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NEW-YORK ETCHING CLUB  
1892




NUMBER TWO OF NEW SERIES



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*M. Virginia Moran*

Born in Strathavon, Scotland, 1842. A pupil of her husband, Thomas Moran. Studied also in Europe for several years. A member of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers, London, and the New-York Etching Club.



PUBLICATION BY THE    
NEW-YORK ETCHING CLUB  
WITH CATALOGUE OF ETCHING PROOFS  
EXHIBITED AT THE NATIONAL ACADEMY  
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1891-92.



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Photo. by Sarony, Plate by The N. Y. Photogravure Co.

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Photo. by F. E. G., Plate by The N. Y. Photogravure Co.

ETCHING, "TANGIER" . . . . . By R. Swain Gifford.

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Photo. by Geo. Rockwood, Plate by The N. Y. Photogravure Co.

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Photo. by Sarony, Plate by The N. Y. Photogravure Co.

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## ABOUT ETCHING.

“**E**TCHING to the New-Yorker is an orange squeezed dry—  
he has no further use for it or interest in it.”

So said a pessimistic friend as we talked of the art and our hopes in connection with it. I do not share with him this discouraging view, although fully aware of the injury done by the glut and surfeit of the past few years that grew quite consistently from love of novelty, imperfect education and greed. I have an abiding ardor of faith in Etching as embodying a delightful and characteristic form of art expression that no amount of indifference or neglect can cool, and I believe that out of the subsiding fermentation—the unhealthy activity—through which we have passed there will come a far better condition. We shall see fewer etchings, but the average of excellence will be higher. There will be fewer etchers, but they will etch in answer to commands from within, not in response to demands from without. There will be fewer buyers, but their wants will be based upon love and intelligence. Our dry-goods stores will not advertise cheap and attractive etchings along with bargains in flannels, fancy soaps and shoes.



The orange has not been squeezed dry. There is plenty of juice still there, perennial in its sweetness and supply. This assurance gives me courage to address a few more words on this overdone subject to such part of a surfeited public as may care to read them.

Deference due to the older art of Engraving demands a few words in passing. It was practised for purposes purely ornamental long before anything was known about plate-printing. Our prehistoric ancestors may be said to have engraved when they cut their rude designs upon horn and bone. The Etruscans and Greeks engraved when they cut figures and devices upon the backs of their bronze mirrors and metal ornaments. The goldsmiths of Florence about the middle of the fifteenth century excelled in Engraving. They embellished their gold and silver work with designs of singular beauty and delicacy, not only ornamental but pictorial. When the work was complete the graver-cut lines were filled with an enamel made of silver, lead and sulphur. This is the work known as Niello. Sometimes, before the lines of these engravings were filled with the enamel already described, a matrix was formed by pressing fine clay upon the work. From this matrix an impression or cast in sulphur was taken, reproducing the original engraving in all its details of line and form. The lines upon the sulphur cast were then filled with a preparation of carbon or black, producing the effect of a printed impression, the lines so filled being a tracery of black upon the golden yellow of the sulphur. A few of these very frail impressions are still preserved, objects of much solicitude to their keepers. There are no less than nineteen specimens in the British Museum. Necessarily they are small, the largest being less than six inches in its longest measurement. The work so shown is wonderfully fine and elaborate, especially so, it must seem, when we remember that the engraver, knowing nothing of plate-printing, could have had no thought of any wider sphere for all his delicate toil than the bounds

of each separate work. The discovery of the process of plate-printing seems to have been quite accidental, and for some time even after it was known its real artistic or commercial importance was not suspected. The recognition of Engraving as a multiplying art was of tardy growth, for it was not until the next century that the knowledge of it was carried to practical results. Perhaps the oldest known print from a plate bearing a date is one marked "W. Jan<sup>y</sup>, 1496." There are but three copies of it known to exist, one being in the British Museum. Authorities are at variance as to whether it is the work of Wenceslas of Olmütz, or of Wolgemut, the teacher of Dürer.

Almost every definite statement bearing upon the early history of this art and its workers is subject to contradiction or controversy. This, we may suppose, is in happy accord with the artistic temperament that loves not an incontrovertible historical statement any more than it does a hard, uncompromising line.

