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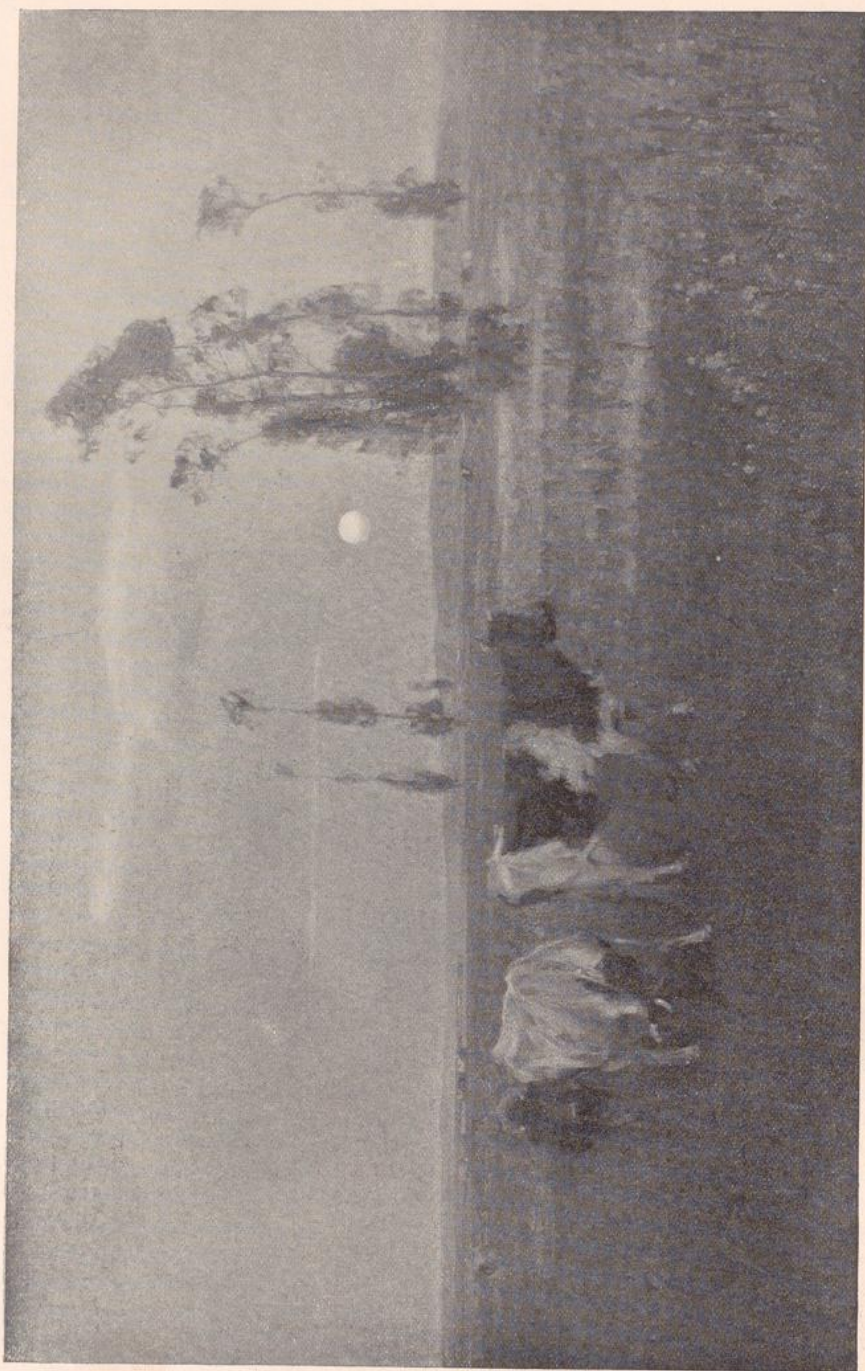
The Work Of Arnesby Brown.

