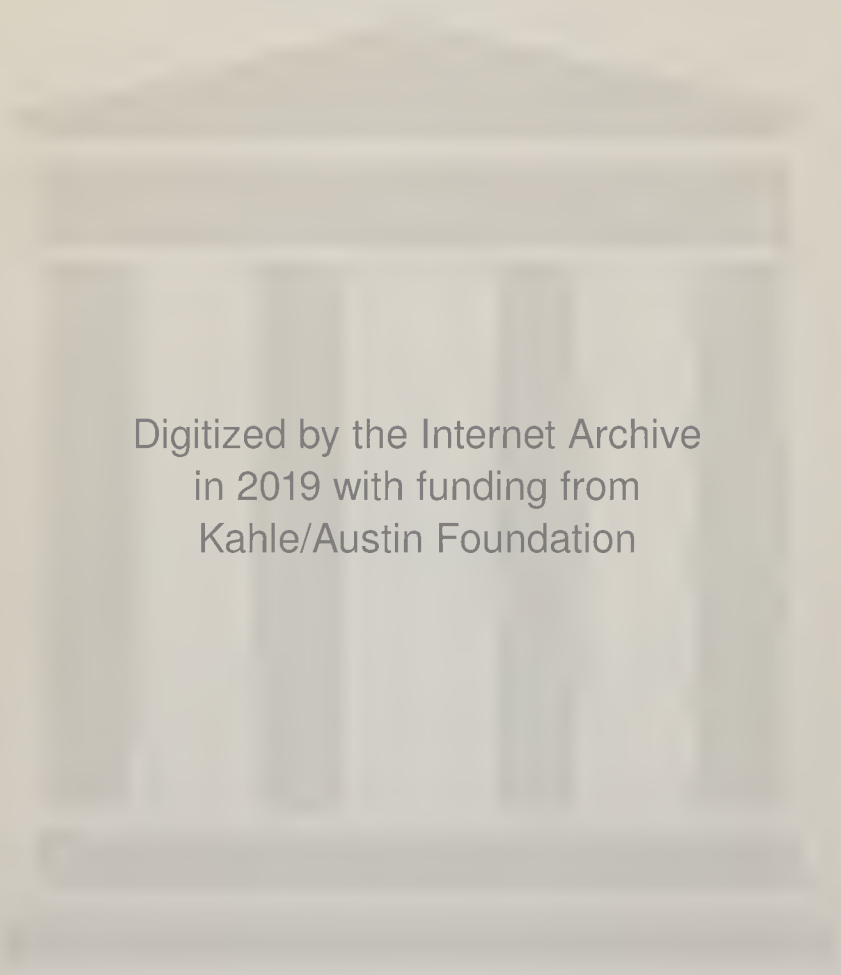


THE EARLY NORTHERN PAINTERS: STUDIES IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY

GIOVANNI ARNOLFINI OF LUCCA AND HIS WIFE. No. 186

JAN VAN EYCK

(*See page* 48.)

THE EARLY NORTHERN PAINTERS: STUDIES IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY BY MRS. C. R. PEERS. WITH TWENTY-FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS

PUBLISHED BY THE MEDICI SOCIETY, LTD.
LONDON: 7 GRAFTON ST., W.1 & 63 BOLD ST., LIVERPOOL
BOSTON, MASS.: 755 BOYLSTON STREET. MCMXXII

Printed in Great Britain at
The Mayflower Press, Plymouth. William Brendon & Son, Ltd.

TO

MY THREE SONS

CHARLES JOHN

ROBERT WITHERINGTON

ROGER ERNEST

My grateful acknowledgements are due to Mr. O. M. Dalton, Mr. G. F. Hill and Mr. Eric Maclagan for help and advice. To Mr. Collins Baker for his kindness in allowing me the use of the National Gallery Library, and to Mr. A. W. Hill, Director of the Botanic Gardens, Kew, for help in identifying flowers. To my husband I owe an especial debt of gratitude for his untiring sympathy and for his help in the final arrangement of the book.

G. K. P.

PREFACE

TO some, to enter the gloomy portal of the National Gallery, is to land on an enchanted island. Of these was the poet, who on going to the British Museum wrote this unexpected verse—

> "And there's a hall in Bloomsbury,
> No more I dare to tread,
> For all the stone men shout at me
> And swear they are not dead;
> And once I touched a broken girl
> And knew that marble bled."

Unhappily, Elroy Flecker has left us no poem on the National Gallery. Perhaps he never went there. This is the more to be regretted, since he would have interpreted its glories in a way only possible to a poet. To others, a visit to our National Collection is merely a thing to be endured. People even go to sleep there: they seem to find looking at masterpieces as commonplace an affair as eating their dinner, and far less interesting. But the poet is right, and this book is written for those who wish not only to land on, but to explore the island, who, in short, want to understand as well as love the pictures so dear to them. What has been said of religion is equally true of art: "The intelligence feeds the affections—who knows

most loves most, and he who loves most enjoys most."

Many pages are concerned with matters of historical and archæological interest which have nothing to do with the æsthetic pleasure given by the picture, except in so far as they affect the mental and spiritual outlook of the man who painted it.

The subject of the picture has been dwelt on because, after all, the subject is in a great measure the medium whereby the painter reaches the mind of the spectator.

As in its companion volume on the Italian primitives, "In the National Gallery," many stories of the saints portrayed in the pictures have been told. These are given in an abridged form, from the version popular in the Middle Ages.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER VIII

CHAPTER IX

CHAPTER X

CHAPTER XI

ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATE IN COLOUR

PLATES IN MONOCHROME

The plates in monochrome are, except where otherwise noted below the picture, reproduced from photographs supplied by Messrs. W. A. Mansell & Co.

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN OF MEDIÆVAL PAINTING NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE ALPS

THE origin of mediæval painting in Italy and Northern Europe is a subject of absorbing interest. North and south of the Alps, both groups are subdivided into a number of different schools, each having its own well-marked characteristics, yet so closely are they united in style, that it would be impossible to mistake a primitive painted in the Netherlands, Northern France or the Rhineland, for one from the hand of an Italian painter, no matter from what city he came.

Mountains are a barrier between countries, but rivers are roads connecting them. The Alps cut off in a great measure the artists of Southern Europe from those of the North, but the Rhine formed a link between all the Northern schools of painting from the Lake of Constance to the North Sea. The cities of Constance, Basle, Colmar, Strasbourg, Frankfurt, Mainz, and above all Cologne, were famous at one time or another for the artists working within their walls. To the east of the river were the countries of Suabia, Franconia, and Westphalia, all at some period renowned for their schools of painting: to the west was the Duchy of Burgundy and the Kingdom of France. At the mouth of the Rhine was the most

famous school of all, that of the Netherlands: in its own way second to none in the world.

Italian art descends in an unbroken line from Greece and Rome, and it is easy to trace the links of the chain that binds the great art of mediæval Italy to that of classical times. When the power of the Romans began to wane, their art and civilization, both of which were derived directly from Greece, moved eastward. In Syria and the East, the Greek tradition proved a vital, living force, strong enough to absorb into itself a powerful Oriental influence. The work of these Eastern Greeks was held in high esteem in Rome, and by them the walls of the great churches of Rome and Ravenna and other Italian cities were covered with mosaic decorations. There was, besides, constant intercourse between Constantinople and Rome, the Eastern and Western capitals of the Empire.

The Church, as soon as it became a strong and definite power, insisted that art should be her servant. The study of the nude was strictly forbidden, and artists were encouraged to rely on symbolical representations of their subjects. This type of art inevitably becomes dead and dull, though the artists preserved to the full the dignity and restraint of classical times. The mosaic decorations of St. Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna exhibit both the weakness and the grandeur of these Eastern Greeks.

The study of nature being thus discouraged, it was inevitable that the vital force of this school should decay, but in the thirteenth century three great artists arose in Italy—Margaritone of Arezzo, Cimabue of Florence, and Duccio of Siena. These men insisted

on painting what they saw, but at the same time they had behind them this strong tradition of form and style. With these painters rose the great school of Italian mediæval and Renaissance art. The Russian ikon of the present day represents the last flicker of the pure Eastern Greek school.

The Italians had yet another direct link with the art of classical times. When Rome and all her great civilization was finally submerged by the Barbarians, the majority of her works of art were torn down and destroyed.

For a long time these fragments lay half buried in Italian soil, but when art and learning began to bud again in Europe men sought and re-discovered these remains of civilization. Artists and sculptors who were wrestling with the first rudiments of their art turned eagerly to the study of the carved marble sarcophagi which were to be found cast away all over Italy.[1] This study of antique sculpture left an indelible mark on Italian art.

It is difficult at first to see any connection between the art of Northern Europe and that of Greece and Rome, yet the chain that connects them, though hidden, is almost as strong as that uniting the Italians with the art of classical times.

From early in the Christian era, there was a continual going and coming of monks, bishops and other ecclesiastical dignitaries from all parts of Europe to Rome, the centre of the world. In old chronicles we constantly

[1] The sculptors of the early Renaissance had for their models not the restrained and beautiful art of the Greeks, but that of the Romans, and even that was by no means of the best period.

come across the casual mention of some vast journey undertaken by an adventurous monk in search of holiness or learning. St. Ninian, who came from the banks of the Solway in the fourth century, went to Rome to attend the schools, and " receiving the word of God like a bee, formed for himself honeycombs of wisdom." After years spent in Rome he returned to Scotland and, on his way thither, passed through Gaul, staying in Tours, where he met Martin, the Bishop of that city, none other than the famous St. Martin, whose figure appears in so many pictures both north and south of the Alps. St. Ninian dedicated his church at Whithorn in Galloway to St. Martin, and the little church thus forms a link between Rome and Gaul and distant Scotland, and commemorates an ancient fellowship and a mighty journey.

Travellers, such as St. Ninian, picked men as they were in courage and endurance, no doubt wished on their return to make their churches and monasteries as beautiful as possible, but they could only describe the wonders they had seen; they had neither the workmen nor the materials to build great churches. Yet art steadily penetrated the North. The monks and churchmen who visited Rome never failed to bring back, for the use of their churches, many small objects easily carried, such as carved ivories and jewelled reliquaries, vessels for the altars and above all, illuminated manuscripts. In the seventh century, as we all know, Wilfrid of York and Benedict Biscop of Jarrow both went to Rome to get manuscripts with which to furnish their libraries of York and Jarrow. Literally hundreds of manuscripts and small objects

of art must thus have found their way to the remotest parts of Europe. So we find that works of art, created by or under the influence of Eastern Greek artists came to be the inspiration of native artists (for wherever man is, there is art, no matter how rudimentary) working in far-away monasteries, in Northumberland and Ireland, in the South of England, in France, in the Rhineland and the Netherlands. Everywhere we find the native art penetrated by, yet assimilating, this distant influence. From the fifth to the eighth century fine illuminated manuscripts came from Constantinople, and not only from Constantinople, but wherever the Romans still held sway. In 726, however, Leo III, Emperor of Constantinople, issued an edict against image worship, and in misdirected zeal innumerable pictures, statues and manuscripts were destroyed. This gave art in the East a blow from which it never recovered, and the artists, sculptors and writers had to find a fresh market. Many of them migrated to Aix-la-Chapelle and Tours, the former being the capital of Charlemagne, Emperor of the Franks. He was a great patron of the arts, and it is easy to detect the influence of the Eastern Greeks in the buildings erected by him, for the cathedral at Aix greatly resembles San Vitale at Ravenna, which was built by Justinian.

The Benedictine monastery of Tours produced under the direction of Alcuin of York many fine manuscripts in the latter part of the eighth century and the beginning of the ninth. These were highly valued long afterwards; for in 1521 Pope Leo X sent to Henry VIII of England a superb illuminated

manuscript of this school, in return for a presentation copy of that monarch's tract against Luther, "Assertio Septem Sacramentorum." In the light of after events the art-loving Pope must have somewhat grudged his handsome gift.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries fine manuscripts were produced at Winchester, and by the thirteenth the English and French were doing magnificent work. Paris was famous for this particular branch of art. Dante in the Purgatorio meets Oderisi, an illuminator and miniaturist of Gubbio, who worked in Rome in 1295, and thus addresses him:

"Oh," said I to him, "art thou not Oderisi, the honour of Gubbio, and the honour of that art which in Paris is called illuminating?"

In the thirteenth century it was flourishing in that city under the patronage of Louis IX. In 1260 a most beautiful Psalter was painted for him, and it is interesting to note that the monks who illustrated it did not represent King David and his warriors armed in contemporary fashion, but as wearing armour already in their day out of date and old fashioned; a little later the royal and knightly personages of Biblical history are represented in the dress and armour worn at the time the picture was painted.

We now come to the last links of the chain uniting art north and south of the Alps. At the beginning of the thirteenth century the Netherlands miniaturists[1] were far behind both the French and the English, but they soon caught them up, and equalled, if they did not surpass them.

[1] Miniaturists, the artists who painted the tiny pictures in the illuminated MSS.

A close study of the miniatures of the last half of the fourteenth century reveals a very finished and beautiful art. We have exquisite landscapes, with rivers and trees, dogs, birds and horses, and carefully studied figures. They are quite perfect, and we can see that the men who could thus paint were indeed masters of their art, and that it would be but a short step for the miniature artist to paint an easel picture.

The connection between portrait painting and the miniaturists is also very obvious. A picture of the noble person who had ordered the book, receiving it from the hand of the scribe, is frequently to be met in illuminated manuscripts, and it was but a small distance from these little pictures to the portrait proper. The portrait of Richard II in Westminster Abbey is a particularly good example of this transition, for it is a greatly enlarged miniature.

Churches and public buildings south of the Alps had small windows high up, and their big, bare walls demanded decoration. The Eastern Greek artists, as we have seen, covered them with mosaic pictures, and in their turn the Italians painted them in fresco; that is, the picture was painted straight on the wet plaster. These pictures made great demands both on the imagination and technical skill of the artist. If the design was dull and commonplace and the drawing poor, the very size of the picture showed up and magnified the faults of the composition and drawing. So that in Italy, from the first, fresco was esteemed the highest and most perfect branch of the painter's art.[1] In the North, men

[1] Perugino's beautiful "The Virgin and Child, St. Joseph and Shepherds," No. 1441 National Gallery, will give some idea of fresco, as contrasted with the easel pictures of the Northern school.

wanted light in their churches, so they built them with walls broken up by big windows, filled whenever possible with stained glass, so that there was less space for large wall paintings.

The painters of the Netherlands, France and the Rhineland inclined from the first to a delicate yet almost fierce realism, and they preferred to work on a small and limited space that could be finished to the last hair's breadth. They did not wish for the freedom of the great wall spaces. Like the sonneteers, they rejoiced in the narrow limits to which they condemned themselves.

> "In truth, the prison unto which we doom
> Ourselves, no prison is: and hence to me,
> In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
> Within the sonnet's scanty plot of ground
> Pleased if some souls (for such there needs must be)
> Who have felt the weight of too much liberty
> Should find brief solace there, as I have found."

In studying the works of the painters of the Netherlands we are immediately confronted by a very serious difficulty. No one who has spent much time in the rooms given over to the Flemish school in the National Gallery, can have failed to notice the scarcity of artists' names compared to the number of pictures ascribed to them. And the longer the pictures are looked at, the more incredible it seems that the same man can have painted pictures so different in style and feeling. The output of the painters of the Netherlands during the fifteenth and the first part of the sixteenth centuries must have been prodigious, and yet how little is left to us. The Guild system, which was extremely powerful in the North, sternly

discouraged its members from either working alone or making an individual name for themselves, so that unless a painter was a man of outstanding popularity, his name had no chance of emerging from obscurity. If, however, a famous painter was taken into the service of a prince, he was not obliged to join the town Guild and he consequently achieved greater freedom than his fellows.

Another cause for the obscurity that surrounds these pictures and their painters is to be found in the fact that it became the fashion in the eighteenth century to despise vastly the works of artists of mediæval and early Renaissance date, and above all those of the Northern schools ; and connoisseurs and art lovers combined in their admiration of the later Italian schools and the works of such artists as Caravaggio, the Carracci and Salvator Rosa. No doubt these new-comers displaced the despised mediæval pictures in many an eighteenth-century collection, and we know only too well what happens to works of art, no matter how beautiful they may be, once they cease to be the fashion. In all probability it is for this cause that so few pictures of the Netherlandish schools have come down to us. In the city archives of the Netherlands there are long lists of artists belonging to the Painters' Guilds still extant, but, except in a few instances through the patient and scholarly work of recent critics, the connection between them and their works has been lost.

In a measure Netherlands art is still an uncharted sea, and the lover of pictures, much as he would wish to discover the true history of the works he knows so

well, is forced to fall back on what, after all, is the surest way of appreciating them, the continual loving study of them. After all, names make but little difference; love of the picture is the real secret of the matter, and if we give our heart to a great art, we gain far more than we can ever give.

We have seen how close was the connection between art north and south of the Alps in very early times, and it may be well here to touch on the difference in the intellectual outlook of the Italian and Northern artists. The Italians, as we have seen, always preserved the great classical tradition: though they ceaselessly studied the human form, not only from the side of beauty and art, but through the sciences of anatomy and perspective, they were not content with realism, that is to say, the exact representation of what was before them: their inward eye was always searching for the highest and most beautiful type of the human form. Their imagination drove them ceaselessly onward in this passionate search for ideal beauty, and in all their work, no matter how early, we find an extraordinary sensitiveness to beauty of line and form: whatever they see passes through the refining process of their imagination. Of course, in the hands of the lesser men, these high qualities were apt to produce merely a mannered and empty style; their saints and angels are never lacking in dignity and refinement, but they are sometimes very wanting in life and spirit. When the sad time of general decadence in Italian art arrived, the love of line and form, of refinement and dignity, degenerated into staginess and mere seeking for effect.

North of the Alps, in the place of the Italian passion for ideal beauty, we have an equal passion for realism and the truth of the obvious. The best of the Southern artists worshipped intellectual truth, but the Northern men seldom got beyond the obvious truth of painting what they saw before them. They painted this with the most loving care and accuracy, but their intellect is fixed on the perception of a beauty which is entirely spiritual. Imagination is the first quality in Italian, but the second in Netherlands art.

The Netherlands painters give the impression of loving every human being they painted, no matter how plain and homely he or she might be. There is no sign of selection or search after ideal types. Their saints are plain (generally very plain), ordinary women, and sober, respectable men. The angels are the sons and daughters of these excellent citizens, or their equally respectable maid-servants. The artists paint them in long white robes ; they add wings—and they are angels. They loved what they saw before them, and with passionate devotion they paint the blue veins on the Virgin's breast, the creases in an old man's eyelids : there is no end to the lavish care they spend on every tiny detail of their picture.

Never in the whole history of art have there been such colourists as the painters of the North during the fifteenth century. For depth and brilliance, for glow and gem-like sparkle, they have never been surpassed or even approached.

The Italians, when they painted in fresco, attained a beautiful and harmonious scheme of colour; the medium itself made for softness and harmony, but in

range and depth it cannot compare for a moment with that of the Northern schools.

In their oil and tempera too, the fifteenth-century painters of Italy often achieved at their best a diffused and glowing scheme, but again it was in no way comparable with that of the Northern men, for their colouring is like a jewel whose liquid, luminous depths seem fathomless.

They are the great painters of the inner spirit, for they are always trying to express a condition of mind, an atmosphere of thought: there is a hush and stillness in all their pictures. Their saints and donors are very ordinary folk, it is true, but they are all absorbed in the mysteries of contemplation and prayer; and an angel from the North never looks out of the picture at the spectator, as the more quick-witted Southern angels sometimes do. The decadence of Netherlands art is infinitely more painful than that of Italy. More and more the artists relied on the exact rendering of the thing seen, and less and less on selection, arrangement, dignity, till at last the hush and peace of the pictures gone, they became gross, vulgar, and above all ugly. To the end they retained in a great measure their sound craftmanship, just as the Italians retained their wonderful feeling for line and form, but in both cases it was a death in life.

CHAPTER II

THE GUILDS. CITIES. TRAVELLING. MENTAL OUTLOOK

ANYONE undertaking more than a very cursory study of art and life in the Netherlands and Germany during the fifteenth century cannot fail to be struck by the strength and influence of the Guilds. The Guild system pervaded everything in those days: there were religious guilds and charitable guilds, business guilds and workmen's guilds, and most towns had usually two Archers' Guilds. North of the Alps the system was more powerful, and far more developed than it was in the south: the Northern peoples showed from the first a greater aptitude for working in combination. At first the Guilds concerned themselves solely with the work and welfare of their members, but by degrees men came to see that only through combination could they resist tyranny, for at that time all rulers, from kings and princes downwards, had practically absolute power over the lives, limbs and property of their subjects. The Church was quick to see the value of the system, and not only had numberless confraternities of its own, but linked up the life of the Guilds in every possible way with itself. The Merchants' Guilds were the richest and most influential, because the merchants were also bankers;

they regulated trade and finance, and had considerable influence on foreign policy. The Craftsmen's Guilds, composed as they were of artisans and skilled workmen, were also very powerful.

The Guilds were self-governing bodies, the masters electing the deans who in their turn elected the sheriff and magistrates of the city, who were responsible to their overlord for the government and safety of the town. The masters of the Guilds were not the rulers of the city, but the Guild system developed into municipal government.

The Guilds had great power within themselves. In 1368 Jean Raine, at Douai, was condemned to death and executed for having given false measure (certainly those were brave days for the consumer). Their discipline, enforced as it was by heavy fines, was most severe. It fixed the length of the working day, and working overtime was strictly forbidden under pain of a fine. The Guilds were very charitable and their poorer members were well looked after. To belong to one in the Middle Ages meant a very real insurance and safeguard for a man and his family.

These Corporations kept up with their overlord a strife, sometimes covert, sometimes open, but always unceasing. He, on his side, was for ever trying to squeeze money out of them, and to encroach upon their hard-won liberties. The usual mode of procedure was this. The Duke of Burgundy wanted money, either to wage war on one of his neighbours, or to finance his luxurious and extravagant court. He would then go to Bruges or Ghent or some other likely town, flatter and cajole the burghers, and finally

suggest that they should either pay him a lump sum down or impose a stiff tax on the city. The burghers would then confer, and if his demands were at all within reason, generally stipulated that he should grant them some coveted privilege, or give them a fresh charter of liberties, and when they had secured it, they paid up. But if the Duke's demands were too extravagant they would refuse his request, and after that, it was generally a question of who could get in the first blow and hold out longest.

In 1447, for example, Philip Duke of Burgundy attended in person the municipal assembly at Ghent, and with the idea of flattering the magistrates and burghers, he spoke in Flemish. Philip himself was a thorough Frenchman. He wished them to impose a salt tax on the Flemish Communes. The magistrates of Ghent flatly refused his request, and so began a long and bitter struggle. By 1452 the city was in open revolt, and the burghers spoke of appealing to their suzerain, the King of France. The other cities of Flanders, though they too would not pay the salt tax, had not the courage to cast in their lot with Ghent. The Ghenters, against great odds, fought till July, 1453, when they were defeated at Gavern, and Philip made hard terms. The deans of guilds were forbidden to help in the election of sheriffs. Their banners were to be given up to the Duke and placed under five keys, deposited in the care of five different people, and one gate was to be closed every Thursday, in memory of the day when the citizens had marched through it to attack their lord, and another to be barred up in perpetuity or at the pleasure of

the Duke. The city also paid a heavy fine. On July 30th, 1453, a civic procession, headed by the Abbot of St. Bavon and the Prior of the Carthusians, prostrated themselves before Philip outside the town crying "Mercy on the town of Ghent." The Ghenters were graciously pardoned, but it is significant that Philip did not after all impose the salt tax, and two years later he again increased their privileges, so that though the burghers appeared to be beaten, they had in reality gained a great deal and showed Philip that he could not with impunity infringe their liberty.[1]

The populace of the cities, both of the Netherlands and Italy, was freedom-loving and turbulent, the Northerners being the more brutal in their methods, while the Italians showed greater refinement and artistry in their murders and assassinations.

In all cases liberty was an entirely local matter. Ghent and Bruges might be groaning under the exactions of their overlord, while Liége, which was governed by its prince-bishop, was for the moment enjoying comparative freedom. Siena might be torn by factions while Florence enjoyed peace. Still worse, a city might endure the horrors of excommunication, and be entirely cut off from its neighbours. It is difficult for us to realize what immense power the rulers, temporal and spiritual, had over their subjects, but the following incident is decidedly illuminating:

"In 1235 the Archbishop of Rheims excommuni-

[1] "Charles the Bold," by Ruth Putnam.

cated the burghers of that commune, damning them with the anathema of perpetual malediction.

'May they be accursed in the city and accursed in the country, their goods accursed and their bodies accursed.

May they perish to all eternity.

May no Christian greet them.

May no priest say Mass for them.

May they be buried in the grave of an ass and scattered like dung on the face of the fields.

Whosoever shall have eaten, drunk, spoken or prayed with one of these shall be excommunicated even as they.' "[1]

When we consider that people believed all this literally, one feels that the Church had a most unfair advantage.

However, the Rheims burghers showed a fine spirit, for they took their grievance to King Louis IX of France,[2] who, while upholding the Archbishop's authority and rights, made him take off the excommunication, and obtained from him a written engagement that he would treat his burghers with humanity. This document he wisely gave into the citizens' keeping.

To return to our Guilds.

Those of St. George and St. Sebastian were of great importance, for they were the Archers' Guilds and drew their membership from all those who wished to

[1] "A Short History of France," by Mme. Duclaux.

[2] Afterwards Saint Louis of France.

become proficient in shooting. The costume of the Archers was most magnificent: the Archers of Bruges, when they attended the great shoot at Tournai in 1394, were dressed in silk damask worn with chains set with jewels. These meetings must have been rather like gigantic football or cricket matches, with the teams numbering several hundreds. By reason of these Guilds, the city had always an admirable body of trained men ready to fight in their overlord's cause, but equally ready to fight against him if necessary.[1]

The Guilds of the Craftsmen, to which the painters belonged, had very strict rules and methods of procedure. A young man could not become an apprentice till he was twenty years old, and he remained in this subordinate position for from two to six years, after which he could, if he wished, become a master himself. At the end of his apprenticeship, a young man often travelled from town to town as a journeyman. In this way an artist became acquainted with the work of different schools, and different masters, before settling down as a master in his own town guild.

All had to pass a kind of examination, in addition to paying a fee when they rose to the rank of master: the furriers had to make a fur amess such as that worn by the Canon in Gerard David's "Mystic Marriage" (No. 1432), and "A Canon with his Patron Saints" (No. 1045): the bootmakers had to furnish a specimen pair of boots and shoes, the painter had to paint a little statuette of the Virgin and so forth. The

[1] "Costumes, Mœurs et Usages des Corporations et Métiers," by Felix de Vigne.

study of the Guild system is very difficult, because each city had its own peculiar Guild regulations.

When we examine the effects of the Guild system on the painters of the Netherlands and Germany, we find that they certainly made for good and thorough workmanship, and insured good materials. In many cases the Guilds bought in bulk, retailing the materials of their art to the painters. On the other hand, while they encouraged good workmanship, they tended to discourage men of genius. They did not want any special member to become famous outside his Guild, and they encouraged the corporation as against the individual in every way. The painters' names were entered in the registers of the Guilds to which they belonged, and there they still remain for us to see, but too often the man's life and history with regard to his work has been lost and absorbed in the society to which he belonged.

Each Guild had its patron saint and a chapel, or at any rate an altar, of its own in one of the city churches, and it is for these chapels and altars that many of our pictures were originally painted.

The Guilds had another great use. They formed a centre where painters travelling from foreign countries could get in touch with their brother artists on their arrival in the city, and artists who were making any prolonged stay in the town usually joined the Painters' Guild. The Guilds took it on themselves to entertain any distinguished artist who was visiting the town; a most famous instance is to be found in the account Albrecht Dürer has left to us of the entertainment given in his honour by the Guild of Antwerp

when he was there in the summer of 1520. This entry occurs in his diary on August 5th.[1]

"On Sunday, it was St. Oswald's Day, the painters invited me to the hall of their Guild with my wife and maid. All their service was of silver, and they had other splendid ornaments and very costly meats. All their wives also were there. And as I was being led to the table the company stood on both sides as if they were leading some great lord. And there were amongst them men of very high position who all behaved most respectfully towards me with deep courtesy, and promised to do every thing in their power agreeable to me that they knew of. And as I was sitting there in such honour the Syndic (Adrian Horebouts) of Antwerp came with two servants, and presented me with four cans of wine in the name of the Town Councillors of Antwerp, and they had bidden him say that they wished thereby to show their respect for me and to assure me of their good will. Wherefore I returned them my humble thanks and offered my humble service. After that came Master Peeter (Frans), the town carpenter, and presented me with two cans of wine with the offer of his willing services. So when we had spent a long and merry time together till late in the night, they accompanied us home with lanterns in great honour. And they begged me to be ever assured and confident of their good will, and promised that in whatever I did they would be all-helpful to me. So I thanked them and laid me down to sleep."

This extract, in its vividness, is like the scenes we see

[1] "Albert Durer," by T. Sturge Moore, p. 143.

through the windows in Netherlands pictures, where we see the town and the people in it going about their usual avocations.

For a famous man like Dürer, no doubt when he and his party had safely arrived at their destination the trials of the way thither were soon forgotten, but at the best travelling in those days must have been very trying. Even for the rich and great, it must have been a depressing and nerve-racking affair, but for those who journeyed for business or of necessity it must have too often been a terrible adventure. The great rivers were used wherever possible as the travellers' highway, and the dangers and difficulties were so well known, that there were brotherhoods and societies established in the different cities, where wayfarers might seek aid and assistance. At Hamburg, for instance, in 1424, the painter Meister Francken was paid a hundred marks for nine panels for the St. Thomas altar, in the chapel of the English Travellers' Society and Brotherhood of St. Thomas. This brotherhood dealt with the concerns of business, as well as those of the soul, and their patron saint was St. Thomas of Canterbury.

Happily in the "Life" of Henry Suso, the Dominican friar of Cologne, we have long accounts of his journeys through the Rhineland undertaken on behalf of his order, and he gives such a vivid picture of the life of a traveller in those days, that it is worth quoting at some length.

"On one occasion when he had travelled to Strasbourg, according to his custom, and was on his return home, he fell into a great stream of water caused by

an overflow of the Rhine, and he had with him a new little book which he had just finished, and with which the foul fiend was very wroth. As he was being swept helplessly along by the current, at the peril of his life, the faithful God so ordered it that at that very moment there came up by chance from Strasbourg a young, newly made Prussian knight, who, venturing into the turbid and raging water, saved the Servitor[1] and his companion from a miserable death.

"Once upon a time he set forth on a journey under obedience when the weather was cold; and after travelling on a carriage the whole day through, until evening without food in the cold wind and frosty weather, he arrived at a troubled piece of water which was deep and rapid, owing to the great quantity of rain which had fallen. The man who drove him went too near the bank through carelessness, and the carriage turning over, the brother was shot out of it and fell into the water on his back. The carriage fell on him, so that he could not turn himself in the water either to this side or to that, nor yet help himself at all, and in this state he and the carriage floated down for some distance towards a mill. The driver and others ran thither, and jumping into the water seized hold of him and tried their best to draw him out, but the heavy carriage lay upon him and pressed him down. When at last they succeeded with great labour in lifting the carriage off him, they drew him out to land dripping wet, and he had not been long out of the water before his clothes froze upon him from the

[1] Suso always alludes to himself as the "Servitor." "The Life of Blessed Henry Suso," by himself, p. 103.

excessive cold. He began to tremble with cold so that his teeth chattered, and in this miserable plight he stood still for a long time, and then looking up to God exclaimed: 'O, my God, what am I to do? What course am I to adopt? It is late, and night is at hand, and if there is no town or village near where I can warm and refresh myself I must die: and what a wretched kind of death this will be.'

"He looked around on all sides until at last he espied far away upon a hill a very small hamlet. He crawled thither all wet and frozen as he was, and by the time he reached it night had set in. He went up and down begging for shelter in God's name, but he was driven away from the houses, and no one would take pity on him. Then the frost and fatigue began to attack his heart and put him in fear for his life upon which he cried with a loud voice to God: 'O Lord, O Lord, it would have been better hadst thou let me be drowned, for then there would have been an end of it, instead of my being frozen to death in this street.'

"These words of lamentation were overheard by a peasant who had before this driven him away, but who now, touched with compassion, took him in his arms and brought him into his house where he spent a miserable night."

This quotation gives a sufficiently depressing impression of travelling in mediæval days, but the next is even more discouraging:

"Once upon a time, when the Servitor was returning from the Netherlands, his road lay upon the Rhine. He had with him a companion who was young and a

good walker. Now it happened one day that he could not keep up with his swift companion, for he had become very tired and ill, and in consequence the companion had gone ahead of him about two miles. The Servitor looked back to see if anyone was following in whose company he might go through the forest at the skirts of which he had arrived, for it was late in the day. The forest, moreover, was extensive and of ill repute, for many persons had been murdered in it. The Servitor therefore stopped at the outskirts of the forest, and waited to see whether anyone was coming.

"At length two persons approached at a very rapid pace: the one was a young and pretty woman, the other a tall, ferocious-looking man carrying a spear and a long knife, and he had on a black jerkin. The Servitor was struck with dread at the terrible appearance of the man, and he looked round to see if there was anyone following; but he saw no one. He thought within himself: O Lord! what kind of people are these? Bad. How am I to go through this great forest, and how will it fare with me? Then he made the sign of the cross over his heart and ventured it. When they were already deep in the forest, the woman came forward to him, and asked him who he was and what was his name. As soon as he had told her his name she answered: 'Dear sir, I know you well by name. I pray you to hear my confession.' Then she began to confess, saying: 'Alas! worthy sir, it is with sorrow I tell you my sad lot. Do you see the man who follows us? He is by trade a murderer, and he murders people here in this wood and elsewhere, and takes from them

their money and their clothes. He never spares anyone. He has deceived and carried me off from my friends, who are persons of good repute, and I am forced to be his wife.'

