

Woman Artist Believes That She Is Inspired To Paint Strange Pictures

Untrained In Art, She Finds Herself Creating Impressionistic
Religious Pictures And Ascribes Her Ability To Draw
Them To An Impulse Derived From Heaven
Through Medium Of A Saint.

By EMILY EMERSON LANTZ.

MME. M. KING IVAH, scalp specialists, is the legend above the door. Perhaps the visitor enters the suite of offices with physical rejuvenation uppermost in mind, cherishing roseate visions of luxuriant tresses replacing time-shaded hair.

Such will meet an alert business woman, pretty, gracious; but if visitors go upon a different errand—to talk to Madame Ivah concerning a new and spiritual power which she believes has descended upon her and enables her to draw mediæval religious pictures, often with her eyes shut, they find themselves in the atmosphere of the Middle Ages, when people believed that the spirit of others entered into them and directed their actions, often enabling them to do things which of themselves, they assert, they are quite incapable of accomplishing.

Madame Ivah's unusual occupation in her brief leisure hours is to draw religious pictures, the impelling force she asserts being the power of God manifested through the spirit of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, born 1647, who devoted her life to good works and who, because of her sanctity, received canonization as a saint.

The pictures are crude, yet strangely weird compositions—impressionistic to the last degree—that suggest the drawings of an inexperienced child, yet are possessed of imaginative quality that is startling and which are executed after the manner of early ecclesiastical drawings.

There are about 25 sketches in all, the most finished piece of work being two heads of Christ upon one background, framed and hung upon the wall. One head represents the martyred Christ, his eyes anguished, his brow wreathed with thorns; the second is Christ the judge, with eyes serene and calm and head crowned with jewels. A halo surrounds both heads and between them are the words: "Go to thy God. Ask and you will receive. He died that you might live."

Had Never Drawn Before.

"I did them both," exclaimed Madame Ivah, "I who have never drawn anything in my life. I who cannot even draw a straight line without a ruler. I, who am not a Catholic and know nothing of art! But I would not exchange my ecstasy of joy while drawing those pictures for anything in the world. When I was drawing that picture I remembered every sin I had ever committed in my life, even in my earliest childhood, and longed to confess it."

She turned a glowing face, her attitude toward her newly-found gift seeming to be that of a happy child who has suddenly discovered she can do something never dreamed of or attempted before, and who, under the impelling of a force that she believes to be inspirational, accomplishes certain results doubtless impossible to her without this child-like faith in a guiding power. Her delight in her work again suggests a child who, in its own imperfect achievement, sees a significance far beyond the actual merit of the work.

None the less the pictures are unusual in composition and the artist's faith in their inspirational source more unusual still. "I will tell you how it came to me," said Madame Ivah, "through the ouija board, which I tried one night about the nineteenth of July in a spirit of fun." She produced the board, a tiny thing with an Eastern face, enveloped in Oriental wrappings, painted upon it. "I sat down, just so"—seating herself at a small table—"and put my hands upon it, thus, and said, 'If a spirit is present, let it manifest itself.' There was immediate response by rapping, but I laughed and said I supposed I had done that, since I could always get such response; and then I asked what spirit was present, and the ouija pencil wrote 'Holy.' This gave me a little shiver, and then the pencil began to draw a war picture, heads of soldiers or whole figures, and heads and bodies of women, all marked and mutilated. I was amazed, because I had never drawn a picture. Later I was directed to cast aside the ouija board and to get drawing pencils and later crayons in color.

The Saint's Admonition.

"A picture of myself was drawn, indicating that through me the work was to be done; then a picture of the blessed Margaret Mary, mother of the tree of life, whose days were devoted to good works. She seemed to enter into me. I sit down thus," again she, seated herself, this time before the larger table. I breathe a prayer and repeat the invocation of St. Margaret Mary: Wholly from God and nothing from myself;

Wholly to God and nothing to myself;
Wholly for God and nothing for myself.

And then I await the spiritual presence. I can feel when it enters, as you feel a person entering a room behind you whom you neither see nor hear, or as you feel a draft of air, and then the power enters my body and runs all through me, and with my eyes still closed I concentrate my mind and my hand goes out, apparently without my guidance, and I pick up the pencil or crayons and begin to draw. I never know what the picture will be until it is drawn. Sometimes I open my eyes and watch it develop and when they (she never spoke of the guiding force as herself) are finished with one color the crayon drops from my fingers and again with closed eyes I reach for another and select it, not knowing what I hold in my hand.

"I feel the message of the picture as I am making it. I suffered agony while drawing this one, which I call 'The Rock of Hell.' My eyes were sunk deep in my head and my face was green with exhaustion when I finished." She showed an uncanny picture of sinners buried beneath great boulders such as Dore might have conceived, and below it was written: "The Rocks of Hell hold the wicked. Repentance leads to the Cross. Bless the Lord and live. Stumble not, lest you be buried under the Rocks of Hell."

"The Garden of Eden" was crudely

drawn, with the spirit of God moving through the garden and Adam and Eve hiding among the trees. The life of Christ is symbolized from conception to Calvary. The faces of the Holy Family were drawn separately.

Drawing The Holy Family.

"I felt a great longing for them to hang in my kitchen, said the woman simply, and when next I drew it was the face of Christ, then again the face of the Blessed Mother, then Joseph. I have them all. I wanted a drawing of Christ to put under my pillow—surely it would protect me more completely than any pistol, and this morning I drew this." She exhibited a small picture of the Saviour.

"That took me, say 15 minutes to draw, the large ones an hour, perhaps. I have so little time I can only draw early in the morning and in the evening. Here is a half-finished picture—I do not know what it will be. Sometimes I am told to stop and go out into the air.

"I read the Bible a great deal now. Some one said you are becoming religious. I say no, but I am becoming a better woman. I read the little leaflet that tells of the life and works of the blessed Margaret Mary and her admonition, and I pray. I do not know what will come, but I know something is coming that I am to do." She turned again to the strange impressionistic pictures—one of them an owl and a dove with human eyes, signifying that the eyes of God are on the world—the owl signifying wisdom, the dove peace. In all the pictures are found the cross of salvation, the pierced heart of Christ, the flag of Heaven "carrying on" followed by the multitude.

Expects More Of Future.

"Most of my friends urge me to continue my drawing," said Mme. Ivah, "one friend urges me to cease. She says, 'May, you will go crazy,' but if to be so happy is to be crazy, I would rather be so. Money is to me nothing compared with this joy I feel, and my one desire is to do good to others."

Asked if she could ascribe any reason for her unusual interest in spiritual things, she replied: "Oh, yes; one day when walking down town I slipped into the Cathedral just to rest a little, as you might do, and I had a vision of Christ. He appeared to me and placed His hand upon my head. I can feel the touch of His hand still. Some one told the late Cardinal of my belief that I had seen a vision of Christ and he did not question its truth. Ever since then I have felt this impulse to be a better woman (to do God's will. But why the manifestation should be through this impulse to draw pictures, I cannot say. If it had been doing something along lines with which I am familiar, I might understand. I don't know what's coming, but it is something coming, for which I must keep mind and body clean."

Mme. Ivah is well known to Baltimoreans, having lived 20 or more years in this city. She is a young English woman, with brown hair, clear, direct glance, and fresh, healthy coloring. Her expression, while speaking of her strange experiences, is sweet and childlike, and her mental attitude that of childlike faith in what she does not understand.