

## Hermann Struck Tells of the Craft of Etching--Max Klinger Recognized as the Master of Graphic Art in Germany--Devices Used.

**H**ERMANN STRUCK, whose original and interesting etchings were shown in New York this last Spring, has published a book in German on the craft of etching, illustrating it not only from reproductions of works by the old masters, but also from the work of the more prominent and accomplished of the German, French, and English artists who have practiced the art of the point.

Many of the author's comments and descriptions are too technical for the general reader, but others are given with the characteristic thoroughness of the German craftsman and at the same time make clear for the merest amateur the distinction between different methods and processes. Especially interesting and useful to the student are the critical notes on various etchers with references to specific works.

Max Liebermann and Max Klinger are recognized as the leaders of contemporary etching, Israel's having said of the former, "In the bristles of his brushes lies the strength of Samson's hair," an appreciation that is extended to his power as an etcher. His synthesis is drastic and his famous definition, "to draw is to omit," indicates the special characteristic of his style.

In the beginning of his career, his critic notes, he worked much with the "Vernis Mou" process, which involves a plate covered with an especially prepared slightly elastic ground on which a thin sheet of paper is laid and the drawing made on this sheet with a hard pencil. The paper being removed, the ground clings to the paper where the pencil has touched it and the lines of the design are exposed on the plate; the etching then proceeds as usual with acid. The lines, however, are not sharp and clear as when they are made with the steel point, but soft and granular. The effect is like that of a crayon drawing and admirable chances are given for rich and tender gradation of light and shade. There is, however, a general feeling among the purists in the etcher's craft that line-work should be as clear and definite as possible, leaving the broader vagueness of massed tones to the artist in other mediums. Liebermann presently arrived at this point of view and the illustrations given of his etching have the crisp certainty of utterance that became usual with him.

One of the devices for achieving absolute freshness and clarity of impression consists in removing with varnish, after the plate is ready for the acid, every superfluous touch. This, as the author points out, is one of the great charms of the etching process, since one gains simplicity and directness thereby, while attempting to remove superfluous lines in a drawing on paper would be apt to destroy all appearance of spontaneity.

Liebermann's easy casual line suggests to the unimaginative mind lack of precision, but his critic calls attention to the certainty of his structure, how surely the slender youngsters in "Boys Bathing" stand on their bare feet, how cleverly one balances his weight on one leg, how obviously one is shivering in the cold air, &c. In his "Polo Players" he concentrates all his power on rendering the rush of the horses across the turf. In his "Samson and Delila" he has more of a painter's problem, the translation of soft, white flesh contrasted with masculine ruggedness into terms of linear art. The result is triumphant, achieving the glow of light and warmth and the force of harsh surfaces and dark color without recourse to any but linear technique.

The plate which we reproduce represents the street in Amsterdam on which Rembrandt long dwelt, and is filled with short cuts to the expression of the swarming life therein.

In recognizing Max Klinger as the master of all graphic art in Germany, Herr Struck falls into agreement with the majority of his fellow-artists and critics for whom Klinger's technically bold, eccentric, yet measured art, has unbounded fascination.

The two examples reproduced in the book show him in opposite moods, one, "Brabarbeit," is an aquatint, unusually powerful in its masses of black and closely related grays; the other is a combination of etching and aquatint, full of delicate detail and clever realism employed to suggest the fantasy of a dream, one of Klinger's favorite methods of embodying in visible form the work of the imagination.

Käthe Kallwitz, the passionate illustrator of the sorrows of the poor, the modern sympathizer with labor, is rightly placed among those who find their natural medium of expression in the etcher's art. Her rich, dusky, masculine interpretations of the spirit of the proletariat are free from all trace of feminine reserve. She flings her art at the door of progress as her furiously inspired working women beat at their barriers with harsh, powerful efficiency. Light in her work seems always to come from a great distance, and to lose itself in overpowering shadow. Recently she has used a soft ground with interesting result.

Among the younger etchers who have forsaken the pure linear expression is Hans Meid, still on the sunny side of thirty, and concerned with making his plates render as fully as possible the color and tone of his subject, cheating the eye into recognition of qualities found in a painting, and cajoling the mind with half-defined masses, whispered grays, and warm full-blooded lights, that lend to his work a strongly emotional and romantic quality. "Each plate," says his critic, "has an interesting and personal character."



From an Etching by Hermann Struck.

Richard Winckel, another of the younger group, shows a continually active curiosity concerning methods, and has turned from one new technical or artistic problem to another seeking fresh modes of expression. Adolf Schumacher produces tender and intimate little impressions of nature with a mingling of different techniques, and Heinrich Vogeler illustrates old German "Märchen," heightening his effect with dry-point work, and keeping his lines very clear and delicate.

Edward Munch, a Norwegian, born in 1863, is represented by a remarkable study in tones, a child in her white nightgown drawing aside curtains to look out of a window. The whole plate has been scratched as for a mezzotint, and the lights burnished, while the principal lines are strengthened with dry point, the whole having a silvery beauty comparable to the grays of a painting by Corot.

In all the examples chosen by Herr Struck he has laid stress on the technical method, as befitting a book of instruction, but the aesthetic value of his illustrations invariably is sufficiently salient to indicate that the craft is only a means to a purely artistic end, and has not been developed with exclusive absorption in the method. Struck's own work is evidence of his interest in the aesthetic side of his art, while his mind works unflinchingly

upon the problems of execution upon which all success in expression depends. His book, aside from its importance to the practical student of etching, is a fine little demonstration of the interplay of intellectual and emotional satisfactions in the artistic mind. Our aesthetic experience takes in many forms of delight, and Herr Struck proves himself the rare critic who can enter with zest upon their origin in technical methods without making the assumption that the method is higher than the aim.