

Bulletin of The Detroit Institute of Arts Of the City of Detroit

Vol. IX

APRIL, 1928

No. 7



SOLDIER SCENE
PIETER DE HOECH

PAINTINGS BY PIETER DE HOOCH AND JACOBUS VREL

In former days the series of Dutch paintings of the seventeenth century owned by the Art Institute formed the largest part of its collection of old masters. However, neither in the quality of the paintings nor in the selection of artists represented did it give an adequate idea of the greatness of this period and the versatility of its masters. We need only to mention that the three outstanding masters, Frans Hals, Rembrandt and Vermeer, were missing entirely, as were also portrait painters like Thomas de Keyser and Bartholomeus van der Helst, landscape artists like Jan van Goyen and Jacob Ruisdael, genre painters like Terborch, Metsu and the two Ostades, and all the still life painters. In keeping with the policy governing the acquisitions of recent years, it was necessary that an effort be made to rebuild the collection of Dutch art, and while rounding it out in different directions, to raise its standard to a higher level.

The list of additions began with four portraits, by Frans Hals, Nicolas Elias, Jan de Bray and Van der Helst. Then followed two masterpieces by Rembrandt, a great landscape by Jacob Ruisdael and two representative still lifes by Willem Kalf and Jan Weenix.

Genre painting, another most important field of Dutch art, should be the next to receive attention. For, curiously enough, in such a popular art as the portrayal of Dutch interiors has always been, the collection was particularly weak, containing only one good example, the charming interior with a mother nursing her child by Pieter de Hooch. With our limited means it will be some time before we can add to our collection one of those great works of the art of genre painting by Vermeer, Metsu or Terborch, which form the attraction of the galleries in Amsterdam, London, Paris and Berlin. But it is still possible to acquire a fine example of Dutch genre painting by such artists as are—unjustly

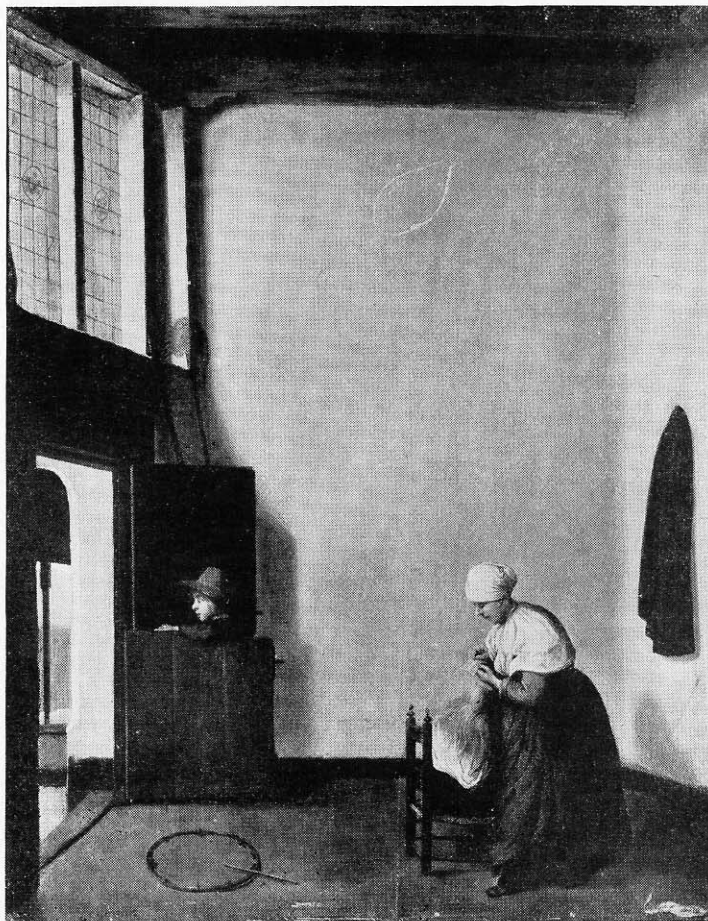
perhaps—less famous, or by famous artists from a period of their life which is not yet fully appreciated. Two works of this type have recently been added to the collection: a charming interior showing a woman and a boy in a high entrance hall, by the little known Jacobus Vrel, and a soldier scene by Pieter de Hooch from the period of his earlier works, most of which have become known only within the last fifteen years. The first painting is a generous gift from Messrs. Knoedler and Company of New York, the second a purchase from city funds.

