

tone and intensely sunny in effect, beyond which it is but *pretty*.

"The Domes of the Great Yo Semite," by A. Bierstadt, now on exhibition at the Tenth Street Studio Building for the benefit of the Southern Relief Association, is about on a par with the generality of all this gentleman's former productions, there is great finish, elaboration of detail, and careful study, but there is *not* grandeur, truth, or nature. Mr. Bierstadt's works, to use the language of a cotemporary, "are all on the surface." You see his pictures once and you have seen all there is in them, there are no subtle beauties, no hidden truths to attract close scrutiny and study; he is a painter who attracts the public more by the choice of his subjects than by the genuine merits of his pictures.

In the "Domes of the Great Yo Semite" there are unquestionably many points of rare excellence—the cliffs on either side, those in the extreme and middle distance, a portion of the foreground, and parts of the valley are thoroughly good, but beyond these all is mechanical and artificial, resembling more a photograph than an oil picture. This, after all, is Mr. Bierstadt's great fault, an undue elaboration of unimportant detail, to cover which he has recourse to unnatural and exaggerated effects totally untrue alike in art and nature. Until this fault is overcome he can never hope to assume that high position in the world of art to which at present ignorant newspaper criticism and the dictum of fashion have elevated him.

PALETTEA.

#### CARVED CABINET OF MAX OF BRUGES.

BY MISS COSTELLO.

When, at the beginning of June, I set out, like a traveller in the eighteenth century who records the same object as mine, on the same coast of Sussex, I scarcely expected to be repaid for following his footsteps. "Proceeding," he says, "along the shore in quest of a house, I came to Southwick village, where there is a harbor for ships to ride in, going or coming into the river, where probably the *Portus Adurni* of the Romans was, as a village near has the name of Portslade."

Whether the worthy adventurer of a century since succeeded in discovering a rural retreat in which to hide him from the glare of the "garish eye of day," he does not go on to inform us, but if he had done so, I am much inclined to think he would have fixed on precisely the same locality, and probably the same tenement, as that which received me, a wanderer in search of the picturesque.

That any one should indulge in so idle a dream as the hope of finding rural beauty four miles from Brighton, and scarcely two from the ugly port of Shoreham, will naturally excite surprise; but still more surprising is the fact that it was found without further looking after. Whether a remarkable season of redundant foliage had clothed the trees with more than usual beauty, and their close concealment had more than usually attracted the birds, certain it is that Southwick shone in my sight like an oasis in the desert.

Perhaps my eyes, like those of Catherine, had  
"So long been dazzled by the sun,  
That ev'ry thing I looked on seemed green,"

and thus I required to go no further, but determined to set up my summer rest, within sight of one of the prettiest little shingle spires, surmounting a square Norman tower, that can be found anywhere.

A curious furze hedge, of ingenious construction, attracted my attention, as I wandered through the village of Southwick, and following it for a little distance, I reached a rustic gate which led me, between thick shrubs, by a narrow path, to an antique house faced with grey stone, and half covered, from the ground to the roof, with pale roses, which grew at their will, and seemed little indebted to the gardener's care.

There was an air of quiet, of silence, of antique comfort about the place, which at once succeeded in arresting me, and, without further question, here I resolved to take up my residence for the brief time that my restless star ever allows me to remain in one spot.

From that moment I found myself in as deep seclusion as if I had sought solitude in the distant valleys of Brittany or North Wales, and but for the occasional booming of the sea when the wind was higher than usual, and the tides were

"Pressed by the moon, mute arbitress,"

I might have forgotten how near my dwelling was to the shore.