"The Servitor was so terrified by these words that he nearly fainted, and he cast a very sorrowful look round him, if haply there were anyone in sight or hearing, or any mode of escape. But there was no one to be seen or heard in the dark forest coming after them, except the murderer. Then he thought within himself: 'If, weary as thou art, thou triest to flee he will soon overtake and kill thee; and if thou criest out no one will hear thee in this wilderness, and death again will be thy lot.'

"When the woman had finished confessing she went back to the murderer and besought him privily, saying: 'Come now, dear friend, go forward and make thy confession also; for it is a pious belief among my people that whoever confesses to him, however sinful he may be, will never be abandoned by God. Do it then, that God may help thee, for his sake at thy last hour.'

"While the two were thus whispering to each other the Servitor's terror knew no bounds, and the thought came to him: 'Thou art betrayed!' The murderer was silent and went forward. Now when the poor Servitor saw the murderer advancing upon him, spear in hand, his whole frame quivered with dread, and he thought within himself: 'Alas! now thou art lost'; for he knew not what they had been talking about. At this point it happened that the Rhine ran close to the wood, and the narrow path lay along the bank. More-

over the murderer so contrived it that the brother was forced to walk on the side next the water while he walked next the wood. As the Servitor went along in this manner with trembling heart, the murderer began to confess and revealed to him all the murders and crimes which he had ever committed. Especially he spoke of a horrible murder, which struck terror into the heart of the Servitor, and which he thus described :

" ' I came once into this wood to rob and murder, as I have done to-day, and meeting with a venerable priest, I confessed to him while he was walking beside me at this very spot, just as you are doing ; and when the confession was over I drew forth this knife and ran him through with it, and then thrust him from me over the bank into the Rhine.'

" These words and the gestures with which the murderer accompanied them, made the Servitor turn pale . . . and he kept looking every moment at his side expecting that the same knife would be thrust into him, and that he would then be pushed into the river. . . . The murderer's damsel caught sight of his woe-stricken face, and running up, said : ' Good sir, be not afraid. He will not kill you.' The murderer added : ' Much good has been told me concerning you, and you shall have the benefit of it to-day, for I will let you live. Beg of God to help and favour me, a poor criminal, at my last hour for your sake.'

" In the meantime they had come out of the forest, and the Servitor's companion was sitting there under a tree waiting for him. The murderer and his partner passed on."

It is impossible, in reading this particular adventure of the Servitor's, to avoid wondering if the murderer, seeing poor Suso's terror, did not purposely heighten the horror of the situation. However, in any case to walk through a dark wood in sole company with a professional murderer and his lady would be a sufficiently terrifying episode in a journey.

The work of the Northern Primitives is marked by a peculiar sweetness, simplicity and spiritual fervour. These qualities remind us that it arose in a region which in the century before had produced some of the greatest among the mystics.

South of the Alps we find the same sequence of events; for the age of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Catherine of Siena and Dante, preceded the rise of Italian art.

Mysticism was widely diffused on the banks of the Rhine, and the form it took was an intense belief in the closest spiritual communion with God, in conjunction with common-sense, practical work for others. The mystics insisted on the personal side of the spiritual life as against, or rather in addition to, the institutions and authority of the Church. Their religion being of a purely personal nature, they did not form themselves into orders of monks or friars, but groups of these thinkers sprang up all over the Rhineland, notably at Basle, where they named themselves the "Friends of God."

The writings of Eckhart, Tauler, Ruysbroeck and Suso have come down to us, and the autobiography of the last gives a most vivid picture of life in the fourteenth century. He writes with singular charm and

simplicity, and it is difficult in writing of the school of painting north of the Alps to resist further quotation from his life.

Blessed Henry Suso entered the Dominican friary at Constance at an early age; he spent many years in the house of his order at Cologne, and died at Ulm in 1365.

He thus describes early morning in his convent at Cologne: as we have already seen, he speaks of himself in the third person in his "Life," and always terms himself the "Servitor."

"It was his custom to go into his chapel after Matins, and sitting down upon his chair, to take a little rest. He sat there but a short time until the watchman announced the break of day: when opening his eyes, he used to fall at once upon his knees and salute the rising morning star, heaven's gentle Queen, with this intention that, as the little birds in summer greet the daylight, and receive it joyously, even so did he mean to greet with joyful longings her, who brings the light of everlasting day: and he did not merely say these words, but he accompanied them with a sweet still melody in his soul."

We recognize here the devotion to Nature and simple everyday things, combined with deep spiritual feeling, so noticeable in the work of the early Northern painters.

It is impossible to make any attempt to recreate the times in which our pictures were painted, without quoting also from the "Golden Legend."

This book was written by Jacobus de Voragine (James of the Whirlpool), Archbishop of Genoa, about

the year 1275, and is a collection of the Lives of the Saints. The author used the histories written before his time, and he also industriously collected legends and miracle stories current in his own day. The Golden Legend was a most popular work in the Middle Ages, and the stories were well known to everyone, and were regarded as historical documents in no way doubtful or legendary. In one single instance, it is true, the good bishop finds his faith put to a slight strain, for in the story of St. Margaret at the point where the dragon bursts asunder to admit of the emergence of the saint he has just swallowed, he says, " It is said that it is apocryphal."

The " Golden Legend " was first printed in 1470 It was written in Latin, but Caxton translated it and printed the first English edition in 1483.

The popular romances and stories current in the Middle Ages shed much light on the mental atmosphere of the time. One quality, and that of fairyland, they have in common, whether they are stories of kings and queens, knights and distressed damsels, such as one finds in the " Morte d'Arthur," or the " History of Jaufre Rudel and his Princesse Lointaine," or the " Legends of the Saints." They all come from fairyland. Fact and fancy are inextricably mixed up together. The story of St. Mary Magdalene, as known in the Middle Ages, is a delightful and typical instance. For a short time the pious author keeps to the comparatively tame account of the saint's life to be found in the Gospels, but he soon launches out into a much more spacious narrative. He makes all the wonderful adventures he relates as circumstantial as possible, by

telling us exactly where they happened and under what conditions. The legend of St. Mary Magdalene [1] was most popular, for she was a great favourite in the Middle Ages, and appears continually in altar pieces and pictures both north and south of the Alps. She generally pairs with St. John the Baptist, possibly because they were both dwellers in the desert. In the "Golden Legend" we learn that Mary Magdalene possessed the castle of Magdalo, her brother Lazarus having part of Jerusalem, while Martha had Bethany as her portion. Mary Magdalene gave herself up to riotous living, and Lazarus to his duties of knighthood, while Martha governed their possessions for them with wisdom and prudence, "When Magdalene abounded in riches, and because delight is fellow to riches and abundance of things: and for so much as she shone in beauty greatly, and in riches, so much the more she submitted her body to delights, and therefore she lost her right name and was called customably a sinner."

St. Mary Magdalene, Martha, Lazarus and their two maids Marcelle and Cedony, "which was born blind and after enlumined of the Lord: all these together, and many other Christian men were taken of the miscreants and put in a ship in the sea without any tackle or rudder for to be drowned. But by the purveyance of Almighty God they came all to Marseilles where, as none would receive them to be lodged, they dwelled and abode under a porch to fore a temple of the people of that country. And when the blessed Mary Magdalene saw the people assembled at this

[1] "The Golden Legend," Temple Classics, Vol. IV, p. 72.

temple for to do sacrifice to the idols, she arose up peaceably with a glad visage, a discreet tongue and well speaking, and began to preach the faith and law of Jesu Christ. Then were they amarvelled of the beauty, of the reason and of the fair speaking of her. And after that it happed that the Prince of the Province and his wife made sacrifice to the idols for to have a child. And Mary Magdalene preached to them Jesu Christ and forbade them those sacrifices."

And all this time the saints were still beneath the cold shelter of the porch. That night the saint appeared in a vision to the lady saying: 'Wherefore hast thou so much riches and sufferest the poor people of our Lord to die for hunger and for cold?'

The lady feared and doubted to show this vision to her husband. However, the saint visited her three nights running, and on the third time she appeared to the Prince of the Province also "with a frowning and angry visage like fire, like as all the house had burned, and said, 'Thou tyrant and member of thy father the devil, with that serpent thy wife that will not say to thee my words. Thou hast filled thy belly by gluttony with divers manner of meats and sufferest to perish for hunger the holy saints of the Lord. Thou shalt not escape nor depart without punishment, thou tyrant and felon, because thou hast so long tarried.'

And when the husband and wife woke they trembled, and the lady said, 'Sir, hast thou seen the vision I have seen?' 'I have seen,' said he, 'and am sore afraid what we shall do.' And the wife said, 'It is

more profitable for us to obey her than to run into the ire of her God.' For which cause they received the saints into their house and ministered unto their necessities."

After a while, seeing the good disposition of the Prince and his wife, the saint prayed that a child might be vouchsafed to them, and her prayer was granted. "Then the husband determined to go to St. Peter and St. Paul who were then in Rome to wit if it were true that Mary Magdalene had preached of Jesu Christ. And his wife said to him, 'What will ye do, sir, ween ye to go without me? Nay, when thou shalt depart I shall depart with thee, and when thou shalt return again I shall return, and when thou shalt rest and tarry I shall rest and tarry.' To whom her husband answered, 'Dame, it shall not be so, for the perils of the sea be without number. Thou mightest lightly perish, thou shalt abide at home and take heed to our possessions.' And this lady for nothing would change her purpose, but fell down on her knees at his feet sore weeping, requiring him to take her with him. So at last he consented and granted her request."

They shortly afterwards put to sea, but before long they encountered a violent storm. The lady fell ill of terror, her little son was born only to die shortly after with his mother. And the Prince of the Province who was now a pilgrim wept strongly, and said to the captain, 'Alas! caitiff, alas! what shall I do? I desired to have a son, and I have lost both the mother and the son.'

Then the mariners set the ship towards the land, and they left the body there lying, and covered it

with a mantle : and the father laid his little son on the breast of the dead mother, and said weeping, "'O, Mary Magdalene, why camest thou to Marseilles to my great loss and evil adventures? This I had by thy prayer, and to thee I commend them, and also I commend to thy God, if he be mighty, that he remember the soul of the mother, that he, by thy prayer have pity on the child that he perish not.' Then he covered the body all about with the mantle and the child also and held forth on his journey. And when he came to St. Peter, the saint saw the pilgrim's cross upon his shoulder, and he demanded him what he was and wherefore he came, and he told to him all. To whom Peter said, 'Peace be to thee, thou art welcome and hast believed good counsel. And be not thou heavy if thy wife sleep and the little child rest with her, for our Lord is almighty for to give to whom he will and to take away that he hath given, and to re-establish and give again that he hath taken, and to turn all heaviness and weeping into joy.' Then Peter led him into Jerusalem and showed to him all the places where Jesu Christ preached and did miracles, and the place where He suffered death, and where He ascended into heaven. And when he was well informed of St. Peter in the faith and that two years were passed he took his ship for to return again to Marseilles. And as they sailed by the sea they came by the ordinance of God by the rock where the body of his wife was left and his son. And the little child who had all the while been kept safe by Mary Magdalene went oft sithes to the seaside, and like small children, took small stones and threw them into the sea. And when the

father with the mariners came to the island they saw the little child playing with stones on the seaside, like as he was wont to do. And they marvelled much what he was. And when the child saw them, which never had seen people before, he was afraid and ran secretly to his mother's breast and hid him under the mantle. And then the father went for to see them, and found the child which was right fair. Then he took the child in his arms and said, 'O, blessed Mary Magdalene, I were well happy and blessed if my wife were now alive and might live, and come again with me into my country.' And with these words the woman respired and took life and said, like as she had been waked of her sleep, 'O, blessed Mary Magdalene, thou art of great merit and glorious.' And when he heard it he said, 'Livest thou, my right dear and best beloved wife?' To whom she said, 'Yea, certainly I live, and am now come from the pilgrimage from whence thou art come, and all in likewise as St. Peter led thee in Jerusalem and showed to thee all the places where our Lord suffered death, and many other places, I was with you with Mary Magdalene, which led and accompanied me, and showed to me all the places which I well remember and have in mind.' And then the good pilgrim received his wife and his child and went to the ship. And soon after they came to the port of Marseilles. And they found the blessed Mary Magdalene preaching with her disciples. And they kneeled down to her feet and recounted to her all that had happened to them and received baptism of St. Maximin. And then they destroyed all the temples of the idols in the city of Marseilles and made churches

of Jesu Christ. And of one accord they chose the blessed St. Lazarus for to be bishop of that city.

And in the meanwhile the blessed Mary Magdalene, desirous of sovereign contemplation, sought a right sharp desert, and took a place which was ordained by the angel of God, and abode there by the space of thirty years without knowledge of anybody. In which place she had no comfort of running water, nor of trees, nor of herbs. And every day, at every hour canonical, she was lifted up into the air of angels, and heard the glorious song of the heavenly companies with her bodily ears. Of which she was fed and filled with right sweet meats, and then was brought again by the angels into her proper place, in such wise as she had no need of corporal nourishing.

And at the end of thirty years she came to die, and for the customable vision that she had of angels every day, the cheer and visage of her shone as clear as it had been the rays of the sun, and her right blessed soul departed from the body and went to the Lord."

The standpoint of the people of mediæval times with regard to art was quite different from ours, for up till nearly the end of the fifteenth century art was looked upon as part of religion. Between 1150 and 1250 a monk, Theophilus by name, who may have been either French or German, wrote a treatise on art.[1] He writes of painting, glass manufacturing, enamelling and other things, and he gives the most careful practical directions as to how the craftsman is to set about his work: what kind of glue is to be

[1] "Materials of the Painters Craft," by A. P. Laurie, p. 157.

used in joining panels before painting on them (he advises for this, cheese mixed with quick-lime): how the paints are to be ground and mixed, and the different kind of mediums to be used. It is a workman's handbook, yet the third book begins with a most beautiful exhortation to the painter on the sacred nature of his calling which, says Theophilus, "is given thee by the grace of the sevenfold spirit," that is the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear. "By the spirit of piety thou knowest what, to whom, when, how much and in what manner thou shouldest work: and, lest the vice of covetousness or greed creep upon thee, thou dost moderate the price of thy reward by pious consideration."[1] Theophilus then goes on: "Cheered by these supporting virtues, my beloved son, thou hast approached God's house in all faith and adorned it with such abundant comeliness: and having illuminated the vaults or the walls with divers works and divers colours, thou hast in a manner shown forth to the beholders a vision of God's Paradise, bright as springtide with flowers of every hue, fresh with green grass and leaves, and refreshing the souls of the saints with crowns proportional to their divers merits whereby thou makest them to praise God in his creatures and to preach his wonders in his works. For man's eye knoweth not whereon first to gaze: if he look up at the vaults, they are as mantles embroidered with spring flowers; if he regards the walls there is a manner of paradise; if he consider the light streaming through the windows, he marvelleth at the

[1] "A Mediæval Garner," by G. G. Coulton, p. 168.

priceless beauty of the glass and at the variety of this most precious work. If the faithful soul chance to behold the effigy of our Lord's passion expressed in all its lineaments, then he is pricked to the heart; if again he see how great tortures the saints endured in their mortal bodies, and how precious a prize of eternal life they won, then doth he receive the encouragement to a better life: or beholding how great is the joy in heaven, how awful the torments amid the flames of hell, then is he cheered with hope for his good deeds, and smitten with fear at the thought of his sins. Work therefore now, good man, happy in this life before God's face and man's, and happier still in the life to come, by whose labour and zeal so many burnt offerings are devoted to God."

It is not to be supposed that the painters were acquainted with the writings of the mystics. They were craftsmen, working at their trade with small leisure for the accomplishments of reading and writing. That it was an unusual accomplishment is proved by the fact that it is specifically mentioned that Jacques Daret, Roger van der Weyden's fellow-apprentice in Campin's workshop, received the tonsure at fifteen, not as intending to become a priest, but to show that he could read and had some knowledge of Latin and history. We know that thoughts do not solely rely on books for their transmission; they pass almost insensibly from mind to mind, and the Rhine from its source to the North Sea was a great highway, linking men together.

Mr. G. G. Coulton tells us, and it is a significant fact, that the dwellings of the English mystics of the

Middle Ages are all found on the trade route from Germany. We thus see that it was the public, who in the first instance created the atmosphere and influenced the artists, and not the artists who created the atmosphere and influenced the public.

CHAPTER III

JAN VAN EYCK, 1385–1441

SO much has been written about Bruges that it really seems wiser to write no more, and a very few words will suffice to describe the town. Everyone knows how very beautiful the city was in the Middle Ages, and that it was one of the most prosperous and influential of all the ports of Europe. Rich silks and fine cloth (woven from the sheep's wool imported from England) and magnificent goldsmith's work were all made in Bruges. It must have been a bustling, thriving place in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but what perhaps strikes us more than anything else was its cosmopolitan society. Every great merchant house—and merchants in those days were also bankers—had its accredited agent living in Bruges.

There was a large Italian colony, a Spanish colony, an English and a Scotch colony, colonies of Scandinavians and colonies of Germans, and the rich merchants composing them were great patrons of art. Tommaso Portinari, agent for the Medici, employed Hugo van der Goes to paint an altar-piece for the church in which he was interested, the Ognissanti in Florence. This picture is still there, though it no longer actually hangs in the church. Giovanni

Arnolfini, of the house of Arnolfini, bankers of Lucca, commissioned Van Eyck to paint him and his wife in their house at Bruges, for which we can never be sufficiently grateful to him, for this picture now hangs in the National Gallery. Sir Edward Boncle of Edinburgh, when he came over to visit his brother, Alexander the merchant of Bruges, got Van der Goes to paint him an altar-piece for Trinity College, of which he was Provost. This picture is still in Scotland, at Holyrood. Sir John Donne of Kidwelly, a knight in the train of Margaret of York who married Charles the Bold, ordered a triptych of Memlinc. He took it back to England with him, and it is now in the Chatsworth Collection. These are but a few of the foreign patrons of the Netherlands artists.

The Bruges merchants frequently married foreign ladies, and we constantly come across records of these marriages. Such was that of James Floreins, the rich master-grocer, who married a wealthy Spanish lady of the Quintanaduena family and had eighteen children. James Floreins was one of Memlinc's most steady patrons.

Bruges must have been full of strangers, and one cannot help wondering what in the world they did about language. Did they all know French and English, German, Dutch, Flemish, Spanish and Italian? Learned critics tell us they did, in which case we can only conclude that they were, as a whole, a good deal brighter and quicker than we are. As we have already seen, Bruges was a great centre of art, or rather, to be exact, a great centre of rich people who not only could afford to buy important works, but were capable of

employing many painters. Artists in the Middle Ages undertook many jobs which would now be performed by house painters and decorators. Large numbers were employed in painting heraldry, many more in colouring statues both of wood and stone, for all sculptured figures were painted; in addition, all decorations for feasts and princely weddings and *joyeuses entrées* were undertaken by painters. Mr. W. H. J. Weale quotes a writer of 1574 who mentions that the houses of Bruges were filled with pictures by Memlinc and other great artists. No single painter of these masterpieces, however, was a native of Bruges; they all came from the country to the north, east and south of the city. This is the reason why they should be described as painters of the Netherlands, rather than Flemish painters, Flanders being but one small province of the Netherlands. Hubert and Jan van Eyck were born at Maaseyck, not far from Maastricht; Robert Campin was probably born in the southern part of the Netherlands, for he is first heard of at Tournai. Peter Christus was born near Ghent; Roger van der Weyden at Tournai; Dirk Bouts, a Dutchman, at Haarlem; Hans Memlinc at Alkmaar, in Holland or near Mainz in Germany. Gerard David, another Dutchman, was born at Oudewater.

The Netherlands were the richest possession of the dukes of Burgundy, and Philippe de Commines, minister of Louis XI of France, thus describes the marriage in 1477 of Mary of Burgundy, the daughter and heiress of Charles the Bold, to the Archduke Maximilian of Austria. "Duke Maximilian came to Cologne, where several of the princess's servants went

to meet him, and carry him money, with which, as I have been told, he was but very slenderly furnished; for his father was the stingiest and most covetous prince or person of his time. The Duke of Austria was conducted to Ghent, with about seven or eight hundred horses in his retinue, and this marriage was consummated, which at first sight brought no great advantage to the subjects of the young princess; for instead of his supporting her, she was forced to supply him with money. His armies were neither strong enough, nor in a condition to face the King's [of France], besides which, the humour of the house of Austria was not pleasing to the subjects of the house of Burgundy, who had been bred up under wealthy princes, that had lucrative offices and employments to dispose of: whose palaces were sumptuous, whose tables were nobly served, whose dress was magnificent, and whose liveries were pompous and splendid. But the Germans are of quite contrary temper; boorish in their manners and rude in their way of living."

Nine years earlier Charles the Bold had married his second wife, Margaret of York, the sister of Edward IV of England. This was made the occasion of great festivities, and John Paston, who came over in the train of the princess, writes home: "the Burgundian lords and ladies are the best seen of any people I see or heard of. Many pageants were played in her [Margaret's] way to Bruges to her welcoming, the best that ever I see . . . by my troth I heard never of so great plenty as there is."

The first of the great painters to settle in Bruges was Jan van Eyck, and we are fortunate in possessing

three of his masterpieces in our National Collection.

Jan van Eyck and his elder brother Hubert were born, as we have seen, at Maaseyck on the left bank of the Maas, not far from Maastricht. The exact dates of their births are uncertain, but Hubert was born about 1365 and Jan about 1385. Unhappily the National Gallery possesses no picture which can be attributed to Hubert van Eyck. In 1422 Jan, who clearly by that time was a painter of some note, was in the household of John of Bavaria, Prince-Bishop of Liége, as painter and "varlet de chambre." This bishop was one of those who make us understand the bright lights and dark shadows of the Middle Ages—John the Pitiless, as he was rightly named, belongs entirely to the shade. He was neither bishop, priest nor deacon, for he had never received ordination, but he managed to secure and enjoy the position and revenues of Prince-Bishop of Liége for nearly twenty years. When his brother the Count of Holland died, leaving only a young daughter heiress to his possessions, John at once put himself at the head of an army, and ousted his niece Jacqueline from her county and inheritance. Jan van Eyck was employed in decorating John of Bavaria's palace at the Hague, and he remained with this prince till the latter's death in 1425. War then broke out and Jan migrated to the Netherlands.

Philip Duke of Burgundy was already acquainted with his work, and took him into his service at once as painter and "varlet de chambre." He seems to have been well paid, for when he travelled with the Court,

he was allowed two horses and a liveried servant. Van Eyck must have been a discreet man, for he was sent on several secret missions, and when in 1428 Philip of Burgundy despatched an embassy to John I, King of Portugal, to ask the hand of his daughter Isabeau, Van Eyck was one of the company. The Lord of Roubaix and Sir Baldwin de Lannoy, Lord of Molembaix, were the two ambassadors. The last named was a grim, hard-bitten nobleman, judging by his portrait by Van Eyck, now in the Royal Gallery at Berlin. The party embarked in two Venetian galleys at Sluys in October, and after a very trying journey they arrived at Lisbon on December 18th. Van Eyck set to work at once and painted two portraits of the proposed bride, and they were sent back to Philip by two messengers, one going by sea and the other overland. While the party was awaiting the Duke's reply, they made a pilgrimage to St. James of Compostella, and visited neighbouring princes, and among them Mohammed, King of Granada. By July, 1429, a favourable answer was received from the Duke, the marriage contract was signed, and in October the bridal party set out on their journey. They had a terrible voyage and suffered sadly from sea sickness: the Lord of Roubaix was so ill that he insisted on going ashore at Rivadéo in Galicia, and taking a few days' rest. If Sir Baldwin de Lannoy was also seasick, it is easy to imagine how gladly the Princess would give that severe gentleman leave to land. The convoy was nearly wrecked close to the Land's End through the carelessness of the pilot, but they at last arrived safely at Sluys on December 6th.

After this long journey, Van Eyck settled down at Bruges, where he bought a house. By this time he was a very well-known painter, for in 1432 the Burgomaster and several of the Town Council came to visit his workshop, and a few months later the Duke of Burgundy himself arrived for the same purpose. Van Eyck's apprentices received tips on both occasions, though that of the Duke was five times larger than the Burgomaster's, as befitted so magnificent a personage.

Jan van Eyck did much work for the municipality of Bruges, and he remained in the service of the Duke for the rest of his life. He died in 1441, and Philip granted his widow a gratuity of £360 and provided his daughter with a dower that she might enter the convent of St. Agnès at Maaseyck, her father's native village.

The Van Eycks, for several centuries, were popularly credited with the invention of oil painting, but doubtless what really happened was that they so improved and perfected the use of oil as a medium, that it appeared almost a new method. In the North, we know that oil was used long before the time of the Van Eycks. As we have already seen, the monk Theophilus describes the method of oil painting in his treatise. Very few oil paintings it is true before the beginning of the fifteenth century have come down to us, but there are many documents still extant in which are the names of painters who are referred to as painters in oil. Only in the north, however, was oil used as a medium at this early date. Fresco was the principal and highest branch of the painters' art in

Italy, when the artist used water for mixing his colours and laid them directly on the wet lime plaster, only when it was dry sometimes finishing it with colours mixed with egg. For their easel pictures they used white of egg, yolk of egg, and white and yolk mixed, fig-juice, honey and other strange things as mediums, and this method was called tempera. Though the Italians never used oil as a medium in early times, the Northern artists painted in tempera a great deal as well as in oil. It is not possible in a book of this kind to write at length of technical details, but those who wish to know more of the subject should read Prof. A. P. Laurie's " Materials of the Painters' Craft."

Jan van Eyck painted what he saw with the most scrupulous fidelity, yet his portraits are in no sense photographic. In " A Man's Portrait," No. 222, National Gallery, we have not only the outward form, but the inner spirit of the sitter. Shrewd and wary eyes look out of the canny but stubborn old face. By some it has been held to be the portrait of Van Eyck himself, but in default of any clear evidence it may be either so, or merely the picture of some prosperous burgher of Bruges who has built up his fortune bit by bit, with no risky ventures. It is a marvellous painting. The very texture of the skin is shown : specially wonderful is the treatment of the eyes, and the veins of the temples and the modelling of the mouth and badly shaven chin. The longer one looks at it the more wonderful does this picture become, one of the very finest of all Van Eyck's portraits. This elderly man wears a red headdress so complicated and intricate, that it is impossible to avoid wondering how he ever

M.S.

A Man's Portrait *No. 222*

JAN VAN EYCK

fixed it on his head and how, when arranged, it ever remained there. The frame is the original one made for the picture, and is painted to imitate marble; on it is Van Eyck's delightfully human and modest motto, "Als ikh kan," "As I can," together with his signature "JOHES.de.EYCK.me.fecit," and the date "MCCCC. 33. 21. Octobris." This picture was once in the collection of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel, the art-loving friend of Prince Henry, elder brother of Charles I. Lord Arundel, when he first began to collect pictures in 1612, passed through the Netherlands on his way to Italy. Almost certainly it was then that he saw and acquired this portrait, which has remained in England ever since.

Our second portrait by Van Eyck is No. 290, "Portrait of a Man." It is the picture of a plain young man who has, notwithstanding his plainness, an alert, intelligent face. He looks straight out of the picture and leans lightly against a stone parapet. On this parapet Van Eyck has written in Greek characters the word "Tymotheus," which is supposed to be the name of the man, then in larger letters, as though carved in the stone, "Leal Souvenir," and beneath that again in small lettering, "Actum anno Domini 1432 10 die Octobris a Johanne de Eyck," so that this picture was painted exactly a year earlier than the other.

We know nothing of Tymotheus; perhaps he was one of the Humanists who were only too glad to avail themselves of the patronage and shelter of a prince's court; his name and the roll he carries in his hand seem to favour this theory. He was almost certainly a friend of the painter's, who probably for that reason

wrote upon it "Leal Souvenir" before giving it to his friend. His is just the face we should expect a friend of Van Eyck's to have, so pleasant and sensible is it. Though this is a very delightful portrait, the first we considered is the finer. The old man's face is painted with a more intense and loving fidelity than is that of the younger, whose skin is of the same hard and leathery texture as that of the St. George, in Jan's Van der Paele Madonna at Bruges.

The portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and his wife, No. 186, is one of the finest of all Van Eyck's works, and it has been recognised as one of the world's masterpieces from very early times. "It was acquired after 1490 by Don Diego de Guevara, Councillor in 1507 of Maximilian and the Archduke Charles, and major-domo of Joan of Castile. He added shutters to it, on the one side of which were painted his arms and motto. Before 1516 he presented it to Margaret of Austria, Governess of the Netherlands. At her death in 1530, it passed into the possession of Mary of Austria, and it figures in the inventory of her property in 1556. It was subsequently taken to Spain. In 1789 it was in the palace of Charles III at Madrid. A little later it fell into the hands of General Belliard or one of the other French generals. In 1815 Major-General Hay, who had been wounded at the battle of Waterloo, found it in the apartments to which he was removed at Brussels. After his recovery he purchased and brought it to England, and in 1842 it was acquired for the gallery for the moderate sum of £730."[1]

In an inventory of Margaret of Austria's pictures

[1] "The Van Eycks," by W. H. J. Weale, p. 69.

in 1523 this picture is mentioned as being "fort exquis."

Giovanni Arnolfini settled in Bruges in 1420. He was knighted by Philip Duke of Burgundy, and was one of his chamberlains, so that he must have been a person of considerable standing in the city. He married Giovanna Cennini.

The Dauphin, afterwards Louis XI of France, when in his unhappy exiled youth, he was taking refuge at Duke Philip's court, wrote to Giovanni Arnolfini as "Jehan mon Amy," and asked him to send forty-three yards of a very special crimson velvet, promising to pay him well for it in the future, a promise he redeemed with interest when his father died, and he came to the throne.

When we examine this picture it is easy to understand how it has kept its power, and made its appeal to men and women in every age. There is here no craving after an ideal, no searching for some more perfect type, but there is an intense delight in all the numberless beauties of everyday life; it interprets and transforms the commonplace. Van Eyck has painted a quite ordinary couple, in their room, as they lived. They themselves are not aware of anything unusual, and yet Van Eyck, for all time, has painted the House of Harmony.

Arnolfini stands, the embodiment of "with my body I thee worship, with all my worldly goods I thee endow." Clearly he had plenty of them, and Giovanna his rather stupid-looking wife, her hand in his, is in complete accord with her husband. Neither in spirit nor sense is there a single discordant note in this

perfect picture. Giovanni Arnolfini is a refined, intelligent-looking man, though of a somewhat sanctimonious, puritanical type. His wife is considerably younger than her husband, and one would judge her fairly amiable, though by no means interesting. At first it would appear that we have the picture of a young wife who is expecting her first child, but this is by no means certain.

The generally received canons of beauty with regard to a woman's figure in the fifteenth century differed greatly from our own. We admire a well-developed, well-balanced frame, combining lightness and grace, with roundness and strength. In the fifteenth century they appear to have admired a narrow chest and shoulders, with the hips and lower part of the figure quite out of proportion large. The Eve in the Van Eycks' "Adoration of the Lamb," always considered to be entirely from the hand of Jan, the first nude figure of the North, exhibits just these peculiarities. His St. Katherine, now in the Dresden Royal Gallery, stands in exactly the same ungraceful pose as Giovanna Arnolfini. Memlinc later also painted an Eve, and though she is more rounded and less ruthlessly realistic, yet she has precisely the same poor muscleless shoulders and arms and heavy hips, and in each case the weight of the body is thrown backwards from the waist, thus forcing the hips into greater prominence.

The Italians also inclined to admire this type of female figure, but their strong feeling for style and their passion for ideal beauty prevented their becoming obsessed by a mere fashion. It is impossible to avoid

the conclusion that it was mainly a question of fashion, because not only did ladies apparently adopt this ungraceful pose when standing, but their dresses were all designed to emphasise and accentuate it. The bodices are skimpy, and drawn into desperately tight folds with a very high waist-belt, while the skirts, immensely long and wide, seem designed for a larger type of woman altogether.

In the fifteenth century a great lady, either in heaven or on earth, always wore one of these stupendous garments; it was a sign of rank and breeding. Jan van Eyck's St. Barbara in the Antwerp Gallery, sitting beneath her noble tower, is a little island of a woman, almost submerged beneath the folds of her skirt; Memlinc's St. Ursula (at Bruges), as she steps off her vessel when she gets to Rome, is having her rich and flowing skirt (most unsuitable for a voyage) held up by one of her eleven thousand virgins. The Magdalene, in No. 654, who sits reading with her voluminous skirt spread about her, has raised it in one place to give a glimpse of her beautiful under petticoat.

Not only did the female figure of the fifteenth century stand out where ours goes in, and recede where ours is developed, but, to be in the fashion, a high-born lady had to cultivate a high round forehead, and to that end she pulled out the hair growing on the temples and dragged the remainder back, hiding the greater part under a headdress. Giovanna's hair is done in the approved style: her forehead is high and bare, and on either side her hair has been plaited, and then pinned over a wire frame, to form a kind of horn the whole, covered by a delicate red silk net, and over

all a many-folded white cloth is thrown. The beautiful material of her dress, and the cut cloth of the hanging sleeves, is the same in every particular as that worn by Hubert van Eyck's St. Martin, the Knight of Christ, in the "Adoration of the Lamb." The dress is gathered tightly into a very high waist, again to accentuate the narrowness and smallness of the wearer's chest and shoulders. The skirt is apparently lined with white fur, while the wide hanging sleeves are bordered with it. One cannot help wondering what these little ladies looked like, stripped of their vast garments, because of course they could not by any possibility have done their housekeeping dressed in this fashion. A big household, such as that of the Arnolfini, must have meant a busy life for its head, but no doubt they slipped out of their fur-lined gowns and gauffered headdresses as soon as the last guest had gone, and went back in their caps and petticoats to scold the maids and box the scullion's ears.

