3-24-1945

Paul to Dario March 24, 1945

Paul Sargent
Dear Dario,

I was glad to hear from you.

Well, that annual resurrection is well on—Spring. It is coming early. I have seen springs when the grass the 1st of May was no farther along than it is now. The grass is very green, daffodils are in bloom, and a few bushes have leaves. Peach and pear are on the verge of blooming; apricots are in bloom. So you can understand the climate here now that I have given the “weather report.”

So far I haven’t done any spring sketches. Have been pretty busy indoors. I am getting a picture ready to send to New York for an exhibit and competition given by the Pepsi Cola Co. They gave one last year. This year they are giving about $15,000 in prizes; the first is $2,500 with fifteen $500 ones. I am sending a large 26X40 wheat field picture. You probably have seen it, a large foreground of stubble and shocks with two men shocking and a binder and horses farther in. I thought a wheat field picture would probably be as new to a New York exhibit as anything I could send.

From your mention of important pictures, I can imagine what large city may be your hangout. I am glad you have had a chance to do some drawing and painting even if it has been stop and go= with you. And to see some fine old masters is something; something in other years we out considerable money and effort to see. If the war should end suddenly and soon, you may get a clearance to study art over there in a school, as was done after the other war. If such happens I hope you can take advantage of it—even if you may be somewhat homesick.

I don’t see how people in the liberated countries could have anything but hate for the Germans, the exceptions of course are the collaborators, and these should be handled in a rough way. Any wealth collected by working with the Germans should not be allowed to keep—even if they keep their scalps.

I am very skeptical about any so-called peace after this war. Selfish motives can’t make anything but an unstable peace. Until big business and money are done away with there will be no peace. Competition in ????? is war without the shooting; it leads
to competition between nations and then the shooting begins. So unless we as a nation and world are willing to give up these things that cause war we had just as well kiss ourselves goodbye, so far as peace is concerned and also so far as ??? existence is concerned. Of course if we of ourselves will not make any radical changes like that even if threatened with oblivion, so a higher power has to take a direct hand to save us from ourselves. As Shakespeare says, we are “actors on a stage,” but we don’t run the show.

It would appear from this long distance that the war over there might end before many weeks, or might end suddenly, as in the other war. We don’t know except that the end is in sight. Big business thinks the war won’t last long. Why? Well, the junkyard man told me that the price of iron would soon go down, so he was shipping out a lot of it.

Rubens is one of my favorite painters. As I studied them in Florida at the Ringling Gallery I decided that vigor was their common quality. And the colors were bright. A book on technique of painting I have (??????) says that Rubens painted with a thick medium, varnish, Venice turpentine, etc. So that the paint dried with a gloss and did not need to be varnished for many years. Other experts say varnish should not be put onto the paint—so what are we to do? Guess we can paint as we please and have authority to back us in any technique, so it seems. The brightness of color of Rubens (and some others) after the centuries is outstanding. It would seem that if this pure paint advocates were right, his pictures by this time would be no more. I paint both ways. I begin with medium, thin paint and usually try to finish in pure paint from the tube. The thing that gets me in technique is the “drying in” which leave color flat and dead. Varnish prevents that.

If the war should end soon I suppose you boys would feel very much disappointed?

As I have told you before, I guess I have three grand nephews in the army. The youngest has landed in the Philippines lately, one other in Italy, the other in an air service, ferry command. A boy from our village, in Pacific ocean, is reported to have received some machine gun bullets in shoulder but is
recovering. He was a machine gunner. The shots struck his dog tag so you can understand how close a shave he had.

Since I wrote you last I have had some good luck thrust upon me. I told you, I think, of the three pictures I sent to the Hoosier show in Jan. They were 30X36 water picture I made last fall at Carlyle; a water picture 23X23 reflections, lily pond, middle size; and a 20X24 of some zinnias. Well, the middle size got a prize of $100 as first prize in landscape any medium. Also sold all three pictures, which was the first time that has happened to me in any exhibit. The cash returns from that ex. was $483.50 after commissions were deducted. Art is picking up. The prize winner was an old picture repainted—a failure for many years. So don’t be too badly discouraged, Dario, when you have worked hard on a picture and you know it to be a flat failure. You have learned something, so it is not a total loss.

There are prospects that I may have a class of my own this spring.

I need to get out and do some gardening.
Sincerely and best wishes for your personal welfare.
Paul