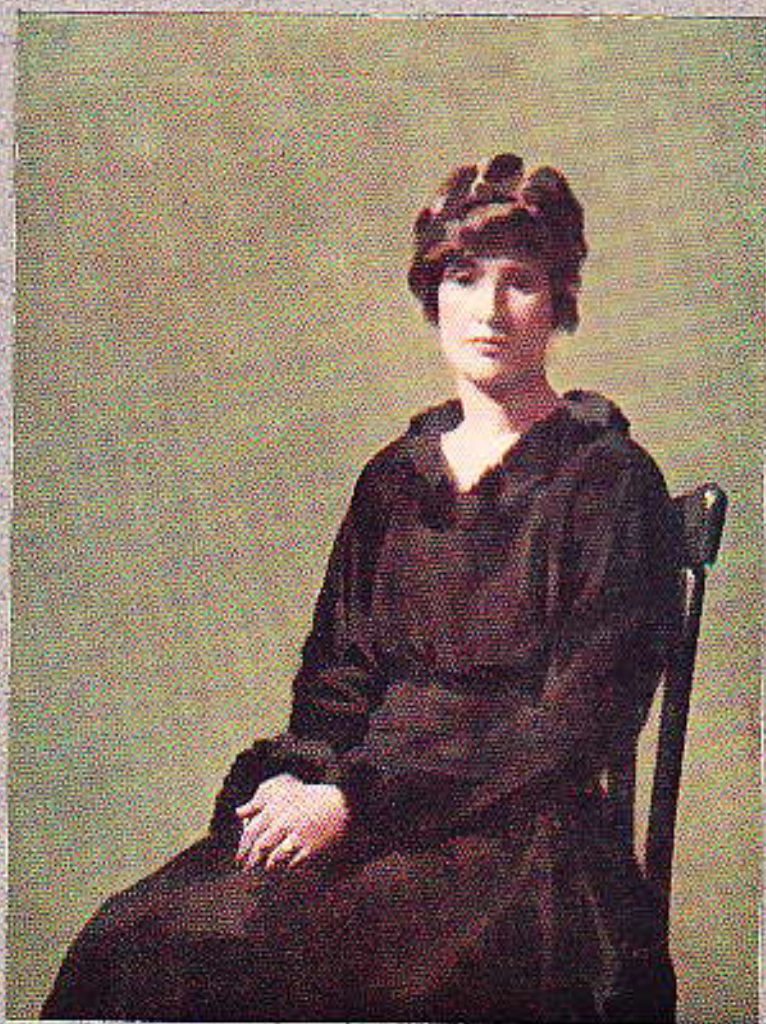


THE PAINTINGS.
OF A. E. NEWBURY.



