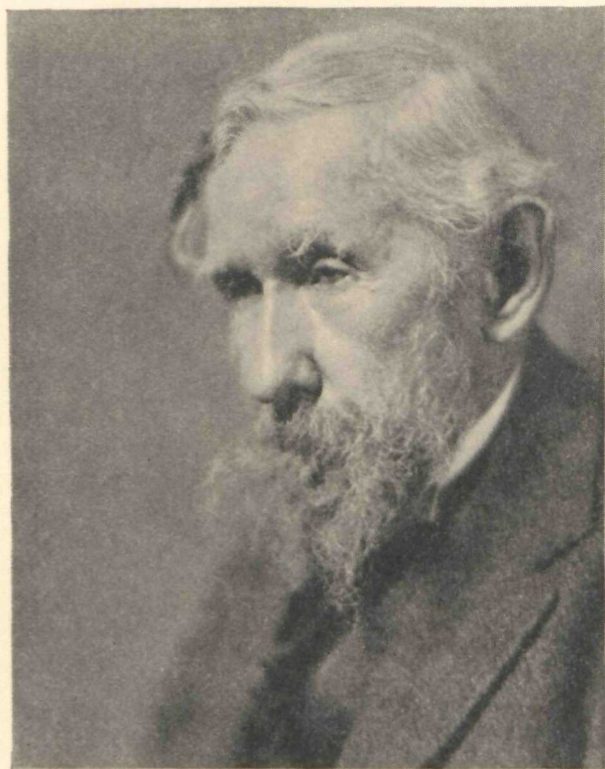


JOSEPH PENNELL



PHOTOGRAPH BY CARLO LEONETTI

Joseph Pennell
1860-1926

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

JOSEPH PENNELL

An account by his wife
ELIZABETH ROBINS PENNELL
issued on the occasion of

A MEMORIAL EXHIBITION
OF HIS WORKS

NEW YORK

November 9, 1926, to January 2, 1927

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IN assembling an exhibition of the works in various media of the late Joseph Pennell the Trustees of the Museum continue their policy of reviewing and paying respect to the achievement of eminent American artists. Among the memorial exhibitions of recent years have been those of Winslow Homer, Thomas Eakins, George Bellows, and John Singer Sargent.

For the success of the exhibition the Museum gratefully acknowledges its indebtedness to Mrs. Pennell, whose interest alone has made it possible, who has lent a very large number of things for the exhibition, and who has written the following account of Mr. Pennell's work. The Museum also acknowledges with many thanks the generous loans which have been made by the following ladies and gentlemen: Mrs. John C. Clark, Mr. and Mrs. Laurent Oppenheim, Mr. and Mrs. Edward L. Tinker, and Messrs. G. W. Davison, David Keppel, and M. S. Sloan. Through the courtesy of The Macmillan Company three illustrations which have appeared in its publications are again reproduced here.

For the Trustees

EDWARD ROBINSON

Director



Le Puy en Velay
ETCHING. 1890



IN WILLIAM DUTT'S HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS IN EAST ANGLIA
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Blakeney

DRAWING. 1900 OR 1901

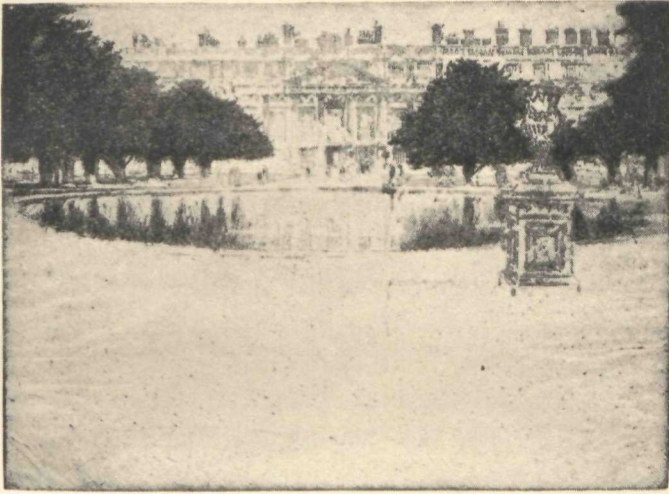
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THAT Joseph Pennell was "a born illustrator" no one knew better than himself. He said so many times and when at the last he wrote the story of his life, the title he chose for it was *The Adventures of an Illustrator*. That he was "a born etcher" he might have added with equal truth. But he was born at a period when in America both the illustrator and the etcher had to work out their own salvation. The sixties and seventies of the last century were not brilliant decades in the history of American art, though we know now that they prepared the way for what has been called, not without reason, the Golden Age of American Illustration, and for that sudden American discovery of etching to which we

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owe its present unbridled popularity. Pennell had to grope through the prevailing darkness with the others, a darkness denser for him because he came of good old Quaker stock and art was not encouraged as a profession among Friends. His earliest drawings may reveal the influence of the wrong masters, the wrong models, the wrong standards. But they show too the unerring instinct for the right point of view and the character that distinguished his work, from the beginning in the Philadelphia nursery to the end at the Brooklyn window overlooking the skyscrapers and harbor of New York.

He had none of the advantages of his contemporaries whose names stand out for us as the pioneers of modern American art. While they were studying in Paris or Munich or Antwerp, he could go no further for his training than the public libraries and old bookshops of Philadelphia. If the Industrial School of Art and the Pennsylvania Academy are now proud to claim him as a student, they were of next to no use to him when he was one. His real schools for long were illustrated magazines and books though, presently, he was learning more from visits to the studio of Gerome Ferris, an etcher of no little technical skill, and to the house of James L. Claghorn, one of the first American collectors of prints. At this impressionable moment chance introduced him to Rico and the Spaniards, while the lectures of Seymour Haden and the exhibitions of the enterprising new societies of etchers strengthened the conviction formed at Claghorn's that Whistler was the greatest of them all.



Hampton Court

ETCHING. 1894

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When, with surprising swiftness, he achieved his ambition, when he found a place on the walls of exhibition galleries and the pages of Scribner's Magazine, soon to be The Century, the two chief influences that helped him to get there were not to be mistaken. The influence of Rico is in the early Pennell pen-and-ink drawings, the influence of Whistler is in the early Pennell etchings, and it is logical and right that this should be so. The originality of Rico, Fortuny, and their school was in their fearlessly realistic rendering of sunlight. They might have been wiser not to exchange an old convention for this new realism, but it cannot be denied that in the attempt they were uncommonly successful. Pennell's first important commissions were in Philadelphia and New Orleans,^(E) where the sunlight can be at times and seasons as vivid and brilliant as in the towns of Spain and, taking his good where he found it, he adapted to his own needs the appropriate methods of the Spaniards. The etcher expresses himself in line and, since Rembrandt, none of the men whom Pennell was studying seemed to him to have made this line so expressive as Whistler. Therefore, when he began seriously to etch, he turned to Whistler as the guide who could best lead him. But no matter whose technical guidance he accepted, he was always determined to follow it in his own fashion. In his later years he would tell his class at the Art Students' League that, whatever they did, they were not to make Pennells. He never made

NOTE: (E) in the text indicates that a print, drawing, or book with this title or upon this theme is included in the exhibition at the Museum.

