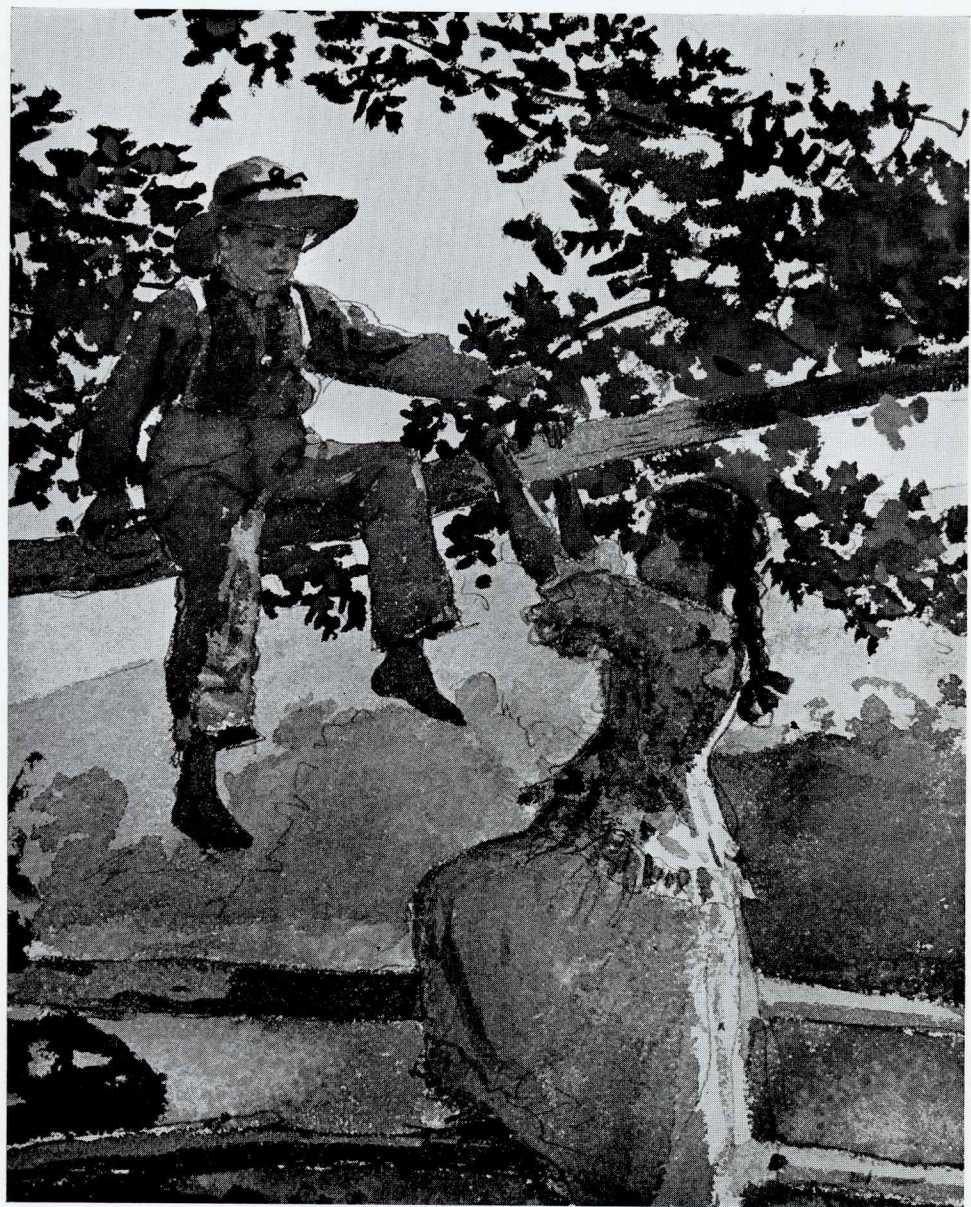


WINSLOW
HOMER in
New York State

STORM KING ART CENTER Mountainville, N. Y.

