

STORIES of New Jersey

depict scenery. His whole career was a quest for artistic expression of his sentiments of natural beauty.

Throughout his early years as an artist he was virtually supported by his brothers, who bought his paintings and resold them whenever they could. At 20 he married Delia Miller of Newark, who died shortly afterward. His marriage in 1850 to Elizabeth Hart was, fortunately, of much longer duration. In that year he was sent to Italy by Ogden Haggerty, a prosperous New York auctioneer who became interested in his work. He spent two years abroad studying the paintings of the Renaissance masters.

Inness went to Europe again in 1854, this time to Paris, where he came in contact with a group of French painters known as the Barbizon School. In painting scenes of the countryside around the village of Barbizon near the forest of Fontainebleau these Frenchmen, among whom were Millet, Rousseau, Daubigny and Corot, had caught the relationship between man and Nature that Inness had found lacking in the work of his countrymen. By their handling of color and light they achieved something far more moving than a merely literal picturization of a given scene. Although he learned much from the Barbizon School, Inness was by no means a servile imitator; he was rather like a brother who, alone in a far-off land, had struggled with the same problems and in whose work the family resemblance now became more visible.

On his return from France Inness' struggle for recognition began in earnest. When New York art circles refused to take notice of him the Boston art dealers, Williams and Everett, undertook the sale of his paintings. From 1859 to 1864 Inness lived in the small town of Medfield, outside Boston. Here he began to develop a definite style which bore the imprint of his own personality and the marks of his years of study and thought.

Although he has always been associated with the outdoors, Inness was what is called a "studio artist." He would spend days studying a particular scene and making drawings of it. Then he would return to his studio and create a composition from his own mind. His selections from the vast storehouse of his memory were extremely varied, but he had a special fondness for the rich colors that come with autumn and sunset. In most of his landscapes a barn, a town in the distance, a few animals or people suggest the relation between human life and Nature.

At Medfield he devoted himself to daily walks over the countryside, carefully studying the contours of trees and the composition of clouds and grass. In an old barn which served as his studio he painted many of the magnificent sunsets and elms of his first period. The famous canvas *Peace and Plenty*, now hanging in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, was conceived in these surroundings and remains one of the most characteristic works of this phase of his career.

In 1865 Inness gave this painting as part payment for a house in Eagleswood, now a suburb of Perth Amboy, to Marcus Spring, a prominent Abolitionist. During his three-year stay in Eagleswood he became the friend of William Page, a portrait painter, who introduced him to the works of Emanuel Swedenborg, the great religious teacher of the 18th century. The teachings of the extraordinary Scandinavian mystic appealed to Inness' deeply religious nature and his artistic convictions. It was at this time that he painted his most famous New Jersey picture, *Delaware Valley*, which is also in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.