

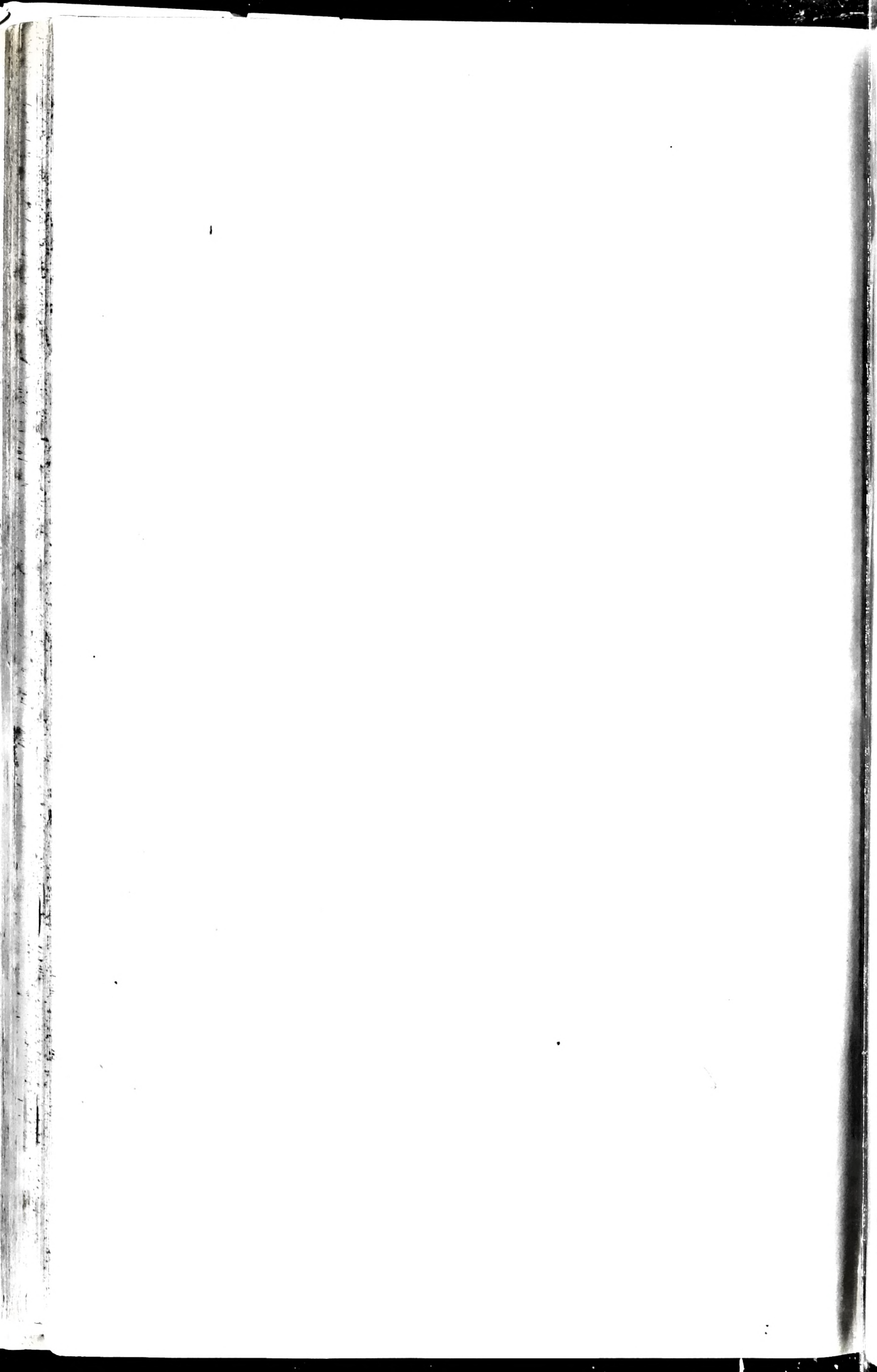
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IN MEMORIAM.

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JOSEPH ORIEL EATON,

ARTIST.



