

The Quiet World

EDWARD WALES ROOT

Edward Wales Root lived in a quiet world. It was a world whose scenery was composed of nature and art; a world of lily-shaped elms, bluejays seen startlingly bright against a brown landscape, iris hybridized to perfection of color and shape, and of paintings—American paintings—which were lyrical in feeling and whose emotion had been recollected in tranquillity.

As a son of Elihu Root, Edward Wales Root had been born into a quite different world of tense political and economic drama and of international excitement. Already a successful corporation lawyer when Edward was born in 1884, Elihu Root served subsequently as Secretary of War under McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt and as Roosevelt's Secretary of State. An urbane man, with an inquiring mind and an epigrammatic humor, he was the most admired member of the Cabinet and an influential in-

ternationalist. Edward Root recalled that when he was a child the house in Washington, D.C., was frequently "cleared like the decks of a battle-ship" for grand social functions. There were elaborate social occasions, too, during summer vacations in Southampton and in Clinton, New York, and meetings with powerful political figures on trips to Europe, Cuba and Labrador.

But out of necessity, Edward Root chose another way of life. He was left a prisoner of almost total deafness from an undiagnosed mastoiditis at the age of three. Perhaps because she was ridden by some unconscious feeling of guilt, his mother schooled him never to allude to or explain his affliction. He was not permitted to betray it by using the rudimentary hearing aids of the time. He was instructed to force himself to lead an outwardly normal life. None of the childhood playmates, whose voices he never heard, knew he was deaf. Even in college, only the most observant could read a betrayal of his condition in the wistfulness of his smile and the alertness of his eyes. At social gatherings he would lurk quietly in the background until he saw someone about to pose a question. Then he plunged desperately into an uninterruptable monologue to avoid being thought rude for not answering a query he knew he would not hear. When a pretty young girl performed on a guitar, he kept his eyes on one of her feet, following the rhythm as she tapped it out with her pink satin slipper.

The deafness and the discipline accustomed him to self-reliance, intense concentration and the habit of reflection. He read greedily and thoroughly. As a substitute for oral communication, he took to jotting down every musing and idea. Most of all, he trained his eyes. They became his salvation and his bridge to the world. At once imaginative and methodical, he used them both to see and to observe.

When he looked at art, he really looked. His well-trained eyes could discriminate and recognize quality in the very new and still strange. He came upon American art at the beginning of this cen-

tury at a fascinating and transitional moment in its history. Offering a release from deafness, the pursuit of art became the core of his life. He watched American painting move through changes as rapid and strategic in their way as were the developments in the international and social arena in which his father was engaged. When Elihu Root died in 1937 he was a respected, conservative elder statesman. But Edward Root moved forward with each chapter of his time, his enthusiasms as fresh and revolutionary in 1956 as they had been in 1907. He trusted his eyes so completely that neither preconceived notions nor prejudice nor fashion could obstruct their direct vision. His taste was formed by his concern with quintessences rather than extravaganzas and by his profound affinity to nature. His background and his experiences directed him, unlike most other collectors of modern art, to American paintings. He looked in American art for that which would satisfy his particular taste and sensitivities—and he found it.

By 1920—at its exact mid-point—his life came into focus. In his quiet world, philosophy and way of life, nature and art were inseparably intertwined.

Even before his death on December 5, 1956, at the age of seventy-two, Edward Root still had a boyish aspect. He was a tall, long-limbed man who walked softly from the long habit of not disturbing birds and butterflies whose private busyness he liked to observe. He usually wore a bow tie and casually comfortable blue-gray tweeds whose sleeves, like those on a fast-growing child, were, rather endearingly, an inch too short. The schoolboy impression was reinforced by his pink cheeks and by the way his short hair seemed to fit snugly on his head like a skullcap, but most of all by the look of absolute candor in his large blue eyes and the motility of his face, which transparently betrayed every mood. Except for the whiteness of his hair, he looked, in fact, remarkably as he had in 1905 when, at twenty-one, he graduated from Ham-

ilton College in Clinton, New York, a well-educated, well-bred, attractive young Phi Beta Kappa.

Upon graduation, he had to choose a career. His handicap forced the choice. The strain of putting on a hollow act of laughing and smiling at strangers' inaudible conversations was becoming heavy. He chafed under the burden he felt he was imposing on friends, to whom "one passes as a sort of telephone conversee to be rung up with a shout every now and then when the conversation lags." He decided to become a ranch hand in South Texas, where talk would be less a part of life than action and where the few laconic comments of the cowboys, bellowed in the open air, would be audible even to his dull ears.