Giovanni Arnolfini is a slight, delicate-looking man : his hands are small and narrow, and his little feet and legs are thin and slender, and are encased in black cloth hose and shoes. On his head he wears an immense hat of black straw ; probably these hats were very expensive and considered extremely smart and uncommon. The only other well-known straw hat in a picture of about this date is that of St. George in Pisanello's "St. Anthony and St. George," No. 776. Arnolfini's somewhat over pious look is a good deal due to this overpowering hat ; it is almost hypocritical looking to our eyes. His under tunic is of black cloth, and the wrist-bands of his and his wife's sleeves are of em-

broidery, and his, in addition, are laced with a scarlet cord. Over his dark under-garment he wears a kind of tunic of claret coloured velvet trimmed with sable. His wooden clogs, now that he has come in from the street, are by his side, while Giovanna's smarter pair, with their scarlet leather tops, are close by the long seat behind her, where she has taken them off. The couple do not wear much jewellery: the wife has a pearl necklace and two rings, one on the second joint of her little finger, and the other on the first joint of her third, and how they remained there is one of the many mysteries connected with a fifteenth-century lady's toilet. Arnolfini himself wears his ring on his first finger.

Husband and wife stand in a perfectly charming room, it is so spacious and clean, and the furniture so good. It is clearly a reception room as well as a bedroom, for privacy is quite a modern luxury, and in the Arnolfini's day visitors were received in their host's bedrooms. We know this bed so well—again and again we see it in Netherlands pictures; very high and wide, it is covered by a deep red bed-cover, it has a red cloth tester and valance, with four curtains to match; those at the foot are always looped up during the day. One cannot help wondering who was the daring man or woman who first broke away from the iron-bound rule and had a bed with hangings that were not red.

By the bed stands a tall carved arm-chair, and on the post at the back is carved a little figure of St. Margaret and the Dragon, and on the knob is hung a dusting-brush. On the floor, by the side of the bed, is a beautiful

rug from the East, and against the wall, between the chair and the window, is a long wooden bench; and the knob at the end is formed of three little grotesque figures, the centre one being a queer hooded creature, with the legs and feet of an animal, putting out his tongue. This seat is covered with a cloth and cushion and has a raised foot-rest. On the wall above hangs what must have been one of the most precious possessions of the Arnolfini household—a round convex mirror set in a carved frame adorned with ten little round medallions of enamel, showing scenes of the Passion. Beginning with the centre roundel at the foot of the mirror, we have the Agony in the Garden; on the left going up, the Betrayal and St. Peter cutting off Malchus' ear; above again, Christ before Pilate the Scourging, bearing the Cross, and, finally, the top roundel contains the Crucifixion. Next from that comes the Descent from the Cross, then the Entombment, the Harrowing of Hell and the Resurrection. Within the small space of the round mirror the whole of this enchanting room is reflected in miniature. We now realize that the Arnolfini are standing facing the open door of their room. In the mirror their backs are turned to us and we see beyond them, through the open doorway, the figures of two people in white and blue, and one of these, from the position of the mirror, must be Van Eyck himself. Beyond them again is a window (Van Eyck and his friend must be in another room or passage), and though this is not much larger than a pin's head, the impression that the painter gives of bright light, is amazing. We are now able to admire the Arnolfini's handsome but heavy clothes, and also

the hat, from a different point of view. The beautiful oak roof with its beams, too, is far clearer in the mirror than in the picture. In this minute compass we feel the light and atmosphere of the cool spacious room.

> "Within thy gates nothing doth come
> That is not passinge cleane
> No spiders web, noe durt, noe dust
> No filth may there be seene."[1]

We speak of the magic touch of the poets, and it means something we can feel yet cannot explain. Van Eyck and all the greatest painters have this same magic quality, and we see it at its highest in this mirror. By its side hangs a string of yellow beads finished with green tassels, and their colour is reflected on the grey wall. Above the looking-glass Van Eyck has signed his name in the most ornate fashion: "Johannes de Eyck fuit hic 1434."

Was he, modest man as he was, with his mottoes of "As I can" and "As I can, not as I would," proud of this wonderful work of his? When he laid the last touch of paint upon it he surely "saw that it was good."

Authorities have advanced the theory that Jan van Eyck and Arnolfini married two sisters, Giovanna and Margarita. They point to the close likeness between the two portraits, that of Margarita being now in the Museum at Bruges, a slender proof when the resemblance of the coiffures of the two ladies is considered:

[1] "The Song of F.J.B. concerning The Heavenly City."

the fact too of the arm-chair having carved upon it a figure of St. Margaret and the Dragon is thought to point to the relationship, but as St. Margaret was the patron saint of women in childbirth it is much more likely the carving was simply considered appropriate to the bed-chamber of a young married woman. The curious signature "Johannes de Eyck was here" is also thought to show that there was some connection between the two families.

The Arnolfini's pleasant room gives on a garden, for we can see the cherry tree outside. The upper part of the window is glazed, but the lower and larger part has wooden shutters only; they are thrown wide open, and no wonder, for it is summer time and Giovanni and his wife are in velvets and furs.

At night, the room is lighted by candles in the beautiful brass chandelier hanging from the ceiling beam. Only one candle is shown, but that one is lighted: the chandelier is of course faithfully reflected in the round mirror. Close beside the pair is their little dog, and he, like everything else in this magic picture, is exactly what he ought to be: charming, innocent and playful, he is a fit pet for the House of Harmony.

In the enjoyment of all its details, we cannot forget how beautiful the composition of this picture is, and all these exquisite things—the mirror, the beads, the candelabra, even the little dog, all sink into their places as accessories, they do not distract our interest in the least. That the Arnolfini were very original and advanced in their views, this picture gives us positive proof. We know of no other secular full-length por-

trait of this date. Rich and noble people had their portraits painted, but only as forming a part of an altar-piece. They are always represented as kneeling, their sons and daughters stretching in long lines behind them, while their patron saint, standing close beside, introduces them to the celestial company. Portrait painting proper was confined to a picture of the sitter's head and shoulders; there are many such in the National Gallery. It is easy to imagine what interest and excitement must have been aroused in Bruges by the startling innovation of the Arnolfini portrait. How carefully the connoisseurs and picture lovers must have inspected it, admiring its wonderful technique; yet there must have been a good many whispers and doubtful looks at the man who had had the assurance to have himself and his wife painted in their house, as they lived, instead of kneeling in prayer, with their patron saints beside them. We, at any rate, owe Arnolfini a deep debt of gratitude, for to him it is due that we know the interior of his beautiful home.

We cannot but believe that Van Eyck enjoyed painting this picture. Realist as he was, he was able to indulge himself to the uttermost: he must often have found it difficult to paint the Virgin in her queenly robes, the Child in her arms, to the order of some ecclesiastical dignitary, who enforced on the painter his own views on the religious aspect of the picture. It must have been an intense relief to be required to set down facts alone, and to interpret in his own way, the beauty of everyday life. It is one of the perfect pictures of the world, and it is cheering to

think, that though fashions have come and gone very many times since Van Eyck's day, yet this picture has had its devotees in every age, or it could not have survived in its perfect state of preservation to delight our own and succeeding generations.

CHAPTER IV

ROBERT CAMPIN, 1375–1444, AND ROGER VAN DER WEYDEN, 1400–64

WHILE Jan van Eyck was working for the Duke of Burgundy at Bruges, and, when permitted by his patron, painting for its more prominent citizens, another great painter had a large and flourishing business at Tournai.

Robert Campin most probably came from Hainault, and possibly received his training at Valenciennes. He settled at Tournai in 1406, then being about twenty-eight years of age. His work was very highly esteemed, and he became town painter, besides holding various important offices in the Painters' Guild. A great deal of fine work came from his workshop, for two of his assistants, Jacques Daret and Roger van der Weyden, were themselves great artists.

The Tournai Painters' Guild was a particularly strict one, for an apprentice had to serve his master for not less than four years, and even when he began his apprenticeship he was no raw lad, but had several years of instruction behind him.

Robert Campin's pictures are on a larger scale than is usual in the Netherlands school, and this may be accounted for by the fact that he often painted in tempera on linen, a method that admitted of more

rapid work than was possible in the minutely finished oil paintings. He designed a series of scenes in the life of St. Peter, which covered sixty-eight ells of linen cloth, nothing of which now remains to us. He died at Tournai in 1444.

Famous in his own day, Robert Campin suffered the fate accorded to so many artists in the Netherlands. His name was completely forgotten, and his pictures, for he has a very distinct and individual style, were described as belonging to the unknown Master of Flémalle, the Abbey where the most famous of his works were. At last, after long and careful research, it became clear that this painter was none other than Robert Campin, the master of Daret and Van der Weyden, whose name appears so often in the town records of Tournai.

Several pictures in our National Collection are attributed to Campin and his school, but the critics differ greatly as to which are from his own hand. However, one is almost unanimously given to him, the "Virgin and Child in an Apartment" (No. 2609). In this picture the mother sits nursing her child, and by her side lies her magnificent, illuminated Book of Hours. It has golden leaves and jewelled clasps, and the cover is protected by a white forel[1] fastened with knotted cords. Were they more careful of their books in the North than in the South? The studious saint of the Netherlands always protects a book with a forel, but the Italian saint hardly ever does. For one forel in Italian we get fifty in Netherlands art.

[1] Forel was the name given to the elaborate loose covering used to protect a book in the Middle Ages.

The Virgin's face is of a singularly heavy, ugly type, a long oval, with a long narrow nose, small mouth and frowning brow. She has masses of hair, but that, too, is heavy and wooden looking, quite unlike the silken, wavy strands painted by later artists. The flesh tones are cold and grey, with the exception of the Virgin's breast, which, with its transparent blue veins, is exquisitely rendered. The baby is also plain, but bright and alert looking: he is tall and thin, and his little hands are long and lined, like those of a grown-up person. In painting the Virgin's head Campin probably simply reproduced the conventional type approved by ecclesiastical authority.

The mother wears an ample fur-lined robe and her baby lies on a white linen cloth evidently intended to be fastened in some way, as there is a loop at one corner.

There is much to interest us in the room in which they sit.

With its back to the fireplace is placed a long settle. It has heavy wooden ends with two little carved lions on the top: the very uncomfortable back to the seat is formed by a long high bar. The Virgin is clearly intended to be represented as sitting on the settle, for she is leaning against the back, but owing to the height of the seat she appears to be sitting on a stool in front of it. We often find these long seats in Netherlands pictures. On the carved buffet by the Virgin's elbow stands a beautiful cup, and between her and the fire is a large round plaited wicker screen supported on two tall iron rods; above it the flames from the fire are seen.

The deeply embrasured and mullioned window has the usual strong hinged shutters studded with nails; an uncomfortable three-cornered stool stands below. All the furniture of this apartment is amazingly strong and heavy; if it was uncomfortable it was undoubtedly durable. From the open window we look down on an enchanting little mediæval city. The Virgin's house is outside, on a hill above the town. Immediately below is the town wall and gate. Once within it, we reach an open square or *place*, where there are horsemen and foot passengers. Round the *place* are buildings; some are evidently shops, and at the door of one of these a woman is standing. Next door they are having the roof mended; one workman is already examining it while another is climbing up the ladder to join him. The street door is open, and the steps leading up to it have a twisted iron handrail on either side. On the extreme right of the square, a woman is looking out of the window and talking to a man standing below. To the left, between the mullion of the window and the shutter, is a nobleman's house with hanging escutcheons.

A great church with a tall spire dominates the little city, which is very small, for we can see two more town gates: on the right a narrow street leads from the square to the biggest one. The road goes through it and out into the country, where it winds up a hill past hamlets and so away over the brow. This charming landscape recalls the work of the Van Eycks, though it lacks their imagination and delicate effects of light and shade.

One sees in this picture the evidence of an alert,

original mind. Campin was so busy striving to get at the true representation of the things he saw before him, that he could not present beauty in the way men who had had these technical problems solved for them were able to do. Campin, like the Van Eycks, was a pathfinder, an innovator, and the difficulties he overcame benefited his pupils and followers. In the art of the primitives, the difficulties of one generation became the commonplaces of the next. For instance, Campin, we know, found it very hard to represent anyone sitting on a seat. If, as is most probable, the "Magdalene Reading," No. 654, is an early work of Van der Weyden's when he was Campin's assistant, we see the problem of the master's workshop had not been completely solved, though the Magdalene is more firmly established on her stool than the Virgin on her settle.

A little later Van der Weyden completely conquers the difficulty and we no longer marvel at the miraculous way in which the saints are supported.

De Commines, writing in 1477, tells us that Tournai, being just on the borders of Hainault and Flanders, had managed to preserve a strict neutrality in the constant quarrels between the Kings of France and the Dukes of Burgundy. This is possibly accounted for by the fact that they paid Duke Philip of Burgundy ten thousand livres a year, and the King of France six thousand. "In all other respects it [the town] was free, entertaining all comers, and it is a fair and strong town, as everybody in those countries knows very well."

It was during these happy years of Tournai that

Robert Campin was working in the town. Later on, while Louis XI and Charles the Bold were at war, the citizens of Tournai "paid nothing, but enjoyed quiet and repose," but with the defeat and death of Charles, this halcyon time came to an end, for the King of France took the city in 1477, and "many fine houses and villages were plundered and burnt more to the prejudice of the inhabitants of Tournai than anyone else."

"The Virgin and Child with two Angels" (No. 2608) is said to be one of many copies made of a lost original.[1] It is supposed that Campin painted it for a Spanish patron. As we have seen, there were many Spaniards either connected by business or actually living in the Netherlands; at any rate the picture was taken to Spain and became very popular. To be popular with a Netherlands picture meant to be copied and repeated again and again. This picture of Campin's was particularly fortunate (or unfortunate), for a dozen of these Spanish copies have come down to us.

No one who has any acquaintance with early Spanish or Portuguese paintings, can fail to notice how strongly the painters were influenced by the art of the Netherlands. So closely do they resemble the work of the Northern artists that it is sometimes very difficult to tell which school is responsible for the picture.

The Spaniards were a very devout and orthodox people, and in all probability it was these very qualities, as exhibited by the Netherlands painters, that so endeared them to the Spaniards and Portuguese. They

[1] "The Van Eycks and their Followers," by Sir Martin Conway, p. 115.

were the fashion in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Spain, and the Spanish and Portuguese painters acquired their style and method as far as possible.

In the case of "A Man and his Wife," No. 653, all the critics appear to agree that these two portraits were painted by Campin. The man wears a folded red capuchon very like that in the Van Eyck portrait, No. 222. His is a dark thoughtful face, and his wife's head, peeping out from the folds of her white headdress, has much charm.

"The Death of the Virgin," No. 658, is a wonderful little work which presents a good many difficulties to the picture lover. In the official catalogue it is said to be of the school of Campin, and the little view seen through the window is decidedly like the view from the Virgin's Apartment in No. 654. On the other hand, it certainly looks to be of a later date than Campin's work, and reminds us at once of Van der Goes' famous "Death of the Virgin" at Bruges. In addition, the dumpy figures and voluminous draperies recall the early Burgundian school of Dijon. Perhaps it is an early work of Van der Goes, or more likely still of an artist whose name and history yet remain to be discovered.

The painter, whoever he may have been, was a very accomplished one. The picture is full of dramatic force and the colour is gem-like and glowing, but there is little feeling for beauty as a whole. Everybody looks dirty, but intent; all the ears are painted in the same way with a long, exaggerated lobe. The old man who has crawled to the bed, and is touching it reverentially with his hand, is marvellously painted; so is

the man in green who kneels in front of him. The next, short and stumpy, has just put his beads into his pocket (they are hanging out), while, spectacles on nose, he reads his book. A horrible looking man holds, kneeling, a bucket of holy water before the priest, who is reading the last office with tears running down his cheeks. The barefooted man who sits beside him, telling his beads with his eyes shut, is a very unpleasant-looking individual. An unattractive person at the foot of the bed is puffing furiously at the censer, while another holds a saucer beneath it. A man with a lighted taper (it must be St. John) is about to touch the dying Virgin, who, dressed in a long black robe and white headdress, lies on the traditional red bed. Above her are Christ and His angels who have come down to receive His mother's soul when it leaves her body.

It is difficult at first to realize that these ugly, grubby looking men are intended to represent the apostles. But by the depth and intensity of their grief they are redeemed from all ignoble meanness, St. Peter is a specially pathetic figure. There is wonderful force and vigour in this little picture, but it is not one that most people would wish to live with.

Roger van der Weyden, or Rogier de la Pasture, as he should be more correctly named, for he came from the French part of the Netherlands, was born at Tournai about 1400. He came of an artist family, for his father was a sculptor. As we have seen, he worked under Robert Campin, and in his workshop was trained in the best manner of the Netherlands school. Soon after 1429 Van der Weyden settled in Brussels,

The Death of the Virgin *No. 658*

SCHOOL OF ROBERT CAMPIN

starting a business of his own, and died there in 1464. In 1448 or 1449 he journeyed to Rome to attend the Jubilee of Pope Nicholas V in 1450. On his way through Italy he stayed at Ferrara, Milan and Florence, painting pictures for that discerning patron of art, Leonello d'Este, and also for Francesco Sforza, and Cosimo dei Medici. This journey for Van der Weyden must have been a triumphant one, for not only was he welcomed by princes, but men of letters celebrated him in prose and verse. He was clearly, however, of a conservative, unimpressionable nature, for we find him quite unmoved by all this flattery and adulation, and entirely impervious to any foreign artistic influence. On his way home he stayed at Cologne, and there painted an altar-piece for the church of St. Columba, which set the fashion for a long time, quite eclipsing Lochner's famous "Dombild," which up to then had been the most admired picture in the city. This picture shows no more trace of Italian influence than does any other of Roger's paintings.

Few painters can have enjoyed so great a popularity in their own day as did Van der Weyden. To the training he received in Campin's workshop he added a suave and beautiful style of his own. He contrived to be both devout and sincere in his art, and he supplied his public with exactly what they wanted. Unhappily he is but poorly represented in our National Collection. One picture, the "Portrait of a Lady," No. 1433, is unanimously attributed to him, but "The Magdalene Reading," No. 654, is sometimes given to him and sometimes taken away, while Nos. 711 and 712, "Mater

Dolorosa" and "Ecce Homo," are undoubted school pictures or copies.

The "Portrait of a Lady," No. 1433, is one of the most charming portraits of the Netherlands school that we possess. It is firmly yet most delicately painted, and the colouring is fresh and transparent, giving rare pleasure to the spectator.

The lady is very young and pretty, notwithstanding her terribly trying costume. Her hair has been plucked out by the roots to make her forehead bald and high, and what remains is dragged back out of sight. She wears a high cloth of gold cap covered with a clear muslin handkerchief fitted round her little ears with a scrap of embroidery. Her dress, tight on the shoulders (the shoulder line has been altered in the painting), is pulled mercilessly down into her high waistband; the whole costume proves how pretty she is to stand it at all. She is a dear little girl, quiet and modest; her pretty mouth is firmly set, yet did she look up and speak to us her face would be full of life and charm. The picture, like so many really fine portraits, gives an impression of calmness and stillness in the midst of great vitality.

"The Magdalene Reading," No. 654, has been attributed at different times to Campin, to Van der Weyden and to their respective schools; no one really knows as yet who painted it, but the balance of probability certainly remains with the Van der Weyden attribution. This picture, or rather, fragment of a picture, for everyone agrees in saying it has been cut out of a larger one, is undoubtedly the work of a great master. There is so keen a sense of beauty in the

Portrait of a Lady *No. 1433*

ROGER VAN DER WEYDEN

picture, such pleasure in the colouring, and such delicate drawing, that only a first-rate man could have painted it. The Magdalene is very pretty, her mouth and eyes, soft hair and little ear make a charming whole. A gentle creature, this Magdalene is no penitent, but a sweet and innocent lady of the Netherlands entirely guiltless of a past. Her delicate head intent on what she is reading, is bent over her book with its dainty forel. Her immense skirt is lined with grey squirrel fur and is turned back over the knees to show her brocade underskirt. She has much the same figure as Giovanna Arnolfini, her shoulders are round and her chest is narrow, and if she were to stand up we should probably see the same wide hips with the skirt trailing all round upon the floor.

The "Christ appearing to the Virgin after His Resurrection," No. 1086, is almost certainly a very free adaptation rather than a copy of a famous original by Roger van der Weyden.

The original has not come down to us, but there is in Berlin an ancient copy. It is a triptych, the centre panel represents the Deposition from the Cross, the left wing the Nativity, and in the right, Christ appears to His mother after the Resurrection. The two figures in this latter picture are almost identical with ours, but, judging from a photograph, the Berlin picture is finer in every way. In the ancient copy the scene is set in a kind of chapel, and through the open doors we see a pleasant landscape in which, on one side, Christ is rising from the tomb, while on the other the three Maries are seen approaching. Our picture is of great interest because it shows us how

shamelessly the painters (especially of course the inferior men) cribbed from one another.

The man who painted this picture, whoever he may have been, took an extremely popular work and copied the figures while he altered the setting entirely, placing the scene in a room instead of a church. He kept, too, the smaller scenes, but we see them through the windows.

This paucity of invention and perpetual borrowing of ideas from one another is the least admirable quality (to put it charitably) possessed by the Northern schools.

Mr. Weale[1] believes that the original of our picture was the altar-piece presented to Pope Martin V in 1425, but Sir Martin Conway considers that the date is too early to admit of this being so. However, when critics disagree, we may well be left at any rate to hear the story which throws light upon the date at which Roger's picture must have been painted.

Between 1420 and 1430 there was a project for setting up another school of advanced learning in the Netherlands. Brussels was the first city approached, but the chief magistrate refused to entertain the idea, as he said he did not wish to admit into the city a body of riotous youths whose behaviour would probably disturb the peace of families. Louvain was ready and eager to face these risks and sent an embassy in 1425 to Pope Martin V to get permission to institute a university within its walls. No embassy, of course ever went unprovided with handsome gifts, and it was known that the Pope was greatly interested in art.

[1] "Burlington Magazine," 1912–13, W. H. J. Weale,

Two years before, Philip Duke of Burgundy had sent him six pieces of Flemish tapestry which he had bought from Giovanni Arnolfini, for these tapestries were then on the crest of the wave of fashion. The Pope was much pleased. Knowing this, the magistrates of Louvain decided to send the Pope a picture painted in oil after the method of Van Eyck, oil painting then being a great novelty in Italy. Van der Weyden had close connections with Louvain, and it is thought that it is this very triptych that was sent to Rome. Later the picture was in Spain, and in the eighteenth century a Spanish writer speaks of it, describing the triptych carefully, and says it was given to King Juan of Castile by Pope Martin V.

CHAPTER V

PETER CHRISTUS, *c.* 1400–73: DIRK BOUTS, 1400–75: UNKNOWN MASTER, FIFTEENTH CENTURY

PETER CHRISTUS was born at Baerle near Ghent soon after 1400, but nothing is known of his early life or where he learnt to paint.

In 1443 he settled in Bruges and, after the manner of the successful Bruges artist, bought a house. This was two years after the death of Jan van Eyck. Christus himself died in 1473.

He is always described as being a follower but not a pupil of the Van Eycks. It is true that both the Van Eyck brothers were dead when Peter is first heard of in Bruges, but he was then a prosperous painter of nearly forty, and his history up till then is entirely unknown to us. He clearly knew the Van Eycks' methods of painting, but he need not have been their pupil to have acquired them. However, whether he was a pupil or merely a follower, he was certainly dull.

We have two of his portraits in the National Gallery: "The Portrait of a Man," No. 2593, and "The Portrait of Marco Barbarigo," No. 696. The subjects of these pictures have two qualities in common, dullness and plainness, and after seeing a number of Peter Christus' portraits one is forced to conclude that this

must have been chiefly due to the painter himself. Still, dull though he may be, the excellent young man in No. 2593 makes a very delightful picture. In his hands he holds his Book of Hours, with its gold tooled edges and silver clasps. It is covered with a serious-looking black velvet forel ornamented with tassels. Above his head hangs a square of parchment on which is a rhymed Latin prayer and a vernicle or head of Christ.[1] People seem often to have had these prayers hung in their rooms, for in "The Annunciation," No. 256, by the Master of Liesborn, we see another fastened on a board hanging on the wall. The young man has thrown off his capuchon, which is safely attached by its long scarf in front and hangs down behind. He wears a very handsome bag with an elaborate and curious clasp, and it has a second opening, secured by a silver pin. Sir Martin Conway tells us that this bag occurs in another picture by Christus, and that the man who wears it (he is the donor in the St. Anthony panel at Copenhagen) shows a marked resemblance to our young man.

Christus has placed his sitter between two windows. Clearly the chamber is on one of the higher floors of the castle (this young man is the kind that lives in a castle), for below are the tops of soft green trees, while half hidden among them is a hamlet with a road winding between the houses. A man riding a white horse has just passed by, while a second horseman,

[1] It is said in the legend of St. Veronica, that as Christ passed by bearing His cross, on His way to Calvary, she wiped His face with a cloth. On this cloth a picture of the Holy Face was found to have been miraculously printed, and this picture is called the vernicle.

mounted on a horse with a white star on his forehead, is about to reach the village. The roadway passes a castle in the distance on the right, then tiny fields and tinier trees, till at last the horizon is reached. It is an exquisite little strip of landscape, and there is small doubt that Christus loved painting it. It is far finer than the portrait, which entirely fails in the searching analysis of Van Eyck, and it is a little hard on Christus that his two pictures should be hung so close to some of Van Eyck's finest portraits. However, that is the penalty he has to pay for the greatness the critics have thrust upon him of being the chief follower of the Van Eycks.

Our second picture by Peter Christus is his portrait of "Marco Barbarigo," No. 696. One would surmise that Christus took even less pleasure and interest in this sitter than the last: his dull expression, his bulbous nose and his big ears combine in giving us a dreary impression of this poor man. He was the Venetian Consul in London in 1449, though he certainly does not look in the least Italian. However, the letter addressed to himself which he holds in his hand is held to prove the point. Barbarigo was elected Doge in 1486, but died six months after, of old age it is to be presumed, as he was holding the responsible position of Venetian Consul in London nearly forty years before.

Dirk Bouts was a Dutchman born at Haarlem about the year 1400. It is not known where he learnt his art, but he was with Roger van der Weyden in Brussels for a time, acting as an assistant in his workshop. Bouts finally set up for himself at Louvain, where he

Portrait of a Man *No. 2593*

PETER CHRISTUS

had a most prosperous business. The early Dutch painters almost invariably migrated to the Netherlands, in search of rich patrons and high prices, and Bouts, who seems to have been an excellent man of business, was no exception to the rule. He was evidently a much respected citizen of Louvain and rose to the position of painter to the town. Many of his finest pictures were painted for the city, and happily several of them still remain there. Bouts died at Louvain in 1475.

The National Gallery is fortunate in possessing four beautiful examples of his work.

The first is "The Entombment," No. 664. This very beautiful picture is painted on linen in tempera, and is in a wonderful state of preservation. These linen pictures were painted specially for export as they were light, easily packed and carried.

These linen pictures are of great interest, and we know that many were painted. Unhappily, owing to their lightness and destructibility, very few have come down to us. Most likely these lost works would shed great light on the artistic history of many a painter of the Netherlands.

"The Entombment" shows the art of the Netherlands at its finest and most expressive. These painters never excelled when it was a question of movement and dramatic force, but they are unsurpassed when they represent, as here, a group of quiet people all animated by the same deep feeling. The painter shows us the moment when the Mother is to be parted from the dead body of her Son. She is surrounded by those who have devotedly loved Him, and in them we

see grief restrained and ennobled by the spirit; of each of these mourners may it be said "he nothing common did or mean, upon that memorable scene." In entire simplicity and deep grief they are placing the body of Him they loved within the tomb. Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus are particularly fine. Apparently Bouts altered the figure of the latter, as it is possible to see another outline behind his back. In places the paint is very thin, and it scarcely covers the linen on Joseph of Arimathæa's red cap or Mary Magdalene's white mantle. The group round the tomb is set in a singularly calm and peaceful landscape: through a champaign country of rolling hills, a placid river winds, past wooded banks which are slightly raised when it reaches open fields. On the right a wide road goes up the hill, while on the left there are high rocks. Here and there are trees with thin foliage, and the colouring is all in tender grey-blues, browns and greens. We know that Dirk Bouts came from Haarlem, but this is no Dutch landscape. It is painted by a man who knew this quiet country well and loved it. The fifteenth-century painters who came from Holland seem never to have liked their long canals and low horizons. Gerard David, who was also a native of Holland, loved these same rolling hills and soft flowing rivers. Simple, homely landscapes that suit exactly the simple, homely, yet entirely lovable people the artists painted.

A "Madonna and Child," No. 774, is a charming picture usually given to Bouts, and as no one knows for certain who painted it, we may as well consider and enjoy it under his name. The Blessed Virgin is

Madonna and Child *No. 774*

DIRK BOUTS

the conventional Flemish one we know so well. Dirk Bouts knew just exactly the rules to be observed in painting her, and we here see the result of a rigid convention; only now and again did a painter of genius, in its despite, represent a gentle human mother.

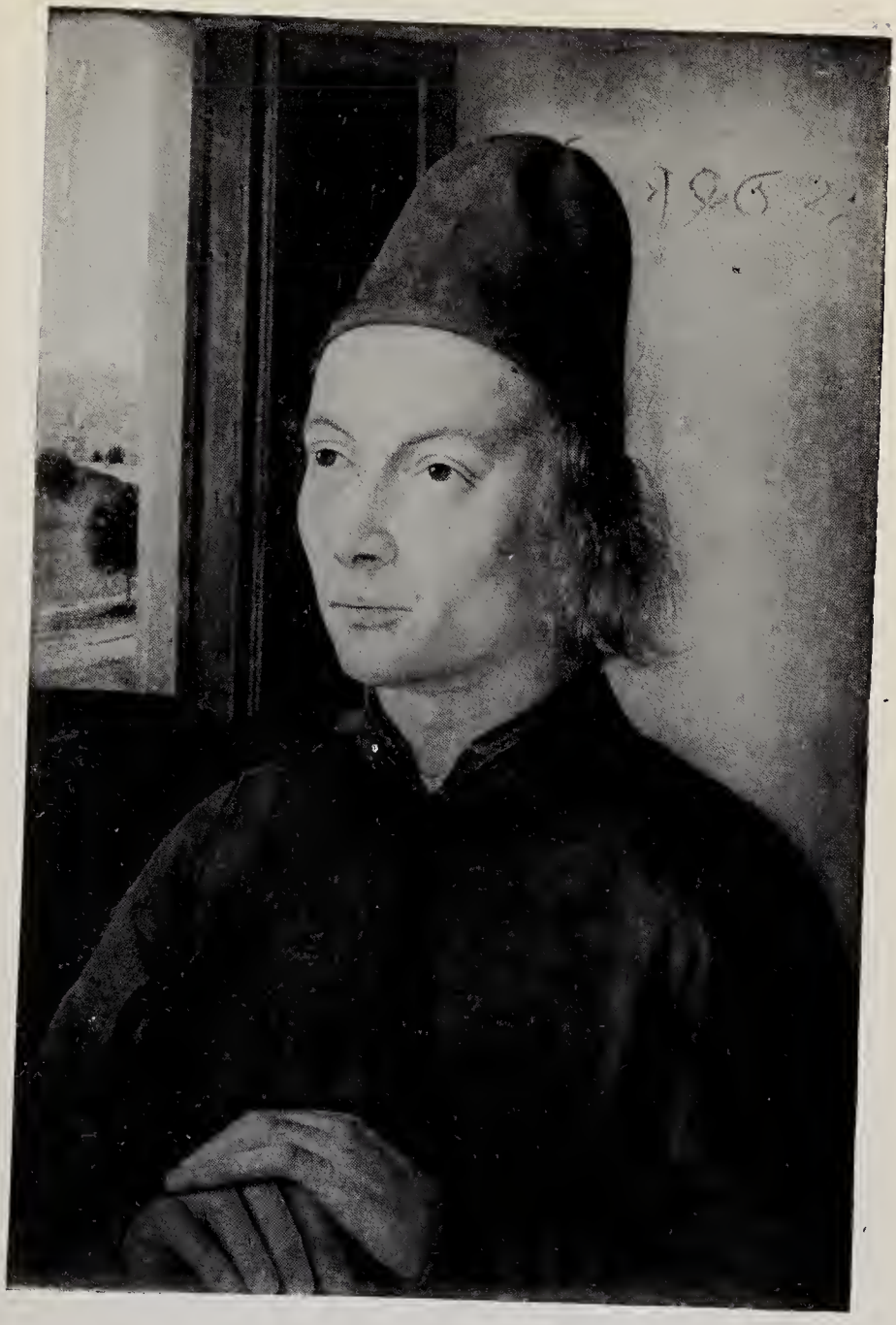
We feel that poor Dirk rather wearily painted his Virgin, but he liked painting the baby better, and the two old men he calls St. Peter and St. Paul he enjoyed painting best of all.

The Virgin sits on her throne, her baby on her knee with a green canopy above her: behind is stretched a beautiful piece of cloth of gold and cut velvet, woven in a splendid design.

There are delightful homely touches in this picture. St. Paul, who looks like the family gardener, leans his sword against the throne as though it were an umbrella: he is playing with the baby, who delightedly stretches out his little hand to take the pink the old man offers Him. St. Peter, who has carefully laid his key on the steps of the throne, holds a book for the Virgin to read. The saintly company are in a strange kind of chapel: to the left, above St. Peter's head, there is a stained-glass window where is seen Christ, His orb in His hand, enthroned between the sun and moon. The architecture of this building is so curious that one cannot help thinking Bouts intended to make St. Paul's side correspond with St. Peter's, but that he yielded to the temptation of putting in an open doorway, so that he might have the chance of painting the little landscape outside.