The word Etching, as may be learned from any dictionary, is but an Anglicized form of the old Dutch verb *etsen*, to eat. It has been used very indiscriminately, and made to bear more than its share of the burden of language. Unless there be corrosion, or eating away of substance, there is no etching. It cannot be stated with certainty when chemical compounds, acids or mordants capable of corroding or etching metal were first known, but Mr. S. R. Koehler, to whose study and research I am largely indebted, says in his admirable work on Etching, published by Cassell & Co.: "We may assume from certain historical indications that the art of biting letters into steel was practised in Italy in the twelfth century." In the fifteenth century the evidence becomes documentary, one receipt, still extant, being "to make water which hollows out iron." The armorers of that time were quite expert in using acids to produce sunken or hollowed-out ornamentation upon arms and armor. As the first artist-etchers worked upon thin iron plates, some writers consider

this as an evidence that they learned the use of acids, or the process of "biting," from the armorers. Parmigiano has some ardent adherents who claim for him the invention of the art of Etching. He seems, at least, to have been the first etcher on copper. There is but little historical light upon the question as to who first made use of acid with artistic intent upon plates for the purpose of printing. As I have already stated, there are three prints extant from a plate bearing date of 1496, but the doctors disagree as to whether that plate was a dry-point, an etching, or an engraving. It is impossible to settle that question by an examination of the prints alone. It is popularly supposed that the weight of evidence is in favor of Albrecht Dürer being the first artist-etcher, since he is known to have etched six plates bearing dates from 1515 to 1518. It is reasonable to suppose that he was not favorably impressed by the new art, for although he is credited with having engraved about forty plates and nearly eighty woodcuts, he produced but six etchings, and these comparatively unimportant. His etched plates do, however, bear the earliest unchallenged dates.

There is a strong chain of circumstantial evidence to prove that Daniel Hopfer, of Augsburg, etched portrait-plates as early as 1500, although none of his work bears date earlier than 1520, or five years later than Dürer's earliest etching. He and his two sons are known to have etched between two and three hundred plates. That these plates were etched may be demonstrated, as many of them are still in existence. One of them, portraits of Charles V. and his brother Ferdinand, after passing through many vicissitudes of fortune, has but recently done duty as an illustration in Mr. Koehler's work on Etching, already referred to. I have held the thin sheet of hammered iron in my hands, regarding it with strangely mingled feelings of antiquary and artist. Here was the work of a man almost contemporaneous with Columbus, who, as he worked, might have listened to some of the strange stories of a newly discovered conti-

ment, never dreaming that, after nearly four centuries, his plate would be printed and published in a city of that New World greater than any city then known, or that his work would be the subject of much learned discussion. How blindly we peer into the obscurity of the future as we wonder what story will be the parallel of this one four hundred years hence.

For the past three hundred years painters have been interested to a greater or less degree in free-hand, or artistic, Etching, and many notable men among them have left evidences of that interest. Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Ruysdael, Claude, Turner, Delacroix, Millais, Meissonier, and Jacque are a few of the lights that scintillate in groups, like constellations, between the beginning of the seventeenth century and the present time.

The love of Etching, like other passions, is subject to tides and fluctuations, now sweeping at flood, then sinking at ebb. It has seemed to die, and has been almost forgotten more than once, sleeping until awakened by the touch of a new master or the call of a new generation. Dates cannot be fixed with exactness to mark the time when dormant interest was last aroused, the growth being too slow to be covered by any one, or even ten years, but it may be well enough to say that in France there was a new impulse, broad enough to be recognized as general, about forty years ago. Fifteen years later the impulse crossed the Channel with energy enough to move the phlegmatic Briton. It reached these shores about the same time in the person of an adventurous Gaul, but he came too early. A few of our painters had etched even years before in a quiet way, to gratify their own love for it, but the public was not ready, and remained uninterested. Twelve or fifteen years ago the right time had come, and we all know the wonderful energy that since then has, like magic, called etchers into being, has excited a popular and evanescent passion, and has furnished a rich harvest for the enterprising publisher. Now the artist of reputation in

Europe or America who does not know something practically about Etching is the exception.