In Texas he clung to the quaint habit of brushing his teeth, but he managed the hard life well, rejoiced in the loud words of the riders and contemplated staying on after the year's trial. On a visit East, he changed his mind. The snatches of conversations he could hear there were more rewarding than all the audible shouting on the range. Charles Dana, the publisher of the *New York Sun*, told him, "You can live more in a day in New York than a lifetime in Texas." Edward Root agreed. He accepted a proffered job on the *Sun*. But he kept his silver spurs, lasso and chaps. The battered cowboy hat he habitually wore around Clinton made him a hero for generations of small boys, whom he never disenchanted from the conviction that the two moth holes in the crown had been caused by Indian arrows.

In the little cubicle which was the editorial office of the *New York Sun* in 1907, Edward Root had a jolting surprise. It had never occurred to him that when fiery Irishmen argued they would raise their voices to a pitch higher than that of the cowhands in the wide-open spaces. But when the art critic Frederick James Gregg and the editorial writer Charles Fitzgerald got going on the subject of modern art, Edward Root could hear every word.

Fitzgerald had seen the "Wild Beasts" in Paris, but the modern art that inflamed their discussions was by a number of former

American newspaper illustrators who, under the influence of an artist called Robert Henri, were learning that realism had a grand tradition in Hals, Goya, Daumier and Manet. These painters were vigorously depicting the back streets and slum life of New York and so antagonizing the polite art audience and the gentlemen-artists of the National Academy that they earned themselves the name of "The Ash Can School." Henri, George Luks, William Glackens, John Sloan, Everett Shinn, along with Maurice Prendergast and Ernest Lawson, and later George Bellows, made up the group which was also known, less colorfully, as "The Eight."

After hours, the impassioned polemics would continue in Mouquin's, that proto-café society restaurant where, a few years later, John Quinn would join the group. Mustached gentlemen and elegant ladies, whose elaborate hats were skewered into their high coiffures, sat on a banquette that ran around the room under a continuous band of mirrors. At a round table in the center, the artists, newspapermen, critics and writers had established squatters' rights. Besides the two charming, redoubtable Irishmen, Gregg and Fitzgerald, there might be the critic James Hueneker; the novelist Booth Tarkington; the sculptor Jo Davidson and other artists who were finding exhibition space in the West Eighth Street Studio of that far-sighted patron, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney. Among the regulars were Lawson, taciturn, with a face like Shakespeare's; and, exuberantly drunk, George Luks, whom Richard Harding Davis called "the best two-fisted bar-scrapper in the world."

All this vehemence astonished Edward Root. Matters of culture and literature had been discussed in his home with traditional Anglo-Saxon restraint. Now he had entered a world where grown men were "arguing, going like hammer and tongs," as he recalled it, "about contemporary art as if it were a vital part of life—as if it were something you got mad about like politics and finance and law."

If the excited verbal engagements shocked him into an aware-

ness of the vitality of art, the experience of seeing how the artists lived shocked him into action. When Gregg told him Lawson was "hard-up," Root withdrew his \$250 savings and went to see Lawson's work. He envisaged artists' studios as high-ceilinged rooms in which beautiful nude models lounged on Algerian carpets and white bear rugs. He found Lawson's paintings, unmounted and unframed, leaning against a kitchen table in a sordid little tenement trap. Walt Kuhn, before the days of the John Quinn bonanza, was sitting there with his legs up, drawing for the old *Life* magazine pre-Disney insects wearing large shoes and carrying umbrellas. "One of Lawson's paintings moved me a little," Edward Root said, "and I bought it."

It was the first step toward becoming a collector of contemporary American art, a rare field in which to specialize. What little market American art has ever had has been local rather than international. Even in 1899 it was noted that, lacking a fashionable world market, "big names" and social prestige, American art had no appeal for the majority of collectors who wished to be in vogue or were buying for investment or immortality. In the past, there had been the lone pioneer collector, Luman Reed, who died in 1836. Among Edward Root's few closer predecessors, there were two eccentric and entertaining nineteenth-century gentlemen, Thomas B. Clarke and John Gellatly.

