

MATTERS of ART

Some Modern Paintings and Some Old Prints.

This is the last week of the Spring Academy, and we do not hear of any exhibition to follow it on the same scale. There are still sales of some importance to be recorded, however, and the one-man show continues to command attention. Current affairs in the auction room take a fairly wide sweep. The show which now fills practically every square foot of space at the American Art Galleries, is made up of paintings and other objects from some six or seven different collections. One of these was formed by Mr. Walter Manchester and Miss Ida M. Manchester, in London, but has more recently been preserved by them in California. The other collections are those of Stanley P. Gifford, Charles and Sue M. Clark, the late Victor Newcomb and several others. They include things as

mind's eye the finest picture that Frenchman ever painted, his picture of St. Francis of Assisi, taking from his litter a last look upon the little hill town he loved so well. Something of the very genius of Italy is preserved in the famous painting to which we refer, and it is there that we feel the tie between Mr. Crowninshield and his distinguished teacher of long ago. All his life this high-minded American artist has kindled to the inspiration that lies in the Italian scene. The more realistic, more prosaic movements of his time have left him untouched. His has ever been a serious and reflective outlook upon life and art. In easel pictures and mural decorations, without paying any routine tribute to academic conventions, he has yet preserved the serenity, the well pondered, orderly quality which we associate with the classical ideal. He has cared for that simple beauty of line which is characteristic of Rome, both in nature and in the works of man. He knows how to make a swift sketch, but we venture the surmise that he has never made even the most spontaneous study without getting into it the unity of a well balanced picture. We have felt this always, and we feel it again in the presence of his latest works.

Most of these were painted during the two years of his stay in Rome as director of the American Academy. Some of the others date from his subsequent holiday in Sicily. A few of the canvases here were done in Stockbridge not long before he went to take up his duties at the Academy, and among them there are one or two pieces, notably the bold study of trees in dark tones (No. 7), which illustrate his method and his spirit at their best. But it is with his Italian motives, first and last, that he takes us captive. He does so through certain solid technical merits and through subtler processes. As a craftsman Mr. Crowninshield excels in composition. His tone might be finer in quality, finer and more transparent. There are passages, as in the rosy glow of his "Sunrise on Etna," in which, as a colorist, he lacks the right tenderness and beauty. But in the workmanlike putting of his picture together he uses an easy and conclusive authority which excites our full admiration. These are the paintings of an artist who knows what he is about, whose choice of a theme is wonderfully felicitous, and whose sense of design is so sure that there is never a loose end about anything he does. Neither, by the same token, is there anything pedantic or crassly immobile about his conceptions. Though they fill a given space so justly, they are not forced into it. On the contrary, Mr. Crowninshield's compositions are, in essence, no less spontaneous than well poised. Witness, for example, a water color like the "St. Peter's from the Palatine," or an oil like "The Studio Wall, Villa Mirafiore." Along with the deftly developed pictorial note you get the broad, free spirit of the artist's subject. It is that genius of Italy to which we have already referred that is always pervading his work, enriching it with the life of landscape and its charm.

The spell of Rome is never more complex than in its great gardens. At the Villa Mirafiore Mr. Crowninshield has had before him both the tangle of the wildwood and the formal, even monumental, simplicity of hedge and cypress. And in some subtle, haunting fashion, which is, indeed, beyond definition, the grandiose strain lurks everywhere, the beautiful strain which comes from space, from the poet's "green silence" and from the pressure of intangible but irresistible memories. One's impression in Rome is never visual alone. It is imaginative, intellectual, besides. For its proper expression it needs precisely the faculty of design in which Mr. Crowninshield is so rich. He has put some light things into his work, the



THE TRAVELLER.
(From the woodcut by Hans Burgkmair)

diverse as bronzes by Barye, paintings by Boldini and Gilbert Stuart, prints, lacquers and autographs. This mass of material will be sold this week, beginning to-morrow afternoon. The Anderson Galleries are similarly crowded with miscellaneous objects. Miss C. A. Skinner and Judge E. A. Lauer have sent to be sold a number of paintings, bronzes, Oriental rugs and so on. There is a collection of Chinese and Japanese teapots formed many years ago by Stuart Eldridge, there are Chinese weapons belonging to Edward Runge, Japanese prints belonging to George J. Smith and relics of Washington and Napoleon from the collection of W. L. Washington. It will take three days, afternoons and evenings, beginning on Wednesday, to dispose of these five collections.

Mr. Crowninshield's Recent Italian Studies.

In a brief preface to the catalogue of Mr. Frederic Crowninshield's exhibition at the Folsom Gallery it is recalled that when as a young man he went abroad to study, one of his masters was Benouville, with whom he worked in Rome. Whether that artist formed his technique or not we do not know. He studied also in Paris, under Cabanel and Couture. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable enough to ally his art with that of Benouville in one respect at least, as we see again in the



CYPRESSES, VILLA MASSIMO.
(From the painting by Frederic Crowninshield.)



