

EN BELGIQUE
LES BELGES ONT FAIM



1915

Théophile Alexandre Steinlen

Posters

ance. It was compelling inner necessity, his feeling of solidarity with the masses of the people, his depth of understanding for them, which drove Steinlen to his outdoor studies and made him one of the first protagonists, an immortal supporter of the "Art of the Hoardings". He has proved, as scarcely any other before or since, that in order to appeal to the soul of the people, one must invent human, picturesque, poetic possibilities of expression for this previously despised branch of art. Therefore it is only the great poster artist who shall be represented in the illustrations accompanying this paper. His supremely excellent work in this sphere will live to testify to his powers when all other manifestations of his art are long forgotten.

Time did not favor Steinlen's development as poster-artist. The new form of art ebbed away again as rapidly as it had appeared—it turned its back on France and wandered towards Germany. The year 1900 might be regarded as marking the close of Steinlen's poster work and poster art was dead in France from this day on. Steinlen was forced to turn his attention to other fields. His efforts in oil, dating from this time, were only known to a limited circle, but he also cultivated decorative painting, of which there is an excellent example in the mural decorations of the "Café de Paris", as well as innumerable small black-and-white designs. Yet—in all this work one misses the élan, the convincing energy, the devotion that characterised the younger Steinlen; a certain weary resignation imbues this work of the master who had once sunned himself in the glory of popular favor. had bared his inmost soul and given unrestrained expression to his feelings—his time is past. His little house on the Montmartre fell to the house-breaker's pick, he took over a perfectly commonplace studio in the Rue Coulaincourt and lived there till his death, and of all his cronies who had helped to focus the eyes of the world upon Paris of the '80s, there was scarcely one left. Fashion and the mob had turned to serve new



1900