THE PAINTINGS OF
A. E. NEWBURY



Portrait

*In the possession of
Alexander McCubbin, Esq.*

THE PAINTINGS OF A. E. NEWBURY

PLATES IN HALF-
TONE AND COLOUR.
BIOGRAPHY BY
CARL HAMPEL



PUBLISHED BY ALEXANDER McCUBBIN
152 ELIZABETH STREET, MELBOURNE

*This Edition is Limited
to Five Hundred Copies.*

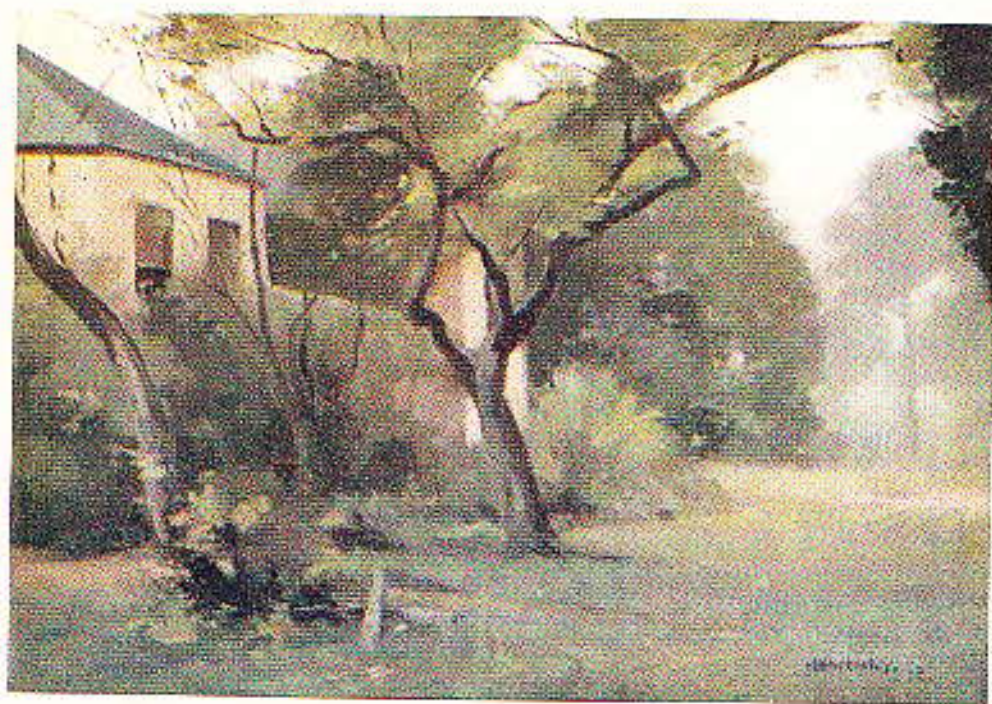
DURING the past few years the appreciation of Art has advanced very considerably in Australia, and consistent with its advance the quality of production has been steadily gathering in volume. until now we are on the verge of seeing the birth of a truly National School of Australian Art. That its birth should occur now is not to be wondered at. Every phase of the art of the old world has been seen within our shores. All creeds receive a hearing, and to the home-staying artist this expounding of creeds is decidedly beneficial. It confirms his mind.

Running against the theories of modernism is the achievement of the past and our National Galleries possess such examples as will make one of an enquiring mind wonder what the trend of our school will be. It is my confident opinion that this young school is moving in the direction of the nature that dominated the work of such men as Wilson, Turner, Corot, Raeburn and Velasquez. If the base of their achievements of light and tone is on the science of the past rather than on the idiosyncrasies of the present, my hopes are about to be realised, the hour of the birth of our national school is at hand. This school of young spirits contains many deep thinkers and fine workers

in all states; of their number there is an outstanding light in the person of Mr. A. E. Newbury, whose advance in the last few years has been very steady until now he is in the front rank of Australian painters.

Mr. Newbury spent his childhood and youth at Geelong, and, at eighteen entered the National Gallery at Melbourne as a student, there to study under the late Frederic McCubbin and Bernard Hall. While in that institution he won a number of prizes, and though he competed for the travelling scholarship, like Mr. McInnes, he just lost it. It was a decided gain to him as it threw him entirely on his own resources. Though he was fairly successful, he was entirely dissatisfied with his work, and in 1916 came under the influence of Max Meldrum, who was the means of moulding the Newbury that we know to-day.

In 1917, Newbury, with Richard McCann, decided upon exhibiting their work produced under the new influence. Artistically, it was most exhilarating and successful; financially, not very encouraging. The lot of the pioneer is hard always, and these pioneers of the new movement of painting nature as it is seen and not under any preconceived glamor, reaped very little praise. True value in painting was never demonstrated by young Australians until



The Old Garden

*In the possession of
Sir Harry Allen*

the advent of these forerunners, and judging by the prices now realised for works exhibited at that little show, the art-buying public acknowledge themselves justly repentant for their reticence in discerning strong talent.