HIGHWAY OF COMBES-LA-VILLE.
(From the painting by Boldini.)

delicate loveliness of foliage, the play of the sun, the quiet appeal of an antique statue turned a shade romantic by the touch of time and the sylvan softness of his background. But most of all we recognize in this exhibition the sterling force of a man faithfully interpreting the grave dignity of Rome, preserving its noble atmosphere, and thereby giving us more than a passing pleasure.

Paintings by Henry O. Tanner and Arthur W. Dow.

The last time that Mr. Henry O. Tanner appeared in a New York exhibition there was in his pictures a good deal of the "brown sauce" which savors more of a Parisian studio than of life observed at close quarters. His religious subjects were enveloped in a queer penumbra, which was effective in its



WILLIBALD PIRCKHEIMER'S BOOK PLATE.
(From the woodcut by Durer.)

way, but not, on the whole, very satisfying. Now all that is changed, and in his show at the Knoedler Gallery of Moorish and French subjects he demonstrates that he can exploit to some advantage an infinitely lighter key. Here he is all for pure white tones, or delicate greens and piercing reds. The result is capital and should convince Mr. Tanner that his old method is best left utterly behind him. The first picture in his catalogue, and, as it happens, the last, would alone win him a cordial welcome. The former, "Entry to Ciudadel," is a really delightful bit of color, remarkable, too, for its sincere, straightforward treatment of a romantically picturesque theme. The other picture to which we refer, the "Woman of Bethelhem," is a charming impression of a graceful figure, and in color has a freshness and a quality which bring the eye back to the canvas again and again. The large figure pieces shown, very serious in aim, are not, to tell the truth, particularly impressive. It is in his more informal, casual notes, his glimpses of landscape and of Moorish towns, that Mr. Turner gives the best account of himself.

The pictures of the Grand Canyon of Arizona which Mr. Arthur Wesley Dow has at the Montross Gallery leave a rather mixed impression. Carefully studied and at a due distance they are more interesting than they at first promise to be, but in the long run the observer is still somewhat disconcerted by the too methodical manner in which the artist has expressed his colossal strata of tone. The bald horizontal regularity of these masses doubtless invites a certain adherence to the linear effects which they include, but really to get such stupendous layers into a painted picture requires, one would say, a style broader and more synthetic than is Mr. Dow's. He seems merely decorative, and to that extent almost feeble, dwelling with a niggling touch upon one of the grandest of all the primeval subjects left in the world. Is he, when all is said, to be blamed for painting the Grand Canyon piece by piece, and for failing to fuse into beautiful artistic schemes the blinding masses of color it reveals? The fact is that it is hard to see how any one could reduce that overwhelming pageant to terms of paint. Mr. Dow's efforts leave us cold, but perhaps they are as successful as could be expected.

Early Woodcuts at the Grolier Club.

The very form and movement of a bygone social period may be observed in the exhibition of old woodcuts which is now open at the Grolier Club. It is an exhibition nominally appealing more to the collector and the student of prints than to anybody else, but as a matter of fact it has a broadly human significance and should interest the layman quite as much as the trained connoisseur. Amateurs of prints are wont to consider their treasures from a highly specialized point of view.

They are more particularly concerned with the brilliance of an impression, its rarity or its relation to the sequence of an artist's productions. Well, some of the finest things in the history of prints are quite legitimately to be dealt with in this more or less technical way, but there are reasons why such examples as those now at the Grolier Club are to be looked at with a simpler appreciation. They were not made primarily for the collector. They were made just for men and women, just for the dissemination of ideas.

To grasp this fact is to expel at a stroke all that is merely esoteric and dry in a collection of early wood engravings. The spectator who goes to the Grolier Club as he would go, say, to the exhibition of Mr. Morgan's pictures at the Metropolitan Museum will not necessarily be happy. In fact, he might risk being bored, for these prints were not devised to play the part of the picture in the ordinary sense, to exist as things of beauty in and for themselves. Far more, even, than an altar piece by Raphael, they were produced to rouse emotion, to stimulate religious zeal. We speak, of course, of the prevailing motive. The early masters engraved secular subjects in great number and they were prodigiously active, too, in the field of portraiture. But they were essentially the popularizers of thought, and more especially of religious thought, and if this was the case anywhere it was the case among the Germans, who have most of the space in the present exhibition. It is interesting to follow this devotional trait through the well arranged show. Among the pieces which open the latter are two or three leaves from a fifteenth century French Book of Hours, examples of an exquisitely decorative typographical mode, but this real stuff of the collection we meet when we approach the tragic passion of Cranach and Durer. These men and their followers were types of a profound moral movement, and artists though they were, they remained in the closest possible contact with the sympathies of the people about them. There is nothing more characteristic here than the "Christ before Calaphas" of Cranach. The garlands above the judge's seat point to a certain decorative instinct in the designer, but his main point is plainly dramatic; his purpose is above all to drive home a great lesson. To do this he would employ the grandeur of his theme not by any draft upon the best style, but through the simplest and most direct

his temperament. Cranach had a good deal of prose in his composition. In his various "Martyrdoms," for example, he discloses a fairly Spanish grimness, which might, perhaps, be said to pass into a heavy handed brutality. Pass from him to an engraver like Hans



ST. JOHN IN PATMOS.
(From the woodcut by Knoblouch.)

