

AMERICAN ARTISTS IN ROME.

PIAZZA DI SPAGNA, Dec., 1868.

IF a truly graphic picture of the scene before us could be made by our pen, it would probably be the most familiar of all the interesting points in Rome to those of our readers who have visited this old city.

We are in a balcony window on "Mendelssohn's Corner," over Piale's bookstore, which window looks down on the whole Piazza di Spagna. Our position is in the centre of the base of the triangle, the apex of which is terminated, far off in the distance, by the Virgin's Column and the Propaganda, with Via due Marcelli leading to the Quirinal, whose statues crowning its summit look from this distance like trees.

On the right of our balcony extends a line of shops, whose different names will recall longing memories of Rome to those who are far away from this enchanting city. There is Barberi's mosaic store; and Spithoever's book and photograph establishment; and Monaldini's library; and, farther down, Nazzari's restaurant and confectionery shop, so tempting to the eye as well as palate, a sort of trattoria, from whence nice dinners come at frightful prices, and where the Nazarene gives strong drinks that cheer and do inebriate.

Opposite this line of shops rise the grand Trinita de' Monte steps—flights upon flights with broad landing-places, reaching up to the Pincian Hill and overlooking Rome. In the crevices of the old steps Kenilworth ivy grows luxuriantly: we gathered enough the other morning to fill the hanging basket in our window, and no one would have known we had been robbing the terraces. A couple of models in costume and a beggar are lazily sunning themselves on the first landing.

On the right of the Trinita de' Monte steps, as we look at it, is the American Consulate; the "spread eagle" hangs out over the second story, and in the

very office occupied by our consul, forty-seven years ago a young poet slept away into death so quietly that the one who watched him thought he was only slumbering.*

A little to the left of the Trinita steps is "Hooker's," the bank, the headquarters of Americans and English. Several gentlemen stand in front of the arched entrance, talking over their newspapers, which they have just got out of the mail, or more probably they are discussing the last event in Rome, the establishment of an American club. The club was started on Saturday evening, November 14, and became *un fait accompli* last night. The rooms are said to be very handsome, and are in Palazzo Gregoria, the edge of which building we can see from our balcony: it is opposite the Propaganda in Via due Marcelli.

Thanksgiving evening was celebrated by the members of the American Club, and at the handsome supper that was served there were *fresh oysters*, which seemed to have been relished by the gentlemen more keenly than the *pâté de foie gras* and finer dishes. Americans, like the English, carry their national tastes and customs with them to foreign countries.

At the Thanksgiving-dinner of one of our distinguished artists, now living in Rome, and at which we were lucky enough to "*assist*," we ate of an excellent pumpkin-pie: the pumpkin was one presented by Mr. Haseltine, the sculptor, and was a veritable marrowfat pumpkin, grown in this country it is true, but from seed procured in America.

Down the centre of the piazza stretches the double line of hack coaches—"traps" as the English call them: they reach to the fountain which is in front of the Trinita steps. The old stone boat in the centre of the fountain circle has only a slender jury-mast of water, but it looks very picturesque in the morning sun.

* Keats.

Beside the huge circular basin stands the well-known green booth of the Perugia man and his wife, who have a license to sell lemonade night and day, and who live in their Mrs. Jarley quarters very comfortably.

A government messenger in fine uniform dashes up the broad piazza on horseback; an Englishwoman with a superb, huge staghound passes; some dressy Americans, fresh from Paris (our rich countrywomen are unmistakable), stop in front of Nazzari's, and three sight-seeing, plainly-clad women, armed with Viennese satchels and guide-books, move briskly along, as if every moment was worth Third street price at noonday.

The studios are filling up rapidly: artists have returned from their summer trips and established themselves for the season. Besides the regular resident artists, some new ones are here for the winter. Among them are Church, McEntee, Gifford, Healy, etc. An afternoon spent in calling at the studios is an agreeable occupation. We gave yesterday to this sort of visiting, but could not accomplish more than two studios, a sculptor's and a painter's—Mr. Mozier's and Mr. Buchanan Read's.