A continual chorus of birds, however, "throstle, thrush, and nightingale," enlivened my retreat, and the sharp, impatient note of the peacock sometimes broke the stillness, as that beautiful and vain coquette in feathers—for the bird is always represented as *female* by the poets of the East, who understand these things—swept with dignified demeanor across the lawn which spread before my windows. To those who are not aware of the peacock's cry, it may pass as any other sound, but to the initiated there is more in it than meets the ear. It is recorded in Persian lore, that this lovely creature possesses a fatal knowledge of former wickedness, when in a human shape, and is continually reminded of her crimes when she looks upon her ugly legs; it is then that, horrified with the thronging memories that oppress her, she lifts up her voice and laments in those shrill strains which disturb the ear from afar. It is in vain that she tries to forget her grief in her pride, by exulting over the humble companions around her, and venting her ill-humor on the smallest of them: she is forever mortified to behold her coarse, large legs, and cannot repress the expression of her despair.

There is, at the end of the lawn on which this fair unfortunate is wont to lament, a ruin so overgrown with ivy, that the form of its walls is scarcely discernible; and the long arrow-sits through which the light once streamed, are nearly blocked up by the thick garlands of bright leaves that cluster round them.

"I have often climbed over those ruins," said a pretty little boy of eight years old to me, as we were one evening standing contemplating the flight of numerous pigeons which darted from a variety of resting-places among the displaced stones.

"And are there any beyond what we see here?" I inquired.

"Oh, yes," returned my little guide eagerly, "but I am not allowed to go there now, because I once nearly fell down a deep pit between the

stairs of the tower where the owl's nest was. Our gardener knows all about the tower and who they were who once lived in it. That old black cabinet in your room came out of the ruins, he says."

I was not long, after this information, in finding the gardener, who was a very aged man, rather deaf, and a little surly, his temper a good deal tried by the conduct of the moles, which were constantly disturbing his walks.

"The creteers," exclaimed he, "there they be, at it agen!—consesserently a worritting and terrifying of the ground—a letting it have no peace. It's my belief they be a sort of evil spirits."

"Not unlikely," said I; "and who knows whether they don't come out of the ruins? I've heard there are odd stories respecting them; but I suppose no one knows anything about them now; since the railroad ran through this country, no doubt all old traditions are swept away."

He looked up as I spoke with rather an offended expression, and remarked that if any one could tell it ought to be he, for he believed no one in the parish had known the locality longer.

"Now," he went on to say, "perhaps you never remarked that long piece of stone that lies in the thick grass, where the ground's highest, above the apple orchard there—many passes that by and never notices it; but I knew that stone since I was a boy—ay, and so did my father, and his grandfather too; and it stood alone in that field, which they called the Stone Field because of it; but when they took and cut up the place for their railroad, they knocked it over, though it had been standing, perhaps, ever since the world was made, if all's true of it as I've heard."

I looked at the huge piece of granite to which he pointed, which lay half concealed amongst the high grass, and a feeling of awe came over me, as I recognized what I could not for a moment doubt was one of those Druid stones with which the Downs were so plentifully strewn, but which, one by one, have given way to modern improvements, and have been displaced or ground into powder beneath the inexorable wheels of the engine, which

"Stands ready to smite once, and smites no more."

"This," said I, half addressing him, "is, no doubt, a Druid stone—it is like the Menhirs of Brittany."

"Ay," returned he, "it's one of them stones mentioned in Scripture you know, in Exodus, where it says, 'If thou make me an altar of stone thou shalt not build it of hewn stone; for, if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it;' and this here bit of granite has never been cut by no tool."

He had invested it with more solemnity than I had dreamed of in my philosophy.

"I want to have it stood upright, as it used to be," continued he; "and have flowers trained over it; it would look well so—however, it shan't never be moved out of its place in my time, I respect it too much more."

I led my friend the gardener from one subject to another, with questions about the place, till by degrees I found myself in possession of the tradition I sought.

Notwithstanding a variety of anachronisms in his narration, I contrived to put the story he told me together, and arranging it

"After what flourishes my nature pleases," it stands in my memory as follows.

The old oaken cabinet, to which my young companion had alluded, was a remarkable bit of furniture which stood in my sleeping-room, which room was approached by two low steps, by which you descended into it from a dark passage, approached also by descending several steps, as was the case with every room in the oldest part of the house; a fashion of our ancestors more curious than either safe or convenient, and founded on some principle now unknown, as its tendency appears on y to throw the inexperienced on their faces at their entrance into every apartment.

