WHISTLER—THE MAN WHO IMMORTALIZED MOTHER

Few artists have been able to put down on canvas a figure that means so much to so many people in all walks of life as James Whistler. Critics and cab drivers, school children and grown-ups all have been deeply moved at one time or another by his beloved "The Artist's Mother." For it isn't necessary to have a knowledge of art to recognize the beauty expressed in the calm, gentle face and peacefully folded hands of that familiar figrue which has come to symbolize a mother's love to sons and daughters the world over.

Curiously, however, he man who depicted a figure synonymous with gentleness was the exact opposite of it in his own personality. During his lifetime Whistler was famous more for his arrogance and biting wit, and his quarrels with artists and critics, than for his artistic talent. Once, when a celebrated critic of his day criticized one of his paintings, Whistler filed a libel suit against him and won—the amount, one farthing, easing the painter's pride if not his pocketbook.

Born 1834, in Lowell, Mass., Whistler,s first ambition was to continue a family tradition of soldiering. But after three years at West Point, he found military discipline unsuited to his particular personality and left the Academy "by request." The following year he served as a draughtsman with the U. S. Coast Survey, but when he engraved caricatures on the margin of a plate he was making for them, the Service decided it could get along without him.

Whistler's artistic ability was better appreciated in France, where he spent the next two years studying under a well-known painter, Charles Gabriel Gleyre. After deciding he could learn nothing more from Gleyre—whom he termed a "bourgeois Greek"—Whistler went to England, where he soon kept the art world in a constant state of eruption.

His most famous incident involved the writer and critic, John Ruskin. Referring to Whistler's "Falling Rocket," Ruskin said it was "cockney impudence" to ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face." A libel suit follower, and Whistler had the farthing he was awarded made into a charm whirh he wore on his watsh chain.

Although Whistler's etchings are considered by many critics to be his best work, the work which made his name a household word was the simple portrait of his mother which he painted in 1871. He called it "An Arrangement in Grey and Black" since he believed that color had a musical quality. The Royal Academy refused to accept it at first, but after an influential friend interceded, it was hung in an inconspicuous corner.

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