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978-1-108-07888-7 - Treasures of Art in Great Britain: Being an Account of the Chief Collections of Paintings, Drawings, Sculptures, Illuminated Mss., &c. &c.: Volume 3

Edited by: Gustav Friedrich Waagen & Elizabeth Eastlake

Excerpt

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THE
TREASURES OF ART IN GREAT BRITAIN.

LETTER XXIII.

STANSTEAD HOUSE, seat of W. Fuller Maitland, Esq. : A Byzantine picture — Florentine school — Raphael — Early Netherlandish, German, and English schools.—PANSHANGER, seat of Earl Cowper : Two Raphael Madonnas — Fra Bartolommeo — Decline of art in the 16th century — Disadvantages of painters — Miscellaneous masters — Old oak.—COBHAM HALL, seat of the Earl of Darnley : Venetian school. Titian's Europa — Bolognese school — Neapolitan, Netherlandish, French, and English schools.—WICKHAM PARK, seat of Lord Overstone. —ASHBURNHAM PLACE, seat of Lord Ashburnham : Rembrandt.—ARUNDEL CASTLE, seat of the Duke of Norfolk : Miscellaneous pictures.—PETWORTH, seat of Colonel Egremont Wyndham.

PICTURES IN STANSTEAD HOUSE BELONGING TO
W. FULLER MAITLAND, ESQ.

THIS accomplished gentleman, who takes a leading part among the yet small number of those connoisseurs in England whose taste is particularly directed to the art of the 14th and 15th centuries, has succeeded in forming a fine collection of pictures of this class. Among them I recognised some formerly in the possession of my late friend Mr. Ottley. The day I spent with Mr. Maitland, in company with our mutual friend Mr. Bezzi, in the examination of his pictures and the enjoyment of his domestic circle, was one of the most delightful that I passed in England.

As the arrangement of the pictures is only temporary, I shall consider them according to schools and periods.

The BYZANTINE SCHOOL.—The Death of St. Ephraim Syrus : corresponding in its principal features with the engraving in D'Agincourt of the well-known picture in the Museo Cristiano, in Rome. It is somewhat smaller however, many details are missing, and the execution is ruder. It proves that this was a typical representation, doubtless often repeated by the Byzantine

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painters. As the life of this anchorite is the subject in which Byzantine art has displayed its most original inventions, this picture is of no small interest.

FLORENTINE SCHOOL.

TADDEO GADDI.—A small altar-piece with wings. One of the most beautiful specimens preserved to us of this admirable scholar of Giotto. In the centre is the Crucifixion, a rich composition, with the figure of the fainting Virgin particularly noble. On the right wing below is the Nativity; here the sarcophagus-like form of the crib in which the Child lies is remarkable. In the spandrils of the Gothic arch are two figures of prophets grandly conceived, probably Micah and Zechariah; in the compartment above, the crucifixion of Peter. On the left wing below, the Virgin enthroned, with St. John the Evangelist, St. Augustin, St. Peter, and St. Paul; in the spandrils again, two prophets; in the compartment above, the youthfully conceived St. Nicolas throwing a golden apple into the room where the three maidens are sleeping, according to the well-known legend. The grief of the father is admirably expressed. With the exception of the St. Joseph in the Nativity, and the figure of the enthroned Virgin, the picture is in excellent preservation. Below the centre part, in a thick coarse black writing, “Ano Dyi MCCCXXXVIII. Florenzia per . . .” It may be concluded that the word Thaddeum stood in the erased part, as it is thus that he signs himself on a small altar-picture in the Berlin Museum, which in every respect corresponds closely with this.

SPINELLO ARETINO.—Two pictures of the legend of a saint; probably St. Catherine. The saint, with a crown, before her judges, and again praying in prison with four guards, has precisely the character peculiar to this master.

FIESOLE.—1. The Entombment of the Virgin. This picture, which is executed like a miniature, displays in the varied, finely-conceived heads of the apostles, and in the noble countenance of the Virgin, all the beauty and depth of the master's feeling. At the back is an inscription by Lamberto Gori, dated 1789, which states that this picture is mentioned by Vasari as a work by Giotto, in the church “Ogni Santi,” and was subsequently in the hands of the well-known Hugford, who actually had it engraved in his Etruria Pittrice as a work of Giotto. I mention this as a remarkable proof of the scanty critical knowledge of such pictures at that time.

