THE SUNNY YEARS: ILLUSTRATED BY ADAM EMORY ALBRIGHT'S PAINTINGS OF CHILDHOOD: BY GARDNER TEALL

“Oh, would I were a boy again, when life seemed formed of sunny years, And all the heart then knew of pain was wept away in transient tears!”

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE once said that no nobler task awaited the great artist than delineating childhood, and that there was no surer way of wedding the genius of the brush to the best in life than by producing beautiful conceptions of true child-portraiture in relation to the joyous pastimes, the innocent seriousnesses, the beliefs, the sweet trust, the little cares and tasks that should follow every child through each day in his life’s beginning.

The stern saints and the sweet-faced madonnas of the Old Masters awaken our wonder, but, above everything else, these masters have endeared themselves to us through their painting of the Child.

When one stops to think of it there is so much that is wonderful and so much that is beautiful in everyday life; only it is not always that one realizes it. That, perhaps, is because it is difficult to appreciate the sunshine’s peeping through the clouds when one holds the ever too common fear that the sunshine is fleeting, that the clouds will come again, as experience has been unkind enough to teach they often will.

But a little while, and all that changes; what is a century to eternity? We are collecting yesterday’s simple possessions and hold them to be precious today. And we look upon the pictures that were painted in faraway yesterdays to exclaim, “How lovely, quaint and charming!” Now in the endless time of those yesterdays these things were no less beautiful than they are in this very today—only the Old Masters grasped the spirit of the beauty of things as they are, a spirit which this all too hurrying era in which we live fails, much of the time, to realize is something that can intensify happiness and dignify right living.

There is no greater achievement for a modern artist than that of portraying the life of today successfully. Of the incidents of today’s existence the simplest ones, like the fundamental things of truth, make the strongest appeal to the healthy appreciation. It is so with Millet’s “Angelus,” which everyone knows and loves, a picture that touches the sympathetic chords of all sensibilities, from prince to peasant. Millet did not have to dig into dusty histories for his subjects, nor did he have to depend upon the unusual for his inspiration. Instead, he painted the homely scenes in the life he found surround-
"NATURAL HISTORY": ADAM EMORY ALBRIGHT, PAINTER.
"PLAYING QUOITS": ADAM EMORY ALBRIGHT, PAINTER.

"MIDWAY": ADAM EMORY ALBRIGHT, PAINTER.
"THE ENCHANTED HOUR": ADAM
EMORY ALBRIGHT, PAINTER.
"A CALL TO SUPPER": ADAM EMORY ALBRIGHT, PAINTER.

"ONCE UPON A TIME": ADAM EMORY ALBRIGHT, PAINTER.
"SCRAMBLING FOR BERRIES": ADAM EMMORY ALBRIGHT, PAINTER.

"THE PRAIRIE—KITE FLYING": ADAM EMMORY ALBRIGHT, PAINTER.
"A SOUTH WIND": ADAM EMORY ALBRIGHT, PAINTER.

LOG CABIN STUDIO OF ADAM EMORY ALBRIGHT, EDISON PARK, ILL.
ing him, and interpreted his environment in a manner that will forever awaken a sure response to his genius.

THE work of a new American painter, Adam Emory Albright, possesses a note of this absolute sort of sincerity that makes it widely understandable, regardless of the possession of a knowledge of the subtle mysteries of art technique. The phase of American life that Mr. Albright has successfully presented has been almost neglected in times past by most of our artists. At least, with the exception of some of the well-known paintings of the late master, William Morris Hunt, I do not know of any other American whose inspiration has recorded in so straightforward, unaffected and beautiful a manner, life in the “sunny years,” as Mark Lemon has called childhood days.

Emory Albright’s sympathy for the American boy (the father of boys, as he is himself, and a friend of boys) has taken away from us the reproach of having missed this note of youth in our art. There never has been anything more truly and vitally national and characteristic of our American life than this artist’s paintings of boyhood’s “sunny years.”

Here the artist has not racked his brain in a search for intricate subjects, he has not gone about his task of painting like an archaeologist who digs up the past to entertain the present, nor has he sought for dramatic situations or atmospheric conditions that might puzzle a weather bureau. What he has done, and marvelously well at that, is to show us the real germ of American brawn in all of its juvenile, honest directness—fishing, berry-picking, kite-flying, romping, marbles, bringing in wood, raking the lawn, chasing bumblebees; in fact, every pastime and occupation dear to the heart of a real boy. And thus, too, he paints girlhood, and the things dear to the heart of every real girl. His work almost seems to stand as a reproach to that of those many painters of posed inaction with their interminable “Boy with a Slate” and “Girl with a Doll” pictures.

A dozen years ago Emory Albright banished brocades and ormolu, armor and arabesque from his studio in a Chicago skyscraper, and, dispensing with material glories, took an abode in a charming country place far from the turmoil of town, there seeking inspiration in the simple life of the real people about him. The pastimes and pursuits of his own children caught his eye as worthy themes for his brush, and watching the dear kiddies as they romped through the sunshine of their blessed years, he painted the pictures which have since brought him renown.

His love of country life you feel throughout his work. You know
it is the work of an American, done for the joy of Americans, as well as for the rest of the world, for his fame has traveled abroad. We know that the American boy is distinct from the boy of any other nation, and because Emory Albright has realized this and has caught the American boy’s distinction, transferring it with consummate skill to his canvases, we can believe that a new American painter has risen among us, a painter who has opened our eyes to the possibilities of the further development of our own art.

FOR THANKSGIVING DAY, NINETEEN HUNDRED AND TEN

If we would give thanks, let us give thanks most heartily
Because the seeds of sanity are planted deep in the heart of the nation,
Because they will grow, if we nourish them, and blossom into health for the people,
Because they will bear a rich ultimate fruitage that will shame the present insanity.

And let us give thanks because there are a few among us growing up in rugged idealism that fears neither drought nor mildew and defies vermin,
A few who stretch their beauty Heavenward, unhampered by the lust of sale,
A few, who, giving their best, are willing to be counted meager and unprofitable, for love’s sake.

And let us give thanks because there are many of us who need but a little more courage to push through the soil of every day, up to our fulfilment,
And many, who, having reached the light, would share all that they have of beauty and fragrance,
And many who give their friendship and the fruits of life gladly, without hope of return.

And because for all of us there is the sunshine of human betterment which we may reach if we seek it with every fiber of our being,
And finally, because those of us who live today are preparing a great harvest, altruistic and assured for tomorrow,
Let us give thanks.

Marguerite Ogden Bigelow.