

A NOTE ON "IN THE SUN"

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There is a pearliness, a pale iridescence with shell pink accents at the vines and clover, lips and hands. In the sun in white against a white stone, she seems about to dissolve in light. She looks down at the white blossom, and we look down at her, as does the sun. She seems absorbed in the flower. She is a flower in which the artist is likewise absorbed—a flower of infinite value.

The light comes down from the sky. You can see it for yourself, a daily miracle. It is God's revelation to you today if you can receive it. He that hath eyes let him see. It was this "mystery of it all" that J. Alden Weir was after. Her dress, white to honor chastity, ample for modesty, a ribbon and a ring, ruffles around the shoulders, large, soft ringlets for femininity are some of the lovely characteristics that tell of his respect for this girl, for what she is. These feelings are genuine in Weir, though for us today they may be harder to appreciate. "Is she for real?" we ask. In both his life and his art Weir stood for quiet confidence in the world's fundamental orderliness, the value of work, respect for the great art of the past, Americanism, womanhood, the family, friendship, and especially the inspiration of nature.

Art's mainstream since Weir has been dramatic, emphatic, expressive, creative, liberating, and revealing, but has largely treated with disdain the ideals just listed for Weir. We hear a contemporary voice: "How can any sensitive artist feel at ease in a society which has at its base neither theology, nor craftsmanship, nor social ownership? Or, the larger society apart, how can anyone's ego develop without building up reservoirs of aggression and a basic hostility to authorities and traditions of all sorts?"¹ Alienation is the conclusion, based on apostate conditions, that Christianity is a fraud. Only through the restoration of the gospel shall a reconciliation of the arts to Christianity be truly justified.

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¹Lawrence W. Chisholm, *The Life and Letters of J. Alden Weir* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1960), introduction.