Jacobus Vrel is known only through a small number of paintings, hardly more than a dozen; no document, no historian of his period mentions his name or reveals anything about his life. A few of his paintings have his signature, usually spelled *J. Vrel*. On our picture it reads *Jacobus Vrelle*, thus proving that his first name was Jacobus and not Jan as has been stated by some modern writers. Only one of his paintings has a date (1654), but all of them show clearly enough the Amsterdam style of around 1650 to 70. That Vrel is an artist of no small merit may be judged from the fact that the French art critic Burger-Thoré, who in the sixties of the nineteenth century rediscovered Vermeer, mistook several of Vrel's paintings for works by Vermeer. Others went under the name of Esaias Boursse, another interesting and rather rare Amsterdam genre painter; and still others—the two finest interiors in the museums at Antwerp and Brussels—under the name of Isaac Koedijk, whose Haarlem style, however, is very different from Vrel's, as Dr. C. Hofstede de Groot has pointed out.

The paintings by Vrel fall into two categories: street scenes (in the museums at Amsterdam, Hamburg and Oldenburg, and in the Johnson collection in Philadelphia) and interiors. The composition of the street scenes, showing corners of narrow

side streets with quaint houses seen at a short distance, are so unusual in Dutch art that our attention is attracted whenever we see them in the galleries. Their drawing is not very correct, but with their fine shades of pale pink and white and their

Vermeer, Vrel is a rather poor draughtsman and not a good designer of figures. This shows also in his interiors, but he has in common with Vermeer the simplicity of composition, the curious neglect of details, unusual in Dutch art, and especially



INTERIOR

JACOBUS VRELL

GIFT OF MESSRS. KNOEDLER AND COMPANY

naively drawn, proportionately rather large figures, they have a charm of their own. In composition they may have been influenced by Vermeer's little street scenes of Delft, now at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, although it is not sure that they are not earlier in date. In contrast to

an interest in picturing the effects of diffused silvery light in large empty spaces.

This is obvious also in our newly acquired picture. As in the other interiors of Vrel we look into a high empty room with beamed ceiling and whitewashed walls with a double window above the door, and

a view through the door into another room. The high mantelpiece and the alcove with bed which we find in his other compositions (Antwerp, McIlhenny collection, Philadelphia, etc.) are missing here. The high wall is entirely empty, with the exception of a coat hanging on a nail at the right. The woman, who combs the hair of an awkwardly drawn little girl sitting on a chair in front of her, is depicted with a fine color sense, placed in profile against a light background, the white of her head-covering and shawl forming a still lighter note. As a sort of rhythmical repetition, the profile of a boy, whose hoop and stick are lying on the floor in the foreground, is seen behind the half-door, turned in the same direction as the woman, but light against a dark background.

This picture is the fifth work of Vrel which has come to this country, the other four paintings being in collections in Philadelphia, no less than three (a street scene, an interior with a woman in front of a mantelpiece, and an interior with a woman nursing another sick woman) being in the collection of the late Mr. John D. McIlhenny, who was especially interested in this artist, the fourth the fine street scene in the John G. Johnson collection.

In the work of Pieter de Hooch the artist attacks an entirely different, and much more difficult problem than does Vrel in his picture. The composition is spaced, not in accordance with the simple architectural lines of a room, but by placing the figures without any surrounding architecture at slight distances from each other, in such a way that we receive the impression of depth. The figures are surrounded by a soft, warm atmosphere, which makes us feel that they are sitting in a rather dimly lighted room. The silvery light, coming probably from a window up at the left, partly touches the faces, and especially the objects with metallic surface such as the armour worn by the soldier in front, the plate on which the oysters are lying, the jug, and the glass which the standing soldier holds. While

Vrel's color scheme is built up on tonality, Pieter de Hooch's is composed of complementary colors: the blue of the costume of the boy to the left complements the warm yellow of the leather jacket of the seated soldier, the cool gray of the girl's dress offsets the orange brown in the costume of the soldier next to her. The color composition is held together by the brown undertone which underlies all the colors and which is partly produced by allowing the panel to show through the other colors, which are placed very thinly on the background in the shadows. Like all compositions of Pieter de Hooch, this one is also carefully constructed from a linear point of view. The figures are arranged symmetrically, sitting at the table in a cross form, the heads of all four being turned to a point about in the center of the table. While the standing boy balances the sitting woman on the right, both being seen in three-quarter profile, the standing soldier somewhat overtops his vis-a-vis, so as to give a center axis to the composition.

