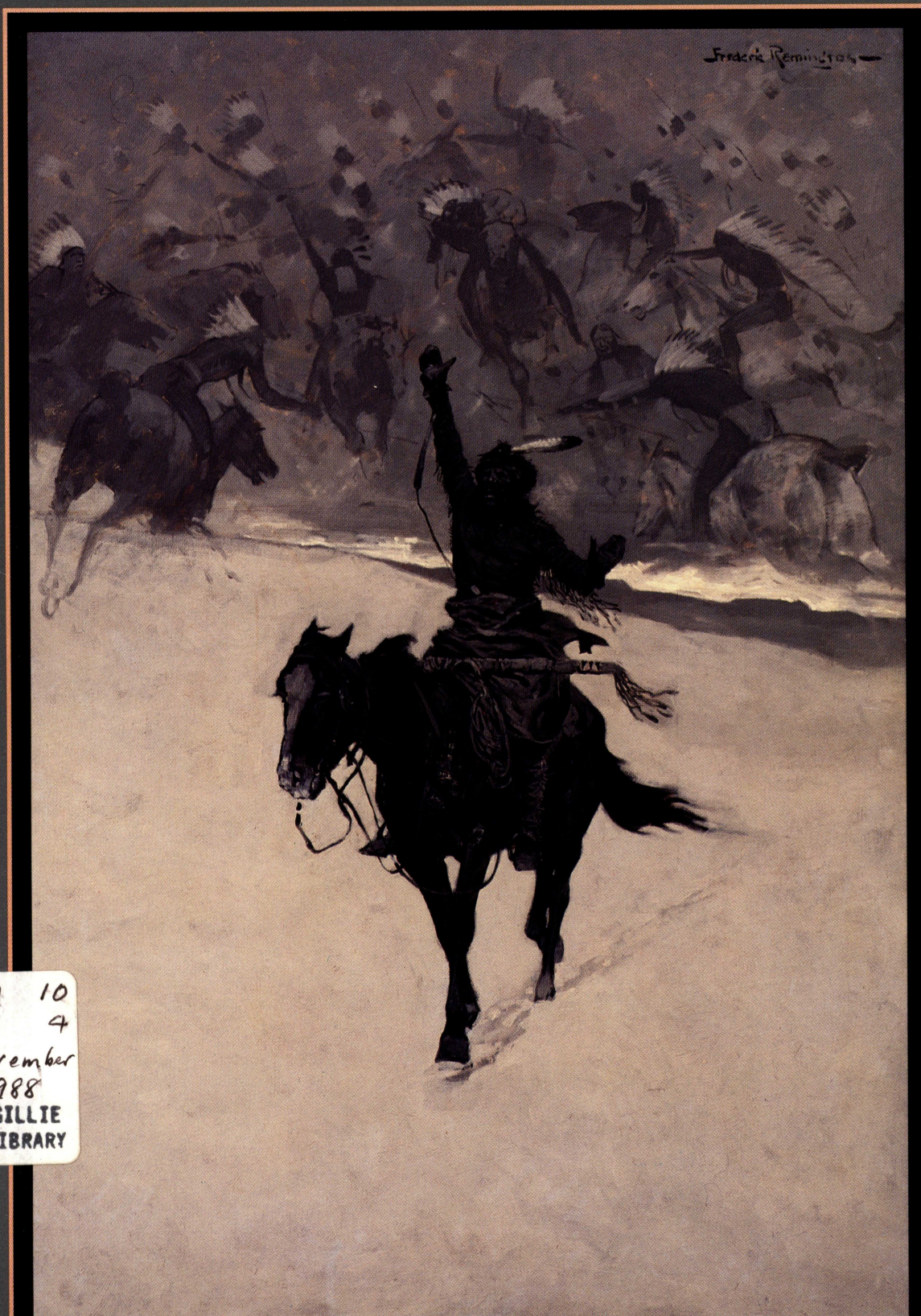


GILCREASE

MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN HISTORY AND ART



Vol 10
No 4
November
1988
GILLIE
LIBRARY

This is second of two articles comparing Frederic Remington with French 19th century art. The first article appeared in the January issue of Gilcrease Magazine. In this article, Joan Carpenter compares Remington with French military art.

FREDERIC REMINGTON'S

French Connection

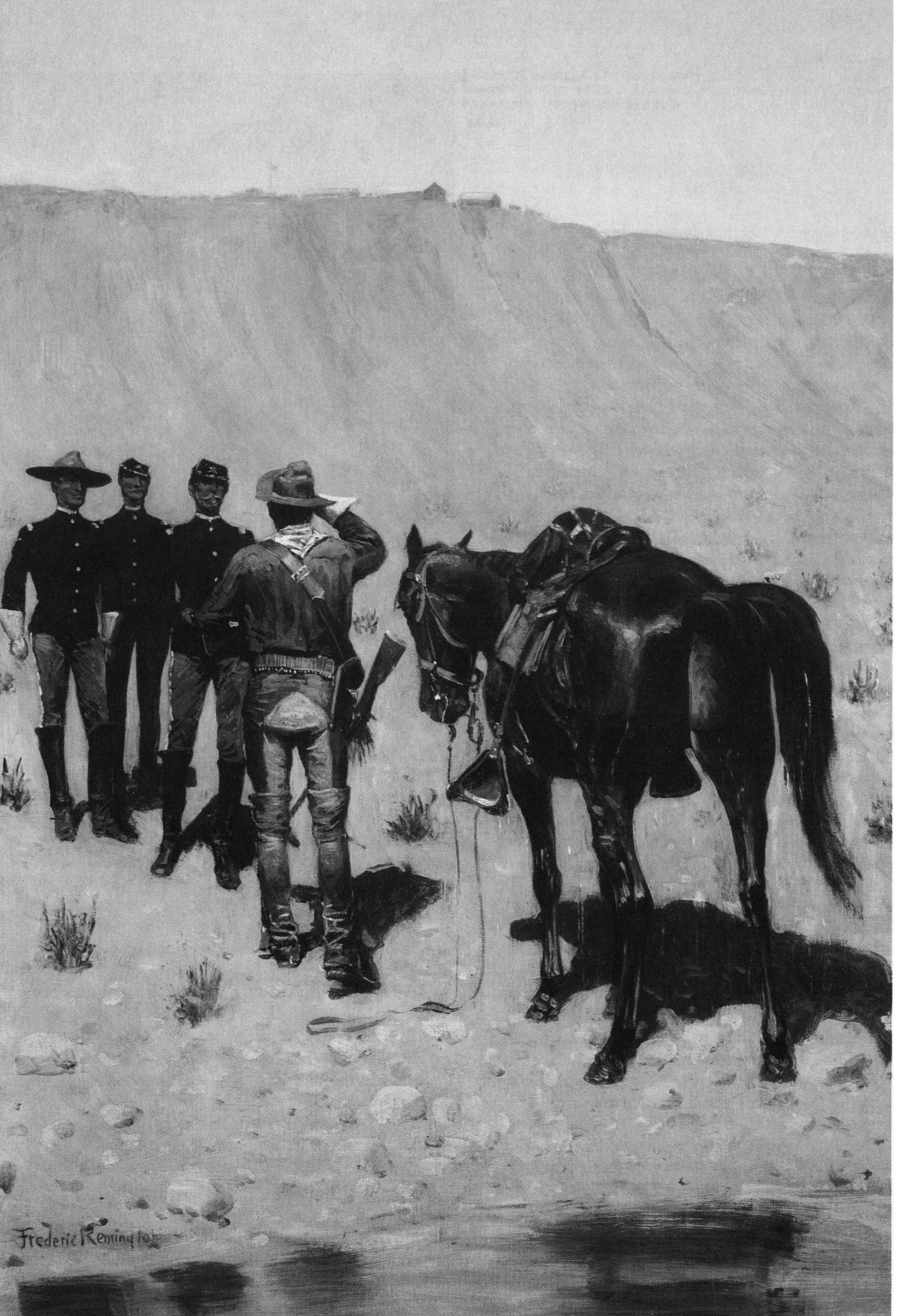
BY JOAN CARPENTER

Frederic Remington was not kind to his critics. In fact, he claimed that only one "intelligent" article about him was ever published. Entitled "Frederic Remington, Painter and Sculptor: A Pioneer in Distinctive American Art," it appeared in the March 1909 issue of the American art magazine, *The Craftsman*. Remington's approval of the piece is not surprising, because he had helped its author, Mary Fanton Roberts, to write it. That Roberts, who published under the pseudonym Giles Edgerton, appears to have acted as little more than a mouthpiece for the artist makes the article all the more interesting. No critical commentary gets in the way of what Remington wanted the public to believe about himself and his career, beginning with his college days:

When Frederic Remington left Yale, in eighteen hundred and eighty, his art heroes were de Neuville and Detaille and his college record largely important as a triumphant forward in some of the greatest football games Yale has ever played for a record. And mere art prizes did not then seem nearly so significant as being lifted on the shoulders of yelling youngsters and borne aloft across college campus with music and cheers.

In those wonderful days of real success, Remington's interest in a national development was muscular rather than artistic. For, after all, there were still men in Paris who could conduct the business of painting soldiers and heroes for

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Frederic Remington

some years longer, but when it came to college athletics and the right forward on the spot and a blue pennant always floating around victory there was indeed work to be done for the nation to the accomplishment of which a national art must for the moment be subservient.

When Remington did have a spare moment to spend in the studio, he made pictures which, he admitted, were at first heavily dependent upon the work of those "men in Paris." He was anxious, however, to let people know that he soon broke free of foreign influence:

And thus, while pictures most flattering to de Neuville and Detaille were produced, they really grew out of a supersoil and were quite unrelated to the actual fundamental quality of the youth, which was eventually to override early training and develop an individuality of such virility and honesty that it could only satisfactorily achieve by breaking new ground, doing pioneer work in the art history of America.

A dissertation could be written on these three paragraphs and all they tell us about Remington's eternal boyishness and bravado. The focus here, however, will be on Remington's "art heroes," the French painters Alphonse Deneuville and Edouard Detaille. Just who were these artists whom Remington was so eager to acknowledge and summarily dismiss? And what effect, if any, did their work have on his mature style?

Until quite recently, students of Remington have accepted too readily his description of himself as a "pioneer" "breaking new ground," and the task of identifying his sources has just begun. Remington's artistic training may have been minimal, but it was not nonexistent, and he was not blind to the work of other painters, both American and European. Like all artists, he learned from the example of those who came before him. The "men in Paris" were among the few painters from whom he acknowledged any influence at all. If we are to understand Remington, we must look closely at the foundations upon which he built his art, starting with the painters whose effect upon him he was willing to admit.

