CHARLES H. DAVIS

N. A.

The MACBETH GALLERY

450 Fifth Avenue New York

Thirtieth
Anniversary Exhibition

1892—1922

PAINTINGS

by

CHARLES H. DAVIS, N.A.

The MACBETH GALLERY
450 Fifth Avenue New York City

THE CALL OF THE WEST WIND

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Titles of the Paintings

1	The Haunted House*	10X14
2	May Morning	34X42
3	Spring Twilight*	10X14
4	Drifting Light*	17X21
5	In Early May	25X30
6	Wings of the Wind	36X31
7	Now April's Here	25X30
8	The First Snow	20X26
9	Spring on the Hillside	29X36
10	Joyous Day in Spring	29X36
11	Winter Morning*	17X21
12	The Springtime*	25X30
13	All Hallowe'en	40X50
14	Spring Pastoral	25X30
15	Autumn Sunshine*	17X21
16	Grey Brothers	30X25
17	Early Summer	29X36
18	Night	17X21
19	"Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang"*	25X30
20	On the West Wind	34X42
21	Golden Moonlight	25X30
22	Pastoral*	20X27
23	Evening Clouds*	29X36
24	The Call of the West Wind	40X50
25	Clouds at Sunset	29X36
26	Summer Afternoon	18X26
27	The Pool*	25X30
28	A Clearing	34X42
29	Old Pasture	25X30
30	Little Grey Home*	17X21
31	Passing Summer	29X36

*These examples are for sale.

GREY BROTHERS

Charles H. Davis, N.A.

An Appreciation

AMERICA'S place in contemporary landscape art is so well established as to make more than a passing reference to it trite and unnecessary. Critical analyses in great number are readily accessible to the student of the work of the best men of our recent past, who, during the closing decades of the last century, established a landscape school that we and those who follow us may always reverence. Inness, Martin, Wyant, Twachtman and Robinson stand out among many other excellent painters as the great landmarks of our art of their time, and the years that have passed since they left us, in spite of "movements," "isms," and "scisms," have but strengthened our respect for them. Pioneers they were, blazing a trail of sanity and beauty that many since have tried, with more or less success, to follow.

It is still too soon, perhaps, definitely to know who of their successors will in the days to come be ranked with them. Perhaps we have some who, in the final reckoning, will be placed above them. We are still too close to the men themselves, to the individual idiosyncrasies both of painter and painting, to form unbiased estimates of current work. The most natural thing in the world is to like a man's creation because we like the man; it is equally human conversely to dislike. But it does not tend to a fair judgment of the work as art. It is probably true that the personalities of certain men, men with an inordinate appreciation of their own

IN MAY

powers, are very real bars to a proper public acceptance of their pictures; and many a second rate picture or worse has been favorably received from the studio of an artist well loved by his fellow men. No one is wholly free from such preconceptions, however strongly he may strive to keep them out of analytical discussion. And so it is that in all critiques of an artist at close range, we must recognize the probable presence of the personal bias. Time alone, long time, with its sifting perspective, will answer for our successors the problems about present-day work that confront us now.

However all these things may be, it is certain that we have several sterling painters, artists to their finger tips, whose efforts are leading toward the definite goal of real achievement. It is not the purpose of this

THE SPRINGTIME

brief article to enter into a discussion of who they are, why they are, or why this man or that is not included in the list. Each of a score of painters can rally any number of staunch supporters to his claim to foremost place in the ranks of men still producing. It would be unprofitable to champion the cause of one against another in such a non-productive debate.

Probably no one would be less likely to put himself forward for honors of this sort than Charles H. Davis. Living a retiring and studious life in the beautiful surroundings of his Connecticut home, he is quite content to work out his own salvation, and to let time decide as to what his place is to be. He belongs to no clique, has no pet theories, and is far more concerned about the production of works of art than in a

discussion as to the school in which they shall be classified. Occasionally he makes it a point to see and study special exhibitions both in New York and elsewhere, and each of his excursions to the city is never considered complete without a few hours at least in the company of the masters in the Metropolitan Museum. For he has a very vital interest in the best work of the past and is as keen a student of the Old Masters as of the creations of his contemporaries. The rest of the year, except when an occasional art jury demands his service, is spent in solving his own problems in his own way. He is very close to nature, a beautiful nature, and his studio is set amidst the hills and trees that form the familiar motive of his canvases.

Davis uses his landscape forms almost entirely as an expression of mood. He paints not a tree or hillside in spring, but the spirit of spring itself; not the tangled, tawny undergrowth of ravines and woods, but the somber quiet of a day in fall; not the snowy approach to the hill-top farm, but the mystery of winter with a hint of snow in the air. And yet, with all their spiritual quality, his pictures are as solidly substantial as we could wish. We can walk on Davis' hills, his rocks have weight, his trees mass, his water depth. He gives us nature and the spirit of nature at the same time, and while one could not exist without the other, we find the combination all too rarely. And we find it most often in the best of the work of the past that has survived.

