrait, obscured with the dust of ages and despoiled by cellar damp, was sold at a Philadelphia auction room, to which it had been brought by a colored drayman who rescued it from the basement of an abandoned house. A restorer and fancier of fine arts discerned in it some merit and bought it for a song. The restoration enhanced its likeness and value; the purchaser became certain it was an auto-portrait of Eichholtz. He studied our biography and catalogue and was convinced; and when he compared it with

the features of a descendant of Eichholtz he was certain. A wealthy connoisseur and art patron dropped into his shop, saw the picture, and, having been led to an appreciation of the supposed author, without further authentication, bought it at a price three-fold as much as Eichholtz ever was paid for any production. Its genuineness is yet to be established, as the family has no trace of this newly-found portrait.

That the general influence of the portrait exhibition led to a local stimulation of interest in the fine arts has already been manifested in many ways. A remarkable illustration is furnished by a letter sent to a gentleman interested in this subject by a citizen of the lower end of Lancaster county, who travels extensively through the lower end and adjoining parts of York county and Maryland, and, therefore, has special opportunities to become acquainted with the art treasures of that locality. He writes as follows to a sympathetic friend:

"I am in touch with the owner of some fine old paintings, among them one each of Henry and Mary Stewart. these are by M. Angelo. they are genuine I wish to bring them to the notice of Morgan & Carnegie. can you put me wise in the matter? if you can think I can make it worth your while to do so."

Whether his reference to the Stuarts involves the royal house of England seems to be a little uncertain, but the fact that the portraits are authenticated as the work of M. Angelo certainly makes them worthy the attention of Mr. Carnegie, now that America's foremost patron of the fine arts has passed away.

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