Although they are little-remembered today, in their own time Alphonse-Marie Deneuville (1835-1885) and Jean-Baptiste-Edouard Detaille (1848-1912) were much esteemed for their contributions to modern battle painting. Their work, far from exerting a merely superficial, passing influence on Remington, was an important precedent for his mature style.

Alphonse Deneuville, the older of the pair, was born in



the northern French town of Saint Omer, the son of a Chandler. (As an adult, the artist began spelling his name "de Neuville," using a form reserved for persons of noble birth; strictly speaking, his name is properly written as one word, although it often appears divided into two.) Little is known of Deneuville's childhood. Among the few documents that survive are two that bear on his life's future course: a sheet of drawings, dated 1843, and a letter of 1848 in which the 13-year-old Deneuville informs his father that his sole ambition in life is to become a soldier. In order to please his parents, the young Deneuville set aside his desire to experience and depict military life long enough to complete his education, but upon finishing his law studies in Paris in 1857, he dedicated his life to art.

Lacking formal artistic training, Deneuville supported himself at first by designing wood engravings for the popular press, much as the young Frederic Remington learned his trade by supplying illustrations to *Harper's Weekly* and other periodicals. Like Remington, too, Deneuville only gradually won recognition as a painter, always battling the stereotype of the professional illustrator as an inferior artist. Deneuville's experience, in fact,



closely parallels that of Remington, who also burned with resentment at his dismissal by the critics and the academic establishment as a “mere illustrator.” Paul Deroulède, whose portrait Deneuville painted in the 1870s, reported that the artist “often told me of the poverty of his beginnings, when he had to sell his drawings from day to day in order to buy a little bit of bread; then the success of his first paintings, in spite of the reproach constantly thrown in his face: He is nothing but an illustrator!”

In 1870, when France declared war on Bismarck’s Prussia, Deneuville finally had the opportunity to realize his boyhood dream of becoming a soldier. At the age of 35, he was commissioned a lieutenant and assigned to a corps of engineers headquartered in the Belleville section of Paris. His military service enabled Deneuville to get a close-up view of the action. Unfortunately, Deneuville’s first war was a catastrophe for France. Since the beginning of the Second Empire in 1851, Napoleon III’s military campaigns, in theaters ranging from northern Italy to China and Cambodia, from the Crimea to Mexico, had been virtually continuous and largely victorious. But this time the outcome was different. The Emperor was forced to

For its time, it (“The Last Cartridges”) was a novel battle painting indeed.

Most of the figures are confined to a single suffocating room, desperately trying to hold out against the unseen enemy outside.

surrender two months after war was declared, and the northern provinces of Alsace and Lorraine were turned over to the Germans. To add to the nation’s distress, parts of Paris, its glittering capital, literally went up in smoke during the brief but bloody civil war which accompanied the French defeat.

Despite the disastrous outcome of the Franco-Prussian War, Deneuville devoted most of the 1870s to its portrayal. His depiction of French officers and soldiers, proud and dignified even in defeat, finally brought him the full success as a painter that he had been seeking for 15 years. Deneuville’s first triumph was “Les Dernières Cartouches” (“The Last Cartridges”), which was greeted with delirious enthusiasm in 1873 when it was shown at the government’s official art exhibition, the Salon. The painting shows a group of French soldiers holed up in a house in the village of Bazeilles, near Sedan, on August 31, 1870. Bavarian forces have overrun the town, but the French, although down to their last few rounds of ammunition, keep fighting. For its time, it was a novel battle painting indeed. Most of the figures are confined to a single suffocating room, desperately trying to hold out against the unseen enemy outside. Deneuville’s moving depiction of French heroism and resistance touched a nerve. The picture was widely reproduced and even presented as a *tableau-vivant* at a major theater in Paris. The critic Arsène Alexandre proclaimed that “Les Dernières Cartouches” was a painting “which causes us to lift up our heads . . . [even though we are still] completely dejected, our wounds barely healed.”

“Les Dernières Cartouches” and Deneuville’s other military paintings appealed, not just for their patriotic subject matter, but for their dramatic style. As a young man, Deneuville had attracted the interest of Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), who had been a leader of the French Romantic movement 40 years earlier. Following Delacroix’s example, Deneuville filled many of his canvases, such as “The Charge” (1879; The Forbes Magazine Collection, New York) with leaping horses, surging troops,

Deneuville filled many of his canvases,
such as "The Charge," with leaping horses,
surging troops and clouds of swirling smoke.

and clouds of swirling smoke. Even Deneuville's less frenzied scenes of military life are marked by emotional intensity and a healthy dose of theatricality.

Alphonse Deneuville, observed Gustave Goetschy in his book *Les jeunes peintres militaires: De Neuville-Detaille-Dupray* (1878), was "a poet, a teller of moving and tragic tales of battle; he animates and dramatizes everything he touches." Edouard Detaille, in contrast, according to Goetschy, was an "observer and a philosopher who analyzes the facts and tries to extract from them a useful lesson." The differences between the two painters had much to do with their early models. Deneuville had paid heed to the counsel of Delacroix, the master of a colorful, often tempestuous style. Detaille's teacher, on the other hand, was Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier (1815-1891), whose meticulous, tightly painted pictures seem diametrically opposed to the great Romantic's works.

Detaille's family was both artistic and military. His father was an architect, his grandfather a supplier of Napoleon's *Grande Armée*. Detaille grew up listening to stories of life in Paris during the glorious days of the First Empire (1804-1814), when all France seemed to participate in a heroic military dream. Little Edouard also accompanied his family on outings to see the official pageants of the Second Empire (1851-1870), in which smartly uniformed soldiers played a leading role.

The young Detaille filled sketchbooks and the margins of his school notebooks with drawings of soldiers. In 1865, at the age of 17, he entered the studio of Ernest Meissonier, one of the most celebrated military painters of the 19th century. Meissonier's paintings were marvels of realism, small and crammed with detail. His advice to his pupils was simple: "Do as I do; follow nature, always nature." Detaille was instructed to paint only what he could see with his own eyes. To that end he was drilled in precise rendering of the model in the studio, as well as escorted outdoors to the parade grounds where the army practiced its maneuvers in order to sharpen his representational skills in the field.

Detaille was the son of a prosperous family and the beneficiary of training which practically guaranteed him success. At no point did he suffer the financial privations that plagued his older colleague Deneuville early in his career. Although on occasion Detaille worked as an illustrator, it was not to keep the wolf from his door. In 1869, at the remarkably young age of 21, Detaille had his





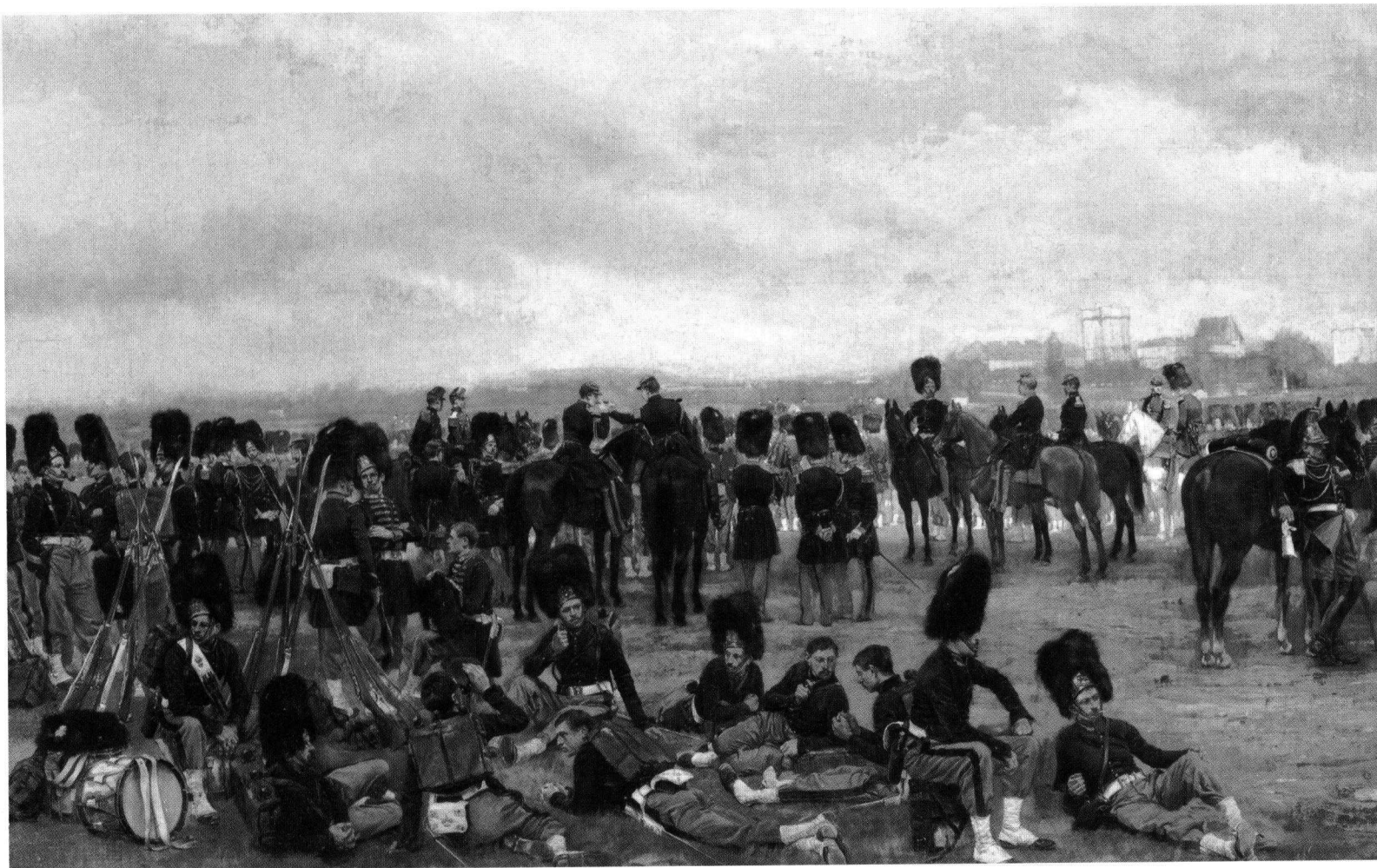
Alphonse Deneuville, "The Charge," 1879, The FORBES Magazine Collection, New York

first Salon hit with the exhibition of a picture called "Grenadiers at the Camp of Saint-Maur" (Philadelphia Museum of Art: The William L. Elkins Collection). The painting, which represents troops of the Imperial Guard taking a break from their maneuvers on a parade ground outside Paris, was warmly received by the critics. They praised the artist's close observation of soldiers at rest and his exacting miniaturist detail (the canvas, populated by dozens of officers and infantrymen, along with their horses and gear, measures only 22¾ by 35¾ inches).

