

Giovanni Segantini

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CITY SWISS CLUB.

Summer Meeting at the Brent Bridge Hotel,
Hendon, on Tuesday, June 15th.

We wish to direct the attention of the members of the City Swiss Club and their friends, to the summer meeting, which will take place on the 15th of this month (Tuesday) at the Brent Bridge Hotel, Hendon. (See advert. Front page).

As already mentioned, the committee of the Club has made arrangements to secure artistes and it is hoped that a large number of members and their friends will attend this gathering, which promises to be a most enjoyable one.

The Committee would greatly appreciate, if those, who wish to attend, would send in their names as early as possible, so as to avoid any disappointment.

GIOVANNI SEGANTINI.

This artist, the greatest painter who ever eternalised the majestic glory of the Swiss mountains, and his magnificent creation "Spring Pastures" hung at the Swiss Exhibition in Union House, Lower Regent Street, have lately been the subject of a lot of discussion.

Giovanni Segantini was born on the 15th of January, 1858, in Arco, a little village in the Romanisch Trentino then belonging to Austria. His youth was anything but happy and recollections of his childhood are dimmed by sadness. After losing his mother as a small child, he emigrated with his father and the rest of the family to Milan, where his paternal parent soon disappeared, leaving the six-year-old boy in the care of an elder step-sister. The life in an attic was, for the temperamental child, who was used to romp about on the beautiful south slopes of the Alps, unbearable, and he ran away. Next we find him engaged at a farm in the Lombardy as a shepherd. Here the young Segantini developed the great love for the cows, horses and sheep which figure so prominently in his later works.

Segantini did not start his career with brush and canvas, but began to carve his four-footed friends with a pointed stone on a flat one, like the artist of many thousand years ago.

His first experience with a pencil Segantini described later in a letter to the authoress Neera, in the following words:—

"The first time I had a pencil in my hand was, when I heard a sobbing woman say to her neighbours: 'If I only had her picture! She was so beautiful.' One of the women present pointed me out to her and said: 'Let this boy do it: he is so handy.' The mother contemplated me with her wet eyes and went into her house, where I followed her. In a cradle lay the body of a small girl of about one year. The mother gave me paper and pencil and I started my first picture. I worked several hours; the mother wanted me to draw her child as if she were alive. I do not know whether the picture was artistic, but I remember seeing the mother for a moment so happy that she seemed to have forgotten her great sorrow. This experience awoke in me the thought that I could shape sentiments with a pencil."

Later we find the youth Segantini apprenticed to a flag painter in Milan. Art-dealers discovered at this stage the artist and helped him to the Academy of Arts. This was another disappointment for Segantini, who soon came to the conclusion that artists are born and not made, and he left this place, remaining for the rest of his life an enemy of art-schools and teachers. Only the beautiful nature could influence this keen young artist, and nature taught him a unique technique never effectively copied after him.

In the year 1886, Segantini, a married man with four children, attracted by the beauty of the Swiss mountains, left Italy for the Grisons, settling down first at Savognin and a few years later at Maloja. Admiring the beautiful shape of the snow-clad mountains and brilliant lakes in bright sunshine, the man Segantini exclaimed that he had not found here a new country, but that he re-found amongst people of his own race the "ladins," his dream-land, the country the child Segantini lost when his father brought him to Milan. Very striking were his words, too: "I shall paint these mountains as nobody ever painted them before." How few may have realised the truth in these words. He did not only paint the mountains, but he was the man able above all others to fix on canvas the clear, brilliant light of the Swiss Alps, employing the principle of the pointillist, putting little strokes of brightly-coloured pigment side by side creating the scintillating and hard effect of the air at high altitude.

Among his masterpieces "Ave Maria," 1887, "Knitting Girl," 1888, "Return from the Forest," 1890, "Mid-day in the Alps," 1891, "The Two Mothers," 1899, "Werden," 1898, and others painted in the Engadine and Oberhalbstein, we find the above-mentioned picture, "Alpine Pastures."

When this painting attracted the undivided admiration of Art lovers as the centre-piece of the Brooklyn Museum, New York, the "New York Times" devoted a whole article to this, in the following lines:

"The most salient of the pictures recently hung (Brooklyn Museum) is the large landscape with sheep by Giovanni Segantini, who dreamed in the manner of the mystic primitives and painted with the science of the Impressionists and shared the sympathies of Millet with the present world, developing nevertheless, a purely individual style. Segantini's subject matter is the life of the Engadine Alps, etc., etc."

He painted these vast mountain tops far above the clouds with close and intimate knowledge, taking us into an air amazingly thin and clear, into a colour blond and cool, where there are almost no darks and where a steady wind sweeps the horizon clear. His pictures are large, not only in their physical dimensions, but in their suggestion of limitless distances, etc., etc."

The Brooklyn picture is particularly happy in the characterization of the sheep. Segantini knew the flocks, not only as a painter, but as a shepherd who has lived with them. Each of the gaunt mountain creatures has its own Physiognomy scrupulously respected, and there are delicate bits of tender observation... lambs feeding, and one asleep, with an aspect of pathetic youth give it emotional value quite without sentimentality. The shepherd drowsing on a flat rock is a true portrait of type, with something of the naiveté of the Primitive, etc., etc."

Every inch of the canvas is vibrating with colour, the rugous surface is woven into a dazzling fabric of pure hues and the scene is bathed in an almost blinding light. Monet never did more inspired interpretation of brilliancy, and the physical soundness of the technique promises that the picture will retain its quality as long as the canvas holds together. It is not quite the technique of the Impressionists, producing a threadier texture, but it is in their modern manner of applying separate colours in juxtaposition and in small quantities.

