

## THE LISMORE ROAD

Where the mountain road bears down  
All its secrets to the town,  
Under pines a cottage square  
Kneels as if it knelt in prayer.

Sometimes carters slacken rein:  
Sometimes exiles come again:  
Or a pilgrim you will see  
On the way to Mellary.

Sometimes County Council men  
Patch the road along the glen,  
Lest it fall into the mad  
Agate-hearted Owenashad.

All of them can smell the sweet  
Breath of forest, stream and peat.  
All of them in their degrees  
Pass that cottage on its knees.

TEMPLE LANE

## ALLEGED CRUELTY

And habit will coffin us all.  
The wonder is that we are still alive  
When at every party and in every street,  
We meet, passing, the same four or five  
Hundred that the years and chance  
Have forced together; we exchange  
Smiles. And ignore the glance  
From under the hat of the lip-sticked girl.  
Moments have carried us, harried us,  
Torn us with longings  
For something undefinable and wild,  
The yacht clutched to the face of a child,  
The untamed horse we have never felt under our knees,  
The prizes won in shooting galleries.

A horse at a well-head, round and round,  
Round in one track,  
Carrying only years on his back,  
Is the symbol of our life; the changeless sound  
Of an engine running.

I sit in the second seat from the end in the tram,  
Pay my penny fare, eat my lurch at one.  
The wonder is that we go on living,  
But then we must do what we have always done.

## ART

### LIMERICK AND OTHER MATTERS

THE dream of an Art Gallery for Limerick, which was hailed in these pages with, it is hoped, fitting enthusiasm a year ago, has materialised, though the announcement in the press that the collection was on view in the Savoy Theatre there was a trifle misleading. The pictures were only on view for three days, after which they were put into storage and they will not be permanently exhibited for a year or two, when premises will be provided in the projected new Municipal Buildings. The Freedom of the City, practically speaking, had to be conferred on IRELAND TO-DAY by two burghers of Limerick, Mr. Bernard and Mr. Johnson, the enthusiastic Treasurer and Secretary, respectively, of the Gallery Committee, but this was accomplished without any formality and the pictures were seen in their present quarters, with gratitude, but under certain disadvantages. There is a notable absence of red tape in Limerick, largely accountable for the rapid success of this undertaking, and there seems to be no reason why these pictures should not be exhibited temporarily in the City "Museum," where there is ample room and where they would be much safer. Even in terms of cash the collection is a valuable one, and many of the pictures are unglazed and some even unframed.

It would be difficult to overpraise the achievement of the Committee, or the contributory generosity of Irish artists. The pictures, about seventy in all, are mainly modern, but there are good examples of Barrett, Mulready, O'Connor, Osborne and other ancients, and there is a very proper leaning towards local artists and subjects. In fact, it is a thoroughly well-balanced nucleus for a splendid collection and will be of incalculable value to the city of Limerick.

Any exhaustive survey of these works must wait for better conditions. There is one outstanding exhibit, however, which justifies being singled out. This is Lavery's "Stars in Sunshine," a picture of two film stars under an orange awning, in a blaze of Californian sunlight, which has already been exhibited at the Academy here. As portraiture it is not important, though by all accounts lifelike; the figures are really notes in a landscape. And what a landscape! The canvas positively glows, revealing the master long eclipsed by the fashionable portrait painter.

Belfast has several landscapes of Lavery's French period. Good pictures never date, and the sober and subtle harmonies of these French pictures will be prized when later and more ephemeral phases of the artist's work are forgotten. What prompts one to label these pictures as "French" is that they share a certain quality with the work of a large group of French painters of the last century. It is hard to put one's finger on that common quality, but it seems to be largely a matter of restraint, of harmonies achieved by using a short range of both tone and colour, in a low key. Within these self-imposed limits the Frenchmen seem to have been able to reach a strength and intensity which other schools could only achieve by more violent contrasts.

