

SAVE Dr. Campbell on Bellows

Mrs. von Keller began gathering material for a Catalogue before she retired in 1952. This was destined for that Catalogue. m7 Williams Nov. 9, 1976.

Madison Heights, R.D.3,
November 29, 1951

Dear Mrs. Von Keller,

The following few sentences should have been sent long ago. I submit them along with my apologies. Please regard this material as purely factual and edit it in any way you please. I am not the least bit sensitive in such matters.

I went to see Mr. Bellows in his studio in New York. He expressed great interest in our plan to start a collection of paintings at Randolph-Macon Woman's College and was pleased that we had selected ~~The~~ Men of the Docks as the first painting to be purchased by the Art Association. I told him with some hesitation the amount of money we felt we could pay for the picture. His response was immediate and generous. He said that most artists, ~~had~~ ^{being} like one of them, were less concerned about the price of their pictures than they were about having them in a place where they would be appreciated. He seemed to think the educational aspect of our undertaking was most important. The idea of having his painting where it would be viewed by successive generations of college students certainly appealed to him. Also I had the impression that he considered our idea of purchasing a painting every year, on a shoestring so to speak, was worth encouraging. The fact that the students had entered so enthusiastically into the project evidently impressed him. He said we might have the painting for the sum I had mentioned.

At the time, Mr. Bellows was working on a portrait of his mother. The painting stood on the easel in his studio. He was quite willing to talk to me about his work and about art in general. I happened to have an illustrated catalogue of a current art exhibition in New York? He pointed out some of the pictures he regarded as the best and some others of a conventional type which he viewed with considerable aversion. I stayed on for awhile until I feared I was abusing his good nature, though he never let me feel that for a moment. The whole interview was pleasant and satisfactory. I came away with a feeling of personal intimacy which made the shock of Mr. Bellows' early death all the more poignant.

As for the painting we acquired, ^{The painting} neither Miss Louise Smith nor I doubted for a moment that it was a great work of art. Such things are often hard to decide. The decision in the case of ~~(the)~~ Men of the Docks was not a hard one. ~~It~~ had stamped upon it clearly the work of genius, and what is more of American genius in its subject and its execution. It is indeed gratifying to all of us to see that the years have confirmed the wisdom of our first choice.

Good wishes
T. C.