Bulletin of

THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS
OF THE CITY OF DETROIT

VOL. XXIII . . . NO. 1
OCTOBER 1943

MADAME HENRIETTE DE FRANCE AS A VESTAL VIRGIN
BY JEAN-MARC NATTIER, FRENCH, 1685-1766.
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb, 1943.

MADAME HENRIETTE DE FRANCE AS A VESTAL VIRGIN BY JEAN-MARC NATTIER

A FULL LENGTH portrait of *Madame Henriette of France as a Vestal Virgin,* by Jean-Marc Nattier (1685-1766), the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb, is the most important picture of the French eighteenth century given to the Detroit Institute of Arts. It is one of Nattier's superbly decorative and elegant life-sized, full length portraits. Madame Henriette was the prettiest and the most spirited of the daughters of Louis XV. She is portrayed as a vestal virgin, dressed in a white satin dress and plum colored velvet cloak, backed by a magnificent green drapery hanging between majestic columns of a temple. A veil of white satin hangs from her white powdered hair. Her sandaled feet are bare. To the right opens the high rotunda of a temple like the Pantheon, and beyond it a vaulted corridor leads to a round altar on which burns the sacred fire of Vesta.

This picture, one of the most important examples of Nattier which has come to this country, was in the Paris collection of Sir John Murray Scott, the third of that curious dynasty of English collectors, Lord Hertford, Sir Richard Wallace and Sir John Scott, whose magnificent collections did so much to revive interest in rococo art. It was acquired from the estate of Sir John Scott by Wildenstein and Company and passed from them to Mr. William Randolph Hearst.

In modern times this has always been known as a portrait of Madame Sophie, while several of the small replicas of it are called Madame Victoire. However, it seems quite certain from the full memorandum of Nattier's work for the royal family, which is preserved in the National Archives of France, and from the memorandum of Nattier's daughter, that only one princess was painted as a vestal, Madame Henriette. The representation of her as a vestal is a reference to her renunciation of marriage when the King refused the proposal of her cousin, the Duc de Chartres. According to these memoranda she was painted as a vestal virgin in a portrait ordered by the King at Compiègne in 1749. This picture was recorded for about fifteen years, then disappeared from history for a century until it came into the possession of Sir John Scott. There are several reduced versions of the picture in French and English collections, including a bust portrait in the Louvre.

It is curious that the identifications of Nattier's many portraits of the daughters of Louis XV should have become completely confused. They were the first ladies of the realm in one of the most interesting periods of French history. Many of their portraits have remained in the national museums of France or in the possession of old families. Yet so complete was the disfavor into which rococo art fell in the early nineteenth century that the portraits of these six princesses lost their very names. One finds them still today called now by one name, now by another. Then identification had to wait until the studies of Pierre de Nolhac in the twentieth century revived a just appreciation of Nattier's work.

The canvas is closely related to an allegorical portrait of *Madame Henriette as Fire,* one of four portraits of his sisters ordered by the Dauphin in 1750 as overdoor decorations for his apartment at Versailles. The four sisters were represented as the four elements and the portrait of *Madame Henriette as Fire* seems to have been

Published monthly, October to May inclusive, at the Detroit Institute of Arts of the City of Detroit, 5200 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, Michigan. Entered as second class matter at the post office at Detroit, Michigan, under date of October 29, 1934. Subscription price $1.00 per year.

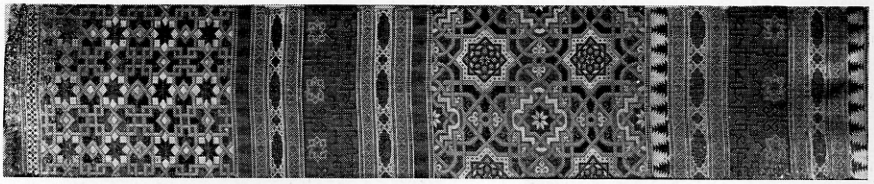
done from the same study from life as *Madame Henriette as a Vestal Virgin.* These four portraits disappeared when the rooms were dismantled in the time of Louis Philippe but the compositions still exist in the form of engravings.

The portraits of Jean-Marc Nattier play an essential part in our understanding of French eighteenth century life and in any representation of its art. He was the favorite portrait painter of French society for a quarter of a century and for twenty years the chief portrait painter of the Queen and the princesses of France. The elegance and charm, the ornamental and polished character of his art are a perfect expression of the taste of the age of Louis XV. He painted what his own age called "historical" portraits, in which French women were represented in the flattering guise of a goddess or nymph or heroine of classical poetry. They owe their decorative effect to the fact that more often than not they were intended, like the portrait of *Madame Henriette as Fire,* to be built into the panelling of a room.