The enthusiasm of artists naturally and to a great extent forms the basis of the interest that grows among amateurs, connoisseurs, and collectors. An indication of the growth of this interest is to be found in the increase of values, of which one of Rembrandt's etchings affords a notable instance. An impression, in the first state, from the plate of "Christ Healing the Sick," was sold in Amsterdam in 1755 for thirty-five dollars. In London the same impression was sold in 1798 for one hundred and sixty-five dollars. In 1809 it was again sold for two hundred and six dollars, and again it was sold, when its present possessor paid eleven hundred and fifty-five dollars for it. Another impression of the same plate sold in 1847 for seven hundred dollars. Not long ago Mr. Palmer, an English collector, paid five thousand nine hundred dollars for it.

There is an agreeable combination of instruction and amusement in the study of some of the conditions that enhance these values to a wonderful degree. In the simplicity of ignorance we might think that, to the loving, admiring collector, the first and highest charm of a print would be found in its perfection as a work of art—in its excellence as an impression. We are mistaken. Higher than artistic excellence or printer's skill, rarity is the quality most dear to the collector. There may be other impressions of the plate that were more satisfactory to the master, more highly finished or more perfect exhibitions of the printer's skill. These take but second place. This condition, growing out of what seems to be a natural desire to possess that which no one else can duplicate, is not to be wondered at, nor should it be wholly deprecated; but to one seeking for gratification of pure art-love only, it must be a very poor and mean standard. Rembrandt etched a "Sleeping Dog" upon the corner of a plate measuring  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches wide

by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches high. He afterward cut the plate down one inch—that is, to  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches. There was no work at all upon the metal that he cut off; it was to his mind only so much injurious margin. There is but *one* known impression having the mark of the plate of the size it was before it was cut. That impression was sold in London in 1809 for seven dollars and fifty cents. The Duke of Buckingham afterward bought it for thirty dollars, and at a sale of some of his possessions in 1834 it brought three hundred and five dollars. In 1841 the British Museum gave six hundred dollars for it. As Mr. Hamerton in his account of this incident very cogently puts it, “The difference between this copy and an ordinary one is exactly six square inches of white paper, so that the British Museum actually gave a little under twenty pounds per square inch for some blank paper which Rembrandt considered injurious to his etching, since he diminished the size of his copper. The essential point, as a matter of curiosity, was that this white paper should be within the plate-mark.” Then he adds: “This may be taken as a typical example of that purchasing for curiosity which is so distinct from the love of art.”

Collectors who are governed by a desire seeking to make their collections unique, or complete, naturally prefer to deal with known quantities. They must know that the producer is dead; also, the number of his works extant. Then there is definite ground for them to go upon, and a complete collection of the known works of any given master is possible. It need not be said that collections increase vastly and disproportionately in value as they approach completeness. In this age, when any one can etch (and almost every one does); when, by the aid of the new processes of electrotyping and steel-facing, the copperplates may be made practically indestructible; when steam-power is already applied to some classes of copperplate printing, one press turning out ten times as much work as a man could do in the same time,—what hope is left for

the collector of the unique or complete—what chance has he against such fearful odds?

The man who buys modern etchings cannot be a collector in such sense. The inference is fair that he must buy them because he loves them, and to such men the etchers of to-day turn hopefully.

