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Emil Orlik. By Richard Muther.

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## Emil Orlik

EMIL ORLIK. BY RICHARD MUTHER.

As yet it is not possible to say much in an article on Emil Orlik, for he is a young artist, just thirty years of age, seeking, learning, experimenting in all directions, and has not yet revealed himself in any big, definite work. But is it right to measure the importance of an artist by the standard of the great exhibition pictures which formerly everyone had to paint before attaining celebrity? Surely our taste has grown more sane and more refined since we ceased to compel artists to useless waste of power, since we learned to appreciate the work which—in defiance of the sensation-hunger of the masses—the true artist lays before us in the form of simple drawings and unpretentious sketches.

Such is Emil Orlik—an artist who has no need to don the gala costume of the exhibition painting, but attracts us at once when he simply displays the contents of his portfolio



FROM AN ETCHING BY EMIL ORLIK

He spent his youth in weird, old-world Prague, where his father was a tailor, and acquired the elements of technique at the Munich Academy, under Lindenschmit and Raab. But he learned more from the dead than from the living, as he sat in the Pinakothek and copied Rembrandt's

*Descent from the Cross*, or lingered in the copper-plate room and admired the great Dutch wizard's etchings. Neither Lindenschmit nor Raab, but Rembrandt, was to be his guide through life.



FROM AN ETCHING BY EMIL ORLIK

His first pictures, *Der Schläfer* and *Die Näherin*, showed but little individuality. At that time a reaction had set in against the glaring *plein-air* style, and painting in dark tones was in vogue. Everyone was trying, after painting daylight, to reproduce the mysteries of night, and the bluish-grey atmosphere of twilight, with the effects of gas and lamp—in a word, to paint the semi-obscurity of the interior. These problems, which exercised the whole Munich School, naturally came within the field of Orlik's studies. Later he went to Paris, and as in Munich it was Rembrandt, so here it was Millet, who influenced him most permanently. He copied the *Église de Gréville*—that sombre, serious painting which hangs in the Louvre—and as he gazed on Millet he thought of his own home.

For this constitutes the strange greatness of Millet and of Rembrandt; that an area of but a few square miles sufficed to make them create masterpieces all their lives. They had no need to take long journeys to collect materials for their pictures; they drew their inspiration from the native soil.



## Emil Orlik

Every fibre of their being was rooted in the spot where fate had placed them.

Orlik's youthful memories were centred in Prague, and Prague is the most interesting of all Austrian cities, crowned as it is by a halo of legend and folklore, every stone in the city seeming to whisper of the Past. When the young artist, after a long apprenticeship, returned home, he knew enough to become the artistic discoverer of Old Prague, the explorer of Bohemian landscape. He loved to stroll about, especially in the dark lanes of the ancient city, with its teeming life confined within so small a space; loved to depict the booths, exposing dirty household goods for sale, the butchers' shops with their meat, and the venerable market-

place with its heaps of vegetables; loved to wander into the peaceful solitude of the Jewish cemetery, and, above all, to visit that deserted spot where the laundresses spread their linen along the river bank, and Polish Jews barter with the Slovak peasantry.

A sense of depression, of melancholy, pervades all these works; and the landscape, with its hazy sky, its dilapidated houses, its gnarled trees and its dirty puddles, forms a fitting accompaniment to the central theme. But in other paintings Orlik sounds a lighter note. Here we see workrooms, with tailors and shoemakers, or women sewing at their windows, or young girls sitting dreamily before their lamps; or, again, we have winter afternoon scenes, with skaters, whose vanishing silhouettes glide like un-

defined shadows over the glassy surface of the river. It is impossible to convey an adequate idea of the vast range of Orlik's material. Many of his works are delightfully peaceful, with a lyrical softness and a dreamy charm — sleeping shepherd lads, poor children at play, or old men dozing in the sunshine. But he is attracted no less keenly by the noisy crowd, the multitude at the concert or on the promenade, as it sways and pushes in a multi-coloured mass at the entrances to the theatres, or drives along under the windows of the cafés. If his power of reproduction has a limit at all it is this: he bestows more pains on the treatment of effects of light than on the drawing of the outline.

