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[Corcoran gallery]

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During the winter the Corcoran Art Gallery has been open to the public on Thursday evenings, so that all might have the enjoyment of its beautiful effects when lighted. Entering it one night, I found myself in the midst of a brilliant scene. The rooms were nearly filled with ladies in elegant costumes, and gentlemen in attendance; but a few of the "great unwashed" had found an entrance there, and were gazing with quite as much wonder upon the living, breathing forms around as upon the pictured faces and scenes upon the walls. Indeed, I very soon found myself doing the same, and thinking how few of those figures, in their dazzling toilets, were really artistic and picturesque; how few could one endure seeing transferred to canvas. For I find myself soon wearying of those exquisitely-finished French pictures, in which fair ladies are represented in sentimental attitudes, gracefully reclining upon couches, or pensively leaning over balconies, clad in silks and satins and laces, marvelous to behold. For a time the harmonious coloring, the wonderful finish, the sheen of satin and silk, the "shadowy lace," delight the eye. But this at last becomes wearisome, as all things must where soul is wanting. But to turn to our beautiful gallery, where, I am glad to say, such pictures as these are rare.

Among the new pictures, that of "Charlotte Corday in Prison" is the most impressive and interesting. It is by Muller, a French artist. In the catalogue - which is, by the way, the most admirable one I have seen, containing well-written

and discriminating sketches of the works in the gallery - there is a description of this picture, so excellent, so much better than any which I could give, that I will quote it entire: "This impressive picture is by an eminent French artist, known by his 'Roll-Call' of the victims of the guillotine during the first French Revolution. He has won three medals, is an officer of the Legion of Honor, and a member of the Institute of France ... The artist has depicted Charlotte Corday in the garb of a rustic, with tricolor ribbons on her cap, resting languidly upon the rusty iron bars, of her prison window. Her right arm is braced against the stone wall, the hand, holding a pen, supporting the drooping head. The left hand clasps the iron bars, - a touching contrast between its delicate, slender fingers and the rusty metal. The pose of the form shows weariness, as does also the noble, pale face, looking through the grating with a thrilling, earnest mournfulness. She appears as if, weary with writing, she had sought the window for air untainted by prison walls. Her mouth shows unflinching firmness, and her eyes show watchfulness and sadness, but not the sorrow of private grief. There is in them no sign of remorse nor of regret, unless over the necessity of her terrible act. Their introverted expression speaks of a heart brooding over the fate of her country.

"The picture is free from the tragic treatment the subject is too apt to receive from French artists. Its color throughout is grave and subdued. The clear, pale face, the plain, gray garb, the stone wall and rusty bars are all in

solemn keeping. Even the rosy tips of the exquisitely moulded fingers harmonize with the prevailing gravity of color. This noble picture is recently from the hand of the artist, and has never before been publicly exhibited."

This beautiful and most pathetic picture is worthy of all the space which has been given to the description of it.

There are two fine pictures by another French painter, Detaille, a pupil of Meissonier, "Le Regiment qui Passe," and "French Cuirassiers bringing in Bavarian Prisoners." The former represents a regiment passing through one of the streets of Paris at the close of a wet, snowy December day. The streets are filled with people, many marching in advance of the soldiers, and keeping time to the music. "The movement of these groups is admirably rendered. On the extreme right is a portrait of Meissonier himself. Beyond are omnibuses and fiacres, filled and piled up with passengers, cloaked and umbrellaed, and over them loom up the grand forms of the Portes St. Denis and St. Martin, which with other lofty buildings, snow-covered, recede in dim perspective in the muffled air." There is a reality about this picture which is very delightful, and suddenly transports one, like

"the magic mat,
Whereon the Eastern lover sat,"

to the very heart of the most brilliant city in the world. The other picture is a very beautiful water-color, most faithful in detail, and rich and harmonious in color. It represents a scene after a battle at Orleans, in which the French were

victorious, and from which they return bringing with them German prisoners, whose expression of utter indifference proves them not deficient in the cool philosophy which characterizes the nation.

I regret that I have not time to describe the pen-and-ink drawings by Mrs. Greatorex, especially the "Market Place at Munich," the "Arch in the Via Julia, Rome," and a "View through the Trees of the Battery, New York." I can only say that they are admirably executed, have exquisite softness and delicacy, and would well repay a long and careful study.

Among the new pieces of sculpture, are a beautiful "Endymion" and a group - "Sleeping Children" - by Rhinehart. The former lies sleeping upon a sheep-skin thrown over a rock. The ease and naturalness of the pose, and the expression of repose are perfect. The latter is a copy of a group made for a monument, and is, I think, one of the loveliest and most natural things I have seen in marble. The two little creatures lie closely clasped in each other's arms, their soft cheeks - they actually look soft - pressed together. The rounded limbs, the dimpled hands, the little bare feet, - all are so wonderfully lifelike and perfect, that one feels an almost irresistible impulse to kiss them.

I cannot now linger in this delightful place; but if you are not weary of the subject, I may, at another time, give you a farther description of the treasures it contains. As I leave it, and wander forth into the soft spring sunshine, again the

old refrain, "Oh, spring-time sweet," comes to me, and again
I realize how ungrateful it is to repine, amid so much that
is lovely and inspiring in nature and in art.

"And so the shadows fall apart,
And so the west winds play,
And all the windows of my heart
I open to the day."