The "Portrait of a Man," No. 943, like so many of

this school, has been bandied about from artist to artist. It was supposed to be the portrait of Memlinc, painted by himself, but now it is unanimously ascribed to Bouts, some even considering it to be his portrait. If we are to believe in all these self-portraits, we are forced also to believe that the artists spent half their time in painting themselves. Whether in this extremely plain man we see Bouts, (and as the picture is dated 1462, when he would have been fifty-two, we probably do not), is a matter of small moment, for we have a magnificent portrait painted with all the skill and care of a great Netherlands artist. The sitter is a typical man of the North; ugly, simple, honest, he has all the shrewdness and common sense that made the wealth and strength of the Netherlands cities. Compare this portrait with an Italian one of about the same date such as Botticelli's "Young Man," No. 626, or Antonello da Messina's "Portrait of Himself," No. 1141. How utterly different they are. Brimful of life, eager, intellectual, no one could describe either of these Italians as simple: honest they may have been, but it is certainly not the first quality one thinks of in looking at them. In quickness of brain and mental activity they greatly excel our excellent Netherlander, but in sincerity they fall far below him. In treatment and technique we see in these small pictures all the distinguishing marks of the schools north and south of the Alps. Bouts' portrait is perfectly painted, not only in workmanship but in feeling (that is as exemplified in the Northern schools); every line, every hair is faithfully rendered, yet all detail is subordinated to the whole:



Portrait of a Man *No. 943*

DIRK BOUTS

it is like the sitter, honest and thorough. In these pictures a magnifying-glass only reveals fresh delicacies and fresh beauties, yet there is no niggling, no over-emphasis; looked at from a distance these details vanish, leaving only the broad effect of a fine portrait.

The Italians do not show this same love of exact reproduction. Accustomed as they were to cover very large surfaces, microscopic finish was impossible to them. Instead we have pictures painted by men who, even when they were at work on a portrait, put the search for ideal beauty, form and style before all else. Every detail of Bouts' portrait will repay attention: the beautiful flat modelling of the face and the thin soft hair. The man's delicately painted hands are folded one over the other, and he wears a tunic and fur-lined garment of much the same shape as Arnolfini's in No. 186. He stands beside an open window. The shutter is open and the upper part is glazed with bottle glass. The little landscape we see through Dirk's open window is rather surprising, for on the horizon is a range of snow peaks. What did a Dutchman, living at Louvain, know of snow mountains? As far as we are aware Bouts never travelled far afield as did so many of his brother artists. He was, however, a follower of the Van Eycks, and worked under Roger Van der Weyden, and all these artists must have seen snowy ranges—Jan van Eyck, when he travelled through Spain and Portugal with the Burgundian embassy, and Roger in his journey to and from Rome in 1448–50—and snow mountains occur in many of their pictures. We have seen that whenever a feature or composition

in the work of another painter commended itself to an artist, it was immediately "lifted" and made use of, so that Bouts need have gone no further than the workshop in which he was working to see his snow mountains, and this may account for the rather perfunctory way in which they are painted. Roger was the most popular artist of his day, and that doubtless explains the appearance of snow mountains, which keep cropping up in Netherlands art from this time forward.

It tends to emphasize for us the great love the Northern peoples have always shown for the beauties of Nature. Their want of selection and their lack of craving for ideal perfection, which is so noticeable in their representation of the human form, cease directly they paint anything in the nature of a landscape. The tiny landscapes of the miniaturists are exquisite, and we find the same passionate love of the country, its sights and its sounds, in Northern literature. The very idea of snow-capped mountains must have fired the imagination of a painter from the Netherlands.

The exact reverse is to be found in Italian art. They gave their love entirely to the human form and to animals, ceaselessly studying them pictorially and scientifically; but landscape interested them hardly at all. They had a perfectly charming formula composed of delicate trees, green hillocks and strange rocks, which they used as a setting for their figures. There is no evidence whatever before Titian of any careful landscape study; they seem to have made up their minds what rocks ought to look like and then painted them. Crivelli's "Beato Ferretti," No. 668, is an excellent

example. How beautiful is the kneeling figure of the saint, and how charming the two ducks in the little pond by his side. But what rocks and trees! The former look like piles of chocolate creams and the latter like dishevelled garden brooms.[1]

The majority of Italian painters must have seen snow-peaked mountains, but they none of them painted them, and we can only conclude they positively disliked and possibly feared them. They enjoyed an artificial kind of landscape, such as that in "Cephalus and Procris," No. 698, which was their own creation and entirely under their own control.

A "Virgin and Child," No. 2595, is attributed to Bouts, but both the Virgin and Child belong in type more to Campin's school than to that of Bouts. The mother stands by a balustrade giving her breast to her child, and the alert but ugly nude baby sits on a brocaded cushion. To the left is an open window divided by a mullion, and through it we see a charming landscape, far more beautiful than that in either of the two last pictures we have been considering. We see fields and trees and, beyond, a walled city with towers. A point of particular interest in this picture is the magnificent cloth of gold and crimson hanging behind the Virgin. It has apparently been lying folded for some time, as the creases show very clearly, but a bit of it is quite unfinished. The artist has painted up to the last crease in the material, completely finishing it as he went, but in the last division on the right, he has

[1] In the Venetian school we find a greater understanding of landscape than elsewhere in Italy, but from the first the spirit of the Venetians was akin to that of the Netherlands.

just laid the paint on flat and only begun to finish it in the lower corner. Clearly the painter finished his picture completely as he went along.

The Northern French school is so closely allied to that of the Netherlands, indeed it is almost indistinguishable, that the two panels, "The Soul of St. Bertin," No. 1302, and "A Choir of Angels," No. 1303, are better considered here rather than later on.

These panels are the wings of a shrine, made between 1453 and 1459 at Valenciennes, for the Abbey of St. Bertin at St. Omer. The corresponding panels are in the Berlin Museum.[1]

The painter who is supposed to have been responsible for them, is Simon Marmion, who was born about 1425, and died towards 1489. He worked at Amiens, Lille, Valenciennes and Tournai.

As compositions, the panels are charmingly childish. The two angels who are bearing up St. Bertin's soul seem about to roost on the saint's earthly dwelling, and in the companion panel the angels only just clear the topmost gable of the building. But how perfect is the colour: the roof of the Abbey is rendered with loving fidelity, and the dim, mysterious light on it, and in the sky behind makes a fit background for the heavenly company. It is difficult to know what to admire most, the details of the angels' drapery, with its long flowing lines broken into sharp angles where they float out behind the heavenly visitants, or the splendour of their parti-coloured wings.

[1] "The Van Eycks and their Followers," by Sir Martin Conway, p. 223.

The sky behind the monastery buildings is a very remarkable achievement. No other primitive in the Gallery, no matter of what school, shows anything to compare with it. Marmion has rendered with perfect art the luminous, coldly glowing atmosphere that comes at dawn and evening when it is neither night nor day. Simon Marmion was one of the miniaturists, and amongst their works are to be found exquisite tiny landscapes which may perhaps help to account for this beautiful sky. Antonello da Messina in his "Crucifixion," No. 1166, and Giovanni Bellini in the "Blood of the Redeemer," No. 1233, have both tried to capture the light of early dawn, but theirs is but an attempt, where the Northern artist has not only succeeded but has never been surpassed. It is sad to think that these fragments, and the two panels at Berlin alone remain to us of the work of this delightful artist.

The painter of "The Exhumation of St. Hubert," No. 783, is a quarry that so far has eluded the hunt of the keenest critic. The scent has led up to Albert of Ouwater and Roger Van der Weyden as being his masters, but there it stops. There is clearly a very close connection between him and Ouwater, as the latter's only identified picture, "The Raising of Lazarus" (Berlin), has a background strikingly like ours. Ouwater was painting in 1470.

It is a splendid picture, full of life and dramatic feeling, the work of a great artist: his touch is sure and certain. Too often we have found the saints in the midst of very strange architecture indeed, and sometimes a layman would judge the buildings posi-

tively unsafe. For the former we have only to glance at Dirk Bouts' "Virgin and Child," No. 774, for the latter at the Master of Liesborn "Presentation in the Temple," No. 257.

With our nameless artist it is far different, for he has rendered faithfully the interior of a great church (it is said to be the cathedral of Liége), where the scene of the miracle is laid. The body of St. Hubert, buried long years before, has just been raised from its grave in front of the altar and is found to be untouched by time. It was believed in the Middle Ages, and indeed long afterwards, that the bodies of saints, owing to the sanctity of their lives, were practically incorruptible. Yet such is the inherent scepticism of human nature that it was always a distinct relief to the faithful when the miracle really happened before their eyes. It is just this moment, when doubt is resolved into certainty, that the painter has given us.

Everyone is intent on the business, and we get every kind of expression of character in the faces. First we have that of the mystic who sees only the spiritual side of the event: such are the two priests who tenderly raise the body of St. Hubert, the man in the black capuchon close behind the altar, and the devout woman near the man in scarlet: all these are deeply touched, are moved to the depths by the scene. Then there are the two complacent bishops who are saying within themselves, "Of course the miracle is all right, we always knew it would be." The monarch who kneels by the altar, his crown in his hand, is a serious-minded man deeply interested in the affair. He must be intended to represent Carloman, King of

The Exhumation of St. Hubert *No. 783*

UNKNOWN MASTER, XVTH CENTURY

the Franks, who was present at the exhumation; behind him are two boys, presumably his sons; one of them is sincerely impressed, but the other is an irrepressible urchin all agog to see what is going on. Everyone is excited, and there must have been a loud buzz of conversation, for everyone is talking. On the other side of the enclosing screens the common folk are crowded together, pushing and standing on tip-toe to catch what glimpse they can of the miracle. Many of the faces are of a coarse, low type, especially the odious woman who is joking with the man beside her: they are seen just above the king's head.

On the altar is a shrine for relics, and above is a little carved figure of a saint under a canopy which can be closed in by doors.

Notwithstanding the wonderful painting, this work is far more an illustration (of the very best and highest type it is true) than a picture. The painter has set out to paint a particular scene, and he not only gives us the facts as they happened, but he shows us the effect of the miracle on the spectators' minds. Illustration, though by no means the highest manifestation of art, is by far the easiest to appreciate and understand. It can never be forgotten that the greatest artists of all time exercise our intellect and imagination, they speak to our spirit though they also appeal to us through our senses. That is, the beauty of their line and colour reaches us first through our sense of sight. In illustration the artist leaves little or nothing to our imagination, he does everything for us, and however well he may have succeeded, it remains a finite instead of an infinite thing, it is bounded by his

sole imagination. To make clear the difference between these two branches of art the best way is to go straight from "The Exhumation" to "The Entombment" by Dirk Bouts, No. 664, and let the pictures explain themselves.

CHAPTER VI

HANS MEMLINC, *c.* 1430–94

HANS MEMLINC was born about the year 1430, but where he was born is a matter of dispute. There appears equally good reason for suggesting Memlynck, near Alkmaar in Holland, or the neighbourhood of Mainz in Germany as his birthplace, but it is almost certain that he received his early training in either Mainz or Cologne, probably the latter. He did not settle in Bruges till 1467. By that time he was a master of considerable standing, as he was in the service of Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy.

The year 1468 was a very gay one for Bruges because the Duke of Burgundy on July 3rd married his second wife, Margaret of York, sister of Edward IV of England. The princes of the Middle Ages loved above all things feasts and pageants where they could indulge their love of bright colours and fine clothes and their sense of personal grandeur. A wedding was an admirable occasion for these entertainments, and it was a fortunate circumstance (for the gentlemen) that most princes had at least two or three successive wives. Charles the Bold, a prince who, had he lived in the present century, would have been vulgarly ostentatious, had the good fortune to be born in the

fifteenth, when art was unconsciously understood and loved by rich and poor, and it was almost impossible to be rich in an offensive way. He spent his money (or rather his subjects' money) in princely fashion, and thus attracted artists of all kinds to his court. One of these, the Italian medallist Nicolas di Forzore Spinelli of Florence, who was the Duke's seal engraver, had his portrait painted by Memlinc (now in the Antwerp Museum). Memlinc was a successful painter and a well-to-do man, for it is recorded that in 1480 he bought a large stone house with two smaller ones in Bruges. He died in 1494, for in a diary kept by an ecclesiastical notary and clerk to the chapter of St. Donatian at Bruges, this entry occurs: "On the 11th of August died at Bruges master John Memlinc, then considered to be the most skilful and excellent painter in the whole of Christendom."[1]

The memory of this painter, so popular in his own day, whose known and identified pictures date only from the time he settled at Bruges and was already famous, was entirely forgotten a hundred years later, for when Van Mander, in the sixteenth century, was writing his lives of the Netherlandish painters, all he could say of Memlinc was that this once famous master was painting some time before the year 1540.

In "The Virgin and Child Enthroned in a Garden," No. 686, we have a picture, in by no means a good state of preservation, but if not entirely from the hand of Memlinc, painted under his directions in his workshop. It certainly shows his peculiarities both of spirit and craftsmanship. It is a picture full of the deepest

[1] "Hans Memlinc," by W. H. J. Weale, p. 8.

and most devout feeling, expressed in a beautiful art united with an intense homeliness and love of simple things. And perhaps, by reason of this last quality, it is a picture that makes a very wide appeal, and is one of which few can ever tire.

The Virgin is seated on a throne beneath a canopy and her Child is on her knee. Before her kneels the donor, and behind him, as usual, stands his patron saint, St. George, his dragon at his feet. On the other side a small angel kneels, playing upon a lute. This simple scene is laid in the paved court of one of the little gardens so dear to the painters of the Netherlands. The picture was painted about the year 1475, and therefore within the first ten or twelve years of Memlinc's settling in Bruges, and every inch will repay the closest examination. The Virgin is a sweet and modest-looking girl, though she is not beautiful, judged by our modern standards. She has the small features and oval-shaped face and the high bald forehead so much admired in Memlinc's day. In her left hand she holds a book which she is thoughtfully reading: with her right she supports her baby on her knee. The Child is not pretty, but he is full of intelligence, strong and wiry and never still. His attention has been caught by the thin music of the angel's lute, and he has turned away from crumpling his mother's book to listen. The homely little angel, who looks like a small nursery-maid fitted with wings, has an innocent charm, for she is humbly delighted that the babe should have deigned to listen to her music. St. George looks kind and thoughtful, but certainly his is not the face of the knight errant, ready for all

ventures, such as this knight of Christ must have been when he killed the dragon, rescued the Princess, and baptized all the people of her city. Memlinc has, (to match his St. George), represented a peculiarly mild dragon curled up at his feet. It is a curious looking animal, with a head something between that of a greyhound and a codfish, and it has the ears of a mouse. It is impossible to say whether Memlinc intended to represent it as dead or alive, because, though it has a gaping red wound in its neck, its bright brown eye is full of life. St. George wears a shirt of mail and over it a suit of armour; he has no helmet but carries a fur hat. The donor (one would like to know his name and something about him) kneels at the corner of the carpet on which the Virgin's throne stands. He looks both respectable and devout, but otherwise his is an ordinary, commonplace type of face. One of the greatest charms of this picture is, that though the saint and donor are quietly adoring, and the Virgin as quietly reading, yet, because the Child is so intently listening to the music and the angel so happy in making it, the whole picture is full of life. The composition, too, is full of interest: instead of a symmetrical grouping of saints and donors on either side, we have on the right a dark mass composed of two men's figures, while on the other there is only the small angel in white. Yet so brilliant is the colour of the Virgin's robe on the left, and so noticeable the little angel, that the balance of the picture is harmoniously kept, notwithstanding the unusual composition.

The Virgin's throne is set on a rich Oriental carpet, and these carpets were highly prized. When the

Virgin and Child Enthroned in a Garden *No. 686*

HANS MEMLINC

Venetian ambassador Giustiniani wished to extract a concession from Henry VIII, he gave a valuable set of these carpets to Cardinal Wolsey for his new palace at Hampton Court.

Somewhere between 1480 and 1490 James Floreins, a merchant grocer of Bruges (this was the same Floreins who married a Spanish lady and had eighteen children), commissioned Memlinc to paint a large altar-piece which is now in the Louvre. The Virgin and Child, with St. James and St. Dominic, are hemmed in on either side by a phalanx of Floreins, big and little, headed by the donors, James and his wife. The Virgin and Child are almost identical with those of our picture in the National Gallery. The Virgin sits beneath her canopy reading her book, and the Child is crumpling the leaves with his little left hand while he raises the right in blessing. The Louvre picture is very much more in the nature of a full-dress affair than ours, and it looks as though Memlinc were so pleased with his representation of the Virgin and Child in the small picture that when, he got his commission from Floreins, he thought he would repeat it, making his Child a little more dignified by raising his hand in blessing, instead of merely stretching it out in an attitude of listening.

But to return to our picture. Beyond, and a little below the porch or tiled court where the Virgin sits, is a little walled garden. On the left, a paved footpath goes through an opening in a low brick wall with a flat stone coping into another tiny garden. In this enclosure some small shrubs are growing in a long

border, surrounded by a brick edging, and a high red wall bounds the two gardens. Outside this pleasant place there is on the right a castle, and on the left a burgher's house: its master, dressed in a long coat and red cap and wearing pattens as well as shoes, is going through the garden door. We know this doorway leads into a courtyard and not into the house because the light shines through, casting the man's shadow behind him: it is not, however, a sharp shadow, for there is no direct sunlight in this picture.

The distant landscape is of great interest, for it shows a scene that must have been very familiar to all those living at Bruges in the fifteenth century. There is a wide space of water bounded by green banks, and across the water many ships are coming into port. Near at hand a vessel, her high poop hung with crimson shields, is lowering her sail, her journey ended, and a wide-bottomed boat crammed with passengers come to greet her is being rowed (very badly) towards her. Close in shore an empty boat is moored, and out in the stream, beyond the big ship, there is a galley with a red awning in the stern to accommodate its passengers, while in the far distance a fleet is beating up and will soon, too, reach its haven.

Memlinc loved to study water and ships, and in the tiny space of this background he has given a study of ripples and reflections of exquisite feeling and delicacy.

Everyone knows that St. George slew the dragon and rescued the Princess, but it may be of interest here briefly to tell his legend again in the form in which it was known and loved in the Middle Ages.

The people of the Netherlands were very conservative in the choice of saints represented in their pictures. Excluding the saints of the New Testament we get St. Margaret, St. Katherine, St. Barbara and St. George again and again, and it is seldom that we find any others. It would be of great interest to discover the cause of their extreme popularity, but one thing they share in common, the romance and fairy-like quality of their legends. Most likely it was these very qualities that so endeared them to the somewhat stolid people of the Netherlands.

Jacobus de Voragine thus relates the tale of St. George and the Dragon.[1]

St. George was a knight born in Cappadocia, and one day he came to a city called Silene. This town was grievously afflicted, for a dragon dwelt in a marshy place near by. The breath of the monster when he came nigh the city poisoned all the people. Therefore the inhabitants gave him two sheep each day that he might be satisfied and remain in the marsh. At last no more sheep were left, and it was ordained that the children and young people should be taken by lot, and any child, gentle or simple, on whom the lot fell should be delivered to the dragon. After many had been taken the lot fell on the king's only daughter, and the king said to his people, "'For the love of the gods take gold and silver and all that I have, and let me have my daughter.' But the people said, 'How, sir? Ye have made and ordained the law, and our children be now dead, and now ye would do contrary;

1 "The Golden Legend," Temple Classics, Vol. III, p. 125.

your daughter shall be given or else we shall burn you and your house.'" Then the king demanded eight days' respite, and after, he arrayed his daughter in wedding garments and led her to the place where the dragon was and there left her.

While she was there St. George passed by, and seeing a lady weeping asked her what she was doing there, and she answered, "'Go your way, fair young man, that ye perish not also.' Then said he, 'Tell to me what ye have and why ye weep, and doubt of nothing.'" Then she told him how she was delivered to the dragon. "Then said St. George, 'Fair daughter, doubt ye nothing hereof, for I shall help ye in the name of Jesus Christ.' The princess answered, "'For God's sake, good knight, go your way and abide not with me, for ye may not deliver me.' Thus as they spake the dragon appeared and came running to them, and St. George was upon his horse and drew out his sword and garnished him with the sign of the cross and rode hardily against the dragon and smote him with his spear and hurt him right sore and threw him to the ground. And after, said to the maid, 'Deliver to me your girdle and bind it about the neck of the dragon and be not afeared.' When she had done so the dragon followed her as it had been a meek beast and debonair. Then she led him into the city and the people fled by mountains and valleys, and said, 'Alas! alas! we shall all be dead.' Then St. George said to them, 'Fear nothing, believe ye in God and Jesus Christ and be baptized, and I shall slay the dragon.' Then the king was baptized and all his people, and St. George slew the dragon and smote off his head, and com-

manded that he should be thrown in the fields, and they took four carts with oxen that drew him out of the city."

In the reign of the two Paynim emperors, Diocletian and Maximian, "St. George left the habit of a knight and put on that of a Christian man, and he went into the middle of the Paynims and began to cry, 'All the gods of the Paynims be devils: my God made the heavens and is very God.' Then said the Provost to him, 'Of what presumption cometh this, and what is thy name?' He answered anon, and said, 'I am named George, I am a gentleman, a knight of Cappadocia, and have left all for to serve the God of heaven.'"

From this time forth St. George suffered imprisonment and numberless tortures, and at last his head was smitten off about the year of our Lord two hundred and eighty-seven.

The histories of the saints as told by Jacobus de Voragine reflect the popular intellectual outlook of the time. They are all related from a strictly aristocratic standpoint. St. George, when arrested by the Provost, says, "I am a gentleman, a knight of Cappadocia." He states his gentle birth and his position and is proud of both. The lesser folk are usually submissive and willing to be led, but both sides often show their nobler qualities. These aristocratic saints never forget that *noblesse oblige*, and if they expect of right to lead, at any rate they are always found at the post of danger. If they start in life favoured of fortune and fabulously wealthy, they strip

themselves of riches, giving everything to the poor, keeping nothing for themselves. The poor folk who had no acknowledged rights show plenty of spirit on occasion also. Though stunted and kept under, the democratic spirit is there, and the King of Silene has to give in when the people demand that, as their children have been given to the dragon so must his be given when the lot falls upon his daughter. 'Your daughter shall be given or else we shall burn you and your house.'

Just such a spirit must have animated the citizens of Bruges and Ghent in their frequent uprisings against the exactions and oppressions of their overlords.

Memlinc's portrait of "The Duke of Cleves," No. 2594, if indeed this is the Duke of Cleves, represents him standing between two marble pillars, his hands joined in prayer, his Book of Hours before him. His head stands out from the dark background, and the whole colouring of the picture, though sombre, is very beautiful. His red, sleeved waistcoat is laced with black over a white shirt, and above the waistcoat is a black tunic slashed at the shoulder to show the white shirt beneath. He wears a chain round his neck with the jewel so popular in the fifteenth century, a cross of coloured stones with four large pearls at the angles and one hanging from the cross. He has two rings, one on the thumb, the other on the second joint of the middle finger. Memlinc has kept to a thoroughly conventional treatment of his sitter, yet the picture has such a quiet and noble charm that no one could ever tire of a portrait such as this. We

feel that probably the sitter, his father and mother, and especially his mother, were greatly pleased with it. The young man's face is decidedly wanting in character, but he looks a gentleman and possibly even an unostentatious duke. But is this the Duke of Cleves? In the light of what Philippe de Commines tells us of him it is permissible to doubt if this is indeed a portrait of that nobleman.

"In 1477 the Duke of Cleves also was at Ghent, soliciting a marriage between his son and the young princess (Mary of Burgundy), which he thought might be convenient for many reasons: and truly I think it might have succeeded had the young gentleman found favour in his person with the young princess and her ministers, for he was of her own family, held his duchy of the dukes of Burgundy, and had been educated in their court: but perhaps the knowledge and character they had received of him caused his rejection." Certainly his rejection is quite comprehensible after reading the footnote on the young man, "John II surnamed the Clement, born on the 23rd April, 1458, married Matilda, daughter of Henry III, Landgrave of Hesse: and died on the 15th May, 1521. He is said to have had sixty-three illegitimate children."[1]

If this were really a portrait of the Duke of Cleves, it would have been painted just about the time he was an aspirant for the young princess's hand. Certainly this is not the portrait of a gross and sensual young man, and it is quite likely that between then and

1 "The Memoirs of Philippe de Commines," Bell and Sons, p. 370.

now the true name of the man whose picture it is has been lost and forgotten.

The only remaining undoubted Memlinc in the Gallery is "St. John the Baptist and St. Laurence," No. 747. This picture is really composed of two wings of a triptych, the centre of which is lost. On the backs of the panels are painted an escutcheon and four cranes with red crests.

These panels are of extreme interest because they show what a conscientious, painstaking workman Memlinc was. There is no sign of inspiration in them whatever. Most probably the patron who ordered the triptych chose these two obvious and popular saints whom Memlinc must have portrayed dozens of times, and the artist agreed to paint them once again, possibly with a sigh. But though the conception is rather conventional there is not the slightest sign of haste or scamping in his work.

St. John the Baptist has the refined and thoughtful type of face Memlinc made so peculiarly his own, and that of St. Laurence is somewhat characterless, but amiable and devout. The Baptist holds his little close-cropped lamb, who though conventional is very much alive, in his left arm while he points to it with his right hand. The two saints stand in two small porches, and behind them are marble pillars. These are of the type represented in Netherlands pictures, but marble can never have been anything but rare in their cathedrals and churches. John the Baptist wears his garment of camel's hair and over it is knotted his purple cloak. St. Laurence carries a book, and beside him is his emblem, the gridiron. It

just fits into the corner of the picture and is purely symbolic, for it is neither large enough to roast a man nor small enough to cook a chop. It is of a piece with the careful, conscientious planning out of a duty picture. Through the two arches behind the saints we see a charming landscape of trees in full leaf and green sward. In the distance is a castle, and over a little eminence two people are walking towards the road that winds across towards the castle.

A "Madonna and Infant Christ," No. 709, is labelled with Memlinc's name. It is a fine painting, but it is difficult to believe it is really from his hand, and it is probably a work by one of his pupils or assistants.

CHAPTER VII

GERARD DAVID, AFTER 1450–1523 : FOLLOWER OF GEERTGEN TOT SINT JANS, WORKING *c.* 1505

THE work of the Netherlands painters was extremely popular in Italy, not only with the rich and cultivated picture-buying section of society but also with the Italian artists.

The immense vogue of Netherlands painters in Europe during the second half of the fifteenth century is probably due to two causes, the first being that they represented the stories of the Old and New Testaments with a devout and moving simplicity. In this particular they were far before the Italians, and the Italians themselves were aware of it. Alessandra Strozzi writes to her son Lorenzo, who was then living at Bruges, about some pictures painted on linen which she was anxious to sell. But of one of them she says, "I shall keep the Holy Face: it is a devout and beautiful picture." "El volto santo serberò: che è una divota figura e bella."[1] The second reason for their popularity may well be found in the rise of the great collectors. Princes and rich men had agents in all parts of the known world on the look-out for good pictures, statues, carvings and gems, both antique and

[1] "L'art du Nord et au sud des Alpes à l'Epoque de la Renaissance," by Jacques Mesnil, p. 21.

modern. And the pictures of the Netherlands artists were particularly suitable for the cabinet of a wealthy man. They were easily handled and could be pored over by art lovers, for they admitted of the closest inspection.

To such an extent was this admiration of the Northern school carried, that Italian princes not only employed Netherlands artists at their courts, but sometimes even sent their own court painters to the Netherlands to learn the Northern method of painting. Thus there are two letters, the first being of December 26th, 1460, in which the Duke of Milan recommends to the Duke of Burgundy Zanetto Bugatto, who is visiting his dominions, to receive lessons from a famous master; in the second, of the 7th May, 1463, the Duchess thanks this master, who is no other than Roger Van der Weyden, for the liberality with which he has shown the Milanese painter the secrets of his art.[1]

We have already noticed that in composition and design the Italian artists far surpassed those of the Netherlands: they were in addition far more original and intellectual, and consequently more open to new ideas. Directly they became acquainted with the works of the painters north of the Alps they sought to discover their secrets in the technique of oil painting and to imitate both their brilliant, enamel-like colouring and the skill with which they rendered the minutest object before them. But they did not take altogether kindly to the new fashion. The Italians

1 "L'art du Nord et au sud des Alpes à l'Epoque de la Renaissance," by Jacques Mesnil, p. 32.

were above all painters in fresco, and the altar-piece and easel picture was to them always a less interesting work. They found it difficult at first to use oil as a medium instead of mixing their colours with egg, and some went so far as to paint the first two coats in tempera, the last one only being in oil. One painter succeeded in a measure in learning the secrets of the North, for "The Crucifixion," No. 1166, and the "St. Jerome in his Study," No. 1418, by Antonello da Messina, are excellent examples of a first-rate Italian painter who assimilated some of the methods of the Netherlands artists.

Gerard David shows all the typical qualities of the great painters of the Netherlands school. He was born at Oudewater in Holland some time soon after 1450. In all probability he learnt his craft in Haarlem, but, as did so many other artists, he came to seek his fortune in Bruges, and in January, 1484, was admitted as master painter in the City Guild of St. Luke and St. Eligius. It is not known for certain under which painter he learnt his art, but when he got to Bruges Memlinc was at the height of his fame, and David was certainly much influenced by him.

Probably Gerard David painted many pictures between 1484 and 1489, but the first work of which we have authentic knowledge is an odd one. In 1489 the citizens of Bruges broke out in fierce revolt against their ruler, the Archduke Maximilian. They had never liked him, and when they got him into their power they shut him up in a big new house in the market square. Once having secured their royal master they were determined he should not escape, and they

had heavy iron gratings fastened over the windows. Gerard David was commissioned to paint them so that they might look less forbidding to the Archduke. At the same time the magistrates of the victorious party having deposed, tortured and finally executed the burgomaster, and the judge who had held office under Maximilian, commissioned David to paint two panels for the justice room in the town hall, the subject being the unjust judge Sisamnes. Sisamnes, convicted of bribery and corruption, was condemned to be flayed alive. His skin was then hung on the judgment seat and his office given to his son, who was recommended always to remember what he was sitting on when he delivered judgment. These two panels are still in Bruges. David's pictures must have been a grim reminder to the new judge and burgomaster.

From this time onwards Gerard David was an honoured and successful painter of Bruges. He married Cornelia Cnoop, who was a miniature painter herself. David was a generous and devout man, and became a member of the confraternity of our Lady of the Dry Tree in the church of the Grey Friars. He died at Bruges in 1523.

Sir Martin Conway thinks that we have in our collection pictures belonging to each of the three periods into which he divides David's art. He places "The Nailing of Christ on the Cross," No. 3067, in the first category; "The Mystic Marriage of St. Katherine," No. 1432, and "The Canon with his Patron Saints," No. 1045, in the second; while the "Adoration of the Kings," No. 1079, "The Deposi-

tion," No. 1078, and the "St. Jerome," No. 2596, he considers belong to the last.

"The Nailing of Christ to the Cross" is a picture of considerable interest. Granting that this is an early work of David's, the face and figure of Christ are most beautiful, but the executioners and spectators on the other hand are poor and coarse.

The picture is a well-known design, often repeated in Netherlands workshops. "The Martyrdom of St. Hippolytus at Bruges" by Dirk Bouts (and Bouts, it will be remembered, was also a Dutchman) though a far finer picture, is roughly the same design. We find it again about 1490 in the Sforza Book of Hours, so it was clearly a favourite.

The Netherlands painters were both conservative and niggardly in the matter of fresh ideas and designs. It seems that when they found that a particular composition took the popular fancy they repeated it again and again. Very likely it was not entirely their fault, for their public was even more conventional and conservative than were the artists. The Guild system, too, tended to emphasize the business side of the studio: it insisted on a very high standard of workmanship, and if an artist produced a particularly popular design they saw to it that the most was made of it. There was no fuss or talk about originality or plagiarism in those days. If there had been, the artists would have had short lives, for never has plagiarism been so general or carried to such a pitch. Painters "lifted" a design bodily from a fellow-artist's pictures if they wanted to, and said no more about it.

Richard de Visch van der Capelle was a member of

an old and distinguished Flemish family whose name constantly appears in the history of the country. This particular member was a canon of the Collegiate Church of St. Donatian at Bruges. In 1463 he was appointed precentor, and he was well known for his learning in canon law.[1]

About the year 1501 he commissioned Gerard David to paint a "Marriage of St. Katherine" to serve as an altar-piece for the St. Katherine's altar in the chapel of St. Anthony in the church of St. Donatian. It must then have been arranged that the canon should be painted in the picture as the donor, together with his dog, his book and his precentor's staff. This picture is now No. 1432 in the National Collection.

This work exhibits in a high degree one of the most notable characteristics of the Netherlands school, for it is pre-eminently a human, lovable picture. The saints and the canon are all absorbed in prayer or contemplation—even the dog is subdued and thoughtful. An air of holy yet strictly human calm and peace pervades the whole picture.

In a tiled porch set in the midst of a little town garden the Virgin and her Son hold their small court. Beyond the garden, and beneath the city wall, an angel is plucking grapes in a vine-covered alley, and there may be many more small angels hidden beneath the shady leaves. Further along the alley St. Anthony pauses in the walk he is taking, to look across the garden at the group beneath the porch. Though the altar over which the picture was to hang was that of St. Katherine, yet the chapel which contained it was St.

1 "Gerard David," by W. H. James Weale.

Anthony's, so that it was almost a necessity that he should come into the picture. But he has been painted so very small that he can only just be said to come in.

