
Extracted on Jun-21-2022 04:33:55

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We spent six months painting around Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, and this gave me an insight into the country and the character of the people that my shorter previous visit had only whetted my appetite for.

Here it was that I made a study of the Mount of Temptation from which I afterward painted "Moses and the Burning Bush." I also commenced a picture, "The Scapegoat," which still languishes in a dark closet of unfinished efforts.

"Christ and Nicodemus," exhibited first in the Paris Salon and afterward at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, where it was awarded the Lippincott prize and purchased for the Temple Collection in 1900, was made during this trip. I still remember with pleasure the fine head of the old Yemenite Jew who posed for Nicodemus. "A Flight into Egypt," and several smaller canvases were the result of this trip. Never shall I forget the magnificence of two Persian Jews whom I once saw at Rachel's Tomb; what a magnificent "Abraham" either one of them would have made. Nor do I forget a ride one stormy Christmas night to Bethlehem. Dark clouds swept the moonlit skies and it took little imagination to close one's eyes to the flight of time and see in those hurrying travelers the crowds that hurried Bethlehemward on the memorable night of the Nativity, or to transpose the scene and see in each hurrying group a "Flight into Egypt." In fact, I have already painted four or five different versions of this subject and the "crop" is not all harvested yet. Nor do I forget the deep pathos of the "Jews' Wailing Place"- those tremendous foundation stones of that glorious temple that stood upon Mt. Moriah, worn smooth by the loving touch of tearful and devout worshippers from all over the world, under the scornful gaze of the to-day Turkish conqueror; nor the sight of those devout Russian pilgrims, with their primitive faith and religious ardor.

"The Mothers of the Bible," a series of five paintings —— Mary, Hagar, Sarah, Rachel, and the mother of Moses, marked the commencement of my painting pictures containing all or nearly all female figures. Before this time they had been all or nearly all male figures.

Very probably the most difficult effect I have ever undertaken is that in the picture, "Christ at the Home of Mary and Martha," now in the Carnegie Galleries.

One evening, while riding in a jiggling ill-lighted omnibus in Paris, I was struck with the beauty of the effect around me. Inside, the figures dimly lighted with a rich cadmium; outside, the cool night with here and there a touch of moonlight. I did not want to paint the interior of an omnibus —— so "Judas Covenanting with the High Priest" is the result. I have a very clear recollection that in my childhood days the sky and fields were never so beautiful as when by some illness I was confined to the house. In after years it has often seemed to me that, when bowed by some sorrow, nature seemed more radiant than ever before. This apparent fact influenced largely "The Return of the Holy Women." The moon has risen, a shepherd returns with his flock, all unconscious of the terrible tragedy of the morning, or the sorrowing figures, one of them, Mary, supported by John, in front of him. All is tranquility and loveliness, only within the souls of that sorrowing mother and those loving disciples is there turmoil and sorrow. Very probably one of the most happy ideas is the one in "Christ and his Disciples on the Road to Bethany." I have
taken the tradition that Christ never spent a night in Jerusalem, but at
the close of the day went to Bethany, returning to the city of strife in the
morning. I have pictured the moon set in rather a blue sky high over the
heads of Christ and four of His disciples, who are walking along a little
roadway to the left of which are the “whited sepulchres” spoken of, while
his herd of black goats. Recognizing in Christ a great prophet, he stops,
places his hand upon his breast, and bows his head in reverence while
Christ and His disciples pass. I could go on explaining the why and
wherefore —— how the picture in the Chicago Institute prompted the
“Christ and Disciples at Emmaus”; how in “Behold! the Bridegroom
Cometh” I hoped to take off the hard edge too often given to that
parable; how generally the wise virgins are made good but cold and
unlovable; how I attempted to show that they were sympathetic for their
sisters in distress, and that this sympathy was one of their beauties, in a
marked degree, by the figure on the left on her knees —— with her own
lamp “bright burning” at her side —— trying to bring to life the smoking
lamp of her friend —— in fact, interpreting the whole parable in keeping
with our knowledge of the goodness of God and what He considers
goodness in us. But why go on? As to the making of a picture after it has

Celebrating 175: Henry Ossawa Tanner in The World's Work Magazine,
1909
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