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"THE HERALD OF NIGHT"  
BY ARNESBY BROWN



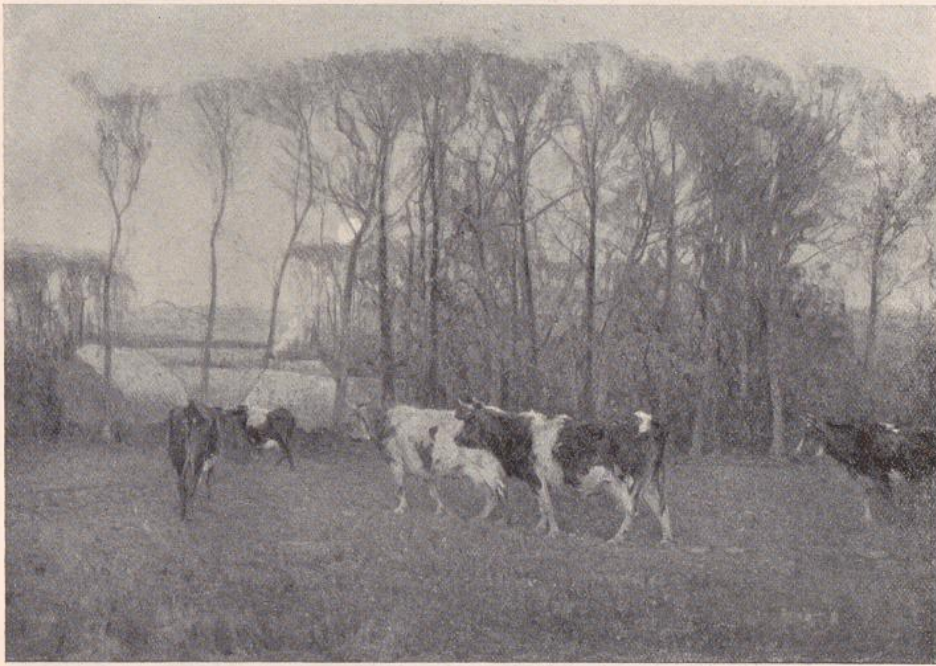
## The Work of Arnesby Brown

### THE WORK OF ARNESBY BROWN.

IT is interesting to see how great a hold the spirit of romanticism is gaining upon a considerable section of the British School. Among the younger painters, especially, the inclination to substitute for pure realism a certain naturalistic sentiment is extremely evident. This sentiment is expressed partly in their manner of choosing the particular types of subjects with which they occupy themselves, and partly in their significant preference for a decorative freedom of method over that pedantic exactness by which the executive devices of the imitative artist are usually distinguished. The naturalism that these younger men affect is of an essentially abstract kind. It is based upon and controlled by the closest study of Nature; but it is concerned rather with the larger subtleties of the open air, with the gradations of tone masses, with the harmonising of aerial colour, and with the working out of problems of illumination, than with the obvious facts and commonplaces of modern life that

call for nothing more than reasonable accuracy of vision and a decent command over the tricks of the painter's trade.

Really, there is in process of development a phase of art practice that is not entirely referable to earlier authorities. A century or so ago the romanticist was an artificial designer who lived in a world of his own creating, and set himself up as being practically independent of Nature. He had certain rules laid down that he considered himself bound to observe, and so long as his productions satisfied these conventions it was quite immaterial whether or not he showed that he had a capacity for noting and recording natural effects. All this was changed when it became the fashion to be strictly and formally realistic, and to admit no principle that did not involve the closest possible regard for mere actuality. The realists, with their creed that everything must be painted exactly as it appeared, without selection and without modification or rearrangement, professed to look down upon the pretty artifices of the romanticist, and denied him the right to be taken seriously. They posed as the men who were upholding the



"HOMEWARD"

BY ARNESBY BROWN

(In possession of the Corporation of Preston)