In the foreground the canon kneels in prayer, a little apart from his saintly companions. One would judge him an honest, kindly man, but obstinate, and but for his reputation as an exponent of canon law, not to be suspected of over-much learning. He wears a furred cassock, and over that a fine white surplice falls in many folds from the neck, and the full sleeves are tucked and set into the shoulder seam with lace and embroidery of delicate needlework. Over his left arm he carries his amess, a tippet of grey fur with brown tails hanging at the lower edge. These capes were worn in choir during service in the cold, unwarmed churches. The hands, with their short, strong fingers, carry out the impression given by the face, of a good man, sensible but neither intellectual nor artistic.

More than a hundred years before, in 1337, Canon Nicholas de Bouchoute gave a cantor's staff to the church of St. Donatian. It was a beautiful piece of goldsmith's work, silver-gilt, with a group of the Holy Trinity between a monk and a cardinal on the top. This staff was highly esteemed by everyone connected with the church, and no doubt that was why Canon Van der Capelle had it painted in his picture. It lies before him on the tiled floor with his breviary with the golden clasps and his black hood. The canon's fat brown greyhound, fit and sober pet for an eminent ecclesiastic, lies in front of his master. As we have seen, the canon belonged to a noble family

The Marriage of St. Katherine *No. 1432*

GERARD DAVID

and, like many an aristocrat before and since, was not averse to the spectators knowing it. His dog's collar is not only adorned with a bell and studded with brass-headed nails, but his master's coat-of-arms is also wrought upon it in fine enamel.

The Virgin is of the traditional type of the Netherlands school. Sad and stately, she clasps her hands about her baby on her knee. The Child gives the ring to St. Katherine with the gracious gesture of a monarch. There is a solemnity about both Mother and Child which is in great contrast to Memlinc's treatment of the subject. St. Katherine kneels beside the Child, her hair is soft and golden and, like that of the Virgin and St. Barbara, hangs over her shoulder in wavy masses. She wears the hot and overwhelming clothing customary with a princess, her skirts are immensely long and wide and so are her fur-lined sleeves, and over all she wears an ermine-lined cloak. Her jewels are as royal as her robes: a pendant and gold chains are about her neck and fasten her cloak, and upon her head is a magnificent crown. Beside her on the ground are her emblems, the sword and the broken wheel of her martyrdom. Facing St. Katherine are St. Barbara and St. Mary Magdalene. The former is less richly apparelled than St. Katherine. After all, St. Barbara was only a nobleman's daughter, though certainly she is, to our modern eyes, magnificently dressed. Deeply serious, she has just looked up from the book she is reading. On her head is the jewelled velvet headdress so often to be found in paintings of this date, in which the hair is drawn tightly back under the hood and then through a hole at the back,

so that it looks like a horse's tail. This was a quite indescribably ugly fashion. On the front of St. Barbara's jewelled headdress is her emblem, a little tower wrought in gold, and round her neck she wears a jewel composed of three stones, probably, in allusion to her story, an emblem of the Holy Trinity. St. Mary Magdalene is clothed in plainer, darker garments than the other saints, for she was a penitent. In her hand she holds her pot of precious ointment, and her head is bound with a velvet ribbon on which her name is embroidered.

The surroundings of this holy company are as charming and delightful as themselves, and the garden is of special interest to garden-loving English people. This type of garden occurs in a good many pictures of the date, and it is thus possible to get a very good idea of how the richer citizens arranged them. The houses were generally fairly close together, so that the space at their disposal was limited. Their plan, roughly speaking, was to fence round a small square in the middle, and very often it was subdivided into little beds set with flowers and strange devices. Sometimes they had little cut shrubs encircled with tiers of painted metal crowns, or a tiny shrine was fixed on to the bush. Space was always left round the square for a paved walk, and then beyond that, generally right up against the boundary wall, there was a kind of wooden pergola with a round arched top, and over the wooden frame vines or roses were trained, making a pleasant shady alley. In these pictures angels are nearly always seen gathering grapes or roses or singing and making music in this covered way. The garden

in the "Marriage of St. Katherine" is larger than many, but it shows the same arrangement, and the flowers are most exquisitely studied.[1]

The vine-covered alley lies between the garden and the high wall that surrounds this pleasant place, and on the other side is the city. It is a spacious town with plenty of shady trees and fine buildings. It gives a general impression of being Bruges; but it is not possible to identify any of the buildings, though they are painted with the most minute and delicate care. A stork stands on the chimney of the house on the left, and an old woman looks out of the window, and a squirrel is eating a nut on the transom of the window of the house on the right. A swallow clings to one of the twisted chimneys, and a bull-finch sits on the garden wall.

St. Katherine, a princess of wondrous beauty and goodness, was the only child of the Paynim king and queen who ruled over Cyprus and Alexandria.

From the first she showed the greatest aptitude for learning, and the prince, her father, built a tower for

[1] The following notes on this picture, for which I have to thank Mr. Arthur W. Hill, Director of the Botanic Gardens at Kew, are of great interest: "From right to left the plants are (1) vine on the wall (red pillar); (2) rose on wall; (3) Madonna lilies; (4) lilium croceum. Then to the left of the hanging is a very fine iris. Unfortunately the details of the pink flowered plant are not clear; it might be a pomegranate, but it is too indefinite to say. I think it must have been an actual plant, as all the other details are so good. In the extreme left there is a very good columbine. At the foot of the wall, covered by the vine, on the right side, there appear to be white-flowered pelargoniums, but they are not very clear. In the garden above is an orange tree with unripe fruit."

her and divided it into several chambers, and he chose the seven wisest of his subjects to teach her, but so clever was she that she soon outstripped her teachers and she ended by teaching them.

When this learned young princess came to be fourteen her father died and she reigned in his stead. Soon afterwards her mother and the chief nobles of her Parliament assembled, and a lord standing forward by consent of the rest said :[1]

"Right high and mighty Princess and our most sovereign lady : the Queen your mother and all the lords and commons of this realm beg and beseech you will take unto yourself a husband to the intent that he may help you in the hard task of ruling your great dominions, and that in time you may have children whom you may bring up in honour, wisdom and goodness."

To this Katherine, in her royal robes and with her crown upon her head, answered :

"My lady Mother and loyal liegemen : I thank you all for your love and kindness towards me, and with your help I trust to rule this land with peace and justice as did my father before me till a Prince shall come who will fulfil the conditions I require ; for, my lords, till this Prince come I will never marry. He that shall be lord of my heart shall have four notable things.

"He must be of such noble lineage that all men shall worship him, and so great a lord that I shall never think that I made him King, and so rich that he surpass all others in riches, and so full of beauty that angels have joy to behold him, and so meek and

[1] "The Golden Legend," Vol. VII, p. 1.

benign that he can gladly forgive all offences done to him.

"Now, my dear lords, I have described to you him that I desire to be my lord; go ye and seek him, and if ye can find such an one I will be his wife with all my heart if he will vouchsafe to have me. But if you cannot find him, then I will never wed, and this is my final word."

Now when the lords of Katherine's court and her lady mother heard these words they were very sad, and her mother said;

"Alas, daughter, is this your great wisdom of which men tell? The husband of whom you speak never was and never will be; therefore, daughter, leave this folly and do as your noble elders did before you."

Then Katherine sighed and said: "My mother, speak to me no more of this matter, I beseech you, for I promise you that I will have him only whom I have described." And so she rose and left the Council Chamber.

Now at this time there lived in the desert a holy hermit whose name was Adrian, and the Blessed Virgin came to him in a vision and bade him go to the noble young Katherine at Alexandria and instruct her in the Christian faith, but the hermit answered, "Right willingly would I obey thy will, but I know not the city, neither do I know the way thither." The Virgin answered, "Nevertheless go ye, Adrian, for the way shall be shewn you and all doors shall be open before you." So the hermit went forthwith, and when he came to Alexandria the gates of the city opened before him, and when he got to the foot of the princess' tower

he went up the stairs till he came to the little chamber where the young damsel was, and when she heard his message she left her palace and went with the old man into the desert. And as they were going Adrian lost his way and was in great fear. Then he prayed fervently to the Blessed Virgin, and Katherine looked and said, "What monastery is yonder that I see which is rich and rare to behold?" And the old man saw in the east a most noble building, and when they came to the gate a glorious company met them clothed in white with chaplets of lilies on their heads, and one more excellent than the rest spake and said, "Stand up, our dear little sister, for ye be right welcome," and he led her to a second gate where another yet more glorious company greeted her and these were clothed in purple with chaplets of red roses on their heads. And they embraced and comforted her, saying, "Dread ye nothing, our dear sister, for all the saints shall love you," and took her hand and drew her into heaven itself, and amidst a glorious company of martyrs and angels were the Blessed Virgin and her Son, and in the vision Christ leaned forward and put a ring on Katherine's finger, signifying that she should be his spiritual spouse.

After having been fully instructed in the Christian faith by the good hermit, Katherine returned to Alexandria, where she lived in great sanctity, teaching and converting her people.

Now the Emperor Maxentius of Rome, seeing the peace and contentment of Katherine and her subjects, marched with an army to the city of Alexandria with intent to subdue it. One day the Princess Katherine

heard a great noise in the streets of the city, and looking from her window she saw that Maxentius, the Emperor of Rome, with his court and his soldiers was in the market-place and that he had set up idols and was forcing the people to worship them. So she formed her people into a procession and preceded by a cross-bearer she went forth from her palace.

"Do you wonder at this beautiful temple, noble sir?" said she, for Maxentius had set up his idol before the chief temple which Katherine had made into a church. "Do you marvel at its wondrous ornaments made by the hand of man? Because of your great dignity, O Emperor, I should wish to salute you in all honour, but how can I when I see you worshipping these images of stone and metal? You marvel at the beauty of these things made by the hand of man and at the richness of their ornaments which will in time be dust before the wind. Look at the wonders of earth and heaven: the sun, the moon, and the stars and the order of their going; how they move from the east to the west and never be weary, and when thou shalt have knowledge of all these things and hast apperceived it, demand after who is most mighty of all, then adore him and glorify him, for he is God of Gods and Lord of Lords."

The Emperor was amazed at her wisdom and said, "We have heard thy fair speech but we may not understand all these things, and even if thou wert an angel or a celestial virtue yet thou oughtest not to be believed when thou art but one frail woman."

Then Katherine spoke again yet more wisely, and the Emperor seeing he could by no means overcome her,

secretly sent for fifty learned grammarians and doctors, and when they were assembled he said unto them: "We have a maiden, none comparable to her in wit and wisdom, which confoundeth all wise men, and she saith our gods be devils. If you will overcome her in dispute I shall send you again into your country with joy."

And the wise men said, "Let the maiden be brought before us that we may at once convince her of her folly."

Then the Emperor took his seat in the great hall, the wise men being ranged on either side of him, and Katherine was led before him.

Scornfully she said, "Is this your justice, my lord Emperor? on one side fifty great and learned men and on the other one poor maiden, albeit a Princess?" However, with great courage and spirit Katherine set forth her arguments, and she spoke with such wisdom and learning that the fifty wise men were convinced of the truth of her words, and when she ceased speaking the chief among them turned gravely to Maxentius and said, "Know, sir Emperor, no woman has ever been able to withstand us before; without doubt the Spirit of God speaks in this maiden, wherefore her God is our God."

When Maxentius heard this he was beside himself with rage, and he commanded that all the fifty wise men should at once be put to death by fire in the market-place. And when this was done and their ashes gathered together and buried by Christian men, Maxentius, wishing to save Katherine because of the fairness of her face, said, "Right noble lady, do but

sacrifice to my gods and you shall live at my court and be second only to the Empress in rank; and because of your great beauty an image in your likeness shall be set up in the city and you shall be worshipped as a goddess by all the people.

Katherine listened to his wicked words with terror and amazement. "Say not such things," she cried. "I have given myself long since to Christ and I am his humble handmaiden, him only can I serve."

The Emperor, overcome with wrath at her words, gave command that she should be beaten and shut up in a dark prison. And while she was there (the Emperor having gone on a journey) the Empress went to visit Katherine and she found the dark prison all bright and shining with a glorious light. They talked long together, and Katherine told the Empress of all the joys of Paradise, and she was converted, together with all the knights in attendance on her to the number of two hundred.

When the Emperor returned from his journey he found Katherine more beautiful than ever, and he begged her once more to come to him and sacrifice to his gods, but as before she utterly refused. Then in his great anger Maxentius ordered two great wheels to be made; sharp knives were fixed in the wheels which turned against each other and tore to pieces anything that came between them. Katherine was put between these cruel wheels and the attendants tried to turn them, but an angel came and broke them into a thousand pieces and Katherine stepped forth unharmed. The Empress, who had been watching these things from a secret hiding-place, came forward when she saw

the wheels lying broken, and denouncing Maxentius for his cruelty, avowed that she too was a Christian, and her attendant knights did likewise. Then in a madness of anger Maxentius condemned the Empress to be beheaded and the knights to be killed and their bodies thrown to the dogs. After that he called Katherine before him and said to her, "Though by your artful magic you have converted the Empress, yet, even now, if you will repent and do sacrifice to my god you shall be first and chief in my palace, for you are very fair. But if you will not repent and will not sacrifice, then to-day shall you lose your head."

But Katherine, steadfast to the end, only answered, "Do as you will. I am ready to suffer all."

She was then led forth, and after kneeling in prayer her head was struck off. And men say her body was borne by angels to Mount Sinai and there enclosed in a great rock.

Canon Richard de Visch van der Capelle had a great friend, Bernardino Salviati, and when he made his will he appointed him as one of his executors. Bernardino Salviati was the son of a rich Florentine merchant, and like Van der Capelle, a canon of St. Donatian. He was in addition a notary and clerk to the chapter. In or about 1501 both friends ordered for themselves a picture from Gerard David's workshop. Canon Richard Van der Capelle's was the "Marriage of St. Katherine," which we have just been considering, but Canon Salviati did not commission David to paint him an altar-piece, as he had a different scheme in hand. He had obtained permission to restore the altar of St. John the Baptist and St. Mary

Magdalene in St. Donatian's, and he determined to supply the already existing reredos with painted wings, so he commissioned David to furnish him with two panels for this purpose.

In the North it was often customary to have a carved reredos over the altar with wings of painted panels that would shut and conceal the reredos. In "The Exhumation of St. Hubert," No. 783, the canopy housing the statue over the altar has octagonal wings painted within and without, made to open and shut. Mr. Weale, speaking of the wings ordered by Salviati, says, "These shutters, together with several other altar reredoses in the nave of the church, were at the request of the sacristan, who complained that they were always breaking the wax candles, sold in a lot by order of the chapter in 1787 for an insignificant sum of money. I have been unable to trace what became of the others, but this one was, as we learn from the letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford, bought in 1792 by Mr. Thomas Barrett of Lee Priory, Kent, and it figures in the catalogue of that collection as 'A Group of Saints' by John Gossaert of Maubeuge." This quotation casts a vivid light on the fate which befell too many of the masterpieces of the painters of the Netherlands: only here and there has a great picture the good fortune to be recognized for all time for what it is.

The portrait of Salviati with his patron saints was the subject of the left wing added to the reredos. The canon kneels, his hands joined in prayer, while the three saints surround him. St. Martin is behind him and St. Donatian in front of him, while

his name saint, St. Bernardino of Siena, stands protectingly beside him.

St. Martin wears a cope of crimson velvet with orphreys embroidered with figures of saints. At the top is St. Donatian with his emblem, below St. Bernardino of Siena, St. Martin with his beggar beside him, St. John the Baptist and St. Mary Magdalene. The morse, a splendid piece of goldsmith's work, has a little figure of St. Martin dividing his mantle in two. On the hood is a picture in embroidery of the Adoration of the Magi seen in perspective, and it is amusing to find that even here, small as the picture is, we have the usual spectator looking over a paling at the aged king kneeling before the Child. No doubt the canon took the opportunity of having his best cope immortalized. Canon Van der Capelle had his mace and dog put into his picture, so why should not Canon Salviati have his cope?

St. Martin carries in his hand a splendid crozier: both that and St. Donatian's cross are wonderful specimens of the goldsmith's art. St. Donatian, the patron saint of the church, holds his emblem, five candles on a wheel, in his hand.

Between these two gorgeous churchmen stands St. Bernardino of Siena in the simple frock of a Franciscan friar. In one hand he holds a book on which is emblazoned the monogram of the Holy Name, the doctrine which only sixty or seventy years before he had been persecuted for preaching. St. Donatian's face is that of a successful, pushful, essentially commonplace man. St. Martin is pleasanter looking and more refined, but, meeting him in a crowd, no one would

A Canon with his Patron Saints *No. 1045*

GERARD DAVID

know him for a saint or even suspect him of undue holiness. With St. Bernardino it is far different. His delicate, refined face is that of an idealist, but the firm lines of his mouth and steady eyes show him to be a man of tenderness and common sense. St. Bernardino died only fifty-seven years before this picture was painted, and a great many portraits and sketches of him must have existed at this date. Not a few have come down to us, and this head of David's, though by no means a portrait of the man, yet recalls in an idealized form the portraits still known to us. The Florentines begged the saint to come and conduct a mission in their city, which he did in 1424, rousing the greatest enthusiasm amongst the people. Salviati's father must have been amongst the audience, and gave in after years the saint's name to his son.

The donor is an intelligent-looking man. The head is a sensitive, refined portrait. He is, as we might expect, dressed in almost exactly the same manner as Canon Van der Capelle. His tucked surplice is set in on the shoulder with almost identical embroidery. His under robe is trimmed with the sable fur, and over his arm is hung the counterpart of Van der Capelle's grey fur amess.

The canon and his saints are in the midst of a beautiful landscape. They are on the bank of a little stream, and on the opposite side a road runs past a wood to a ford. It must be June or July, for the trees are in full leaf, and at the edge of the wood, where the ground drops, the roots of the trees show clearly. Along this pleasant lane a lame beggar is limping: his begging bowl hangs at his waist, and on a strap over

his shoulder is a wallet. His clothes are torn, and through his broken shoe his toes are protruding. As the canon had chosen St. Martin as one of the saints for his picture, his beggar had to be included, but David has made the incident appear entirely ordinary and not in the least supernatural. On the right the wooded ground slopes sharply upwards: there are fields, and below them on the river bank is a walled castle. It is a beautiful and satisfying picture, but it arouses an intense wish for its companion, the right-hand shutter, which most probably had for its subject St. John the Baptist and St. Mary Magdalene.

We are fortunate in possessing many records of the life of St. Bernardino, a man pre-eminently of his time, brilliant and cultured, a great orator, a leader of men but, above all, a genius in the spiritual life. Born in 1380 at Massa in the territory of Siena, he came of a noble family, the Albizeschi, his father being the governor of the town. Bernardino was early left an orphan and owed his first care and training to his three saintly aunts and his cousin Tobia. When he was eleven years old they all migrated to Siena that Bernardino might receive from his uncles the education due to his station in life. Philosophy, canon law and theology he worked at with the greatest avidity, combining these subjects with the study of the Holy Scriptures. For his time Bernardino was a brilliant scholar, and counted among his friends in later life many of the most famous humanists of his day. In these early years he must have been a charming boy, good-looking and high-spirited: his contemporaries said " no one could possibly be bored in Bernardino's

company," yet with all his gaiety and charm his inner life, even then, was one of recollection, penitence and prayer.

At the age of seventeen Bernardino joined one of the many confraternities open to laymen who wished to lead a devout and charitable life. In 1400 Siena was devastated by the plague, and when not only the patients but the nurses in the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala were stricken, Bernardino gathered together a band of young men, and going to the governor begged to be given entire charge of the hospital. He and his companions were fully alive to the danger they ran, a far greater peril than that of any battle. The governor accepted the offer, and after receiving the last Sacraments the young men, with Bernardino as their leader, entered the hospital. Bernardino reserved all the most painful and dangerous duties to himself, and remained, nursing the sick and burying the dead with his own hands, until the plague had entirely disappeared; afterwards he nearly died from exhaustion. When he recovered, he decided to retire from the world for a time that he might consider his vocation. In one of his sermons he gives a most amusing account of this episode. "Before I became a friar I one day resolved to live not like a man but like an angel, and to take up my abode in a wood. When I asked myself what on earth I should find to do there, and on what I should subsist, I said to myself, 'I will do as the fathers of the desert, eating grass when I am hungry and drinking water to quench my thirst!' So saying, and invoking the Holy Name of Jesus, I took a mouthful of bitter herbs and began to

chew them. I chewed and chewed with no result, until at last, finding myself quite unable to swallow, it occurred to me, 'Supposing I begin by taking a drop of water!' To my cost, however, I soon discovered that the water went down while the herbs remained."

Notwithstanding these difficulties, Bernardino remained in his wood till he was quite sure that his vocation was that of a Franciscan friar, and in September, 1402, after having divided all his goods between the Church and the poor, he assumed the grey habit of the Franciscans. He entered the convent of Colombaio, a house where the rule of St. Francis was observed in all its original strictness: the friars who so followed it were known as belonging to the Observance.

St. Francis of Assisi died in 1226 after drawing up an austere rule and enjoining it strictly upon his followers. This rule, which was as natural to St. Francis as the perfume to the flower, was altogether too hard for his followers; especially hard was his injunction that they were to hold no property whatsoever. The friars soon found means of evading it. Very shortly after the founder's death great abuses crept into the order, and the "mitigated rule," as it was euphemistically called, grew laxer and laxer, till at last a few ardent souls pressed for a return to the strict observance of the rule and began to keep it themselves. Naturally those of the mitigated rule hated this small minority and did their best to break and annihilate them. When St. Bernardino entered the order there were no more than a hundred and thirty

friars who observed the rule in its original purity, and the little convent of Colombaio was one of the few under their control. Long and bitter was the struggle of the Observants, and St. Bernardino threw himself heart and soul into it. Victory came at last to the party of reform, and in 1438 St. Bernardino was appointed vicar-general of the Italian Observance, and four years later, instead of there being but one hundred and thirty oppressed friars who followed the strict rule of St. Francis, there were over four thousand in Italy alone.

St. Bernardino did a great work in leading the party of reform within his order, but he is best known by the fame of his missionary preaching tours throughout Italy. Thanks to the devotion of a humble admirer, a certain Benedetto of Siena, a fuller by trade, many of his extempore sermons have come down to us. When St. Bernardino was to preach a sermon, and sermons in those heroic days lasted for two, three and even five hours, he used to leave his shop and take down on wax tablets every word the saint uttered. He must have used some kind of shorthand, for as soon as the sermon was ended he returned to the shop and transcribed what he had written ; in this way he took down forty-five sermons. St. Bernardino's discourses give us a most vivid picture of life in Italy in his day. Sometimes he speaks of the terrible feuds between different cities, and still worse, between members of the families living in them. He exhorts them to repentance, sometimes having two enemies brought before him and insisting on their embracing one another and making peace. Sometimes he inveighs against the

extravagance and luxury of the richer classes, and again and again he denounces the vanity and immodesty of the women's dress. Often, when his sermons were ended, his congregation erected in the market-place a wooden turret over which flew the Devil's banner. Into the turret the men threw their dice and cards and all things connected with the gaming table, while the women cast in their hair dyes and cosmetics, their extravagant ornaments and headdresses and even their false hair, of which the saint makes frequent mention, and then, when all was ready, they set fire to the turret and consumed it and all within it in one grand bonfire. On one occasion a lady, we are told, withheld one last treasure, a beautiful tress of false hair, but when she went to open the box in which it was kept it leapt out and struck her in the face, and, terrified, she flung it too on to the blazing mass.

In all his missions to the various cities of Italy St. Bernardino exalted the Holy Name of Jesus, and to rouse the spiritual fervour of his hearers he used, when preaching, to exhibit a tablet inscribed with the sacred monogram encircled with golden rays. To such enthusiasm did he stir the people that the magistrates of the towns had the sacred monogram carved on their public buildings, and these tablets are still preserved in many Italian cities. His most famous follower, the Blessed John of Capistrano, carried this emblem on his banner when he went unarmed to encourage the army of Hunyadi, who were fighting the Turk before Belgrade. St. Bernardino is invariably represented in art bearing a tablet with the Holy Name. His enemies—and being a good man

he had many—accused him, under two successive Popes, of heresy, but on both occasions they were finally defeated. His fame spread throughout the length and breadth of Italy. Worn out by hard work and privation, he died in 1444 at Aquila in the territory of Naples. He retained to the end all his old charm and gaiety, and those who wish to hear more of this most lovable and human of saints, and gain an insight into fifteenth-century life, cannot do better than read the "Life of St. Bernardino of Siena" written by Thureau Dangin, translated by Baroness von Hügel.

St. Donatian,[1] like St. Margaret, is one of those saints who seem to have come straight from fairyland. Whilst still a child he was pushed off a bridge by a wicked servant who left him to perish in the water beneath. A holy man, touched by the grief of Donatian's parents, determined to rescue him. Fastening five lighted candles on a wheel, he launched it on the river. This remarkable method of life-saving was completely successful, for the wheel floated down the stream until it stopped at a certain place where the body of the future saint was found rigid and immovable, but still living. He became in due course Archbishop of Rheims. His relics were translated to Bruges in the ninth century, when he became known as St. Donat. His aid is invoked against thunder.

The story of St. Martin is thus related in "The Golden Legend": [2]

"Martin was born in the castle of Sabaria in the country of Pannonia," but he was brought up at Pavia

[1] "Caractéristiques des Saints," by P. Ch. Cahier.

[2] "The Golden Legend," Temple Classics, Vol. VI, p. 141.

in Italy with his father, which was master and tribune of the knights under Constantine and Julian Cæsar. And Martin rode with his father till the age of fifteen, when the emperors ordained that the sons of ancient knights should ride instead of their fathers, and Martin was commanded to do the same.

"In a winter time as Martin passed by the gate of Amiens he met a poor man all naked, to whom no man gave any alms. Then Martin drew out his sword and carved his mantle therewith in two pieces in the middle, and gave one half to the poor man, for he had nothing else to give him, and he clad himself with that other half. The next night following he saw our Lord Jesu Christ in heaven clothed with that part he had given to the poor man, and he said to the angels about Him, 'Martin yet new in faith hath covered me with this vesture.' And when Martin was eighteen years of age he did do baptize himself, and promised that he should renounce the dignity to be judge of the knights and also the world if his time of provostry were accomplished. Then he held yet chivalry two years. And in the meanwhile the barbarians entered among the Frenchmen, and Julian Cæsar, which should have fought against them, gave great money unto the knights. And Martin, not willing to fight, refused his gift, but said to Cæsar, 'I am a knight of Christ, it appertaineth not to me for to fight.' Then Julian was wroth, and said it was not for grace of religion that he renounced chivalry but for fear and dread of the present battle following. To whom Martin, not being afeared, said to him, 'Because that thou holdest it for cowardice, and that I have

not done it for good faith, I shall be to-morn all unarmed to the battle, and shall be protected and kept by the sign of the cross, and not by shield or helm, and shall pass through the battles of the enemy surely.' But on the morn the enemies sent messengers that they would yield them and their goods, whereof it is no doubt but that by the merits of this holy man that this victory was had without shedding of blood. And then he left chivalry and went to St. Hilary, Bishop of Poictiers, and he made him acolyte."

After overcoming many temptations and performing numberless miracles we are told that when the people of Tours had no bishop "they required strongly Martin to be their bishop," and he refused, but afterwards he was ordained bishop. Among the saint's miracles is one he performed on a serpent. "A serpent passed over a river, and St. Martin said to the serpent, 'I command thee in the name of God that thou return anon.' And the serpent returned by the words of St. Martin, and went to that other side, and then St. Martin said, all weeping, 'The serpents understand me well, but the men will not hear me.'" The latter part of this miracle, at any rate, is easily believed.

"And when he lay dying he prayed his brethren that they would remove a little his body nearer the window, saying, 'Brethren, let me behold more the heaven than the earth, so that the spirit may address him to our Lord.' And with this word he rendered and gave up unto the Lord his spirit."

St. Martin's life as told in the Golden Legend is full of charm, but when examined in the cold light

of historical research he still retains his claim on our love and admiration. In 371 he became Bishop of Tours, and at a time when Christians were bitterly persecuting all those who differed from them in belief, St. Martin, while fighting against what he held to be their errors, stoutly opposed the harshness and cruelty of the Christian bishops, and numberless instances of his tolerance and charity have come down to us.

One further miracle connected with the death of St. Martin as related by our author must be given.

"And in the same day St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, sang Mass and slept upon the altar between the lesson of the prophecy and the epistle, and none durst wake him, and the sub-deacon durst not read the epistle without his leave. And when he had slept the space of three hours they awoke him and said, 'Sir, the hour is past and the people be weary for to abide, wherefore command that the clerk read the epistle.' And he said to them, 'Be not angry. Martin my brother is passed unto God, and I have done the office of his departing and burying, and I could no sooner accomplish nor make an end of the last orison because ye hasted me so sore.' Then they marked the day and the hour, and they found that St. Martin was then passed out of this world and gone to heaven."

"The Deposition from the Cross," No. 1078, is very beautiful by reason of its moving tenderness, and has all David's devout and sincere feeling, though it is not absolutely certain that he himself painted this picture.

The Virgin who presses the dead face to her own,

and Mary Magdalene who gently touches the red wound-print with her ointment, and her companion who bathes Christ's right hand are so human in their love that they make a moving appeal to the beholder.

The painter has, however, expended all his thought and feeling on the figures and has had but little to spare for the landscape background, which is perfunctory and dull.

In the "Portrait of an Ecclesiastic," No. 710, we have the picture of a clean and dapper but most unreliable-looking churchman; behind him is the tower of Notre Dame at Bruges.

"The Adoration of the Kings," No. 1079, is said to have been painted towards the end of the artist's life, after his visit to Antwerp, when he was under the influence of Quinten Massys.

This picture requires a good deal of explanation, for it is utterly unlike either the "Marriage of St. Katherine" or the "Donor and his Patron Saints," both of which are authentic works. Not only is the colouring infinitely lighter and thinner, but the painting of the landscape and ruined castle is entirely different from David's usual work. In addition, the pursy, self-complacent kings with their attendants are painted in a formal, perfunctory way that is not at all usual with David. In colouring and general feeling the little picture is far more like the Castle Howard Mabuse than anything of David's.

There is, however, one definite piece of evidence that points to its being from his hand. Sir Walter Armstrong discovered that the name of David's birthplace, "Ouvvater," had been scratched on the panel

while the paint was still wet, and it is a fact that cannot be ignored.

Whose were the initials "A. W." we find embroidered on the purse belonging to the dark king? If there were any chance of the picture's being by Adrian Isenbrandt it would fit in well, for Isenbrandt, after the liberal usage of the Middle Ages, spelt his name interchangeably with an I and a Y, written like a W.

The colouring of the picture is beautiful and the workmanship of a high degree of excellence: the faces are full of refinement and devotional feeling (except that of the fat king in mauve), but the types are feeble and uninteresting, and in places the drawing is decidedly mannered.

"St. Jerome," No. 2596, has David's name attached to it, but it is almost impossible to believe that he really painted it as it is so unlike the rest of his authenticated work.

Gerard David's landscape backgrounds are of particular interest.

We know that in the fifteenth century the master painter to whom a commission was given was only bound to design the composition and to paint the nude parts of the figures: he was at liberty to have the rest of his picture executed by his pupils or assistants, or to call in the aid of another artist who specialized in one particular branch of painting, landscape, jewels, materials or any other accessories.

Mr. Weale is of opinion that the landscape backgrounds of David's earlier pictures are the work of Joachim Patinir, who was at that time also working in

Bruges. In 1515 David went to Antwerp, where he made some stay, being admitted as a master painter in the St. Luke's Guild. The next name on the register is that of Patinir, who was also in Antwerp. David returned to Bruges, but Patinir remained in Antwerp to the day of his death, and after the two artists parted David had no more landscape backgrounds in his pictures.

In " A Canon with his Patron Saints " we have one of David's beautiful landscape backgrounds painted before he went to Antwerp. Was it painted actually by Patinir ? Mr. Weale would certainly have answered yes, but if we follow Sir Martin Conway and accept the " Adoration of the Magi " as a late work of David's after his return from Antwerp, away goes Mr. Weale's neat theory, for we have a charming landscape taken, as Sir Martin tells us, from an early sketch of David's. It is a delicate point, fit only for the critics.

The early Italian school, notwithstanding the naïveté and innocency of its spirit, is pre-eminently distinguished by the grandeur and breadth of its conception and style. No matter how small the picture, there is the same sense of spaciousness and proportion as in the largest fresco.

These primitives have a magic all their own : their saints and angels move in a world far removed from ours, they are inhabitants of another clime, and the angels are indeed the " birds of God." The saints, for all their look of innocent kindliness or rapt devotion, have a delicate high-bred grace and aloofness that make it quite impossible to mistake them for

anything but high-born aristocrats; and he would indeed be a bold man who would venture to take a liberty with an early Italian saint. Unlike the early Netherlands saints, they seldom wear contemporary costume but are robed in simple flowing garments that fall in long and graceful folds. The hair, too, is never concealed as in the Northern fashion by close-fitting, heavy headdresses, and the backgrounds of the Italian primitives add to the impression of aloofness. In the earliest we find a lavish use of gold, tooled beneath in elaborate patterns, over which the gold is laid and burnished. By degrees these backgrounds were replaced by representations of architecture and landscape, but the early Italian painters hardly ever painted the landscape for its own sake: it was always a secondary matter, a setting for the main subject of the picture.