The motif shows that we are still near in time to the great Thirty Years War, which ended with the Westphalian peace in 1648, a few years before this picture was painted. It is a motive more than once repeated by Pieter de Hooch and by those Haarlem and Delft masters of soldier scenes by whom he was influenced in his youth. The soldiers have been having a gay time, enjoying the company of women, wine and food, when the report is brought by the boy that the troop is about to start. From the way the soldiers behave, we feel that they are taking the soldier life none too seriously. Holland, indeed, was not affected by the war as much as its neighboring country, and its soldiers, especially after the peace, took more pleasure and pride in their picturesque costumes than in fighting. In our painting the charmingly colored costumes of the soldiers greatly aid the fascination of the composition.

The picture can be dated with certainty

around the year 1655, when the early maturing artist was twenty-five years of age. It was at this date that he had reached his height in the portrayal of soldier scenes, with which his career started about 1647, when he became footman to a gentleman of fashion named Justus de la Grange, with whom he resided in turn in Delft, the Hague, and in Leyden. He married in 1654 and after this took up his abode in Delft for a comparatively long period. Possibly under the influence of his family life, he started to paint composi-

tions of a different type, representing housewives with children or with maidservants, an example of which we have in the painting already owned by the museum. While this picture was executed about 1668-70, at the end of his Delft or the beginning of his Amsterdam period, in the decade after the zenith of his art, we have in the newly acquired picture a work which shows the artist on the road to becoming one of the greatest of the Dutch masters, which he was to be during the decade from 1655 to 65. W. R. V.

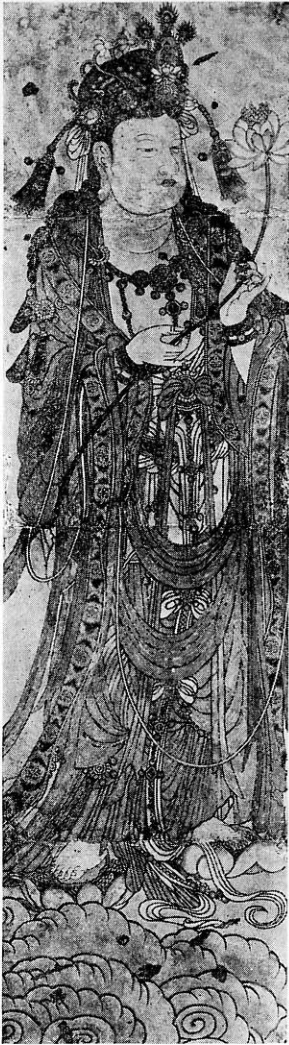
A CHINESE FRESCO OF KUAN-YIN

That art accorded the highest rank by the Chinese is painting. In the last twenty years, Westerners have discovered the beauties of Chinese frescoes and many have been brought out to Europe and America. The strongest single collection is that recently given by Mr. Eumorfopoulos to the British Museum, and there are about twenty-five in American Museums, chiefly in the Fogg Museum at Harvard University and the University Museum, Philadelphia.

Through the generous gift of the Detroit Museum of Art Founders Society to the Asiatic Department, our Museum is among the fortunate ones to also possess a Chinese Buddhistic fresco of the tradition and in the style of the great T'ang Dynasty. The fresco is said to have come from the Tung Yen temple in the province of Shansi and near the village of Yü Yang, a temple said to have been erected in the T'ang Dynasty. The figure represents Kuan-Yin, the Goddess of Mercy and Compassion, whose mission it is to remain in the world and save all creatures from suffering. She is standing upon lotus blossoms resting on billowy clouds. Rising from her left hand is the lotus flower, her attribute of peace and purity; her head is crowned with a jeweled diadem, the required designation for all Bodhisattvas, who are regarded as of royal lineage. In the center of the crown, lotus throned under a flaming glory is the