Thomas B. Clarke was an elegant man, with precise features and hair as white-gold as the head of the cane he carried in later years. Aline Bernstein, the actor's daughter who was to become famous for her theatrical designs, lived next door to Clarke's lace-curtained house on East Thirty-seventh Street when she was a young girl, and knew him well. His life "was caught in two passions," she recalled, "first and foremost a love of art, second the pursuit of pleasure. He rode that passion like a handsome yacht riding a blue and wavy sea; that passion was not only for the ladies, but for food and wine, flowers and rides to the country, and wonderful parties at Claremont or Delmonico's."

The son of a schoolteacher, Clarke began collecting in 1865, when he was fourteen. Wandering around Chinatown, he found his attention snagged by a black jar with white hawthorn blossom decoration which he saw gleaming among a window-full of junk. "Too dear for boy, seven dollar, cheaper ones, here, twenty-five cent, thirty cent, seventy cent," the Chinese storekeeper told him. He pulled back a soiled curtain and revealed shelf upon shelf of porcelains in lovely shapes and unfamiliar, glowing colors. The fourteen-year-old boy bore home a peachblow vase for eighty-five cents, left a gold cuff button as deposit on the black hawthorn jar and bought it ultimately out of payments from his fifty-cents-a-week allowance. Clarke's porcelain collection eventually became fabulous and famous. As fortunes piled up in the expanding economy of the eighties and nineties, and the millionaires began desiring elegant trappings for their plush new surroundings, Thomas B. Clarke sold to them. He became Morgan's adviser on porcelains and catalogued the banker's collection.

Soon after he fell under the spell of porcelains, Clarke spent a hundred dollars for a meticulously rendered "Brook Trout." But his first serious love affair with an important American painting occurred in 1869, when he bought a landscape called "Grey Lowering Day" by George Inness. Clarke kept on buying in the seventies the work of the painters then known as "The Younger Men," men like Inness and Winslow Homer. He became their friend as well as their patron. A gregarious man who cut a fine figure, he used his social position to influence his friends to buy paintings, too, and he promoted American art in the Century and Union League Clubs. When his American paintings were exhibited at the end of 1883, it was the first show of its kind ever to be held anywhere.

As Aline Bernstein remarks, "Once he started to collect, it was like a disease that had to run its course." One by one he built up collections, tired of them and auctioned them off, his passion fixing not only on paintings and porcelains but also on English

furniture, Greek vases, brass jars, Syrian glass and Italian faïence.

He tired of the American paintings in 1899. The Clarke sale made headlines, and its total of \$235,000 astounded the press. Many records were broken: Inness' "Grey Lowering Day," for which Clarke had paid less than \$3,000, went for \$10,150; Winslow Homer's "Eight Bells" brought an unprecedented \$4,500. One by one, Clarke built up and sold his other collections. He spent the last years before his death, which occurred in 1931 when he was eighty-eight, building a brand-new one of American portraits from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.

John Gellatly, ten years Clarke's junior, also died in 1931, a month before Clarke. Thin, hollow-cheeked, with dark, liquid eyes and a tidily trimmed mustache, he was a dapper man with a supercilious sneer. Born in New York in 1853, he was orphaned early and brought up by an uncle in the drug business. Gellatly worked for a while in the London branch of the firm, but shortly after his first marriage in 1883 he left the concern and went vaguely into real estate and insurance. It is said that his fortune began with the sale of the old Holland House, which was willed to him by his first wife on her early death.

He began spending that fortune on art and *objets d'art*, of which he ultimately acquired over 1,600 items. Strange, brooding, somewhat mystical, he was particularly attracted to the inscrutable beauty of glass and jewels (he owned the 475-carat emerald cup of a seventeenth-century Mogul emperor of Delhi) and to the poetically mysterious paintings of Albert Ryder. He owned seventeen of these, along with work by a variety of other artists including Dewing and Thayer. (It was he, in fact, who bought Thayer's "Virgin Enthroned," which had moved Mr. Freer to such pious thoughts.)

His vast collection—of which the paintings number 142—was valued in 1929 at \$5,000,000. He decided to leave it to the United States Government. No Smithsonian Regents came to look this gift horse in the mouth, as they had when Mr. Freer made his offer

of art twenty-five years before. The Senate and the House simply passed resolutions and on May 19, 1929, accepted, to come to the Smithsonian after his death, the entire Gellatly collection.