The mental and spiritual atmosphere obtaining in the pictures of the Northern artist is always clear and characteristic. Their saints, it is true, are deep in the mysteries of contemplation and prayer, but they dwell on the same plane as ourselves. When they rise from their knees they will go back to the council chamber and the still-room and be quite at home there: furthermore, we judge them to belong to the rich aristocracy by the splendour of their clothing, never by their personal grace or beauty. And it is a remarkable fact that the donors in the Netherlands pictures are to the full as devout looking as the saints they adore, indeed sometimes they are a good deal more so. The Italian donor was seldom painted in the picture he ordered, which was perhaps just as well, for as a rule he

was far, very far removed in feeling from the saintly company in which he found himself. How different, too, is the Netherlanders' attitude to landscape. How intensely they love it both in the distance and the near foreground. We have the same feeling of escape from restraint, to what they really loved, as we have when we find the Italian painter painting his little scenes from the lives of the saints in the predella, after he has finished their majestic presentments in the upper part of the altar-piece. We look through a window in some Netherlands picture and there we see an enchanting little mediæval city, or behind the saintly company is a beautiful river scene such as that in Memlinc's "Virgin and Child with St. George"; or we peer into Arnolfini's magic mirror; or we wander in that mysterious garden where the mystic nuptials of St. Katherine take place. And we know that it is here the painters had their secret joy.

The "Marriage of St. Katherine," No. 1085, is one of the most fascinating of all the pictures of the Netherlands school. No one seems to know with any degree of certainty who painted it, but it is believed to be the work of a follower of Geertgen tot sint Jans, of about 1505, the copy of some lost original by that master. Geertgen tot sint Jans was working at Haarlem in the latter half of the fifteenth century. The Dutch school at Haarlem was a very important one, but unhappily very few Dutch primitives have come down to us. This picture proves what an extremely interesting school it must have been. In form it is a triptych, but the composition carries on from the central panel into the wings on either side.

It is a charming and poetical conception. In the twilight the Virgin with her Child sits in a flower-garden surrounded by saints, virgins and angels. Behind her is a wood composed of lemon and cypress trees, and in the wood is a church. A service is being held, for it is all lighted up : the saints must hear the singing clearly, but they prefer to remain outside. In the centre of the picture the Virgin sits on a marble bench ; her son, a serious chubby baby, is placed at her feet on a tasselled cushion. In his left hand he holds a bird, while the right is raised as he turns towards St. Katherine, who, kneeling, holds up the ring. St. Dorothy kneels behind her, and her basket of roses from Paradise is being handed to her by a blue-winged angel. To the right of the Virgin is a female saint : who she is we cannot tell as she has no emblem, but as she pairs with St. Katherine it is most probably St. Margaret. She sits on the ground, her lap full of stalkless flowers which appear to be roses, with the exception of one solitary daisy which another saintly virgin is giving her. Behind, there are three angels : one holds a flute, the second is playing a harp and the third is singing to the accompaniment of a mandoline. This central group is gathered in front of a cool fountain that jets thin streams of water, beneath one of which an angel, who has been gathering cherries, holds up her plate so that the water may drip upon them.

One cannot but be struck by the engaging ugliness of all the company at this celestial *fête-champêtre :* it is almost impossible to believe that so many people could have been so plain ; however, as Abraham Lincoln

The Marriage of St. Katherine *No. 1085*

FOLLOWER OF GEERTGEN TOT SINT JANS

said, "The Lord prefers common-looking people, and that is why he made so many of them."

In the left wing St. John the Baptist, clad in a garment of roughly woven stuff, points to the central group, while two female saints are seen in a wood behind. One of these is St. Agnes, for she is leading a lamb by a string. It is feeding and refuses to budge, for the line between it and its saint is taut. The other saint, sauntering along beside her, is probably St. Apollonia, carrying her teeth in a pair of big pincers. In the right wing St. John the Divine kneels with his cup, and in the wood a lady saint is holding out her skirt to receive the fruit an angel is plucking for her. To the right of St. John a very ugly angel, with one eye on the saint, is furtively picking roses with the expression of a schoolboy robbing an orchard. The foreground is entirely carpeted with flowers.[1] St. Katherine's sword is by her side with her broken wheel set with little sharp ploughshares.

Into the lovely background the painter has put all his feeling and mystery. The little wood in the darkening twilight is strung out along a grassy slope, where the shadows lie deep beneath the trees. Above and beyond we see the dark blue evening sky with white clouds riding across it. The picture is said to be unfinished, but it is difficult to detect any want of detail except in the effect of light in the church, and that may well be sheer inexperience, as it is among the earliest instances in a picture of a building lighted from within.

[1] Mr. Arthur Hill has identified in this picture the Scabious, Jasione montaua, or perhaps Phyteuma, the white-flowered Potentilla, the wild strawberry (sacred to the Virgin), lilies and the violet.

The faces and hair are all rendered in a curiously dry, hard fashion, quite unlike the generality of Netherlands pictures. The painting is original both in feeling and treatment, and notwithstanding the surprising ugliness of the saints and angels, there is a most wonderful sense of beauty pervading the whole picture.

The fact that the little Christ Child plays with a bird is much more remarkable in a Netherlands picture than it would be in one of the Italian schools.

In the present day the peoples of Northern Europe are much fonder of animals than those of the South, but, judging by contemporary art, in the fifteenth century the case was reversed.

In Italian art we find birds and animals everywhere; little birds perch on the Virgin's throne, and Crivelli paints snails crawling up its steps; sheep and goats, dogs, horses and cattle, camels and lions, tiny deer and pet bears—there is no end to the menagerie we find in Italian pictures. With their bright, nimble wits the Italian princes were always deeply interested in any new wild animal imported from the East, and the happy man who arrived intact, bringing his lion or tiger with him, was sure of a welcome at any Italian court. How in the world they managed to convey a giraffe or an elephant in their little ships passes the wit of man, but that they did so we are credibly informed.

There were certainly more wild animals at the Italian courts than in the French and Burgundian because they were more readily come by, Venice forming a direct link with the East. However, at Lille in the winter of 1453 we know that Philip Duke

of Burgundy had a lion, for on the day of the Feast of the Pheasant a certain Gilles le Cat received twenty shillings for a chain and lock for a live lion.

All through Netherlands art we see the painters' love of peace and stillness; their most perfect works all exhibit this quality at its highest. They never care to paint quick movements or violent gestures, and probably that is why painting animals did not much interest them, while landscape and every form of still life gave them intense and unending pleasure.

The delicate light and shade in the exquisite landscape in the Chancellor Rollin van Eyck in the Louvre and the wonderful room in the Arnolfini portrait have never been surpassed, but they are both absolutely still pictures; it would be impossible to speak above a whisper in either of them. Netherlands art is always static.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MASTER OF ST. GILES, FIFTEENTH CENTURY: JOACHIM PATINIR, 1485–1524

IT would be difficult to decide who was the favourite saint in mediæval art, but if the suffrages of religious pictures were taken St. Katherine, if she did not head the list, would certainly take the second place. St. Margaret, St. John the Baptist and St. Mary Magdalene, however, would run her close.

St. Margaret's popularity in the Middle Ages was prodigious, and it will be well here to relate her story as it was known to the people for whom these pictures were painted.

Jacobus De Voragine in his Golden Legend gives it at great length.[1] He starts by giving the derivation of her name and what it signifies. "Margaret is said of a precious gem, or ouche, that is named a margaret, which is little, white and virtuous. So the blessed Margaret was white by virginity, little by humility and virtuous by operation of miracles."

St. Margaret was of the city of Antioch, daughter of Theodosius, prince of the idols of the paynims. She was delivered to the care of a nurse in the country and was baptized a Christian. One day as she watched her nurse's sheep the provost Olybrius with his com-

[1] "The Golden Legend," Vol. IV, p. 66.

panions rode by. Struck by the maiden's beauty, he straightway determined to make her his wife. When she was brought before him he asked her name, her lineage and religion, and when she had answered to these things he said, "Margaret is a most fair name, but that so fair a maid and so noble should worship a crucified God is evil," and when she still affirmed her faith Olybrius commanded she should be put in prison. He threatened the maid with torture, and besought her saying, "'O good maid, have pity on thy beauty and worship our gods that thou mayest be well.' To whom she said, 'I worship Him that maketh the earth tremble, whom the sea dreadeth and the winds and creatures obey.'" After that we have an account of sickening tortures till at last the provost covered his face with his mantle that he might no longer see such an effusion of blood. Margaret was then made fast in prison, which immediately shone with a marvellous brightness. While she was in prison she prayed that she might see the fiend visibly shown to her, and in answer to her prayer a horrible dragon assailed and swallowed her, but, she making the sign of the cross, it brake asunder and she issued forth all whole and sound.

On this the Golden Legend says, "This swallowing and breaking of the belly of the dragon is said that it is apocryphal."

After this the fiend appeared to her in the likeness of a man, but after she had prayed she rose and caught him by the head and threw him to the ground, and set her right foot on his neck, saying, "Lie still, thou fiend, under the foot of a woman." The devil then

cried, "O blessed Margaret, I am overcome. If a young man had overcome me I had not recked, but alas! I am overcome of a tender virgin."

Margaret then had a long and interesting conversation with the foul fiend, who told her that he naturally hated all virtuous men and worked ceaselessly to exclude them from the felicity he himself had lost. He acknowledged that he was Veltis, one of the demons enclosed by Solomon in a brazen vessel. After Solomon's death they of Babylon found this vessel, and supposing it to contain great treasure, they brake it and a great multitude of devils flew out and filled the air. And when he had said this she took her foot from off his neck and said, "'Flee hence, thou wretched fiend.' And anon the earth opened and the fiend sank in."[1]

The next day following she was brought before the provost, and continuing steadfast, she was condemned to yet more hideous tortures. At last Olybrius, seeing the faith of the holy Margaret immovable, gave sentence that she should be beheaded. She besought that she might have space to pray, and when she had finished her prayer there was a voice heard from heaven saying that the gates of heaven were open and abode for her, and bade her to come into the country of everlasting rest. Then she bade the executioner accomplish the commandment of the provost. "God forbid that I should slay thee, virgin of Christ," said he. "If thou do it not thou mayest have no part with me," answered Margaret. Then

[1] One cannot help wondering why, if Jacobus de Voragine could accept Veltis and his brazen vessel, he boggled at the dragon.

he, being afraid and trembling, smote off her head, and falling down at her feet gave up the ghost.

One of the most beautiful pictures of the Netherlands school is "The Legend of St. Giles," No. 1419, painted some time during the fifteenth century. The name and history of the man who painted it, to whom all lovers of art owe so deep and loving a sense of gratitude, are utterly unknown to us. He united in himself all the best qualities of his school. A searching yet tender love of nature, a perfect craftsmanship and technique, exquisite colouring and a calm and beautiful style. The picture is the right-hand panel of a diptych, the left hand, representing the mass of St. Hubert, being in a private collection.

The painter tells us the story of St. Giles, yet the picture is in no sense an illustration only. It is true that he has given us the most striking incident in the saint's life. But, though the hunt has been suddenly brought to a standstill by an incident sufficiently astonishing even in those days of unexpected happenings, there is no sign of violent action, no exaggerated gesture. The central group concerned in the miracle is absolutely still: only behind them in the middle distance is there any conversation going on.

St. Giles is a charming old gentleman. We are apt to have a lurking suspicion that hermits though holy were rather squalid persons, but our saint is neatness and freshness itself. The plainness and shabbiness of his attire does but set off the magnificence of the monarch who kneels before him. The outside of the hermitage looks as neat and well kept as the recluse who dwells within, and the interior is doubtless as

clean and dustless as Giovanna Arnolfini's lovely room.

The picture is of extraordinary interest in many ways, for as a landscape it is second to none in our collection of Northern primitives. The whole composition is amazingly original for a Netherlands artist, and it is supposed that he spent some time in France, and that he was influenced by the Italians. This we may very readily believe, as the tall figure on the extreme left is thoroughly Italian. In his devotion to nature the artist is entirely Northern ; no Italian primitive would have thought it worth while to make the careful study of the tree that divides the picture in half ; especially noticeable is the painter's rendering of the twigs and dead wood among the foliage. The horizon is high, and between low, rolling blue hills the Rhone flows. A great castle stands on a spur of rock on the left, a little village hanging on to its skirts. The curtain walls are all built up and intermixed with houses.

St. Giles' hermitage is a cave in the rocks, and a rough pentise roof has been built above the entrance to give a little added shelter, and his crucifix hangs by the lintel. The saint in his brown habit is sitting beneath a tree in a flower-grown glade. His hind, driven in terror by the huntsmen, has rushed to her friend, and her front feet, like a dog's paws, lie on the old man's knee. The hand with which he caresses the frightened creature is transfixed by the arrow that has wounded the hind. Calm, gentle and self-possessed, St. Giles sits tranquilly beneath his tree and the King and the Bishop kneel humbly before him. The saint

The Legend of St. Giles *No. 1419*

THE MASTER OF ST. GILES

is happy in his wound, gained in an act of Christ-like charity, and the men from the world recognise him at once as a man of holy life. Their own lives are probably far from holy, but they have at any rate the saving quality of being able to appreciate truth and goodness when they see it. Among the flowers in this lovely glade they kneel, and the painter has made visible to us the passionate love of beauty and holiness that lies deep in the hearts of all men.

Behind the King, at a short distance, his retainers, who have not seen the wounded saint, though they are aware that something unusual has happened, are discussing the matter among themselves. On the right, round the corner of a large rock, the Rhone flows quietly, and two of the huntsmen are holding their straining hounds in leash.

The foreground of this picture is of exquisite beauty, the iris and the tall mullen plant are painted with the most loving care.

The story of St. Giles,[1] like the picture, has a charm all its own.

"St. Giles was born in Athens and was of noble lineage and royal kindred. And on a day as he went to the church he found a sick man in the way who demanded alms of Giles, which gave him his coat. And as soon as the man was clad withal he received full and entire health. And after that, anon his father and his mother died and rested in our Lord, and Giles made Jesu Christ heir of his heritage.

Then Giles doubted of the temptation and peril of

1 "The Golden Legend," Temple Classics, Vol. V, p. 91.

the world and went secretly to the rivage of the sea, and saw there mariners in great peril and like to perish in the sea. And he made his prayer, and anon the tempest ceased and anon the mariners came to land and thanked God. And he understood them that they went to Rome, and he desired to go with them, whom they received into their ship gladly, and said they would bring him thither without any freight or hire. And then he came to Arles, and abode there two years with St. Cezarien, bishop of that city. And after he desired to go into the desert and depart covertly, and dwelled there long with a hermit that was a holy man. And there by his merits he chased away the sterility and barrenness that was in that country and caused plenty of goods. And when he had done this miracle he doubted of the peril of human glory and entered farther into the desert and there found a pit and a little well and a fair hind, which without doubt was purveyed of God for to nourish him, and at certain hours she ministered her milk unto him.

And on a time servants of the king rode out hunting, and much people and many hounds with them. It happed that they espied this hind, and they thought she was so fair that they followed her with hounds, and when she was sore constrained she fled for succour to the feet of St. Giles, and then he was much abashed when he saw her so. And then he sprang up and espied the hunters. Then he prayed to our Lord Jesu Christ that like as he sent her to him that he would save her. Then the hounds durst not approach her by the space of a stone's cast, but they howled together and returned to the hunters, and then the night came

and they returned home again and took nothing. And when the king heard say of this thing he had suspicion of what it might be, and he warned the bishop and both went thither with great multitude of hunters, and when the hounds were on the place where the hind was they durst not go forth, and they encircled the bush for to see what there was, but that bush was so thick that no man nor beast might enter therein for the branches and thorns that were there. And then one of the knights drew up an arrow follily for to make the hind afeared and spring out, but he wounded and hurt the holy man which ceased not to pray for the fair hind. And after this the hunters made way with their swords and went into the glade and saw there this ancient man, which was clothed in the habit of a monk and the hind by him. And the king and the bishop went alone to him and demanded from whence he was and what he was and why he had taken so great a thickness of desert and of whom he was so hurt for [the knight had wounded the hermit instead of hitting the hind], and he answered right honestly to every demand: and when they had heard him speak they thought that he was a holy man, and required him humbly pardon. And they sent to him masters and surgeons to heal his wound, and offered him many gifts, but he would never lay medicine to his wound nor receive their gifts, but refused them. And he prayed our Lord that he might never be whole thereof in his life, for he knew well that that virtue should profit to him in infirmity. And the king visited him oft and offered to him many great riches, but he refused all. And after, he admonished the king

that he should make a monastery, and when he had made it Giles refused many times to take the charge and the crozier. And at last he was vanquished by the prayers of the king and took it.

And after, he went to Rome, and the Pope gave him two doors of cypress on which were the images of St. Peter and St. Paul, for his church, and he did not know how to convey them to France, so he threw them into the Tiber at Rome and recommended them to God to govern. And when he returned to his monastery he found the two doors of cypress at the gate, whereof he thanked God that had kept them without breaking in so many adventures as they had been, and then he set them at the gates of the church for the beauty of them, and for the grace that the Church of Rome had done thereto. And at the last our Lord showed to him his departing out of this world, and so he slept and died goodly in our Lord. And many witness that they heard the company of angels bearing the soul of him into heaven. And he flourished about the year of our Lord seven hundred."

This account of St. Giles is thoroughly characteristic of the Middle Ages. Full of wonders and mysteries (of which only a selection have been given), it pins us down to the most surprising facts. We are told that the saint was born in Athens; he goes by sea to Rome and thence to Arles—whether by sea or land we are not told. Travelling, at any rate for saints, was considerably simplified in those days. St. Giles was "an ancient man" when the king and his courtiers discovered him in his desert. But when the

king had built the monastery, and after long persuasion the saint had been induced to enter and rule it, all of which must have taken time, he starts for Rome. No wonder at his age that he hesitated to add " two cypress doors with the images of St. Peter and St. Paul " to his baggage on his return journey. To throw them into the Tiber, however, in the expectation of their arriving intact at his monastery door is an alternative that could only have occurred to a mediæval saint.

Joachim Patinir was born at Dinant in 1485. As so often the case with the painters of the Netherlands school, nothing definite as to his artistic history emerges before 1515, when he was admitted as master in the Antwerp Guild. He bought a house and settled in the city and lived there till his death in 1524.

The Antwerp Painters' Guild was a large and powerful one, for in the first quarter of the sixteenth century the city was one of the busiest art centres north of the Alps. Artists were attracted to Antwerp from all parts, and there the newest ideas were discussed and the newest methods practised.

Patinir's position as a painter is somewhat obscure, some critics holding him to be one of the originators of modern landscape painting, while others give him a much less prominent position. It is perhaps this uncertainty and want of knowledge that has caused Patinir to suffer more than most from the number of inferior works and poor copies that have been given the shelter of his name. Of one thing only are we

certain, that he loved and was far more proficient in landscape than in figure painting.

In the "St. John on the Island of Patmos," No. 717, we have a very delightful example of his work. St. John the Divine is represented as a very young man, almost a boy, sitting on, or rather in, a very small island. It contains beside himself a large and sturdy black eagle holding a pen case and inkpot in his beak. A most interesting, iridescent devil, rather like a frog in form, is also trying to find room on the island. He has a long hook with which he is going to try and claw away the good eagle's inkpot. A very pretty little tree, which greatly aids the whole composition, has also managed to squeeze itself on to St. John's island, but if the saint were to lean against its trunk he would certainly lose his balance and fall overboard.

Patmos is surrounded by a stretch of dark rippling water across which many ships in full sail are skimming. Across the straits among the sand-dunes on the mainland is a comfortable homestead, and beyond, the imaginative rocks in which Patinir always delighted. In the sky is a very unimpressive monster more like a centipede than a dragon, and high in the right corner the Mother and Child.

The colouring throughout is very beautiful, but there is no feeling of air or out-of-doorness.

The "Flight into Egypt," No. 1084, and "The Visit of the Virgin to Elizabeth," No. 1082, both bear the name of Patinir, and they are clearly by the same hand, but that it was the hand of Patinir is more than open to doubt.

In the first of the two pictures the artist shows us

St. John on the Island of Patmos *No. 717*

JOACHIM PATINIR

two legends popular in the Middle Ages. When Herod's soldiers reached Bethlehem and failed to find the Child Jesus, they asked some countrymen who were gathering the harvest if the Mother and Child had passed that way. The reapers replied that they had seen no one. Now when the Virgin and Child with Joseph had fled past this field a few hours before, the men had been sowing that same harvest.

It is also related that as they passed the idols on their way down to Egypt the images fell from their altars and were destroyed. The idol that is here represented is a thoroughly Renaissance image.

The " Landscape River Scene," No. 1298, is almost certainly not by Patinir, but it is interesting because for the first time we get a lansdcape with no pretence of its being a scene for something else. It has a charm of its own, and it is also remarkable as having the figure of the artist in the left corner.

CHAPTER IX

THE MASTER FROM DELFT, *c.* 1520: QUINTEN MASSYS, 1466–1530: MARINUS VAN REYMERSWAEL 1497–1567: JAN GOSSART DE MABUSE, 1465–75—1535: LUCAS VAN LEYDEN, 1494–1533: JAN PREVOST, *d.* 1529: THE MASTER OF THE DEATH OF THE VIRGIN, 1480–85—1540

"THE Crucifixion," No. 2922, a triptych, was painted by an artist of the early Dutch school whose name has so far not been recovered. For convenience sake he has been named the Master from Delft by Friedländer, who discovered a triptych now in the Amsterdam Museum, which he identified as being by the same hand. In the wings of the Amsterdam picture are the portraits of Dirk Van Beest, his wife and his children. Dirk was a burgomaster of Delft, and in 1480 he made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He is represented as carrying a palm branch under his arm and is identified by his coat of arms. It is almost certain that the burgomaster would have employed an artist resident in Delft to paint such an important picture. Unhappily the donor in our "Crucifixion" did not have his arms painted in his picture, so we have no means of knowing who he was. Probably he too was an inhabitant of Delft.

The Dutch school, when untouched by any Netherlands influence, seems always to have hovered on the edge of the pitfall of ugliness. Geographically the

Dutch painters were very near Germany, where after the middle of the fifteenth century sincerity was very apt to degenerate into brutality and ugliness. It is of interest to compare the Master from Delft's "Crucifixion" with another "Crucifixion," No. 1049, by a German master of the Westphalian school. There is no doubt that the Master from Delft has fallen over the edge and right into the pit, for his picture shows no sense whatever of beauty. He loves colour, and he is sincere and an able draughtsman, but his picture is almost painful to look at, for the eye and brain seek in vain for any beauty and, what is even worse, for any nobility in the conception of the tragedy. It is all ugly and mean, yet what mastery over his materials this man from Delft shows; it is not his hand that is wanting in skill but the brain and spirit in feeling and selection.

The picture is a triptych, the central panel representing the "Crucifixion," the right wing the "Deposition" and the left "Christ led to the Cross." In general arrangement the Crucifixion follows the traditional manner. In the left corner the donor kneels, a small and careworn man in the dress of one of the reformed orders, and this careful portrait is the most pleasing part of the whole picture. The composition is crowded with figures, for in addition to the main scene there are many smaller groups, the most remarkable being that in the middle background behind the Cross, representing the swooning Virgin with St. John, Mary Magdalene and two other Maries, all perfectly hideous people. To the left of them is Judas Iscariot, who has just hanged himself: the

painter has delighted in painting this realistically, sparing us no details. This incident has clearly been painted in after the picture was finished, as the background shows through. Beyond Judas on the left is the procession to Calvary, while to the right Judas guides the soldiers to the Garden of Gethsemane where are Christ and the three apostles, and on the left again is the procession to Calvary. And amidst all these episodes bystanders from Delft look on. In front are two surprisingly ugly and unpleasant-looking children with abnormally large heads, one of whom carries a bow.

The two wings of the triptych are to the full as unpleasing as the central panel; we can but admire the skill and mastery of the painter and pass on to pictures that make more appeal to our sense of beauty. Two small details are noticeable. In the dexter panel we see how the ladies managed their tremendous skirts. The Mary on the left has not been too overwhelmed by despair to forget to tuck up her heavy fur-lined skirt before she stretches out her hands in grief. The second point is that the armour is of the fantastic kind worn in the Westphalian "Crucifixion," No. 1049.

Quinten Massys was born at Louvain about 1466, and he died in 1530 at Antwerp. It is not known for certain where he received his artistic training, but it is most probable that it was in the Bouts workshop. When Dirk Bouts died, his workshop and business were carried on by his son Albrecht, who was a good and competent craftsman but not a great artist. An example of his work is to be found in the "Ecce Homo," No. 1083.

Some time in or before 1491 Massys went to Antwerp, for he entered the Painters' Guild there in that year. At this date the glories of Bruges were beginning to wane and its prosperity was passing to Antwerp, a city better suited to become a great modern port. As we have seen, the artists invariably congregated in the city most likely to furnish wealthy patrons; consequently we find Massys the greatest and most popular painter of the North, settled in Antwerp, the head of a large and flourishing business.

The city was an up-to-date, go-ahead place, and Massys practised the newest art of his day. It is quite startling to come across one of his pictures after we have been closely studying the work of men who flourished, as far as actual date is concerned, so short a time before him; or, like David, were practically his contemporaries. To go straight from the "Mystic Marriage of St. Katherine" painted by David at Bruges to the "Crucifixion" by Massys at Antwerp is like entering a different country and hearing a strange language. The former is painted with the soundest craftsmanship and the most devout feeling, but in the traditional manner, and beside the "Crucifixion" looks old-fashioned. Massys threw off the old ways in a great measure and introduced a new manner of looking at things and a new method. In the "Exhumation of St. Hubert" we found dramatic feeling, but it is quite different in expression from the drama in Massys' "Crucifixion with St. John and the Maries," No. 715. The simplicity of the "Exhumation" has given place in Massys' picture to an intellectual mastery and grasp that is quite new. There is a

tremendous change in the mental outlook. The painter still feels the scene devoutly, but the old peace, stillness and hush have gone. Two of the saints at least express their grief in dramatic attitudes. They are no longer dressed in the cumbersome and rather ungraceful garments of his own day, but in long and flowing robes. It is noticeable, however, that Massys still keeps the traditional angular gothic folds when the drapery falls upon the ground. How different, too, are the graceful veil-like headdresses of his saints compared to the stiff choking head coverings we have seen so far.

Everywhere as never before in the Northern schools we find beauty of line. The white clouds in the sky are painted up close round the body of Christ to accentuate it, and the white loin-cloth with its floating ends is full of decorative lines. Massys has felt the scene not only as an event to be represented, but as a beautiful decorative pattern. The two figures kneeling at the foot of the Cross show the most passionate and yearning love; St. John, too, has no thought for aught else beside the Cross, but the Virgin and the Mary on the extreme right seem but little moved. In short, this picture of the Crucifixion is becoming sophisticated. The scene is set in a beautiful landscape which was painted possibly not by Massys but by Patinir, who was often employed in painting landscapes in his brother artists' pictures. It is certainly a very fine one, and especially remarkable for its wide stretch of cloud and open sky. All primitive art tends to a very high horizon, but here, for the first time, we get space and air and an almost

M.S.

The Crucifixion *No. 715*

QUINTEN MASSYS

windy sky. The distant hills are painted with less interest, but in the middle distance there is a city wall with a deep moat, a gate-house and drawbridge. The wall apparently climbs for miles over hill and dale, but it is extremely difficult to find the city. Here and there are a few houses amongst bushes, but that is all. It may, however, be reminiscent of Massys' birthplace Louvain, for in 1457 Philip Duke of Burgundy, with the exiled Dauphin, afterwards Louis XI of France, and all his court spent the summer in that town. The Dauphin was very fond of hunting, and De Commines particularly mentions that at Louvain there was " good hunting and falconry and a great number of rabbits both within and without the city walls." There would certainly be plenty of cover for rabbits in this city of Patinir's.

With Massys we stand at the parting of the ways. Behind him we have Bouts and Memlinc, David and the earlier school, while working at Delft at about the same time was the Master from Delft. We have already remarked the gulf that lay between Massys and the earlier school, but the Master from Delft was in his way up-to-date too. Massys' " Crucifixion " is full of beauty, but in him are the latent seeds of decadence which grew with terrible rapidity in the work of his followers, and we have only to glance at the " Crucifixion," No. 718, of the Antwerp school to be convinced of this sad truth.

In the ugly picture " Two Bankers or Usurers," No. 944, we see the Northern habit of borrowing at its worst. Massys painted a picture, " A Banker and his Wife " (now in the Louvre), of great and compel-

ling beauty. The husband and wife sit at their table facing the spectator: they look more like collectors than bankers, for they seem to be going through their treasures. There are pearls and an illuminated manuscript, and coins both ancient and of their own time; everything is clean and sweet and still. The picture was very popular, and consequently the idea was used by many subsequent artists. Among these was the painter of our "Two Bankers," Marinus van Reymerswael, a painter living in Antwerp. He was born in 1497 and died in 1567. The picture shows technical skill, otherwise it has nothing to recommend it. Where he found beauty, Marinus has given us ugliness, and for charm and freshness, confusion and squalor.

Jan Gossart de Mabuse, more generally known as Mabuse simply, was born at Maubeuge in Hainault somewhere between 1465 and 1475. Little is known of him before 1503, but in that year he was in Antwerp, for his name occurs in the register of the Painters' Guild as "Little John of Hainault." Mabuse remained at Antwerp till 1507, when he entered the service of Philip of Burgundy, who was at that time an admiral, though ten years later he became Bishop of Utrecht, a position doubtless more suited in those days to a man of easy life and cultivated tastes. Mabuse was always fortunate in finding powerful patrons: when he was quite young he was employed by Carondelet, Chancellor of Burgundy; from him he went to Philip of Burgundy, the illegitimate son of Philip the Good, and on the death of the latter he transferred his services to Adolphe of Burgundy, Seigneur of Beveren and of Veere.

In 1508 Philip of Burgundy went to Rome on a mission to Pope Julius II. He was deeply interested in classic and Renaissance art, and he took Mabuse with him to make drawings for him of works of art in Italy. Unlike Roger Van der Weyden, who sixty years before had been entirely uninfluenced by his visit to Italy, Mabuse was deeply interested in the work he saw in Rome.

By the beginning of the sixteenth century works of art produced under the influence of the full tide of the Italian Renaissance were to be found in many parts of Europe north of the Alps. Torregiano had finished Henry VII's tomb in Westminster Abbey; Michael Angelo's sculptured "Virgin and Child" had most probably been ordered by Jan Monscronen, the merchant of Bruges, for the church of Notre Dame in that city. Everywhere the Italian Renaissance was flooding in, and the intense enthusiasm felt by the Italians for the civilization of the antique world had already begun to penetrate Northern thought.

"The Adoration of the Kings," No. 2790, was painted when Mabuse was quite a young man, and before he took his momentous journey to Italy, but already we have a reminder of the Renaissance in the band of marble putti he has introduced into his brick ruins. It is generally agreed that the picture was painted for the Abbey of St. Adrian at Grammont, near Brussels. It is a work that has always been greatly admired, for it is a wonderful example of sound and careful craftsmanship; there is not a single careless stroke in the whole of this crowded composition. Mabuse was proud, and well he might be, of his great

"Adoration" (on it he signed his name twice, once in the headdress of King Balthazar and again on the steel collar of the dusky retainer who stands behind him), for the picture is an amazing piece of work, worthy of the closest study, but it rouses no enthusiasm and no emotion. It is entirely devoid of inspiration. The Abbey authorities ordered a picture of the Adoration by a rising young artist, well spoken of by the Chancellor of Burgundy, and they got a magnificent work. But what a different atmosphere we have entered—that marble band of putti is an outward and visible sign of a far greater spiritual change. The earlier painters we have sometimes suspected of being a little tired of representing the traditional types, but we never feel they are indifferent to the subject of their pictures. They paint them with the deepest feeling and conviction; their minds are narrow, perhaps, but deep and still. The "Adoration," on the other hand, gives the idea of having been painted by a man who took the incident he was called upon to paint entirely for granted; he neither believed nor disbelieved, it did not interest him much. What he was concerned to do was to paint a thoroughly good picture, and he did it. In Mabuse we begin to feel the stirrings of a modern mind. We have only to pass from this picture painted in his early life, yet with complete mastery, to the small and brilliant portrait of Jacqueline de Bourgogne to see where his true strength and interest lay.

Mabuse is among the world's great portrait painters. In the "Adoration" he reached his high water mark as a painter of religious pictures. After his visit to

M.S.

The Adoration of the Kings *No. 2790*

JAN GOSSART DE MABUSE

Rome his skill and facility increased, but so did his sophistication, and his Virgins became elegant, fly-away ladies quite unused to children. But as his religious pictures declined in sincerity, so his portraits grew in strength and reality. When we compare the "Adoration" with his "Jacqueline de Bourgogne," No. 2211, painted between 1525 and 1533, while he was in the service of Jacqueline's father, the Seigneur of Beveren, we realize the immense change that has come over his mental outlook.

Little Jacqueline de Bourgogne, the youngest daughter of Adolphe de Bourgogne, Lord of Beveren, must have known the painter well, for this nobleman was Mabuse's most constant patron. Jacqueline's mother, Anne de Bergnes, with her small son, were painted by the artist as the Virgin and Child in one of his numerous "business" pictures.

The little girl's portrait is brimming with life. The painter has enclosed the glowing green background in a painted brown frame, and this gives the illusion that Jacqueline is in front of it and coming straight out of her picture. The portrait is painted with extreme delicacy and yet absolute certainty: in the brilliance of its colouring and the skill in rendering accessories it is unsurpassed. Jacqueline is just a little girl, holding in her hand her treasured armillary sphere.[1] She is so fresh, serious and childlike that she reminds us in feeling of Reynolds' children. Compared with earlier portraits, even with Mabuse's own, such as the "Mag-

[1] The armillary sphere was a celestial globe, the series of rings representing the great circles of the heavens, and revolving on an axis within a horizon.

dalene," No. 2163, we feel that here we have something modern. Mabuse as a portraitist no longer has any connection with the primitives.

