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A RAMBLE THROUGH THE EXPOSITION

By Iverson Harris, Jr.

The Spirit of the Exposition

A THING of beauty is a joy forever." And there is no question about it, the Panama-California International Exposition at San Diego is a thing of beauty. Back of every outward expression of beauty there is a spirit which is infinitely more beautiful than its own creation. Whence came that spirit which has taken possession of the city of San Diego to such a degree that it has been able to accomplish a marvel in this Exposition? I think I know who gave birth to this spirit I speak of; but as one of Katherine Tingley's own students, perhaps it would not be wise to tell my secret!

Some sixteen years ago San Diego was one of the sleepest little Western towns imaginable. Nature had done her part, to be sure. There was an unmatched climate, a magnificent land-locked harbor, and glorious scenery. But there was little evidence of culture, of enterprise, of intellectual vigor, or of esthetic tastes.

At about this time Katherine Tingley came to California and established the International Theosophical Headquarters at Point Loma. She purchased in San Diego the finest opera-house on the Pacific Coast, renaming it the "Isis Theater." Shortly after its purchase she publicly announced that San Diego was destined to be the Athens of America. But San Diego did not then care to be the Athens of America.

So Katherine Tingley decided to let San Diego remain the Piraeus, and she commenced building up her own Athens on Point Loma. She inaugurated the practical work of the School of Antiquity: she erected the first Greek theater in America; she established a college for the higher education of youth, the success of which has aroused the enthusiastic admiration of pedagogs and social workers the world over; she started a conservatory of music whose pupils recently caused Madame Melba to weep and exclaim: "I have never felt this way but once before in my life, and that was when I heard *Parsifal* for the first time"; she attracted to her Athens artists, craftsmen, musicians, scholars, poets, writers, and men of affairs, who, in their own way, would not have been out of place among the pillars who supported Pericles in the Golden Age of Attica; and she presented in the Greek Theater an original drama. *The Aroma of Athens*.

San Diego began to stir. Stimulated by many motives, possibly with emulation, and not liking to be looked upon abroad as nothing but the Piraeus, San Diego began to break down the Long Walls between Athens and her port! Only the other day one of the leading literary lights of the now world-famous city published the following:

If you will think it over disinterestedly, perhaps you will agree with me that it is not such a far cry from the Lyceum of Athens to the gardens of Point Loma; nor from the theaters where Sophocles thundered and Aristophanes scoffed, to the stage where the students of the Isis League of Music and Drama are inspired to re-enact the humor and philosophy of him on whose ample shoulders has fallen the mighty mantle of Greek drama.

The San Diego Exposition is a thing of beauty, as we said before; and all honor is due to those who have helped to make it so. But he who runs may read the secret which we have referred to above.

The Theosophical Information Bureau

The first place we went to in our ramble through the Exposition, as the reader may well guess, was the Theosophical Information Bureau — a building purchased by Mme. Tingley, and which is the second building to the right of the splendid out-of-doors organ, contributed by Mr. John D. Spreckels to the success of the Exposition. Our reasons for going there first were both sentimental and rational. Sentiment told us that there was no place like home — even if it were only a " branch office " of home; and reason told us that, to provide against any possible interference with our program, we should not miss one of the best things.

The Theosophical Information Bureau has certainly an atmosphere all its own. It is the blending of true art with the religious spirit. Woe to the religion which divorces itself from beauty, and woe to the art which divorces itself from spirituality! Theosophists have not made this mistake; and at the Theosophical Information Bureau, as indeed in all of Katherine Tingley's work, one sees religion made beautiful by art and art made spiritual by religion. " Beauty is truth, truth beauty: that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

The Luxemburg Paintings

The sixty-three paintings from the Luxemburg Museum of Paris, which were exhibited at the San Diego Exposition until about the first of April, represented the greater portion of the pictures which were on exhibition at San Francisco last year. They comprised many of the best paintings of the Modern French School since 1870 — a period characterized by a wonderful renaissance of the artistic spirit in France. It is dangerous for a dilettante to pose as a critic; so I will only hurriedly mention those pictures among the Luxemburg paintings which pleased the eye of an amateur or appealed to his fancy.

There were one or two exceptionally good portraits. The first one which appealed to me on account of its naturalness, was that of the late Dujardin-Beaumetz, Undersecretary of State for Fine Arts, painted by Adolphe Dechenaud. Bastien- Lepage's portrait of M. Simon Hayem brought back recollections of his picture of Joan of Arc in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, which was one of the first pictures that awakened in me an interest in art — not so much, perhaps, because I appreciated its artistic merit, as for the reason that I have always been a worshiper at the shrine of the peasant girl of Domremy.

Other portraits of interest were Leon Bonnat's portrait of Robert-Henry; Benjamin Constant's portrait of Aunt Anna — a genial face which is a never- failing .source of kindness and affection. Paul-Albert Besnard's portrait of Alphonse Legros, portrait-painter, sculptor, engraver, and medalliste; Jules-Elie Delauney's portrait of his mother; Fantin-Latour's portrait of Mme. Fantin-Latour; Francois Flameng's portrait of his wife — a really beautiful classic face; Claude-Ferdinand Gaillard's portrait of his aunt, Mme. R.; Jean-Jacques Henner's portrait of Mlle. Le Roux; Alphonse Legros' portrait of the great French statesman, Leon Gambetta; and Alfred-Phillipe Roll's portrait of Damoye.