In the course of his highly successful career as a portrait painter Sir John Lavery has never ceased to be an artist. He has always been able to make time to paint for the love of it, and out of some extraordinary reserve of energy has kept on producing, from time to time, either pure landscape or arrangements of figures which were only portraits in name. In these latter, for the most part interiors, he experimented with a wider range of colour, and, although the results were not always successful, it can now be seen that these rather garish experiments were necessary. Probably too in another period, which produced some interiors practically in black and white, or rather, grey and grey, the artist was seeking some subtlety which escapes the layman, as artists do. The sun of California would naturally terminate that series, and the present picture shows a combination of his early grasp of harmony with an unrestricted use of pure, bright pigments. There seems to be hardly a dark in the canvas. The range of tone is small, but the key is high. The technical difficulties in the use of such materials are enormous, and it is notorious that the results are often the reverse of bright. The old masters, with a very restricted palette, often managed, by cunning contrasts, to achieve more than their successors of to-day, but the paint in this picture sings. A lifetime of observation and technique have gone to make it, and it is a pity that Dublin has not some such lyrical example of this artist's work.

The Friends of the National Collections have not yet donated anything to Limerick. The Friends are a delicate subject. Their annual reunion last month afforded a good opportunity for stocktaking, since all their contributions were conveniently starred, and it is quite plain that the Friends are wholehearted supporters of every "modernist" movement in art. As these vary greatly, it is rather strange that the Friends are not wedded to any particular cult, but are ready to embrace them all, provided they belong to the subjective rather than the objective school, that is, so long as they are not capable of being judged by established standards.

The Enemies of the Collections would be a better title for this body, who, if their activities are not curbed, may eventually do real harm to public taste. Probably the rank and file have little or no interest in the alleged aims of the organisation and regard it as a social enterprise, and presumably the selection of the works to be purchased is left to a committee. By what principles are they guided in their deliberations? Mr. Dermot O'Brien, P.R.H.A., who is also President of the Friends, must be a member of the Committee. If Mr. O'Brien believes in subjective painting, in distortions and "abstractions," why does he not paint them? If he has a philosophy of art which these pictures do not outrage, why does he not apply it to his own work? Why does he continue to produce those charming, but quite understandable, pictures which are associated with his name? These are fair questions. The contention that "modernist" painting is a development of traditional art and that the same mind or eye can appreciate both may be rejected. Modernist art makes no such claim. It claims to be subjective, and all previous artistic expression,

European, Indian, Chinese, from paleolithic to post-impressionist, has been objective. The two are not on the same plane or in the same language. One cannot believe in both. If one is true the other is a sham.

The only satisfactory explanation of the activities of the Friends is that they have been gambling in futures. They have not, so far, picked a winner, a Modigliani or Derain, but possibly they entertain a hope that some at least of the incomprehensible rubbish which they are acquiring to-day may be hailed in twenty years' time as evidence of extraordinary prescience. "While the rest of the world was engrossed in Hobbs and Nobbs a body known as the Friends of the Irish Collections, with amazing vision and acumen, recognised the true worth of Gobbs and Slobbs, and snapped up some remarkable examples of their work, for a song." A delightful vision. Or perhaps it is that in the general collapse of standards they find themselves without any aesthetic faith, with nothing but a groping agnosticism, and feel that every step is a step in the dark.

It is a comfort to reflect that there is nothing irrevocable at stake. In twenty years' time all these donations may be quietly pushed into the cellars of Charlemont House by a generation restored to sanity, and none will drop a tear. Meantime, we must suffer them, and fortunate are they so unsophisticated as to escape their message. It is innocence which guides the Friends, or something equally forgivable, stupidity.

In these notes the failure of our Corporation to strike even a small rate for the purchase of pictures and sculpture for the Municipal Gallery was once deplored. God forbid that they ever should. There is a sub-committee of the Corporation already with some measure of control over the Municipal Gallery and there must be close co-operation between them and the Friends. By their fruits we may judge them. It may be taken for granted that for some time to come any body likely to be entrusted with public funds for the purchase of works of art will not differ radically from the Devil we know. That their power for evil should be increased out of the Common Purse is unthinkable.

JOHN DOWLING

#### HARRY KERNOFF: EXHIBITION

While Kernoff can with justice object to being grouped with the abstractionists, he cannot, however, be called a realist—not if he and I mean the same thing by realism. When he paints, say, a street scene, a canal bridge with trees, he does not paint those objects as I see them, nor as any human eye "sees" them. He may paint them as they "strike" him, to use a useful exoteric term, and he does succeed in conveying to me, the spectator, enough of that individual emotion eminently to justify the work. But this is not done by a method that can be described as realistic. In fact, he definitely eschews realism. He ignores the change perspective makes in the tone values of light. The three dimensional element is achieved through design. Behind their fresh naivete the painter is obviously delighting himself with the secondary creation in abstract forms, indulging in what Sean O'Meadhra would probably describe as a play on empathic relations.

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