Mabuse numbered among his friends Lucas van Leyden, the engraver and painter, and the two went for a tour through the Netherlands. The latter was also a friend of Dürer's, in whose diary we find this entry: "Antwerp, June 8th–July 3rd, 1521. Master Lukas, who engraves on copper, asked me as his guest. He is a little man, born at Leyden in Holland: he was at Antwerp. . . . I have drawn with the metal-point the portrait of Lukas van Leyden."[1]

Lucas van Leyden, the friend of both Dürer and Mabuse, was first and foremost an engraver, second only to Dürer, by whose work he was greatly influenced. He was born in 1494 and died in 1533. His "Portrait of a Man," No. 3604, is superb. Modern in feeling as it is, in pose and arrangement Van Leyden has kept to his earlier manner. To realize its beauty it is well to look at "The Portrait of a Man," No. 1036, fifteenth century, which is a typical piece of good portrait painting of the date, but can bear no possible comparison with Van Leyden's work. The strong feeling for character, the firm yet delicate drawing and the limited but transparent and luminous colour scheme make it one of the finest portraits in the Gallery.

Jan Prevost was born at Mons (the date of his birth is unknown), but in 1493 he was in Antwerp, for he joined the Painters' Guild there. In the following year he settled at Bruges, and there he died in 1529. Some time in 1521 he paid another visit to Antwerp.

[1] "Albert Dürer," by T. Sturge-Moore, p. 162.

Jacqueline de Bourgogne *No. 2211*

JAN GOSSART DE MABUSE

Albrecht Dürer spent part of April, 1521, at Bruges, the guest of Jan Prevost. He must have had a delightful time in that city, for he was not only treated with great honour but he was taken to see all the sights of Bruges likely to interest him. In Dürer's diary, under the dates April 6–11, 1521, is this entry: "I saw the chapel there which Roger[1] painted and some pictures by a great old master. I gave one stiver to the man who showed us them. Then I bought three ivory combs for thirty stivers. They took me next to St. Jacob's and showed me the precious pictures by Roger and Hugo,[1] who were both great masters. Then I saw in our Lady's Church the alabaster Madonna sculptured by Michael Angelo of Rome. After that they took me to many more churches and showed me all the good pictures, of which there is an abundance there. And when I had seen the Jan van Eyck and all the other works we came at last to the Painters' Chapel, in which there are good things. . . . So early on Tuesday we went away, but before that I drew with the metal point the portrait of Jan Prost, and gave his wife ten stivers at parting."

One cannot help wondering why Dürer presented his hostess with ten stivers at parting. Was it a kind of "tip" in recognition of the kind way in which she had looked after him? They seem to have had so many servants in those days (Dürer, though by no means a rich man, travelled with his wife and his wife's maid Susanna) that one would imagine the hostess would not do more than give general supervision. And

[1] Roger van der Weyden and Hugo van der Goes. "Albert Dürer," by T. Sturge-Moore, p. 155.

why did he not present her with one of those three ivory combs he had just bought instead of ten stivers? But perhaps Dürer, when he pressed his not too handsome offering into Mistress Prevost's hand, made some particularly charming speech and so turned gracefully a rather difficult corner.

The quotation describing his sight-seeing is given because from it we gain some idea of the number of works then in Bruges that have since perished or have been lost. Of all those mentioned by Dürer the Michael Angelo group and the Van der Paele Madonna of Van Eyck alone remain.

To return to the painter Jan Prevost. He continued in a great measure the conventions and traditions of Memlinc and David. Though he was closely connected with Antwerp, where the new style of painting emanating from the workshop of Quentin Massys was rapidly growing in fashion, the new ideas seem to have interested him but little. His "Virgin and Child," No. 713, is a pleasant but somewhat sentimental picture. The Virgin is a beautiful and stately lady, and her son a pretty child. Here at any rate Prevost has not kept strictly to the precedent of the Bruges painters. They are seated beneath a tree in a little garden fenced off from the surrounding country. The horizon is high, according to tradition: the sky low in tone but rich and glowing in colour. The background is a real landscape containing farm-houses, fields, hedges and figures. The flowers in the Virgin's garden are carefully drawn, but they certainly have not the hues of Nature. The picture is of interest apart from its beauty because it is the work of a painter,

the follower of Memlinc and David, who thus carried on and preserved their manner and tradition for a short time before the Bruges school was finally eclipsed by that of Antwerp.

The Master of the Death of the Virgin, whose real name was Joos van Cleve, though in date (1480–85—1540) he comes after Massys and Mabuse, belongs almost entirely to the Primitives in thought. Yet in him too we see a premonition of what was to come.

His "Holy Family," No. 2603, has the old downrightness and sincerity, but much of the devout feeling of the other world has disappeared. Van Cleve's "Virgin and St. Joseph" are no saints rapt in contemplation of the Divine Child, but an ordinary father and mother, quiet, good people seen in their own home. And St. Joseph at least is by no means unduly interested in the Child. The craftsmanship is sound and careful, and the colour beautiful.

The interest of the picture lies in its foreshadowing of the great Dutch school of the seventeenth century. We have seen how the early Dutch masters of the fifteenth century almost always migrated to the rich cities of the Southern provinces of the Netherlands. When, however, in the last quarter of the sixteenth century both in Italy and the Netherlands art became decadent it arose again Phœnix-like in Holland with Rembrandt and the men who came after him. With Van Cleve we begin to see the genre picture ; the glass filled with wet sand in which a lily stands ; the cut orange with the knife beside it are all such as the Dutchmen were to paint. With Joos van Cleve we are on the threshold of Dutch art.

CHAPTER X

THE EARLY GERMAN SCHOOL

HERMANN VON WESEL, 1378 (first mentioned): STEPHEN LOCHNER, *c.* 1400–51: MASTER OF THE LIFE OF MARY, MASTER OF LIESBORN, MASTER OF WERDEN, WESTPHALIAN MASTER (last half of fifteenth century): LUCAS CRANACH, 1472–1533: HANS BALDUNG GRÜN, 1476–1545: HEINRICH ALDEGREVER, 1502 (?)–55: BARTHOLOMÄUS BRUYN, 1493–1553

IN the early German school we find at its best a great sweetness and freshness, but unhappily it had also from the first a slight tendency to sentimentality. This quality when it becomes marked is almost always allied with the vice of brutality, and when the German primitives became less child-like and more grown up we see the old sweetness and simplicity declining and being replaced by ugliness and brutality. But the skill remains, and with the advent of Dürer and Holbein we get the directness of the early combined with the power of the later men. For examples of the first qualities we may take (in our collection) the works of Lochner, and the Masters of the Life of the Virgin, Liesborn and Werden, while as a picture exhibiting both skill and brutality we may select the "Crucifixion," No. 1049, by a Westphalian master.

The real strength of the Germans lay in portraiture,

though at first it was unconscious and unrecognized. The Netherlanders, as we have seen, were profoundly influenced by the religious and spiritual atmosphere of the centuries immediately preceding their own, but the Germans, after the earliest men, represented in the National Gallery only by Von Wesel and Lochner, seem only to have felt this through the medium of the great Netherlands painters. It was not a personal quality of their own.

The finest of all our German primitives is the "Presentation in the Temple," No. 706, by the Master of the Life of the Virgin. He was possibly John Van Duyren, who is mentioned as buying a house in Cologne in 1475, and died in 1495.

However that may be, the painter of this picture probably worked in Dirk Bouts' studio at Louvain, for it shows Netherlandish influence so strongly that at the first glance it might be mistaken for one belonging to that school.

The central group in the "Crucifixion," No. 1049, of the Westphalian school, is also thoroughly Netherlandish both in conception and execution. If we next consider the "Presentation," No. 257, by the Master of Liesborn (and this panel represents the high-water mark of the painter's attainment) we find a picture that owes its inspiration entirely to the German school, and we can clearly see the love of portraiture emerging. The Master of Liesborn feels the scene on its devotional side far less keenly than does the other master, nor does miniature-like painting interest him in the same degree. But on the other hand he is far more interested in the human being he is at that moment studying.

The woman in the green cloak in the left corner of the picture is an example of this.

If we turn to a "Portrait of a Lady," No. 722, it is at once seen that here the unknown painter has put his whole strength, conscious and unconscious, into his picture. He is painting something he instinctively delights in, and this fine portrait has all the great qualities of directness and sincerity exhibited by Dürer and Holbein, though it lacks their astounding mastery over line and colour.

The first painter of the German school to emerge from obscurity with a name and a definite history, slight though it be, is Wilhelm von Herle, or Meister Wilhelm as he is more often called.[1] Though he was probably from Herle near Constance, as his name indicates, historical records prove that he lived and worked at Cologne. In the year 1350 he and his wife Jutta bought a house in the Schildergasse (Painters' Lane) opposite the monastery of St. Augustine (this street still exists). On August 9th, 1370, Magister Wilhelm received nine marks for painting a miniature in the oath book of the Cologne Corporation. On the 27th November of the same year two hundred and twenty marks were paid for the wall paintings in the Hansesaal of the Rathaus, now in the Cologne Museum. Though his name is not mentioned it is natural to suppose that these paintings were also by "Magister Wilhelm," as he was then at the height of his fame, and is very likely the painter mentioned in 1380 in the "Limburg Chronicle" as "the best painter in German lands, as he was esteemed by the masters, for he

[1] "Early German Art," Catalogue of the Burlington Arts Club.

painted each person of every form as though he lived."

In 1378 Jutta, the wife of the painter, is mentioned as "relicta quondam Wilhelmi de Herle," and she married Meister Wilhelm's pupil, Hermann Wynrich von Wesel, who succeeded to his master's workshop in the Painters' Lane.

Hermann's name is first mentioned in 1378, and he died in 1413–14. He painted an altar-piece for the convent of St. Clara, afterwards placed in Cologne Cathedral. The "St. Veronica," No. 687, in the National Gallery is only a poor copy of Wynrich's original in the Munich Gallery. It has, moreover, been grievously repainted, and only in the lower corners is a trace of the original gem-like colour to be found. In the Munich "St. Veronica" there are three singing angels at each corner.

Stephen Lochner, like Wilhelm von Herle and Hermann Wynrich von Wesel, worked at Cologne though he was not born there. His birthplace was Mersburg on the lake of Constance, and he is first mentioned in the Cologne archives in 1442 as buying, on October 27th, with his wife Lysbeth, half the Roggendorp house in the parish of St. Laurence. Nine years afterwards he died of the plague.

Stephen Lochner painted the famous "Dombild" at Cologne, and this picture, like the great altar-piece of the "Mystic Lamb" at Ghent, painted by the Van Eycks, exercised great influence over other painters of the time.

As we have seen, Roger Van der Weyden on his way home from Rome stayed in the city of Cologne, and

while he was there he painted a large triptych for the church of St. Columba. This picture created the greatest admiration amongst the Cologne artists; Lochner's traditions went out of fashion and they set to work to imitate the methods of the renowned Flemish master. Nevertheless Lochner's "Dombild" remained a picture of great fame, for on October 25th, 1520, this entry occurs in the diary of Albert Dürer: "I paid two white pfennings for opening the picture at Cologne which Master Stephen made."

Stephen Lochner is represented in the National Gallery by "St. Matthew, St. Katherine and St. John," No. 705.

In this picture we see the German school at its most individual period. Later, it was so much influenced by the Netherlands that it is sometimes most difficult to distinguish between them. It is impossible to avoid drawing a parallel between German and Netherlands and Sienese and Florentine art. Painting in Siena matured rapidly under Duccio and his followers, but though it had extraordinary charm and beauty it was wanting in that intellectual passion so pre-eminent among the Florentines, consequently art in Siena never reached the height it attained in Florence. Charm with lesser men than Duccio and the Memmis took the place of strength, and the Sienese school began to decline when the greatest time of Florentine art was but beginning. In Lochner's three saints we see the same grace and charm that we find in the Sienese pictures, but later the German artists showed a like want of mental vigour, and the full flower of Northern art bloomed, at first, not in Germany but in the Nether-

Three Saints *No. 705*

STEPHEN LOCHNER

lands, and not till quite the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century did Germany produce painters of the first rank.

Lochner's three saints are full of a delightful grace and simplicity. Their look of gentle goodness charms at once, their faces are types and yet very realistic. Instead of the gorgeous robes, heavy with brocade, embroidery and gems, that later came so quickly into favour, we have simple garments in flowing folds bare of gems and jewels. St. Katherine, a slight and graceful girl, wears a golden chain and cross and her royal crown, her little head bending beneath its weight. The tall sword that nearly reaches her shoulder is like those carried by St. Exuperius and St. Maurice in Nos. 254 and 255. It is decidedly a weapon for show and not for defence; the handle is bound with red velvet and the pommel and guard are of gold.

St. Matthew is a dignified, kindly old man with more character in his face than St. John. He holds a pen in his hand and seems to be just waiting for an inspiration before writing his Gospel. The head of the delightful little angel peeping round him and apparently holding on to his cloak appears to have been considerably repainted. It is characteristic of the school that St. Matthew's symbol, the angel, so often introduced in a perfunctory way, should be painted in this charming, innocent manner.

St. John's pen-case and inkhorn hang on his leathern belt. The saint holds a golden chalice in his hand, and a poisonous serpent rears itself up within it. His eagle stands on a stone beside him, and close by is a split flint naturalistically painted.

The picture must have been the wing of an altar-piece, for on the back of the oak panel the faded, ghostly forms of two saints can still be distinguished, St. Margaret, her palm branch and dragon long since vanished, stands a young and girlish figure in a red robe, her long fair hair hanging down her back. Her companion is the venerable Gregory, pope and saint, and when the picture was fresh and new the contrast of St. Margaret's youth and innocence with the age and wisdom of her fellow must have been very delightful. More of St. Gregory remains than of St. Margaret. His dim yet commanding figure, carrying an open book in his hand, is like the picture of a ghost. A white dove whispers in his ear, and below him an old man kneeling can just be discerned. The book St. Gregory carries he holds out towards the spectator, and it no doubt contains his homilies, dictated to him by the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove.

St. Gregory, unlike St. Margaret, is no mythical saint of the Middle Ages, but a famous man who left a profound mark on his time. Born a year or two after the death of another great thinker and leader of men, St. Benedict, he organized the secular church while St. Benedict regularized and co-ordinated the monastic life.

Gregory the Great came of a noble Roman family, the Anicii, and had very great possessions. In 573, while he was still a young man, he was made Prefect of Rome, but a few years later he gave up the world and became a monk.

During the pontificate of Pelagius II, Rome was decimated by the plague, and when the Pope himself

fell a victim to the pestilence the people took Gregory by force, and for the holiness of his life made him Pope. He was a man of the greatest strength of character; an incurable invalid, he worked unceasingly till he died. His is a wonderful character, for he fulfils Dante's ideal of a mystic who is also a man of affairs, working for the common weal.

Gregory's connection with our own country is well known, but it is worth repeating in the words of The Golden Legend:—[1]

"It happened afterward that St. Gregory passed through the market of Rome, and saw there two fair children white and ruddy of visage, and fair yellow hair which were for to sell. And St. Gregory demanded from whence they were, and the merchant answered, 'Of England.' After, St. Gregory demanded if they were Christian, and he answered, 'Nay, but they were paynims.' Then sighed St. Gregory and said, 'Alas! what fair people has the Devil in his doctrine and in his domination,' after, he demanded how these people were called: he answered, 'They were called Angles men,' then he said, 'They may well be so called, for they have the visage of angels.' And for that St. Gregory went to the Pope and by great prayers and entreaties prevailed that he should be sent into England to convert the people of that same country, but when the Romans heard say that Gregory was sent into England, anon they went to the Pope and said to him: 'Thou hast angered St. Peter, thou hast destroyed all Rome and hurt all holy Church in this, that thou hast let Gregory go out of Rome.' Of which word the Pope

[1] "The Golden Legend," Vol. III, p. 60.

was angry and much abashed, and anon sent his messengers after St. Gregory and commanded him to return and come again to Rome, which then was gone on his journey three days, and for his noble and good renomee the Pope made him Cardinal Deacon."

According to the Golden Legend Gregory was the first of the popes to style himself Servus Servorum Dei, that is Servant of the servants of God. "He had a great cure and was busy to convert sinners: he made and compiled many fair books of which the Church is greatly illumined. He was never idle, although he was always sick.

He converted the English people to the Christian faith by three holy men and good clerks, that he sent thither, that is, to wit Augustine, Mellitus and John, for to preach the faith."

"The Presentation in the Temple," No. 706, by the Master of the Life of Mary, was painted in the last half of the fifteenth century. As we have already seen, this painter may possibly be John van Duyren, who is mentioned in the Cologne archives with his wife Catherina as buying a house in the Schildergasse in 1475, and who died in 1495. He shows a strong influence from the Netherlandish school and probably worked in Dirk Bouts' studio at Louvain.[1]

"The Presentation in the Temple" forms part of a series of which the rest is now at Munich. It was painted for the Church of St. Ursula at Cologne and formed the inside panel of an altar-piece.

The composition is very simple. Two groups of figures balance one another on either side, and in the

[1] Burlington Fine Arts Club Catalogue, "Early German Art."

The Presentation in the Temple *No. 706*

MASTER OF THE LIFE OF MARY

middle is St. Simeon. It is a picture of the most delicate and tender charm, but painted with intense realism; the heads are not idealized in the remotest degree. The magnificent gentleman on the right, for all his magnificence, is very common-looking, but luckily for him he is clearly marked out as a rich noble. He is evidently dressed in the extreme of fashion; his gorgeous coat is stiff with gold thread, and the short sleeves are bordered by a band of precious stones. His hands are hidden in the folds of his fashionable though most inconvenient under-sleeves.

He, with the two other men on the right, is distinguished from all the other figures by wearing hose and shoes made in one instead of the soft, black, buckled shoes and pattens worn by the rest. The painter clearly loved rich stuffs and embroideries. The young lady immediately behind Joseph on the left has a magnificent bodice of crimson and gold. The artist has taken especial pains here, for he has painted it over a prepared gesso ground to give it all the richness possible.

The heads are a marvel of delicacy, the very veins of Simeon's eyelids are shown, and yet no detail forces itself upon the spectator, and it is only when the picture is closely examined that it is possible to realize the loving minuteness with which it has been painted. His cope is a wonder of mediæval needlework: besides the border containing figures there is embroidered in the hood the legend of the Emperor Augustus and the Sibyl. The Virgin with the Child in her arms is painted entirely in accordance with Flemish tradition. Behind her stands Joseph with an

unlighted candle in his hand; on the other side of the picture a woman holds the corresponding candle and two more are on the altar; these last are lighted. Joseph's bent head is painted with the greatest fidelity and is perhaps the most beautiful of the group: his right hand is in the handsome purse at his side.

The golden background of the picture evidently extends some distance beneath the figures, for a little paint has flaked off Joseph's head and also off the young man behind him, and the gold background shows beneath. Gold was so precious (it was real gold rolled into the thinnest gold leaf) that it is surprising to find it hidden beneath the paint.

The altar before which Simeon stands is in the most exuberant Gothic style. In the middle of the reredos is carved the sacrifice of Isaac, on the left the sacrifice of Cain and Abel, and the death of the latter, and on the right the uncovering of Noah. A border of needlework with a Hebrew inscription runs round the altar.

It is interesting to compare this "Presentation" with Dirk Bouts' "Virgin and Child," No. 774, and it is easy to believe that the Master of the Life of the Virgin worked in this artist's workshop. St. Peter and St. Paul belong to the same type of simple, kindly old country men as Joseph and Simeon.

"The Crucifixion," No. 1049, Westphalian school, fifteenth century, when compared with "The Presentation," brings out clearly the two widely different ways of treating a subject designed for an altar-piece. In the picture painted by the Master of the Life of Mary we find its intense realism penetrated through and through with an equally intense spiritual and

devout feeling, but in "The Crucifixion" we find (except in the principal figures) realism alone, and by no means of the highest kind. Notwithstanding the depth of its rich and wonderful colouring, it is essentially an ignoble picture, for the painter or painters (for it is difficult to believe it to be the work of one hand) have delighted in base and ugly forms.

"The Crucifixion" betrays very clearly the system on which the artists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries worked, and illustrates its drawbacks with equal clearness. In all probability the master of the workshop from which this picture issued had a large and flourishing business, and no doubt, being a business man as well as a painter, he turned his pictures out as quickly as possible. He would have in his workshop a number of apprentices, to whom he was teaching his trade, and they, working under his direction, would be responsible for the less important parts of the picture. In this "Crucifixion" it is permissible to make a guess at the division of labour both in the planning and execution. One day we may suppose an order came in for a large painting of the Crucifixion, probably from some rich man who wished to get as much as possible for his money. Not only was it to be a picture of the crucifixion, with small scenes of the Road to Calvary and the Deposition, included in the design, but it seems likely he also stipulated there were to be as many figures and horses as possible, all to be represented in the design in a life-like manner.

The master accepted the commission and no doubt blocked in the general arrangement of the design himself. The way in which the horizon in the picture

drops to allow the cross of Christ to stand against the light is very beautiful. Probably the whole composition and design was the work of the master alone, but when we look closely at the painting of the figures we find an amazing inequality of execution.

The Virgin is a noble and dignified figure painted with the utmost refinement and delicacy. Her hands especially are very finely studied. St. John, though his face is of a somewhat coarse and ordinary type, is, by the depth of his sorrow and devotion, raised to a higher plane. The Magdalene, standing behind the Virgin, is a moving figure with her tear-stained face, and all three saints are painted according to the highest and best traditions of the German school. So much for the principal group. But when we examine the great crowd of persons to the right and behind them there is an astonishing decline both in feeling and execution. It is true the colour never fails, but the drawing is both poor and careless; the man standing with his back to the spectator on the right of St. John might be cut out of cardboard. The faces of the crowd belong to the lowest and most vulgar type, the centurion on his white horse has no back to his head, emotion is expressed by exaggerated looks and gestures, many of the soldiers are childishly ugly, and remind us of the wicked robbers in the "Babes in the Wood." The thieves hang agonized and tortured on their crosses. In contrast to the sweet dignity and beauty of the principal figures, there is nothing in this horrible crowd but indifference, brutality and pain, and worst of all the painter, or painters, have delighted in all this senseless ugliness and coarseness.

There remains the deep, brilliant, gem-like colouring: it has the qualities of a beautiful stained-glass window. The man who painted it was a great colourist, but it is strange that he should have allowed such coarse, ugly work to go out of his workshop.

The painting possesses great interest for those who study the life of the Middle Ages. On the extreme left an archer on horseback is riding out of the picture. He carries a sheaf of arrows in a bag at his back, but for convenience, in case of sudden attack, he keeps one thrust through the knot of his capuchon or hat, much in the same way that a shop assistant carries his pencil behind his ear. The archer carries his long-bow in his hand. The long-bow and the cross-bow seem to have had varying fortunes: cross-bows were used at the Battle of Hastings, but then they went out of fashion and the famous archers of Crecy and Poitiers carried the long-bow. At the date of our picture the cross-bow was again coming into favour. Pollajuolo, painting towards the end of the fifteenth century in Florence, represents the executioners in the "Martyrdom of St. Sebastian," No. 292, as using both the long and the cross-bow. In "The Battle of San Romano," No. 583, by Uccello, painted some time between 1432 and 1475, the archers have nothing but cross-bows. In "St. Sebastian, St. Roch and St. Demetrius," No. 669, painted by Giovanni Battista Benvenuti in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, there is an elaborate cross-bow, showing the latest improvements before it was finally displaced by firearms.

The richly dressed soldier standing on the right holds

in his hand a boar spear, and wears an immense two-handed sword. The villainous-looking knight on the brown horse above holds a small hammer-headed weapon in his hand. This at least is practical. The solitary Sienese warrior in "The Battle of San Romano," No. 583, has a weapon of a like nature and is evidently doing great execution with it.

The man behind the cross holds a heavy iron mace, and the soldier beside him, in the white cap and cloak, carries a strange primitive weapon. It is a long knotted cudgel thicker at the top and shod with iron and tipped with a spike. This was a weapon well known to the Flemings and called a Godendag. In the Porte de Bruges at Ghent there used to be a wall painting (now destroyed) showing the Guild of St. Sebastian all carrying Godendags, apparently their only weapon. The Chronicler Guiart, himself a bowman in the army of Philippe le Bel in 1304, thus describes the Godendag :—

"With great heavy iron staves,
Having a long sharp iron projecting,
They go to meet the French.
Such a staff, which they carry in war,
Is named Godendac in their country.
Goden-dac that is to say Good-day,
If one would express it in French.
This staff is long and well contrived,
Made for striking with two hands.
And when it is used for a crushing stroke,
If he who strikes understands it
And knows how to work well therewith,
Quickly he may recover his blow
And strike, without any jest,
With the projecting end forward, stabbing

His enemy in the belly;
And the iron is sharp that enters
Easily and straight forward
Into all places in which it may be thrust,
If armour does not resist it."

This poem was written after the battle at Courtrai between the French and Flemings, the latter being victorious. After the siege of Guisnes the English made this rhyme in derision of the Flemings :—

"With habirgeons and hounsculles and rusti kettill hattes
With longe pykes and goden daghes
For to stikke the rattes."[1]

The primitive but businesslike Godendag is in great contrast to much of the armour in this picture, which seems designed more for ornament than use. Such is the openwork vizor worn by the man-at-arms on the left, who is striking Christ as he falls with His cross, and the handle of the sword in the extreme right of the picture.

Abbot Heinrich of Cleves ruled over the Benedictine Abbey of Liesborn near Münster from 1465 to 1490, and during his abbacy he dedicated a great altar-piece for the high altar of his church. This picture remained in the place for which it was painted until 1807, when it was ruthlessly cut in pieces and dispersed. Parts of it were lost, but a number have found a final resting-place in our National Collection. The name of the man who painted the picture has long since been lost, and he is now known as "The Master of Liesborn."

1 "A Carved Flemish Chest," by C. ffoulkes (Archæologia, lxv, 122).

It is exceedingly difficult for us to appreciate this great altar-piece under its present conditions, for the eight pictures belonging to it are at present hung in different parts of the German room.

Two of them represent respectively "The Presentation," No. 257, and "The Annunciation," No. 256, and are complete compositions in themselves: two more are the merest fragments, the "Head of Christ," No. 259, and "The Adoration," No. 258. The remaining four consist of groups of saints. The fact that we do not know in the least in what way they were arranged or grouped together: whether it was a winged altar-piece (as is most probable) or merely a large composite picture, makes it almost impossible to judge it fairly. And as if that were not enough, we are faced with the further difficulty that the paintings vary so greatly in merit that it is impossible to believe them all to be the work of the same hand. We are thus forced to suspect that the altar-piece was the combined effort of a large workshop, and that the talent employed ranged from the master himself down to the boy who mixed the paints.

As we have already seen, the master painter was only bound to provide the general design of the altar-piece and to paint the nude parts of the figures. The Master of Liesborn may have furnished the general design, whatever that may have been, but that he painted all the hands and faces passes belief.

If we compare "The Presentation," No. 257, and "The Annunciation," No. 256, the differences are startling. The former is a very beautiful specimen of the German school, and in it the Master of Liesborn

The Presentation in the Temple *No. 257*

MASTER OF LIESBORN

runs the Master of The Life of the Virgin very close. The types are fine, there is a great sense of beauty, and above all the colouring is warm, clear and glowing. In "The Annunciation," though it has great interest archæologically as showing us the interior of a mediæval room, we find a dull, dry tone and flat cold colour. The stupid bucolic angel is entirely different from anyone in "The Presentation." It is, of course, not impossible that the original "Annunciation," the pair, if pair it was, to "The Presentation," was destroyed and the present picture put in to replace it.

We may now consider the separate pictures, not in their order of merit but according to their numbers in the Gallery.

When the two pictures "St. Ambrose, St. Exuperius and St. Jerome," No. 254, and "St. Gregory, St. Hilary and St. Augustine," No. 255, were bought by the British Government from Herr Krüger of Minden, they were supposed to represent the four doctors of the church, Ambrose, Jerome, Gregory and Augustine, with two knights, St. Exuperius and St. Hilary, and these attributions have always remained, though with regard to the last saint the attribution seems open to doubt. St. Hilary was Archbishop of Poitiers in 368, and as, unlike St. Martin of Tours, he was never a soldier, he would certainly have been represented, not in armour, but wearing his pontifical vestments. Mrs. Jameson in her "Sacred and Legendary Art" suggests that the two soldier saints are St. Exuperius and St. George, and there is no difficulty about the former, as his name is written round his halo; unluckily it is impossible to decipher the inscription belonging to the

other knight. On reading the story of St. Exuperius in the Golden Legend, it seems most likely that the saint is neither St. Hilary nor St. George, but St. Maurice, for St. Maurice and St. Exuperius were officers and comrades in arms in the Theban Legion, and both suffered martyrdom at the same time. The saints of the Theban Legion were peculiarly honoured in Germany, and it seems probable that the two young knights are here commemorated together with the learned doctors.

"The Theban Legion[1] numbered six thousand six hundred and sixty-six knights, and they came from the East beyond the parts of Arabia, and it is full of richesses, plenteous of fruit, delectable of trees. The dwellers of that region be of great bodies and noble in arms, strong in battle, subtle in engine and right abundant in wisdom." The Thebans were all Christians. The heathen Roman Emperors Diocletian and Maximian summoned the Legion to fight under them in Gaul.

"And the nobleman Maurice was duke of this holy Legion: and they that governed under him which bare the banners were named St. Candidus, St. Innocent, St. Exuperius, St. Victor and St. Constantine." When the Emperor Maximian, together with a great host, amongst whom were the Theban knights, had crossed the mountains, he commanded that all those with him should do sacrifice to the idols on pain of great and grievous penalties. "And when the holy knights heard that they departed from the host, eight miles farther and

[1] "The Golden Legend," Temple Classics, Vol. V, p. 159.

SS. Gregory, Hilary and Augustine *No. 255*

MASTER OF LIESBORN

took there a certain place delectable by the river of the Rhone, by name Aganum." Now when Maximian heard this he commanded that they should immediately come to the sacrifice of the gods, and when they refused, he sent his soldiers and commanded them to slay every tenth man of the Thebans. "Then the holy saints stretched their heads with joy and hasted that one to fore that other to come to the death: and after, St. Maurice rose up and said . . . Let us send this answer unto Cæsar. We be thy knights, Sir Emperor, and have taken arms to the defence of the Common weal: in us is no treason, no dread, but in no wise will we forsake the law in faith of Jesu Christ." Then the Emperor commanded that every tenth man yet remaining to them should be beheaded. "And when this was done one of the bannerers named Exuperius took the banner and stood among them and said, 'Let us send to the Emperor these words: We be knights of thine empire, but we confess us to be servants of Jesu Christ: we owe unto thee chivalry, but to him innocence, and of thee we attend the reward of our labour but of him we have the beginning of life, and we be ready to receive for him all torments, and we shall not depart from his Faith.' Then Cæsar commanded that his host should environ all that Legion of Knights so that none should escape. Then were environed the Knights of Jesu Christ with Knights of the Devil so that none should escape," and nearly all were slain though some few evaded their foes.

These panels, Nos. 254, 255, are perhaps the dullest and most conventional of the six. The two knights carry parade swords and shields, for shields by the

middle of the fifteenth century were no longer used in actual warfare but were reserved for use in tournaments. Those carried by the two saints are shaped for lance rests.

The next portion of the altar-piece we have to consider is "The Presentation," No. 257. The Virgin's large golden halo draws attention to the Mother and Child and the group that surrounds them. The Virgin's face has beauty and dignity, but the little child is rather an ugly baby, looking unnaturally pious.

The Virgin's robe, beneath her heavy blue mantle, is composed of crimson cloth with a pattern of golden threads. Simeon, notwithstanding his high honour, is a Jew and no Christian bishop, and therefore he is represented wearing a crimson conical cap and not a mitre. Behind him, just as in "The Presentation" by the Master of the Life of Mary, No. 706, stands the richest and most important of the spectators of the ceremony. Both Simeon and this nobleman wear the long wide sleeves fashionable at the time. On the left stands a plain woman, obviously a portrait, wearing a long green cloak and a white turban headdress. She carries the cage containing the doves—a pretty cage made of slender willow wands, but scarcely calculated to secure two active birds. The scene is set in a large church of flamboyant architecture, the draughtsmanship of which is very faulty. The altar shows the little cupboard below, where the cruets are kept, and is covered with a white cloth bordered by cross stitch. The tiles on the floor have a black pattern on a light ground, unlike English tiles of the same date, which have light patterns on a darker ground.

"The Annunciation," No. 256, gives us a delightful glimpse into a high-born lady's chamber of the Middle Ages.

It is long and narrow, with a barrel roof of wood, and windows and door along one side. The latter are wide open and overlook a wide park-like landscape.

The Virgin's furniture is worthy of note. At the further end of the room is her big bed with crimson brocade curtains, and by its side a carved cupboard with a large round brass dish and several other objects, among these being her pen-case and ink bottle. Below the window hangs her prayer fastened to a board. There, too, is a long wooden seat with three modern-looking cushions on it. One is embroidered with the device of a running stag, the second with a coat of arms, while the third is covered with brocade. On the tiled floor we again find the same running stag. The artistic interest of this panel is slight, but as a little window into the past it is charming.

The "Adoration of the Magi," No. 258, is a mere fragment, but the "Head of Christ upon the Cross," No. 259, is of great beauty and painted with tender feeling. The glazed and dimmed eyes, the faded "passing" look of the face, are pitifully rendered. We see in this picture both the strength and the weakness of the Northern schools. On looking at it no one can doubt the depth and reality of the master's fervour, but it is greatly spoilt by the Northern tendency to over-realism and over-emphasis of physical pain and agony.

Blood pours in dark crimson streams from the green thorns pressed down upon the suffering head, and

beautiful as the picture is it is painful to look at for this reason.

No. 260 represents St. John, St. Scholastica and St. Benedict, the two last shown as the first Abbess and Abbot of the Benedictine order.

No. 261 represents St. Cosmo, St. Damian and the Virgin. The two physician saints each carry a pot, no doubt containing ointment or medicine connected with their art. Cosmo's is a beautiful glazed earthenware jar decorated with a pattern of ramping blue dragons; the saint holds the lid in his right hand, and the hand is much out of drawing, a not uncommon failing of this master.

