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## AMERICAN PAINTERS.—J. APPLETON BROWN.



**T**HIS artist, who has already acquired a prominent place among American landscape-painters, was born in Newburyport, Massachusetts, July 12, 1844, and is consequently now between thirty-three and thirty-four years old. At an early age he exhibited a great fondness for Art—a taste which is usually shown as soon as a love for music, we learn from the biography of most artists. While still very young he went to Boston, where he studied in the same studio with Mr. Porter, who is now taking a leading position as a portrait-painter.

Brought up with one of the most picturesque surroundings of New England, where the sea, the low, many-hued marshes, a

beautiful river with its windings and its small tributaries, varied the scene with soft hills and a rich farming-region, a poetical mind could hardly fail here to fasten upon the innumerable points of beauty, fit either for lovely word-descriptions or for pictures. The same regions about Newburyport have inspired Whittier, and the beauty of Plum Island and the misty reaches of the blue Merrimac delighted Mrs. Harriet Prescott Spofford, who has bodied forth their charms in some of her best verses.

The stamp of these youthful surroundings has impressed itself indelibly upon the work of Mr. Brown; and, in a trip to Europe in 1866, he found in the interpretations of Nature by Lambinet a spirit most congenial to his own. The strong, rugged forms of hills and trees, the misty interiors of woods, and the still pools



*The Upper Merrimac.—From a Painting by J. Appleton Brown.*

nearly hidden by surrounding sedge-grass, in the pictures of Lambinet, were the same in spirit as those Mr. Brown had contemplated from his childhood. With Lambinet he studied for a year, and from him learned to portray in a forcible and direct manner his impressions of landscape where a more detailed and realistic master would have entirely failed to help him.

At the end of his year's stay with the French painter, Mr. Brown, with very slender resources, made a trip through Europe, and in Switzerland painted studies from some of the most notable points, which are now possessed by prominent Bostonians. On returning to America, Mr. Brown took a studio in Boston, and has since spent his winters there, returning to Newburyport each summer for his studies from Nature.

American landscape-paintings at the present time divide themselves into those where great detail appears and those which convey through large and simple treatment the sentiment as well as the general character of the scene they portray. Of the former class

are Whittredge, McEntee, Hubbard, Kensett, and the older landscapists, such as Durand. Another set of men, conceiving landscape art rather as a combination of impressions than in its photographic detail, however beautiful the latter may be, render it through great masses of light and shade, rich colour, with here and there, in significant positions, firm and precise outline, or solid, definite drawing. The painters of this class in France are Daubigny, Lambinet, Jules Dupré, and Diaz.

A visit to Mr. Brown's studio shows us his wall covered with brilliant sketches done in this manner. Here are gnarled and bent fruit-trees standing on exposed hill-sides, whose twisted branches are in one portion strongly indicated, and in another vanishing into the misty silhouette of the tree. You see a stunted greensward in the same picture reflecting the heat of a summer sky, or the mist and dampness hug the grass where its pale colour rises faintly against an old dark undergrowth at twilight. In one picture Mr. Brown has put upon his canvas some stray young willows, whose

gawky, rambling arms are thrust out at all points and in various directions, with their thin, scant foliage on the tips of the twigs, that look like fingers, suggesting the thought of dryad transformations where the spirit of some poor soul still lingered under its painful body :