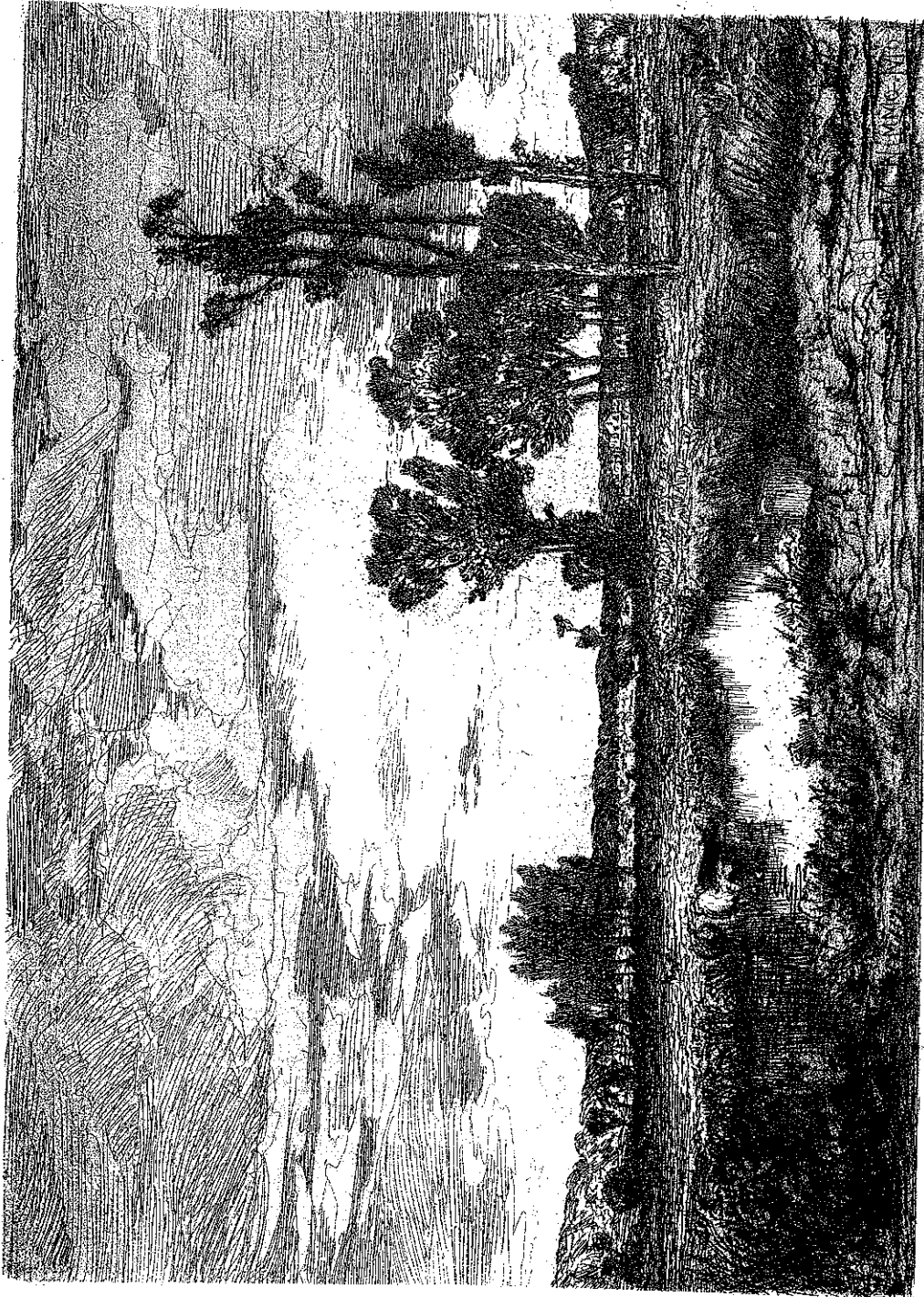
These meager notes are prefatory to a technical description of the process of Etching, which will form a part of the next section of this publication.

J. D. S.



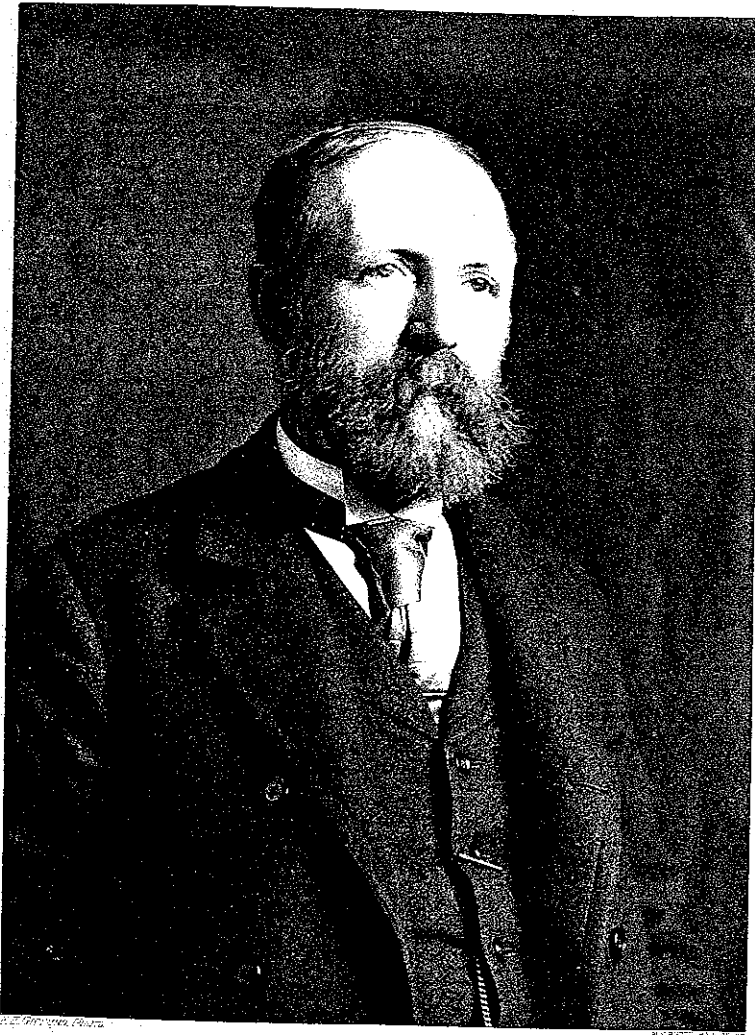
THE PASSAIC MEADOWS. M. NIMMO MORAN.