Like Deneuville, Detaille served his country during the Franco-Prussian War, enlisting in the militia. He helped patrol the environs of Paris and participated in combat on several occasions, all the while making drawings and watercolors of his fellow soldiers and the besieged city.

The war would provide Detaille with subjects for his painstakingly rendered canvases for the next two decades.

Although they sought commissions and recognition in the same branch of art, Deneuville and Detaille were not rivals. They were, in fact, good friends, and in the early 1880s they worked together on panorama paintings of two engagements of the Franco-Prussian War, the battle of Champigny, in which both artists had taken part, and the battle of Rezonville. Each panorama was to measure 1800 square meters. To fill these immense canvases with an accurate view of each battlefield and the myriad of incidents which took place there on the fateful day was a task that required almost as much preparation as a military campaign. The painters interviewed witnesses, participants, and historians. They visited Champigny and



Edouard Detaille, "Grenadiers at the Camp of S. Maur," 1869, detail, Philadelphia Museum of Art: The William L. Elkins Collection

They praised the artist's (Detaille's) close observation of soldiers at rest and his exacting miniaturist detail (the canvas, populated by dozens of officers and infantrymen, along with their horses and gear, measures only 22¾ by 35¼ inches).

Rezonville and ordered photographs of the sites, which were projected onto the panorama canvas and traced by studio assistants. Although they made sketches of the entire composition of each panorama (which may also have been projected by photographic means on the canvas), Deneuville and Detaille painted only the figures and accessories in the final works, leaving the landscape and sky to their assistants.

The panoramas of Champigny and Rezonville opened in Paris in 1882 and 1889 respectively. They were presented in a specially constructed circular building in which the audience sat in darkness, viewing the dramatically lit 50-foot-high canvas from a central platform. The public and the critics applauded both panoramas, and they were exhibited in a number of cities in France and other

European countries. Meissonier himself praised them as "aids to history" which recreated "the flavor and atmosphere of things experienced, not just things seen." At the Paris World's Fair of 1889, "The Battle of Rezonville" was awarded a Grand Prize, an unprecedented honor for a panorama.

Up until this time panorama painting, with its mass-appeal subject matter (usually famous battles or exotic foreign cities) and spectacular scenic effects, had been considered more a branch of show business than of fine art. The new, higher status accorded the panoramas of Champigny and Rezonville is borne out by the fact that when, in the early 1890s, they had become too worn from their travels to be displayed as panoramas, they were not destroyed (the usual fate of such paintings), but cut up into fragments the size of easel pictures and sold at auction in Paris.

The extraordinary acclaim that Deneuville and Detaille won for their panoramas was a consequence not only of the high quality of their work, but also of changing standards in military painting, standards which they had themselves helped to alter. Of his intentions in painting the panoramas of the battles of Champigny and Rezonville, Edouard Detaille stated in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* in 1897,

I wanted to show a battlefield in its reality, without conventional poses, without a far-fetched composition, and without a single one of those improbable things which the public accepts with too much good faith. [In my panoramas] everyone is occupied with his own affairs, not thinking of the spectator, as they really are in most military situations. I wanted the poetry and feeling of the scene to come out on their own, without gimmicks or tricks. I wanted to express the silence, the calm of nightfall, because you don't chat much on the battlefield; and the sound of gunfire makes you very aware of the silence.

Detaille preferred the panorama of the battle of Rezonville, in which he had had a greater hand than Deneuville. (Deneuville contributed more to the panorama of Champigny.) The representation of the battle of Rezonville, Detaille declared, was "more realistic, and it rendered better the impression of the battle as it actually looked." He added, "I believe I have left a real document, as well as a touching picture to which I tried to impart a feeling of grandeur."

Detaille's description of his panorama as a "document," that is, a realistic account of what actually happened, goes



against the grain of earlier battle painting, which was conceived along more frankly propagandistic than journalistic lines. Since the Renaissance, battle art had been used to promote the authority of the king or general who led the army and to proclaim the power of a nation. Military leaders were presented as glamorous and heroic guides to glory for whom common soldiers felt privileged to sacrifice their lives. The less inspiring aspects of war — the debilitating life of campaigners exposed to the elements, the wounded and mutilated, and death — had little place in paintings focused on generals laden with medals and gold braid and mounted on rearing chargers.

The exalted presentation of the heroic military leader lost credibility with an increasingly skeptical public as one war succeeded another over the course of the 19th century. Moreover, new ways of making and disseminating

Deneuville and Detaille were enormously successful in America as well as France. Their paintings were published . . . with English texts that appeared in London and New York . . . Remington was 16 years old.

images of warfare, especially photography and the engraved illustrations based upon photographs that appeared in the popular press, helped to alter the traditional focus of battle art. First in Europe, in the war fought in the Crimea from 1853 to 1856, then in America during the War Between the States, the camera's all-inclusive eye revealed that war is chaotic and that grand strategies are accomplished by means of a multiplicity of isolated episodes. Viewed through the camera lens, war does not resolve itself into noble compositions centered around great generals; photography showed that war is a messy business, conducted mostly by lowly soldiers led by rather ordinary-looking commanders. The camera's limitations, as well as its revelations, influenced the form and content of military painting. Both the Crimean War and the American Civil War took place before the introduction of instantaneous photography. Photographers could not shoot satisfactory pictures in the heat of battle; the action would register as a confusing blur. Instead they worked during quiet times, while officers conferred and soldiers attended to their camp duties. Photographers also dealt with the most immobile



After Edouard Detaille, "In Retreat (French Artillery)," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, March 1877

subject of all, the field of battle after combat had ended and before the burial detail had done its work. Alive or dead, the camera's subjects had to be still to register properly on the plate. Thanks in part to photography, two previously neglected themes began to assume new prominence in military art: daily camp business, once considered by most battle painters too commonplace to depict, and the aftermath of battle, previously regarded by many as almost too ghastly to even contemplate.

Along with photographers, reporters and newspaper artists thronged to the front. For the first time in history, newspapers covered the progress of war on a daily basis. Artist-journalists such as Constantin Guys in the Crimea and Winslow Homer on the battlefields of the American Civil War made sketches that were translated into wood-engravings and published in the illustrated papers. As reporters, these artists felt less constrained by the idealized conventions of traditional battle painting. They showed the boredom and misery of the soldier's lot as well as his moments of glory. The effect of these eye witness reports was similar to that of the war photographs: the public learned that modern warfare seldom arranged itself into the heroic visions of the old battle painters. People saw, and began to demand, the facts.

The facts were what they believed they got in the paintings of Alphonse Deneuville and, to an even greater degree, of Edouard Detaille. Both artists based their pictures on extensive research, and neither had any qualms about using photographs as well as their own sketches of battlefields and military encampments to help them recreate a particular event. In the opinion of the critics, their most striking contribution, along with their photographic realism, was their relative neglect of the activities of gallant leaders in favor of the life of the simple soldier. Detaille, especially, was noted for his depiction of the routine of the ordinary soldier, an existence that

consisted of courageous assaults on enemy strongholds, but also of meals hurriedly consumed around campfires and the drudgery of fatigue duty. This emphasis on war as it is experienced by the common enlisted man did not, however, diminish the appeal that Deneuville's and Detaille's paintings had for the government. Napoleon III was thoroughly aware of the power of the brush in selling his military schemes to the people, and his regime provided patronage for Deneuville, Detaille and a number of other battle painters.

Many of the changes in military art wrought by photographers, artist-reporters, and military painters like Deneuville and Detaille took place while Frederic Remington was a boy. Remington's lifelong fascination with all things military began almost at his birth in 1861. Shortly afterward, his father departed to serve as a major in the Eleventh New York Cavalry; he would later enthrall his son with tales of his wartime exploits. According to Augustus Thomas, a playwright and Remington's neighbor in the New York City suburb of New Rochelle, Remington "adored the memory of his father in uniform" and fervently believed that "humanity's future [was] safe only under military discipline." His parents, apparently feeling that young Frederic could use a little of that discipline himself, sent him to the Highland Military Academy in Worcester, Massachusetts, for part of his high school education. While there he filled notebooks and letters to friends with scenes of the Civil War and of troopers fighting Indians in the West, as well as humorous sketches of the academy's cadet officer instructors.

Among the first artistic images which the young Frederic Remington saw must have been the representations of Civil



After Alphonse Deneuville, "Advance Guard," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, March 1877

War skirmishes and camp life published in *Harper's Weekly*. At the conclusion of the war, the Army headed west to deal with the conflicts brought on by white expansion into Indian lands, and the artists employed by the illustrated papers moved with them. It is likely that Remington's early idea of military art was formed not by the paintings of idealized heroes which hung in museums and historical societies, but by the illustrations which appeared in the popular press. The work of Deneuville and Detaille, marked as it was by the factual standards of journalism and photography, would have looked familiar to him from the moment he first laid eyes upon it.

It would have been easy for Remington to recognize something of himself in Deneuville and Detaille and to model his ambitions upon their achievements. The hyper-masculine American artist seems never to have felt completely at ease in the gentle profession he chose, as is shown by his declaration to Giles Edgerton that the high point of his life was passed not before an easel or in a picture gallery, but on the college gridiron, as well as by his almost complete neglect of subjects involving women (a characteristic of Detaille's work as well). In his conversation and his writing, Remington preferred to tell tales of his Western adventures rather than to expound upon the fine points of artistic theory. Deneuville and Detaille excited his interest because they were not just painters. They were soldiers who had courted danger in the defense of their homeland. Although Remington once said that he wanted to go to West Point, he never seriously pursued a career in the military. But war artists could be seen as the next best thing to real war heroes. Toward the end of the Civil War, the editors of *Harper's Weekly* lauded their artists at the front, declaring that they *have not been less busy, and scarcely less imperiled than the soldiers. They have made the weary marches and dangerous voyages. They have shared the soldier's fare, and climbed and floundered, always trusting in lead-pencils and keeping their paper dry. When the battle began, they were there. They drew the enemy's fire as well as their own. The fierce shock, the heaving tumult, the smoky sway of battle from side to side, the line, the assault, the victory — they were a part of it all, and their faithful fingers, depicting the scene, have made us a part also.*

To this image of the artist as a soldier's comrade-in-arms, Deneuville and Detaille added something more, something which meant a great deal to Remington: the

wealth and social standing of the successful painter. Their popular, officially sanctioned paintings provided Remington with an artistic source that boasted a better pedigree than photographs or the illustrations printed in *Harper's*.