Barely four months later, Gellatly, aged seventy-six, married a woman forty-three years younger than he, a granddaughter of a senator from Georgia, whose stage name was Charlyne Courtland. The lady was somewhat bitter when she discovered *after* the ceremony that the United States Government rather than her pretty self had dower rights to the \$5,000,000 collection and that her spouse had left for himself only an annuity that paid scarcely more than \$3,000 a year. She was so bitter that she soon moved to a separate apartment, hounded her husband in the courts for \$450 monthly support payments and, after his death from pneumonia in 1931, appealed unsuccessfully to Congress to reject the collection. Her scorn was mighty. She told the press that Gellatly had given the collection to the government, and thereby impoverished himself, in order "to pose as a philanthropist."

Ironically, Gellatly's philanthropy is little known. His *objets d'art* and his paintings are barely noticed in the vast accumulation of the Smithsonian Institution.

Both Clarke and Gellatly stopped short of the new generation of American painters that Edward Root saw confounding the art world at the turn of the century—the realists who seemed very brash and outrageously impudent, and such of the American impressionists as Maurice Prendergast. These were the young men who instigated the Armory Show of 1913, but it boomeranged for them because the much-publicized French copped most of the sales. Edward Root was one of the few who "bought American" there. He was tempted by the French "Wild Beasts" and the cubists, but he settled on a landscape with figures by Maurice Prendergast.

He was motivated both intuitively and consciously. Like his father, he had strong pride in his American heritage: his ancestors were among the first to venture from England in the seventeenth

century and to push westward with America's frontier, until, their restless urge over in the mid-nineteenth century, they settled in upstate New York. But he also felt protective and grateful to the struggling American artists who had released him into the visual world and to men like Luks who had introduced him to a boisterous Bohemia so unlike the polished world in which he grew up.

Yet these were uneasy, floundering years for Root. He quit the *Sun*. By day, he studied painting with Luks. He continued painting later both as a hobby and as an exercise in analyzing form and color. At the end of his life, he delighted his doctor with a series of *collages*, which he called "pill-ages" because they were composed of bright, multihued barbiturate and miracle-drug capsules. By night, in these early restless years, he wrote sophomoric editorials for *Harper's Weekly* and struggled futilely at a novel. He regularly bought paintings from the artists in their studios, American Chippendale furniture ("my wooden chattels") from auction rooms and methodically built and read a thorough library of literature and history. So assiduous and diverse was his application that when Elihu Root was sent secretly by President Wilson in 1917 to see Kerensky in a last peace hope, it was Edward Root who briefed his father on Russia. Despite Luks' ebullient friendship, Edward Root's life grew increasingly inward and solitary. Directionless, lonely, and taut with the strain of deafness, he had a physical breakdown in 1916 that landed him in a rest home on the Hudson.

In this improbable setting, he met his future bride. Grace Cogswell of Albany, New York, had come to the haven to escape a difficult stepmother situation. She had the kind of square, strong-featured, thoughtful face that you come across above a white ruff in Dutch seventeenth-century portraits. He admired her prowess at baseball; teased her about her deep Puritanism; sympathized with her love of nature; responded to her forthright intelligence; and was attracted at the way she turned a perceptive phrase as a

more flighty young woman would flash a pretty ankle. He wooed her gallantly and timidly. They were married late in 1917 and spent the war and postwar years in Washington, where Root worked for the Red Cross.

She was a most excellent consort. She accepted his deafness tacitly. She managed adroitly to counteract his childhood shame about using a hearing instrument. Unobtrusively she maneuvered conveniences: a chair strategically placed; a dinner party arranged according to the decibels of voices; brilliant overhead lights to facilitate lip reading. As deftly and subtly, she managed the last five years when angina pectoris was a threatening reality. They both pretended to believe whatever flimsy pretexts she invented when she transplanted close to the house the sweet wild daphne and white trillium from a part of the forest he could no longer explore. Once when their friend Alexander Woolcott told Edward Root that Grace should be given an honorary degree of Master of Arts, Edward Root countered by saying, "Yes, Master of the Wily Arts." Their constant intimacy was protected by an almost Victorian respect for each other's privacy.

