THE TWO GREAT PAINTERS OF THE APPLE LAND OF SPAIN: BY MILDRED STAPLEY

PAIN, to the outsider, means sunny, orange-scented Andalusia; to the Spaniard it means rather the grim northern provinces of Castile and Leon where the Goths, pushed ages ago by the Moors, developed through much hardship and struggle into the great Spanish nation. The popularity of Andalusia with foreigners is due to the Romanticists who saw wonderful "copy" in its Moorish glamor and found it just the right setting for Alhambra Tales, for "Carmens" and "Figaro." This foreign preference for the south at first amused the Spaniard; but of late he has begun to point out that northern Spain is equally, if not more, fascinating; wonderfully paintable either in words or pigments.

As a distinguished Spanish critic recently expressed it in a protest against certain artists who seek inspiration in the south: "If the impetuous Valencian recalls by his sunny canvas the golden orange and purple grape of Mediterranean regions, the meditative Castilian recalls by the cooler but more richly graduated tones of his, the apple of the north; the apple is bitter to southern palates, but we of the north know that it is an excellent fruit, carrying in its bosom a nepenthe for those who dwell in wineless lands."

The two great painters of this apple land are the Zubiaurre brothers—always, excepting Zuloaga, who likewise has never gone to the south. But Zuloaga lives in Paris and paints his native land all too seldom; the Zubiaurrees paint nothing else. They give us the very essence of Spanish tradition. Their figures, in quaint setting of undulating valley and hill, of rude stone bridges and firmly planted little stucco dwellings, carry conviction that they are the true sons of the soil, interpreted for us by one of their own brethren. They are seen with unswerving realism, yet with the realism made tender by artistic originality. To one familiar with Spain nothing seems posed for the occasion or influenced by the memory of things seen elsewhere.

Those Charros whom they paint, for instance; you may see them in any village of old Leon toward the Portuguese border—tall, straight men and women of the plain who continue to wear the barbarically brilliant costumes of their ancestors. So much are those wide-spread yellow skirts a matter of preference that even the rich village girls who have been sent off to Madrid or Paris to school resume the traditional dress on their return to the province. The Charro would despise one of his race who urbanized himself. And similarly, when they gather in the public plaza to sing the wild inspiring ballads of their ancestors to the ancient weird music of
"A YOUNG ASTURIAN:" FROM A PAINTING BY RAMÓN DE ZUBIAURRE.
"FISHERMEN OF ONDARROA, NEAR SAN SEBASTIAN:" FROM A PAINTING BY RAMÓN DE ZUBIAURRE.
"ROGUES AND BEGGARS:" FROM A PAINTING BY RAMÓN DE ZUBIAURRE, PURCHASED BY THE GALLERY OF MODERN ART IN ROME.
"SEGOVIAN TYPES." FROM A PAINTING BY VALENTIN DE ZURHAURRE.
dulzaina or tamboril, they would look coldly upon one who allowed rain or wind or biting cold to drive him from the performance until it had endured at least six hours. That is what the traditions of his country mean to a Charro.

The mosaic floor of river pebbles in a Zubiaurre picture you may see in the humblest northern dwelling. Every cottage, too, has that shelf of wonderfully glazed, gorgeous peasant pottery—something peculiarly local and distinctive, and which you would search for in vain in the shops of the large cities. No mere ostentation of still-life virtuosity, this introduction of small objects; they are ubiquitous in the humble life of northern Spain. The painter has merely taken the material at hand and brought it under the domination of a composition sense as unaffectedly primitive as the elements it composes. That is why flowers and fruit and faiience are as much in place in a Zubiaurre canvas as stiff little wild flowers in the foreground of a Gothic tapestry.

The name Zubiaurre, like the name Zuloaga, at once announces itself as Basque. So well is the name esteemed abroad that the two brothers who bear it have received honors in every European capital. A dozen public galleries possess their work and innumerable private collections.

Valentin Zubiaurre was born in eighteen hundred and seventy-nine: his brother Ramón three years later. Their father is a distinguished musician, head of the Madrid Conservatory and Director of the Royal Chapel. Moreover, he is a savant; and both sons inherited along with his love of art, his fine intellect. From boyhood both wanted to be painters and seemed equally gifted. They were placed in the Escuela Superior de Madrid and were set simultaneously at copying in the Prado. Next they visited the principal museums of Europe, and then came back to paint Spain. And because they were always together, and because what they have put into and taken out of life is almost identical, it seems natural that their work should be spoken of collectively; but in truth there is a far deeper reason for their mutuality of vision. Both are limited to the eye for their knowledge of the world about them, for these talented sons of the Court musician were born deaf and dumb. Small wonder, then, that only the most analytical observer can recognize, at a glance, whether a canvas is by the exuberant Ramón or the more serious Valentin. People say merely “It is a Zubiaurre.”

