

“What French Sculptors Think of American Sculptors” (in 1895)

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What French Sculptors Think of American Sculptors.PAUL WAYLAND BARTLETT'S "*Dying Lion*."

Talking about American art in general and sculpture in particular, one of France's celebrated sculptors said to me: "Yes, it is more difficult for a sculptor to make a lasting reputation than a painter, but what a glory for a man to be a Pericles, a Michael Angelo, a Donatello! Some one has said that sculpture is the male of Fine Arts. It is a happy expression, for it is substantial, strong and has character, and for those who are accustomed to study nature together with what the artistic world has left us in the way of great masterpieces, nothing has more nobility—more grandeur than a fine piece of sculpture."

"What do you think of American sculpture as represented by the native artists in Paris?"

of art was as important as the conception. Unfortunately the majority of the artists of to-day are not sufficient artisans. In ancient times, it was thought natural for an artist to be an architect and at the same time a sculptor, as the Gothics were; then for artists to sculpture in marble and stone and be able to cast in bronze like Donatello, or be a jeweler, sculptor and caster like Bellive. Nor were they satisfied to be chisellers in stone and precious metal, most of them were passed masters in the art of painting, and they painted their pictures scientifically; they themselves preparing their colors, and oftentimes inventing them in secret. To-day we have great artists but no masters. Very few modern works combine taste and execution. We French have a great reputation for taste; but unfortunately, we are in too great a hurry and we leave the exe-



DYING LION.—PAUL WAYLAND BARTLETT, SC.

"Ten years ago, I would merely have shrugged my shoulders at the question. But a few American sculptors have made or rather, I should say, are making such rapid strides towards pure art, that il faut commencer a compter avec eux, and now the progress they make, compels us to stop in both salons to thoroughly examine and oftentimes admire the works of Wayland Bartlett, Mac Monnies and Barnard. They are to-day the representatives of American sculpture. Although Mac Monnies and Barnard are men of great promise, I consider Bartlett the one who is heir to the greatest posterity. He reminds me of one of those artisans of the Renaissance who had nothing but art in view and in mind. Of those artists, who jealous of the perfection of their work, would not think of leaving anything of it, however menial, to be done by other hands, who were masters of a foundry as well as a studio, and to whom the smallest details to ennoble a work

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cution to practitioners and nothing could be more fatal to works of real art. Execution in sculpture is as important as in painting, and the rules must be practiced according to the material employed. It stands to reason that molding in soft clay is very different from chiseling in stone, and as stone is the material in which the model will finally be made, sculptors ought to see the importance, as did the ancients, of working it themselves."

"Now if I am not mistaken, American artists may teach us to go back to the old way, to imitate the ancients in being workers of art. Being a new nation, their conceptions, when original, may be bolder, stronger than ours, and when they add patience to will, they may bring forth work that shows an ability and power to follow the ancient handicrafts which to-day are so much admired in the works of the Renaissance. Now I said that Paul Bartlett will doubtless be the greatest of the three that I have

mentioned, and I believe it, because he spends his days in his studio, in his foundry, not only giving life to his conceptions and molding them in clay, but after the selection of the material, it is he who cuts and chisels. He works like the ancient artisan who spent days locked up in his studio to discover an artistic effect, which to the casual observer may pass unnoticed, but which, to future connoisseurs may establish not only the lasting reputation of the artist but elevate national art. When his mind is fatigued with working at some grand piece of sculpture, he seeks relief in modeling curious reptiles, small objects of art, and he himself casts them a *cire perdue*, then comes the most amusing of his occupations, the making of patinas. Paul Bartlett's patinas vie with those of the old Japanese artists, they are simply most admirable, and all the great French sculptors look upon the young man as one of great promise. So you see we have all reason to be proud of a few of the talented American artists who abide with us. I am one of those who believe that art must not have any political boundary. Art must be universal, for the love of the beautiful is universal."

About two years ago, I happened to call upon Mr. Paul Wayland Bartlett to see what he was preparing for the Salon, and to my surprise I found him in his large suburban garden in company with three royal, ferocious lions, restlessly walking their cages. The young sculptor, soft clay in hand, was too busy studying their faces and movements, to say anything more than to have me take a chair and look. Before him, I saw several reductions of lions in clay in different attitudes, and he worked upon one and the other, magnificent animals, according to their moods, movements or rests.

This was the most important work towards the execution of the dying lion here illustrated, for the artist here closely studied the life and anatomy of lions, the relax and tension of the muscles, the flexibility of the mouth, the mobility of the muscles of the eyelids, the nostrils when under the sensation of ferocity, hunger, pain or the state of simple well-being. But if Mr. Bartlett considered those three weeks study of live lions as the most important work, he by no means thought it the only one necessary towards the realization of the dying lion, for he holds that the aim of sculpture is to be ornamental, and as art is subject to the material employed, it must assume a certain characteristic which goes under the name of "sculptural." To obtain this result, the artist further holds sculpture is not an imitation of nature but a sculptural transcription of what he sees, of what he invents to be hewn out of durable material according to his ideal of the beautiful and ornamental.

In his conception then of the dying lion, Bartlett's idea was to give the broad lines of the king of beasts in the throes of death. It was to give the synthesis of form to produce the desired effect, that is, the admirable ensemble of dying courage and grandeur in nature. Grand sculpture is made comprehensible by broad but simple lines, and when those lines make up an ornamental whole, then, and only then, can sculpture be called admirable.

Paris.

Emma Bullet.

The National Cemetery, Vicksburg, Miss.

The road to the cemetery rises gently, and passes at last between trees to the stone entrance. Over the gate the inscription reads:

National Military Cemetery,
Vicksburg,
1864.



ENTRANCE, VICKSBURG NATIONAL CEMETERY.

While on the inner side of the same tablet it is recorded:

Here are buried 16,600 citizens who
died for their country,
1861—1864.

But once the entrance is passed one scarcely thinks of what the place is for—what it *is*, is enough. And it is a place apart; it is, or seems to be, the place where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. It is the place of Peace.