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2. The Virgin in an almond-shaped glory of very pointed form, borne up by six angels to heaven. Below, kneeling by the sarcophagus, St. Francis and St. Bonaventura, painted on a gold ground, and belonging to the earlier time of the master. Both these pictures are from the Ottley collection.

FRA FILIPPO LIPPI.—1. The Adoration of the Kings; a rich circular composition. In the high line of horizon, and in the distinctness and refined artistic feeling of the whole arrangement, may be recognised the influence of Lorenzo Ghiberti's relief of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon on the celebrated doors of the Baptistery at Florence, in which this favourable style of arrangement for large compositions was first applied. Two of the kings are kneeling; the Infant blessing one of them. The variety in the admirably individual heads is very astonishing. The delicate silvery tones of the ruins, which are in the taste of the Renaissance, and a considerable degree of aërial perspective in landscape and sky, are evidences of the later time of the master. From the collection of Mr. Coningham.

2. A predella picture. St. Peter and St. John healing the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the Temple. The scene is very animated, and the surprise of some Pharisees standing by admirably expressed. The rich architecture is in the style of the pictures by Benozzo Gozzoli in the Campo Santo at Pisa.

SANDRO BOTTICELLI.—1. The Virgin and St. John adoring the Infant which is lying on the ground. The heads are of earnest and noble sentiment, and the infant Christ, which, in opposition to the usual heavy brown tone of the other portions, is lightly and transparently coloured, is truer to nature in the forms than is usual with him. A circular picture.

2. The Nativity. A very spirited, and, considering the vehement character of the master, a most remarkable picture. The appearance of our Saviour excites among the angels the highest joy; twelve of them are dancing in a circle in the air; two others are crowning five shepherds with garlands, six other angels are embracing each other; three devils are fleeing away in impotent rage. The execution is, for him, slight, but full of spirit. A long Greek inscription on the upper border contains the master's name and the date 1511, whence it appears that the picture belongs to the latest time of the master. From the Ottley collection.

RAFFAELINO DEL GARBO.—I am inclined to ascribe an altar-

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picture to this painter, who, though a scholar of Filippino Lippi, departed from the style of his master—a style first introduced in Florence by Fra Filippo. The subject is the Virgin with the Child on her lap, and two angels holding garlands of fruit; in the right wing St. Augustin and St. John the Evangelist; in the left wing a saint with a sword, and a crowned female saint, probably St. Catherine. The heads breathe a genuine religious feeling; that of the Virgin has also the expression of a tender melancholy. The blue and red of her dress is very powerfully treated.

COSIMO ROSSELLI.—A large altar-piece. Christ on the Cross, with a splendid crown upon his head, in a black garment richly adorned with jewels, touching the sacramental cup with his sandalled feet. In the air are six angels and eight cherubim and seraphim, all of great beauty. On the right hand, St. John the Baptist and St. Dominic kneeling; on the left, St. Peter and St. Jerome. With the exception of his fresco in S. Ambrogio, I prefer this to all the other works of the master. The heads are very animated and characteristic, the attitudes noble, the drawing very careful, the colouring warm and clear, the impasto of the tempera painting most masterly.

DOMENICO GHIRLANDAJO.—St. Dominic standing under a tree. Of powerful and transparent colouring. Six angels of delicate action and pleasing heads, as well as three saints in circles below, are, to judge from the drawing, the work of some scholar. The same may be said of a picture of the Virgin reading, with the Child blessing the adoring St. John. Her noble and delicate head, and the childlike character of the St. John, are not unworthy of the master; but the empty character of the Child's head and the weak drawing of the hands betray the scholar.

FRANCESCO GRANACCI.—The Virgin enthroned with the Child, and two beautiful adoring angels. A circular picture, which both in feeling and in the modelling of the tender broken colours is of the highest charm.