spiritual "father" O-mi-t'o Fo or the "Buddha of Boundless Light" with whom Kuan Yin is identified in her final birth. Other iconographical details are the jewelled necklace, the rope of beads and the bracelet, all symbolizing royal descent. The long lobed ear is a mark of piety and saintliness among all Buddhist disciples and deities, the convention among Buddhist ascetics requiring the ear lobes to be extended by hanging weights in them. The fresco, which is nine feet and about three inches high, probably stood as one of a large group among other goddesses arranged along a chapel wall of a temple. The walls for paintings were faced with a coating several inches thick of dried mud and chopped reeds. The mud surface was covered with a thin layer of impure burnt gypsum on which the brush work was done. White, sometimes pink or thin cream pigment was laid on for the flesh tones. The quality of pink in the flesh tones as in the case of our fresco, strikingly suggests the warmth and delicacy of reality. We cannot here for want of space, discuss the technique of "Asiatic Fresco" so well described by Sir Arthur Church and quoted by Binyon in his catalog of the Eumorfopoulos collection of Chinese frescoes.

Aesthetically, the Kuan-Yin figure in our fresco has stateliness and repose with a strong feeling of solidity in form which never becomes weighty but conveys the



FRESCO OF KUAN-YIN
CHINESE. XIV CENTURY (?)

sense of being easily and lightly poised upon floating clouds. There is in the figure an air of nobility which is rather a revitalizing of the nobility which characterized earlier T'ang paintings. The feeling is conveyed further in the expression that Buddhism is still a vital religion and that its deities are

beings of serenity and dignity. The garments are full and billowy and their contours defined with a firmness which makes a three dimensional form felt beneath them. Like all Chinese painting, there is no modelling with light and shade. The color is painted on in flat tones and, where intended, the quality and vitality of the contour lines alone determine the form. This firmness of contour line is especially apparent in the hands and the delicacy with which the bent fingers hold the lotus stem. The lotus flower is another detailed instance. Throughout the figure, the lines are carefully concentrated and the rhythms of the folds of the garments consciously organized, with the emphasis centered upon the curved sequences carrying the eye upward rather than downward, not permitting it to wander away, but keeping it focused within the limits of the figure.

The colors, though somewhat darkened in the process of repair, in comparison with a number of other frescoes brought to this country are clear and brilliant. In the main, the colors are malachite green, a crimson red, with touches of scarlet appearing in the external folds and in the tassels of the head-dress. The jewelled ornaments like the clouds are mainly of yellow ochre tone, the former worked in some parts with pure gold paint and red and blue. The undergarments below the ascending curves and extending to the feet, are bluegrey. The same tones occur in the "rosette" ornament which contains a complete register for all the colors used in fresco. The ornament is intended as embroidery, along the outer bands of the garment. There is a limited use of white, mainly in the ribbons and in the tunic next the body.

There are one or two interesting points in our example similar to a very large and very beautiful fresco of three bodhisattvas from the Chi Liang Temple now in the Eumorfopoulos collection in the British Museum and attributed by Binyon to the Sung Dynasty. The outline of the flesh parts in both frescoes is charcoal grey. All

the Shansi group in the same collection, contrary to our example, have the flesh tones outlined in red. Another similarity with the Chi Liang fresco is the diadem which is Indian in style. Neither diadem is modelled in relief as is the case with the Shansi group.

The line drawing in our fresco is highly organized and not so free or essentially downward in direction as are many of these paintings. The form is full and easy, centering the attention more on the roundness of the body under the garment than upon the fullness of the garment itself.

Although quiet by comparison, our fresco, in our personal opinion, seems, on aesthetic grounds, more in accord with the grandeur of the beautiful three bodhisattvas of the Chi Liang fresco.

A peculiarity which does not occur in any of the Chinese frescoes in America,

with the exception of one now in the hands of a New York firm, is the rosette border which appears to be a motif combined of the lotus and rosette.

