

AMERICAN PICTURES AND THEIR PAINTERS. By Lorinda Munson Bryant. Lane; \$3.

What first attracts one toward Mrs. Bryant's book is the discrimination manifested in the selection of the illustrations, which form a series displaying the characteristic phases of American painting from Colonial times to the present. These examples reveal the general trend and vigor of native painting in oil. Artists differing widely in methods and aims are ranged side by side in amicable historical review. Even the much despised anecdotist and the latest of the younger radicals are not denied admission. There is much biographical detail of an informing nature, and here and there expositions of studio theory. The book is written, however, from a popular non-critical point of view; consequently there is little or no discussion of the various technical methods used by the painters in obtaining their effects. Whether intentionally or not, the author constantly gives the impression of emphasizing the importance of subject matter in painting. She even adds a rebellious little corollary to one of Whistler's pronouncements, in which he glorifies the manner at the expense of the matter. One sincerely wishes that Mrs. Bryant in her enthusiasm for nature, both inanimate and human, had focused her numerous descriptions of the subject matter of the paintings. That the painter has chosen to paint a wintry landscape under certain interesting conditions is surely no excuse for a general panegyric on winter, or that the artist has selected a human being or several human beings as a means of expression is no excuse for a general eulogy of mankind. In the family circle a little girl, it is true, may be a "darling," but in a painting that may be the least interesting of her attributes. If the subject is a man, the author dilates on masculine character; if the subject is a woman, and a thin one at that, the author thinks the artist would have been wiser to select a plumper and

rosier model. The author even says in one place that each brush stroke of a certain artist was a "stroke of love." Most artists will confess that their own brush strokes are often accompanied by something more closely resembling profanity. Paint, as anyone knows who has worked with it, is a mulish substance. And, furthermore, our view is endorsed by famous testimony, for we all recall that historic outcry of Sir Joshua Reynolds, "Damn paint!" Aside from these minor defects the book is a handy and valuable compendium. It contains a goodly stock of information, and one is readily able, by means of it, to trace the leading tendencies in our native art.