

**CATALOGUE OF
ETCHINGS
AND DRY-POINTS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649022571

Catalogue of Etchings and Dry-points by James McNeill Whistler

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Cover @ 2017

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JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER

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AND DRY-POINTS**

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Exhibited at the Grolier Club, 29 East
Thirty-second Street, from April 15th
until May 7th, nineteen hundred and four

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OF
ETCHINGS AND
DRY-POINTS

BY
JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER



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From the
Grolier Club

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THE DE VINNE PRESS

JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER was born on July 11, 1834, and the record of St. Anne's Church in Lowell, Mass., shows that he was baptized there on November 9th of that year. He died in London on Friday, July 17, 1903, having been in ill health for a considerable period. He was thus on the verge of rounding out the Psalmist's threescore years and ten when the end came; his was a long life, and, on the whole, it was a happy one, though he may have sought to give the world the opposite impression. As with Corot, Millet, and many others, immediate popularity did not fall to his lot, but even as a young man he had the appreciation of the few,—the appreciation which he always preferred,—and long before his death he had won world-wide repute. Connoisseurs here and in Great Britain bought his works; artistic organizations formally honored him; among the members of his profession everywhere he was held in high regard, and to the people at large, his became one of the famous names of the time. The French government bought his great portrait

INTRODUCTION

of his mother, now in the Luxembourg; the Corporation of the City of Glasgow acquired his next most celebrated portrait, that of Carlyle; and examples of his art hang in the public museums of Boston, Chicago, and Pittsburg. During the past winter a memorial exhibition of productions by him was held by the Royal Scottish Academy in Edinburgh, and a similar enterprise was carried through on a much larger scale by the Copley Society in Boston.

Two informal Whistler exhibitions have been held in the Grolier Club, but the present one has been made as complete as possible, all or nearly all of his etchings and dry-points being shown, as well as many "states" not heretofore described or discovered. There are also several subjects which have not been publicly exhibited before, so that it may be claimed that no such complete exhibition of this side of his genius has ever been given either in America or abroad.

Whistler began life with dreams of service in the army—his father and grandfather were both military men—dreams which throughout his career he looked back upon with unfading interest; but his sojourn at West Point was comparatively brief. Numerous anecdotes are told of his wit and serene faith in himself in those days; but to a cadet constituted as was Whistler,

INTRODUCTION

the discipline must have been extremely irksome, and at the end of nearly three years he was recommended for discharge, being totally deficient in mathematics, though always first in drawing.

It is significant that there should be associated with his (brief) career in the government service at Washington a certain Coast Survey plate on which he etched a number of loosely drawn heads, showing, even at that early age and with all his inherited respect for the traditions of the place, a characteristic disregard of or indifference to official decorum. In short, the spirit of the etcher had to come out, the happy moment for seizing a congenial subject could not be permitted to pass, no matter what suffered, or, from the official point of view, was disfigured. But when as a young man he definitively embraced the career of an artist and began his studies in the atelier of Gleyre, it was not with the etching needle alone that he proposed to make his way. On the contrary, he seems to have had quite as much enthusiasm for the brush, and, in fact, he remained ever after a practitioner of both arts.

The story of his life in Paris and in London is too long to be recited in this place. It is sufficient to note that as an etcher and as a painter he followed ideals of his own, and that while his prints found a certain acceptance, his

INTRODUCTION

paintings were slower in obtaining recognition. Still, if he was not to know commercial success until his later years, his rank as a brilliant artist was freely acclaimed while he was still in his prime; and always, whether praised or contemned, he pursued his chosen path with ardor, painting figure pieces and nocturnes, making water-colors, pastels, and lithographs, and etching plate after plate. By the time he died he had put a remarkable mass of work to his credit.

Whistler was instinctively an etcher. Like Rembrandt, with whom he is unquestionably to be ranked in this field of art, he handled the needle as though it were a perfectly natural means of expression — as natural as the pen is to the average man. He was in his teens when he adorned with his irrelevant observations of human nature the plate mentioned on page 5. We know that he was in financial straits on his way back to Paris from his trip down the Rhine, remittances having failed him; but under these and other discouraging circumstances he made those wonderful, elaborate plates of eastern France (erroneously called the Brittany set) which delight all lovers of the art of etching. Less than three years before his death he went to Corsica for rest and recuperation, and although strictly enjoined not to work, he made several

INTRODUCTION

small etchings and drawings. He was, in fact, an *etcher* all his life long.

The catalogue which Mr. Frederick Wedmore compiled runs in the second edition (that of 1899) to 268 numbers. A Supplementary Catalogue, by "An Amateur," published in New York in 1902, swelled the record so as to account for 372 plates. Four hundred etchings by Whistler are now known, most of which are entered in the following pages. It is not the intention of their compiler to frame the complete and final catalogue, as that would involve almost endless research, both here and in Europe. He simply enumerates the prints to be exhibited, which unfortunately, owing to lack of wall space, must be shown in two, or possibly three sections.

It will be observed that certain of the etchings fall naturally into groups. The French set of the late fifties stands obviously not only for a definite period in Whistler's life, but for a clearly marked phase of his art, and as much may be said of the Thames set which followed not long after; but it should be pointed out that in the case of a man like Whistler, who was always working, it is injudicious to pigeonhole this or that group of his etchings as though it had an existence by itself, with no relation to anything coming before or after. There are points of