Winslow Homer in New York State



ON THE FENCE, HOUGHTON FARM. 1878. Watercolor. 11 x 8½. (No. 26)

WINSLOW
HOMER in
New York State

June 29 to August 22, 1963

STORM KING
ART CENTER

Mountainville,
New York

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Foreword

IT is appropriate that this exhibition of Winslow Homer's works done in New York State should be held at the Storm King Art Center, for it was at Mountainville that Homer painted some of his finest early pictures. The nucleus of the exhibition is the outstanding group of Mountainville water-colors and oils acquired in the 1870's by Lawson Valentine of New York and Mountainville, which descended to his grandsons Lawson Valentine Pulsifer and Harold T. Pulsifer. The Storm King Art Center wishes to express its particular gratitude to Mrs. Harold T. Pulsifer, and to Mrs. Pulsifer Byles and Mrs. Alice P. Doyle, daughters of Lawson Valentine Pulsifer, for their generosity in lending these works to the exhibition.

Special thanks are due to Lloyd Goodrich, Director of the Whitney Museum of American Art, and to Mrs. Goodrich, who acted as advisors in the selection of the exhibition, and assisted in other matters in connection with the show.

The Storm King Art Center wishes to make grateful acknowledgement to the following collectors and museums who have generously lent works to the exhibition:

Mr. J. G. Bradley, Dr. and Mrs. Irving F. Burton, Mrs. Pulsifer Byles, Mrs. Alice P. Doyle, Mrs. Frederica Frelinghuysen Emert, Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence A. Fleischman, Mr. Pieter W. Fosburgh, Mrs. Charles R. Henschel, Mr. and Mrs. Harold K. Hochschild, Mr. and Mrs. John N. Irwin, II, Mr. and Mrs. John M. Kernochan, Mr. Alastair Bradley Martin, Mr. Charles Shipman Payson, Mrs. Harold T. Pulsifer, Mrs. George P. Putnam, Mr. and Mrs. William Allen Putnam, Mrs. Walter N. Rothschild, Mr. Victor D. Spark, Dr. and Mrs. Samuel Emlen Stokes, Mrs. Bayard Warren, Mrs. Edwin S. Webster, Mr. Arthur Weyhe, the Honorable and Mrs. John Hay Whitney.

Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Brooklyn Museum; The Century

Association, New York; The Cooper Union Museum for the Arts of Decoration, New York; Cummer Gallery of Art, Jacksonville, Florida; The Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University; Henry Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle; Joseph H. Hirshhorn Foundation, New York; International Business Machines Corporation, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art; National Gallery of Art; Norton Gallery and School of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida; Harold T. Pulsifer Collection, Colby College, Waterville, Maine; Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design; Worcester Art Museum.

Winslow Homer in New York State

by Lloyd Goodrich

IN THE late 1870's Winslow Homer spent several summers in Mountainville, Orange County, New York, at Houghton Farm, owned by his friend Lawson Valentine; and here he painted a series of idyllic watercolors that are among his most delightful pictures. These watercolors, generously lent by members of the Valentine family, form the nucleus of this exhibition, "Winslow Homer in New York State." But since Homer worked in various other parts of the state, the exhibition has been expanded to include these other phases. Ranging from 1870 to 1902, the show presents a survey of his development in those fruitful years.

By ancestry, birth and upbringing, Homer was a New Englander. But for almost a third of his life his permanent address was New York City, and many of his summers were spent painting in the rural areas of the state. Even after he finally left the city, the Adirondacks continued to be a favorite region.

Winslow Homer was born in 1836 in Boston, and brought up in nearby Cambridge. With little professional art education, he was practically self-taught, learning by direct observation of nature, and by continual drawing. He began as an illustrator, chiefly for *Harper's Weekly*, and he was twenty-six before he started to paint seriously. In 1859 he had moved to New York, to be nearer the magazine publishers; and there he was to live (with a few breaks) for the next twenty-four years.

But Homer never liked the city, and he never painted it. From childhood he had retained a passion for outdoor life. He loved country life in its many aspects: the summer resort with its good-looking American girls, the farm with its work and play so close to nature, the solitude of the northern woods and mountains. He was a born wanderer, and every May or June would find him on the move, painting in New England, in eastern New York, or as far south as Virginia. It was these summers in the country that furnished material for almost all his early pictures.