Finally, as accurate data are still wanting, we hesitate in confirming the designation of the temple from which our fresco is said to have come, or in dating it exactly. We can, however, assign it with reasonable assurance to the province of Shansi; furthermore, it very probably comes from the P'ing Yang prefecture in the southeastern portion of Shansi.¹

Although certainly in the style of T'ang painting, when the temple to which it is attributed was said to have been built, the dating of the fresco may be possibly assigned to the late fourteenth century, or the early years of the Ming Dynasty, when there occurred a renaissance of T'ang painting.

A. C. E.

A LANDSCAPE BY GASPARD DUGHET

The classical landscapes of the French school of the seventeenth century have not been popular with, I might say almost unknown to, American art collectors, who cling to the great Dutch landscape painters Ruysdael, Hobbema and Cuyp, to Gainsborough, and finally to the nineteenth century landscapists, both American and European. There are reasons to believe, however, that the near future will bring an increased appreciation of this hitherto neglected phase of French art. From the days of Cézanne on there is in modern landscape painting a tendency which, gradually growing stronger, turns away from the casual naturalism of the Impressionists to the more serious principles of classical composition. It seems, therefore, only logical that the taste of the collecting public would before long take a similar trend. But be this as it may, there

can be no doubt that in the field of landscape painting masters like Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorrain really are among the most brilliant stars of all times, not only for the noble and unequalled grandeur of their vision, but also for their more technical accomplishments of mastering the problems of space, light, and atmosphere. It is in these their pictorial performances that they became models—this is especially true of the more sensuous and luminous art of Claude—for later great masters such as Corot and Cézanne.

Gaspard Dughet, one of whose pictures was recently added to our collection as the generous gift of Mr. and Mrs. Leo Butzel, is not a creative genius of the stature of Poussin and Claude, but he is undoubtedly the greatest and strongest of their followers. Born in Rome in 1613 of French parents, he spent all of his life in Italy. Neverthe-

¹ Through the careful investigation of Mr. March, we have been able to obtain this more exact information as to provenance. We have also to thank Mr. Lodge, curator of the Freer Gallery, Washington, D. C., for his several kindnesses in giving us valuable information regarding this fresco.



LANDSCAPE
GASPARD DUGHET
GIFT OF MR. AND MRS. LEO BUTZEL

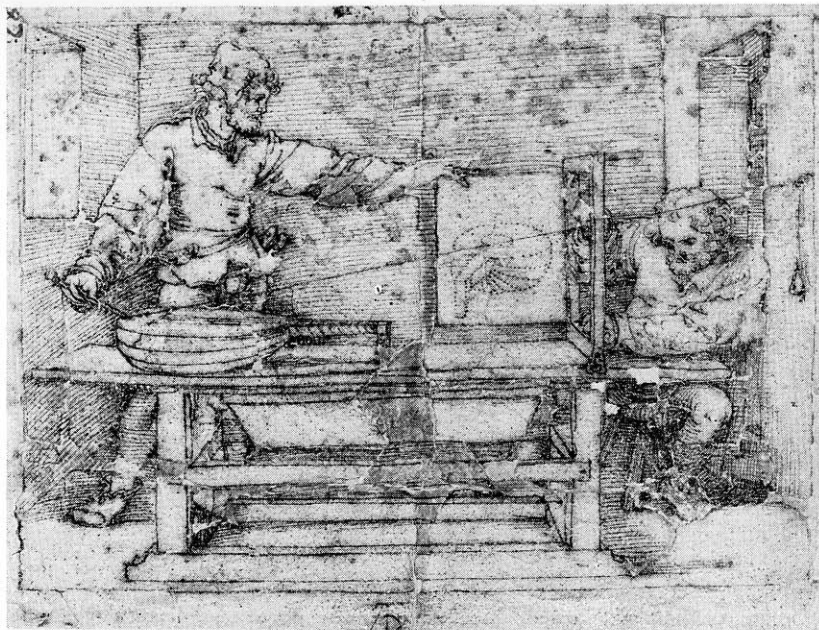
less the character of his art is so decidedly French that he is rightly counted among the artists of that country. At an early age he became a pupil of the great Poussin, who as a lonely and friendless student had been living in his parents' house, later marrying his sister. Leaving Poussin's studio when still scarcely twenty years of age, he decided to set up for himself. He spent several years traveling through Italy, working at different times with good success for high born patrons, before settling down once more in the Eternal City. He now came under the influence of the other great French painter of that period, Claude Lorraine, at this time at the zenith of his fame. To the study of Claude's works is due the warmth and mastery over light and air observable in the paintings of Gaspard's maturer period. He was gifted with a marvelous facility of execution and is said to have required only one day to finish a large picture. In addition to easel works he

painted frescoes in some of the palaces in Rome. He died in Rome in 1675.

