

AN ARTIST OF TALENT

Miss Marie Keller's Paintings On Exhibition.

A SKETCH OF HER CAREER

Work Characterized By Strength, Sentiment And Technique — Praise By Artists And Critics.

By EMILY EMERSON LANTZ.

There assembled last week in a pleasant studio located almost beneath the eaves of the Cathedral a group of interested and interesting people whose coming together was to welcome again to Baltimore art circles a painter whose reputation is well established and whose work has been accorded both by artists and critics the appreciation it deserves.

The artist is Miss Marie Keller, and among those who greeted her return was his Eminence Cardinal Gibbons; Mr. Carl Ahrens, the Canadian landscape painter, whose work has been likened in delicacy and sentiment to that of George Innis; Mr. Thomas C. Corner, the well-known portrait painter; Mr. Ephraim Keyser, the distinguished sculptor; Miss Lizette Woodworth Reese, the poetess, and other equally prominent in literary and artistic circles.

Miss Keller was a member of the Art Students' League in New York and studied under William M. Chase, Walter Shirlaw and Kenyon Cox, after which she further pursued her studies abroad under Franz Duer, a professor of the Royal Academy, and enjoyed the friendship and advice of such noted men as the president of the Academy and Count Franz von Lenbach, court painter of Germany, whose portraits of Bismarck and other distinguished men are known all over the world.

In her selection of teachers Miss Keller was peculiarly happy, since the instruction of one was supplemented by that of the others. In no case did she have to unlearn any previously acquired methods, and all her teachers, recognizing a gift of tough and technique peculiarly her own, aided her in preserving this artistic personality, while encouraging her by their appreciation of the admirable results obtained.

The studio as seen last week, with the artist moving gracefully amid her guests, was a very attractive spot. The walls were tapestried with burlap of a warm gray that that furnished a most harmonious background for oil paintings, and the pictures, save two—a copy of Rubens' Christ upon the Cross of Calvary and a large portrait of Cardinal Ferdinand of Spain (now in the Munich collection) copied from the same painter—were the original work of Miss Keller.

The place of honor in the studio was accorded to a portrait in oil of Cardinal Gibbons, the excellence of which was emphasized by the presence in the room of the prelate himself. The portrait combines in pose and likeness the dignity of the high ecclesiastic and the benignity of nature that is so characteristic of Cardinal Gibbons as a man. The background of the picture is a rich tapestry effect, with a shadowy suggestion of the Tree of Life, and the warm red of the Cardinal's robe is carried in a subdued form into the background. There is spirituality, in keeping with the face, in the hand of the ecclesiastic that rests upon a table beside him.

Miss Keller combines in her work to a remarkable degree masculine strength and feminine sentiment and tenderness, and her portraits are distinctive in that the faces and figures blend and melt into their background with softness and beauty.

This is especially true in the only water color in the room—a portrait of the niece of Dr. Amadore, President of Panama. The face is of pre-Raphaelite loveliness and ideality, yet bears the stamp of perfect portraiture, and is done in soft ivory tones that are charming.

In altogether different style is a second portrait—a study of another niece of Dr. Amadore—that hints in the haughty tilt of the head of ancestral intermarriage with the proud Aztec tribes. It is a fresh, invigorating picture, with a schoolgirl's face smiling forth from a close red skating cap, and a red cloak about the shoulders blends into surrounding color effects.

Two of the strongest pictures in the studio are the heads of an old man and of an old woman. The first represents a German soldier. The workmanship is very low in tone, and yet so light that the effects are truly remarkable. The face is that of a man over four score years and ten, with the appealing eyes and slightly tremulous lips that come with second childhood. "How did you get it?" asked the teacher Duer of his pupil upon first seeing it, and then, baring his head before her, added, "All respect to you."

The head of the old Italian woman, whom Duer has not seen, since the original is in Baltimore, would win from that artist equal commendation. The painter calls this work of her brush "Madeline." It is the embodiment of a sweet-souled face that smiles with luminous effect from within the shadows of a large black bonnet. The wrinkled hands are clasped in sudden and expressive gesture across the breast, and if the ivory-tinted dream face of the Panama girl appeals to the imagination Madeline's gentle mother-face wins the heart.