Just where these pictures were painted is not always possible to determine. He was extremely reticent about his personal life. However, from James W. Fosburgh's thorough researches (*Winslow Homer in the Adirondacks*, Adirondack Museum, 1959) we know that Homer visited Minerva, Essex County, at least as early as 1870, the year he painted two oils of a lonely Adirondack lake, with a trapper and his canoe. (No. 1) Several Adirondack illustrations were published from 1870 to 1874 (Nos. 60, 61, 62, 64, 65), and in the latter year came a group of watercolors and small oils. (Nos. 3, 13, 14, 15) From a friend's reminiscences we know that Keene Valley, thirty miles north of Minerva, was the scene of two fine paintings, *The Two Guides* (1876) and *Camp Fire* (1880). The Adirondack region was still largely virgin wilderness, undiscovered by the summer boarder, and Homer's choice of it as a painting-ground, and the strength and freshness of his paintings of it, were prophetic of his later life and the later direction of his art.

2

HOMER's background as an illustrator and his slow though steady development as a painter, are shown by the curious fact that he was thirty-seven before he took up the medium of which he was to become a master—watercolor. From the first, it suited him perfectly. Still basically a draftsman, he now had a medium in which he could work directly from nature, recording his impressions swiftly and freshly, and proceeding from a pencil sketch to a complete picture in color. Thence-

forth it was in watercolor that he first captured new scenes and subjects, and made discoveries of outdoor light and color. The transparency of the medium, with the white paper showing through the washes, had an immediate effect on his color. His oils had inclined to be dark, but even his first watercolors were clear and luminous. Beginning with his first season of watercolor painting, in 1873 in Gloucester, Massachusetts, he devoted certain summers almost entirely to the medium.

It is tantalizing to speculate where his 1874 watercolors and oil sketches of farm life were done. The character of the country suggests Orange County. But since no direct proof has been found, it was reluctantly decided not to include them in the present exhibition.

But there is no such doubt about the Mountainville watercolors of 1878. Winslow's older brother Charles, who watched out for him constantly in early years, was chief chemist of the Valentine Company, varnish and paint manufacturers, and a close friend of the Valentine brothers, Lawson and Henry. Winslow also became their friend, and they purchased many of his early works. In May 1875 Lawson Valentine bought Houghton Farm in Mountainville, where the Homer brothers often visited him. A pleasant farming and grazing country of hills and narrow valleys and sloping pastures, dotted with cattle and flocks of sheep tended by farm girls and boys, Mountainville was extremely paintable. Spending the summer of 1878 there, Homer produced about fifty watercolors, as well as numerous drawings and a group of oil studies.

Children had always played leading parts in Homer's country scenes. He pictured them with a reserved but deep sympathy, a self-identification with the world of childhood—its freedom, its joy in nature, its adventures and delights, its early-morning freshness. In his Mountainville watercolors we see, appearing again and again, half-grown girls tending sheep, seated in hillside pastures, resting in the shade of trees. Sometimes, instead of their everyday aprons and sunbonnets, they are oddly arrayed in eighteenth-century costumes, with bodices, ruffles and straw hats with flying ribbons, and carrying shepherd's crooks—figures quite unlike the homespun farm girls of Homer's previous years, whom Henry James had unkindly called "pie-nurtured maidens." In at least two pictures, a farmer is plowing in what looks like an eighteenth-

century coat. Perhaps some country attic had yielded up these relics of the past. And perhaps Homer, like other Americans of the time, was showing the effect of the great Centennial Exhibition of 1876, which had revived interest in everything Colonial, and had also spread a craze for decorative art throughout the homes of America. It is noteworthy that even Thomas Eakins, most drastic of realists, was essaying Colonial subjects in these same years. For the hard-shelled Yankee Winslow Homer these conceits seem equally strange. But his adolescents wear their finery with a touch of native gawkinsness, showing that Homer had lost none of his sharp-eyed truthfulness. The result was an engaging blend of awkwardness and grace, of realism and rococo. What might have become prettiness was saved by Homer's fresh, candid vision. His touch had a new lightness and skill, his color had never been so transparent and luminous. These Mountainville watercolors have a delicacy and grace unique in all his work.