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Ricos or Whistlers, but, from the beginning, he made the Pennells he afterwards refused to let his students make, and it was because of the individuality he expressed in his work that he became known at once. No sooner had he exhibited *The Scaffolding on Philadelphia's Public Building*,^(E) *Callowhill Street Bridge*,^(E) and the other Philadelphia etchings, *The Swing of the Arno at Pisa*,^(E) *The Landing Place, Leghorn*,^(E) and the rest of the Italian series that quickly followed, than he was recognized, though he had been unheard of until then. When I met him in 1881 he was already prominent in the new societies and active on exhibition committees. More astonishing, England was almost as prompt in its recognition, and, on the strength of the Philadelphia and Italian plates, he was elected to the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers.

For the first few years after we were married, in 1884, there were comparatively few etchings—that year and the next, three or four in London; several in Rome, some never even bitten, from others only trial proofs pulled, most of which have disappeared; several in Venice, these proved on the old historic press said to date back to Dürer, afterwards printed and now familiar to collectors, suggesting more than any others Whistler's influence—inevitably, for in Venice every subject is a Whistler subject, every motive a Whistler motive. In the autumn of 1885 we cycled over the route of Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, our object a book and etchings to illustrate it. A grooved box was made and twenty-five plates to



IN ARTHUR NORWAY'S HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS IN YORKSHIRE
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Whitby Abbey

DRAWING. 1899

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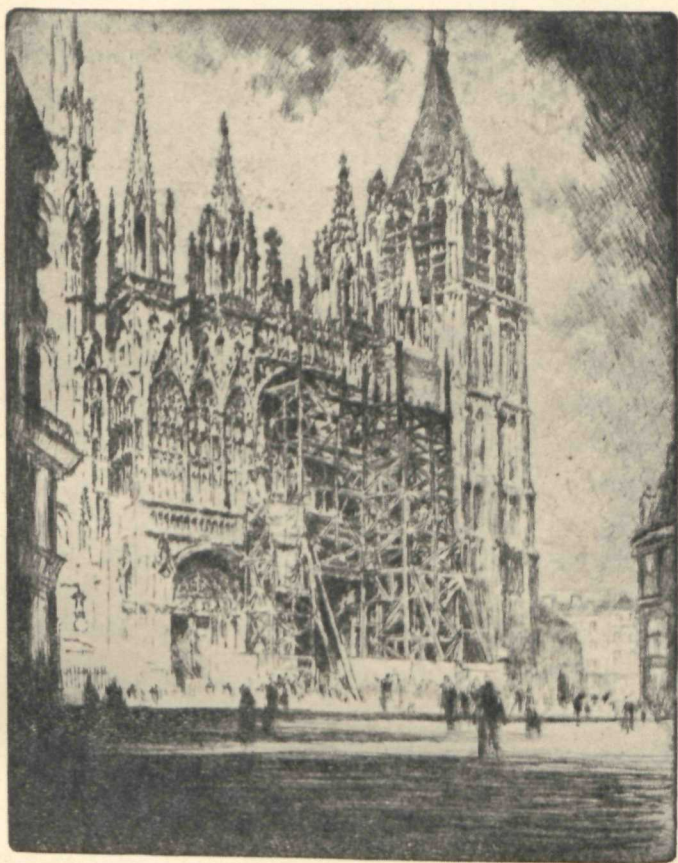
fit in the grooves were grounded before the start. But we came home with no more than three or four notes on copper—an old barn, reeds by a riverside, a cottage or two—prints from which I fancy I alone have seen, and this incident helps to explain why these years were so barren of etching.

They were years of innumerable commissions for illustrations, mostly taking him out of London. When he traveled then it was usually by cycle, and cycling, when every unnecessary ounce in one's luggage is a calamity, throws almost insurmountable physical difficulties in the way of the etcher. Another reason was his disappointment in the Painter-Etchers. The promise that American members should be represented on the Council was not kept and Pennell, from his youth a valiant fighter against injustice, resigned. And there was a third reason, perhaps the strongest—Frederick Goulding. As long as we lived in lodgings, as we did at first in London, a printing press of our own was out of the question. Pennell had to depend on a printer and Goulding was the one printer in London considered worth depending on. But Goulding made it quite clear that he was out of sympathy with the young American who would have what he wanted though it might not be what Royal Painter-Etchers wanted. Anyway, prejudiced or not, he got out of five Pennell plates dry, hard, soulless prints, and Joseph Pennell, discouraged as he has himself written, did fewer etchings in the years that followed than ever before or since.

Pen-and-ink was the medium of which he made

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most use during this period. It was a form of the graphic arts that fascinated him as it did almost all the brilliant group of illustrators who were then giving the American magazines an international reputation—Abbey, Blum, Brennan, Lungren, Remington—as, for that matter, it had the greatest English illustrators of the sixties. Pennell's pen drawings were, oftener than not, large; their size would astonish those who have seen only the small reproductions on the printed page, but it was the scale on which the American illustrators were then working. However elaborate his subject, his handling of the pen was never tight or niggled, for he had one great advantage, shared by all his generation, over the Englishmen of the sixties. The new mechanical engraving allowed a freedom in pen-and-ink impossible when every line had to be translated by a wood-engraver who too often believed he knew more about line than the draughtsman. Pennell had learned from Rico not merely to render sunlight with a pen but to "suggest the forms of architecture rather than draw them—suggest them by shadows which give the form." That it was a method by which he was sure to get crispness and color he showed not only in the large drawings of the English and some of the French cathedrals,⁽⁶⁾ full of exact detail, or the still more closely studied halls and courts of the London City Guilds, but in the small pen-and-ink notes by the wayside for *The Canterbury Pilgrimage* and *Our Sentimental Journey* and for Hamerton's *On the Saône*. The periodicals of the day, more especially