Deneuville and Detaille were enormously successful in America as well as in France. Their paintings were published as lithographs and reproduced in many French magazines, as well as in books and periodicals with English texts which appeared in London and New York. For example, an article entitled "Contemporary Art in France," published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in March 1877, when Remington was 16 years old, is in general highly condemnatory of the subject in question. The unidentified author describes French art as "often low and demoralizing." But he has nothing but praise for the military artists:

In one class of painting the French have always shown characteristic ability — nor has that ability yet deserted them — and that is the delineation of war scenes.

The author goes on to applaud Meissonier and Deneuville, but his favorite is Detaille, who, he says, "seems to be the coming military artist of France." The article is illustrated with engravings after Detaille's "In Retreat," a scene of soldiers moving artillery in a snowy birch forest, and Deneuville's "Advance Guard."

The young Remington could also have read about Deneuville and Detaille and seen reproductions of their pictures in *Hours with Art and Artists*, a book by George W. Sheldon (who would later write on Remington) published in New York in 1882. Sheldon noted the "patriotic ardor" shown by Detaille during the "Franco-German War" and praised the artist's lively realism, which he attributed to "genius and a Paris education." Sheldon made the usual distinction between the two painters. Deneuville had not "always contented himself with telling unvarnished tales." Into his pictures "the dramatic enters with transforming influence . . . the pomp and pageantry of war have colored the delineations of incidents from which pomp and pageantry were absent; a heightening of interest has been sought by artificial rearrangements." Detaille, on the other hand, *has so depended upon a simple and faithful naturalism, that his stories carry with them the impress and assurance of truth. The scenes in which he was a soldier,*



Edouard Detaille, "Salute to the Wounded," 1876, Location unknown



Edouard Detaille, "The Defense of Champigny," c. 1879, The FORBES Magazine Collection, New York

Remington had no shortage of opportunities to see the work of his heroes at home, and he may well have seen their pictures abroad as well.

and of which he is an historian, did not, in his judgment, need factitious, extraneous assistance. They were quite worthy of portrayal, because they were what they were.

If ever an artistic credo were tailor-made to the uses of the mature Frederic Remington, it was Sheldon's description of Detaille's approach to his work.

Remington's first acquaintance with the work of Deneuville, Detaille, and Meissonier, whom he also admired, may well have been made by way of lithographs and reproductive engravings published in books and magazines, but he had plenty of opportunities to deepen his

knowledge of their pictures directly. Sheldon noted in his book that since about 1874 Americans had been "good customers of the young Frenchman Edouard Detaille" and that his pictures sold for the considerable sums of \$15,000 to \$20,000. Detaille's well-known "Grenadiers at the Camp of Saint-Maur," for example, belonged to the American collector William L. Elkins, and by 1896 it was in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Sheldon provided a list of Detaille's American patrons, which reads like a Who's Who of the late nineteenth-century East Coast establishment, studded with names like Belmont, Astor,





Frederic Remington, "A Cavalryman's Breakfast on the Plains," c. 1890, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth.

Vanderbilt and Avery. One of the most highly praised works shown at the 1883 Pedestal Fund Exhibition mounted to raise funds for a base for the Statue of Liberty was Detaille's famous "Salut aux Blessés" (Salute to the Wounded, 1876), now lost, lent by the New York hotelier Samuel Hawk. Another of these distinguished collectors, Judge Henry Hilton, presented Detaille's "La Défense de Champigny" (1879), which shows soldiers ransacking a house for furniture and bedding with which to construct a barricade, to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1887, not long after Remington moved to New York and settled down to serious work as an artist. (A four by seven foot version of the scene is now in the Forbes Magazine Collection.) Remington may also have seen the replica which Detaille made of part of the panorama of Rezonville for Cornelius Vanderbilt, presented by Vanderbilt's wife to the Seventh Regimental Armory on Park Avenue and 66th Street. Deneuville's work was also purchased by wealthy Americans, and he is represented today in public and private collections in the United States.

As Giles Edgerton's article in *The Craftsman* proves, Frederic Remington never made any secret of his admiration for the work of Alphonse Deneuville and Edouard Detaille. He spoke of his high regard for Deneuville and Detaille to other people as well, and critics often commented upon Remington's debt to French military art. Remington did tell Edgerton, however, that the French painters' pictures only influenced him when he was a very young man, before he conscientiously set himself the task of "doing pioneer work in the art history of America." In truth, Remington's early work is so feeble that only in its

military subject matter can any effect of his esteem for the pictures of Deneuville and Detaille be discerned. Far from outgrowing their influence, it was only toward the end of the 1880s, when Remington entered his artistic maturity, that he was skillful enough to emulate them.

Numerous parallels can be drawn between Remington's military pictures and those of the French artists he admired. Remington's representations of the humdrum routine of camp life and his focus on the regular soldier in scenes of combat prompted comments, as did Detaille's work, on his innovation in the field of military art. For example, Remington's "A Cavalryman's Breakfast on the Plains" (c. 1890, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth), filled with mundane incident, bears a striking resemblance to Detaille's "Grenadiers at the Camp of Saint-Maur" in the Philadelphia Museum; the pictures have remarkably similar compositions and are even almost exactly the same size (Remington's canvas measures 22 x 32½ inches).

Remington's decision to concentrate on the ordinary soldier stirred Owen Wister to write in his introduction to *Done in the Open*, a book of reproductions of Remington's drawings and paintings published in 1902, that:

Our generals will sit for their portraits as Washington and William Penn sat for theirs; but never until this particular day have we possessed a recorder who should give also to posterity the enlisted man to be put alongside with the captain that led him into battle. How much more rich the past would be for us if various Remingtons, each in his day, had handed such work down into our sight! . . . Our heritage in portraiture includes the leaders of men; it does not include



the men themselves. No artist until Remington has undertaken to draw so clearly the history of the people.

Although Wister's claim for Remington is exaggerated, the passage does show how important this aspect of his art was to his contemporary admirers. It is interesting to note that just three years later the art historian Samuel Isham, in his *History of American Painting*, discerned the same deficiency in earlier American art which Wister had pointed out. However, Isham didn't think the situation had

Deneuville and Detaille share much common ground with Remington, in part because he followed their example, but he was not their slavish imitator . . . all treat the same theme: the delivery of information to an officer in the field.

improved in recent times. He stated "the American soldier has had no De Neuville or Detaille to record his prowess," thus discounting much of Remington's career.

Remington treated a number of subjects favored by Deneuville and Detaille. All three artists made paintings and drawings of individual soldiers and officers, impeccably turned out. These fashion plates included the studies which each artist made of military uniforms old and new, foreign and domestic. Detaille, for example, contributed more than 300 watercolors and drawings to a mammoth history of French uniforms from 1789 to 1889, and he even designed uniforms for the contemporary army in 1912 (the designs were never used). He also traveled throughout Europe and in North Africa gathering material for his pictures of the foreign military, producing, among other things, a book illustrating the maneuvers of the Russian army at Krasnoie-Selo in 1884. Remington never attempted to assume the role of couturier to the U.S. Army, but he did journey abroad to study the dress of soldiers and officers in other countries. At one time or another Remington published illustrations of the fighting men of Mexico, Germany, Chile, Cuba, Great Britain, the Philippines, and Manchuria, as well as representatives of the French forces in Algeria. Like Alphonse Deneuville, who was commissioned by English patrons to paint pictures of colonial battles in Africa and India, Remington ranged far afield in these works, at

one point depicting soldiers of the Orange Free State in South Africa for Poultney Bigelow's book *The White Man's Africa*. While on his travels, Remington collected books illustrated with pictures of foreign armies, as well as prints of soldiers, and it would be surprising if the work of Detaille and Deneuville were not among these souvenirs.

Certainly Remington's way of making pictures had much in common with the artistic practice of Deneuville and Detaille. Like most successful 19th-century painters of the human figure, each of these artists worked in an elaborate studio filled with costumes and props. In Deneuville's studio, uniforms and parts of suits of armor were displayed on massive wooden chests, and regimental flags on long poles were propped against the wall. The centerpiece of the space was a remarkable pillar to which were attached four life-size horse's heads, complete with tack. Whether these were examples of the sculptor's or the taxidermist's art is impossible to tell from the photograph which survives of the studio. In any case, Remington, the artist who "knew the horse," would have been delighted to own a similar piece of interior decor. The spacious ground-floor studio of the affluent Detaille was connected to a big glass-roofed shed where he posed his human and, occasionally, equine models. Displayed in a gallery within the studio proper was one of the nineteenth century's most important collections of military artifacts, which now belongs to the Musée de l'Armée in Paris.

Remington may have read George Sheldon's description of Detaille's studio in *Hours with Art and Artists* — "the artist at present has one of the noblest studios in Paris . . . so rich in specimens of military costumes and accoutrements, that a history of them might be handsomely illustrated from his collection alone" — but he was not to possess a comparable *atelier* until 1896. In that year Remington hired an architect to design an addition to his house in New Rochelle. The 800 square feet of what Remington called his "Czar-size" studio were filled with guns, swords, tack, and other Army gear, Native American clothing, weapons, and artifacts, and Mexican and American cowboy paraphernalia.

The studios of Deneuville, Detaille, and Remington, though used as much for socializing and receiving clients as for painting, were laboratories in which the artists assembled their field studies and photographs, carried out additional research, and cooked up their pictures. All three prided themselves on the documentary qualities of their



Edouard Detaille, "Alerte!," 1880, The FORBES Magazine Collection, New York

work, and all three enjoyed reputations as military experts, although they occasionally got things wrong. Detaille, for instance, was taken to task for his faulty reconstruction of the Paris setting of a picture which showed the enrollment of volunteers into the Revolutionary army in 1792. The numerous liberties taken by Deneuville in, of all pictures, "Les Dernières Cartouches," have caused French historians much distress over the years. These problems bring to mind the embarrassment Remington brought upon himself when he attempted to point out inaccuracies in Charles Schreyvogel's "Custer's Demand" and was publicly corrected by a participant in the event as well as by Custer's widow.