Newbury works around Eltham, among the picturesque cottages and white gums. There is hardly a painter in Australia more sympathetic to the form of gum trees than he. He understands their very growth and reveals them in all their pristine beauty. In such pictures as his white gum and pine studies, one has the dignity and simplicity of the gum as well as the austerity of the pine contrasted so ably, that had Harpignies done the same thing he hardly would have imbued mere pigment with a more atmospheric quality, or revealed the poetry of the bush in any finer manner. It takes an open-eyed and clear-brained Australian to realise the beauty of our bush, and Newbury is the man.

Occasionally he worked at the home of the late Frederic McCubbin at South Yarra, and at that truly romantic locality produced some very fine records of the home and surroundings. Typical of these are "The Old Home," "Late Afternoon," and the superb work "The Old Garden," in the possession of Sir Harry Allan. Of this work, much might be written, but this



Spring Morning

*In the possession of
Henry Stead, Esq.*

color production of excellent quality speaks for the picture more eloquently than I can write; its placidity and beautiful atmospheric quality make it a thing apart.

Two years ago he worked round the environs of Macedon. There he realised very fine interpretations of that charming locality. He always enters into the spirit of the country, and one is conscious always there is no embellishment of any kind occurring to the detriment of his picture or to the defamation of nature. His work savors of truthfulness continually and, though his pictures are absolutely authentic records of existing fact, there is that romantic charm about them that raises them high above the mere statement of topographical truth to the realm of sincere, serious and beautiful art. He never strains his medium. He works simply, with due regard to the *ensemble* as a unified whole. Detail is swept away in his pursuit and revelation of visual fact. The appeal of his intellect is to the *great* breadth of nature rather than the smallness of things which entrance the microscopist. Tone is the predominant feature of his work allied to beautiful form. I have never seen Newbury one little bit out of drawing in any of his tree forms and I've been fortunate enough to see



Strathmore Lake

*In the possession of
T. M. Burke, Esq.*

him begin and finish many pictures. His Macedon pictures have all the clarity and serenity of that rarified air. Tree forms can be distinguished botanically with the same readiness that one recognises the characteristic botanical forms represented in a good Japanese print; they are realised with that same economy of means, truly the hall mark of scientific art. Huge messmate, and white gum, play an important part in these pictures, and among some of the finer realised examples is "By the Lake," in the possession of Sir John Monash, a serene conception of high gums and wattles bathed in a beautiful golden afternoon light, beside the placid waters of a shadowed lake. Beside the same lake was painted "Strathmore Lake, Mt. Macedon," a broad simple study of basket willow and lightwood trees on the borders of a most liquid and translucent water—an achievement quite Corotese in many qualities and composition. It is a most truthful and poetic rendering of fact visible to any visitor to those parts.

Cloudscapes and dim distances have inspired him to many brilliant works; the finest of which undoubtedly is a dim silvery cloud chequered distance above which lazily moves a magnificent sky, cumulus cloud-studded. In these panoramic interpretations one is so unconscious of his mastery of technique that



An Old Gum

the picture springs to life and one veritably appears looking at a bit of nature itself. These works soar upward in pictorial art and have in them a naivete and breadth that characterises the beautiful Mousehold Heath of Cromer.

Great art is known by the artist's transcript being near the normal and external aspects of nature, and all must agree Newbury arrives very near to truth. Problem after problem receives consideration from his brush and, as each in turn is mastered he seeks something fresher and more formidable. The condition of his artistic growth is then very encouraging. His work has leapt onward in big successive jumps without any playing to the gallery. There is not the slightest suggestion of the trivial or commonly popular visible in his work. His aim is nobility and he conscientiously defines and records his visual impressions in a most direct and convincing manner, else, in such a work as "Spring Morning," one would not feel the enervating drowsiness of spring. The tone of this work is so excellent that the beholder becomes one in the picture; the air is so cool and limpid, yet withal, drowsy; the trees are taking their places so well behind the frame that one could walk past them out into the green sunny fields.



The Red Cape

This is a little masterpiece and was, in my opinion, one of the best pictures in his last exhibition. It reveals Newbury in the best of all his phases.