West Front, Rouen

ETCHING. 1900

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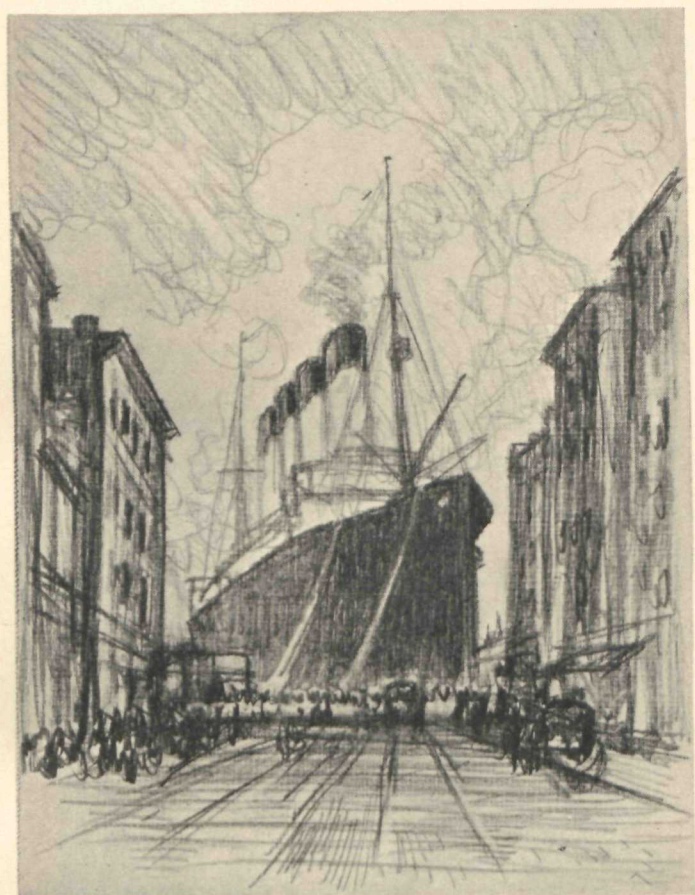
The Century and Harper's, are records of his pen drawings as well as his travels. Every stage of his progress can be traced, from Philadelphia to Rome, from the Italian roads to the English, from the Hebrides to the Alps, from the Thames to the Rhone. He pampered himself with no interval of rest. And throughout his wanderings pen-and-ink was to him a beautifully responsive medium. It was the subject of his first technical book, *Pen Drawing and Pen Draughtsmen*.⁽²⁾ That tribute offered, he no longer let it monopolize him to the same extent, though he loved and used it, if in moderation, to the end.

In the early nineties we took a place of our own in London, old chambers at the foot of Buckingham Street, Strand. We were scarcely settled when Pennell bought a second-hand press from Anthony Henley, brother of W. E. Henley, the poet and our friend. It was a fine old press with a great wooden wheel, decorative if a test of the printer's muscle. But to this special etcher hard work was never a drawback, and I should say, now I look back, that for the next ten years or so etching was the medium to which he devoted most of his time and attention. By no means all of it, however. The same year the press was bought, or the next, we went together for *The Century to Andalusia*. The drawings for our two articles were mostly in pen-and-ink. But, as if he began to fear drifting into a formula, when the Macmillans, about the same time, commissioned him to illustrate Washington Irving's *Alhambra*, he also made a number of pale, gray, delicate little lithographs⁽²⁾ in which

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some critics could find only Whistler. What I see in them now is the then unavoidable concession to the Ways, the London lithographers, and tyrants after their fashion. What they said could and could not be done on paper or stone had to be accepted as the gospel of lithography. A mystery was made of printing and the artist kept in an outer room until the print was placed in his hands. Whistler accepted the tyranny. So did Pennell, until he took his lithographs of Panama to Philadelphia where the more liberal firm of Ketterlinus unlocked the printing room and put a press at his disposal. But this was years after the Alhambra book, years after the Dutch lithographs⁽⁶⁾ made on a holiday to celebrate the successful end of the important Lithography Case, even a few years after the Society of Iconophiles published his first, almost timid lithographs of New York City.⁽⁷⁾

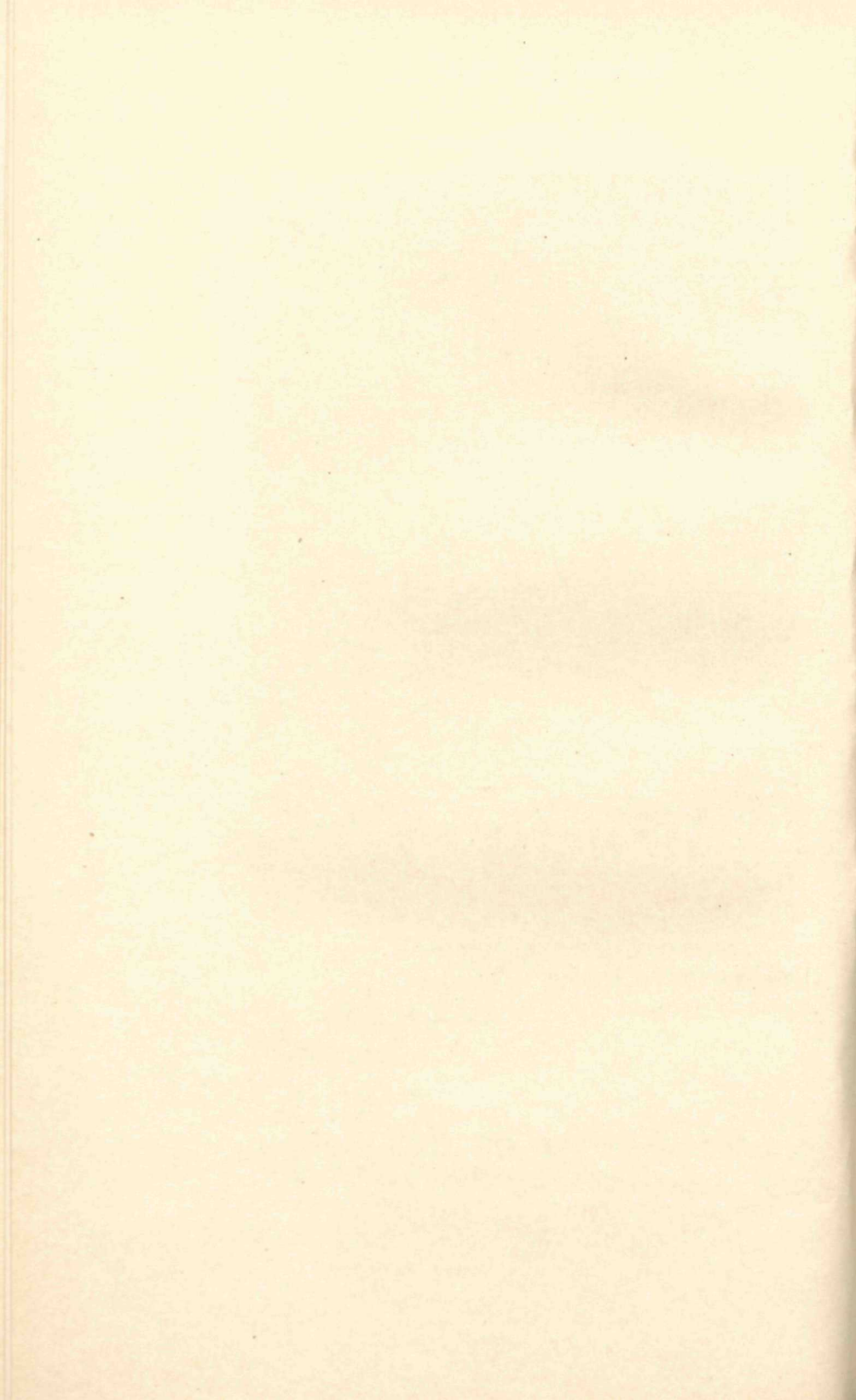
During one of the two journeys in Spain he went to Toledo—grim Toledo. No delicacy here, no paleness, no silvery grays, but sternness, ruggedness, bold masses and heavy shadows. Had he already worked with the Philadelphia firm, he might have made lithographs in Toledo. But he was still bound by the Ways' iron rule, and on his next visit he packed copper plates, not transfer paper, in his bag. The most determined to detect Whistler's influence, or anybody else's, will now search for it in vain. Nobody could have seen Toledo, its monumental bridges⁽⁸⁾ across the river, its massive gateways, its commanding citadel, its towering churches and palaces, its sinister landscape, just as Joseph Pennell,