They turned out to be the most popular pictures he had done for some years. Many were bought by Lawson and Henry Valentine. He sent a portfolio of twenty-nine of them to the American Water-Color Society exhibition next spring, with permission to choose, and the Society hung all of them. The critics gave them the most cordial reception in years. In his *Hours with Art and Artists* (1882), George W. Sheldon wrote, in the flowery style of the day: "On Mr. Lawson Valentine's farm near Cornwall-on-the-Hudson, just behind West Point, Mr. Winslow Homer made all the charming sketches of sheep and shepherdesses which brought him great praise at the American Water-Color Society's exhibition in 1879. . . . Winslow Homer never fully found himself until he found the American shepherdess. The career of this artist was long disappointing to some of his friends. That he had something in him, every one of them admitted and proclaimed; but, why it did not come to the surface, nobody seemed to know. . . . [Then] the painter himself stepped into the midst of them, and introduced the American shepherdess. At sight of the maid, Philosophy herself stood still. One touch of nature made the three parties kin, and Winslow Homer was pronounced to be a nondescript no longer."

Homer might have capitalized this popularity by turning out shepherdesses by the dozen. He did execute two oils (Nos. 9 and 10) and

several larger watercolors, all evidently painted in his studio, and more consciously composed than the summer pictures. But then, characteristically, he went on to quite different developments.

3

THREE YEARS after his Mountainville summer, at forty-five, fundamental changes commenced in Homer's life and art. The summers of 1881 and 1882 were spent in England, at the fishing port of Tynemouth on the stormy North Sea. There, working almost entirely in watercolor, he first began to paint the sea, and the men and women who made their living on it. His shepherdesses were replaced by sturdy fishwives. There was a new sense of pictorial drama, and a new depth and roundness of style.

After his return he left New York for good, and settled in a lonely spot on the Maine coast, Prout's Neck, his home until his death there in 1910. Here, face-to-face with the ocean, he lived absolutely alone, often through the hard Maine winters. And here his art reached maturity. His rustic idylls, his comely young women, his childhood scenes, were abandoned. He turned to the elemental themes of the sea, the forest and the mountains, and the hardy lives of sailors, hunters and fishermen. His style lost its traces of naiveté and femininity, and took on a new power and energy. As the solitary years passed, he became the greatest pictorial poet of outdoor America.

All his life Homer loved the northern forest. In the late 1880's he began spending part of each summer in the Adirondacks, at the North Woods Club near Minerva, of which he was a charter member. This was a mountainous region of deep woods and many lakes, containing the headwaters of the Hudson River, here only a mountain stream. His visits were largely for fishing and hunting, but he combined sport and art, producing each summer a series of watercolors that were among his finest works in any medium. His subjects were the forest and its life: mountain lakes whose still water is broken only by the splash of a leaping fish or the silver wake of a canoe; the shy beauty of deer;

hunters moving through the silence and muted light of the woods; mountaineers looking out over miles of blue hills under cold northern skies. Never had his art been closer to nature, its primal source. These direct records of pure physical sensation capture the wild fresh beauty of all this unspoiled world.

These Adirondack watercolors marked a great advance in boldness and command. Everything was seen in color, as never before. The transparency that is the particular beauty of the medium was fully preserved. His brush, building large forms and masses, combined freedom with sureness and precision. With all their spontaneity, these watercolors were composed with unerring rightness. Their strong linear rhythms, their deep, resonant color harmonies, their superb decorative quality, remind one of the great Japanese printmakers. They have that pure visual sensuousness that was one of his chief virtues. They contain the essence of his genius—the direct impact of nature on the artist's eye, recorded by the hand of a master. As he himself once said, "You will see, in the future I will live by my watercolors."

Almost all Homer's Adirondack work of the 1890's was in water-color. But his visits resulted in two of his most important oils, *Huntsman and Dogs* and *Hound and Hunter* (No. 12). From Minerva in October 1891 he wrote Charles, with a half-humorous boasting well understood by both: "I am working very hard & will without doubt finish the two oil paintings that I commenced Oct 2nd & great works they are. Your eye being fresh from European pictures, great care is required to make you proud of your brother. The original ideas of these paintings are in water-color & will not be put on the market, but will be presented to you." In both oils he transformed the spontaneous naturalism of the watercolors (Nos. 51 and 55) into paintings thoughtfully composed, fully realized, and large and powerful in form. The uncompromising realism of the subjects, the accurate characterization of the tough young hunter who appears in both, and the deeply poetic portrayal of the wilderness landscape, rank these paintings among the strongest, most authentic images of outdoor life in America.