The OLD SCHOOL OF SIENA is also represented by a picture by SANO DI PIETRO of very dramatic conception, St. Peter restoring Tabitha.

The point of attraction, however, of this collection, is the picture by Raphael representing Christ with the three Disciples on the Mount of Olives, which I formerly saw in the Gabrielli Palace at Rome. This beautiful work, which is intense in feeling, power-

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ful in colour, and most careful in execution, is proved by Passavant to be the same mentioned by Vasari as having been executed for Guidobaldo di Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, in 1504. I am inclined, however, to think that Raphael intrusted the execution of the subordinate portions, such as Judas with his troop, and the landscape, to his fellow-pupil, Lo Spagna, whose somewhat cool tones and bright general effect I recognise. Nor is there anything strange in this, for, in the same way as several of Perugino's pictures show the co-operation of several of his scholars, so we may conclude that two fellow-students so closely allied as Raphael and Lo Spagna may well have worked together on the same picture. From Mr. Coningham's collection.

FRANCIABIGIO.—To this painter, who was first the friend and later the rival of Andrea del Sarto, I am inclined to attribute two pictures representing the parable of the Vineyard, here assigned to Andrea del Sarto himself. The proportions have not the noble and slender character of Andrea, but rather the clumsy and shorter forms of Franciabigio. The reddish and heavy tone is also a characteristic of this latter. The conception is very animated.

EARLY NETHERLANDISH SCHOOL.

The Virgin standing with the Child on her arm; above, two angels holding a crown; below, two angels playing on musical instruments. A picture of about four feet square, and obviously by a scholar of the Van Eycks, though I am not prepared to attribute it to Hugo van der Goes, whose name it here bears. The Virgin is very noble, but, in the attempt to make the Child serious in expression, a look of ill-humour has been given. The landscape background is of delicate tone, and the effect of the whole of singular transparency and daylight freshness.

HIERONYMUS BOSCH.—St. John in profile. The portrait of a Netherlandish physiognomy of very insipid character is so little in unison even with the lowest conception of the head of the inspired Evangelist, as to have the appearance rather of a deliberate parody. He is represented looking upwards at the vision of the Virgin and Child, to which an angel is drawing his attention. In front, to the right, is an eagle; to the left, one of Bosch's well-known demons, with a good natured expression, and spectacles on his nose. The background consists of an extensive landscape and the sea. Inscribed "Hieronymus b" Purchased in Rome.

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LUCAS VAN LEYDEN.—The Virgin standing with the Child on her arm, who is holding a rosary. An early picture of this scarce master, and treated in his somewhat reddish tones. Most carefully carried out, especially in the richly wooded landscape of the background.

An admirable portrait of a young man in brown dress and cap, with local yellow flesh-tones and brownish shadows, is here attributed to Holbein. It approaches, however, very near to Lucas van Leyden, and is perhaps by the hand of that master in his later period.

PATENIER.—Scenes from the legend of a canonized bishop; different individuals are pointing upwards to some invisible object. A very careful work.

SCHOREEL.—Portrait of an old woman; of masterly execution and animation, and of the warmest flesh-tones. Judging from the only authenticated portraits by Schoreel, in the Hôtel de Ville at Utrecht, I am inclined to attribute the picture to that rare master.

SIR ANTHONY MORE.—The portrait of the Dr. Butts introduced into Shakspeare's Henry VIII. Also a portrait of his wife. Two pictures of admirable truth, and as remarkable for the care of the execution as they are for transparency and warmth of colouring. As Dr. Butts appears here as an old man with white hair, these works may be attributed to Sir Anthony's earlier time, when he retained the manner of his master Schoreel.

PETER NEEFS.—Interior of a church. Of great transparency and precision of execution. Of the middle time of the master, and inscribed.

GERMAN SCHOOL.

HOLBEIN.—Portrait of a young man in a black furred coat, weighing gold. The ground green, with a red stripe. This admirable picture exhibits the brownish flesh-tones of his earlier period. The hands are particularly careful. The effect of the whole is full, warm, and harmonious.