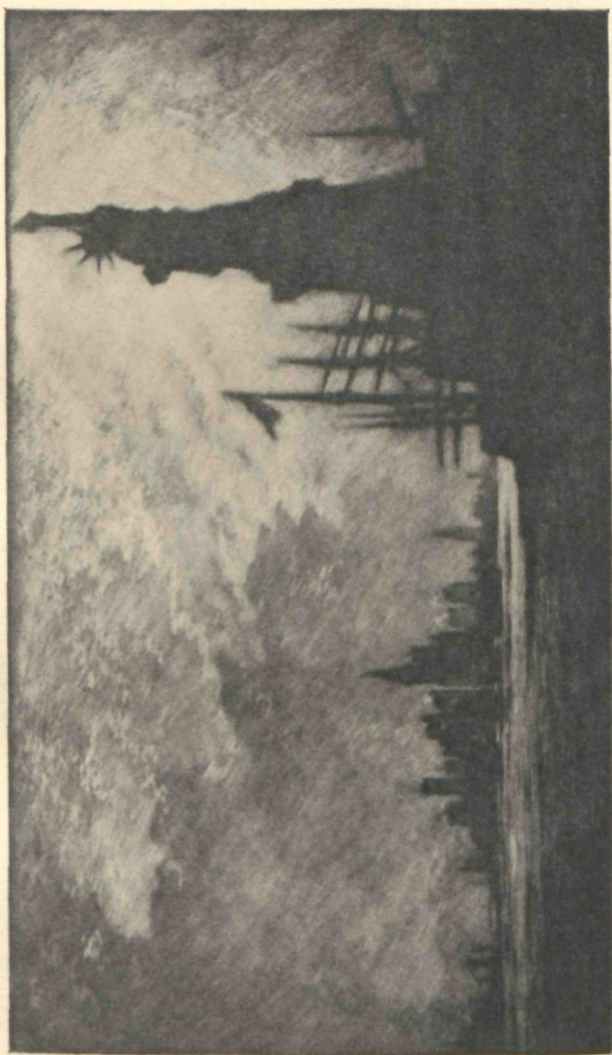


IN JOHN VAN DYKE'S THE NEW NEW YORK. THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

