

# BRUSH AND PENCIL

Vol. V

NOVEMBER, 1899

No. 2

## HERMANN DUDLEY MURPHY

When a young man has achieved that meed of success which has made his name generally known, and has done this without any adventitious aids,



PORTRAIT OF HERMANN DUDLEY MURPHY, BY HIMSELF

he becomes a subject of interest, both for what he has accomplished and for what he promises to do in the future. It is not unusual in this day of advertising for a man to win a certain amount of something between notoriety and fame. Reputations are built for a man to-day by skillful manipulation, but they are of the mushroom variety, and like that vegetable of swift growth, they soon die. Mr. Murphy has gained no fame of this sort. His reputation is the result of praise passed from artist to artist and from

art lover to others seeking good things. It is this quiet, simple growth which is the best guarantee of the innate value and artistic quality of what he has done.

There is a great deal in the story of Mr. Murphy's development which is helpful to the student of to-day, because it shows what is

possible for a youth of determination who has his goal, and works toward it regardless of obstacles. From the paintings of old and modern artists it has always seemed to the writer that he who has not too easy a road gains something from the hardships to which he is thus introduced. He is given an insight into human nature that can never be obtained by the prosperous who have never tasted some part of the hard side of life. He gets a knowledge of his brothers and of the springs of action that are not given to the man who has never pursued anything but pleasant ways. Obstacles to one's career are a sort of moral bracer, and unless continued too long, do for his inner nature what a gymnastic training does for his physique. Mr. Murphy does not agree with this view of the question. He thinks one can go so much faster if he is not obliged to stop to gather his tools for himself. But in whose paintings do you get most at the soul of things and of people: among the artists who have found all paths open for them, or in those who have to open them for themselves?

When Mr. Murphy was sixteen he made up his mind that he would be an artist. It was the only thing he wanted to be or felt that he could be, and this he told his parents. His father was a successful business man, and while he did not oppose the boy's plans, neither did he favor them. Possibly he felt that it was a fancy of youth, which would pass away if it met a struggle with adversity; so in the beginning, while he was perfectly kind to his son about his choice, he left the boy to his own endeavors, watching him in the mean time to see whether it was a whim or a true spirit which was directing him. Mr. Hermann



PORTRAIT OF MR. WEBSTER, BY H. D. MURPHY

Dudley Murphy came to Boston (he is a son of Massachusetts) and entered the School of Fine Arts, studying with De Camp and Grundmann. With every month of work he felt surer that he had made no mistake in his choice. His teachers indorsed what he did, and he succeeded well enough from the first to pay his way by illustrations in papers and magazines. At this stage of his development it was his highest ambition to be an illustrator. One of the best things that came to him in this line was his appointment as artist to the expedition which investigated and mapped out the Nicaragua Canal. He said he did not know enough at that stage to save studies for future use, but was satisfied to do what came along in the day's work, while the experience and the life of freedom were of great value to him. It was a liberal education to the youth, to whom it opened so much that was new. His work brought him into prominence as an illustrator, and had he still pre-



CAROLINE, BY H. D. MURPHY

ferred that branch of artistic expression he might have had opportunities enough to continue in it.

Mr. Murphy wanted to go abroad to study, as all students do, and as it was more necessary for them to do ten years ago than it is to-day. His father, who had been growing prouder of him, sent him to Paris, and there he entered Julian's, and settled to the work of the Paris schools. He does not advise students to go abroad to study until they have practically finished their elementary school work, because a very young man cannot appreciate what there is in the old

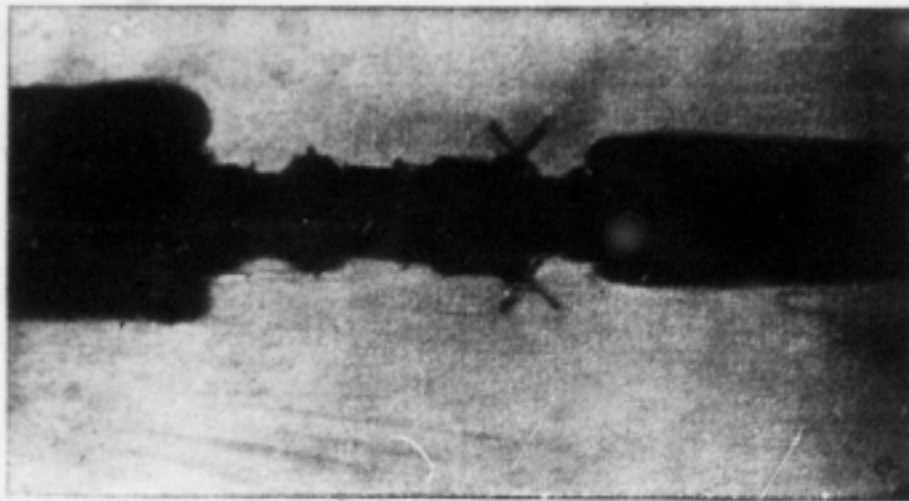


WINTER, BY H. D. MURPHY

masters. It is in this opportunity to see masterpieces that foreign study outdoes what America has to offer. He thinks that a student who has reached twenty-five is as young as any one should be to go abroad with advantage, though there is some difference in temperaments, of course. There are difficulties for the student in Paris which incline the balance toward his working in America until his school days are over. Mr. Murphy, like so many others who have tried it, says the school work can be done in the large cities of this country as well as in any city of Europe.