The Virgin nursing the Child. A most tender picture by the Cologne master who painted the Death of the Virgin in the Gallery at Munich—there most erroneously denominated a Schoreel. The delicate modelling of the silvery tones of the flesh, the soft grey colour in the drapery of the Virgin, closely recall Quentin Matsys, and furnish further proof that this excellent painter must have studied under that master.

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ENGLISH SCHOOL.

WILSON.—An English landscape, with the remains of a volcanic crater, is very interesting.

SIR CHARLES EASTLAKE.—Eight studies of classical localities and monuments in Greece; for instance, Corinth, the Erechtheum, &c.: uniting a tasteful and true conception with admirable keeping and a free and light treatment.

PANSHANGER, SEAT OF EARL COWPER.

In July, 1835, I arrived at Hertford on my way to Panshanger. Being favoured by the finest weather, I set out on foot, with a guide, for this seat of the Earl of Cowper, who, as I mentioned in page 17 of my second letter, has a very choice collection, consisting chiefly of Italian pictures, most of which were purchased by the grandfather of the present Earl, when ambassador at Florence. The rather hilly ground, richly wooded, affords an agreeable diversity of views. The town of Hertford lies very picturesquely between hills of agreeable forms; and here and there I saw, at a distance, beautiful country-seats, situated on eminences, to which my attendant drew my attention, telling me the names of the owners. After walking through a part of the fine park, I reached the mansion, and being provided, by the kind intervention of the Duke of Sutherland, with a letter from Lady Cowper to the housekeeper, all the rooms containing pictures were opened to me, and I was then left to myself.

The coolness of these fine apartments, in which the pictures are arranged with much taste, was very refreshing after my hot walk. The drawing-room, especially, is one of those apartments which not only give great pleasure by their size and elegance, but also afford the most elevated gratification to the mind by works of art of the noblest kind. This splendid apartment receives light from three skylights, and from large windows at one of the ends; while the paintings of the Italian school are well relieved by the crimson silk hangings. I cannot refrain from again praising the refined taste of the English for thus adorning the rooms they daily occupy, by which means they enjoy, from their youth upward, the silent and slow but sure influence of works of art. I passed here six happy hours in quiet solitude. The silence was

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interrupted only by the humming of innumerable bees round the flowers which grew in the greatest luxuriance beneath the windows. It is only when thus left alone that such works of art gradually unfold all their peculiar beauties. But when, as I have too often experienced in England, an impatient housekeeper is perpetually sounding the note of departure by the rattle of her keys, no work of art can be viewed with that tranquillity of mind which alone ensures its thorough appreciation.

The historical painters of the time of Raphael attained a perfection with which no others can bear a comparison. This arose from the happy balance of all the qualities required in a work of art. Retaining the high requisites which characterised their predecessors—genuine enthusiasm for the spirit of the subject, symmetrical arrangement, and a feeling for a faithful and accurate execution of the details—they added to these elements a complete mastery over the materials of art and the means of expressing their ideas. The old meagreness and stiffness were succeeded by a natural fulness, freedom, ease, and grace; the laws of linear and aerial perspective so far observed, that every object is correctly foreshortened, rounded, and duly united with its ground; by which the general keeping, the quality in which the older pictures were most deficient, is attained. In such subjects as required symmetrical arrangement, the old hardness and formality are no longer apparent; the artifice being concealed by contrasts and alternations of opposing masses. Lastly, they have that advantage over all the works of later periods, that the mastery attained in all these points is entirely unstudied in its application, serving only to express the subject with the utmost truth, clearness, and beauty. The painters of the succeeding epochs, on the contrary, frequently make an ambitious display of this mastery; so that the subject before them is no longer the end, but merely a means for exhibiting their skill in drawing, chiaroscuro, and general keeping. The striking effects which they thus produce have rendered their works much greater favourites in England, generally speaking, than those of the time of Raphael, in which the decision which characterises the forms is looked upon as hardness. I will now endeavour to describe the finest works in this collection.