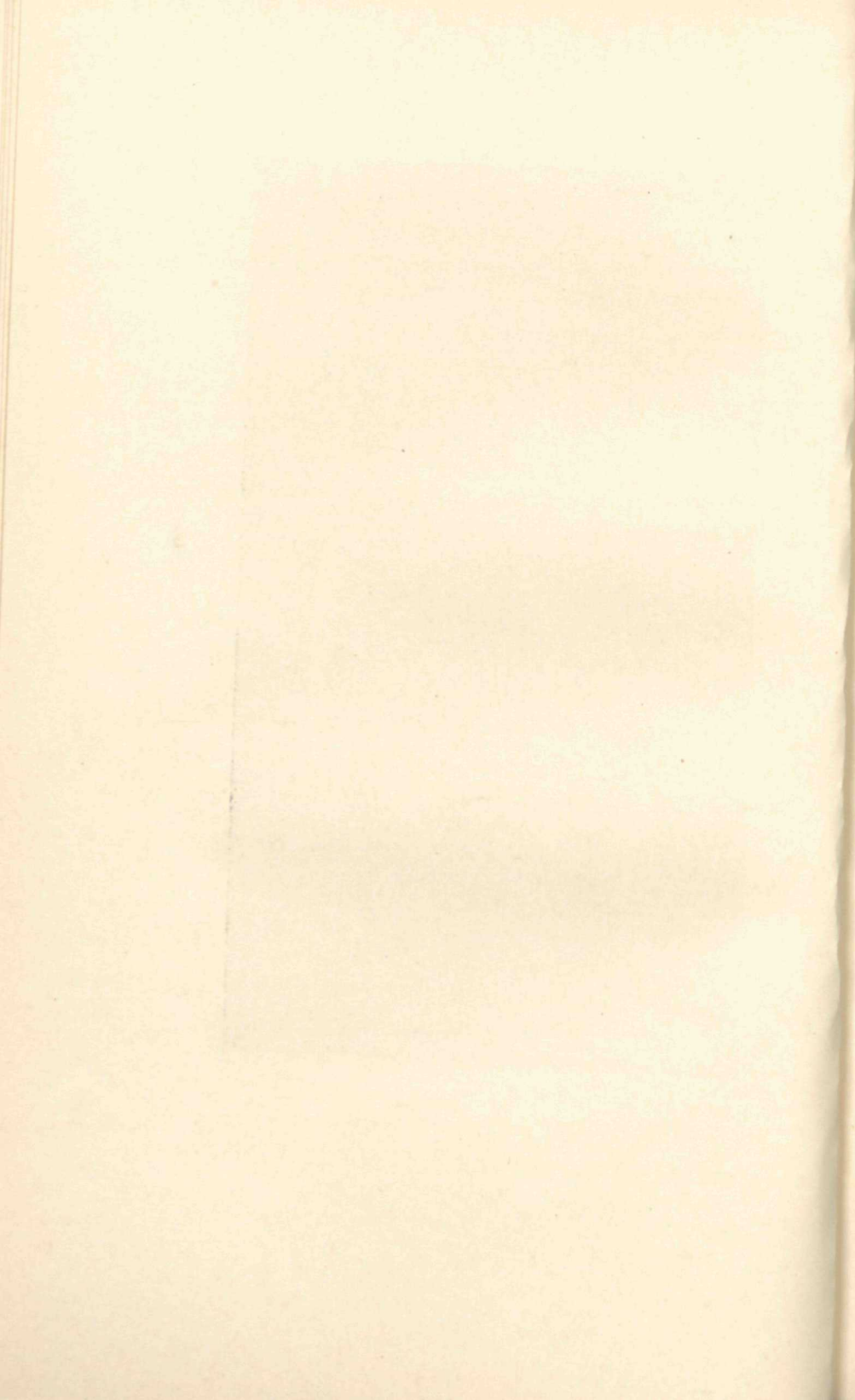
The Mauretania, New York

DRAWING. 1908





Hail America
MEZZOTINT. 1908



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with his unerring instinct for character, saw it, nobody could have etched it with just his nervous, sympathetic line, his feeling for color, and his knowledge of architecture gained by years of study in cathedrals. To compare the Toledo plates to the London, soon to come in quick succession, is to realize the degree to which he had developed his powers of observation and his readiness to vary line and treatment with his subject. Grimness at Toledo, yes. But charm at Hampton Court,^(E) intimate tranquil charm in the palace built for peace, protected not by impregnable walls but by shade-giving trees growing luxuriantly as trees grow only on English soil; charm at Greenwich Hospital with its stately park on the river bank; charm at low-lying Lambeth, across the Thames at Westminster,^(E) in the City at St. Paul's; charm from his windows, Wren's City^(E) spread out before him, Waterloo Bridge and Somerset House^(E) in the foreground; charm in the London churches, St. Mary-le-Strand,^(E) St. Clement Danes,^(E) St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, a part of his Classic London; charm in the London parks; charm in the London streets and squares with the odd little corners and tender little vistas hitherto undiscovered. London is not all tranquillity and tenderness. It can be grim enough down by London Bridge, Limehouse and Shoreditch, Tower Bridge^(E) and the Pool of London, but grim in a very different way from Toledo. To look first at Tower Bridge and then at the Bridge of Alcantara^(E) is to see how well the artist understood the difference and with what absolute rightness he expressed it.

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After Toledo, about 1900, he returned to the French cathedrals to finish the last three articles for *The Century*. It now occurred to him that it would be infinitely better to have fifty or seventy-five or even a hundred good prints of such beautiful subjects than one original for mechanical reproduction. The regret is that to do this did not occur to him at the start. His *Le Puy*^(E) and *The Devil of Notre Dame*^(E) suggest what he might have done if it had. He had gone to Le Puy in 1890, on his bicycle, and had his first view of "The Most Picturesque Place in the World" from the road that winds down into the wide stretch of volcanic country, so like the design glorified of some mediaeval painter or engraver. He was fascinated by that extraordinary landscape, by the strange formation of the volcanic peaks each crowned with church or castle, chapel or statue, by the amusing pattern of road and river winding in and out and on to the enclosing hills, and he stopped his work in the cathedral to etch the well-known plate. Three years later (1893) he was no less fascinated by the arrangement on the top of Notre Dame when, risking the comparison with Méryon, he etched *The Stryge*,^(E) and one of the other chimeras among which he spent many memorable days. The Amiens, Rouen, and Beauvais plates prove the fine facility the years of work in the mean time had given him. They are drawn with far more freedom than his earlier cathedral illustrations though, certainly, these three of the greatest Gothic churches are not the simplest in construction or detail. The impressive length of Amiens



Wren's City

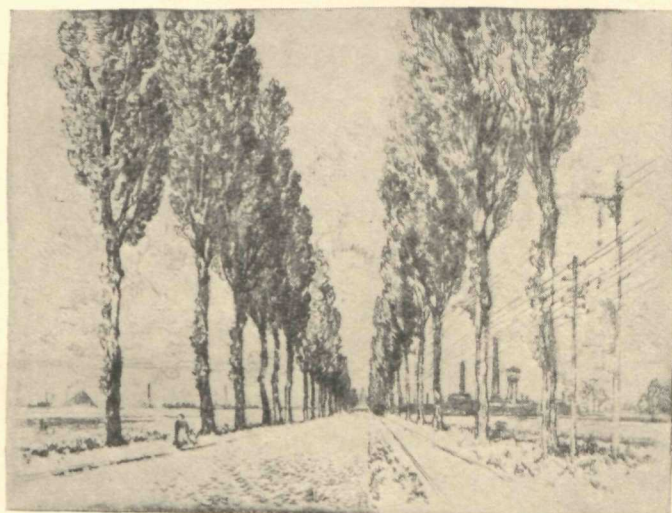
MEZZOTINT. 1909

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as seen from the river, the huge bulk of Beauvais from the market-place,⁽²⁾ even the west front of Rouen⁽²⁾ partly under scaffolding, all were done on the spot without preliminary sketches or notes, though with much preliminary study and thought. He worked little on them afterward in the studio. He seldom attempted to reverse the drawing on the plate, for he held that by reversing, freedom of line is lost and character sacrificed. Any amount of labor, inside or outside the cathedrals, with "plumb lines, T-squares, triangles, and ten-foot long strings," or in the studio, elaborating sketches and transferring them to the plate, could not be so true, so fresh in the result as the fearless, direct expression of what the artist saw and put down on the spot, and the most difficult architecture, the most flamboyant ornament never dismayed him, never deterred him from methods he believed were the best. I can recall only a few exceptions to his rule, the most notable The Stock Exchange. But it was made for the Certificate of Membership and there was reason to show the building as the members see it; also, as the etching was to be printed with text below, for a certain formality in the design. It was the popular manufacture of etchings from sketches and photographs that kindled his wrath. To him the reversing of a subject was a concession to the amateur collector, a playing down to the commercial market, as was the deliberate multiplying of states. These are points I need hardly dwell upon, so forcibly did he express himself in his Etchers and Etching,⁽²⁾ and in The Graphic Arts.⁽²⁾

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He was fastidious to a degree in all questions of technique, keen for experiment but against any abuse of a medium, any disregard of its limitations. His interest was too great in the technical side of etching to ask it to do what he was convinced it was never intended to do. Only his students know, as I know, just how intense was his respect for technique, how inexhaustible his delight in it. In many ways the most impatient of men, when etching he was patience itself. He lingered lovingly over every stage in the process—the grounding, the drawing, the biting, the inking and wiping the plate for the press. Every proof, with every turn of the wheel, was a renewed excitement. And he loved his tools, his materials. It was wonderful to see him handling them. Wherever he traveled he was hot in pursuit of fine old paper to print on and never cared how much it cost him. He gave every needle that came his way a chance, though he searched in vain for one to suit him better than the Whistler needle. The failure of the American ink-maker to produce as good an ink as the English, he could not understand, but it was the reason why he kept on sending to his old London firm for supplies. A new stopping-out varnish had a thrill in it. He could not rest until he had tried every device a friend or student chanced to discover. And, weary as he was after a day at the press, he cleaned up the mess, had everything in perfect order before he left his printing room, and would not let any one else take over the task. The joy he got out of the art of etching more than repaid him for the labor.