Illustrations

I. ADIRONDACK LAKE. 1870. Oil. 24 x 38.





3. WAITING FOR A BITE. 1874. Oil. 12 X 20.



4. TWILIGHT AT LEEDS, NEW YORK. 1876. Oil. 24 X 28.



14. MAN IN A PUNT, FISHING. 1874. Watercolor. $9\frac{1}{2} \times 13\frac{1}{4}$.



15. TRAPPERS RESTING. 1874. Watercolor. $9\frac{1}{2} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$.



28. ON THE STILE. Probably 1878. Watercolor. $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{1}{8}$.



41. WEARY. Probably 1878. Watercolor. $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{1}{8}$.



25. THE MILKMAID. 1878. Watercolor. $19\frac{1}{2} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$.



32. A SHADY SPOT, HOUGHTON FARM. 1878. Watercolor.
6 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{8}$.



37. THE SHEPHERD GIRL, HOUGHTON FARM. 1878. Watercolor.
6 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{8}$.



9. SHEPHERDESS. 1879. Oil. $22\frac{3}{4} \times 15\frac{1}{2}$.



21. THE FLOCK OF SHEEP, HOUGHTON FARM. 1878. Watercolor.
8 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 10 $\frac{3}{4}$.



34. SHEPHERDESS. 1878. Watercolor. 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 19.



39. THE SIESTA. Probably 1878. Watercolor. $6\frac{3}{4} \times 8$.

31. SCENE AT HOUGHTON FARM. Probably 1878. Watercolor.
 $7\frac{1}{4} \times 11\frac{1}{4}$.





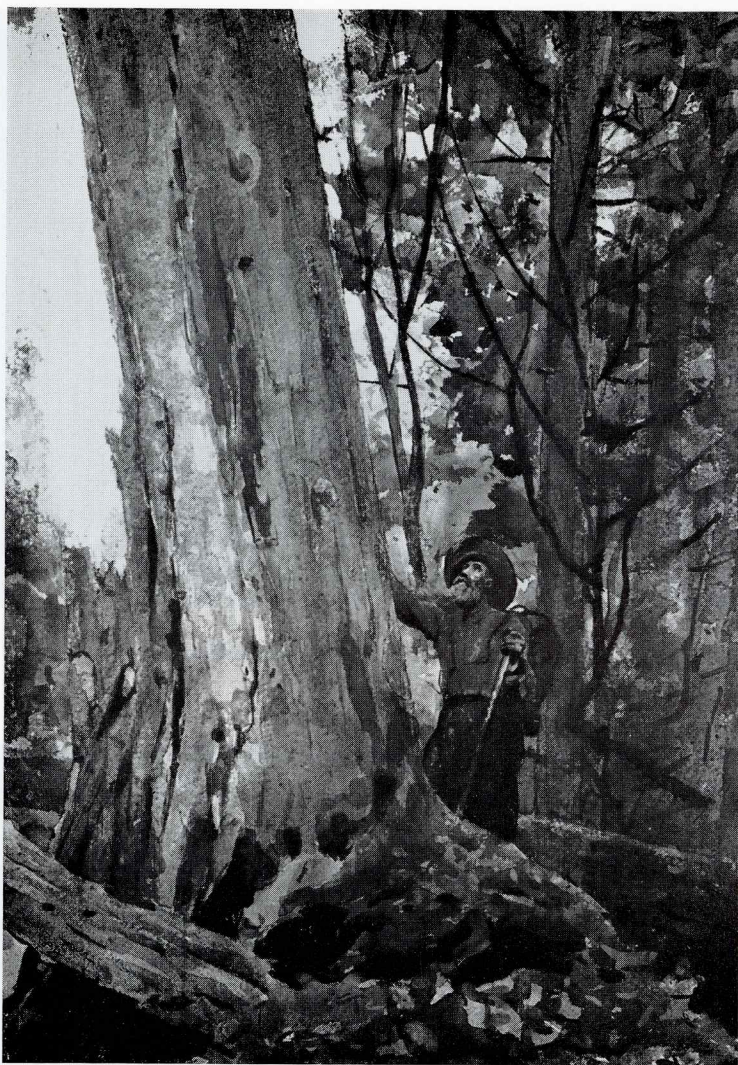
10. SPRING: SHEPHERDESS OF HOUGHTON FARM. 1879. Oil. $24\frac{1}{2} \times 28\frac{1}{2}$.