# JOSEPH ORIEL EATON, ARTIST.

*Born in Licking County, Ohio, February 8th, 1829.*

*Died at Yonkers, N. Y., Feb. 7th, 1875.*

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Born on a farm, with no one to direct his tastes nor to appreciate his labors, MR. EATON spontaneously developed that love of beauty in every form, and that unbounded enthusiasm for art which characterized all of his after life.

He left his home at the age of sixteen, and began his career as a portrait painter, unknown, with no influential friends to help him on, but possessing that genial and sympathetic disposition which made him fast friends wherever he went. In Indianapolis he made his first essay with moderate success, but in about a year he moved to Cincinnati, where he hoped to find greater advantages for improvement in the society of older artists, such as James Beard, Worthington Whitridge, and T. Buchanan Read. Here, overflowing with enthusiasm, full of the desire for improvement, and ambitious of ultimate distinction, he opened a studio. It was not long before his pictures began to be favorably noticed by artists and amateurs, who recognized in his endeavors a certain freshness, originality and sincerity that charmingly reflected his personal character.

Though MR. EATON'S love of art in every shape, and his great versatility, prompted him to attempt historical and landscape painting, yet he devoted himself especially to portraiture and to the interpretation of different phases in domestic life. His extraordinary perception of individuality and truth of color, aided by magical manual dexterity, in a few years made him the first portrait painter of the west. About the close of the year 1853, still striving for improvement, he moved to New York. He now gave much of his time to *genre* pictures; and his great love for children made his pictures, illustrating child life, perhaps the most charming of his productions. We have one more proof of his astonishing versatility in the fact that, as one of the early members of the "Water Color Society," his first contribution was unsurpassed, and found an immediate sale, although it was his first attempt in that direction. After

his return from Europe in 1870, he painted several classical pictures, which have gained a wide reputation. Each year in New York increased his popularity with the public and his position among artists, and his untimely death seems to have left a place unfilled.

MR. EATON was an indefatigable and conscientious worker, always retaining his boyish enthusiasm for his profession. He was never discouraged by want of success, nor envious of more popular artists. His interest in, and loyalty to younger and less fortunate artists, are well known; and when success at last crowned his efforts it neither made him indolent nor less painstaking, but death found him still a student, faithfully striving for perfection.

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At a meeting of the Artists' Fund Society, held in New York, March 10th, a committee was appointed "in relation to the recent death of one of their number, and reported as follows:"

The death of our late member, MR. JOSEPH O. EATON, has deprived the Society of one of the most active and esteemed of our number, both as regards his excellence as an artist and his qualities as a man; and we not only deplore his loss to our Society, but to the cause of art, in the sphere of which his truthfulness to nature and simplicity of treatment in his many works won for him a wide and permanent fame.

The members of the Society deeply sympathize with his bereaved family, and will cherish the memory of his membership as that of one whom all appreciated.

H. W. ROBBINS, JR., *Secretary.*

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NEW YORK, February 8, 1875.

At a meeting of the Board of Control of the American Society of Painters in Water Colors, the following preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted:

*Whereas*, Our late fellow-worker, JOSEPH O. EATON, has been removed by death,

*Resolved*, That we, members of the American Society of Painters in Water Colors, do hereby express our deep sorrow at the loss of an earnest worker and a ready adviser; one whose energetic action, unimpeachable integrity and characteristic art-work made for him a position in the Society that must long remain unfilled.

To his family we would offer a sympathy that cannot find voice in words, realizing, as we do, the terrible reality of the blow that has fallen upon them.

JAMES D. SMILLIE, *President.*

J. C. NICOLL, *Secretary.*

## THE ARTIST AND THE MAN.

*An Address at the Funeral of Mr. J. O. Eaton, at Yonkers, N. Y., on February 9, 1875, by Rev. H. W. Bellows, D. D.*

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This occasion is its own tongue and needs no lips to speak its meaning; rather let me speak to abate its urgency and anguish, and to empty your own o'erfull hearts.

Already this grief has found one consolation. The bitterness of this cruel day and the remoteness of this afflicted home have not chilled nor kept away these numerous comrades in art, and friends of this household from this last opportunity of looking on the face they loved! He cannot be dead indeed whom so many loved and still love, and while love, sympathy, tenderness survive, God is not thoughtless of us or unkind, nor can we be without hope and consolation.

