

CONTEMPORARY FRENCH POSTER ARTISTS

II. A. M. CASSANDRE

IN a recent number of this periodical I treated the work of Charles Loupot. To-day I shall consider a poster artist whose style is diametrically opposed to that of Loupot—A. M. Cassandre. The one is gentle and sensitive, the other just as robust and plain, a spiritual difference that is further emphasized in their work by a complete difference of technique.

Loupot's training as a lithographer enables him to transfer his designs to the stone himself. With lithographic devices to aid him, he can reproduce the most delicate of nuances, so that atmosphere plays a leading part in his posters.

The reverse is true of Cassandre's work, which is entirely constructivistic. His style is not lithographic but purely decorative, in fact, in his opinion lithography leads to unnecessary complications by the very opportunities it offers for fine shades of difference. Hence his preference for broad surfaces in simple colours, by which Cassandre is enabled to harmonize his posters with the architectural forms of the city street, which has become his particular field of activity. Simple lines and curves, and pure geometrical figures. Cassandre believes that the "painter" must be seen as little as possible in the poster artist. He claims there is never time for the passer-by to be impressed by details, nuances, or other fine points. A hasty sketch, he thinks, as long as it expresses the essential point, can be of more value than a painting, and he would also add, that the principle at the bottom of poster art is, after all, the achievement of the strict

simplicity in the chalk drawing on the blackboard. For are not the people on the street like so many school-children, with a like demand for an appeal that is direct?

Among the illustrations to this article there is one very remarkable poster, that thoroughly illustrates this theory of the blackboard. It was designed by Cassandre for the "Grand Sport" cap. Thus we might trace the artist's principles in our illustrations, and we should find that the desire for simplification and schematic construction has become the basis of his work.

This may suffice as an outline of the elements of Cassandre's technique. The course of his development as a poster artist may also be shortly surveyed. — Like so many other French poster artists, Cassandre was at first an architect, until the idea came to him to introduce the principles of the builder into a branch of art which appeared at that time to be narrowed down to one type

in France: the "genre Capiello". His early work is, to be sure, not altogether free. The poster he designed for "The Garres Noodle Company" is still a compromise, with the idea and the action of most importance in the design. In the next example shown here, however, the poster for the Aero Club Bourgogne, Cassandre has come into his own: form as such is his greatest consideration here.

But the artist was not yet satisfied. He desired to achieve a stronger, more vigorous effect. Paris awoke one day to see those wonderful hoardings for Bûcheron, of which one example is re-



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