Deneuville, Detaille, and Remington were on safer

ground when they dealt with current events. When planning pictures of contemporary soldiers, they could substitute first-hand experience for historical research. Nicolas-Toussaint Charlet, a French artist active early in the 19th century, had declared, "the true military painter must draw everything while under fire," and Deneuville and Detaille took this pronouncement to heart, as is shown by their service in the Franco-Prussian War, although they did not participate in every incident they later depicted. After hostilities had ended, they continued to visit army barracks and parade grounds. Detaille remained in the reserves, and, long after the war was over, Deneuville enjoyed dressing up in a uniform and imagining himself taking part in the battles he painted. Remington never observed a



Edouard Detaille, "The Dream," 1888, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.
Photograph copyright and courtesy of Musée de l'Armée, Paris

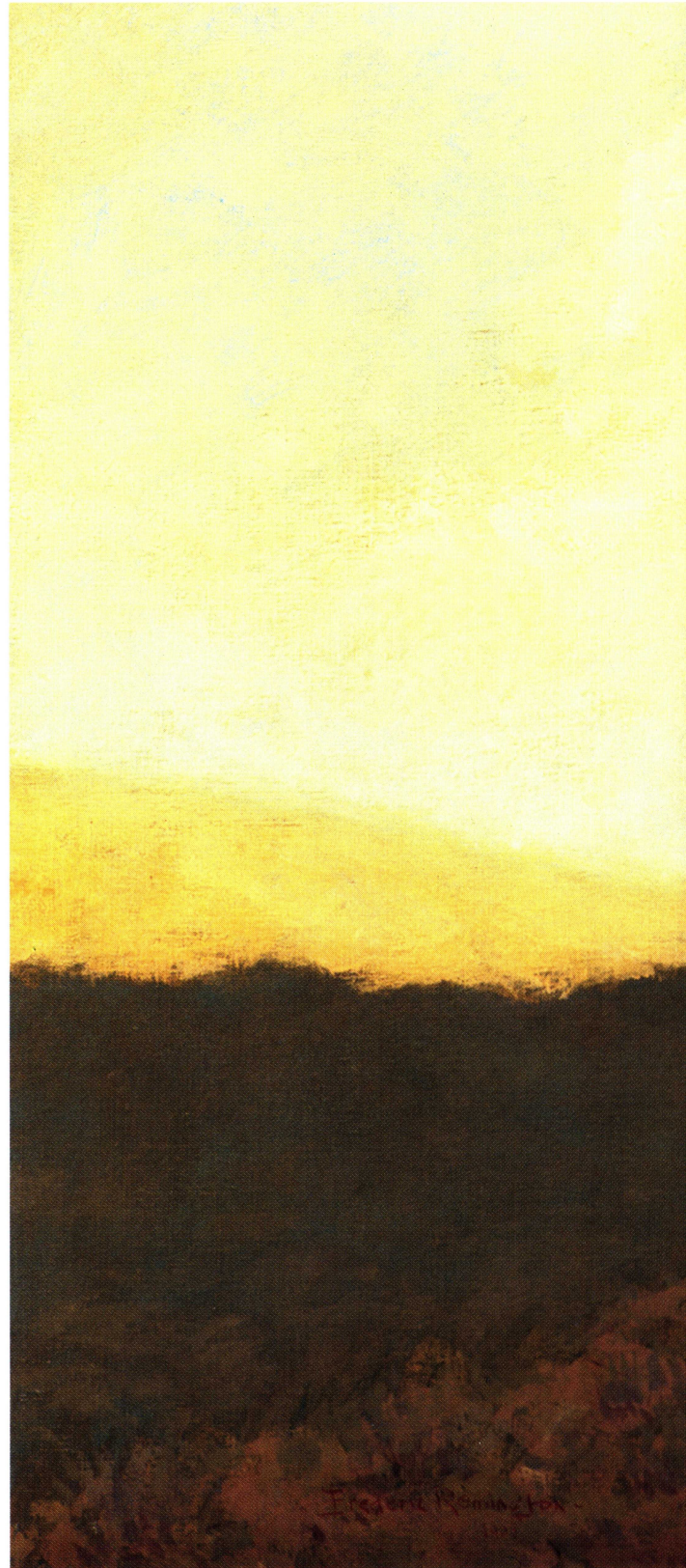
battle until he accompanied the American forces which invaded Cuba in 1898, but he often attached himself to army campaigns against the Indians when he went west, in the process developing friendly relationships with such military luminaries as General Nelson A. Miles, whose memoirs he would illustrate. Authenticity, the mark of the faithful account of an eye-witness or, even better, a participant, was what these painters claimed to offer to the public in their military art, and they went to a fair amount of trouble to achieve it.

This quest for accuracy — or at least the appearance of it — prompted all three artists to employ photography to supplement the sketches they made in the field. Detaille, especially, used the camera to make preliminary studies of figures, objects, and settings, sometimes taking the pictures himself, sometimes assigning that task to others, just as Remington did. Both even worked directly on photographs. Detaille painted on photographic enlargements when working up sketches for large pictures, and Remington occasionally drew in ink on photographic prints when he designed illustrations for *Harper's Weekly*. The significance of Eadweard Muybridge's photographic studies of animal locomotion was not lost on them either. Detaille met Muybridge in 1879, when the photographer demonstrated his zoopraxiscope, a precursor of the motion

One of the Detaille's most famous paintings is "Le Reve" ("The Dream") . . .

Above them, in the dawn sky, we see spectral images from their dreams . . .

In one of his last paintings, "With the Eye of the Mind," Remington uses a split format.





Frederic Remington, "With the Eye of the Mind," 1908, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art



Frederic Remington, "The Battle of Warbonnet Creek," 1897, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art



picture projector, in Meissonier's studio, and he was among the subscribers to Muybridge's book *Animal Locomotion* when it was published in 1887.

On a bet from three other painters, Detaille exactly reproduced the movements illustrated by some of the plates in the book in a painting which he sent to the Salon in 1890. There is ample evidence that Remington, without any outside encouragement, also copied Muybridge's plates in some of his pictures.

Deneuville and Detaille share much common ground with Remington, in part because he followed their example, but he was not their slavish imitator. Deneuville's "Information" (1876; The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore), Detaille's "Alerte!" (1880; The Forbes Magazine Collection, New York), and Remington's "The Messenger," a grisaille painting made to illustrate Charles King's book *A Daughter of the Sioux* (1903), all treat the same theme, the delivery

*Remington did not make a personal
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but he undoubtedly saw the photographs
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These horrific images . . . were almost
surely in Remington's mind when he worked
out the poses of the Cheyenne victims.*

of information to an officer in the field. The distinctions as well as the parallels that can be drawn between the three pictures illuminate each artist's approach to his contemporary military subject matter.

Although he was better known for his representations of the melee of battle, Alphonse Deneuville also found occasion to depict the quieter side of army life, as he does in "Information," a painting acquired by the American collector William T. Walters before 1878. Here a shepherd gives directions to an officer of the engineers, who holds a map. The contrast between the peasant's coarse cloak and scruffy dog and the officer's highly decorated uniform and handsome mount could hardly be more striking. The meeting between the humble peasant and the splendid officer upon whom he is dependent for protection (as the officer is dependent upon him for guidance in unfamiliar territory) is a touching instance of the uncommon alliances

necessitated by war. Remington's "The Messenger" also projects a subtle theatricality. Nothing startling is happening, but our interest in these figures is stimulated nonetheless. In a clever move, Remington turns the messenger's back to us; we are unable to search his face for signs about the nature of the news he is about to share. All is expectancy here: the viewer, as well as the three figures in the middleground, are locked in an eternal state of suspense, waiting for the message to be passed on.

Both Deneuville and Remington worked extensively as illustrators. From their experience of working in a small-scale medium, they learned the dramatic virtues of narrative economy. "Information" and "The Messenger" are composed of a mere handful of pictorial elements: a few figures sharply silhouetted against a relatively undifferentiated background. Deneuville controls our experience of his little drama through the positioning and gestures of the figures. He aligns his composition along a mild diagonal staked out by the stance of the officer's horse and reinforced by the edge of the country road, which rises ever so slightly from right to left. The shepherd points and the officer glances toward a spot outside the picture; lines drawn in the directions of their gesture and gaze would neatly enclose the horse's head. Another line, connecting the most dynamic elements in the painting, the officer's right eye and the peasant's right forefinger, would complete this triangle, which the viewer cannot avoid retracing again and again. Remington was equally adept at stage-managing his pictures. Unlike "Information," "The Messenger" is self-contained. No reference is made to anything outside the picture. All eyes are riveted upon the painting's subject; only the viewer is denied a glimpse of his face. All the figures, including the horse, line up on a diagonal axis that runs from the right foreground to the left background. We follow that dramatic track back and forth between the protagonists; the rest of the picture hardly matters and, indeed, hardly exists.

The impact of Detaille's "Alerte!" is more diffuse. Detaille prided himself on his detailed treatment of settings, and he provides his soldiers with a full-blown backdrop here, with the result that the viewer's eye wanders around the picture, away from the central figure grouping to the soldier in the doorway putting on his coat and to the buildings and men in the background. Detaille even inserts a dark slushy path that leads away from the foreground action and further diminishes its claim on our



North Western Photo Co., "Big Foot, Chief of the Bules [sic] taken at the Battle of Wounded Knee," 1890

attention. Detaille's approach here is matter-of-fact, more reportorial than theatrical. Despite the exclamation point in its title, "Alerte!" arouses no particular sense of urgency. It is a candid glimpse of men at war, captured in the middle of their activities as if by a camera.

Although Detaille's compositions often seem to have been inspired by the random look of unposed snapshots, he did paint one picture which no photograph could even

approximate, and Remington may well have been inspired by it to create works in a similar vein. One of Detaille's most famous paintings is "Le Rêve" ("The Dream"; Musée d'Orsay, Paris; formerly Musée de l'Armée), which created a sensation at the Salon of 1888. It is a two-part composition. Modern infantrymen, rolled in their gray blankets, sleep on a barren, seemingly endless field of battle. Above them, in the dawn sky, we see spectral images from their dreams: glamorously uniformed soldiers of France's past armies surge forward, their regimental banners in tatters but still hoisted proudly aloft. The sense of distance between the dreary present and the splendid past could not be more poignant. Remington had earlier transposed Detaille's incisively realistic battle-painting style to his pictures of cowboys, and he seems quite possibly to have borrowed the fantasy composition of "Le Rêve" for non-military Western subject matter as well. "The Last



North Western Photo Co., "Burial of the Dead at the Battle of Wounded Knee," 1890

But photographs do not provide the only precedent for Remington's treatment of the horrors of war. Since the time of Napoleon I, French military painters had included glimpses of wartime gore in some of their pictures.