It is one of the sublimest contradictions of our wonderful human nature that the greater the loss we experience in our bereavements the greater the consolation we find! They are the most to be pitied, they are the least consolable, who can bury away their dead without wishing them back; who are relieved from anxiety and a burden when those bound to them by natural ties are taken away from a life they did not adorn or dignify, and from a companionship to which they gave neither charm nor comfort. But when we feel that our dead were truly worthy of life, were blessings to their family, were rare in gifts and qualities of mind and heart, were markedly individual and leave no exact likeness of themselves in all the world, had still a useful and noble career before them, were indeed indispensable, humanly speaking, to those they leave behind, then in the very greatness and richness of the loss we suffer, the vast sacrifices we are called on to make, we find a consolation which, though torn out of a bleeding heart, is full of sweetness and power. It is the fresh and vivid sense we have of the merits and charms of the lost one! The magnitude of our sorrow seems the measure of the gift we have possessed and enjoyed—our grief is the long, broad shadow of the object that casts it, and we would not have it less. It is a luxury to weep for those so worthy of our tears. For we have our friends as long as we truly miss them. They are gone indeed when we no longer grieve for them.

When we can recall in the memory of our departed ones vital qualities, noble traits, still growing powers, celestial aspirations, vivid hopes and

longings for higher and holier things, they rebuke all our doubts of immortality, all our fears of their not retaining a personal and individual existence. Thoughtless, careless, indifferent, unloving and unstriving people die and leave the world no emptier than before. They occupied no room, they gave no sign of true life, they showed no reason for their existence. They seem to give no promise of immortality. They disturb our faith and weaken our confidence in another life. They melt into the dark river like snow-flakes, without promise of ever emerging from it. "Dust to dust, ashes to ashes," but alas how little "the spirit to God who gave it!"

But when a strong-souled, high-hearted man, in the very prime of life, leaves us, taken in the midst of his usefulness, full of noble ambitions, full of honorable labors, the centre of strong and various affections—a beloved husband, father of a growing tribe of children, with everything to live for, and everything still to do, more capable than ever of improvement, fonder than ever of his vocation, never so illy spared either in his profession, his household, and among his friends—then we know and feel that room exists somewhere for this positive, this marked and individual spirit, this precious personality, this strong soul, this bundle of limitless possibilities, this rich aggregation of affections, tastes, aspirations, susceptibilities. We cannot make such a person dead. This cold clay does not represent that warm heart; this icy hand, those plastic fingers; this frozen brow, that thoughtful brain; this stiff and motionless frame, that active, responsive, flexible spirit! Where is it? That it is somewhere even nature forbids us to doubt. So much cannot hide itself in emptiness and negation. The grass may wither, but the trees of the forest, yield their leaves, but not their lives, to the Winter cold. Death might seem, were not Revelation our assurance to the contrary, the end of the weak, the useless, the thoughtless, the soulless; but even without the blessed Gospel it is hard to believe that death itself can extinguish any who have truly, greatly, firmly *lived*.

But there is, after all, nothing that makes death so powerless to alarm as its commonness and universality, and the lightness with which God seems to send it. If it were the great evil, the terrible defeat, the mere terror we so often think it, it would not carry off the innocent, the promising, the stay and staff of the dependent. It would be more discriminating. But God sends it seemingly without any thought of its being an evil or a defeat. It is as much in his plan as life, and it is life in another form. If it were, what we too thoughtlessly deem it, a perpetual interruption, a disappointment, breaking in on a plan that fails, a mischance, accident, punishment, it would indeed be too dreadful to contemplate. But it is clearly in God's sight only a higher part of His providence.

The great husbandman, God, the mighty florist of souls, has many conservatories, various exposures and various climates, and he moves His plants from cellar to attic, from forcing-house to flowering room, from earth to heaven, with almost a seeming indifference to the transitory effect upon their fellow-plants. If we could see His reasons or how orderly His whole plan is, and how what grates on our ears is music in His, we should wonder at our short-sightedness or dullness of our spiritual hearing.