The Avenue near Valenciennes

ETCHING. 1911

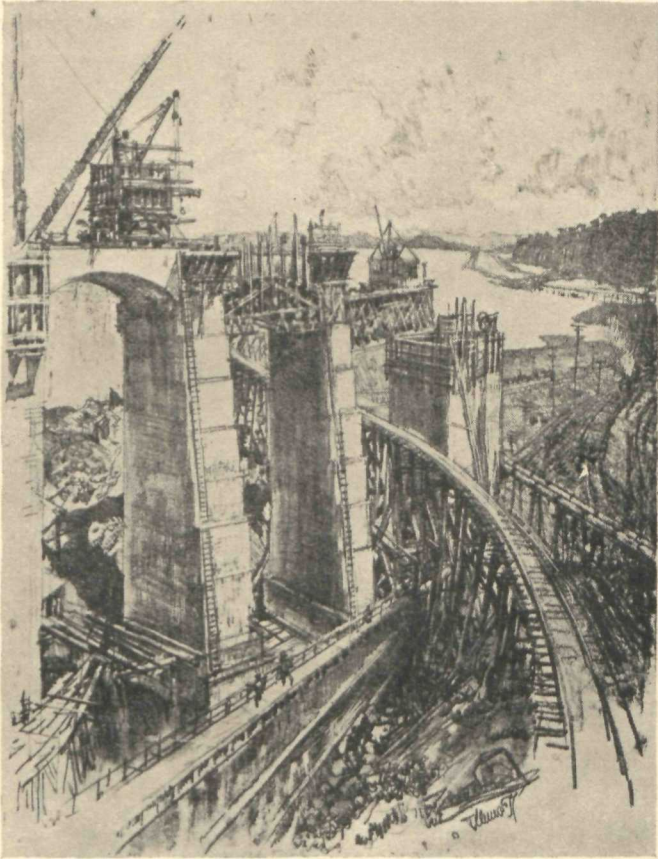
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He was never so engrossed in etching as to neglect the other graphic arts. During the later nineties of the last century and the first decade of this, if etching claimed most of his time, he was still keen to experiment in other mediums and methods with every magazine article and book he illustrated. He went back to pen-and-ink and the old familiar style in some of the books of this period. But in others, volumes he did for the Highways and Byways Series among them, his drawings, still in pen-and-ink, were more conventional, just to show, I sometimes thought, how easy it was to do the "decorative illustration" so prized by the Morris group in the nineties, even if you were not of the elect. But when he illustrated Maurice Hewlett's Tuscan Road and Marion Crawford's Gleanings from Venetian History, 1901-1902, though he began in pen-and-ink, he finished in Russian charcoal. Curiously, the charcoal proved a more congenial medium for rendering the color and light of the South, and his emancipation from Rico was now complete. The only trouble was that charcoal drawings need great care in reproduction and printing, and the ardor of engraver and printer for experiment had not kept pace with his. There were battles, but he never minded a good fight in a good cause. Nor was he moved by the criticism that charcoal was inappropriate for illustrations to be printed with type. He had fought that particular battle many times. If artists and craftsmen had always been hidebound by convention, he used to say, we would never have got further than the St. Christopher woodblock, if as far.

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What he liked about the Russian charcoal was the color he could get out of it. The line, so characteristic of his earlier work, disappeared and his drawings were virtually painted. For his London, which Henry James was to write, he made his series of London etchings. But while Henry James was not writing it, he was amusing himself with Russian charcoal, and, as the book was published eventually with Sidney Dark for author, there are more drawings than etchings, and in all, this feeling for color is in evidence. From charcoal to color itself was but a step. For James's *Italian Hours*⁽²⁾ (1905) in the same series as his *English Hours* and John Hay's *Castilian Days*, the full-page drawings were in pastel. And when Pennell, in 1908, crossed the Atlantic to illustrate John C. Van Dyke's *The New New York*, his pastel box went with him. He knew the risk to his reputation. An artist is apt to be found guilty when he has the courage to do what he has never done before. And, besides, color reproduction and color printing then were even less reliable than they are now. But, at least, he could help engraver and printer by not asking too much of them. He drew with his pastel sticks on brown paper in as simple lines and as few colors as possible, a somewhat conventionalized scheme, but in his hands it suggested the light and color of New York more effectively than the charcoal could and it gave him his unfailing pleasure in trying something different and succeeding in it.

By 1908 I seem to see a turning-point, a new departure. Journeys for magazines and books sent him



Approach to Gatun Lock

LITHOGRAPH. 1912

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to industrial districts in many parts of both Europe and the United States. They were to him the revelation the journey to the Borinage was to Constantin Meunier, and the "Wonder of Work" became his absorbing interest. It had appealed to him as far back as his childhood when he drew the old mills in Germantown, and his youth when he etched the scaffolding on Philadelphia's public buildings. Now, often, he would go out of his way and let a commission wait for the sake of the Edgar Thomson Steel Works^(E) at Pittsburgh, or what was to be seen from a trolley On the Way to Bessemer, or the Mill at Gary^(E)—Rembrandt's Mill glorified, magnified—or The Stock Yards at Chicago. He would stay over many weeks in New York simply to study, already built or in the building, its "monsters of many moods." In England, the lure was the furnaces like castles at Leeds, The Great Chimney, Bradford,^(E) the Rebuilding the Modern Pier, Dover,^(E) and other subjects without end; in Belgium, it was The Dump at Seraing^(E) or The Lake of Fire, The Iron Gates at Charleroi; in Germany, The Hut of the Cape of Good Hope at Oberhausen, or The Cranes at Duisburg; in France, Schneider's Gun Factory at Creusot, or the Old and New Mills, Valenciennes^(E) where, probably for the sake of contrast, he also etched the poplar-lined Avenue,^(E) the beautiful stretch of road which also is a wonder of work, though of another kind. Sometimes he drew these places, sometimes he etched them, oftener he lithographed them. Russian charcoal had taught him how much

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better some effects are to be had by drawing in mass instead of line, and the lithographic chalk seemed made for the tremendous modern machinery, its formidable detail, its heavy smoke, rendering them as no point ever could. From about 1910 or 1911 until the end of the war, lithography attracted and held him as never before.

It would have been strange if, preoccupied as he was with the wonder of work, his thoughts had not turned to Panama, at the beginning of the century the biggest wonder of all. The more he thought of it, the more sure he was that he must see it in the making, for as an admirably working canal its most wonderful wonder in his eyes would have gone. He started from London early in 1912 and got there in time. The Locks of Gatun,^(e) Pedro Miguel,^(e) and Miraflores, the vast Culebra Cut,^(e) the artificial lake were still at the most interesting stage in their construction. The great cranes, the mammoth buckets, the huge steam shovels, the swarming humanity were at the highest tide of their labor. And this "apotheosis of the wonder of work," as he called it, was the more beautiful, as well as the more stupendous, because it presented him with "such a magnificent arrangement of line, light and mass" as he could never have imagined. Nor did the immensity, the cyclopean scale of the undertaking frighten him. Here, as everywhere, the drawing was done directly before his subject, though a more bewildering, a more complicated subject could scarcely be possible. He took his transfer paper to the locks and gates, the cuts and lakes,



Storm in the Canyon

LITHOGRAPH. 1912

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he selected his point of view, invariably the right one, and, without further ado, began his lithograph, returning the next day if necessary, and finishing it there on the paper, just as we see it today in the print. When the lithographs were exhibited in London some critics discovered poetry in them, the poetry of modern machinery. But nothing pleased him more than when engineers told him his machinery would work.

