

# At the Art Club

SOME OF THE PICTURES . . . . .

AT THE FOURTH ANNUAL EXHIBITION OF OILS.

The fourth annual exhibition of oil paintings at the Art Club this year suffers from the fact that all the best artists in the country are reserving their best work for Chicago. This has affected all exhibitions, and the Academy of the Fine Arts will omit its usual exhibition next spring.

The works at the Art Club are fewer in number than usual and there are few very strong works. There are some that are very mediocre and a good many that are neither very good nor very bad. The names of the exhibitors include most of our best artists, but few are represented by their best work. There have been more adverse criticisms on this exhibition than on any that have preceded it, but these are not all de-

one. It has life and strength in it to an amazing degree. We think it will be generally considered as one of the ablest pieces of portraiture seen in this city for a long time. It is not only a portrait; it is a picture.

In strong contrast to this result of modern ideas is the "Descent" by George De Forest Brush. Here we have a return to classic ideals, worked out with modern skill. The subject is excellently conceived, and is executed with poetic grace and artistic idelity. The tones are beautiful, reminding one of the early masters, while the drawing and arrangement are worked out on the best modern ideas. Taking it all for all, this is the most important work in the exhibition. It is a work that repays any

artist and his model is simply disgraced, and we do not see why the jury allowed it to be hung.

It shows an artist leaning back in his chair talking to his nude female model who sits in a sensuous attitude facing him. There is no excuse for this. It is bad ethics for an artist to introduce his model to the public. While the necessity for nude models is apparent, it is not intended that they shall form the component part of any picture. When a Venus or what-not is painted we are not to think of her as a nude model, but as an artistic creation.

When the nude is painted simply for its nakedness it is bad art and worse morals. When an artist can idealize a model into a creation of beauty that appeals so strongly to the esthetic as to suppress all sense of violation of the rules of conventionality, he is perfectly justifiable for the human form is the highest type of beauty. But to paint a naked woman as such and to reveal the secrets of his studio is little less than revolting. Mr. Grayson is an artist of ability, and he should not have allowed what was not enough as a study to be hung in a public gallery.

The "Goddiva" of J. H. Calise is a good piece of flesh painting, but it is open to some of the objections noted above.

W. T. Dannaet has a large study in red—a full-length figure in a red gown—which is a good piece of technical work, but otherwise uninteresting.

Alexander Harrison, whose fame is as great as any American artist, has three pictures which are little more than studies, and though shown in a public gallery, are very disappointing, because we never like to see an artist other than at his best.

Robert Houari has a bright little bit of broad painting, showing the Atlantic City boardwalk on a sunny day. Another, showing the same place on a rainy day, is less attractive.

Miss Klumpke's portrait of her sister has many excellent points in it. Mr. Lakin's portrait of Dr. DaCosta is not well done.

Mr. Moran's cattle piece is a charming picture, reminding one of Troyen, albeit devoid of the latter's defects in drawing. Miss Stephens' "Broad Street Station on a Rainy Day" is a very interesting piece of work.

Miss Elizabeth Nourse has a couple of interesting pictures. No. 26, which she calls "Tide," is a charming piece of work. The faces repay a great deal of study.

Charles H. Davis has two small works of a very high order. Mr. Davis is one of the best landscape painters in America. There is a quality in his work that is unrivaled by any of his fellow-artists. The soft touches of nature ooze out from the end of his brush in a way that is little less than magical. There is little to his pictures but atmosphere, and in his line of work that is all that is needed.

In sculpture all the works are interesting. The "Primavera" of Herbert Adams is a singularly pure marble that grows convincing upon the beholder. E. Ellwell has three charming busts in plaster, one of Miss Alcott, one of a modern young lady and one that reminds us of our grandmothers in their youth. The latter is particularly pleasing.

Mr. Grafty has four plaster pieces, showing remarkable power in the delineation of facial character. Mr. Samuel Murray has two small bronze busts (one of the inevitable Walt Whitman) and a plaster bust study. Dr. George Fayner has a single plaster portrait bust.