But if we cannot rise to this high argument in our griefs, let us find in the life and death of Jesus the evidence that length of days is not essential, that God takes His beloved in the midst of their highest work, and that men are often more useful in their death than in their life. Let us accept the light of the only religion that assumes immortality as the very ground of all its precepts, and cling to the testimony of Christ's resurrection.

It requires little personal knowledge of our departed brother to feel the deepest sympathy with this event. That a husband fondly beloved and trusted, a father of seven children, from a babe in arms to a son in college, an artist full of work, with an industrious, productive and earnest past behind him, and a future full of aspirations, strivings and hopes, should, on the very pinnacle of life, at the very height of manly strength and vision, be suddenly cut off and cease from among those that loved him, leaned on him, hoped for him and with him, this is, indeed, a cause for profound condolence. I wish I were fitted, by a more intimate acquaintance with our departed friend, to speak discriminatingly of his character as a man, of his gifts as an artist, of his life at home. True, I have known him a long time—from the earliest days of his art and marriage—but always interruptedly and never closely. But I think he was a peculiarly transparent man, and gave one, even at a glance, a certain confidence in his being what he seemed, and in seeming what he was. He was a typical American of the best class, in a certain rugged, homely naturalness of character, without pretence and without servility, proud, but unassuming, self-reliant yet not self-asserting. If anything, he put his worst foot foremost rather than his best, and would sooner have appeared less than more than he was. A blunt, unaffected honesty marked his carriage and his temper. He seemed like one who had found it hard to ask favors, and who could and would sooner fight his own way with even bleeding hands and feet than be carried a step on his road. This ruggedness and naturalness pervaded his opinions. He hated show, parade, formality, and could not frame his tongue into any duplicity or compromises. He seemed to get his opinions out of his own observation and experience, and to have a vivid reliance upon such open vision as was vouchsafed to his own eyes. But I always found his heart as soft as his rind was rugged.

He loved humanity, felt its sorrows and hardships, was easily moved to sympathy, and what is better to active helpfulness. I think he was peculiarly free from selfishness, envy, jealousy, self-absorption. Indeed, Nature and Providence built him on a large scale, high above meanness and bitterness.

It is a singular tribute to the internal beauty of his nature, its sensibility and loveliness, that, with so little in his early circumstances to lead him to art, an irrepressible fondness, an invincible predisposition to it, should have made him early and always a devotee at her shrine. It is seldom that so much physical vigor and capacity for affairs is associated with delicacy of hand and keenness of eye and patience with the effort to externalize in art the haunting of beauty in the soul. Yet over this strong framework, firm and large as if meant to sustain a fabric of economic or public utility, wound the delicate and graceful vine that makes the arbor where the muse of painting sits and tints her shell. I think few know what anxieties and labors and what moderate encouragement follow those in this country, whose mission is to develop the sense of beauty in color and form. They have a pride in their art to whom most of the natural desires of the thrifty, forelooking man of business must be sacrificed. Yet I doubt if many who put their hand to that plough, which is drawn by the sacred heifers of Olympus, often look back. They lose the world, indeed, but it is to gain a paradise of beauty all their own. They exchange the more vulgar prizes of life for the crown of fame and the hope of immortality.

I think our friend was, for an artist, unusually a man of devotion to other public interests. Free in his own views, a discreditor of form and times and seasons, he was a lover of public worship and a Christian in feeling. I dare not invade the sanctities of this home. Sorrow here bears her own testimonies. Who shall speak where these silent witnesses of a tenderness and watchfulness that was faithful unto death sit in mute sorrow?

It matters not whether our brother knew or did not know his approaching end. Doubtless he did, but his life and not his death, his health and not his short sickness, must be his preparation for the meeting with his Judge. I knew him well enough to know that death could not affright his brave soul, which had neither superstition nor weakness in it. He had chosen his part, he had done his duty, he had striven to the end of his strength, and he has gone to his reward. Death has no part in souls like his, and religion drops her sectarian narrowness and her written creeds to honor in him goodness united with strength of will, beauty of taste and fidelity to domestic and human claims!