Pennell said himself that 1912 was the busiest year of his life and, well as I knew his tireless industry when his heart was in his work, I am astonished when I consider the measure of achievement in that one year, not only in quantity, which does not count, but in quality. On his return up the Pacific Coast, he stopped, when the steamer would let him, to sketch in pastel or water-color a Mexican town or a Mexican costume. In San Francisco he stayed long enough to etch the difficult perspective of its steep streets and the amusing detail of its Chinatown. Traveling back to the East, he broke the journey at the Yosemite^(*) and the Grand Canyon,^(*) so as to draw, always on his transfer paper, Nature's wonder of work. We met in Philadelphia and the lithographs illustrating Our Philadelphia tell the story of his crowded weeks there. He went from Philadelphia to Washington, lithographs of the Capitol the record of his visit. In New York, waiting for his steamer, he added still more prints to the list. And it was in his power of work I saw the wonder when, by the end of the year, he was in Adelphi Terrace again, with the lithographs

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he had finished and the lithographs that were still to be transferred and printed.

As his knowledge of modern machine-made wonders increased, he was curious to compare them with the wonders of the ancient civilizations. That is why he went to Greece in 1913. What impressed him most, to quote him again, "was the great feeling of the Greeks for site in planning their temples and shrines in the landscape," and it is this in his *Land of Temples* that most impresses those who, like myself, have never been there. As he drew them, it seems as if the columns of *The Temple of Jupiter*⁽⁸⁾ could not have told so well, had not the Greeks placed them just where they now stand, in ruined majesty, nor Delphi anywhere save on its slopes below *The Shining Rocks*, nor the *Temple of Poseidon* save on its headland above *The Wine-Dark Sea* at Sunium, nor any of the other temples that proved to him, had he needed proof, the greatness of the Greeks as artists. The appeal of Greece was powerful and he was inclined to think he did his best work there.

He planned to go the next year, 1914, to Egypt and thus complete his record of the wonder of work, ancient and modern. He could not get away in the early winter, busy as he was printing the Greek lithographs and preparing *In the Land of Temples* in the *Wonder of Work* series for Heinemann. Spring was not the season and, anyway, by spring he was occupied with his official duties at the Leipzig Book Exhibition. His journey that year was to Germany and the temples were *The Railway Station* in Leipzig,



Temple of Jupiter, Evening

LITHOGRAPH. 1913

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the Repairing the Bridge at Cologne, the Building the Bismarck at Hamburg,⁽²⁾ the Zeppelins in their Lair, the monster of a Grain Elevator in Hamburg Harbor,⁽²⁾ the galleries and stations and monuments and workmen's dwellings of modern Berlin. Then the war caught him and he just managed to get back to London before England decided upon the part she was to play in it.

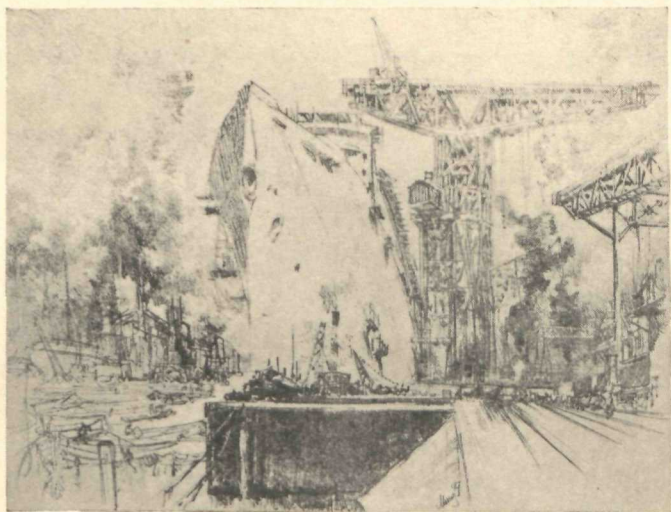
The war crushed him. Generations of good old Quaker stock had their way with him and his whole soul rebelled against what he held was the criminal folly into which the nations of Europe were plunging. There were times when his nervous state caused me much anxiety and I was thankful when his official position on committees and juries in connection with the Panama-Pacific Exposition called him to San Francisco early in 1915 and kept him in America for a year. On his return to London, the wonder of work came to the rescue, the wonder provided on a gigantic scale in the munition works. The British Government gave him permission to draw in them, the drawings to be used as propaganda for the Allies. To him they were propaganda for peace, unanswerable proofs of the evil in this waste of human energy and mechanical perfection on the wholesale murder that is called war. The French Government invited him to do in France what he had done in England, sending him, however, not to the munition works, but to the front. He, who would faint at the sight of blood, could not stand it. "I have failed," he wrote to me, the only time he made that bitter confession, and,

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to my infinite relief, he left France in June, 1917, for the United States.

Here things were easier, the evidence of war not on every side as in England, no front with its horrors as in France, and Washington opening wide the shipyards that Whitehall had shut to him. He could forget the evil as he drew the ships for his joy in the beauty of their lines and curves and masses, the grace of their movement. He drew the building of battle-ships, destroyers, submarines, he drew them In the Dry Dock^(*) and Ready to Start, he drew them growing amid "the forests" of the shipyard, he drew them being launched. Of some of the drawings he made posters. He drew also the munition works, the modern temples, where guns and shells and armor plate were the gods worshiped. Wholesale destruction might be prepared in those temples, but his business was to study their beauty and put it down on paper as well as he could.

Lithography had already taught him to do what, to his knowledge, nobody before had done, though Senefelder knew it could be done. He had learned how to get his drawing from the paper to the stone and yet keep the original intact on the paper, only the grease of the chalk being transferred to the stone, the chalk remaining on the paper. Lithographic printers with whom he worked sometimes fought shy of this method but, like etching, lithography stimulated his passion for experiment. Stones were too heavy to carry about on long journeys and he kept seeking a substitute for the transfer paper. He tried zinc and I



Building the Bismarck

LITHOGRAPH. 1914

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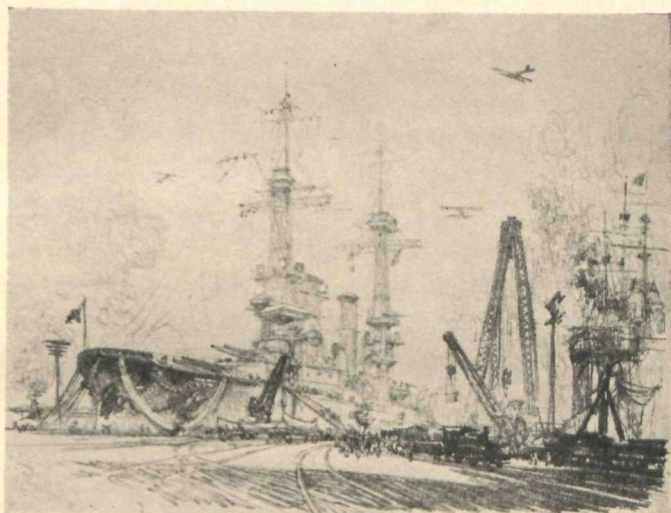
have a vivid memory of our whole small establishment waiting breathless while he ran the plate through his etching press. He got a lithograph but the zinc surface was never sympathetic. He tried, by mere chance, oil-cloth; he found it an agreeable surface, and a friendly patent lawyer was eager to take out a patent, but as everybody was free to buy a piece of oil-cloth, draw on it, and print from it, there did not seem anything in particular to patent. After that he was content to experiment with different transfer papers, with chinks and inks, with stumps and gums and acids. His waistcoat pockets were always full of sticks of lithographic chalk and the sort of lithographic pencils that unwind. He laid in his materials in large quantities so that when the fancy came to lithograph, everything would be ready, and he left enough behind him to furnish a small shop. Joseph Pennell as an artist can hardly be appreciated if Joseph Pennell, the enthusiastic craftsman, is ignored.