I cannot leave the portraits without speaking of the lasting impression made upon me by Leon Bonnat's picture of the well-known opera singer, Mme. Pasca, deceased, 1914. There is something peculiarly

fascinating in the eyes of this woman; but it is not the fascination of spiritual beauty, so much as it is a kind of snake-like charm. She follows you with her eyes wherever you go. I have never known but two or three people in my life who looked like that, and I never felt safe in their presence.

Particularly interesting at this time were several war-pictures. The one which made the most lasting impression upon my mind was *The Dream* by Jean-Baptiste-Désiré Detaille — said to be his most popular work. The soldiers lie asleep on the ground with their guns stacked nearby, and the campfires smolder in the distance. Above them, “in the mist of the early morn, soars the apotheosis of the glorious armies of the past, foretelling victory for the present.” As I looked upon this picture, I thought of another dream — the dream of the devoted mothers and sisters, of the heartbroken wives and sweethearts at home, wondering if their loved ones would ever return again. And General Sherman’s words echoed in my ears: “War is Hell — its glory is all moonshine!”

There were other interesting war-pictures, but I had not the time to study them carefully. To me personally they were not so interesting in theme as *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, or the enormous war-paintings at the Hamburg Museum, which the Raja-Yoga students visited in 1913. I do not vouch for the artistic merit of the celebrated American masterpiece (!) above referred to, but I like it because I knew it from the time I opened my first American history primer. But some of the Hamburg war-paintings are certainly superior works of art.

An interesting drawing whose theme was more to our taste was *A Musical Evening* by Leon-Augustin Lhermitte. This was particularly attractive to us for the reason that it contained — among the portraits of a number of notables — that of Saint-Saens. It was the only pencil sketch in the collection.

Jean-Alexandre-Joseph Falguiere’s *Begging Dwarfs of Granada* is a rather bizarre and freakish picture. And a painting whose theme is distinctly modern and not altogether artistic was Henri Gervex’s *Staff of the Newspaper La Republique Francaise*, 1890. Maurice Lobre’s picture of *The King’s Library at Versailles* was remarkable for its faithful reproduction of detail.

Eugene Carriere’s two paintings, *Christ on the Cross* and *Alphonse Daudet and his Daughter*, have a peculiarly distinctive style — not altogether satisfying to the unlearned observer. There is a bloodlessness and corpse-like appearance to his pictures — perhaps not out of place in the former subject, but most distressing in the portrait of the poet and his child.

Puvis de Chavannes is best known in America for his great work at the Boston Library in 1895. His painting *The Revictualling of Paris by Sainte Genevieve, Patron Saint of the City, attacked by Attila and his Huns in 451*, in conception reminds one of some of Alma-Tadema’s beautiful paintings in the Royal Museum at Amsterdam, but is certainly not to be compared with the great Dutch-English artist’s classical studies in richness of color and finish. But perhaps it is not fair to compare the original sketch for a monumental work with the careful execution of a painting per se.

The last painting which I will speak of is what was catalogued as Gustav Moreau’s *Jason*. I did not examine the title until after I had left the Exposition; but it would surely seem better to call it “Jason and Medea,” for certainly the two figures are equally prominent; and I am wondering if perhaps the painting was not Maignan’s *Jason and Medea* instead of Moreau’s *Jason*. The picture reminded me of some of the early Renaissance paintings which I had seen in the Vatican and the Louvre. I suppose it is well done; but I must say at the risk of offending some artistic specialists, that I do not like paintings of the nude. It

may sound puritanical, but I believe that we come nearer to showing that the human form is " the Temple of the Living Christ " in sculpture than in painting the nude. Even in great works like Titian's classical *Sacred and Profane Love*, or Julius Kronberg's modern *Wood-Nymph*, I do not believe it is everybody, even among lovers of the beautiful, who can lose himself in the beauty of the art and forget that it is flesh he is looking at. If the eyes are the windows of the soul, let us look at the soul of the beautiful Venuses and Madonnas (Venuses with Christian names!) we paint, through their eyes; and let us drape the rest of their forms so that we do not have to make an effort to find the soul expressed. Mona Lisa's beautiful face will live as long as the most perfectly executed nude, and we will always be grateful to Leonardo for having dressed her so simply and so chastely. But the same criticism does not hold true of sculpture. There is no suggestion of warm animal life coursing through the veins when we look upon the *Venus de Milo* or Michelangelo's *David*. Here we may easily forget the flesh and blood and realize that we are gazing reverently upon a human form that is a veritable " Temple of the Living Christ." And this brings us to the French and Italian Exhibits.