47. SOLITUDE. 1889. Watercolor. $13\frac{3}{8} \times 19\frac{3}{8}$.



56. ADIRONDACK GUIDE. 1894. Watercolor. $14\frac{1}{2} \times 20\frac{7}{8}$.



57. OLD FRIENDS. 1894. Watercolor. $21\frac{1}{2} \times 15\frac{1}{8}$.



51. GUIDE CARRYING DEER. 1891. Watercolor. $13\frac{3}{4} \times 19\frac{1}{2}$.



55. HOUND AND HUNTER. 1892. Watercolor. $13\frac{1}{2} \times 19\frac{1}{2}$.



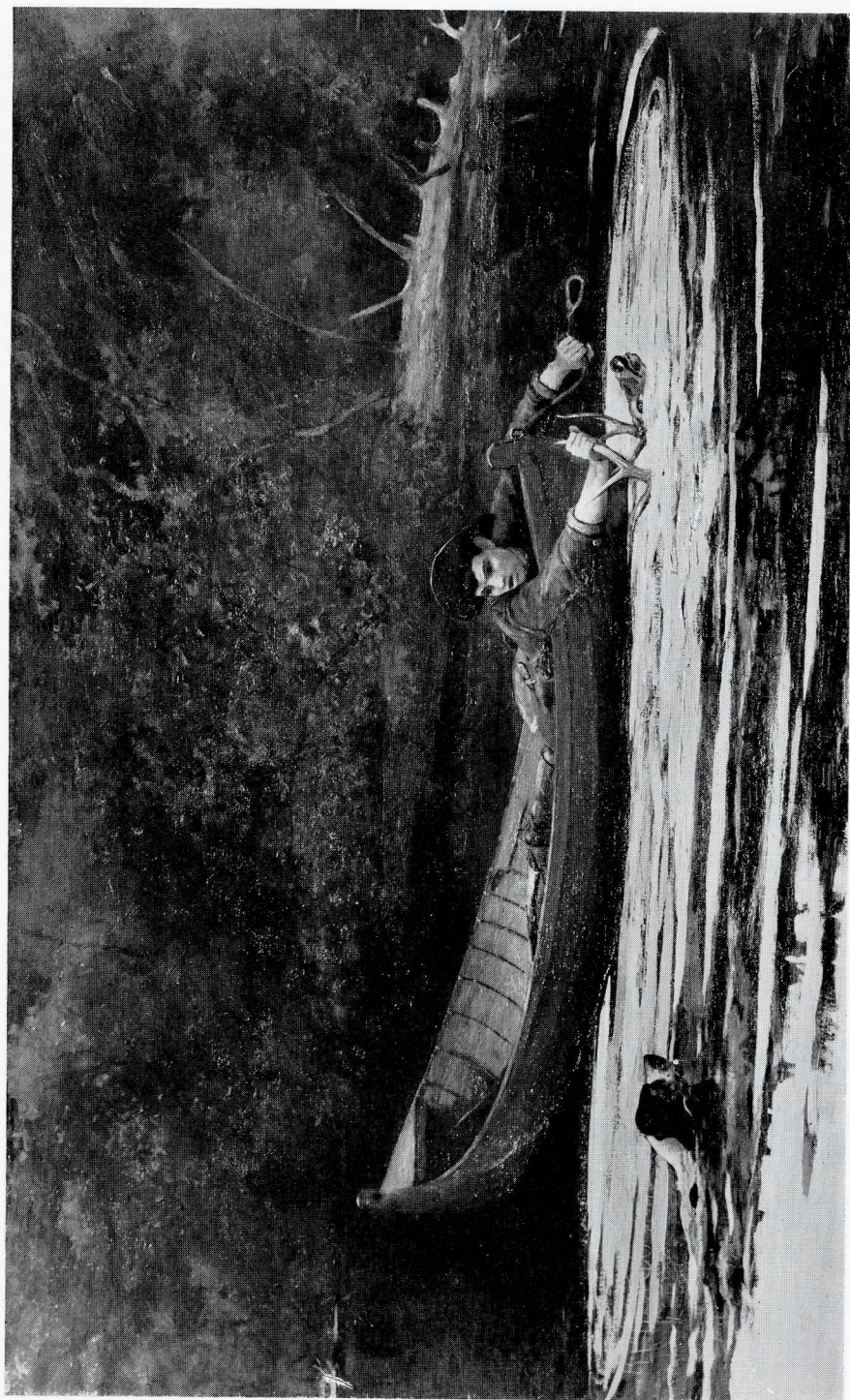
54. A GOOD SHOT. 1892. Watercolor. $14\frac{1}{2} \times 21$.