Not only is this true of their paintings of provincial life, but also of their portraits and family groups. Here each seems equally capable of laying aside his Charro manner and seeing in a delicate
OLD SPAIN ON NEW CANVASES

and decorative way the aristocratic personages of Madrid's mundane world.

While no one would pretend to say that deafness is a blessing, one is still free to question whether, without it, the Zubiaurre would be so Spanish in their art. Equipped with normal means of intercourse with their fellows, might they not long since have found that brilliant artistic fraternity of Paris irresistible? Would they have been able to hold aloof from its lure and devote themselves so wholeheartedly to Spain? Or, with closer contact with cosmopolitan art-life, might they not, in this day of deviations from long-accepted standards, have attempted to translate the mystic beauty of their own Mediaeval towns and types by some method so assertive as to outweigh, in itself, the quiet, quaint claims of the subject matter?

And the Zubiaurre eye, if it were not their chief point of contact with life, would it see so powerfully? Would it seize so unerringly the subtlest gradations of light and fathom the mystery of shadow? Would it run riot in a mass of warm rich color and suddenly offset this by a daring, large blank area of cool greenish-white? Would it master so successfully the trick of textures, lingering as lovingly on the leathery face of a Basque fisherman or a Castilian peasant as on the velvety surface of a peach? Idle questions, one may say; and the brothers themselves might be readiest to disavow any indebtedness to their supposed deprivation; but I cannot help suspecting that it has been a factor in keeping them with their own people, and for this reason it may well be pronounced a blessing in disguise.

The Zubiaurre are doing for Spain what was done for Holland in that wonderful century when innumerable artists set themselves the task of immortalizing her landscape, her domestic life, her kermess frolics. No painter was similarly occupied in Spain in that day. Spain was then shaping her Sevillian group of religious painters and one—albeit the greatest—portraitist. But of genre painters, strictly speaking, she had none. No one depicted all those details of the daily life of simple people that lent color and human interest to the life of bygone days in Spain; but precisely because it is the one country of Europe where provincial customs and costumes and ferias and processions have hardly changed since then, it is still possible for native artists of clear vision and untouched by fashionable creeds and sects to make up these arrears to the Spanish School. That is what the Zubiaurre seem to be doing.

Their painting is nothing more than the virile technique that was good enough for the old masters applied to the purpose of re-
cording that daily life with which the painter has been familiar from his earliest moments. It is Spanish phenomena scrupulously observed by men highly gifted with the dramatic sense. And the dramatic sense, Romanticists to the contrary, can submit to fact, and by doing so it may arrive at rare pictorial expression. It gets poetical charm, for instance, without the usual nebulous blur over nature, but through the almost uncanny clearness of the keen Castilian air; and it achieves archaic charm without copying the primitives, but by merely accentuating those elements in rural life which, among these conservative folks of northern Spain, are the same as when the old masters of genre wrought in Holland.

Whether, should the two brothers later live and work apart they will develop differences of artistic personality, it will be interesting to watch. Meanwhile their work stands collectively as a masterpiece of observation. It is the Spain of the Spaniard unaffected by the much overworked golden glamor of the south. For artists in Spain or out, it is a rich aesthetic feast. For the layman who knows the country only through fiction it must be a revelation. It carries proof that Spain grows the apple as well as the orange. The apple, indeed, is the seal to a Zubiaurre painting almost as inevitably as the cherry-blossom is to a Japanese print.

ART AND THE DAILY LIFE OF MAN

"If you accept art, it must be part of your daily lives, and the daily life of every man. It will be with us wherever we go, in the ancient city full of traditions of past time, in the newly cleared farm in America or the colonies, where no man has dwelt for traditions to gather round him; in the quiet countryside as in the busy town, no place shall be without it. You will have it with you in your sorrow as in your joy, in your work-a-day hours as in your leisure. It shall be no respecter of persons, but be shared by gentle and simple, learned and unlearned, and be as a language that all can understand. It will not hinder any work that is necessary to the life of man at the best, but it will destroy all degrading toil, all enervating luxury, all foppish frivolity. It will be the deadly foe of ignorance, dishonesty and tyranny, and will foster good-will, fair dealing and confidence between man and man. It will teach you to respect the highest intellect with a manly reverence, but not to despise any man who does not pretend to be what he is not."—From William Morris’s “Art and the Beauty of the Earth.”