The exhibition is interesting, but we



PORTRAIT OF DR. WILLIAM THOMSON. BY ROBERT W. VONNOH.

served and circumstances account for some of the rest.

It can be fairly said that the work of the Hanging Committee is open to criticism, as there are some obvious errors of judgment. The Jury of Selection is said to have rejected two-thirds of the pictures offered. It would be interesting to see those rejected. There are eighty-five oils hung—that of Mr. Pearce not having arrived—and fourteen pieces of sculpture.

The south wall is usually called the place of honor, but this year no such distinction is made by the committee. The centre is occupied by Edmund Tarbell's "In the Orchard," a large canvas treated somewhat in the impressionistic style. The colors are strong but conscientiously handled. It is a picture that repays study, and is one of the most noteworthy compositions on exhibition.

Opposite, on the north wall, is Gari Melchers' "The Pilots," the largest work hung and an admirable composition. It is a strong piece of work, but with somewhat of sameness in the delineation of character. It is admirably drawn, and the general treatment leaves little to be desired.

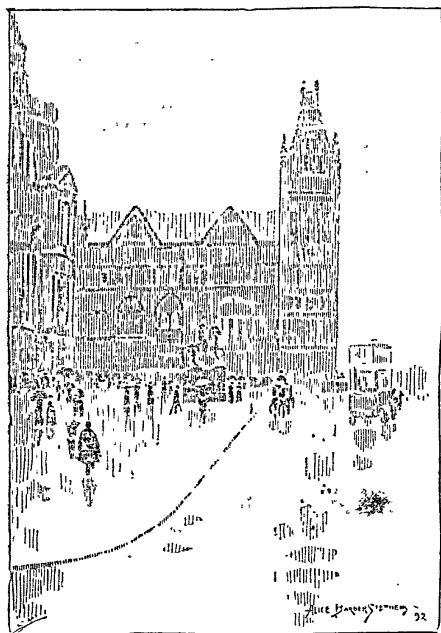
In many respects the most striking work in the gallery is Mr. Vonnoh's portrait of Dr. William Thomas. Mr. Vonnoh is a moderate impressionist, not a disciple of the crazy notions of modern Paris—but he has found some truth in the teachings of Monet and has applied them with very happy results, as his exhibit at the Academy of the Fine Arts shows. In the portrait of Dr. Thomas we see the effects of his impressionistic tendencies. Those who condemn impressionism by wholesale will hardly believe it possible that any good could come from introducing any of its canons into portraiture. And yet it could be hard to find a portrait more satisfying than this

amount of study, and is delightful, however considered. It is a pleasant relief after the high jinks of the modern schools.

Mr. H. R. Poore's "Old English Stag Hounds" has not been well hung. This is the only serious piece of animal painting in the gallery, and it may have been skied because the animals painted are entirely unknown in this country, so that the jury failed to see its merits. As a matter of fact, the hounds are painted with the greatest fidelity. Mr. Poore is the most conspicuous animal painter in this country, and we note in a recent English publication that no man in England since Landseer has painted dogs so well. In the present picture the dogs are marvelously drawn. The head of the dog on the left is one of the strongest pieces of animal painting of this generation. This rare breed of hounds is noted for the deep red in the eyes and this Mr. Poore has faithfully portrayed, although it seems to the uninitiated a palpable exaggeration.

Totally different from anything else we have ever seen by Mr. Poore is the Normandy landscape on the north wall, a charming bit of bright color, showing waving fields of grain, done admirably. Mr. Colin Campbell Cooper has a moonlight scene which is almost a monochrome, but nevertheless an attractive picture, showing careful work in the production of the various grades of shadow. A portrait by this artist does him less credit.

Mr. Clifford P. Grayson, a Philadelphia artist who has a high reputation, is represented by four small pictures, none of which are important. Two of his pictures are sketches of his studio. This is a bad sign. When an artist begins painting his studio for exhibition it is an indication that he needs new inspirations. The picture of the



RAINY DAY, LOOKING TOWARD PENNSYLVANIA STATION. BY ALICE BARBER STEPHENS.



SUNNY DAY AT ATLANTIC

fancy that the next one will be more important.