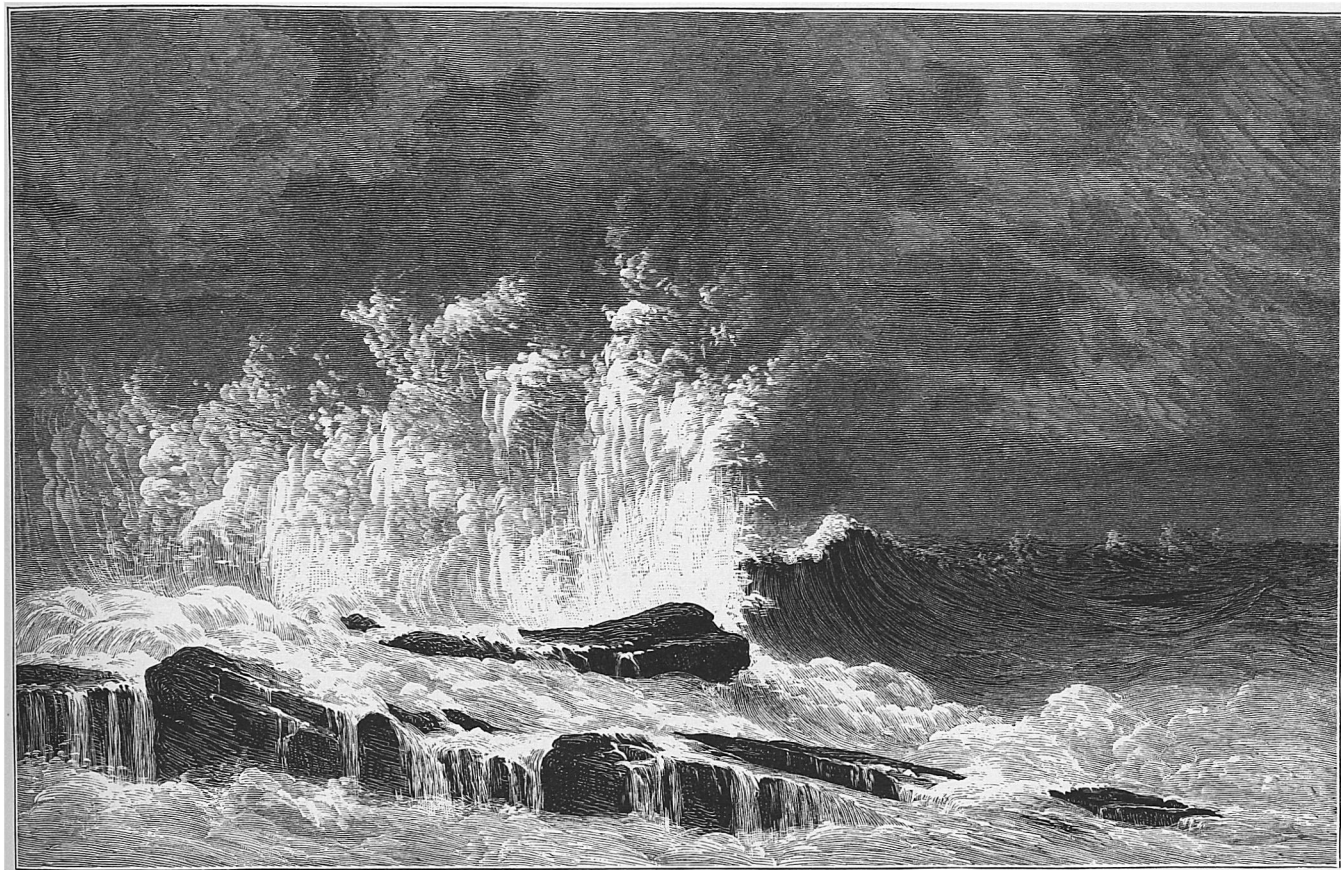
“ Yet latent life through her new branches reigned,  
And long the plant a human heat retained.”

Mr. Brown has a charming picture called ‘ Apple-Blossoms,’ and in it is shown the same tender love of Nature. Round young trees, with their outlines melting into a misty atmosphere, appear the young shoots of branches decked with the pure, filmy pink of the delicate flowers. The trunks are not yet old, nor bent, nor moss-grown, but they are the healthy young trees of orchards such as

are so often found in sheltered nooks and in the hollows of New England pasture-land, where the low granite hills, with no better growth than juniper and thin grass, protect the fruit-trees, and the kitchen-garden with its vegetables, from the piercing and destructive salt-winds of the sea. The ground here is soft, and often through its spongy surface little brooks creep along lazily to find an outlet somewhere or they lose themselves in the earth.

Other pictures yet are of the pooly salt-meadows near the sea—places so remote from the ocean that the tide never overflows them, except at spring and autumn floods ; but the small creeks are flooded in their half-hidden courses twice a day from the ocean, and long, coarse marsh-grass draggles its heads in the black muck when the creek is empty.

But it is not alone in these nooks and corners about Newbury-



*Storm at the Isles of Shoals.—From a Painting by J. Appleton Brown.*

port that Mr. Brown finds his inspiration, for two or three large canvases are filled by scenes of wild ocean-storms. Darkness, and clouds, and wind, drive in with the great green waves that come up and break over rock and sand. Mr. Brown has caught the cold, green colour of the sea ; but it is not for its beauty as a pigment that his colour impresses the imagination most powerfully, fine though the hues, but the tints are an expression of the weight, the density, and the mass, of the water—of the sea in its great throes of fury.

Mr. Brown is a true artist in spirit, and in his painting is entirely separate from the worldly considerations of what subjects will be popular or will take the market. His pictures are a matter of conscience with him, and, though he has a fine and true eye for colour, he uses it always, as in the sea-waves we have described, not for its sensuous charm, nor yet as a showy palette, but each tint of blue or white, green or scarlet, is so important on his canvas to carry out his ideas and purposes, that, even where we feel the richness and harmony of his tones, the amateur cannot fail to recognise them as used to carry out a thought or a suggestion, and not,

as is too often the case with painters, being laid on from vain display, or from the fascination of their sensuous beauty.

Mannerism is totally absent from Mr. Brown's work ; and whether he draws the details of a tree with pre-Raphaelite care, or slurs into shapeless masses the paint upon his canvas, it is always the scene that is in his mind he endeavors to evolve, and not to make a pedantic display of his own knowledge of painting.

In 1874 he sent two pictures to the Paris *Salon*, both of which were accepted, and purchased from the gallery. The compliment of this will be appreciated when it is considered that four thousand canvases were rejected from the same exhibition.

Mr. Brown's aims as a painter have been recognised by numerous persons in his vicinity. His first considerable commission was from Mr. Thomas G. Appleton, author of “ Syrian Sunshine.” Mr. Martin Brimmer is also the owner of a fine painting by him ; while the artist Ernest Longfellow, son of the poet, also possesses one of his characteristic subjects. Of the many recent promising artists who are now with us commanding attention, Mr. Brown has a place to which his fresh, unmannered, and strong paintings justly entitle him.