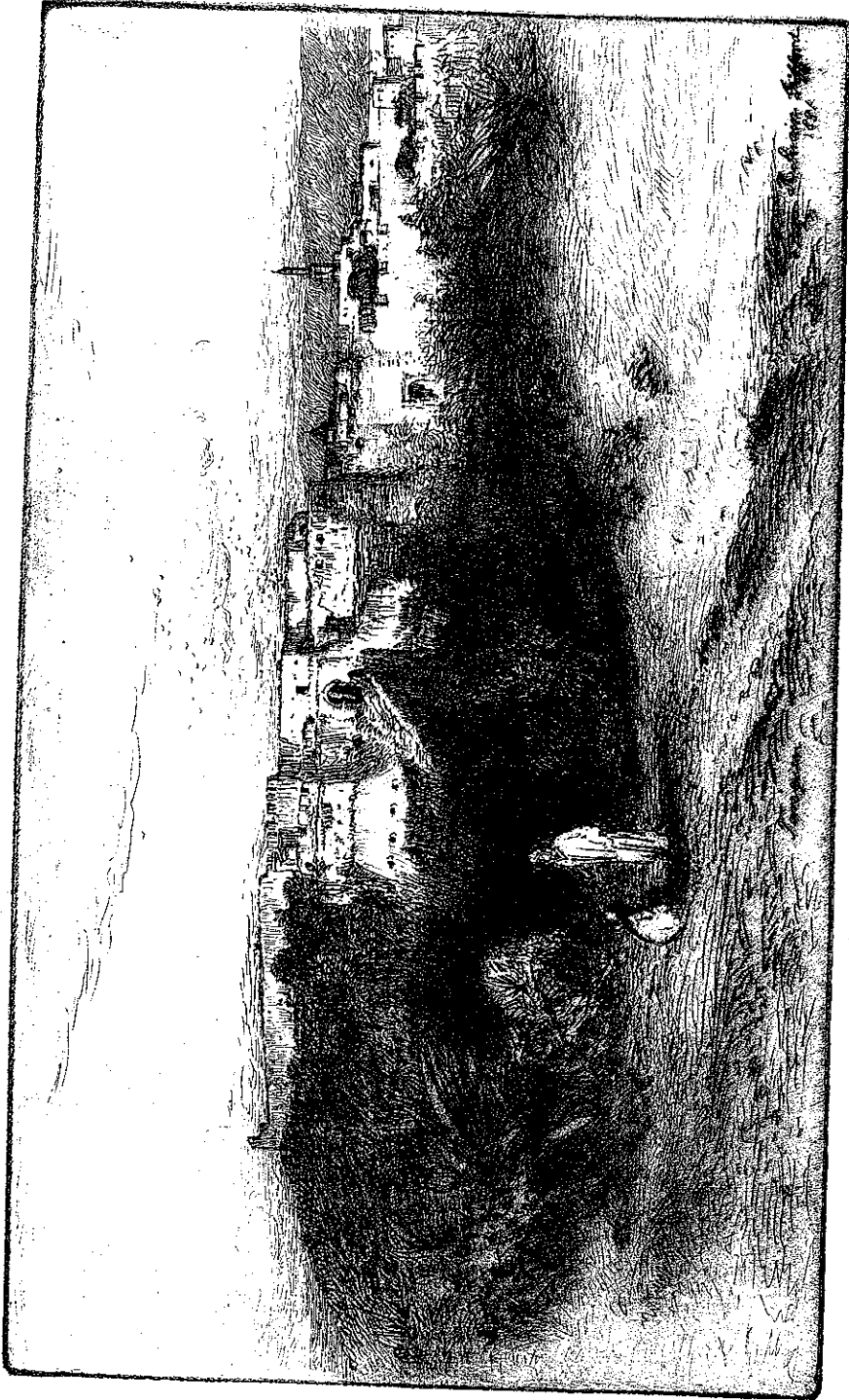


*A. Swain Gifford*

Born on the Island of Naushon, Buzzard's Bay, Mass., 1840. Began painting with Albert Van Beest. First settled in New-York in 1865. Traveled extensively in Europe and Northern Africa for art study. Academician of National