"The Grape Gatherers" is the title of a most attractive picture and is full of sunlight effects and the rich color of grapes. A man and girl bend over the fruit-laden



MISS MARIE KELLER

[Photographed by Mesny.]

vines. The man faces the spectator, the girl is in the simple garb and cap of the Rhineland. Only the slightest outline of her cheek is visible, yet so strong is the artist's power of suggestion that one sees mentally the laughter that dimples her cheek and curves her lips and knows the face to be a bewitching one.

There is an interesting portrait of Miss Eleanor Jenkins, daughter of Mr. Joseph W. Jenkins, of Baltimore, that was made in the classroom as an illustration of how to paint a portrait. It recalls in purity of feature and aristocracy of type the maiden of Colonial days, whose high-arched eyebrows, aquiline nose and sensitive mouth have descended to us in old portraits by early masters. A contrasting bit of portraiture is a winsome embodiment of baby innocence, sweetness and rosy health called by the artist "Little Nannie."

The head of a Munich fruit girl that is exhibited has much the coloring of a Botticelli and is a delightfully youthful profile with all the delicacy and perfection of tinting incident to girlhood.

The one painting of still life shown by Miss Keller is so careful in finish and vivid in coloring as to suggest the work of a different but equally sure hand. A young woman glowing with health tilts from a half-overturned barrel quantities of luscious tropical fruit, and girl and fruit are equally alluring.

A charming landscape painting in the room is known as "The Nun's Walk," and shows a secluded woodland roadway beneath trees that breathe of spring, and the whole atmosphere suggests the peaceful seclusion of monastic life. "The Widow's Mite" is another striking picture—the wan face indicating privation and suffering, yet also calm resignation under their stern discipline. There are several studies of imagination in the group, fancy heads with decorative treatment of background and frame and one or two healthy outdoor sketches of humble but picturesque market types.

Not the least interesting study is the artist herself. She is small and slender, with an earnest face that plainly indicates the fixed purpose and incentive of her life and her absorption in the art for which she is so well equipped. Her features are Teutonic, and one is not surprised to learn that her birthplace was upon the Rhine, near the city of Worms. There is, however, a sparkle and enthusiasm in her manner that is inherited from her French mother, and this union of nationalities in her blood is probably the reason of the French vitality and German solidity characteristic of her painting. "I paint very rapidly," she said, in reply to a question, "and what I paint either stays untouched or is painted out altogether. The old German soldier there is a three hours' study and 'Madeline'—it was a sudden impulsive gesture of her clasped hands that I caught for the picture. The girl with the overturned fruit is a Panamanian, and the fruit, you see, is tropical, too—all save the apples—and the girl herself was such a rosy apple of a girl they seemed appropriate. The fruit girl head in profile? Hers is the peculiarly bright coloring of the Munich fraulein that one does not see in this country and which I seem to have happily caught. The copy of Rubens? I wanted to see how he achieved certain results, and the only way to know was to do it myself; how, as in the Calvary, he got the effect of

suffering and lifeless weight. But I do not want to copy; I prefer to do original work, and if I have obtained some measure of success it is because I try to find the spiritual element of each face.

"And I like to teach because I seem to possess the ability to inspire enthusiasm and impart knowledge, and my training has been with that object in view. I want particularly to paint portraits and religious subjects and desire very much to paint some religious pictures that will be ennobling to mankind and worthy of the church."

In her imposing portrait of Cardinal Gibbons Miss Keller has already completed a picture suited to the adornment of some large scholastic or religious institution or a Catholic club. She was an instructor at the Maryland Institute School of Art and Design before going to Munich and since then has been occupied in art work and study. Her present studio is located at 5 West Mulberry street, and already a group of young artists has secured a studio in the same building and are pursuing their work under her instruction.

In addition to her individual work, Miss Keller has also on exhibition at her studio four water-color pictures painted by Mr. Carl Ahrens. The subjects are taken from Indian life, concerning which the artist is distinguished for his unique and skillful treatment. The pictures are all delightful, but one is of peculiar loveliness. It shows an Indian wigwam in the half light of early nightfall. Smoke issues from the top of the tent, and against the canvas sides are cast the shadows of the Indians seated inside around the fire.

Within all is warmth and light; without are twinkling stars in the quiet heavens and a sense of solitude and stillness that can be felt.