At Mr. Mozier's studio we found, besides various successful and well-known works, such as his "Lady of Avenel," "The Peri," "Undine," etc., two or three new creations—"Rebecca at the Well," a very graceful and finely-draped figure; "Penseroso," full of Miltonic feeling; the "Prodigal Son," a carefully-worked group; and "Rizpah." This last has been much admired in England, and the *Athenæum* has given it a laudatory and well-deserved notice. Our small space and hurried time prevent us from entering into a description of this striking creation: at some future day we may do so. Just now we wish to devote all the leisure we have to a few works which ought to be mentioned while they have the freshness of novelty added to their beauty and genius.

Before leaving Mr. Mozier's interesting studio, we must notice a curious piece of colored sculpture which he showed us. Painted statues are repulsive to the

modern eye and taste. Gibson's tinted one in the Philadelphia Academy is a ghastly thing, and it seems impossible for us moderns to accept this practice of the ancients.

But Mr. Mozier's statue happens to be a pictorial subject, and with the exception of the face it is harmonious and pleasing. The figure is "The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish." The girl is listening to her mother's voice with troubled memory. In the unpainted statue the anxious look of the eyes and the expression of the whole face are very touching, but these are lost in the tinted one. The costume and drapery and the flesh-coloring of the legs are beautiful.

Mr. Buchanan Read's studio is at present one of the most attractive in Rome. He has a portrait of Cardinal Pentini, which is said to be the finest one that has been painted in Rome for many years. The expression of the features, the coloring of the flesh, the brow and temples, are life-like, and the pose is natural and easy. It is a figure and head that recall the Leo X. of Raphael, and the portrait will live among the great portraits of the world.

But the principal object of interest just now at Mr. Read's studio is his unfinished portrait of Maria Sofia, ex-Queen of Naples. Mr. Read has been closely engaged for two weeks at the Farnese Palace, where this beautiful young throneless queen has been sitting to our famous poet-painter, and his subject has inspired him to create a lyric in his picture.

Enough of the portrait is finished to enable us to read the poetic thought. In the background is Vesuvius and a sunset. The sky is beginning to be dotted with stars. The head of the Bavarian Bourbon queen wears no diadem but her own superb hair, which lies in a high mass of ruddy chestnut hue, and in the sky just above this true regal crown of beautiful womanhood is the evening star.

The ex-queen's face has tragic points in it, and in some photographs she looks as if she might be a bandit's wife as well as a Bourbon princess; but Mr.

Read has caught these striking features and rather fierce expressions, and with the transmuting power of a poet and artist blended them into deep feeling and thrilling emotion. Her hand is playing with the pearl necklace that encircles her throat, while from the fingers the pendant cross has slipped and rests against the light, filmy drapery of the breast.

The fire in the flashing eyes of the queen is softened down almost into tenderness, and there beams from them a look of something like faith and trust in the future—a watching for the rising of the morning planet.

While looking at the picture we feel so impressed by its expectant expression that we cannot help recalling how many marvelous changes crowned heads have had in our memory, and imagination willingly restores this young Bavarian girl to the throne that slipped away from her just as she stepped upon it as a bride.

In Buchanan Read's studio is another fine national picture, which has been ordered by a gentleman of San Francisco. This picture is a deeply interesting one for double reasons. The subject is "Sheridan's Ride." It is a small copy of the large picture of "Sheridan's Ride," which, when finished, is to be placed in the Union League of Philadelphia. The General is on horseback, and he and his horse are in full tilt on that great ride which made the General so famous, and which Mr. Read has commemorated in a poem as well known as the great ride. The General's face is as eager and full of fire as the superb horse is of mettle and speed. The eye of the horse is bloodshot, the nostrils dilated, and from the mouth falls a fleck of foam. The rapid motion of the animal is finely expressed, the whole painting is full of spirit and life: it is the poem and the warlike act in one.