Entranced by her gentle, unassuming husband until the day he died, Grace Root became his secret Boswell. Late at night she surreptitiously filled notebooks with such of his trenchant or amusing comments as, "You fight with only a wooden sword on matters of taste," or, "Dimming your lights when you drive at night is like throwing kisses: sometimes the gesture is returned, sometimes not." She noted such of his pastimes as "spouting Swinburne in the shower" and keeping a tally on whether he passed more blue-haired women or more men wearing hearing instruments on a given stretch of Madison Avenue.

Edward Root found himself in 1920. Distressed for a long time by the spectacle of people "diseased by dutifulness," he had been searching for the courage to live simply in order to enjoy and understand living. By accepting a job as teacher of art appreciation at Hamilton College he could do so.

He could also move into the family homestead and bask in family tradition. His grandfather Oren Root had begun teaching mathematics at Hamilton College in 1849. He had built a serene Greek Revival house and planted rolling acres of the Mohawk Valley with elms, spruces and a rich tangle of myrtle and exotic seedlings gathered from his botanist friends. Edward Root had loved the Mohawk Valley from the summer days in his childhood when he diligently collected caterpillars and watched them turn into butterflies. It was a landscape, he wrote later, "to arouse indeterminate desires and bestow sensuous delights—a proper nursery for the poet, the artist and the man of thought." In this nursery, he could be all three. He could also devote himself to the rare kind of collecting that became his way of life.

Collecting was part of the Root heritage. Grandfather Oren, as his son Elihu had written, "collected" not only trees, but also "black sumatra game chickens, peacocks, plants and geological specimens. I have seen him fondle a beautiful geological specimen, patting and gazing at it as a mother would a baby."

Elihu Root liked collecting trees, too, and both he and his son Edward put themselves to sleep at night recounting the Latin names of the more than fifty varieties they planted on the Hamilton campus. Elihu also inherited his father's attachment to geological specimens. Fortunately, his law practice was more lucrative than his father's academic career had been, for the geological specimens *he* liked were emeralds and rubies. He would carry a few around in the pockets of his well-cut suits and fondle them in a similarly maternal way.

Edward Root's collecting had less to do with fondling and caressing. He had very little pride in possession. He was always, even in his personal relationships, the observer. He collected things in order to observe them intimately, study them, analyze them, understand them and by this profound appreciation and love come closer to the excellence of life. They were instruments of faith.

Paintings were only one of the things he collected. They were infinitely more precious, but not really different from many other creations that, by the beauty of their form, "called your attention," as he once said, "to the world in which you live." Thus, iridescent butterflies; ladybugs and less gay, more martial-looking beetles; sea shells; trees; vintage wines; daffodils and lordly iris seemed to him also witnesses to the possible perfection of life.

His Odyssey was personal. So was his choice of paintings. Time and again his unclouded eyes led him to painters whose work would later be fashionably approved. The list of his discoveries and early recognitions is long. He "discovered" in 1929 the early (1916-1917) watercolors that Charles Burchfield had discouragely put aside. He saw the originality and power of these anthropomorphic landscapes, where houses have leering faces, the wind is a ghostly phantom and trees reach up with menacing claws. Not only did he buy many of them, but he persuaded the dealer Frank Rehn to promote them. As a result, Burchfield was able to quit his frustrating job designing wallpaper and devote himself to painting. In 1944, Root was among the first to respond to the new American abstract art. He was the first in the East to buy the canvases over which Mark Tobey spread the magic of his "white-writing"; the first to purchase Theodore Stamos' imaginative visual metaphors of nature; one of the first to approve Bradley Walker Tomlin's poetic tick-tack-toe-like patterns.

Although he championed diverse styles, his taste was consistent. He was a meticulous man. His study was filled with dozens of little file drawers, neatly labeled from "Tobacco" and "Matches" and "Hybridizing Tools" to "Fishing Flies" and "Photographs of Italian Renaissance Paintings." Astonishingly, each one contained exactly what it was supposed to. He liked a similar orderliness in paintings. The abstract paintings he bought were never the "messy" or "smudged" ones.

Always he responded to work that had a closeness to nature, whether in the concentrated close-up of a poppy by Charles De-

muth or in a canvas in which Rueben Tam set waves and winds battling in a color fugue. He did not care for expressionist painting; and the "social consciousness" canvases of the thirties, which ignited a collector like Joseph Hirshhorn, interested him not at all. The only inconsistent pictures in his collection are those he bought for teaching purposes, such as a tightly embroidered landscape by Lucioni. He hung this, with wry humor, in the guest room for such conservative visitors as his banker brother, who would consistently and innocently fall into his trap by telling him at breakfast how much they loved it.