Newbury has no desire to thrill by any dramatic innovation or technical display; all, save nature, is far from his mind during the throes of production. Yet, notwithstanding his desire, to those who know and can see with unbiassed eyes, his pictures are as thrilling to them as they undoubtedly were to him when he was painting them. The transmission of that condition to the beholder is probably one of the finest functions of a landscapist. To make one feel its beauty is the lesson the landscape painter must achieve in educating his public in the love of the all-beautiful nature. Though the reproduced all-beautiful nature may not thrill, there is an emotion received from it that carries one to the view point of the artist immediately, if he has grasped his subject with sufficient accuracy. To further accentuate this line of thought, I intend quoting Corot, who said: "Beauty in art is truth bathed in the impression, the emotion that is received from nature. Seek truth and exactitude, but with the envelope of sentiment which you felt at first. If you have been sincere in your emotion you will be able to

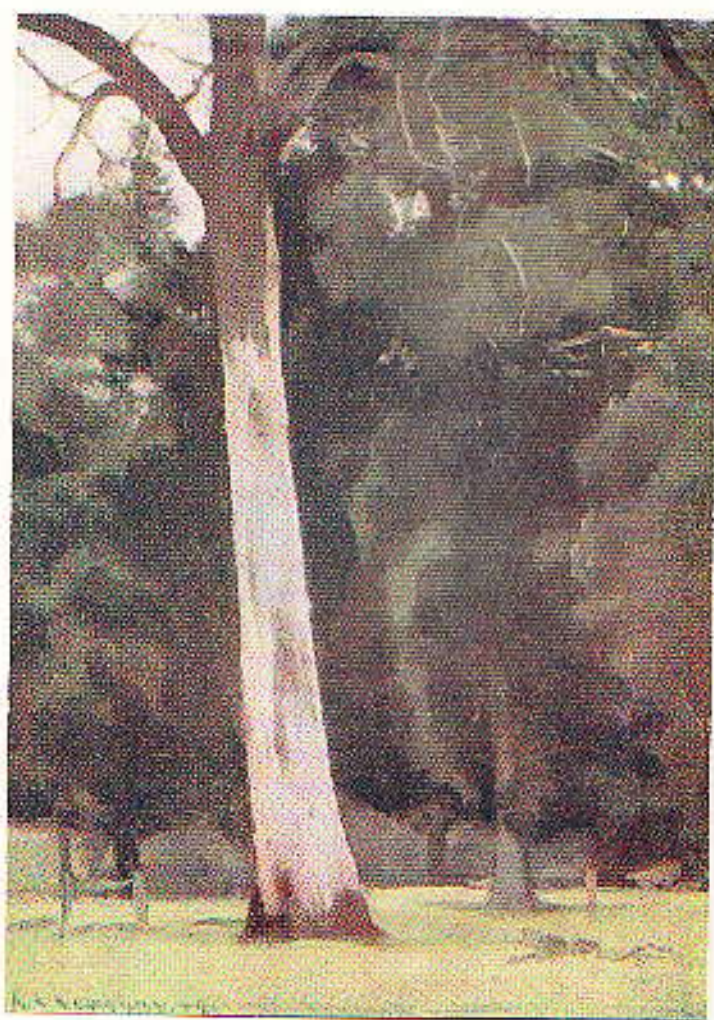


Morning Light

pass it on to others." Corot fully realised his aim. He was a sentimentalist, as is every artist. When the artist thoroughly loves his art and reveals it and nature with truthfulness his message is visible to all peoples.

In the color reproduction "White Gums and Pines," one sees all the qualities previously spoken of. His ambient air moves among the leaves and pine needles and under the shady trees. All feeling of paint is destroyed in its luscious open-airness. The qualities of open-air pervade all his works. He does no studio work at all in landscape. Newbury's landscape art consists of the undeviating intention of producing a picture of nature as it is seen and understood by any and every normal human being; that he has achieved so much in so short a period of sincere production is very remarkable. Seeing that his achievement is already sound and vigorous it augurs greater things for the future and for them we may be readily expectant. His work undoubtedly shall blossom in its maturity as a bright shining star in the annals of the National Australian School.