Edouard Detaille, "November 1870 (Sketch for the Panorama of the Battle of Champigny, detail The FORBES Magazine Collection, New York

Cavalier," an illustration which Remington made for Owen Wister's "The Evolution of the Cow-Puncher," published in *Harper's Monthly* in September 1895, has the same split between the here-and-now (a contemporary cowboy whose horse strides across the foreground of the picture) and the gilded pages of history (a misty cavalcade of mounted knights, crusaders, and conquistadors that fills the rest of the composition) as Detaille's "La Rêve." In each case, the artist shows the connection between past and present as well as the unbridgeable gulf which separates them. "An Indian Dream," an illustration to one of Remington's own Sun-Down Leflare stories, "How Order No. 6 Went Through" (1899), employs the composition to highlight a similar contrast, that between the bedraggled figure of the half-Indian Sun-Down and his noble warrior ancestors who are now extinct. In one of his last paintings, "With the Eye of the Mind" (1908), Remington uses a split format again, to masterful effect. Here, both the cloud-borne apparitions and the earthly landscape are more generalized than in Remington's earlier adaptations of the composition. This increase in abstraction results in a powerful expression of the hold which forces of the spirit can possess over

physical reality.

Deneuville, Detaille, and Remington drew on many sources — field research, historical fact, photographs, the work of other painters — in their endeavor to present a convincing impression of modern warfare. To these must be added one more factor, personal feeling, which is plainly discernible in "Le Rêve" and in Remington's similar compositions. The part played by imagination and subjective judgment was not insignificant in the art of Deneuville, Detaille, and Remington. Although they worked with "the facts," these artists were capable of presenting them in a variety of ways, with a variety of expressive results. There is plenty of room for creative freedom in realistic art. Even assuming the role of a purely objective observer is a form of commentary, and often a very effective one, as is demonstrated by one of Remington's most moving military paintings, "The Battle of Warbonnet Creek," a picture which represents well the artist's synthesis of history, photography, and the tradition of military painting as it had evolved in the work of Deneuville and Detaille.

Remington painted "The Battle of Warbonnet Creek" as



one of six illustrations for his article "A Sergeant of the Orphan Troop," published in *Harper's Monthly* in August 1897. Remington's story followed his visit to the Tenth Cavalry in Montana in the fall of 1896. His host was First Lieutenant Carter Johnson, who told Remington of his experiences during the winter of 1878-1879, when he had participated in the final battle against the Northern Cheyennes. The Cheyennes had been the object of intense Army campaigning since June 1876, when they had helped Sitting Bull's Sioux warriors defeat George Armstrong Custer at the Little Bighorn. During the next two years, the Cheyennes were relentlessly pursued by soldiers. Greatly outnumbered, they eventually surrendered and were sent to a reservation in Indian Territory. The harsh southern climate and inadequate food and medical care made life there intolerable, and soon several hundred Cheyennes left the reservation to return to their homeland, fighting off soldiers all along the way. But by the end of 1878 they were back in Army custody, some surrendering to become scouts for General Miles and another group of about 150 incarcerated at Fort Robinson in Nebraska. There the post's commanding officer, Captain Wessells,

tried to convince them to return south. Their stubborn resistance led Wessells to take the extraordinary measure of imprisoning them in a barracks in early January without heat, water, or food. The Cheyennes were adamant in their determination to remain in the north, and, after about a week, they decided to make a final stand. Using guns which they had dismantled and hidden in the clothing of women and children, Dull Knife's band broke out of the barracks prison on the night of January 9. Many of the Indians were killed or recaptured during the outbreak, but a small group managed to escape from the fort and headed north, hoping to join Red Cloud's Sioux in Dakota Territory. They were able to hold off Wessells' troops for almost two weeks as they fled through the Bad Lands. Finally, on January 20, 1879, Wessells' men, reinforced by troops called in from Fort Laramie, surrounded the freezing, starving Indians, who had taken refuge in a dry buffalo wallow on Warbonnet Creek. Two hundred soldiers deployed massive firepower against the Indians for three hours, but still a few Cheyennes survived. Three direct assaults on their position were required to rout the remaining Indians.

Detaille, like Remington, preferred not to dwell on the most gruesome aspects of war . . . both present the victims of and survivors with a deadpan objectivity that makes the grisly facts all the more horrifying.

Remington found winter campaigning to be anything but pleasant. The scouting party had to cross the icy Cheyenne River in twenty-degree cold, force their horses up steep, treacherous trails, and make camp in a raging blizzard. Remington soon retreated to the relative comfort of Pine Ridge Agency, just in time to miss the action at Wounded Knee, in which Lt. Casey's men took part. The artist was invited to join the burial party, which was preparing to leave Pine Ridge when he arrived at the agency. He vacillated, looked after his horse and his breakfast, and the party departed without him. It is impossible not to wonder whether the artist was relieved rather than disappointed that he was a witness to none of the action or its aftermath at Wounded Knee.

Remington did not make a personal appearance at Wounded Knee, but he undoubtedly saw the photographs of the battlefields made after the massacre by John C.H. Grabill and George Trager. These horrific images of corpses awkwardly bent and scattered over the frozen plain were almost surely in Remington's mind when he worked

out the poses of the Cheyenne victims in "The Battle of Warbonnet Creek." One well-known photograph is composed of a pile of Indian bodies in the foreground with soldiers standing above and beyond them. We are looking at a mass grave, which is what the buffalo wallow on Warbonnet Creek became, as Remington so eloquently suggests in his painting.

But photographs do not provide the only precedents for Remington's treatment of the horrors of war. Since the time of Napoleon I, French military painters had included glimpses of wartime gore in some of their pictures, and the practice increased as the century advanced.

Alphonse Deneuvre, working in a more painterly style, was something of a specialist in the representation of



Edouard Detaille, "A French Advance (Sketch for the Panorama of the Battle of Champigny)," detail, The FORBES Magazine Collection, New York



Edouard Detaille, "French Artillery," 1873, The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida

battlefield mayhem. A portion of his and Detaille's panorama of the Battle of Champigny was devoted to a burial detail; another section shows the rigid bodies of dead horses and men lying in a trench while fighting goes on above them. Sketches for both parts are in the Forbes Magazine Collection.

In work done completely on his own, Detaille, like Remington, preferred not to dwell on the most gruesome aspects of war. Neither painter ever depicted dismembered or mutilated bodies, and in Remington's territory especially, the occasions to do so if one wished were numerous. When Detaille represented casualties, as he did in "French Artillery," the painting reproduced as "In Retreat" in *Harper's Monthly* for March 1877 and part of the collection of John Jacob Astor before its purchase by circus tycoon John Ringling in 1926, his view was a distanced, impersonal one. Neither "French Artillery" nor "The Battle of Warbonnet Creek" is marked by overt emotionalism: both

Detaille and Remington present the victims and survivors of war with a deadpan objectivity that makes the grisly facts all the more horrifying. The facial expressions of those still living are impassive, numb. Few glance at the bodies.

Alphonse Deneuille and Edouard Detaille remained strong, even fanatical, enthusiasts of war and the part it might play in France's recovery from the humiliation of 1870. Detaille lived long enough, in fact, to see his brand of militant ultra-nationalism, which was popular in France in the decades following the Franco-Prussian War, go out of style. He was awarded few commissions after the turn of the century, and those he won were for representations of wars long past or for decorative allegorical treatments of that inspiring patriotic concept which the French call *la gloire*. Remington's feelings about war, on the other hand, underwent a dramatic change soon after he finished painting "The Battle of Warbonnet Creek." After devoting

*In the end, the work of Deneuville, Detaille and other
French military painters remains one set of influences
among the many upon which Remington drew as he
developed a personal style.*

most of his career to celebrating the military, Remington lost interest in glorifying war.

Although Remington never seriously doubted that the Army of the West was fighting what General Miles called a "battle of civilization," he seemed always to harbor ambivalent feelings about the Indian Wars. As time went on, he came to realize that the destruction of the Indian was not only tragic, but had also resulted in the loss of a vital component of the Western American culture which had provided him with subject matter. It is ironic that Remington painted "The Battle of Warbonnet Creek" while anxiously anticipating America's declaration of war against Spain. Remington had been waiting all his life to witness what he sardonically called "the greatest thing which men are called on to do." He yearned to see, as had his heroes Deneuville and Detaille, a full-scale conflict between two "civilized" powers. The Army's prolonged, largely monotonous Western campaigns against the Indians, who refused to play by the rules of conventional warfare, were, so Remington said, a poor substitute for the real thing. As it turned out, Remington's stint in Cuba as a war correspondent for *Harper's Weekly* and the *New York Journal* convinced him that "civilized" war was made up of

more parts misery than glory, although some of the pictures he based on that experience, such as "The Charge of the Rough Riders at San Juan Hill" (1898; Frederic Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, N.Y.), might lead one to think otherwise. He happily returned to his cozy house and big studio in New Rochelle after fighting off illness in muddy jungle encampments, scrambling to escape enemy fire, and seeing, as he wrote in an article for *Harper's* entitled "With the Fifth Corps," "the broken spirits, bloody bodies, hopeless, helpless suffering" that huddled in the rear of battle. To his neighbor Augustus Thomas, Remington declared that henceforth he would renounce military themes in order "to paint fruits and flowers."

The campaign in Cuba only confirmed what Remington must have sensed for years — that for most participants, the experience of war is anything but the glorious epic fiction shown in the old battle pictures. "The Battle of Warbonnet Creek," painted in 1897, comes close to ending a chapter in Remington's career. Within a few years he would turn away from reportorial images of the Army of the West in favor of nostalgic views of early western life and the lost ways of the Indians. ◡

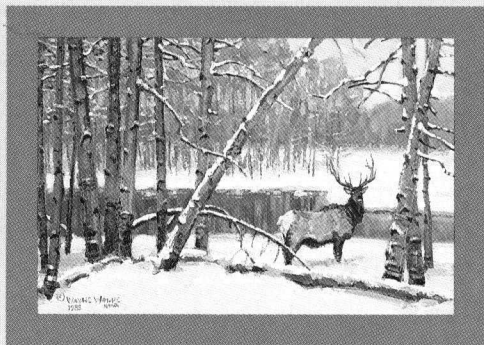
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American Art IN MINIATURE

BY PAULA HALL



Wayne E. Wolfe, "Winter in Colorado,"
8 by 12 inches, oil

Top, Glenna Goodacre, "Bolivian Girl,"
6 by 4 inches, charcoal on paper

THE ANNUAL *American Art in Miniature* will open at Gilcrease Museum December 2 through December 18. This popular exhibition features small paintings and drawings of over 40 American artists and provides an opportunity to collect some of the best realist art at prices usually much lower than larger works.

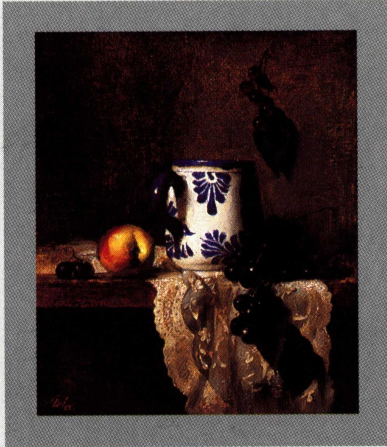
Miniature paintings and drawings have definite origins and have greatly served in reading and chronicling history. Miniatures, with their own separate and distinct characteristics, have gained and fallen in favor with collectors over the centuries and most recently have increased in popularity.