Once he believed in a painter, he bought his work consistently over the years. The fascination of cultivating daffodils and hybridizing iris found its parallel in being involved with an artist's growth. With the flowers, he had control. Like the mother of a first baby, he kept painstakingly accurate records of each blossom's growth, measuring and recording height, width, foliage, date of opening. (At one point he named his various varieties after the faculty and recipients of honorary degrees at Hamilton, but the crossbreeding led to such embarrassing nomenclature that he reverted to the practice of baptizing them after favorite heroes and heroines of fiction.) He had no desire to control the artist's growth, but he had a deep need of paternal involvement with it. His own son's interests lay more in Elihu Root's directions: the navy and public affairs. Young artists like Theodore Stamos and Jimmy Ernst became other sons, who, in some subtle way, made him feel fulfilled. He stood by them even in lean creative years: trees in his orchards did not bear abundantly every season. But if he discovered he no longer "really saw" a painting, he would get rid of it. He always pruned deadwood.

"Teaching," he explained once, "is getting someone off balance emotionally. You have to shock them." He jolted stolid football captains out of visual stupor by making them look at snow through a prism. He would show them a Sung painting and then lead them out to look at the mists in the glen. He unfolded the

magic possibilities of color by twirling cards attached to the treadle of an old sewing machine. The calloused hands of farm boys were made to hold cubes, spheres and cones until they had a feeling for form. Beginning in the twenties—thirty years before the notion of visual education had even occurred to most institutions—Root was finding ways to open unseeing eyes.

He tried to be an evangelist who "could bring emotion to a point where intuition began to work." Then he would leave his students and move to New York for a few months to haunt the galleries and to buy. (His mother's death in 1929 and his father's death in 1937 gave him a tidy income.) Grace Root never asked if he had bought a painting, but she could discern that he had by the restless way he kept looking at the door. When a painting arrived, he would prolong his anticipation as long as possible. Unlike Johnson, he would delay unpacking it until after his dinner. Then, fastening on it, he carried it around for several days, trying it in different lights. In New York, he spent most of his time with artists and citizens of the art world (he had removed his name from the Social Register, remarking that more of his friends were listed in the Manhattan telephone directory). Then he would return, with his new acquisitions, to Hamilton for the third semester. In "The Studio," a large, uncluttered room he built in 1922 and in the fireproof "pocket-gallery" in which he housed his collection from 1931 on, he tried to teach the young men "appreciation as a part of life."

When he first started teaching, Edward Root lugged with him everywhere a hearing instrument weighing seven and one-half pounds, "the weight," as he put it, "of an average baby." So extraordinary have been the technical advances in hearing instruments that by the time he died, he was wearing simply a light metal band that held a small white button behind one of his ears and carrying a small vacuum tube in his shirt pocket. "My hearing has gotten steadily worse," he remarked shortly before his death, "but I hear increasingly better." In 1932, the bone-con-

duction receiver was a revolutionary step; in 1940, Sonotone's first wearable vacuum-tube model was made available. Edward Root waited until his wife had gone to market and then he put on the new instrument. He met her at the door with an expression of transfixed wonder. "I've heard my first symphony," he said. He rushed over to a musical neighbor and begged him to explain the scales. He sat up most of the night working them out, with variations, on score paper. The neighbor was awakened early next morning by the sound of Edward Root quietly tapping out scales on the piano.

From that point on he tried to balance the visual world with the aural one. He added musical recordings to his list of collections. He went avidly to concerts. Grace Root's secret notebooks began to be spotted with such of her husband's offhand comments as, "Mozart is angelic and athletic," or, "I like Mendelssohn's overtures; he makes grand whoopee," or, "Brahms is autumnal, regretful and noisy." He found Heifetz had "like Ozymandias, a sneer of cold command," thought Mitropoulos in the lively passages "shook his shoulders like a dog coming out of the water" and decided that the conductor Cantelli "must have lived with his tailor at least a month to be able to present such a perfect back." As with painting and architecture, his interest in music embraced the present along with the past. Bartók was a special enthusiasm. He even took his wife to 301 West Fifty-seventh Street to see where Bartók was writing his third piano concerto just before he died.