Gaspard Dughet, in contrast to his teacher and friend, Poussin, who, though supreme as a painter of landscape, gave the pre-eminence in his work to figure painting, is a landscape painter only. Figures never play an essential role in his paintings; if there are any they very often were not even done by himself but by Nicolas Poussin, Pietro da Cortona and others. But in his pictures, as compensation for this, nature really speaks that grandiose language which still sounds from the mountains, oak forests and ruins of Rome's surroundings. Thunderstorms and wind sometimes give a dramatic accent to his heroic visions, and when there is, as in ours,¹ quietness and lyric charm, one feels with delight the infinite and luminous space, the caressing air and the freshness of cool shadows, and wishes, so to speak, to fly on wings over the ideal beauty of these pictured scenes.

W. H.

¹ There are replicas of this painting in the museums of Berlin and Dresden.



THE DESIGNER OF THE LUTE
ALBRECHT DÜRER

GIFT OF THE FOUNDERS' SOCIETY (WILLIAM C. YAWKEY FUND)

A DÜRER DRAWING

The gift of *The Designer of the Lute*, a drawing by Albrecht Dürer, adds to the Print Department a most important document. The drawing was made as a study for an illustration in Dürer's great book on the Art of Measurement, published in 1525.

From the year 1526 onwards, this great German painter and engraver devoted most of his time and thought to the preparation of his books, in which he was to formulate his theories concerning geometry, perspective, proportion, and fortification.

His plan was indeed ambitious. The series was to form a comprehensive course of instruction for beginners in art, the principal part being a Doctrine of Proportion in four books. Dürer himself lived to see the publication of only the first book, the rest being published by friends after his death.

Dürer made numerous drawings during

all periods of his life, and in them, as in his prints, we find the same immense energy, the rich imagination, and the same passionate pursuit of scientific knowledge. His interest in the subject of proportion had been aroused in Italy by Jacopo de Barbari, "a good, sweet painter," who promised to give him valuable data on the ideal proportions of the human form. A futile promise, but the idea of a scientific canon of beauty was to haunt the German master to the end, and the belief persisted that he could reduce the science of beauty to a mathematical formula. The last years of Dürer's life, which might have been given to the creation of still greater work than he had yet accomplished, were given instead to this fruitless search, and the Institute drawing records with his own hand, this last effort to solve a baffling problem.

I. W.

A NEW NAME FOR AN OLD PAINTING

It is always gratifying for the historian of art to release a painting listed under the vague designation of school and century only, from its anonymity, recognizing it



MADONNA AND CHILD
THE MASTER OF THE LIFE OF MARY
COLOGNE. SECOND HALF XV CENTURY

with good and convincing reasons as the work of a definite and well-known artistic personality. Strangely enough, the work of art actually seems to gain a new and stronger life by this act of christening. It only now becomes "legitimate," so to speak, and enters competition as an equal within the collection to which it belongs.

Our Museum recently had the joy of such a baptism, all the more thrilling as the child to be legitimized was among the very oldest of our stock, being one of the Scripps pictures which formed the original nucleus of the Institute's collection. We speak of the charming panel representing the Virgin and Child, and bearing until now the somewhat colorless designation "Flemish XV Century." Only recently two competent visitors, Prof. Otto Goldschmidt from the Berlin University, at the present time exchange professor at Harvard, and Prof. Herman Voss, Curator of Paintings at the Berlin Museum, expressed quite independently of each other, the opinion that the painting was not Flemish but German—to be more exact a work by the Cologne artist of the late fifteenth century, known under the name of The Master of the Life of Mary. Careful comparisons with authenticated works of that master eventually left no doubt that the attribution was correct. To show this we reproduce here beside our picture a painting, *Virgin and Child with St. Bernard*, from the museum in Cologne, which, though somewhat earlier, yet in the general types of mother and child, with their almost geometrically rounded eyebrows, as well as in certain peculiarities in the design of hands, ears and folds, clearly reveals the characteristics of the same author.