St. Damian's pot is of copper, and he, too, is about to remove the lid. The Virgin's head is of the same gentle, refined type as the rest.

Between the years 1474–8 an altar-piece was painted for the Abbey of Werden near Essen, and the two panels, "St. Jerome, St. Benedict, St. Giles and St. Romuald," No. 250, and "St. Augustine, St. Ludger, St. Hubert and St. Maurice," (or perhaps St. Gereon), No. 251, formed the outside wings: the inner panels show the conversion of St. Hubert and the Mass of the saint, and are now on loan in the Scottish National Gallery. These panels were discovered in the Abbey of Werden, and no others painted by the same hand are known. Like so many of the German painters, the artist has neither name nor history. Nor is he allowed the credit for the whole of the altar-piece, for various authorities detect a different hand in the two sets of panels, the Conversion and Mass being by a better, and the eight saints by an inferior master.

SS. Peter and Dorothy *No. 707*

MASTER OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW

The eight saints have the peaceful, innocent look common to so many holy personages of the early German school. St. Jerome's engaging little lion stands on his hind legs while the saint holds his paw in his hand. The lion is to the full as innocent and charming as his saintly companions. The robes fall in long flowing folds, quite untouched by the sharp angularity always found in the drapery of the artists of the Netherlands.

St. Ludger founded the Abbey of Werden where these panels were discovered. He was buried in its crypt, and was taken for its patron saint. He was Bishop of Münster in the time of Charlemagne and also the Apostle of the Frisians. Like so many of the early saints he was a great friend of animals, and a wild swan waited on him : for this reason he is often represented with a swan beside him. St. Ludger was evidently a man of some firmness, for when the Emperor Charlemagne sent for him while he was reading his office he sent him a message telling him he must wait till he had finished. In remembrance of this incident St. Ludger is also represented as holding a book.[1]

St. Gereon's story is very meagre. He was an officer in the Roman army, and being sent to Cologne refused to take part in a heathen festival, whereupon he was put to death with all his company.

"Two Saints,"[2] No. 707, by the Master of St. Bartholomew, represent St. Peter and St. Dorothy. The panel is of course the wing of an altar-piece, its fellow, now at Mainz, containing St. Andrew and St. Columba.

[1] Mrs. Jameson, "Sacred and Legendary Art."

[2] "Early German Art," Burlington Fine Arts Club Catalogue, p. xxxix.

This master, whose name and history as usual are unknown, worked between 1485 and 1510. He is an example of a thoroughly good and capable master of the German school, who continued to work on conventional, conservative lines right into the sixteenth century while many of his brother artists were feeling the stirrings of modern thought. His two saints are amazingly plain and uninteresting looking, but they are well and carefully painted; there is no sign of scamping or hurry: the colouring of St. Peter's garments is magnificent, and the painting of St. Dorothy's skirt is a marvel of skill and care. Nothing, however, can make these two people anything but dull. St. Peter's beautifully curled hair and beard seem only to accentuate the vacuity of his face, and as to St. Dorothy, if she is a saint, she falsifies Blake's saying that "a fool shall never get to heaven, be he never so holy."

The "Portrait of a Lady," No. 722, is in marked contrast to these dull saints. We do not know who painted it, but he was no mean precursor of the greatest German portrait painters. This man is no conventionalist, painting after the manner of his school, but a painter who has thrown himself heart and soul into the mental pursuit of his sitter's personality. He has dived below her exterior, delightful though it may be, and he shows us a woman whose face is full of character, determination and energy, and yet is sweet and cheerful. He is by no means complete master of his technique, for his planes are flat and hard, and this is particularly noticeable in the back of the neck, which ends in a hard line against the background and does not go round at all: the hands, too, are drawn in a curiously stiff,

Portrait of a Lady *No.722*

UNKNOWN MASTER, GERMAN SCHOOL

wooden manner. But how delightful the portrait is with all its angularities. This unknown artist falls far short of Holbein in skill and mastery, but in freshness and sincerity, in restraint and directness, his picture recalls Holbein's superb " Duchess of Milan."

Lucas Cranach (the elder) is one of those painters who seem to have been spoilt by prosperity. He was born at Cronach in Franconia in 1472, and all his best and most beautiful pictures, such as the " Repose in Egypt," now at Berlin, were painted in his early years. Like so many of the German artists, Cranach was an engraver on copper and wood as well as a painter. He was a great traveller, for we hear of his being in the Holy Land, Austria and the Netherlands. He held positions of importance, for he was twice burgomaster of Wittenberg and he was also court painter to three Electors of Saxony. When the Elector John Frederick the Magnanimous was taken prisoner Cranach went with him, voluntarily sharing his captivity till the prince was set free five years later. The painter died in 1553. Cranach's art was extremely fashionable in the Germany of the early Reformation. He must have had a very large number of assistants and apprentices in his workshop, for " Cranachs " were turned out at a great rate. His nudes seem to have been particularly popular, and " Charity," No. 2925, is one of his more pleasing examples. Cranach probably painted nudes because there was a demand for them—they paid. There is no poetry whatever in them. The human form is one of the supremely beautiful things in creation. We see in the male, power energy and cleanness of line : in the female exquisite delicacy of form and

colour, while the line is of intense subtlety. A really great nude in either painting or sculpture is a poem in itself. Cranach's studies from the life are not nudes in this sense at all. They are simply people who have taken their clothes off, and unfortunately "Charity" still wears her necklace, which turns her at once into an uncomfortable naked woman. The early nudes of the North, as we have seen, were ugly, but that is because the artists were trying so hard to set down exactly what they saw before them. They were not seeking first and foremost for beauty of line and form. The models they had happened to be poorly developed, and in their anxiety to be absolutely truthful the painters seem to overstate their ugliness. The mental attitude of the Netherlanders sometimes reminds us of that of the candid friend.

Lucas Cranach was born more than a hundred years after the Van Eycks, and he belongs to a different age. In his Charity he is treating of an allegorical subject, but he shows no imagination whatever in his conception of it. Charity, it is true, looks a fairly kind-hearted woman, and were she respectably dressed might make a suitable nurse for the three small children. But of the Charity who is ready to give all, who would lose her own soul for another, Cranach knows nothing. His Charity has not even been able to spare her scarlet necklace. There is considerable charm about the three children, and this is especially true of the little girl who nurses her black doll. Cranach has signed this picture with his emblem, a winged serpent.

Cranach's "Portrait of a Man," No. 1925, is the

picture of a choleric, heavy-looking man most carefully painted. It is a fine painting with the exception of the boneless, unanatomical hands. His "Portrait of a Lady," No. 291, shows Cranach at his worst as a court painter. The lady is a self-complacent, overdressed, foolish-looking girl.

The "Virgin with Saints," a winged triptych lent by His Majesty the King, is the kind of picture likely to be manufactured in a thriving workshop such as Lucas Cranach's, whose real strength lay in portraiture. He belonged to the early Reformation and was a friend of Luther's; it is therefore scarcely surprising that his "Virgin with Saints" is painted with no feeling or sincerity. It is dull and unattractive, and shows no inspiration of any kind.

The "Portrait of a Senator," No. 245, by Hans Baldung, is a magnificent picture. Not only is the modelling of the face delicate and fine and the colouring beautiful, but it is painted with sympathy and imagination, for Baldung has captured both the dignity and pathos of old age. The portrait, both in arrangement and idea, belongs to the early school, though in execution it has no longer the extreme delicacy and finish shown in the work of the earlier men. We have only to compare the treatment of the fur collar and hair in this picture with Bouts' "Portrait of a Man," No. 943, and Van Eyck's "Portrait of a Man," No. 222, to be convinced of this.

Baldung's picture was formerly believed to be by Dürer, but the signature of the latter  in the background is now known to be a forgery. Hans Baldung

Grün was born in 1476, and passed the greater part of his life in Strassburg, where in 1545 he died.

Heinrich Aldegrever, who was born about 1502 and died after 1555, was one of the numerous German artists whose chief employment was wood engraving. One of his few paintings is the "Portrait of a Man," No. 1232. The man holds in his hand a pink, probably indicating that he is a bachelor. It is a fine portrait, but a trifle wooden and rather what might be expected from a man who was an engraver rather than a painter.

Christopher Amberger's "Portrait of a Man," No. 2604, is a pretty picture which shows the evil quality of sentimentality clearly, an ivy-like growth that quickly suffocates and kills true art. Amberger was born in 1490 and died in 1563.

The somewhat commonplace picture by Bartholomäus Bruyn, No. 2605, is of interest because it is the portrait of Dr. Leonard Fuchs. He was a German botanist, famous in the sixteenth century.[1] His great Herbal, printed in 1542, still exists, but his memory is best perpetuated by a flower now common in all gardens. In 1703 a new and beautiful plant was brought to Europe from S. America, and the botanist Plumier, with surprising altruism, named it the fuchsia after his learned predecessor. Fuchs holds in his hand a paper on which is written in German, "The word of the Lord endureth for aye."

Bruyn was born in 1493 and died in 1553–56. He received his artistic training in the Netherlands, and was greatly influenced by Joos van Cleeve. He migrated to Cologne, where he spent the rest of his life.

[1] De Historia Stirpium. Basle, 1542, Folio.

CHAPTER XI

ALBRECHT DÜRER, 1471–1528, AND HANS HOLBEIN, 1497–1543

ALBRECHT DÜRER and Hans Holbein belong to the Northern Renaissance, an intellectual and spiritual movement which owed but a part of its inspiration to Italy. They with Massys and Mabuse form a bridge between the primitives and the art of the seventeenth century.

Albrecht Dürer was born at Nuremberg in 1471 and died there in 1528. He was the son of a goldsmith and was apprenticed when fifteen to the German painter Michael Wolgemut. A great painter, he yet spent the larger part of his time in producing woodcuts and engravings, most of his pictures being painted between 1507–11. Happily we know Dürer better than most artists, for he wrote treatises on art, kept a diary, and wrote letters to his friends while he was on his travels. His diary is a work of extreme interest and opens for us a window into the past. It is quite clear that he was far more appreciated and honoured in Venice and Antwerp than in his own land of Germany. He makes us see Antwerp with his own eyes in the vivid account he gives of his visit to the city in 1520. He is amazed at its richness and grandeur. Speaking of the burgomaster's house, after expatiating on its splendour and

beauty, he adds "altogether a noble house, the like of which I have nowhere seen in Germany."

We have already had occasion to refer to the entertainment given in his honour by the Painters' Guild at Antwerp. In Venice, some years before, the nobles and rich men made so much of him that many of the Venetian painters became jealous, but not so the noble old Giovanni Bellini, then at the height of his fame.[1]

In a letter to his friend Pirkheimer Dürer writes, "How I wish you were here at Venice! There are so many nice men amongst the Italians who seek my company more and more every day, which is very pleasing to me—men of sense and knowledge, good lute-players and pipers, judges of painting, men of much noble sentiment and utmost virtue, and they show me much honour and friendship. On the other hand there are also amongst them some of the most false, lying thievish rascals: I should never have believed there were such living in the world. . . . Amongst the Italians I have many good friends who warn me not to eat and drink with their painters. Many of them are my enemies, and they copy my work in the churches and wherever they can find it: and then they revile it and say that the style is not antique and so not good. But Giovanni Bellini has highly praised me before many nobles. He wanted to have something of mine, and himself came to me and asked me to paint him something and he would pay me well for it. And all men tell me what an upright man he is, so that I am friendly with him. He is very old, but is still the best painter of them all."

[1] "Albert Dürer," by T. Sturge Moore, p. 81.

Dürer's style may not have been antique enough for the jealous Venetians, but his mental outlook was marvellously akin to the best of the Italians in its alertness and originality. He was for ever seeking for some new thing. When he was in Antwerp he heard that a whale had gone ashore in Zeeland.[1] "It is much more than one hundred fathoms long, and no man living in Zeeland has seen one even a third as long as this is," Dürer says. This was in November, and in December he set off and "tried to get a sight of the great fish, but the tide had carried him off again." There is a study of a walrus in the British Museum by Dürer dated 1521. On it is written, "The animal whose head I have drawn here was taken in the Netherlandish sea and was twelve Brabant ells long and had four feet."

An immense number of Dürer's drawings and engravings have come down to us, and in them we see the evidence of a great and original mind.

Writing of his father when he himself was a man of fifty-seven, he thus describes him. "This Albrecht Dürer the Elder passed his life in great toil and stern hard labour, having nothing for his support save what he earned with his hand for himself, his wife and his children, so that he had little enough. He underwent moreover manifold afflictions, trials and adversities. But he won just praise from all who knew him, for he lived an honourable, Christian life, was a man of patient spirit, mild and peaceable to all, and very thankful towards God. For himself he had little need of company and worldly pleasures: he was also of few words, and was a God-fearing man."

1 "Albert Dürer," by T. Sturge Moore, p. 152.

In 1497 Dürer painted a portrait of his father, and later on this picture, together with a portrait of the artist painted by himself, was presented to Charles I by the city of Nuremberg. The latter picture is now in the Prado at Madrid, but it is not known for certain what became of the portrait of the painter's father. There are four known versions of this work—one at Sion House, one at Munich, one at Frankfurt and one in the National Gallery.[1] By some the last mentioned is considered to be the original portrait painted by Albrecht Dürer, but others believe the original to be lost, and yet a third party pin their faith to the picture at Sion House. There is no doubt that our version, No. 1938, is a fine and arresting portrait, but delightful though it is the picture has not the certainty of touch we expect in a very great artist. This is especially noticeable in the poor rendering of the hand and in the heavy opaque shadow on the side of the face. The place where Dürer's genius may best be studied in England is not the National Gallery but the British Museum.

Hans Holbein was born at Augsburg in 1497, the son of Hans Holbein the Elder, and he received his training in his father's workshop. Between 1514 and 1516 he and his brother migrated to Basle, but it was in England that Hans spent the greater part of his working life. He was there from 1526 till his death in 1538, with an interval of three years (1528–31) in Basle. He was appointed court painter to Henry VIII about 1536, and

[1] "The History of our new Dürer," by Sir Charles Holmes, "Burlington Magazine," Vol. V, 1904.

he died in England in 1538, having paid Basle another brief visit earlier in the year.

Hans Holbein, like Albrecht Dürer, is head and shoulders above the rest of the German school. Probably the strictness and severity of the Guild system in Germany tended to dwarf the originality of the painters and turned them into capable but unimaginative craftsmen. Dürer and Holbein were such big men that they threw off the fetters and refused to be bound. That their independence was disapproved of is shown by a letter from the Town Council of Basle addressed to Holbein while he was in England, requesting him to return to the town, and promising him work and a very small pension. However, Holbein was then prospering greatly, and no answer from him to this communication, if he ever sent one, is extant. When he became court painter to Henry VIII the Council became still more insistent, and the painter found it necessary to come to some arrangement so that no unpleasant consequences should ensue. His wife and family never came to England but remained in Basle. It is probable that his hurried journey to Switzerland in 1538 was for this purpose.

When we consider that Henry VIII had the good sense to employ the greatest painter of his time north of the Alps, and that nearly all his best works were painted in England, it is mortifying to think that we have but two of Holbein's pictures in our National Collection. However, these two are in the front rank of portrait painting.

The "Christina, Duchess of Milan," No. 2475, possesses a double claim to our attention, for it is not only

one of the greatest of portraits but it is also a memorial of an interesting historical episode.

The lady who is represented was very young when the picture was painted, for she was only fifteen. Christina was the daughter of Christian II of Denmark, and at this date she had already been a widow for over two years, having been married to Francesco Maria Sforza, Duke of Milan, when she was only eleven years old.

In 1537 Jane Seymour, Henry VIII's third queen, died, and the breath was scarcely out of her body before the widower and his Council began to cast about for another lady to succeed her. Cromwell,[1] Henry VIII's minister, wrote to John Hutton, the English agent at the Court of Brussels, requesting him to make secret enquiries as to suitable brides, and in Hutton's reply, dated December 4th, 1537, after various suggestions, the following passage occurs : " Ther is the Duches of Myllayn, whom I have not seyn, but as it is reportid to be a goodly personage and of great beawtie. The Dewke of Clevis hathe a daughter, but I here no great preas neyther of hir personage nor beawtie. I have not mych exsperiens emonges ladies, and therefore this commission is to me very hard : soo that, yf in annything I offend, I beseche your Lordshipe to be my mean for pardon."

The Duchess soon after arrived in Brussels, and Hutton, notwithstanding his " inexsperiens," is charmed with her, and writes home letters glowing with praise of the Princess. He says she is a " goodly personage of boddy, and compytent off beawtie, of favour excellent, sofft of speche and very gentill in countenance," and he

[1] " Hans Holbein the Younger," by Arthur Chamberlain, Vol. II, p. 25.

adds, " she hath a syngular good countenance and when she chancesithe to smyl, ther aperithe two pittes in hir cheikes and wone in hyr chyne the wiche becommythe hyr right excellently well." The experienced widower then on the throne of England was enchanted with this description of the young girl, and he at once sent one of his gentlemen, Philip Hobey, with Hans Holbein to Brussels. Hobey was to judge of Christina's manners and address, while Holbein was to paint her portrait. After some confabulation " Mr. Haunce," as the painter was called, was sent for to the court at one o'clock on the 12th of March (1538): he finished his sketch of the Duchess in three hours, and it was despatched at once to England. Henry was delighted with the picture and was prepared to welcome Christina as his bride. Her relatives, however, never intended she should marry the king, the negotiations merely being one of the stratagems so often employed by diplomacy in those days. Christina herself seems to have been quite ready to run the risk of the dubious honour (of course she was young and full of spirit), and it is to be feared there is no historical foundation for the story of her reply to the Ambassador that " had she two heads, one should have been at the disposal of His Majesty, but as she had only one she preferred that it should remain in her own keeping."

Our picture is of course the full-length which Holbein painted from the three-hours' sketch he made of the Duchess in Brussels.[1] She is represented as being in " moornyng aparell aftre the maner of Ytalie," to quote Hutton again.

[1] The original sketch no longer exists,

With this sitter the painter has limited himself to the utmost in the matter of colour. A deep blue background, a black velvet gown high to the neck and a voluminous black silk coat lined with sable; the narrow white ruffles at neck and wrist are the sole relief he allows himself. There are no jewels beyond the single ruby ring, and even her hair, which is probably pretty and fair, is covered with a hideous mourning cap. Yet through it all we feel the youth and palpitating life of the young girl. The whole interest is focussed in the little fair face with the bright, serious eyes and fresh red lips. Like so many of the greatest portraits, the subject gives the impression of extreme stillness combined with great vitality. We can almost see her breathing. The Duchess is not actually smiling, but she has only just ceased smiling, or is on the point of doing so again, and then we shall see the "two pittes in her cheikes and the wone in hyr chyne." There is so much character in the girl's face that it is hard to believe she is only fifteen, but people grew up quickly in those days, and to be a wife at eleven and a widow at thirteen would tend to age anyone.

This picture was painted in England and has remained in the country ever since.

Our second picture, "The Ambassadors," No. 1314, is again a human document as well as a great work of art.

Jean de Dinteville,[1] Lord of Polisy and Bailly of Troyes, a young man of twenty-eight, at the time

[1] "Hans Holbein the Younger," by Arthur Chamberlain, Vol. II, pp. 36–50.

M.S.

Christina, Duchess of Milan *No. 2475*

HANS HOLBEIN

the picture was painted was the resident French Ambassador in London. Intelligent and cultivated, he had a close friend, Georges de Selve, a man of great learning and attainments, who afterwards became Bishop of Lavaur. In the spring of 1533 de Selve came over to England on a mission, the purpose of which is now unknown, and stayed with his friend de Dinteville. To commemorate this visit the two were painted by Holbein, who though at that time not actually appointed court painter, was yet the best-known artist in London.

The picture is in complete contrast to that of the Duchess of Milan. Instead of severely limiting himself in the matter of detail and focussing the whole interest on the face and hands of his subject, Holbein has here crowded his canvas with every conceivable object: the eye hardly knows where to rest, and the faces of the two men compete in vain for mastery over their surroundings. The picture is full of historical and archæological interest, but as a work of art it must yield to Christina's portrait. Probably de Dinteville, that delicate, anxious young man, fussily insisted on the painter's introducing as many of his pursuits and hobbies as possible. Chief among his fads was that of the "devise." In mediæval and early Renaissance days highly placed persons had a perfect passion for devices and riddles. A nobleman would take an object of some kind and adopt it as his badge, sometimes adding to it a motto with a single, double or treble meaning, or as it often seems now to us, no meaning at all. We find these devices on the reverse of the Italian medals of an earlier date. It is frequently extremely difficult to

detect their meaning, but they have had their use, for they have often enabled critics to date and identify the pictures in which they occur. This was notably the case in Uccello's "San Romano," No. 1432, where the impresa on Tolentino's banner gave the clue to its having been painted to commemorate the battle of San Romano instead of that of Sant' Egidio as had been supposed. De Dinteville clearly loved these mysteries, and no doubt that was why he had the huge distorted skull painted in the foreground of his picture. Certainly he succeeded to perfection, for he puzzled people for centuries, and it is only in recent times that this strange-looking object was discovered to be a Death's Head distorted by reflection in a curved mirror: if it is looked at downwards from the right-hand side it is recognized at once.[1] Probably de Dinteville and his friends adopted this device because it was both mysterious and gloomy. He may have known and admired Holbein's "Dance of Death," for though it was not then published, the engravings for it had been completed some time before this date. He was probably a rather morbid young man, and wears a tiny skull on a shield in his cap, and we find yet another of Death's emblems in the picture, the broken string of the lute used in the Renaissance as a symbol of mortality. The two cultured friends stand surrounded by symbols of the seven Liberal Arts, in all of which no doubt they wished it to be understood they were proficient.

They themselves as ambassadors personified the first three—Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric. Then comes

[1] "Holbein's Ambassadors," by Mary F. S. Harvey, p. 203.

Music, shown by the lute, the hymn-book and the case of flutes; Arithmetic by the open "Merchants Arithmetic Book"; Geometry by various mathematical instruments—the square, compasses and the pavement on which the ambassadors stand. Astronomy is symbolised by more mathematical instruments, and by the celestial and terrestrial globes.

It is known that de Selve had the reunion of the Reformed with the Roman Catholic Church very deeply at heart, and a point of great interest in the picture, quite unconnected with art, is the close relationship it proves between the liberal Catholics and the Reformers. Above de Dinteville's head (and hard to see) hangs a small silver crucifix, but the open hymn-book discloses on the one page Luther's German version of the "Veni Creator" and on the other his "Shortened Version of the Ten Commandments."

De Dinteville's copy of the "Merchants Arithmetic Book" is in the British Museum, where this very page may be seen.

The pavement is an exact copy of that laid down by Italian workmen in front of the high altar at Westminster Abbey, by order of Abbot Richard Ware, in the reign of Henry III.

Though we are to understand that he was a man of great learning, de Dinteville certainly does not look clever: de Selve has a great deal more character in his face. He is dressed as a layman, for he did not become Bishop of Lavaur till some time after his visit to England.

De Dinteville is magnificently dressed and wears the French order of St. Michael without its collar, a fashion

allowable when a member of the Order was at home, hunting, travelling or under arms. In his hand he grasps the golden scabbard of his dagger on which is engraved " Aet suae 29," and from which hangs a large silken tassel. De Selve's age is written on the leaves of the book on which he rests his elbow.

The story of de Dinteville and his friend was lost and forgotten, and the picture became a riddle for succeeding generations, which was only solved by the accidental discovery of a seventeenth-century document stating that the two friends had had their portraits painted together in England by " an excellent Dutch painter " in 1532 or 1533.

With Massys, Mabuse, Dürer and Holbein the spirit that produced the masterpieces of the Middle Ages has almost passed away. The deeply religious spirit inculcated by the treatises and handbooks on art such as those of Theophilus and Cennini ; insisted on by the Church, its most powerful patron ; and demanded by popular opinion, runs like a thread of gold through the art of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, restraining and directing it. But being a living, growing thing, Art could no longer be kept in leading strings however beautiful. She lost, it is true, her child-like innocence and freshness, but she gained liberty, which when rightly used is the greatest gift of all.

APPENDIX

"THE Holy Trinity," No. 3662. This recent acquisition to the Gallery is of great importance; it gives us a link between the art of the picture painters of the North and that of the miniaturists. Sir Charles Holmes in his article in the "Burlington Magazine," Vol. XLI, says: "We find a group of the Trinity practically identical with the centre part of our picture, adorning Jacquemart's Petites Livres at Paris" (Bib. Nat., 18014), "while the general scheme of the figure and throne is similar to that of the figures in Beauneveu's Psalter in the same collection" (U.S., Fr. 13091). Only one deduction seems possible, namely, that our picture . . . is "directly derived from this group of miniaturists working for the Duc de Berri between 1370 and 1415. Our picture is indeed more in the nature of a glorified and enlarged miniature than a strictly pictorial design."

What strikes us at once in this picture is the extraordinary restraint exhibited by the painter in the matter of colour. The red-robed angel has green wings, while the green-robed angel has red wings. The robes of God the Father are green and red. The throne is white, while within the arches green is seen again. There is a little purple behind—and that is all. On the other hand, the artist has been lavish in his use of gold, for it not only extends over the background, but the angels are painted over it. The patterns on their robes are made by allowing the gold to appear between the lines of colour.

The patterns themselves are of considerable interest. That of the green angel has, first, the letter "I" amidst foliage, above a winged, lop-eared dog, seated, and holding in his mouth a rope which goes round a stake fastened to the ground. This pattern has every appearance of being a "device" or badge, and did we but know who bore it considerable light would prob-

ably be shed on the history of both the painter and his picture. The red angel has a pattern of two palms and a crown, and above them two lop-eared dogs, seated back to back, alternatively with winged eagles.

"Louis XI of France," No. 2612. Burgundian School. Louis XI when King of France became the bitter enemy of Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, but in his youth he was exiled by his father and spent several years at the Burgundian court with Duke Philip, the father of Charles. It seems, therefore, probable that this portrait was painted while Louis was still Dauphin and under the protection of the Burgundians. It is of interest to note that the big church in the background is unfinished. And if by chance it were possible to identify it, we should probably know for whom the picture was painted. At this date France must have been full of these great churches in various stages of completion, and a prince or nobleman who had spent immense sums of money on a building of this kind naturally liked to get all the credit he could for it. The little nuns who are going to church wear red leather pattens. It is a very delightful little picture altogether.

"Virgin and Child with Saints and Donor," No. 1939, is catalogued as being of the French school of the fifteenth century, but the donor wears the Burgundian Order of the Golden Fleece and kneels in the doorway of a little chapel decorated with the Burgundian badge of the Briquette. This picture must have been painted after 1430, because the Order of the Golden Fleece was founded in that year by Philip Duke of Burgundy in honour of his bride, Isabeau of Portugal. This picture is not a great work of art, but it has a certain naïve charm. The saints looking over the wall are St. Francis of Assisi, an unknown Bishop and St. John the Divine, St. Katherine, St. Barbara and St. Margaret.

"The Virgin and Child with St. Katherine and St. Barbara," No. 3664 (Quentin Massys), is painted in tempera on linen. Time has made sad havoc with this noble picture, but it proves to us, if proof were needed, to what a great height the painters of the Netherlands could on occasion rise. Massys here shows us an exquisite and harmonious style united to an intense feeling for beauty of line as well as of colour; and, to crown all,

he exhibits imagination in a high degree. The composition of the picture is simple and sculpturesque. The Virgin, a stately, dignified figure, holds her Baby on her knee. To left and right are the two kneeling saints. St. Katherine is the most beautiful of the three women, but all are of a refined and delicate type. The Child is giving St. Katherine the ring, while the Virgin bestows a bridal crown on St. Barbara. The saints have a high-born grace most unusual with the saints and martyrs of the Netherlands school. The grey fur and the shades of blue in the robes make the predominant notes in a wonderful symphony of subdued colour. The patterns on the saints' dresses look remarkably as though they had been quickly stencilled on, for the pattern takes no count of the folds of the material. The little landscape on the left, with its trees round which the rooks are circling, while others have settled on the branches, gives the picture a fresh breath of outdoor life. It is remarkable that the only other work painted on linen in the gallery of this school, "The Entombment," No. 664, exhibits just these same qualities of feeling and imagination, and soft, subdued colouring. It is only necessary to compare Massys' "Virgin and Child" with his "Crucifixion," No. 715, and Bouts' "Entombment" with his "Virgin and Child with St. Peter and St. Paul," No. 774, to realize how far the linen tempera paintings excel in these things the oil.

Did the painters dash off the former at great speed and pin down an intense feeling, a sudden mood of exaltation, and there leave it? Did the Guilds insist that the oil-painting proper must proceed in a slower and more methodical manner, and thus, unwittingly, put a curb on the artist's imagination? When we compare our two linen pictures with the "Virgin and Child," No. 2595, attributed to Bouts and painted in oil, we find we can mark the exact spot up to which the painter had finished his picture, while the rest was left undone. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the linen picture was painted broadly, the whole picture being painted over at the same time, so that, unlike the oil-painting, no part could be meticulously finished while the rest remained hardly begun.

St. Katherine's face is of a refined and delicate beauty, and her fellow is only less charming. There is some uncertainty as

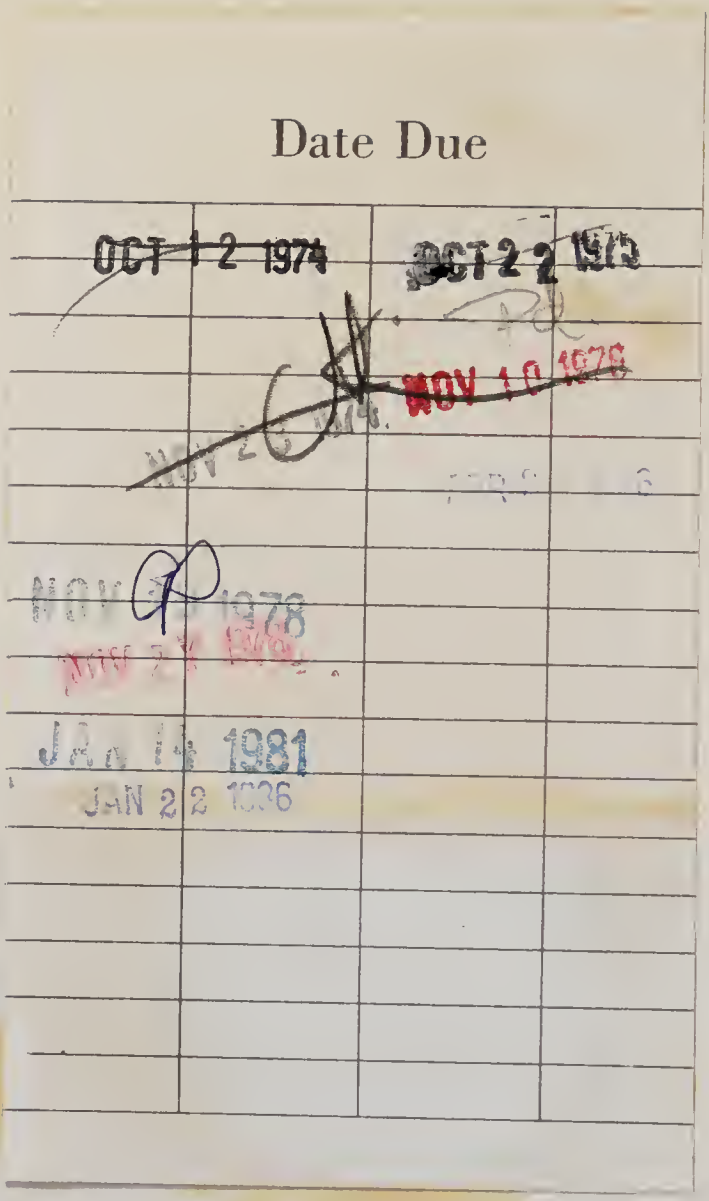
to which saint she is intended to represent, but there can be little doubt but that she is St. Barbara, who, as we have seen, was a great favourite in the Middle Ages. She and St. Margaret frequently pair with St. Katherine in pictures and altar-pieces. The small architectural erection behind, that looks rather like a sentry box, is probably intended to represent her emblem, a tower. The legend of St. Barbara is one of the wildest and most fantastic of all the stories of the saints. When her wicked father[1] " drew his sword to have slain her, the Holy Virgin made her prayer and then marvellously she was taken in a stone and borne into a mountain on which two shepherds kept their sheep, the which saw her fly. And then her father, which pursued after her, went to the shepherds and demanded after her. And that one, which would have preserved her, said that he had not seen her ; but that other, which was an evil man, showed and pointed her with his finger, whom the holy St. Barbara cursed, and anon his sheep became locusts, and he consumed into a stone. And then her father took her by the hair and drew her down from the mountain and shut her fast in prison. At the end of her martyrdom St. Barbara prayed thus : ' Lord Jesu Christ, which hast formed heaven and earth, I beseech thee to grant me thy grace and hear my prayer, that all they that have memory of thy name and my passion, I pray thee that thou wilt not remember their sins, for thou knowest our fragility.' Then came a voice down from heaven, saying : ' Come, my spouse Barbara, and rest in the chamber of God my father, which is in heaven, and I grant to thee that thou hast required of me.' " St. Barbara was, like St. Katherine, a Bride of Christ, and it is no doubt in allusion to this that the Virgin is bestowing upon her a bridal coronet.[2]

[1] " Golden Legend," Temple Classics, Vol. VI, pp. 201–204.

[2] In England the coronet worn by brides was known as a " paste," and was often let on hire by the parish. Parish Accounts of St. Lawrence, Reading, 1557 and 1561.

INDEX

Date Due


OCT 12 1974
OCT 22 1975
NOV 10 1976
NOV 1978
JAN 14 1981
JAN 22 1986

210609