NIGHT

But while Davis both now and for most of his art career has worked apart from his fellow painters, he has never been without keen interest in them and in their work, and this has been generously reciprocated. As long ago as the early '90s it is recorded that when one of his pictures came before the Jury of the National Academy of Design, it won the favor of Inness and Wyant, both members of the hanging committee, who tried to secure for it the post of honor, an effort in which, it is further recorded, they did not succeed. This picture was "The Deepening Shadows," bought at that exhibition by Thomas B. Clarke, Esq., who with Inness was one of Davis' earliest and most cordial supporters.

Davis' pictures of the '80s and '90s however have little in common with his work of

A CLEARING

today. He comes of a thoughtful family,—his father was a schoolmaster of the old type,—and it is not surprising that his earlier efforts were directed to a somber interpretation of nature in her quieter moods. "The Edge of the Village," his Salon picture of 1883, later exhibited in this country, well reflects the direction of the young artist's mood at that time. His first exhibition in America, made the preceding year, when he was but twenty-seven years old, was entirely composed of pictures of this type. But a dozen years later a different note began to appear; more light, a higher color-range, and perhaps a more joyous spirit, crept into his pictures. From then on they showed the presence of a firmer hand, a greater strength, and a simplification both of subject and of rendering. Forsaking the intimate details

MAY MORNING

of the French landscape which until then had dominated his thought, he devoted his attention to the broader aspects of nature, to the moods of rain-filled clouds over uplands, to the song of birds in spring, to the depth of the New England winter.

For Davis is as versatile in his subjects as he is in the methods he uses to depict them. For a time his cloud motives interested him so greatly that he came in the popular mind to be associated with them to the exclusion of the many other subjects that he painted with equal enthusiasm. It is certain that this growing reputation as a painter of clouds troubled him, and perhaps it is on that account that in recent years he has unconsciously devoted more and more of his time to spring, summer and winter subjects, with other than clouds as their chief

characteristic. One of his finest successes, "The Sunny Hillside," which was awarded the Corcoran Silver Medal at the exhibition in Washington two years ago, was as far from the type of picture usually associated with his name as anything could possibly be. In its subtlety of form and color it was a picture that Twachtman would have liked, and indeed that would apply to many of his recent efforts. There is something in most of his more poetic canvases that unconsciously recalls the work of Twachtman's later days, though they are far from imitative of that great master's art. Instinctively we try to interpret the new in the terms of what has gone before, and it is to Twachtman if to anyone that we must turn to find Davis' forerunner among the men of the preceding generation. Perhaps that is why Twachtman admirers have immediately turned to Davis with keen appreciation, or perhaps such a reaction is merely the natural association of quality with quality.

Since his earliest American exhibition honors have come to Davis wherever his pictures have been shown, juries uniting to recognize in him something almost always worthy of special distinction. He is represented in most of our leading museums, many of which recognized his merit some time before the general public responded to his highly individual art. There has been no lack of substantial appreciation in recent years, however, and there are few private collections of any importance in which his work does not occupy a conspicuous posi-

NOW APRIL'S HERE

tion. And, at that, his pictures are not fundamentally exhibition canvases, as the warm place they take in many private homes that do not aspire to the collector's high estate, amply indicates. They are pictures to be lived with day after day with an enjoyment that only a beautiful thing of the highest merit can possibly give.

So whether Davis belongs at the top of the list or not really matters very little, or not at all. And many years shall pass before we know. But in the meantime we can be sure that he is a splendid painter and a very real creative artist. Without indulging in too fulsome praise, in spite, perhaps, of strong temptation, let us be content to enjoy him for what he means to us now, and, like him, let time decide where his place eventually is to be.

Biographical Notes

BORN, Amesbury, Massachusetts, Jan. 7, 1856. Pupil of Otto Grundmann and Boston Museum School; Boulanger and Lefebvre, Paris. Member of the National Academy of Design, New York.

Represented in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Art Institute of Chicago; Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford; Art Gallery, Omaha; Boston Art Museum; Art Museum, Syracuse; Art Museum, Cincinnati; City Art Museum, St. Louis; Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, Minn.; Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts; Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh; Hackley Gallery, Muskegon, Mich.; Butler Art Institute, Youngstown, Ohio; Bruce Art Museum, Greenwich, Conn.

Honorable Mention, Salon, Paris, 1887; Silver Medal, Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1889; Palmer Prize, Art Institute of Chicago, 1890; Medal, Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics' Association, Boston, 1890; Medal, Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893; Grand Gold Medal, Atlanta Exposition, 1895; Gold Medal, American Art Association, New York, 1896; Cash Prize, American Art Association, 1897; Potter Palmer Prize, Art Institute of Chicago, 1898; Bronze Medal, Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1900; Lippincott Prize, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, 1901; Silver Medal, Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, 1901; Silver Medal, Universal Exposition, St. Louis, 1904; Silver Medal, International Exposition, 1910; Gold Medal, Panama-Pacific Exposition, San Francisco, 1915; Second W. A. Clark Prize and Corcoran Silver Medal, Corcoran Gallery, Washington, 1920; Saltus Medal, National Academy of Design, 1921.