The French and Italian Exhibits

Most of the sculpture in both the French and Italian exhibits consists of statuettes. In the French hard-buscuit Sevres porcelain, particularly notable is *The Reading Woman* by Dalou. The attitude and the whole expression is wonderfully natural, and the face is admirable. The same may be said of the busts of Voltaire, La Fontaine, Moliere, Berlioz, and other famous personages in this same ware. A charming group for a fountain, made of the Sevres glazed porcelain with crystallizations, is *The Children with Frogs* by M. Max Blondat. It is irresistible in its optimism. You cannot help smiling and hearing the frogs croak and the children laugh when you see them. It is really excellent.

Before leaving the French exhibits, we must speak of the wonderful Gobelin tapestries, dealing with the lives of Alexander the Great and Joan of Arc — the first being from the drawings of Charles Lebrun, the second from the models of J.-P. Laurens, Both sets are interesting in theme, but the four huge tapestries entitled *The Battle and Passage of the Granicus*, *The Battle of Arbela*, *Porus, Wounded, is Brought before Alexander*, and *The Triumph of Alexander (at Babylon)*, in spite of the grand scale on which they are woven, appear to be so overloaded with figures that to the uninitiated observer they leave the impression of a confused jumble, though no doubt exceedingly well executed. This criticism does not hold with the Joan of Arc tapestries, though neither of the two sets are to be compared with the wonderful tapestries in the Vatican, whose cartoons were drawn by Raphael and the other Italian masters.

There are other interesting features to the French Exhibit, but I must now pass on to the charming little Italian statuettes. These are really lovely — so chaste and beautifully executed. A novel feature in sculpture to me was the varicolored stones, which were very pleasing to the eye. Two statuettes remain in my memory. One was *Beatrice*, and the other a charming little duo entitled *Let's be Friends Again*. This latter is a very happy conception, and my companion remarked upon seeing it, "Phoebe and Silvius," which certainly would make a good sub-title. In fact the whole group of Italian statuettes makes one of the brightest spots in the Exposition.

As this is merely the account of a ramble through the Exposition, I cannot go into details about the art works exhibited from other countries. I have only touched on the things which made the most vivid impression on my receptive but diletante mind, omitting entirely any mention of the exhibits which

were displayed last year. The Russian Keezelwood inlaid work was quite attractive; some of the Dutch china and enamel ware was also tasteful — especially the miniatures of great paintings. So were the German dolls and Persian rugs. But none of these, I think, can be compared with the Japanese exhibits of last year. The Guatemala confectionary and the Suchard and Stolwerck chocolates may be very toothsome, but hardly come under the head of art. And this brings us to the industrial exhibits.

The Canadian Exhibit

The Canadian Exhibit so far excels all the rest of the industrial exhibits that it deserves a whole chapter to itself — not as a work of art, for it was not intended for that, but for setting off the natural resources and industrial advantages of the Land of the Maple Leaf. Not only is one struck by the magnitude of the concession, but also by the wonderful skill with which Canada has displayed her inducements to the settler. So successfully has this been done, that I heard an old gentleman say to his wife, while standing and looking at the Canadian Exhibit: “ Let’s take the next boat for Vancouver.” And I have no doubt that is the way many feel when they look at this magnificent display of Canada’s resources. You leave it with the idea that Canada is rolling in natural wealth, and that all you have to do is to go there and partake of it.

There are some other exhibits that make quite an impression on the mind. The Philippine concession is quite attractive, with its basket-work, its silk robes, and its articles of art made out of hammered fish-scales, etc. The Keen Kutter Cutlery Company’s exhibit is certainly unique, and forces you to linger and examine it. The Globe Flour Mills’ exhibit is interesting to good housekeepers. Several of the exhibits of abalone products are extremely pretty, and the pattern-weaving devices are worth seeing for those interested in that line of work.

Music at the Exposition

There is one excellent feature of the Exposition, and that is, that the lover of good music can always hear good music, and on the other hand, the man who likes to feel his feet itch with the latest popular jig need not leave the Exposition grounds to find it. Dr. Stewart always has some beautiful classics for the big out-door organ, and Tomassino’s “Royal Italian Band” furnishes a strangely mixed diet of music of all sorts, ranging, on the day I heard it, from a splendid selection from Puccini’s *Tosca* and *Tschaikowsky’s Overture Solennelle, 1812.* to *Bright Eyes* by Hoschna and *Tipperary*. But there is this much to be said; whatever they serve, they always serve it in fine style.

With Tomassino’s band were three grand opera singers from Milan, who rendered the Quartet (!) from *Rigoletto*. There was no contralto, so I suppose her part was taken by the “Queen of the Wood-winds,” to whom I myself am wedded.

If you should happen to be more interested in acrobatics than in music, you can stop up your ears and watch young Maestro Tomassino capering around the platform. I heard an old couple pass a very unkind criticism on this youthful Italian bandmaster. They said: “After the band plays, he comes out and bows and gets all the applause, when the players have done all the work.” This was as unreasonable a criticism of music as probably some of mine have been of painting; for I will wager that Director Tomassino uses up as much energy in leading that “Royal Italian Band” as all his players put together.

Taking it altogether, it was a most interesting ramble, and one well worth taking a day off to enjoy.