The origins of miniature painting have been traced to ancient Egypt where the Egyptian papyri were rubricated in gold, silver and red. The art was used in the illuminated devotional manuscripts. It is in connection with these beautiful works that the word "miniature" came into

existence. The term is derived from the Latin word *minium*, or red lead, the substance used in drawing the capital letters of the manuscripts. The persons employed in this work were called *miniatores*.

Book miniatures flourished in the East as well as the West throughout the Middle Ages. These book miniatures were intended to illuminate the text and to decorate the page. During the Renaissance, decorative borders were added to illuminated initial letters and extravagant designs often commemorated a person or celebrated some event in history.

Portrait miniatures were immensely popular from the 17th century until the introduction of photography. Charles Willson Peale and Gilbert Stuart painted portrait miniatures in Colonial America. These treasured portraits became a symbol of prestige, as well as heirlooms for the American family.



David A. Leffel, "Mexican Mug, Fruit & Lace," 11 $\frac{1}{8}$ by 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, oil

European artists of the time were more inclined to paint landscape miniatures. Louis Nicholas Van Blarenberghe painted such scenes as "A Promenade in the Park" and the gouache, "The Avenue to a Great Palace" with great detail in rectangular areas measuring only 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ by 3 inches.

During its heyday, the miniature was always small, for it was designed to be carried on the person or set into some personal article as a snuffbox or a memorandum case. After 1795, there was a gradual increase in the size of miniature paintings.

The definition of a true miniature has been established by several societies of miniature painters and set forth by Cyril Davenport in *Miniatures, Ancient and Modern* as a painting with a maximum measurement of seven inches. However, the true test of a miniature can be seen in the style of the painting or drawing.

A miniature has been compared to

larger paintings as chamber music is to the symphony. In other words, the style can be anything from a diminutive impressionism to a highly polished, detailed finish, but the brush strokes with which a miniature is painted should be small, in proportion to the size of the work.

As Thomas Seir Cummings, an American miniaturist, wrote: "Miniature painting is governed by the same principles as any other branch of the art, and works in miniature should possess the same beauty of composition, correctness of drawing, breadth of light and shade, brilliancy, truth of color, and firmness of touch as works executed on a larger scale."

A miniature is painted "in miniature" as a means to achieve a certain result. Its size can be justified on many grounds. Illustrations for illuminated manuscripts or paintings for settings in rings, brooches and other forms of personal mementos most obviously are painted in miniature. Often there is a special justification for its size by collectors due to lack of space to display or

simply personal taste, as illustrated by western art collector Philip Cole who commissioned O.C. Seltzer in the early 1900s to paint one of the largest collections of miniatures. Despite the reasons, miniatures consistently have been treasured art forms and hold an important historical value to the past. To look into the faces of such people as Queen Elizabeth, Oliver Cromwell, George Washington and others, as portrayed by the miniaturists of their times, is an important addition to the world of art and history. In the opinion of one art historian, "To examine a collection of them (miniatures) is like holding up a diminishing-glass to the world's past."

Gilcrease's popular miniature exhibition will preview December 2. The show first began at the museum in 1984 and includes paintings and drawings of various subjects and techniques. Each work is no larger than 9 by 12 inches. Paintings and drawings illustrated in this article are just a few from the *American Art in Miniature* exhibition. ◻



Right, Paul Calle, "They Call Me Jacob," 9 by 12 inches, pencil



O. C. Seltzer, "Sacajawea at the Sulphur Springs, June 16, 1805," 4-3/8 by 5-3/4 inches, oil on canvas

Montana in Miniature

WORKS OF O.C. SELTZER

BY PAULA HALL



O. C. Seltzer, "The Elk Hunter," 4 by 5-1/2 inches, oil on board

WHAT BEGAN AS "decoration" on the mats of watercolors commissioned by Olaf C. Seltzer's patron set the stage for one of the largest collections of miniatures in American history, the product of a deep friendship and mutual devotion to capturing the spirit of an age that would never come again to the American scene.

The "Artist of the High Plains" was not born in the American West but migrated to Montana in 1892 when he was 14. That year and the next, he found a romantic dream of adventure come true when he was employed by several horse outfits. In 1893, he went to work as an apprentice in the Great Northern Railway shops in Great Falls. He became a machinist and locomotive repairman, a skill he practiced diligently for more than 30 years although his great passion was art. He devoted most of his spare time to it.

By 1897, Seltzer was painting in

watercolor and oils. That March he met Charles Marion Russell in a Great Falls saloon where Charlie and his buddies were celebrating the cowboy artist's 33rd birthday. From that time until Charlie's death in 1926, Russell was a friend, advisor and mentor of Seltzer's.

Whenever the opportunity permitted, young Seltzer was seen in the company of Russell whose advice, according to those who knew, was continuously valuable to Seltzer. They remained friends until Russell's death in 1926.

From the *Great Falls Tribune*, October 1, 1937:

"Seltzer and Russell worked side by side for many years as a team. Seltzer spent his spare hours in Russell's studio, or together they went out into the hills to study nature and make their sketches close to the beautiful rugged outdoor scenery that later Seltzer was to portray, exclusively, in

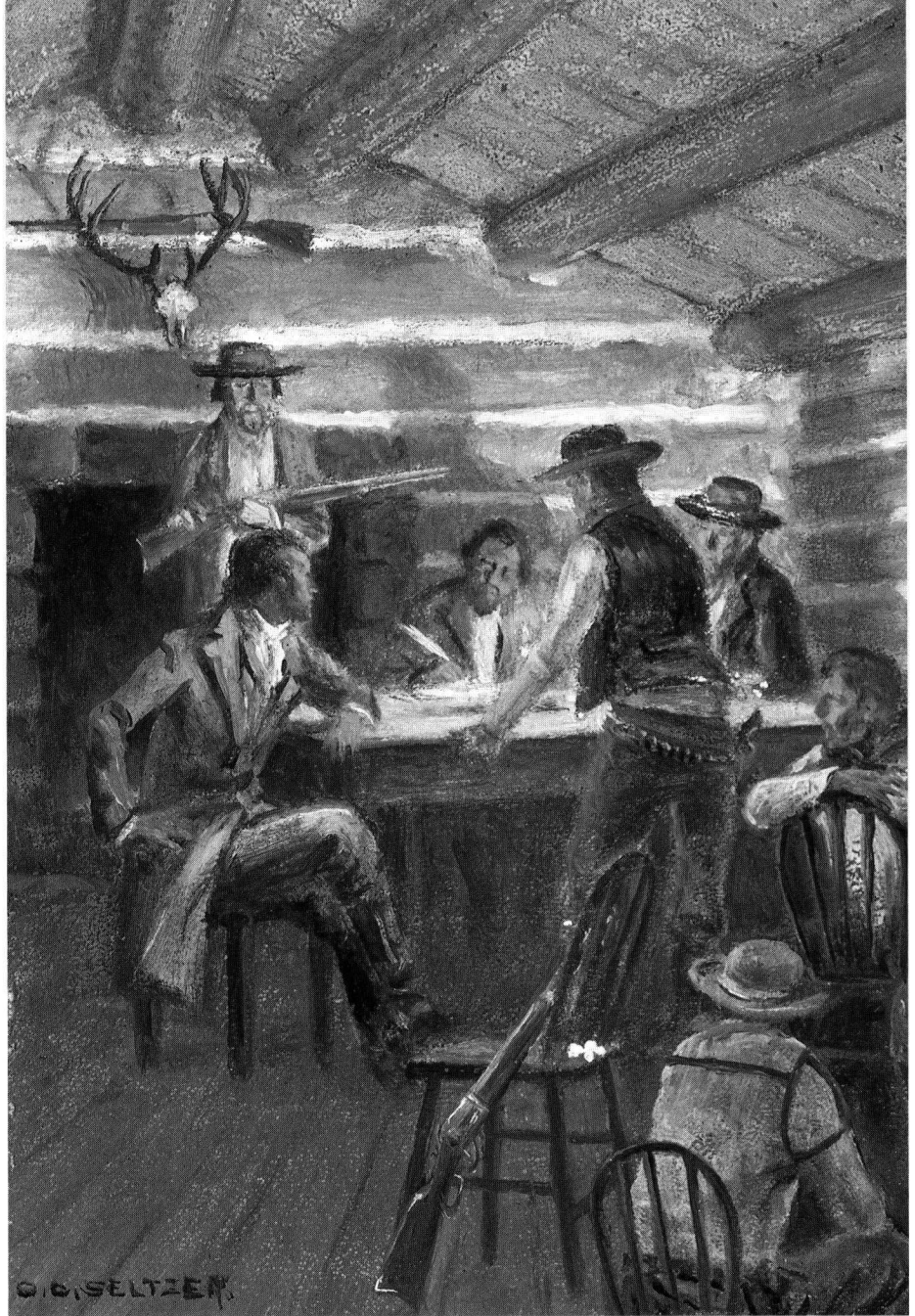
his paintings. The two men posed for each other, exchanged ideas and suggestions, and gained immeasurably through mutual association. Beginning in 1921, Seltzer worked entirely on his own, and since that time has devoted himself almost entirely to his painting. Russell, who once said that Seltzer was one of the two best watercolor artists in the world, died in 1926."

By 1921, Seltzer had gained self-confidence. His paintings were selling. He was striving for perfection in detail and reaching the realistic technique that was to be his hallmark in later years. He researched and read constantly in the Great Falls public library for authentic and historical facts about his subjects. Perhaps in an effort to get away from the critics who claimed his work too often resembled Russell's, Seltzer diversified, painting romantic scenes with European backgrounds.

During frequent layoffs of workers in the Great Northern roundhouse in the early 1920s, Seltzer was able to devote more time to his painting. Then in 1925, while delivering a canvas to the state veterinarian in Helena, Seltzer met Dr. Philip G. Cole. This meeting changed the course of Seltzer's career and enabled him to put the railroad shops behind him forever.

Philip Cole was a Helena native whose father's investment in a tire valve caused him to relinquish his medical career and spend the rest of his life in the New York area. He began buying western art because of his love for Montana and was quietly assembling a splendid collection of paintings by Russell and Remington among others.

