

Poetry and Painting in the Works of Frederick Oakes Sylvester

Frederick Oakes Sylvester dedicated his career to documenting the Mississippi River on canvas and in print. The culmination of his artistic dream was the book *The Great River* which was, in many ways, the culmination of his artistic talents. The deluxe edition of this book included full leather binding featuring an original design by Sylvester on the cover, leaves of India Tint Oxford paper with full gold edges and an original signed watercolor on the frontispiece. St. Louis photographer Takuma Kajiwara provided a portrait of Sylvester and produced the twenty-four platinum photographs from the original oil paintings that were inserted among the sixty-four poems. Sylvester also designed the initial letter of each poem. The volume was a masterwork of the Arts and Crafts ideals that inspired much of Sylvester's aesthetic.

Sylvester was also a deeply religious man, and much of his work, both in paint and in poetry, reflects his convictions. Sylvester's painting *Live Man, Live Strong, Another June is Here* is complemented by the following poem by the artist:

This is the perfect night of perfect June!
The universal harmony sublime
Is audible. The mighty spheres that climb
The templed heavens and the full-orbed moon
Lead on the starry chorus. Fancy strewn
With orchestras, the galaxy keeps time,
And rolls, in unison and rhythmic rhyme,
One grand, triumphant, million-chorded tune –
It is Creation's own Messiah, sung
By nature's countless choristers. The notes
Of Mars and of the plaintive Pleiades,
Now low, and now voluminous, are flung
World wide. The music o'er the mountains floats
And thrills the bosom of the trembling seas.