52. ADIRONDACKS: MAN AND CANOE. 1892. Watercolor. $14\frac{1}{2} \times 20\frac{7}{8}$.



11. THE WOODCHOPPER. About 1890. Oil. $10\frac{3}{8} \times 15\frac{3}{4}$.



12. HOUND AND HUNTER, 1892. Oil. 28 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 48 $\frac{1}{8}$.

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- 1 *Adirondack Lake*. 1870. 24 x 38. Lent by the Henry Gallery, University of Washington. Il. p. 12.
- 2 *Easthampton, Long Island*. 1874. 10 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 21 $\frac{5}{8}$. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Harold K. Hochschild.
- 3 *Waiting for a Bite*. 1874. 12 x 20. Lent by the Cummer Gallery of Art. Il. p. 13.
- 4 *Twilight at Leeds, New York*. 1876. 24 x 28. Lent by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Il. p. 13.
- 5 *Fishing*. 1877. 7 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 9 $\frac{1}{4}$. Lent by the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.
- 6 *Portrait of the Misses Valentine*. Probably 1878. 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 17 $\frac{5}{8}$. Lent by the Harold T. Pulsifer Collection, Colby College.
- 7 *A Shady Spot*. Probably 1878. 20 x 13. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. John M. Kernochan.
- 8 *Two Girls in Sunbonnets*. Probably 1878. 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 22 $\frac{1}{2}$. Lent by the Cooper Union Museum.
- 9 *Shepherdess*. 1879. 22 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 15 $\frac{1}{2}$. Lent by Mrs. Pulsifer Byles and Mrs. Alice P. Doyle. Il. p. 18.
- 10 *Spring: Shepherdess of Houghton Farm*. 1879. 24 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 28 $\frac{1}{2}$. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. John N. Irwin, II. Il. p. 21.
- 11 *The Woodchopper*. Probably c.1890. 10 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 15 $\frac{3}{4}$. Lent by the Honorable and Mrs. John Hay Whitney. Il. p. 26.
- 12 *Hound and Hunter*. 1892. 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 48 $\frac{1}{8}$. Lent by the National Gallery of Art, gift of Stephen C. Clark. Il. p. 27.

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- 18 *Cow in Pasture*. 1878. 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 10 $\frac{3}{4}$. Lent by Mrs. Alice P. Doyle.

- 19 *A Farmhouse on a Hill*. 1878. 10 x 18½. Lent by Victor D. Spark.
- 20 *Fishing*. 1878. 6⅞ x 8⅞. Lent by Arthur Weyhe.
- 21 *The Flock of Sheep, Houghton Farm*. 1878. 8⅞ x 10¾. Lent by Mrs. Pulsifer Byles. Il. p. 19.
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- 26 *On the Fence, Houghton Farm*. 1878. 11 x 8½. Lent by the Harold T. Pulsifer Collection, Colby College. Il. frontispiece.
- 27 *On the Hill*. Probably 1878. 8½ x 11. Lent by Alastair Bradley Martin.
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- 29 *Plowing*. Probably 1878. 6¼ x 9⅞. Lent by Mrs. Pulsifer Byles.
- 30 *Pond and Willows, Houghton Farm*. 1878. 8 x 9½. Lent by Mrs. Pulsifer Byles.
- 31 *Scene at Houghton Farm*. Probably 1878. 7¼ x 11¼. Lent by the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Foundation. Il. p. 20.
- 32 *A Shady Spot, Houghton Farm*. 1878. 6⅞ x 8⅞. Lent by Mrs. Pulsifer Byles. Il. p. 17.
- 33 *Sheep and Cattle, Houghton Farm*. 1878. 6⅞ x 8⅞. Lent by Mrs. Alice P. Doyle.
- 34 *Shepherdess*. 1878. 11½ x 19. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence A. Fleischman. Il. p. 19.
- 35 *Shepherdess Tending Sheep*. 1878. 11⅞ x 19½. Lent by the Brooklyn Museum.
- 36 *Shepherdess, or Warm Afternoon*. 1878. 6¾ x 8¾. Lent by the Harold T. Pulsifer Collection, Colby College.
- 37 *The Shepherd Girl, Houghton Farm*. 1878. 6⅞ x 8⅞. Lent by Mrs. Alice P. Doyle. Il. p. 17.
- 38 *The Shy Sweethearts*. 1878. 10⅝ x 6. Lent by Mrs. Pulsifer Byles.
- 39 *The Siesta*. Probably 1878. 6¾ x 8. Lent by Mrs. Walter N. Rothschild. Il. p. 20.
- 40 *Tending Sheep, Houghton Farm*. Probably 1878. 8½ x 11½. Lent by Mrs. Alice P. Doyle.
- 41 *Weary*. Probably 1878. 8½ x 11⅞. Lent by Mrs. Alice P. Doyle. Il. p. 15.