Mr. Murphy does not approve of the system of prizes, and says he is prepared to speak of its evils, as he won several at Julian's. He agrees with the foremost educators of the day that prizes put before the student a wrong aim in working. The end becomes the great

thing, and the prize more than the work that wins it. The pleasure of the doing is overshadowed by the hope of winning a prize. Most prize-winners, and those who have tried unsuccessfully to become such, will agree to this. Mr. Murphy says: "First, I was not satisfied until I had won one prize. When I got that, I wanted to have two drawings hung—no one had—and so I worked for that, and got it; and then there was something else in similar ways to try for, and so on, and the only thing one does not think of under such circumstances is Art for Art's sake, which should really be the first thought, I believe." While at Julian's Mr. Murphy had four drawings hung and won four prizes for composition.



EVENING, BY H. D. MURPHY

During his student days in Paris Mr. Murphy received much encouragement from Benjamin Constant and Jean Paul Laurens, who became his friends as well as instructors. Through their kindness he was given an insight into the way such minds as theirs view art. Perhaps it is due to them and talks with them that Mr. Murphy's individuality began to develop. He says with perfect frankness that there was no originality in his work until after he had studied for some years. During his first trip abroad he visited Italy and Holland for the purpose of study. It was in Paris that he painted the portrait of Mr. Tanner which is shown in this article. Mr. Tanner is an interesting man who has won several honors, and what is better, the appreciation of his brother artists. One of his paintings was bought by the French government for the Luxembourg Gallery. This portrait of him is one to attract attention anywhere. It has been shown at several

exhibitions, and has never failed to awaken comment. The peculiar flesh tint which belongs to the subject, and the dull background, make the picture conspicuous before one notices the handling.

Mr. Murphy found his individuality through studying the paintings of others, which in his case was an exception to the usual rule. Original he surely is, and though now and then he is said to be strongly influenced by Whistler (he says himself that the study of Whistler did more to bring out in him what he has than any other thing), yet most critics and artists are ready to give him credit for individuality. His work is both strong and tender. He paints by choice in a low key, with grateful harmonies, and the effect is restful to the spirit. He avoids strong contrasts of light and shade, and gets most decorative effects. His landscapes are like poems in color, and are full of feeling. It is not given to many to paint such sensitive, graceful bits of nature in such a tender, sympathetic manner.

Mr. Murphy regards the frame in a sense as a part of the picture, in so far as it may accentuate its beauties or mar them, and he always designs his to go in tone with his picture. How wise this is one may learn by putting any picture of tender tones within frames of different materials and colors.

In his figure work, some of which is reproduced here, he shows such excellence in line that that alone is a pleasure to see. The picture of Caroline shows this strikingly, and is it not decorative? The composition of this picture is worth study. Its color is red in different shades, with the light given by the crape shawl. The graceful



H. O. TANNER, BY H. D. MURPHY

line from head to foot is a satisfaction to the eye, and the artist so arranges his sitter that all the draperies simply tend to accentuate this beauty.

I feel that Mr. Murphy's pictures, even the portraits, in black and white, give but a poor idea of what his work really is. Much of it cannot be reproduced by photography without losing the values. Only those things which have rather strong contrasts in color or in light



PORTRAIT OF THE REV. JAMES REED, OF BOSTON  
BY H. D. MURPHY

and shade come out well in black and white, and some of the finest and most characteristic of Mr. Murphy's paintings lack these in a marked degree. He has an exquisite figure, done while he was in Venice, of a girl with green shawl against a dark-toned background, and the grace of the figure, the simplicity of the pose, the textures in the gown and shawl, the richness of the colors in their depth, make a very charming whole.

As a portrait painter Mr. Murphy has received the highest praise. He has a happy faculty of being in accord with his sitter so that

he feels and presents that sitter's personality. In the portraits reproduced this will be noted. Each is as distinct in every respect as the persons themselves. The work is strong, and they show him at his best, he thinks. One of these portraits is owned by the Swedenborgian Society of Boston, another is the portrait of the oldest professor at the Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, and is owned by the school. The portrait of Mr. Murphy, which is a less finished production, shows his artistic instinct more fully than the other portraits. It is a hard thing to make an artistic portrait of a man of to-day, as is

this one of the artist by himself. You will notice how fine are the lines in this, and how picturesque the whole effect—more like the cavalier of a century ago than the everyday man of the present.

It would be a misfortune for Mr. Murphy to work where he has no scope for this instinct of the picturesque which is so lacking in art, and which he possesses in high measure. He might become a most successful painter of women, for they lend themselves by their garments and form more easily to this quality of the picturesque than men. Men are more useful than ornamental in the garb of to-day.

The portrait of Mr. Webster was exhibited at the Society of American Artists, and was flatteringly hung. It was regarded as a strong piece of painting, both in handling, values, and arrangement. The "Evening Scene in Winter," which I hope will be shown in this article, has been exhibited in Boston, and was one of the few specially noted by Fritz Thaulow on his visit to the exhibition of the Art Students' Association last winter. It is now in New York, and was exhibited recently at the Society of American Artists. It is a picture of which one would think Mr.

Murphy might be very proud, but the artist is as modest in his valuation of himself as he is original in his method of expression.

Mr. Murphy seldom uses pen and ink as his medium to-day, but early in his career he found it agreeable, and might have become one of the leaders in this branch had he cared to restrict himself to it. The Boston Art Club bought one of his pen drawings done in Paris, and one from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts is shown with this article. Mr. Murphy has exhibited in Chicago, Philadelphia, Pittsburg, New York, Boston, and Paris. The profile picture illustrated



PROFILE HEAD, BY H. D. MURPHY