A fuller account of this portrait and its sitter, as well as of an excellent portrait of Cardinal de Fleury[2] by Rigaud, just given us by Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Kanzler, will appear in the Autumn issue of *The Art Quarterly.* Cardinal de Fleury as the King's first minister was responsible for the breaking off of Madame Henriette's marriage and consequently for her appearance here as a Vestal Virgin. It is a curious coincidence that these two people should meet again, after two hundred years, in Detroit.

E. P. RICHARDSON

[1] Accession Number: 43.417. Oil on canvas; Height: 71 inches; Width: 52½ inches.
[2] Accession Number: 43.55. Oil on canvas; Height: 32 inches; width: 25¼ inches.



SILK FABRIC FROM GRANADA IN SPAIN
HISPANO-MORESQUE, FIFTEENTH CENTURY.
Gift of the Octavia W. Bates Fund, 1943.

WEAVINGS FROM MOORISH SPAIN

TWO CHARACTERISTIC specimens of the Moorish weaver's craft have recently been presented to the Textile Collection by the Founders Society.

A woollen rug[1] belongs to a small group which can be dated fairly closely by the armorial devices that form part of the design. Our rug shows, four times repeated, a coat of arms, quarterly, a triple-towered castle and a lion rampant (for Castile-Leon), adextré of two pallets gules upon or (for Aragon). This is the blazon, well known from her seal and tombstone, of Maria, queen of Alfonso V of Aragon, daughter of Henry III of Castile and granddaughter, on her mother's side, of John of Gaunt. In 1415 she married her cousin; she died in 1458, surviving her husband by a few months only. While Alfonso spent the greater part of his reign in Italy, adding the Crown of Naples to that of Sicily, the Queen remained in Valencia where she set up her own court at the Convent of the Holy Trinity. The rug was probably part of the furnishings of the Queen's apartments.

It then disappeared, to turn up later in the Convent of Santa Isabel de los Reyes at Toledo, founded about 1477 on property granted by Ferdinand the Catholic. The rug may have been part of his gift at that time, and it remained there until the nineteenth century.[2]

The coats of arms are displayed in a frame of diagonally converging lines, on a field covered with a trellis of octagons. Half the width of the rug is taken up by the borders, five narrow bands with ribbon-like patterns of lozenges, blossoms, lacework and chevrons, one wide band of intricate diamonds and the outer border of kufic lettering, forming a variant of *baraka* (blessing), interspersed with geometric stars and rosettes, animals, birds and human figurines. These repeat, on a somewhat more extended scale, the patterns filling the octagons of the field. The rug is practically complete, only part of the border missing at the lower end. The color scheme is of noble restraint; the many hues of red, blue and yellow are blended harmoniously.