As I had almost the whole of this domicile to myself, and was at liberty to roam about it as I pleased, I became acquainted with many of the secrets of its architecture, which both amused and surprised me. Amongst the peculiarities of structure which I noticed were the huge closets into which half a dozen persons could well be thrust in case of concealment being necessary, and doubtless they had been used for that purpose on more than one occasion, notably at that time when Cromwell's rude soldiery lorded it over this district, as their initials, and the date of their visit to a neighboring church carved with their swords on the back of a defaced monument may bear witness.

I have small doubt that I shall one day find the secret of a hollow pillar in this house, as a friend of mine did in his beautiful old domicile near Oswestry, in the marches of Wales. This was the support of a spiral back staircase, and ran up from the cellars to the roof without any apparent opening. A secret spring, however, displaced a panel and gave admission to the interior, in which, doubtless, a rope must have been suspended, by which the fugitive could descend to the vaults beneath the house, which extended under ground for a distance of several miles.

It is true that no tradition exists of such a subterranean way in the house I am now dwelling in, but that is, in my mind, no reason why there should not have been one, as there certainly was beneath the ruins adjacent.

But I am neglecting my black oaken cabinet and the story connected with it.

At the time when the ruins in the garden were solid walls, they formed a manor-house belonging to one of the numerous family of Shelley, known throughout Sussex long before the fame of the poet of their race made the name celebrated throughout Europe in modern days.

Sir Richard Shelley was a young and remarkably handsome man, when he was appointed by Cardinal Pole to fill the office of Grand Prior of St. John of Jerusalem. One would scarcely associate that famous body of warlike monks with the simple little village of Southwick; nevertheless, it had long before formed part of the numerous possessions scattered over the country of which that body called themselves master. For some time Sir Richard enjoyed his high dignity, but then came a downfall to Popish grandeur, and, under the Protestant Elizabeth, the Grand Master found Spain more congenial to him than his Sussex downs. He was a great favorite with Philip of Spain, and was employed by him as an ambassador to the Netherlands; and it was while there that he is said to have formed an attachment to a fair lady whose family would not listen to his suit, as she had been vowed from her cradle to the Holy Virgin: and in spite of her tears and his entreaties, the beautiful Beatrix was forced into a convent of Beguines at Bruges.

It was about this period that the favor of Queen

Elizabeth fell upon Sir Richard more unaccountably than her enmity, and, from having peremptorily refused to allow him to return to England, she suddenly gave him permission to do so, and even sent a special messenger to Ghent, where he then was, desiring him to wait upon her forthwith at Greenwich.

Sir Richard, having been obliged to abandon all hope of forming the alliance he desired, was glad to obey a command which would remove him from the scene of his disappointment. Before he left the Low Countries, with little probability of returning speedily, he provided himself with much curious furniture, such as the workmen of Belgium have always been famous for manufacturing.

Amongst other things, he purchased of a skillful carver, known as Max of Bruges, who worked under his direction in the formation of this particular piece, a remarkably fine oak cabinet, very elaborately ornamented and of considerable size. The lower part of it formed a large cupboard closed by two doors, and shutting so artfully, that to open them without the secret of a certain concealed spring was impossible.

On these doors were panels deeply set, framing figures of two of the Evangelists, attended, the one by his couchant bull, the other by his eagle, both surrounded by highly-adorned scrolls and draperies. Two bearded torsos, in high relief, supported the cornice above them, being themselves supported by projecting lions' heads, terminating in a graceful falling wreath of fruit, which reached to other lions' heads, three of which, in the centre of pedestals, interrupted, at even distances, the wide, flat scroll which ran along the bottom line of the massive front. In the centre, dividing the door and even with the bearded figures, a graceful female torso, wearing a string of beads round her neck, depended, equally with her companions, on the support of lions and garlands,—the whole together forming three pillars, solid and light at the same time.