But the gentleman who ordered the picture, with an artistic forethought worthy such liberal comprehension of art, wishing to possess both the portrait and the poem actually in one, has desired to have the latter inserted in the

frame of the picture. At the head of the frame will be placed the arms of the United States; at the base the poem, "Sheridan's Ride," in red letters on gold. The frame is being made here in Rome, under the direction of Mr. Read, and when the picture is completed and placed in this remarkable surrounding, it will be a possession of art whose value must go on increasing as years pass by.

Healy has just finished and sent off to Milan, to be chromo-lithographed, a small copy of his great national picture, "The Peace Makers."

The large picture, which is to be placed in the wall end of a private library when completed, is now in progress at Mr. Healy's studio. It has been ordered by a gentleman of Chicago. The picture represents President Lincoln, with Grant, Sherman and Porter, in the cabin of the steamer River Queen.

The incident is well known. Sherman had early in the spring, just before the close of the war, finished his famous Southern movement and come up as far as Goldsborough. From thence he proceeded to City Point, where he met President Lincoln, General Grant and Vice-Admiral Porter, who were on board the steamer River Queen, which was lying in the James river.

Nothing seems more prosaic and uninteresting than a large picture representing four rather plain-looking American men in conversation. The room, too, has nothing to render it attractive—the cabin of a steamboat, and a very plain cabin at that—no drapery, no architectural helps and aids.

But Mr. Healy has made out of these unpromising materials a touching and deeply interesting picture.

Mr. Lincoln is in the centre; on his left is Vice-Admiral Porter; to the right is General Grant; and opposite to the President, but to the left of the looker-on, is General Sherman, engaged in giving an account of his movements or his suggestions for the closing of the war.

The faces of the four men are types

of the characters they displayed in the contest. Sherman's is eager, earnest and full of fire. Grant's compact head, firm, thin lips and quiet eyes are given to the life. Porter's expression is listening, and as if his mind were weighing the differences.

Mr. Lincoln's face is sad and thoughtful—the expression it bore the last few months of his life. It is told us that Henry the Fourth felt the knife of the assassin some time before he was murdered. The face of Charles the First has been often said to bear a prophecy of his sad fate. So with Mr. Lincoln's countenance: the weary, sorrowful look that stole over it like the shadow of a funeral pall gave to his plain, hard features a softness and even a certain tenderness. Mr. Healy has caught this look exactly, and this is the lyric beat, the poetical part of his picture.

Behind the President is the glass door of the cabin, and through the windows of the door can be seen part of a rainbow gleaming in the sky.

A hundred years from now this picture will be doubly, trebly valuable, for it is a historical fact, commemorated by a great painter, whose portraits years ago received the stamp of success.

Wealthy Americans are doing a bold and creditable work in this thing of ordering national pictures from American artists.

Randolph Rogers, our distinguished American sculptor, has his studio so crowded with the various national mon-

uments he is completing that he has been forced to take another studio for the statue of Abraham Lincoln, which statue is to be sent to Philadelphia when finished. This new studio, by the way, is the actual one formerly used by Canova.

The statue of Lincoln will be a success: the pose of the figure is excellent, but the head and face are masterly. All the artists unite in their admiration of this fine creation of Mr. Rogers.

The last fashion is the velocipede. Gentlemen are practicing in their courtyards, and one or two are daring enough to venture in the streets. One bold man has been seen on the Piazza di Spagna.

This grown-up velocipede is a ridiculous-looking thing: two wheels are placed one before the other, and only motion keeps the affair from tumbling over; consequently, it is very difficult to manage, but some gentlemen have become so expert in Florence and Paris as to fly around the streets among the horses and carriages. It is a perilous and fatiguing way of obtaining exercise, after all; but it is the mode.

Miss Hosmer has returned. Miss Cushman is expected at Christmas, and with her will come Miss Stebbins.

There is quite an American colony of artists in Rome—men and women; and although "*on dit*"—that disagreeable gossip—implies that there are thorns of discontent and discord in society, we have not yet discovered them, and hope we may not.

ANNE BREWSTER.

Lippincott's monthly magazine : a popular journal of general literature.

Philadelphia : J. B. Lippincott and co. [etc.], 1868-1914 ;

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