Seltzer had already scheduled a



O. C. Seltzer, "The Vigilantes Oath Organization in Virginia City, Montana, Dec. 23, 1863," 6-1/8 by 4-1/8 inches, oil on board

move to New York to study the great paintings displayed in countless galleries. Soon he and Cole were planning a series of paintings to capture the essence of the old West. These "western characters" are depicted as Cole remembered them from his boyhood. Each figure in watercolor is supplemented by an illustrative vignette on the mat.

Seltzer's talent for such delicate painting in a limited area delighted Cole, who wrote to Seltzer on August 31, 1928, urging him to work over a

painting on the Vigilante movement and to reconsider one on a smaller scale with Lewis and Clark and their Indian guide, Sacajawea. It was the first time the patron mentioned in writing his hope that the artist would reduce the scale of his work:

"I am more than sorry you cannot do a smaller picture for me of Lewis and Clark with York and Sacajawea. I realize that 10 x 15 for this would doubtless be inadequate. I sincerely and honestly like your smaller pictures so much better than your bigger

canvasses. Also as you know space is a big item with me. Why don't you work up one for me as small as you can? As you know this picture is very close to my heart and I don't want it to get away. Also I want you to be the one to do it.

Give it a few thoughts anyway, Olaf. As you well know, neither shape nor price cut any ice with me as long as it is small as consistent and is good.

I am still clinging to the idea of a series (or collection) of small historical oils by you. I cling to this idea both for my own sake and for yours. I feel that you have your best bet here. If the little ones work out well with me then you can paint them as big as a house if you want to."

Cole later wrote:

"I am delighted that you are going ahead with the small Sacajawea (I am glad that you have noted the correct spelling of her name) such details are interesting.

I do hope that you are not going to disappoint me with the small Lewis & Clark with York and Sacajawea oil. Please, even if you yearn to make a big canvas of this some day, make me the smallest size you can of it . . . My reasons for wanting the small size are twofold. First, I sincerely feel that your best work is done on the smaller canvas. Second, the amount of space that I can afford to give it in my collection."

Philip Cole was not one to give up

easily when he had a certain effect in mind. His insistence of his limited space and constant correspondence concerning Seltzer's ability to portray so much action in a small area finally persuaded Seltzer to paint the series.

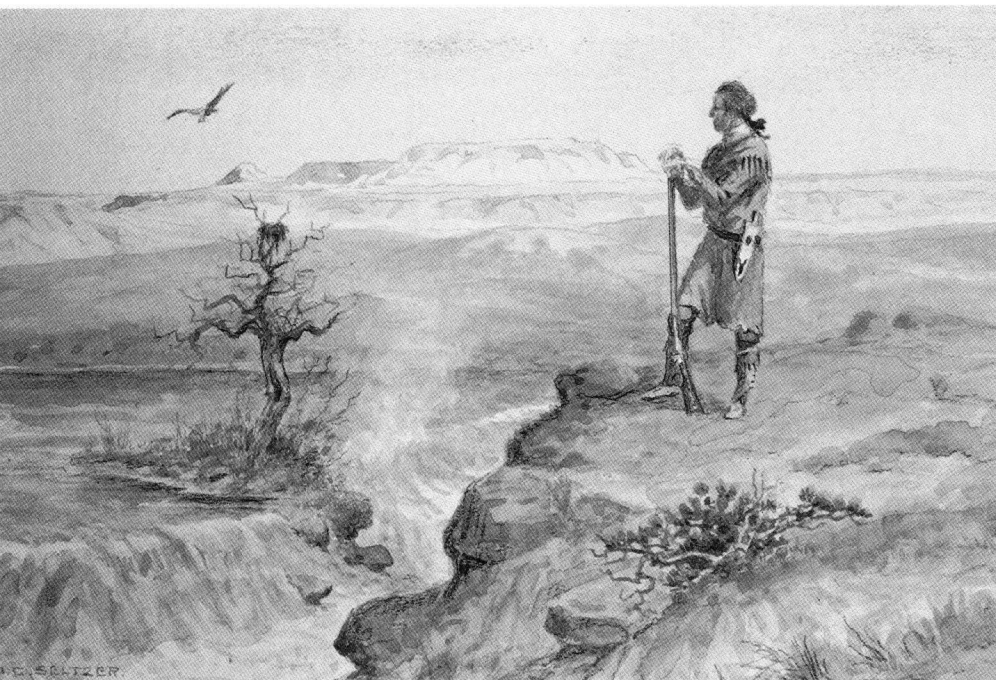
These miniatures in oil — there are more than 100 of them — are outstanding among the 234 Seltzer oils and watercolors included in the purchase of 560 paintings from the Cole estate by Thomas Gilcrease who brought them to his new museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma. They testify to Cole's devotion to his native state, for he devoted his fortune to sponsoring a reconstruction on canvas of a past era, and to Seltzer's meticulous attention to detail.

Although his New York residency had lasted only through a season, Seltzer returned again and again to visit Cole, whose growing collection of western art led him to move to Zeeview, a sumptuous estate near Tarrytown, New York. Here Seltzer would correct details while his patron wrote detailed descriptions of the historical scenes. Most of the actual painting was done in Seltzer's home studio in Great Falls.

By late February, 1935, Dr. Cole had 84 miniatures in his possession. The last of the miniatures were delivered to Cole in the autumn of 1935.

The miniatures can be divided into three categories: historical events, personal histories of prominent western personalities and the graphic portrayal of customs that were rapidly becoming archaic.

They include several scenes of the Lewis and Clark expedition, "Chief Joseph's Surrender," "Buffalo Bill's Duel with Yellow Hand," "The

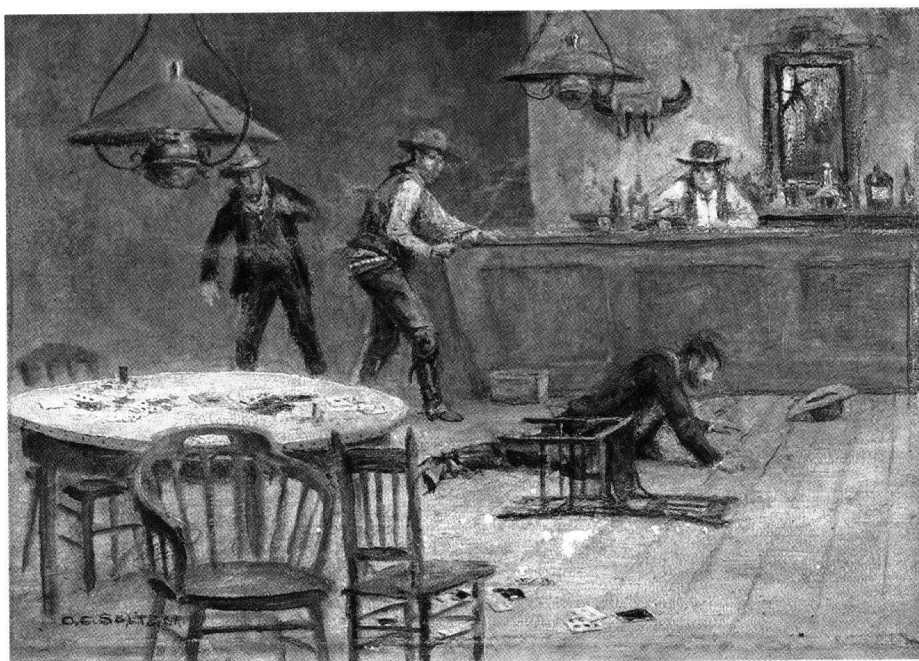


O. C. Seltzer, "Capt. Lewis at the Black Eagle Falls of the Missouri River-June 13, 1805," 4 by 6 inches, watercolor on paper.

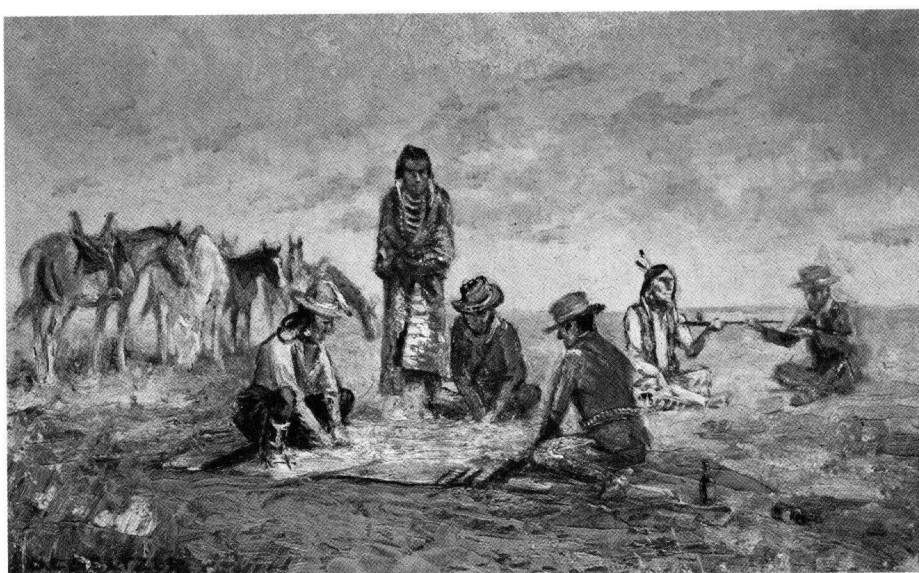
stabbing of Crazy Horse" and many others of equal drama and historic import — a monumental contribution to the graphic arts of the Old West.

"By the time this monumental series of historical miniatures was completed to Dr. Cole's satisfaction, Olaf Seltzer was wearing thick eyeglasses. He had severely strained his eyes painting the miniatures, and in his later years he could paint for only short periods of time during the morning hours. His limitations caused him to grow increasingly nervous.

"Was the effort worth it? It is likely that if he had never painted another picture, he would be remembered for these gems of western history. So sharp and clear are the minute brushstrokes that the little paintings can be enlarged to three times their actual size and still show sharp detail. So rich and glowing are their colors that they are frequently compared to jewels; light seems to reflect in myriad fashion from their depth . . . These miniatures comprise a documentary in oil of episodes that otherwise would become increasingly difficult to recall. They are indeed the crown jewels of Olaf Seltzer's career," Mildred D. Ladner, *O.C. Seltzer, Painter of the Old West*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1979. ▽



O. C. Seltzer, "Kid Curry Killing Pike Landusky in Jew Jake's Saloon, Landusky, Montana," 3-3/4 by 5-1/4 inches, oil on board



O. C. Seltzer, "The Parley," 4-1/4 by 6-1/4 inches, oil on board

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FRONT COVER:

"An Indian Dream," 40 by 27 1/2 inches, oil on canvas, Frederic Remington

BACK COVER:

"The Times of Change," 9 by 12 inches, oil, G. Harvey

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