

HERBERT WARD'S GIFT TO THE SMITHSONIAN

BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

"MR. HERBERT," the central figure in Hopkinson Smith's "The Arm-Chair at the Inn," is really Herbert Ward, the sculptor.

There is in Paris no more interesting character than Herbert Ward. He began his work in art with drawing and attempts at water-color painting. At twenty-one years of age he turned up in Africa, having previously traveled in New Zealand, Australia, and Borneo. He remained in Central Africa for five years. He was there at the time of Stanley's arrival, and, knowing the country well, collected four hundred men and aided the explorer on his journey. A few years later Mr. Ward came back and established a studio in London. There he was hopelessly hampered by the stereotyped formalism then governing the Royal Academy. But in Paris a very different reception met his work in sculpture, on which he had now started; and the more sympathetic atmosphere induced Mr. Ward to settle in the French capital, where he has accomplished his life endeavor—the depicting of primitive African life.

No other modern sculptor has done anything of the kind that Mr. Ward has done, and no other modern sculptor—indeed, we can truthfully say, no sculptor of any previous age—has possessed his many-sided equipment for the work. He is an explorer who has wandered far and wide over the world's waste places; he has lived for years in the steaming, danger-laden tropical forests of East Africa; he knows, as very few white men have ever known, the strange, furtive, cruel life, brute and human, of these forests. He is, without exception, the only great artist of any time who has ever had such an experience. I am saying this after the vain effort to remember any other artist of his ability who has ever had his opportunities and profited by them.

His figures, most of which are in bronze, possess a strange compound of realism and symbolism. They are emphatically individual figures, and yet they are far more their types, and they represent the brooding African spirit in its broadest and deepest significance. Those who know Mr. Ward know that, in addition to his love of art for art's sake, there is in him the determination to use his mastery of art to help the people with whom he has so long lived

Mr. Ward is not only a sculptor but a writer. One of the very best books that has ever been written about the African forest is his "Voice from the Congo."

In his life endeavor Mr. Ward has happily been able to accumulate about him a great collection of African trophies. Perhaps the greatest item in this collection is that of African weapons, more than seven thousand in number. The collection also includes drums, primeval implements of war and the chase, and many rare bits of ancient domestic utility. It is now announced that Mr. Ward will leave this splendid ethnological collection to the Smithsonian Institution at Washington. All Americans are to be congratulated on the chance one day to see in their own land this unique presentation of the primitive life of one of the most primitive of races.

This gift makes all Americans in a peculiar sense the debtors of Mr. Ward. It is a singular act of munificence on his part, and one for which our countrymen should be profoundly grateful.

and for whom he has felt and shown such genuine friendship. But because he has this serious purpose, it must not for a moment be supposed that there is any offensive didacticism in his art. It is art, genuine and unique of its kind, standing at the uttermost limit from the conventional type of ladylike sculpture one sees in most drawing-rooms and galleries. Like the professed realists, Mr. Ward has never hesitated to depict what at first sight seems to be ugly and grotesque, but, unlike the ultra-realists, he depicts it so that the onlooker does not dwell only on the ugliness and the grotesqueness; for he has put into it the soul that lies behind the painful or rugged exterior. In his figures the Negro of the Congo is seen on his native soil, childlike and cruel, friendly and brutal, age-old man who lived in Europe a hundred thousand years ago, and yet a man with eternal youth in his soul that has preserved him in his stalwart strength to the present. All the mystery and the savagery and the suffering and the ugliness and the harsh beauty of the African forest come out in Mr. Ward's works.

Only an artist could have done what he has done, and no artist could have done it had there not lain within him the soul of a great man, a man both strong and pitiful.