Wechtlin, whose "Alcon Killing the Serpent" is one of the most charming things in the show, and you see how a type more interested in the play of light and shade could achieve a fairly romantic quality. In the numerous mas-

in their generation. Whether they illustrated the Scriptures or dipped, as they were often tempted to dip, into the pagan mythology, the vividness of their dream as they realized the latter was conditioned upon their fidelity to the facts of the actual visible world. They saw nature not as a source of formal background, but as a place, as a familiar region of tangible trees and stones. These truths they expressed with a kind of artless simplicity and the result was a delightful quaintness. But the quaintness never deprives them of one whit of their force. Those towering roofs with which they loved to break the sky line may seem to us, considered by themselves, a shade too scenic, a shade too suggestive of theatrical artifice, but the print that contains them is, after all, as a rule, a pretty well-balanced affair; and in its whole spirit it breathes not of the theatre but of the living old German world, in which men followed day by day a simple religious faith.

How far did beauty, the purely aesthetic impulse, enter into the transactions of the wood engravers? Sensuous beauty, as it was understood by the masters of classical antiquity and by those of the Italian Renaissance, they would appear to have known nothing about at all, though Durer, Altdorfer and Baldung Grun had glimpses of the sheer loveliness that abounds in Southern art. In the main theirs was the beauty that resides in truth and the beauty—of a more intellectual nature—that belongs to design. There is much effective composition to be noted in these old prints, though again we have to note the presence of

major men in the school, which is to say that there are quantities of wood cuts in the exhibition possessing no transcendent technical merits. But the leaders worked linear miracles, and even the lesser figures, working with scarce a tittle of their magic, still caught something of their dignified simplicity. The wholesome, stimulating lesson of this whole collection is a lesson of bold, honest workmanship, devoted, as we cannot too frequently



JACOB MEDITATING ON JOSEPH'S DREAM.
(From the woodcut by Aldegrever.)

reiterate, to the fundamental interests of ordinary human beings. The point comes out not only in the independent prints which have chiefly provoked the foregoing remarks, but in the book illustrations which are also put before us at the Grolier Club. Both in their portraits and in their designs for historical, topographical and more inventive episodes the illustrators had a markedly realistic way with them and used that same straightforward technique which we have seen in their other works. There are many volumes of all kinds at the Grolier, many more than we can traverse in detail in this place. They richly extend the interest of the show and not only enlarge our view of the woodcut as a woodcut but invite our attention to the taste and skill with which artist and printer collaborated. The harmony desired upon such an occasion was better secured in France and Italy than in Germany, and we are glad that the present exhibition, given so largely as it is to the North, nevertheless includes some noble books from Venetian and other presses.

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THE VILLAGE FAIR.
(From the woodcut by Hans Sebald Beham.)

of processes. He seeks to humanize his subject, to make it vivid to the most ignorant peasant, and so intimate, so familiar, is his touch that it even gives us in the foreground a couple of dogs fighting as though in the most everyday scene out of German life. It is well to keep this artless tone of Cranach's in mind throughout the show.

Style and Emotion in the German School.

The strange Gothic imagination of the German School, fruitful of effects of the most luxuriant imagery, mystical, and, indeed, sometimes a little more than obscure, nevertheless almost invariably preserve what we can only describe as practicable links with German life. The artist might let his fancy soar, but he addressed himself to his public in terms that remained curiously realistic. The individual colored his style, to be sure, according to

terpieces of Durer one is confronted by nobler forms and a spirit altogether finer and more grandly austere than that of Cranach. In Altdorfer we have one of the rare poets of wood engraving, a man with a genius for landscape, who got something of the subtle beauty of nature into everything that he did. Hans Baldung Grun shows us still another facet of the art. He is a personality, with a metaphysical streak in him, and he is, besides, a connoisseur of form and a portentous draftsman. Of Hans Sebald Beham one is moved to say simply that he had charm. So from beginning to end one savors the distinguishing quality of this or that master. But what binds them all together is that sincere poignant emotion at which we have already glanced, and the realistic tendency which kept them all speaking the same vigorous language, easily understood of all men

When you have apprehended what the masters have to say and pause upon their way of saying it, it is in their linear strength that you recognize their genius. There were minor as well as