The picture is beautiful, fresh and cheering, representing the true originality of the artist, and its presence in an American gallery adds not only to the pleasure of the American public, but to its knowledge of modes of thought and feeling in modern art."

In the late summer of 1899 Segantini was taken ill while painting, on the Schaffberg above Pontresina, his life's artistic ambition, "The Alpine Triptych," and he died at the age of only forty-one years, mourned by the whole valley.

Segantini, the great lover of the mountains, lies now buried in the peaceful cemetery of Maloja, in the shadow of the peaks he so wonderfully painted.

A. Tall.

SOME OF THE FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

June 6th or 13th
Aquatic Festival on the lake of Zurich at Zurich.

June 6th and following days
Golf Match, Club Match for ladies and men, at Lucerne.

June 6th-July 5th
Exhibition of works by Albert Welti and Wilhelm Busch (Kunsthalle) at Berne.

June 6th-July 11th
Cuno Amiet Exhibition (Kunstmuseum) at Winterthur.

June 13th
Fribourg Costumes Festival at Estavayer-le-Lac (lake Neuchâtel).
Horse Races at Berne.

Middle of June-September
Exhibition of Swiss chalet architecture (Kunstgewerbemuseum) at Zurich.

June 19th-20th
International Rowing Regatta at Lucerne (Rotsee).

International Rifle Match of City-teams at Ragaz-Bad.

June 19th, 20th, 23rd, 26th, 27th, 30th
Open-air Jaques-Dalcroze Festival de luxe "Geneva sings" at Geneva.

June 20th
Golf Match, "Richard Winch" Cup, for ladies and men, at Lucerne.
Horse Races at Yverdon, Lake Neuchâtel.

June 24th-July 3rd
"Quo Vadis" for Girl Scouts. Training. International Home for Girl Scouts at Adelboden.

June 25th-July 4th
Cantonal Rifle Competition at Baar, Zug.

June 25th-July 11th
National Trade Show and "Rheinwoche" at Schaffhausen.

June 26th
Fête of Roses at Weggis, Lake Lucerne.
Costume Festival, Kursaal Schänzli, Berne.

June 26th-27th
Flower Festival at Geneva.
National Swiss Horse Show at Thun.
Swiss National Gymnastic Contests at Neuchâtel.

June 27th
Lucerne cantonal circuit race for bicycles at Sursee near Lucerne.
Rifle Shooting contests at Morat.
Swiss long-distance Canoe Championships at Soleure.
Alpine Flower Fête at Lenzerheide, Grisons.

June 29th-July 1st
International Congress for Seed Control at Zurich.
End of June-Middle of September
Exhibition of Folklore and Old Zurich (Pestalozzianum) at Zurich.

During July
Botanical lectures and excursions at Zermatt.

July-September
Official Vacation Courses in German Language in the Institute Rosenberg, St. Gall.

July
VIth International Conference for Education at Geneva.

July 1st
Opening of Climbing School at Pontresina.

July 3rd-4th
Gymnastic Festival of the Swiss Catholic Societies at Lucerne.
Open-air Jaques-Dalcroze Festival de luxe "Geneva sings" at Geneva.
International Motor Races for "Grand Prix" of Europe (Motor-cycles) at Berne.

July 3rd-5th
Cantonal Choir Festival at St. Gall.

July 3rd-11th
International Horse Show and Jumping Competitions at Lucerne.
International Rowing and Yachting Regattas at Lausanne.
International Lido Fête: aquatic and other contests, fashion show, at Lausanne.

July 4th
American Independence Day Celebration will be observed at the leading resorts.
Swiss Mountain races for bicycles at Lucerne.
Golf Match, "American Flag," Competition for ladies and men, at Lucerne.
Golf Tournaments (Engadine Links) at Samaden-St. Moritz.
Alpine Swimming Competitions at Champéry, Engelberg and Wengen.

July 4th or 11th
Cantonal Wrestling Contest at Davos.

July 5th-11th
Swiss Tennis Championships at Zurich.
First week of conducted Alpine tours at Arosa.

July 6th
Anniversary celebration of Battle of Sempach at Sempach near Lucerne.

July 6th-October 12th
Vacation Courses for Modern French at the University of Geneva.

July 9th-12th
Congress of International Skating Association at St. Moritz.

July 10th
Golf Match, "Kleine Rigi" Cup, for ladies only, at Lucerne.

July 10th-11th
Annual Summer Ski Races on Jungfrauoch.
International Rowing Regatta at Zurich.
Open-air performances of "Adrian von Bubenber" in courtyard of castle at Spiez; also Venetian Night Festival.
Fencing Tournament: Championship of Gstaad at Gstaad.

July 11th
Fête of St. Placidus at Disentis.
Swiss Walking Competition (75 km.) at Berne.
Fête of Alpine rhododendrons at the Schwellisee, Arosa.

July 11th, 18th and 25th
Open-air "William Tell" performances at Interlaken.

July 12th
Skating lessons begin in ice hall on Jungfrauoch.

July 14th-August 7th
Vacation Courses for Modern French at the University of Neuchâtel. (1st Series.)

Middle of July
Summer Ski Races on Piz Corvatsch, St. Moritz.

Alpine Festival in the Oeschinen woods, Wrestling and Swimming Competitions, Kandersteg.