At the two corners, in front of the surrounding cornice, on delicate pedestals ornamented with cherubs' heads, stood two caryatides of remarkably graceful character: the attribute of one destroyed, as I saw it in its present state, but the other leaning on a half-defaced anchor, and pressing her hand to her heart. A couchant lion, defaced, occupied a boss between these two figures above the centre torso of the lower part.

The two caryatides, entirely detached, supported a massive canopy covered with bosses of cherubs' heads, lions, mouths, and scroll-work, and finished at the corners with jewel-formed ornaments. Beneath this was a second cabinet, as it were, connected with that beneath in the inside, but thrown far back, leaving a flat space or ledge all-round it on which anything could be placed, vessels, vases, or books, as might please the possessor.

The two panel-doors of this inner cabinet had the figures, on a smaller scale, of the remaining two Evangelists, and these were divided by a singularly designed flat compartment covered with carved images, the chief of which was the three-quarter figure of a female, singing, accompanying herself on a lute.

The fame of this beautiful piece of furniture was soon spread over the town of Bruges, and as he was in the habit of working for the convent of the Beguines, he was naturally anxious that they should behold his *chef d'œuvre*, nor were the nuns slow in responding to his wish to gratify them.

As, however, it might be thought wrong in them to notice anything destined to a person who, it was known, coveted the possession of a sister of the community, they did not wish it to be generally known that the furniture was introduced to their convent. The artist himself, therefore, and several of his people on whom he could rely, were to bring the cabinet by night into the church, place it there, and after it had been inspected by the abbess and those of the nuns who were desirous of seeing it, they were to fetch it away by daybreak, and as the whole business was a secret from Sir Richard, who, of course, was not likely to wish to show any favor to the establishment, it was forthwith to be carried to Ostend—there was then no railroad to take it in an hour—and shipped for England.

Sir Richard was meanwhile already on board, and only waiting the arrival of the last part of his baggage to set sail on his return to his native land.

At length Master Max and his precious load duly arrived, and it was with extreme satisfaction that Sir Richard heard that no accident of any kind had befallen the cabinet on its removal. He had the treasure placed in his private cabin, and, with the chief workman, he examined it carefully to convince himself that all was right.

The vessel which bore Sir Richard to his native land had a rapid and prosperous voyage, and sailed into the port of Shoreham and up the little river Adur to Southwick with great pomp, the shores being lined with his friends and retainers delighted to see their lord once more after so tedious an absence. But however surprised and overjoyed they were to welcome him, their astonishment increased when, instead of landing from the vessel alone and taking his way to the Manor in the Wood—for so his house was called—he stepped on shore having on his arm a beautiful lady dressed magnificently, and immediately they both took their way to the church and were married by a Protestant clergyman in attendance.

It is easy to conjecture, without explanation that the fair lady was no other than the Beguine nun of Bruges, whose curiosity having led her—perhaps not accidentally—to enter the carved cabinet at the invitation of the artist, she had remained there unobserved by her companions, and had been—accidentally too, of course—carried off in the morning and hurried on board the vessel of her late lover.

How he contrived to calm her fears, how he persuaded her to cast off her nun's dress and clothe herself in garments which his care had provided, and how he convinced her during the voyage that both she and himself had been hitherto in error in their religious belief, my informant did not relate, but the end proved that his reasonings were conclusive, and he showed that his diplomacy was as skillful in love affairs as it had been considered in politics by the delighted Maiden Queen, who, for once, forgave a marriage and welcomed a bride.

When the Manor in the Wood was replaced by the present house, this famous oaken cabinet changed places. It is very little injured and has been always guarded with great care. The noses of a few of the holy personages who figure on it have suffered, perhaps in the indignation of some follower of Cromwell, who might have owed them a grudge, holding:

"'Tis but a false and counterfeit  
And scandalous device of human wit,  
That's absolutely forbidden in the Scripture  
To make of any carnal thing the picture."