Unfortunately we do not know the name of this artist who is called after the altar with representations from the Virgin's life, seven panels of which are in the Pinakotek in Munich, while the eighth is in the National Gallery of London. Whoever has studied the Munich collection will recall the richly dressed figures, outlined against a gold background, who, with their non-committal faces and pretentious gestures of a somewhat angular grace, make up these scenes. Other important works of the master are in the museums of Berlin and Cologne. None of them besides our own has to our knowledge come to this country.

The Master of the Life of Mary is undoubtedly the outstanding figure in Cologne after Stephane Lochner, who had led the school in the first half of the century. All we know of him with certainty is that he was greatly influenced by, perhaps the pupil of Dirk Bouts, the great

the same time to the School of Flanders, a fact which is the more intelligible as there were no political frontiers at that time between the German and the now Belgic and Dutch Netherlands, respectively. He was active from about 1460 to 1490 and in his last period had a certain relationship with



VIRGIN AND CHILD WITH ST. BERNARD
THE MASTER OF THE LIFE OF MARY
IN THE MUSEUM OF COLOGNE

master of Louvain. This explains why the designation "Flemish" was not so entirely out of place. The Master of the Life of Mary, though a German, really belongs at

—borrowing from as well as lending to— the younger and equally important anonymous master in Cologne known as the Master of the Bartholomew altarpiece

which is likewise now in Munich. Our picture, belonging to that late period of the master, is in its rich coloring and particularly fine state of preservation undoubtedly

one of the most important additions to the work of this master, whose name we hope will soon be unearthed from an undeserved obscurity.
W. H.

NOTES

On the first of April the Museum will open to the public a series of five small exhibition galleries on the second floor, containing paintings and sculpture of the most modern of the art movements of the late nineteenth and the twentieth century, so-called "Cubism," "Futurism," "Expressionism," etc. Owing to the prejudice which exists among many people against this modern art expression, the Museum has thought it best not to include these paintings in its series of period rooms on the first floor, but to isolate them, as it were, so that they need not be visited unless there was an actual desire on the part of the museum visitor to see them. On the other hand, the Museum authorities have felt that it was not possible to ignore these modern art movements altogether, for since art has at all times reflected the spiritual and emotional condition of a nation's life, the complete circuit of the world's change and development, which the Museum has endeavored to show in its period room plan, would be incomplete if this its latest phase was entirely without representation.

Among the works exhibited in the five galleries will be found representative paintings and sculpture from all the leading European countries: England, France, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, Russia, Italy, etc., as well as a number of American and several Detroit pieces.

The Department of Asiatic Art has placed on exhibition in Gallery 24 the Kelekian Collection of early Chinese pottery. The collection, consisting of about one hundred and thirty pieces, is of particular interest because it covers a period of over a thousand years—from the Han

through the Yüan Dynasty—and includes characteristic examples of all the important periods during that time.

There are no porcelains in the group. The pastes vary from coarse earthenware to a fine porcellanous ware, typical of the different provinces or potteries where the pieces were made. The glazes and methods of decoration are equally varied. Two early painted vases are remarkable for their striking, colored, paneled figures, and the Tz'u-Chou Ware, made in the Province of Chihli in the Sung Dynasty, is particularly well represented in the collection. The exhibit offers an excellent opportunity to secure a comprehensive impression of early Chinese pottery.

The Institute's Fourteenth Annual Exhibition of American Art will be shown in the special exhibition galleries from April 13 to May 31. As in former years this exhibition will endeavor to show to the people of Detroit the best work that is being done by present-day American artists.

The Tuesday evening series of travel talks which began on March 13 will continue through April and until May 8. The subjects and speakers for the remaining talks are:

- April 3. Cathedrals and Chateaux of France—MISS WEADOCK.
- April 10. Northern Italy—MISS HARVEY.
- April 17. Florence—DR. HEIL.
- April 24. The Hill Towns of Italy—MISS WALTHER.
- May 1. Classic and Mediaeval Rome—MRS. WEIBEL.
- May 8. Rome of the Renaissance—MRS. WEIBEL.

Sicily may be given at a later date.