XX. No. 90.—SEPTEMBER, 1900.

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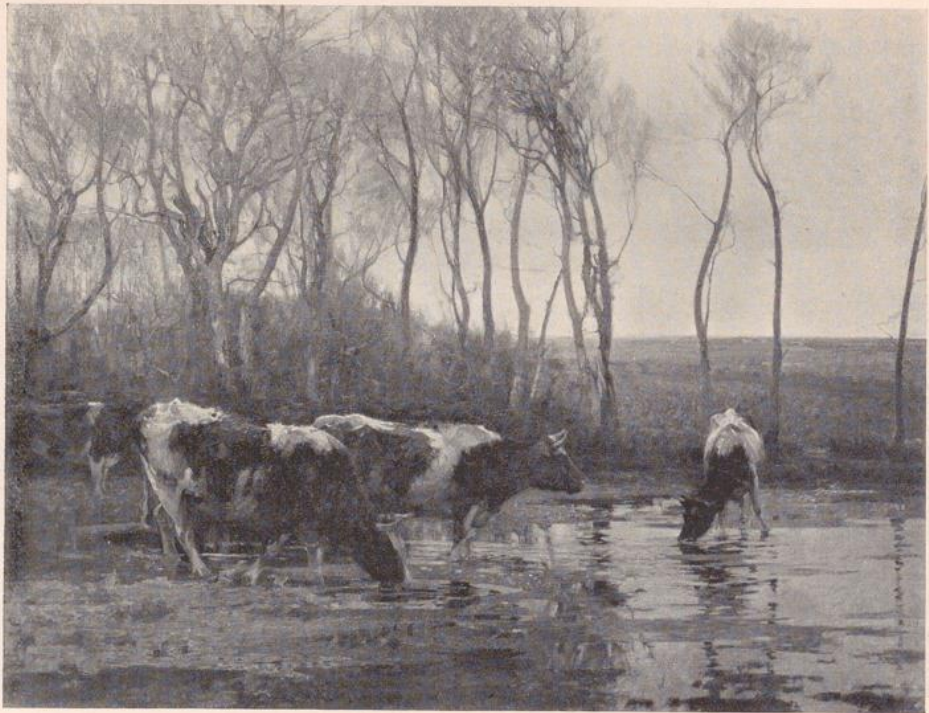
### *The Work of Arnesby Brown*

credit and reputation of pictorial art, they were the only sincere students of Nature; while he, with his ideas of composition and adaptation and his horror of everything that was ugly or commonplace, was a heretic and an unbeliever, whose work deserved ridicule on account of its affectations, and blame because of its unorthodoxy.

Now we are witnessing a movement that marks a safe compromise between these representatives of two extremes of æsthetic opinion. The romantic spirit has not died out in art, and realism has not imposed its hard and uncompromising formality upon the practice of the better men. Instead, the two creeds have inter-married, and their offspring shows itself possessed of the finer qualities of both parents. The combination is in some respects peculiar, for it gives results that have not been arrived at before, and promises to lead to artistic achievements that will be quite unlike those upon which modern traditions have been based. The men of to-day have learned to make their art an intellectual exercise, and to use their powers of discrimination to help them in the selection of

material that is properly adaptable. They do not refuse to study the world about them or to occupy themselves with motives that are at first sight commonplace enough; but they do decline to make the exact realisation of these motives the beginning and end of their practice.

It is by virtue of its possession of true poetic qualities that the work of Mr. Arnesby Brown takes its place among the best illustrations of the new romantic movement. He is one of the artists who can be most safely instanced as an exponent of the present-day creed with regard to the adaptation of natural details to the exigencies of pictorial design; and he is typically a leader of the movement that is enlarging the scope of our native school and adding appreciably to its æsthetic authority. His romanticism is essentially sound and well balanced, without extravagance or excess of fancy, and yet distinguished by a full measure of imaginative charm. It has just the right touch of pastoral simplicity that is necessary to keep it in harmony with that note of country life which so many artists are at this moment wisely striving to