In 1953, the Metropolitan Museum of Art broke a precedent. Edward Root was invited to show his collection there. It was the first time that the Metropolitan had exhibited a private collection of contemporary art. It was also a rare gesture on the part of an institution that for most of its life had been somewhat reluctant about American art. In 1906, the department-store king, George A. Hearn, had presented the Metropolitan with a \$100,000 fund (later doubled) whose income was to be used for the purchase of

American art. It was as if a rabid Puritan had been left a bequest to be used exclusively for the benefit of fallen women. In the twenties, Edward Root made one attempt to influence a Metropolitan purchase. He was presumably permitted to make this attempt because his grandfather, Salem Wales (editor of *Scientific American*), had been one of the Metropolitan's founders and his father and brother had served successively on its board. Root was very fond of Edward Hopper's detached, lonely, very American landscapes. He persuaded the Metropolitan purchasing committee to look at Hopper's "Blackwell's Island." "The average age of the purchasing committee was seventy-two," Root calculated, "and none of them liked anything more modern than the Barbizon School and certainly nothing American." The painting was rejected. The Metropolitan bought an American painting every now and then, but the income from the Hearn fund was accumulating in an embarrassing way and the ire of American artists was building up, too. Finally, in the late forties, the Metropolitan began a series of placating and finally encouraging gestures and purchases.

The Root collection had been invited not because of its size (at its largest, it numbered only about 220 paintings and 150 drawings) or its cost (Edward Root spent probably less than \$110,000 on art) or its comprehensiveness (many gifted, acknowledged Americans were absent), but because of its quality and its revelation of a sensitive, personal taste. It was also unique in its adventuresomeness. The only other collection of American art which could rival it in the early periods had ended with its owner's death in 1934. It had belonged to Ferdinand Howald, an Ohioan who graduated in the first class of the engineering department of Ohio State University. Howald made his money out of the coal mines of West Virginia, but he was somewhat more squeamish than the tycoons of an earlier day. His sensitive nature was so shocked by two mine explosions about 1914 in which seventy-one of his employees were killed that he sold his interests and de-

voted himself, primarily under the influence of the Daniel Gallery, to buying American art. His collection, a conscientious cross-section of conservative and advanced art, was divided between his niece and the Columbus Gallery of Art in 1931, three years before his death. Root's more personal collection uniquely spanned the whole period up to the avant-garde present of the fifties.

Root never intended to leave his collection to the Metropolitan. He had deep regional feelings. For a long time the art department at Phillips Andover Academy had shown sympathy with his aims and he had served on the board of its Addison Gallery of American Art. Some of his paintings were willed to it. But once the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute in nearby Utica, New York, hired an active director, Root transferred his allegiance there. He guided the museum's purchasing, made gifts and urged the choice of a distinguished modern architect for its new gallery. He left his few contemporary English paintings, by such men as Tunnard and Sutherland, whose feeling for nature he enjoyed, to his wife. The bulk of his collection went to Utica. "The Homestead," which Oren Root had built and in which Edward Root found his quiet world, will, under Grace Root's guidance, become an art center.

On May 26, 1957, a memorial concert for Edward Root was held at Hamilton College, in the chapel, which had been designed by Philip Hooker, an eighteenth-century American architect on whom Root had written a monograph. The Budapest Quartet appropriately played Beethoven's Quartet in A Minor, Opus 132, and the first movement of Bartók's Quartet No. 2, Opus 17. Shafts of sunlight played over a vase of flowering white dogwood, daffodils and a spray of orange azalea which stood on the altar. The cross was not in evidence. It had been removed by the artist friend who had arranged the flowers. He felt compelled to remove it, because that morning he had found a poem which Edward Root wrote shortly before his death:

When the loons were calling
 From the dark reflections of the hills
 In the quiet water,
 And the east turned to ashes,
 And the zenith to roses,
 And the stars came out one by one,
 I used to think :
 Was it so great a disaster
 That so many people no longer believed
 That the Universe was made by a little old man with a beard?
 (Not even Michelangelo could do the impossible.)
 And we who have an affinity
 For the beetles, the trees and the flowers,
 Who have no father to cry out to,
 No cozy little world with man at its centre;
 Let us contemplate the stars;
 And if we feel lonely
 Let us also feel proud:
 For the dignity of man is relative
 And to be even so small a part of so great a thing
 is greatness.