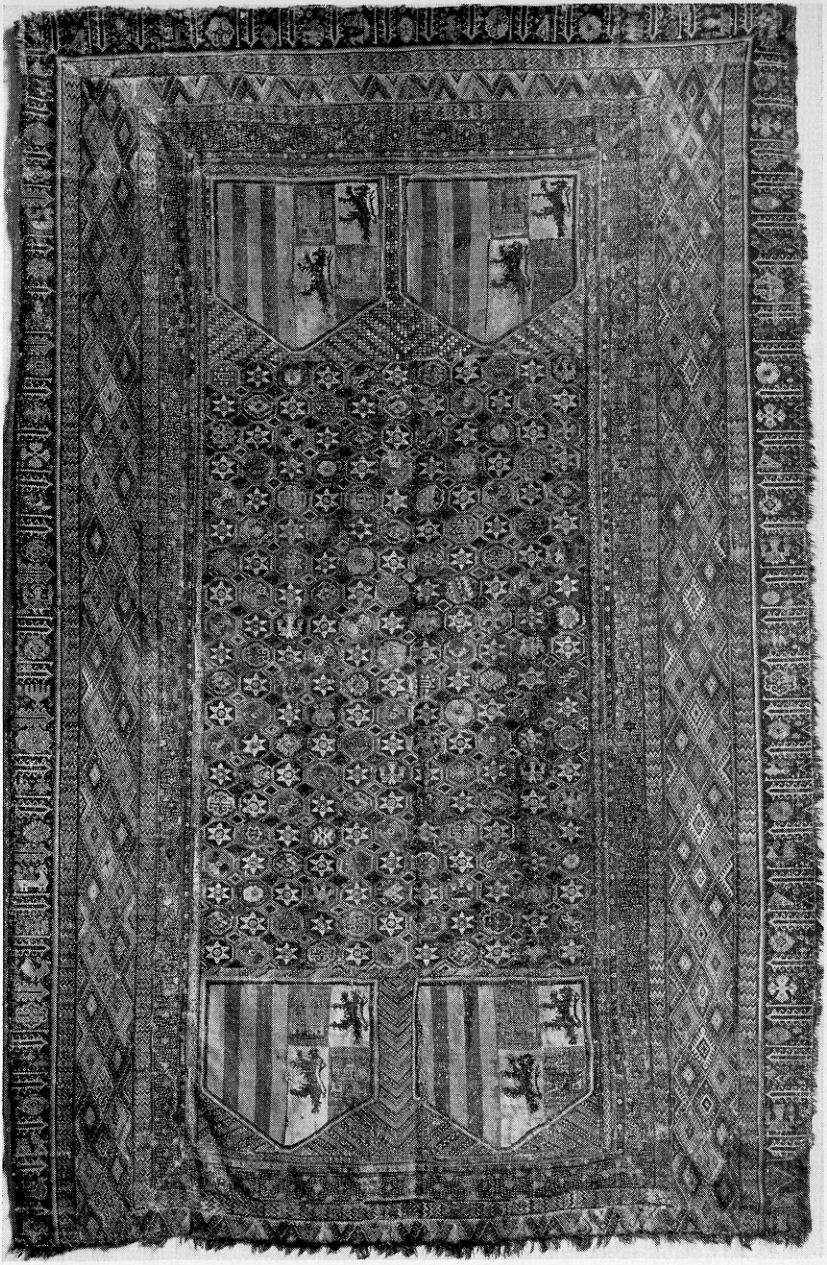
The technique, pile knotted over single warp threads, seems older than the more elaborate Sehna and Ghiordes knots of Persia and Turkey. Fragments discovered in the ruins of Old Cairo which have been assigned to the twelfth century, and fragments found by Le Coq at Qyzil and by Sir Aurel Stein at Loulan, both sites in Central Asia dating before the sixth century, are all knotted over one warp thread and prove at least the venerable age of the technique.

Little is known about the history of rug weaving in Spain, but rugs are mentioned before the twelfth century. The first centuries after the reconquest, the thirteenth and fourteenth, were a golden age for the Moslem population. The Kings, the Church and the Knightly Orders vied with each other to give their protection and patronage to these excellent craftsmen. The *mudéjares,* the Moslems living under Christian rule, continued working for their new overlords all through the fifteenth century. Our rug is *mudéjar* work, probably of the second quarter of the fifteenth century.

We are better informed concerning the silk industry of medieval Spain. The papal inventories of the ninth century mention Spanish fabrics as used for altar hangings and curtains, and actual specimens are preserved dating back to the eleventh and twelfth century. Almeria, the capital of Andalusia, was the first center of silk weaving. Silkworms were raised all over Southern Spain. Eggs of the silkworm and silk in hanks were exported as well as the finished fabrics. About the middle of the thirteenth century the last remaining Moorish dynasty in Spain, the Nasrids of Granada, revived the splendor of the days of the Caliphate, and henceforth and till the final conquest of 1492, the silk weaves of Granada were widely famed, even, as a contemporary writer states, preferred to the silks of Syria. The patterns of these silks, in the so-called Alhambra style, are variations of *laceria* (interlacing); the colors are brilliant and pure, red and yellow dominate, an emerald green follows closely.

A panel of silk weave[3] demonstrates well the predilection for arranging *laceria* in elaborate patterns, in a series of wide and narrow bands. The wide bands are filled with related yet absolutely different patterns of *laceria,* with stars, rosettes and palmettes. At least one other pattern, looking like square and starshaped *azulejos* (painted tiles), was part of this sampler-like fabric. The narrow bands show reciprocal triangles with dentate edges in green and red or black and white, more *laceria,* and cartouches inscribed in green on red "Glory to our Lord the Sultan."

Striped fabrics are often mentioned by medieval poets. They enjoyed a continued favor all through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; many of those mentioned



AMORIAL RUG OF MARIA OF ARAGON
HISPANO-MORESQUE. EARLY FIFTEENTH CENTURY.
Gift of The Founders Society, 1943.

in French and Burgundian inventories may have come from Spain, possibly together with the highly appreciated luster pottery from Valencia.[4]

ADELE COULIN WEIBEL

[1] Accession Number: 43.75. Height: 11 feet, 7 inches; Width: 7 feet, 3 inches. Woollen rug, not quite complete, some repairs. From the collection of the Comtesse de Behague, Paris. Gift of the Founders Society, 1943. The rug will be discussed more fully in a forthcoming number of *Ars Islamica.*

[2] A. Van De Put, "Some fifteenth century Spanish carpets," *Burlington Magazine,* Vol. XIX (1911), pp. 344-350. On p. 350 Van De Put presents two possible ways by which Ferdinand the Catholic could have inherited the rug.

