

ECHOS OF THE PAST

by CHAS. T LAMBERT

THIS is the story of a Peoria boy, who, battling against physical disabilities of the most distressing character, and overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles by the sheer force of will, has, almost on the instant, placed himself in the front rank of landscape artists in America. grasping success with a hand raised out of the depths of despair.

It is a story that will go down in history as one of the romances of art romance based upon the weirdest of realities, as showing how the nobility of the soul can rise triumphant over the ills of the body.

The triumph came only two weeks ago after a struggle that was veritably superhuman — the breaking of a glorious dawn after a long, lark night of agony that came as the sequel to a tragedy.

One afternoon in the spring of 1906 a youth sat on the grass, now covered by the front steps of the gymnasium,, with a drawing board on his lap and made a rapid but singularly effective sketch of the castellated front of Bradley Polytechnic Institute.

The drawing was done with photographic accuracy as to outline, while the massing of lights and shadows and the exquisite finish given the whole proclaimed the exquisite feeling, of the born artist.

"Artist, nothing!" he somewhat contemptuously replied as response to a compliment. "This is only a pastime. My life work will run along the lines of a civil

That year Robert Strong Woodward left Bradley where he had been enrolled as a student for two

years and went with his family to California. Some time later, while carelessly handling a revolver, it was accidentally discharged and the bullet went clear through his body.

In its passage it struck one of his spinal vertebrae and on his recovery from the wound he found himself par-alyzed from the waist down.

The realization that he who had been training for a life of outdoor activities was to be imprisoned for life within himself, deprived forever of the power of locomotion, doomed to the restrictions of a wheeled chair, dependent upon others for even the most trifling assistance, was terrible in its hopelessness and sense of helplessness.

A limner suddenly stricken blind or a musician deprived of hearing ere his last note had ceased to vibrate might find himself in an analogous condition, but he would still retain freedom of movement.

Here was a young man of stalwart frame and vigorous; constitution suddenly reduced to the physical immobility of an infant -- a Samson in eternal fetters of brass. And yet at the bottom of Pandora's box of evils he found the jewel of Hope.

The family moved east and for a few years the crippled patient found solace and a source of some remuneration in his drawing hoard —the same board on which he had penciled the drawing of Bradley hall that afternoon in the spring of 1906.

He designed holiday cards, book covers and did a variety of things in the line of commercial art with a skillful hand, but all the while his soul yearned for excursions in the wider and higher...

ECHOS OF THE PAST

by CHAS. T LAMBERT

...fields of artistry.

He longed to get out doors again and draw and paint the hillsides along the Connecticut river. He painted all the familiar scenes visible from the windows of his home but desired to get closer to the vistas beyond.

One spring morning, ere the snow had melted, they drove a sleigh up to the door of his home and wheeled him out in his chair, from which it was comparatively easy to get upon the runners. They brought out his tubes of colors, his palette, brushes and his old drawing board and drove him along the Connecticut valley until his quick eye discovered a pictur-esque spot.

It was a mild day, just warm enough to permit his colors to work freely. and with a deft hand he laid them on in feverish haste, rapidly completing two excellent studies before atmospheric conditions compelled his return. There followed other favorable days while the sleighing lasted and before the snow was gone he had made studies enough to keep him painting enlargements all summer.

That was only two years ago. Two weeks ago he outdistanced every competing exhibitor in the United States, winning the Hallgarten prize at the animal exhibit at the National Academy of Design in New York —the one great prize for which American artists strive each year.

He not only won the prize —a medal, with an accompany \$500 in cash —but Mr. Hallgarten was so struck with the excellencies of the picture that he bought it at the artist's price —an unusual thing with this great collector and patron of American art.

The winning of the Hallgarten prize is a mere bagatelle so far as its cash value is concerned, but the distinction it confers is invaluable. The reputation of Robert Strong Woodward as an American artist is now established, the long night has passed and joy cometh with the dawn.

This afternoon Peorians will be afforded an opportunity to see seven of this artist's examples in the exhibit in the social hall in Bradley gymnasium, which opened Friday afternoon and will close at 6 o'clock this evening.

Admission is free and the exhibit will be open this afternoon between the hours of 3 o'clock and 6.

Visitors will see one of them hung on a wall apart from the others. It is one that the Arts and Crafts club of Bradley Institute is going to purchase as the beginning of an art collection of its own, and to which a special significance will attach as the work of one of its former students, now famous.

There is another touch of sentiment in that picture. It will be observed that patches of snow still linger on vale and upland —the snow that lured the artist and smoothed his way to those heights which then seemed so far away but which have been reached at last.