His yearning for rare atmospheric tones induced him to visit other countries. He went to Holland, the land of half-lighted rooms and cosy interiors, of melancholy dunes and soft rolling mists. He visited London, the city of November fogs, which lie like a pall on the streets; and there he painted the mingled crowd of waggons and omnibuses on the bridges, and the curious effects of light produced by the struggle of the gas-light



FROM A CHALK DRAWING

BY EMIL ORLIK



"THE SEAMSTRESS"

FROM A CHROMO-XYLOGRAPH IN THREE PRINTINGS BY  
EMIL ORLIK



## Emit Orlik

Every trace of their being was rooted in the spot where they had placed them.

Orlik's youthful memories were centred in Prague, and Prague is the most interesting of Bohemian cities, crowned as it is by a halo of legend and folklore, every stone in the city seeming to whisper of the Past. When the young artist, after a long apprenticeship, returned home, he was enough to become the artistic conscience of Old Prague, the explorer of Bohemian traditions. He loved to stroll about, especially in the dark lanes of the ancient city, with its towering life crowded within so small a space; loved to creep the bowels, exposing dirty household goods for sale, the tall bare shapes with their meat, and the venerable market-

place with its heaps of vegetables; loved to wander into the peaceful solitude of the Jewish cemetery, and, above all, to visit that deserted spot where the labourers spread their linen along the river bank, and Polish Jews barter with the Slovak peasantry.

A sense of depression, of melancholy, pervades all these works; and the landscape, with its hazy sky, its dilapidated houses, its gnarled trees and its dirty puddles, forms a fitting accompaniment to the central theme. But in other paintings Orlik sounds a lighter note. Here we see workrooms, with tailors and shoemakers, or women sewing at their windows, or young girls sitting dreamily before their lamps; or, again, we have winter afternoon scenes, with skaters, whose vanishing silhouettes glide like un-

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FROM A PRAGUE STREET

BY NIGHT



with the dense, smoky masses of fog  
succeeded in Scotland, and



"BY THE WAY" FROM A SCOTTISH BALLAD

BY THE WAY







## Emil Orlik

with the dense, smoky masses of fog. Thence he proceeded to Scotland, and painted the chimneys of Glasgow, the soot from which covers the firmament as with a drapery of crape. In all these works the figures are full of bubbling, vibrating life. Like Menzel, who draws even during his railway journeys, Orlik rarely puts aside his sketch-book; and this practice has made him one of the readiest sketchers of the day. Everywhere he is master of the art of rapidly and correctly seizing definite outlines; he produces suggestive effects with a single stroke; everything is reduced to the simplest form of expression; everything preserves the vigour of life itself.

It is this ability to give swift and true expression to characteristic features which makes Orlik so powerful a portraitist. Max Lehrs, the director of the Dresden Museum, Otto Erich Hartleben, the jovial poet, and Bernhard Pankok, the gifted caricaturist and applied art draughtsman, have sat to him for their portraits—all these works being able analyses of complex personalities. He reveals the sitter's character in bold, confident lines, and knows how

to grasp at once the significance of personal peculiarities.

Latterly Orlik has confined himself almost exclusively to pastels and engravings, for oil is not the medium in which he can best express himself. He has already done several hundred plates, and, though there may be many better painters, he stands in the front rank as an engraver. Thanks to his long and arduous apprenticeship, he has mastered all the technical part of the business, and can use with equal skill the wood engraver's tools, the etching needle, and the lithographer's pencil. Orlik's studio is like a printing office; he knows that only an artist's hand can give the exact tone to the impression, and he acts accordingly. His wood engravings for several years past have been most successful. All sorts of colours—even the most incongruous—are placed side by side, apparently at haphazard—brown looking-glass frames, red lamp shades, yellow dresses, blue walls, green carpets—and yet there is no suggestion of vulgarity or over-colouring. Everything is sympathetic and harmonious.

Plates of this kind could never have been



"HYDE PARK." FROM A PENCIL DRAWING

BY EMIL ORLIK



## Round the Exhibition

produced but for Japanese influence; and to Japan Orlik has turned for inspiration. A few months since he left for the Far East to study its art. May he return to Prague the richer for the experience!