Academy of Design, a Founder of the American Water-Color Society, Member of Society of American Artists, of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers, London, and of the New-York Etching Club.

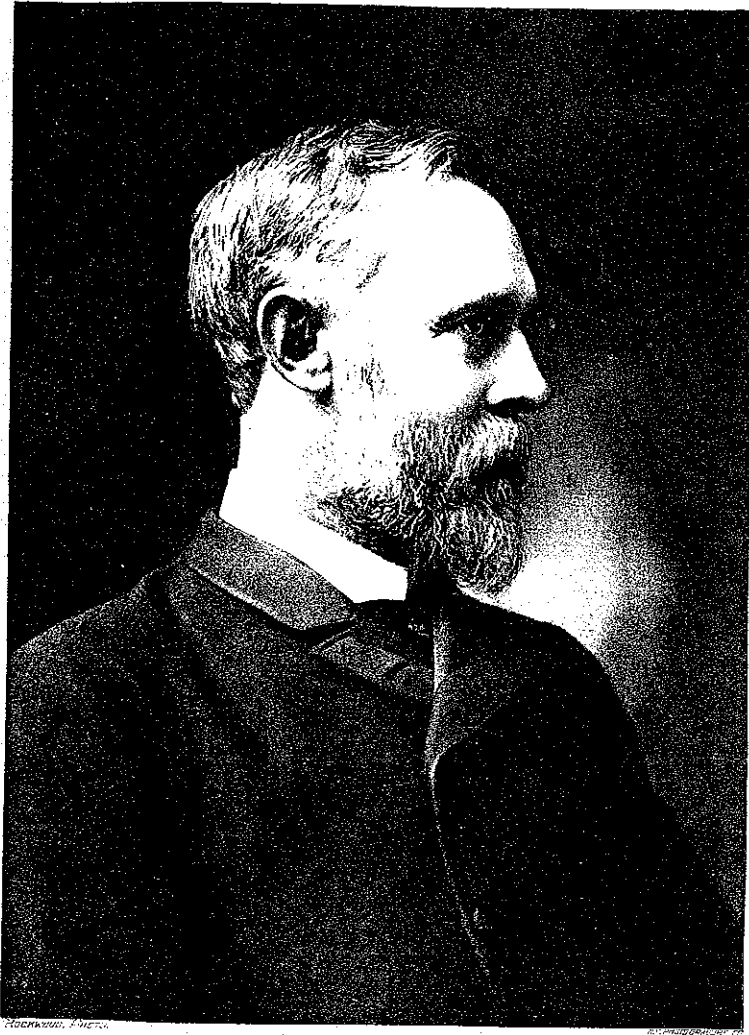


“TANGIER.” R. SWAIN GIFFORD.