RAPHAEL.—1. The Virgin, seated on a stone bench, looking thoughtfully out of the picture, and holding the Child with her

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left hand. The attitude of the Child, which, turning its head round, takes hold of its mother's neck, may be placed between that of the Madonna del Granduca, where it sits quietly on its mother's arm, and that of the Tempi Madonna, where she presses it fondly to her bosom. In other respects, also, this picture may be placed between these two. Though more slightly handled, it agrees with the former in the brilliancy and lightness of the general tone. The dreamlike and highly interesting expression of the Virgin likewise recalls the feeling of Perugino, while the forms, especially of the eyes, with the arched lids, approach the greater beauty and purity which we find in the Tempi Madonna, and in the Canigiani Madonna at Munich. The hands of the Virgin are beautifully formed. In the drapery, again, we find the glowing red of the under garment, and the dark blue of the mantle, with the green lining peculiar to Perugino. The landscape is of a brownish green in the middle-ground, and of a pale blue tone in the distance. This is probably the oldest specimen of the lighter mode of treatment with glazings, which Raphael had adopted from Fra Bartolommeo. The figures are half the size of life; the Virgin to the knees. On panel, about 2 ft. 3 in. high, 1 ft. 6 in. wide. The preservation is excellent.

2. The Virgin is looking with maternal tenderness at the Child, who, seated on a cushion on her knee, and taking hold of her bosom with the left hand, looks out of the picture with infantine joy. The background consists of a blue sky. No other picture by Raphael approaches so nearly to the Madonna from the Casa Colonna, and now in the Museum at Berlin. In both, the same feeling for beauty and gracefulness of attitude are combined with masterly freedom and spirited handling. Both pictures are evidently taken from the same model, and both have a slight tendency to affectation. If this censure be applicable only to the head of the Virgin in the Colonna Raphael, in this picture it regards only the head of the Child, though not by any means to the degree which the otherwise excellent representation in Passavant's book would lead us to suppose. The soft expression in the eyes (the *ὄρασις* of the ancients), which is chiefly produced by the strong shadows under the lower eyelids, is particularly remarkable. The Virgin, on the contrary, recalls in purity and elevation of expression the Canigiani Madonna, and the Madonna with the Palm in the Bridgewater Gallery. If the feeling is

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perhaps less intense, the forms are more grandly conceived. This lovely picture, which, with the exception of numerous cracks and the injured state of the left hand of the Virgin, is in excellent preservation, differs from the Colonna Raphael by a far more solid impasto, a more careful modelling, and greater depth of the shadows, as well as by a more powerful, though much less clear and brilliant general tone. The date MDVIII. on the hem of the stomacher, which is partly effaced, indicates the time when the picture was painted, and shows the eminence which Raphael had in some respects attained, shortly before the commencement of his grand career at Rome, on which he entered in the course of the same year. For it is to be observed that Raphael, during his Florentine period (from 1505 to 1508), had studiously kept two objects in view. In pictures like the preceding, and that from the Colonna Palace, he gave himself wholly up to the charm of graceful motives, caught from nature and fixed in his fancy, so that no strictly religious conception is to be sought in them. On the other hand, a religious style of conception, united with an accurate study of nature in the details, decidedly predominates in another series of pictures, of which I will mention here only the Madonna del Granduca, and the Entombment in the Borghese Palace. Finally, the blending of the two tendencies is admirably seen in his first frescoes at Rome, the four allegorical figures of Theology, Poetry, Philosophy, and Jurisprudence, as well as in the *Disputa*.

FRA BARTOLOMMEO.—This is the most beautiful picture that I am acquainted with by this friend of Raphael. The infant Christ, seated on his mother's lap, has just given the Cross to the little St. John, who is standing by. The Virgin, in whose delicate oval face and genuine virgin expression the influence of Leonardo da Vinci is evident, looks upon St. John with tender compassion, while Christ regards him with an expression of sorrow, as if both knew the sufferings which the Baptist took up with this Cross. In the averted profile of St. John, too, the expression is of a painful kind; yet his left hand pointing to his breast indicates how willingly he receives the proffered Cross. This style of conception is strongly indicative of the enthusiastic melancholy tone of the master's mind. Joseph is seated on the left hand of the Virgin. The background is a beautiful landscape, with a bright horizon and a palm-tree. The singular grace in the leading lines of the