

DETROIT MUSEUM OF ART,

EXHIBITION

OF THE PAINTING

“*Evangeline,*”

AND THE

Munich Studio.

OF THE ARTIST THE LATE

SAMUEL RICHARDS.

OCTOBER, 1895.

Samuel Richards

was born at Spencer, Indiana, April 22nd, 1853. His earliest aspiration was to become a Painter and in the face of every conceivable discouragement he clung to that ambition until it was realized. Until 1880 he studied unaided, supporting himself by his Art. At that time he determined to go to Munich where he spent many years in close application and study of the best examples to be found there. His drawings of heads and character sketches brought him numerous medals and considerable reputation. John Ruskin asked him to send a few to him for inspection which were returned with a delightful letter from the great Art Critic. During one of his painting excursions to Switzerland he met John Addington Symonds, the English Writer, they became fast friends, in fact Mr. Richards was of such a lovable character that he made many lasting friendships which he always cherished as a delight and pleasure. His boyhood companion was James Whitcomb Riley, the "Hoosier Poet," the two struggling together for existence in their early days. On Riley's last visit to Denver where the Artist had also gone with a hope of regaining his lost health and Myron Reed another old friend together the three met in Richard's tent, where he lived in the open air, and they had a jolly time. The bracing atmosphere and life imparting sunshine of Colorado inspired the Artist with the hope that he might live to still persue his loved Art. But his hopes were not to be realized, on the last day of November, 1893 his life like that of Gabriel in his painting of "**Evangeline**" after years of suffering took its flight.

His most famous pictures are "**The Day before the Wedding**," owned by Mrs. Platt, of Chicago, "**His Peasant Stories**," owned by Senator McPherson, of New Jersey and the "**Evangeline**" which was the gift of Hon. Bela Hubbard to the Detroit Museum of Art.

The latter was one of his earliest dreams and on it he spent many years of thought and labor.

“Evangeline,”

After long years of faithful search for her lost lover, who had spent his life seeking his bride through the length and breadth of the land, finally gave up the search and mourned her Gabriel as dead. Guided by the love of humanity and with a spirit of self-sacrificing devotion, she became a Sister of Mercy, and took upon herself the duties of a nurse in the old almshouse in Philadelphia. It was here, one morning, as she passed in her daily visit to the sick and dying that Evangeline found Gabriel. Longfellow has given us in a few lines, the sad story of this one of the purest characters ever described by pen or brush:—

“The patience and abnegation of self, and devotion to others,
This was the lesson a life of trial and sorrow had taught her,
Other hope had she none, nor wish in life but to follow,
Meekly, with reverent steps, the sacred steps of her Savior.
Thus many years she lived a Sister of Mercy.
Then it came to pass, that a pestilence came on the city,
Thus on a Sabbath Morn, through the streets deserted and silent
Wending her quiet way, she entered the door,
And, with a light in her looks, she entered the Chamber of Sickness.”

The moment chosen by the artist for the picture is perhaps the climax of the Poem, and is described in these lines—

“Suddenly, as if arrested by fear or a feeling of wonder,
Still she stood, with her colorless lips apart, while a shudder,
Ran through her frame, and the flowerets dropped from her fingers
And from her eyes and cheeks, the light and the bloom of the morning.”

Evangeline's sacred vocation has presented her in a calm serenity that defies age, but before her lay the form of her lover, prematurely aged and crushed by misfortune and disease; he for whom she had loved as only the noble and great souls can love, at last restored to her, but given back just as life is ebbing away. It is this moment, this first dawn of recognition that the artist has chosen for the immortalization of his theme.