

GREAT BATTLE PICTURE.

Some Observations on the Beauties and Realisms of the Gettysburg Spectacular Panorama.

St. Paul Dispatch: Although hundreds of citizens of St. Paul and strangers visit the great Gettysburg panorama at the corner of Sixth and St. Peter streets every day, there are thousands more who have not yet realized the splendid attractions of this matchless spectacular exhibition. They pass it by as an unexciting sort of show—good, but not exhilarating. On the contrary there is no theater in all the country where so exciting a tragedy holds the boards.

On the wonderful canvas of the Gettysburg picture is portrayed one of the realities of history. What are sham griefs and mock tears compared to the reality of that fierce onslaught which fixed the nation's destiny, turned the babbling brooks to blood, and planted the crimson flower of death broadcast along its wooded hills! The griefs of the footlight world are soon forgotten, but the griefs that sprang to life from Gettysburg field shall never find assuagement within thousands of stricken hearts until the peace of eternal years enfolds them.

The picture represents the decisive action of July 3, 1863. It was painted by artists who thoroughly posted themselves as to the location of troops, the landscape and other details of the fight as it actually took place. By such care they were enabled to reproduce the maneuvers of that dreadful day, so, that, looking upon the work, we can not realize that we are gazing only upon mechanical effects. The area of the picture is 20,000 square feet. The wonderful blending of effects in the foreground so deceives the eye that one can not separate the real from the unreal.

Entering the unique building in which the painting is on exhibition, through a dark passage, you grope your way, until the ascent of an unlighted stairway ushers you suddenly into a new region. You have left the streets of St. Paul behind you and penetrated one of Pennsylvania's loveliest valleys. About you lie wooded hills that belt with living green a stretch of fields and meadows. An old rail fence zig-zags across the foreground. The illusion is perfect as your eye takes in the swarming blue-coats and the upspringing uniforms of grey confronting them.

Taking your standpoint at the exact center of the scene of action, you soon lose thought of all the world but the exciting sweep of events about you. The horses actually seem to be alive; their wild eyes full of splendid courage and dauntless desire. Rosa Bonheur never painted a better scene of animal life in action. Every muscle stands out like whip-cords. Under a copse to the south of a central standpoint the never-to-be-forgotten charge of General Pickett and his desperate men is in progress—a charge which proved the tide-water mark of the rebellion, from which it slowly ebbed to its close. You can almost hear the sharp whistle of bullets and the unceasing roar of batteries, as the carnage is at its height. From the pale lips of wounded men you seem to catch the pitiful cry of their agony; and the last shudder which convulsed the features of the dead, seems yet to haunt the air.

All about you look where you will, brave boys are falling thick as leaves in an autumn storm. Up from the meadows a reinforcement of grey coats, 17,000 strong, is trampling the blossoming grasses under foot. Each man is as thoroughly in earnest as men are sure to be, when some fatal moment unlooses the bulldog passions in their souls. Their front is like the crest of an angry sea. Take your glass and look closely at this magnificent charge. Under the strongest glass, the most distant human figures (not larger than cockroaches on the actual canvas) stand out clear, distinct, artistic and life-sized, thus vastly enlarging the scope of vision.

Through the very thickest of the battle a magnificent horse is flying, riderless. His gallant master lies somewhere in the red storm of death, but he, with head erect and strained blood shot eye, is seeking safety, he knows not where. Away from the tangle of white faces, and pale, outstretched hands; away from the scream of bursting shells; away from the war's turmoil to the peace of the hills, the frightened horse, they tell us, found his way at last to safety and an honored old age. The event was an actual occurrence of that day of horror.

Perhaps the feature which appeals most strongly to the local beholders is the vivid portrayal of the historic charge of the gallant old "First Minnesota" regiment. This regiment is truthfully and graphically portrayed rushing heroically to the flaming front, under the leadership of the brave Col. Colvill, who was desperately wounded in this battle, and yet survives, maimed and disfigured, an honored citizen of Red Wing. The colonel and a large number of the men of the old "First" are painted from photographs, and the likenesses are readily recognized. The battle flag of the Twenty-eighth Virginia regiment, which led the charge of Pickett's division, and is correctly painted in its place in the picture, lies in the foreground. It was captured by Marshall Sherman, of St. Paul, a member of the First Minnesota, and by him loaned to the panorama company.

The canvas presents for us but one moment—an eternal moment!—of the struggle that waged so fiercely for three long summer days. But it strikes that one moment so sharply, it holds it forth so grandly, and immortalizes it so completely that, to see the picture is to the thoughtful soul a full revelation of a direful yet glorious epoch of history. Never imagine for a single moment that the Gettysburg panorama is above you, or that it ranks with the ordinary panoramic visit to tame lands and scriptural places. This wonderful painting is as unlike the average panorama as spice differs from marble dust, or champagne from tepid tea.