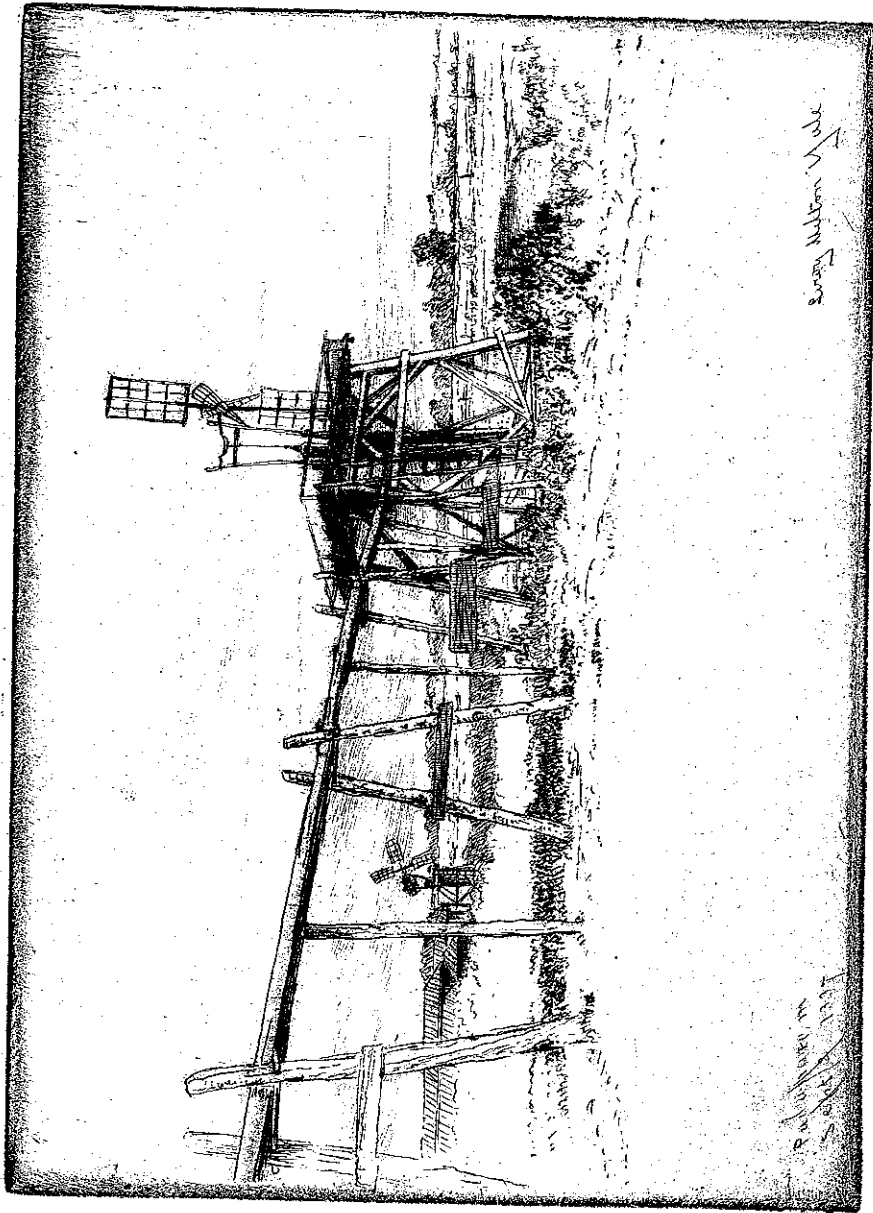
*Leroy Milton Gale.*

Born in Vineyard Haven, Mass., 1841. No definite instruction in drawing. Began to etch in 1866, while House Physician on Blackwell's Island. Most of his plates were etched between 1875 and 1882, and almost entirely directly from nature. With Jas. D. Smillie he organized the New-York Etching Club, and was its first President, 1877-79.



SALT-WORKS NEAR PADANARAM BRIDGE. DR. LEROY MILTON YALE.





Every Nelson Vale

Produced in  
1908

*T. Moran.*

Born in Bolton, England, 1837. Studied art in Philadelphia and, for several years, in Europe. Traveled extensively in the Far West, and painted many of its grand features. An Academician of the National Academy of Design. Member of the American Water-Color Society; elected an Original Fellow of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers, London; Member of the New-York Etching Club.



LARDY, PHOTO.

N.Y. PHOTOGRAPHIC CO.

GLEANNING FROM THE WRECK, MONTAUK. THOS. MORAN.

Image Missing

Alexander Schilling.

Born in Chicago, Ill., 1859. Studied landscape-painting under Geo. S. Collis. Came to New-York in 1885. Went abroad in 1888. Member of New-York Etching Club.



