

ARNOLD BOEKLIN.

Arnold Boeklin is to German art what Wagner is to German music and strange to say both owe to the artistic, crazy Ludwig of Bavaria the means of accomplishing their ideals.

As a youth in the Academy, Boeklin was noted for his wonderful memory. When the students were given a bit of landscape to sketch he would lean comfortably against a tree apparently engrossed with the panorama before him but not doing a stroke of work. Later in the day when he returned to his room his brushes flew over the canvas and he soon showed his fellow students how deeply the scene was impressed upon his mind. Each tree seemed to be reproduced with a correctness of line that could scarcely be credited by his fellow workers when they saw it the following day. This did well enough for the limbs of trees but when it came to the human body hard study from life was necessary to reach perfection and Boeklin's drawing is far from faultless. Some say he lacked the money for study in his youth. Others that the jealousy of his wife would allow no model in his studio. Be that as it may I soon forget everything but the poetry of the conception when looking at his work.

His work may be divided into three subjects—mythical, allegorical and religious. The first named are his greatest. They contain a sympathy with nature which is seldom found except in Greek statues. Hawthorne felt its subtlety standing before Praxiteles' faun and called it "neither man nor animal, and yet no monster, but a being in whom both races meet on friendly ground. The idea grows coarse as we handle it, and hardens in our grasp. But, if the spectator broods long over the statue, he will be conscious of its spell; all the pleasantness of Sylvan life will seem to be mingled and kneaded into one substance, along with the kindred qualities in the human soul."

"The Play of the Waves," a picture which hangs in the new Pinakothek of Munich, is abhorred by some people because of the hideous figures which sport through the cold blue water but yet there is a charm about it like one of Andersen's fairy stories and everyone feels it in time.

Boeklin was born at Bazi and in his religious paintings can be traced the influence of the early German masters whose work he studied in his youth. In these he has simplified his coloring and has depicted in a realistic manner the drawn, agonized faces around the Christ. A thing which modern artists have not attempted.

The "Dance of Death," which figured in all literature and art of Holbein's time, has also been a favorite subject of Boeklin. Of the many treatments of

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this theme his portrait of himself is more in demand than any other. The artist is standing playing on the one string left on his violin while back of him looking over his shoulder is a skeleton. The picture seems prophetic of the life of the man. Boeklin is now paralyzed but works on for a few hours each day with the one hand that can hold a brush while he says he knows death waits back of his chair.

Perhaps a little gossip as to Boeklin's life romance as it is retailed at the Berlin studios may be of interest. While yet a young man, poor and unknown, he was wandering in Italy and stopped for the night at a small inn on the Campagna. A peasant girl who was serving the guests attracted his artistic eye. She seemed so strong, so perfect in form and such a true child of nature, but lacking altogether a soul to understand its beauties. There is a deeply sentimental vein in all Germans and the wish came to Boeklin to train this untouched and perfect piece of nature until the soul should respond to the beauty without and make the being complete.

The maiden of the Campagna became the wife of the artist but her heart remained stone and the dream vanished. However, they live now in a villa in Italy and I have no doubt but that Madame Boeklin has learned to cook "Kartoffeln und apfeln" to the taste of everybody so the absence of soul is not especially regretted.

The greatest thing about Arnold Boeklin as an artist is that he is national "Echt Deutsch" as the Germans would say. He has never been influenced by Paris. His coloring is heavy and intense. His conceptions are practical and deeply sentimental and mingled with this is something brutal—the remains, perhaps, of his northern blood. The Germans say the French cannot understand him but that they will give them an opportunity in nineteen hundred and I have no doubt but what the French will rise equal to the occasion.
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