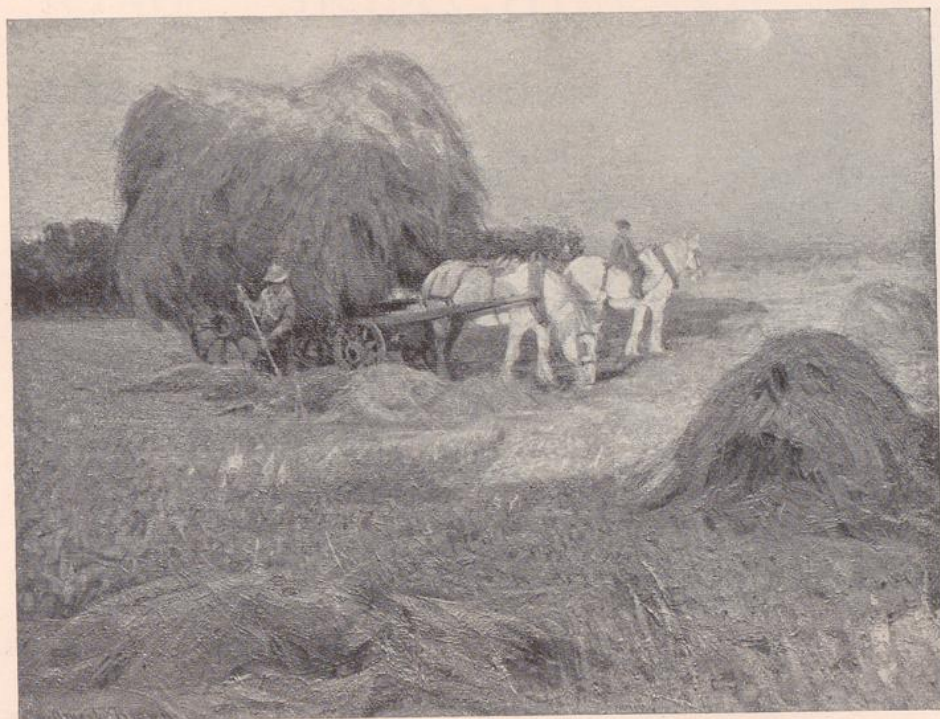
"THE DRINKING POOL"

*(In possession of the City of Manchester Permanent Collection)*

BY ARNESBY BROWN



## The Work of Arnesby Brown



"THE HAYFIELD"

BY ARNESBY BROWN

make clearly heard in their pictorial production, but this simplicity is gained by no sacrifice of important technical qualities. Mr. Brown has taught himself well what to leave out, and what to refine and modify, without losing the essentials of his subject. By his mode of treatment he makes the rural motives that he selects fully worthy of supporting a romantic intention, and carries them through to successful accomplishment without departing from the æsthetic principles that he regards as best fitted to guide his practice.

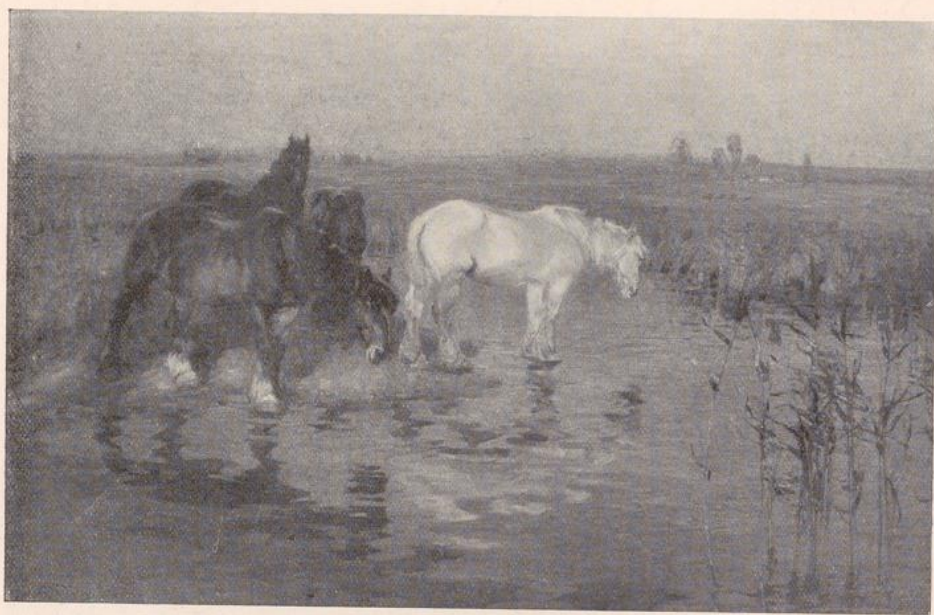
Possibly he owes part of his poetic instinct to heredity. Poetry is certainly in his family, for among his relatives he includes the veteran writer Philip James Bailey, whose "Festus" has taken an honourable place among English classics. He had, too, the advantage in his boyhood of being encouraged in his artistic aspirations, so that, instead of having to fight his way painfully against misunderstanding and opposition, he was able to develop his personality in a congenial atmosphere, and to find his right direction at a time when most young artists are only just beginning to feel a vague consciousness of the powers to which they wish to