RICHARD MUTHER.

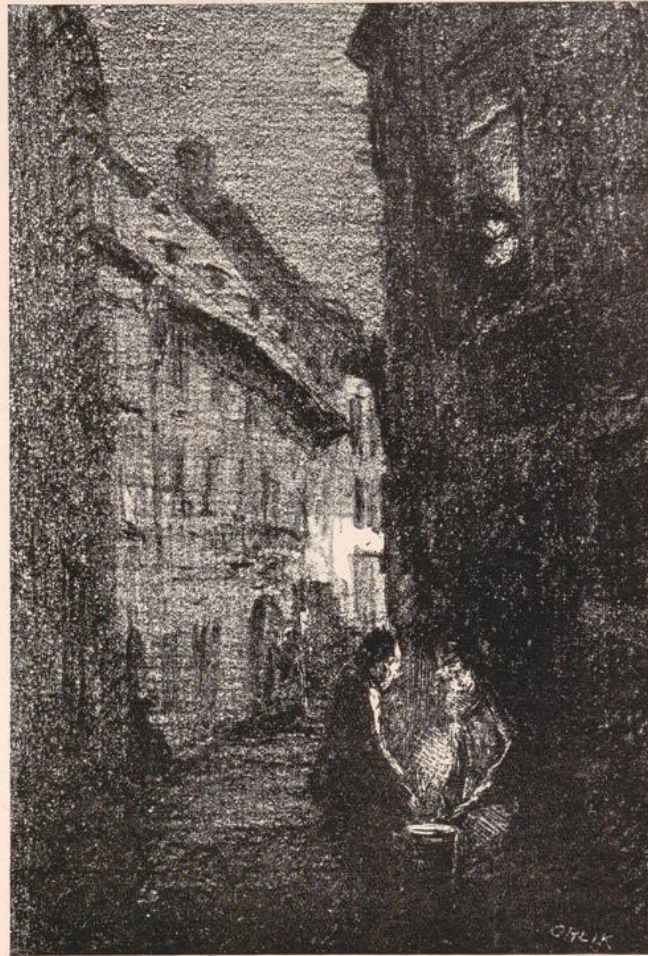
### ROUND THE EXHIBITION.—I. THE HOUSE OF THE "ART NOUVEAU BING." BY GABRIEL MOUREY.

To deal adequately with the Paris Exhibition, to describe and to depict the many marvels of human activity contributed by all the races of the

universe, would, even were we to confine it to that which interests the readers of this journal, mean page after page of letter-press, and more illustrations perhaps than are to be found in all the nineteen published volumes of *THE STUDIO*!

In the Grand Palais des Champs-Élysées, in the Exposition Centennale, in the Exposition Décennale de l'Art Français, and in the painting and sculpture galleries of the foreign sections, are many works worthy of reproduction. In the Petit Palais, too, among all these tapestries and ivories, this jewellery work and this mediæval furniture are marvels of art which could not fail to impress the craftsman of to-day, for M. Roger Marx and M. Emile Molinier, the trusted organisers of the "Centennale" and of the "Rétrospective," have, with sound knowledge and discretion, collected whole groups of masterpieces. Elsewhere, too, the art gleaner may roam with profit—in the Invalides, or in the Champ de Mars, among the foreign pavilions—notably those of Finland, Spain, Hungary, Sweden, Germany, and Greece—or again in the Rue de Paris itself, with its joyous fair-like air, or in the Palais de l'Asie Russe, which contains a delightful little Russian village in all its primitive simplicity. Artists and workmen alike have let their happy fancy run riot with the happiest results, but the inevitable effect is a certain want of concentration and a general lack of *ensemble*, which may perhaps be regretted. At any rate, many competent judges of applied art have arrived at that conclusion after long and careful examination.

The perfect *ensemble* would certainly have been realised had England taken the place she was expected to take in the Exhibition; for out of the isolated, individual efforts



FROM A CHALK DRAWING (See article on "Emil Orlik") BY EMIL ORLIK