

## STORIES of New Jersey

It was many years before he was able to live comfortably from the proceeds of his paintings. Aided by his understanding wife, he remained cheerful and generous throughout long periods of poverty. He was not, however, always the most practical of husbands. On one occasion, having sold a painting after many months of pinching and scraping, he went directly to a Boston jeweler and bought a diamond necklace for his wife. She thanked him tenderly, and the children were allowed to sit up late to celebrate. Shortly afterward Inness noticed that she was not wearing the necklace. When he asked where it was, she replied, "I have not got the necklace--you see, dear, I went to Boston the next day and the jeweler gave me the money you paid for it, and I put it in the bank."

In 1870 Inness went a third time to Europe at the suggestion of his agents, who felt that foreign subjects would sell better in the American market. For five years he wandered through France and Italy, living in Rome and Paris or in little towns, high up in the mountains, far from traveled roads. Italian pines and ancient olive groves, the coast of Cornwall and the sea at Etretat provided excellent material for his brush.

This period represents the transition from the style of his youth to the mature works of his old age. As the artist matured he began to emphasize the use of color as a means for the expression of feelings. The many fine paintings of this stage, such as *Barberini Pines* and *Evening at Medfield*, are sharply executed pictures of Nature which reveal a power of interpretation lacking in his earlier works.

Inness was by nature too passionate and restless a man to be content with the solid form of his transitional style. The development of his art moved steadily from the factual study of Nature to painting in waves of color more suited to the emotions he was seeking to portray. It was his conviction that the business of the artist is to paint what he feels, rather than what he sees. The realization of the vast possibilities for expression in color grew in Inness until it became the ruling passion of his art.

The third and final period in the art of George Inness coincides with his life in Montclair. During the last 16 years of his life from 1878 to 1894 the old house on Grove Street in Montclair witnessed the full bloom of his art. With the passing of each year his landscapes became more and more a medium for expressing the spiritual meaning of Nature and its relation to human life and emotion.

Sustained by his indomitable energy he painted many of his greatest canvases in the last few years of his life. His *Spirit of Autumn*, which was sold in 1922 to a private collector for \$60,000, the highest price ever paid for an American landscape; the famous *Moon over Passamaquoddy Bay*, now in the Ryerson Collection of the Chicago Art Institute, the *Wood Gatherers* in the Hearn Collection of the Metropolitan Museum, the beautiful *Florida Pines* and *Georgia Pines* were all done in his last years from 1887 to 1894. Most of the 21 paintings in the George Inness Room of the Chicago Art Institute, the most important collection of Innesses in the country, which was presented to the Institute by Edward B. Butler of Chicago, belong to this last period. In Montclair itself, where he found so much inspiration, six of his paintings now hang in the art museum.