The wonder of work could go no further than the war carried it and lithography for him virtually came to an end with the Armistice. The great days of magazine illustration already belonged to the past. The books he now cared most to make were technical, new editions of *Pen Drawing*^(E) and *Lithography*^(E) and a new volume on *Etchers and Etching*.^(E) It might have been thought no channel remained for his activity as artist, all the more because he was no longer a young man and it seemed late to embark on fresh adventures. But, just as I see so plainly that his

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working life until then could be divided into periods of pen drawing, etching, and lithography, so I also see that these three were now succeeded by a period of color. Not that he ceased entirely to occupy himself with other methods. There is a long list of etchings to show for the years we spent in Brooklyn, from 1921 to the end. Every going up of a new skyscraper in New York, every fresh arrangement of New York's unbelievable sky-line was a challenge for a new plate. The Caissons,^(E) the Foundations,^(E) the Brooklyn Edison Works, Tel and Tel, and many as fine are plates of this last period. The grandeur of newest New York did not destroy his delight in the quiet charm and old-fashioned dignity of vanishing old New York and at almost the same moment he was doing his series on Brooklyn Heights. Nor must it be supposed, as it usually is, that he had never until now worked in color. I have referred to the two books he illustrated in pastel. But before they were thought of he had begun his many water-colors of London—notes from our Buckingham Street windows, notes in the London streets. And there were notes further away, of Surrey in springtime, further still, of Provence in summer. But he never exhibited any of these notes publicly until two or three years ago.

In 1908 we moved from Buckingham Street, from the windows with that view of London and the Thames which we thought could not be surpassed, to Adelphi Terrace House with windows opening upon greater beauty, commanding as they did the Thames



The Sinews of War

LITHOGRAPH. 1917

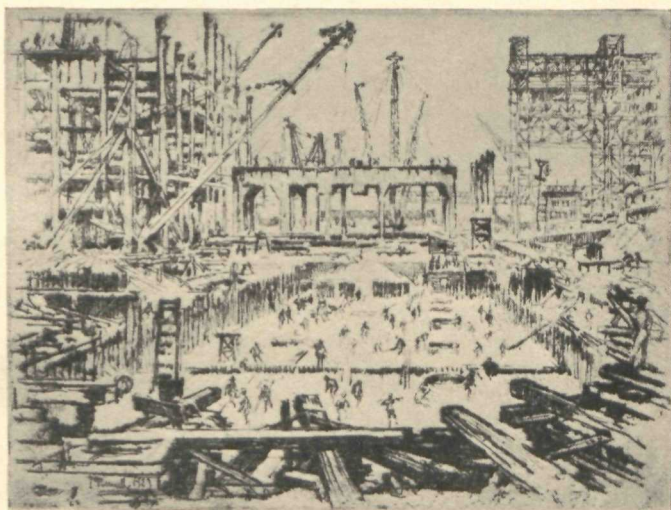
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from St. Paul's to Westminster, and a wide expanse of London's ever-changing sky. Paper and canvas now were at hand for every change which, during the years from 1908 to 1917, he was ever ready to record in water-colors^(e) or oils. But the water-colors were hidden away in drawers, the oils were ranged against the studio walls, their backs forbiddingly turned, and the chief tragedy of our tragic loss in the London warehouse where our possessions were stored towards the end of the war was the ruin of those paintings. His water-colors and pastels were seldom left behind on his long journeys and he was rarely more wholly himself, more unreservedly original than in the work he did with the pastels during the long summer and autumn in Venice in 1901. He had traveled far from Rico, far from Whistler, and the beauty of Venice to him was not so much its dazzling sunlight and vivid color, not so much its picturesque doorways and little streets as its amazing cloud effects, the last thing most artists in Venice have looked for. San Marco, San Giorgio,^(e) and the Salute,^(e) groups of fishing boats and gondolas, the usual Venetian motives, he saw and treated as mere incidents. The splendor of Venice was concentrated in the clouds piling up in the sky at sunrise, sweeping across it at sunset, or with the moon struggling to break through during the nights he wandered alone along the Riva. These pastels were his recreation in the intervals between his illustrations. They were done for his own joy in the dramatic loveliness so unlike the conventional cloudless Venetian sky, and he never exhibited

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them. Nor did he exhibit the pastels made to please no one save himself during his travels from one end of Italy to the other, at much the same period. They also were the pastime reserved for hours borrowed from his commissions.

But in Brooklyn, water-colors and, toward the last, oils were his principal occupation. The windows, for which alone we came to the Heights, overlooked what to him was "the most beautiful thing left in the world"—The Glory of New York^(e)—Lower Manhattan and New York Harbor, which he thought more beautiful far than London and the Thames from our Adelphi windows. The water-color box now was always prominent. He was up with it to see the sun rise over a vast expanse of Brooklyn roofs or hide itself in mist as the ghostly white river and fruit-boats crept in to the ghostly shrouded towers of Manhattan. And from that moment, all day, he was drawn to the windows by every change, subtle or violent, worked by the shifting winds and light. He loved the harbor during the busy hours, big liners steaming out, a warship perhaps arriving, a dredger always somewhere at work, ferry-boats hurrying to and from the Battery, and everywhere the little bustling tugs and their trails of curling smoke.^(e) He loved it in winter, river and bay full of ice, the boats forcing their way through and leaving long lines and curves of darkest blue in the shining surface.^(e) He loved it in summer, the sky behind the skyscrapers black, the water below them steel-gray as the thunder storm came sweeping up from the Jersey shore. He loved it at sunset, the



The Foundations, New Edison Building

ETCHING. 1923



The Caissons, Vesey Street

ETCHING. 1924

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sky such a marvel of light and color as he had never dreamed of in all the marvelous places his journeys had taken him to.^(E) He loved it in the blue dusk, "the gleaming cliffs" on the opposite shore turning to walls of gold and the ferry-boats to "the fairy boats" of the name he invented for them.^(E) He loved it at every hour, at every season. He never wearied of it. He had other interests, he was a man of extraordinary vitality who could not stay idle or indifferent, who could not help taking a part in the politics of art and many affairs of the world outside. But he was always glad to leave all other interests for his high observation post over the harbor. The return to America had been in many ways a disappointment, the new America was not the old America he had known and loved and dreamed of coming back to. But sitting at his windows on Brooklyn Heights he could forget. The America he saw from them was still to him home, and, so long as the beauty that made them home remains, I like to believe his name will be associated with it.



In Constable's Country

DRAWING. 1900 OR 1901

*Of this book
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