Australia is deficient in number in portrait painters, but of those practising that art there is an extraordinary genius in the person of Max Meldrum. Following him and practising



Pines and Gums

*In the possession of
Mrs. A. Handley*

with the same scientific formulæ are Harry Harrison, a man of sound and strong accomplishment, and Newbury, the subject of my article. Of him I can do no better than quote the late Mr. Carrington of the "Argus," who said: "His portraiture is skilful, very well observed and painted with unfaltering hand holding a brush that never loses its sway nor becomes a slave to color that cannot possibly realise the beauties of human flesh in all its purity as revealed under the influence of light and beneath the transparencies of shadow." The same scientific qualities permeating the work of Corot and Raeburn are visible in Newbury's portrait work; it is strong and full of that charm of happy realisation that brands it interesting at once. He never misses in a portrait. His work in all its phases is worthy of the closest attention.

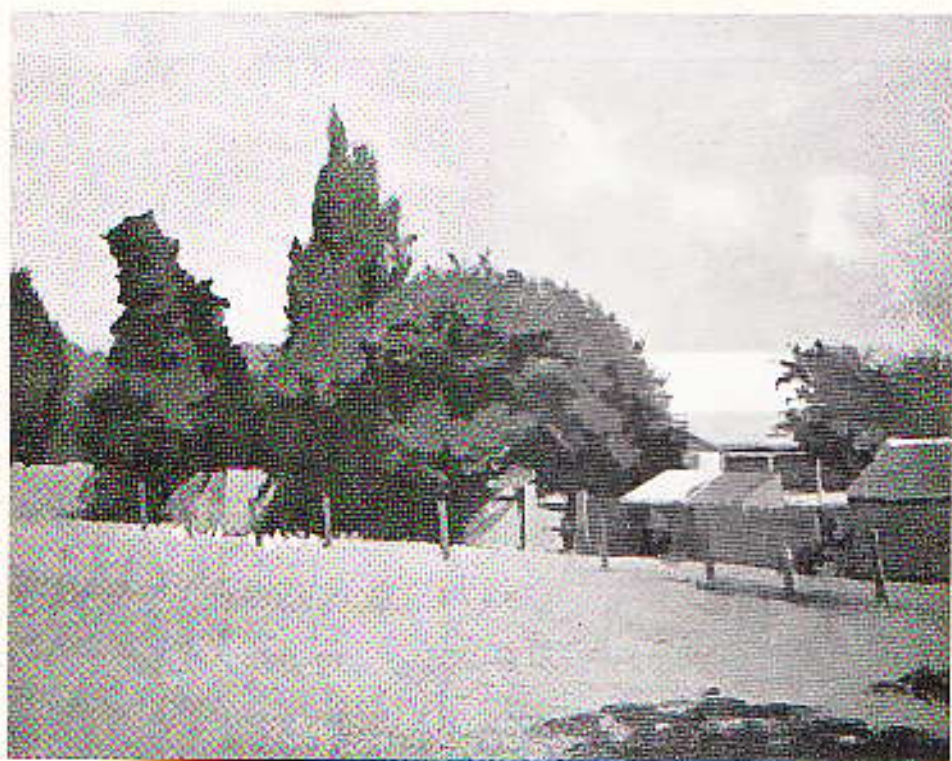


An Eltham Road

*In the possession of
B. D. Ratcliff, Esq.*

PLATE IX.

The L



The Little Cottage

*Wholly set up and printed in
Australia by Messrs. Taylor & Son,
10 Russell Place, Melbourne.*

*Three-color blocks by Messrs.
Paterson, Shugg & Co., Burns
Lane, Melbourne. Half-tones by
Messrs. Prebble & James, 193
Little Collins Street, Melbourne.*