give expression. Decidedly he has matured earlier than most of the men, who are professionally his contemporaries, for he is now, at the age of only thirty-four years, a man with an established reputation, and is recognised as a painter who has passed well beyond the stage of probation.

In his training, at all events, there was nothing abnormal to account for his development in an unusual way, and there were no special influences that might be held to have shaped his opinions unexpectedly. His first education in the practice of art was obtained at the School of Art at Nottingham, his native place; and though for a short time, after this introduction to the painter's profession, he diverged into office work, he soon decided that the way there pointed out to him was the one that he intended to follow. At nineteen he became for eighteen months a pupil of Andrew MacCallum, the landscape painter, studying with him in the country; and then, in 1889, he began a three-years' stay at Bushey as a student of the Herkomer School. There he was able to gain that close knowledge of the human figure which gives now to his productions their certainty of drawing and their



## The Work of Arnesby Brown



"LABOURERS"

BY ARNESBY BROWN

soundness of construction; and by constant practice under thoughtful supervision he acquired the complete grasp of technical details that was necessary for the free statement of the ideas that he wished to express.

His first appearance as an exhibitor was made at the Academy only a year after he entered the Bushey school. He exhibited a picture called *A Cornish Pasture*, which was the result of his first visit to St. Ives, in which place he has spent every winter since. In 1891, 1892, and 1893, his chief canvases at the Academy were *Above the Bay*, *Low-land*, and *The End of the Shower*, all pastoral subjects; but in 1894 he sent a sea picture, *A Northerly Breeze*. Another pastoral, *The Drinking Pool*, appeared in 1895, and was purchased by the Manchester Corporation. To public galleries went also his *Homeward*, bought in 1896 by the Borough of Preston, and the *Herald of Night*, bought in 1897 by the City of Worcester. In 1898 he exhibited *Labourers*; in 1899, *The Marsh Farm*; and this year he was represented by *After Heat of Day*, which has been acquired by the City of Auckland Gallery, New Zealand. In addition to these Academy works there have been many important paintings shown at the New Gallery, the Institute, and other shows. The New Gallery had his *Fading Day* in 1895, *The Hayfield* in 1899,

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and this year the *End of the Harvest*; and to the Institute went *A Son of the Soil*. His record, indeed, for the last ten years is an excellent one, and does the fullest credit both to his industry and to his imaginative capacity.

To most people he is probably best known as a painter of landscape and cattle; but although quite a large proportion of his pictures could be classified under this heading, he is by no means an artist of only one direction. He has produced several memorable paintings of the sea, and several pastorals in which human interest is prominent, and he has scored many successes with portraits, some of which he has exhibited. But whatever the subject he chooses for treatment, his manner of handling it remains always evidently marked by that desire to arrive at something beyond the merely crude assertion of his capacity for seeing. Year by year the mental quality has become more important in his pictures, and steadily the simple imitation of details that any observer with good eyesight and a fairly retentive memory can record has given way to more intellectual and imaginative analysis of the deeper truths of Nature. As his powers ripen his pictures become more impressive; and, remarkable as his success has been so far, we may fairly expect him to far surpass in coming years the best of his present record.