Adirondacks, 1889 to 1902

- 42 *Adirondack Catch*. 1889. 19⅞ x 13⅞. Lent by Dr. and Mrs. Irving F. Burton.
- 43 *The Guide*. 1889. 14 x 20. Lent by Charles Shipman Payson.
- 44 *Hunter and Dog, Adirondacks*. 1889. 13⅞ x 19½. Lent by Pieter W. Fotherburgh.
- 45 *Log Jam, the Hudson River at Blue Ledge*. Probably 1889. 14½ x 21. Lent by the Norton Gallery and School of Art.
- 46 *The Red Canoe*. 1889. 13⅝ x 19½. Lent by Mrs. Edwin S. Webster.
- 47 *Solitude*. 1889. 13⅞ x 19⅞. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. William Allen Putnam. Il. p. 22.
- 48 *Fishing in the Adirondacks*. Probably 1890. 13⅞ x 19½. Lent by the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University.
- 49 *The Boatman*. 1891. 13¼ x 19½. Lent by the Brooklyn Museum.

- 50 *Building a Smudge.* 1891. 13½ x 20. Lent by Dr. and Mrs. Samuel Emlen Stokes.
- 51 *Guide Carrying Deer.* 1891. 13¾ x 19½. Lent by Charles Shipman Payson. Il. p. 24.
- 52 *Adirondacks, Man and Canoe.* 1892. 14½ x 20⅞. Lent by Mr. J. G. Bradley. Il. p. 25.
- 53 *Canoeing in the Adirondacks.* 1892. 14⅞ x 21⅞. Lent by Mrs. Frederica Frelinghuysen Emert.
- 54 *A Good Shot.* 1892. 14½ x 21. Lent by Mrs. Charles R. Henschel. Il. p. 25.
- 55 *Hound and Hunter.* 1892. 13½ x 19½. Lent by Mrs. Charles R. Henschel. Il. p. 24.
- 56 *Adirondack Guide.* 1894. 14½ x 20⅞. Lent by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Il. p. 22.
- 57 *Old Friends.* 1894. 21½ x 15⅞. Lent by the Worcester Art Museum. Il. p. 23.
- 58 *Burnt Mountain, Adirondacks.* 1902. 13⅞ x 20¾. Lent by the Addison Gallery of American Art.

ILLUSTRATIONS

The following are lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Dick Fund 1928, 1930, and 1936.

- 59 "Our Watering-places — Horse-racing at Saratoga." *Harper's Weekly*, August 26, 1865.
- 60 "Trapping in the Adirondacks." *Every Saturday*, December 24, 1870.
- 61 "Deer-stalking in the Adirondacks in Winter." *Every Saturday*, January 21, 1871.
- 62 "Lumbering in Winter." *Every Saturday*, January 28, 1871.
- 63 "Under the Falls, Catskill Mountains." *Harper's Weekly*, September 14, 1872.
- 64 "Waiting for a Bite." *Harper's Weekly*, August 22, 1874.
- 65 "Camping Out in the Adirondack Mountains." *Harper's Weekly*, November 7, 1874.

