

HAND THAT CREATED WONDROUS SCULPTURES NOW PALSIED, BUT ARTIST'S SOUL LIVES ON

Johannes Gelert, Far Into the Gray Shadows of Life, Seeks Haven for Rest in Brooklyn Home for Aged—His Fight With Fate Losing One—Americans Too Materialistic, He Finds, to Cultivate Spirit That Leads to High Ideals in Art

PARALYSIS, old age, oblivion. Then, what of Fame?

That right hand of Johannes S. Gelert, which fashioned the majestic pieces of sculpture and statuary that enhance the beauty of many American cities, lies weak and helpless.

Mighty monuments withstand the onslaughts of wind and weather. But not so the human frame.

Today Gelert, noted Danish sculptor, is in the Danish Home for the Aged in Brooklyn, penniless—broken in health and fortune.

His last work, a memorial to Dr. Thomas R. Slicer, which is in the All Souls' Church, Manhattan, he made entirely with his left hand. Now, that hand is being overtaken by the paralysis which has crippled his right.

A year ago, without any notice at all, Gelert closed his studio in New York, where he had wrought some of his best work, disappeared from his usual haunts and faded from the group of fellow craft-men who had been his cronies in the National Sculpture Society and similar organizations.

Last week, on his seventieth birthday, his friends found him in the Danish Home for the Aged.

Although he created many notable civic groups, among them the Denmark Group on the New York Custom House, the Haymarket statue in Haymarket Square and the Hans Andersen piece in Lincoln Park, Chicago, and although he won three gold medals in contests in the United States, he received few commissions to do remunerative work.

What a young artist who comes to America and finds it a land of promise has to say is notable. But what an artist who for a lifetime has battled and beat against the promise of America says is more significant.

"I have no fault to find with America," said Mr. Gelert. "I am just stating facts."

He sat in his rocking chair in the



"The Struggle for Work," erected in the City of Chicago and regarded as a splendid example of Gelert's virile conceptions

Man's Best Handiwork, He Says, Should Be Fashioned Out of the Pure Love of Giving the Best

YEARS AGONE ACCLAIMED ASSUPERMAN

Now Forgotten, but Although Pride Is Wounded, Dane Does Not Cavil at Passing of Fame

know little about them. And the school was not open to teach the subject matter he had to teach.

He found in the high, fervid tone of a poet and prophet.

The keeper of the house and the house-keeper both came in to hear his poem.

It was a staid, middle-aged man, the world had been a hard one.

But other men, who he found? They were probably the more appreciative than I was.

He went on to the end of his poem. It was, with the reason we learn from your beautiful flowers, is, like you, to give our lives. To gladden and comfort the whole world at last.

Johannes S. Gelert, famous Danish sculptor, as he looked on his seventieth birthday. This picture was taken in the Danish Home for the Aged, Brooklyn, N. Y., where Mr. Gelert is spending his remaining years. He is shown looking over his latest work, "Schleswig and Denmark."

immobility of despair. They just seemed tired—very tired. "Art is in the heart," he said. "If a person has not a heart feeling for art, no amount of reading or writing will give it."

"A great deal of reading about art may give a person a certain understanding about art, a certain blunt feeling for it, but never a true desire, a true need for it."

"Americans do not want art. Art is definitely spiritual. Americans have been and still are materialistic. I believe what Russell Sturges said about them: 'Art is a birthday gift which is denied to English-speaking people.'"

"The art which has been developed as a distinctly American product includes the Modern School of Art and the New School of Art. They are developed to attract attention. They are what shouting is to a deaf man. They are like a call for help from a ship in distress."

"Americans repress and suppress their feelings until there is no feeling left."

"Art must have a background of emotion and experience. I believe in building art on tradition."

"America has no feeling for art of its own," he declared.

"They, disturbed and inexpressible, he arose and, in slumped feet, shuffled across the room."

"America seems to present itself as a vast field of inspiration to many artists," he was reminded.

"That is because they are young and applause means much to them. When they are old, they are not so easily pleased."

He left off the sentence with a sharp gesture of his bent left hand.

As he said that he stood under a picture of two Danes defending the ruins of a fort. Their spirits were undaunted, but their bodies were weary and bedraggled. Facing this picture was another, "The Landing of the Pilgrims." There is joy and thankfulness in it for the discovery of the New Land—a land of dreams and hopes and promises.

and studying American history until he had mastered it.

His sculpture brought him various high recognitions. He was elected a member of the International Jury of awards of the Chicago Exposition, 1893. He received honorable mention at the Paris Exposition, 1900. Gold medals were awarded him by the Nashville Centennial Exposition, in 1897, by the Philadelphia Art Club and by the American Art Society. He was elected a member of the National Sculpture Society and of the Architects' League.

Some of the prominent public works that he was called upon to execute include the statue of Napoleon at the St. Louis Exposition, the series of statues representing Roman civilization in the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Science; the statue of Colonel J. F. Stevens, the founder of Minneapolis; the decoration of the Bergen County Courthouse, H. S. Senack, N. J., with nine symbolic statues and a frieze around the exterior of the tower; the six symbolic statues in the Parkside building, Chicago; the central statue of "W. Post, Battle Creek, Mich.," a portrait statue for Vanderbilt University; the statue of General Grant, Havana, Ill.

Popular Acclaim Dies as Years Advance

The old age came upon Gelert. Pleasure and hopes ceased to respond. The life of his mind. Disposed repose left him and his wife a school he created when he was forty-four and his daughter and two sons.

His studio became infrequent. Days gathered on the inspiring hours that a brief time before had been the pride of the country.

"The gold medals tarnished and were laid away."

"I was happy," said Gelert. "To create is to live life. When I had no work to do I made sketches—about 270 in all. They were all life-avers. The more who have seen them, the more dangerous to possess."

"I said to myself, 'It doesn't matter whether my works are carried away as rubbish after my death. I will do as Christ said: 'Noli shall me hinc vultu light under a bushel, but put it on a candlestick that it may give life to all.' So I considered it my duty to give these children of my brain and intellect a housing."

Just as the artist settled back to enjoy the life of creating his right hand and mind became entirely paralyzed.

"Life is never better," he continued. "When I could no longer use my hand, figures of beauty still continued to pass through my brain, and there was left to me the means of expressing them in words, though the power of presenting them in shapes was gone."

"My crowd is: Whatever I fashion must be done for love, so fashioned and so felt. My work is born of longing to transmit the joy I have known to countless others that they may feel the rapturous thrill of creation given."

"It does not matter what success do to you, life may rob you of the power to give." His high-pitched voice faded into a feeble tremor.

"When you do think there is hope for the development of art in America?" he was asked.

"Yes," he answered, and his long steel gray locks which fell back over his head shook with emotion.

Gelert's "Denmark," one of the beautiful symbolic figures adorning the New York Custom House

Gelert's "Denmark," one of the beautiful symbolic figures adorning the New York Custom House



"Napoleon," which won commendation at the St. Louis Exposition and which takes rank with Gelert's more famous works

Danish Home as he talked. His unworn black suit caught the sunlight which danced and flickered in the rays that streamed through the partly raised shade.

The place seemed comfortable and

clean. A housemaid busily moved about, dusting the furniture. This man who breathes the gospel of art which dwells in steeples towers and in the dusty shadows of light and darkness is confined to a room

which knows only the art of the housewife—that of cleanliness. His every ideal seemed contradicted.

His large, earnest eyes stared straight ahead. They had not the

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