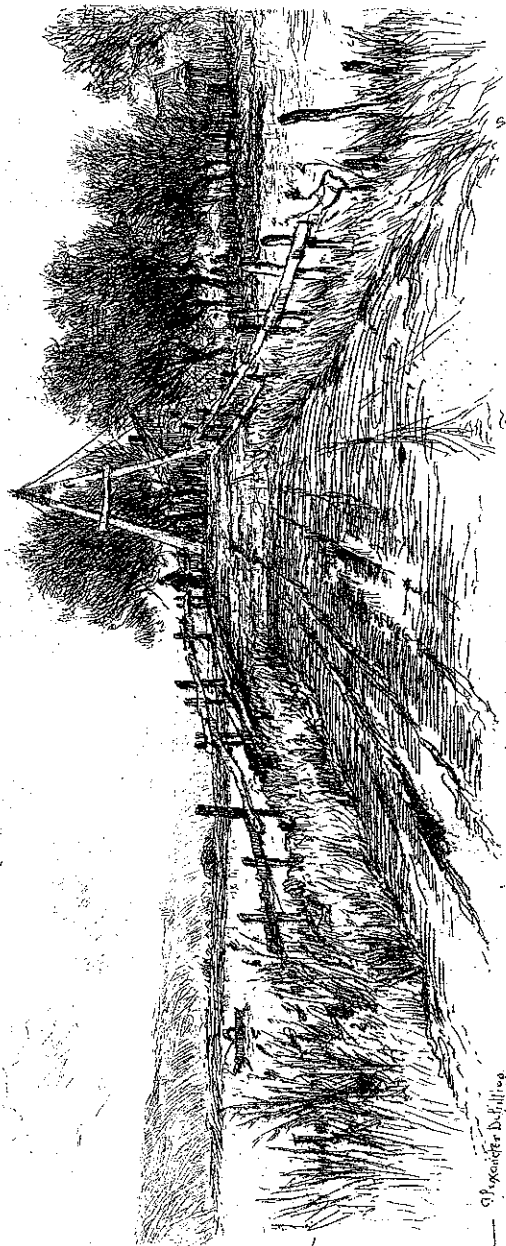
SAGONY PHOTO

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“TOLL-GATE AND BRIDGE.” ALEXANDER SCHILLING.





— G. Kneller Del. 1849



## CATALOGUE OF ETCHING PROOFS

EXHIBITED AT THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN, NEW-YORK CITY,  
DURING THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY, 1892.

- 
- BALDWIN, A. H., . . . . . *58 West 57th Street, New-York.*  
1 Head of a Man.
- BLANEY, HENRY R., . . . . . *12 Follen Street, Boston, Mass.*  
2 Atlantis. . . . .  
3 A Byway, Cuba. . . . .  
4 The Brook. . . . .  
5 Old Boat-house.  
6 Japanese Bronze.
- BLOODGOOD, R. F., . . . . . *58 East 13th Street, New-York.*  
7 False Friends.
- CHAPMAN, CARLTON T., . . . . . *58 West 57th Street, New-York.*  
8 Morning Calm (first state). . . . .  
9 Morning Calm (second state). . . . .  
10 English Fishing-boats.  
11 Low Tide.
- CALAHAN, J. J., . . . . . *195 Broadway, New-York.*  
12 Waiting for the Tide.  
13 Pepys.
- CANBY, LOUISE PRESCOTT, . . . . . *1020 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia.*  
14 Castle of Chillon.  
15 A Lonely Road.
- DIELMAN, FREDERICK, . . . . . *41 West 10th Street, New-York.*  
16 Head. (Dry-point.)

- VANDERHOOF, CHAS. A., . . . . . *14 E. 120th Street, New-York.*  
 96 Sand-dunes of Virginia. 101 By the Hudson.  
 97 Morning Light. 102 Bay Ridge.  
 98 A Kansas Windmill. 103 A New-York Shanty.  
 99 The Passing Storm. 104 Castle William.  
 100 The First Snowfall. 105 The Fish Hawk's Nest.
- WHITTEMORE, CHAS. E., . . . . . *579 Broadway, New-York.*  
 106 Hampton Roads, near Newport News.
- WEIR, J. ALDEN, . . . . . *11 East 12th Street, New-York.*  
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 108 The Young Student. 117 Hay-stacks.  
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