[3] Accession Number: 43.34. Height: 40¼ inches; Width: 8 inches. Silk weave, incomplete width, one end of run. Gift of the Founders Society, Octavia W. Bates Fund, 1943. Specimens of the same weave are to be found in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and in the Museums of Berlin and Barcelona.

[4] "A Hispano-Moresque Luster Plate," *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts,"* Vol. XXII, No. 3 (December, 1942), pp. 18-20.

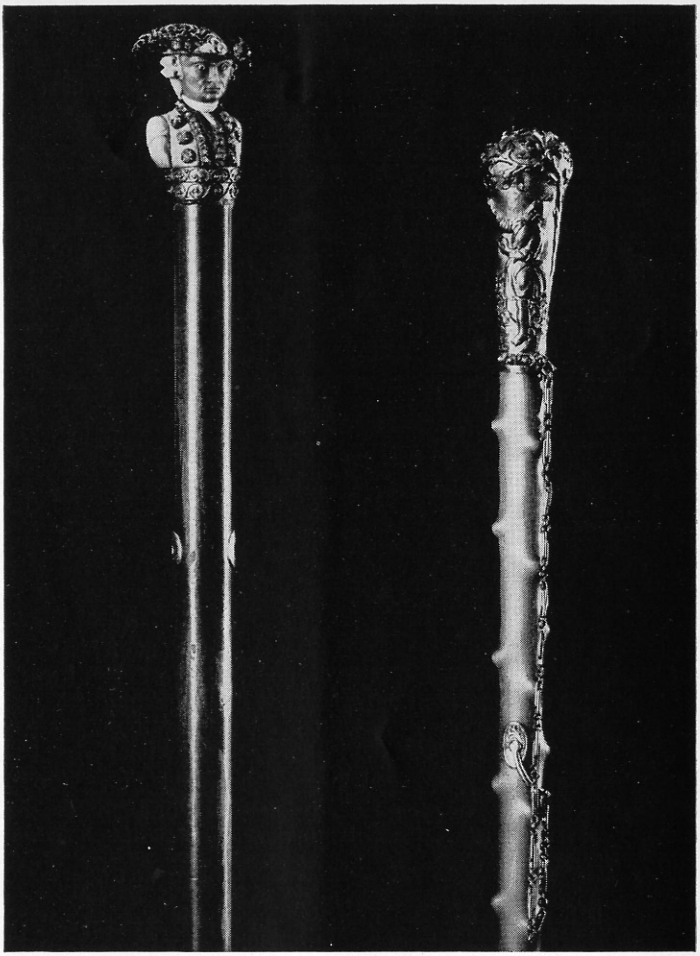
WALKING STICKS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE FIRST OF ALL human implements was undoubtedly a stick of wood, picked up to reinforce the reach of a man's arm, and men have been using sticks ever since. But a great deal has happened to that simple implement as it has served the needs and caprices of human nature. It became the weapon, the baton, the sceptre, the staff of office, the sign of authority for kings and priests, generals, sorcerers, even of gods — for Zeus carried a staff, and Prometheus concealed in his pilgrim staff the divine fire stolen from heaven. In the hands of the great the stick thus became a symbol, while it remained the humble companion of shepherds and travelers, the guard against thieves and watch-dogs, the crutch of the lame and the staff of the old.

The most entertaining chapter in the history of the walking stick began when it became an article of fashion somewhere about the fourteenth century. The eighteenth century was the great age of the walking stick. King Louis XIV liked to carry a stick, perhaps because he wore high heels, and his example made it the fashion never to appear in public without one. The aristocracy of Europe, who were just giving up the habit of wearing swords, found a stick an admirable solution for the problem of what to do with their hands. And as soon as the stick became fashionable, women and even children, in France at least, began to carry elegant little sticks. The *Galerie des Modes et Costumes Français,* published at Paris from 1778 to 1787, has many illustrations of very small children carrying sticks and the custom has come down in France to modern times.

Of the two sticks recently acquired through the Laura H. Murphy Fund, one is a French eighteenth century lady's walking stick, probably a "badine" or light stick to be carried in the morning. It has a tapered mahogany shaft, bored near the top for the woven silk loop by which it could be carried on the wrist. The head is a bust of a cavalier carved in soapstone. He wears a light blue coat (such was fashionable among the French aristocracy) set with brilliants, and a military cross that probably represents the *Croix St. Louis* or *Croix St. Esprit.* His tricorn hat is of enameled metal and is also set with brilliants.

The second is a child's walking stick[2] of carved whalebone with a gold handle and gold chain. The handle is a delicate repousée and chased knob of chinoiserie design representing a Chinese tending an eagle on its perch beneath a tree in a garden. The first example is probably of about 1780; the second, of the 1740's.



WALKING STICKS
FRENCH, EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.
Gift of the Laura H. Murphy Fund, 1943.

These elegant and charming playthings illustrate the amusing character of the walking sticks produced to gratify the eighteenth century. There was almost no limit to the sums which people were then willing to spend upon them. Louis XIV had a stick whose eagle knob was set with twenty-four diamonds. The Regent of France, one of the outstanding rakes of the century, had a huge and famous diamond called "the Regent" set as the head of a walking stick. People of fashion spent as much as forty thousand francs a year on walking sticks. Voltaire, who considered that he lived a life free from fashionable nonsense, owned eighty sticks. Rousseau, a poor man and the apostle of the simple life, owned forty. Count Brühl, creator of the famous Brühl Terrace at Dresden, owned three hundred canes, each with a snuff-box to match, one for each of his three hundred suits. To meet such a

demand, the makers employed every imaginable material for the shaft and knobs were made of jewels, gold, silver, bronze, ivory, mother-of-pearl, amber, horn, or china from Meissen, Chantilly or Capo di Monte. The love of gadgets also made itself felt and walking sticks were made with built-in umbrellas, pedometers, watches, flutes, pen-and-ink; the Cluny Museum even has one which could be converted into a fiddle!

Addison in 1709 devoted a genial number of *The Tatler* (No. 103) to the subject of walking sticks: "It is some time," says Isaac Bickerstaffe, "since I set apart that day (Saturday) for examining the pretensions of several who had applied to me for canes, perspective glasses, snuff boxes, orange-flower-waters, and the like ornaments of life. In order to adjust this matter, I had before directed Charles Lillie, of Beaufort Building (a celebrated maker of such luxuries) to prepare a great bundle of blank licenses in the following words:

'You are hereby required to permit the bearer of this cane to pass and repass through the streets and suburbs of London, or any place within ten miles of it, without let or molestation — provided that he does not walk with it under his arm, brandish it in the air, or hang it on the button: in which case it should be forfeited — and I hereby declare it forfeited to anyone who shall think it safe to take it from him. Isaac Bickerstaffe'."

Addison then describes a number of the cases that presented themselves on that day. The first was the following petition:

"To Isaac Bickerstaffe, Esq., Censor of Great Britain

"The Humble Petition of Simon Trippit,

"Showeth, that your petitioner having been bred up to a cane from his youth, it is now become as necessary to him as any other of his limbs. That a great part of his behaviour depending upon it, he should be reduced to the utmost necessities if he should use lose the use of it. That the knocking of it upon his shoe, leaning one leg upon it, or whistling with it on his mouth, are such great reliefs to him in conversation, that he does not know how to be in good company without it. That he is at present engaged in an amour, and must despair of success, if it be taken from him. Your petitioner therefore hopes, that (the premises tenderly considered) your Worship will not deprive him of so useful and so necessary a support."

Upon reading this, Bickerstaffe's heart was touched and he advised the petitioner to submit his cane to the court. Finding that it was very curiously carved, with a transparent amber head, and a blue ribbon to hang upon his wrist, the censor ordered the clerk to lay it up, and deliver out to him a plain joint, headed with walnut which would serve to keep the petitioner on his feet until he could learn to walk unaided.

There is only space for one more anecdote. The authors of an elaborate modern work on the accessories of dress, published at Peoria, Illinois, in 1940, took Addison's irony as a serious newspaper account, and gravely report the whole proceedings as an interesting fact that in eighteenth century England it was necessary to procure a license to carry a cane, snuff box or perfumed handkerchief.

E. P. RICHARDSON

[1] Accession Number: 43.45. Length: 36¾ inches.
[2] Accession Number: 43.44. Length: 27⅝ inches.

Bibliography: Max von Boehn: *Modes and Manners — Ornaments.* London, New York, 1929; Katherine Morris Lester and Bess Viola Oerke: *Accessories of Dress,* Peoria, Illinois, 1940; Edna Deu Pree Nelson: "Walking Out with the Walking Stick," *Antiques Magazine,* Vol. 32 (1937), pp. 128-130.