

VALUABLE PAINTINGS

from the ROERICH MUSEUM

COLLECTION

*

ON EXHIBITION *from* MARCH 22
UNRESTRICTED SALE MARCH 27 *and* 28
AMERICAN ART ASSOCIATION
ANDERSON GALLERIES • INC
30 EAST 57TH STREET • NEW YORK • 1930

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BY FRANK JEWETT MATHER, JR.

*I*NSPIRED by the aesthetic principles and artistic activity of Nicholas Roerich, the genius of international fame, the Roerich Museum, located at 310 Riverside Drive, New York City, together with its affiliated institutions, has launched upon a great cultural program which embraces all the arts and related sciences.

Among its many activities the Roerich Museum started to build up a gallery of old masters. Greater expansion of its educational plans has influenced the Museum to dispose of part of its collection for an Educational Fund. This puts at the disposal of museums, private collectors, and dealers a remarkable collection of nearly two hundred items. These pictures were bought by connoisseurs and artists for the pleasure and study of professional students of art, and this origin is reflected in an unusually high quality, which extends even to the relatively unimportant numbers. For example, I feel that only an artist would have selected that oddly enchanting triptych in which the naïve yet expressive forms are invested with an extraordinary refinement of color.

It is my pleasant task merely to signalize a few of the more important pictures, while I shall feel at liberty also to notice a few others which, while technically less important, seem to me delightful. The first place is clearly due to Greco's *Madonna and St. Anne*, a picture which reveals him at the height of his power and also in his most reasonable mood,—a rare combination in a none too reasonable genius. It is plainly either his excerpt from or his study for the famous picture in

the Prado. Of equal importance and of far greater rarity is the *Madonna and Child* by Simone Martini, by all means the most important Sieneſe picture that has come in the American auction market. The Madonna is the ſiſter of the lovely Virgin Mary of the Palazzo Venezia and muſt be dated about the ſame time, before 1320, at the moment of Simone's artistic coming of age.

Again well worthy of notice is the big ikon representing a very familiar type, the *Madonna with the Frightened Child*, but a genuine Balkan piece of early date and of monumental ſeverity of technique. The two panels of paired ſaints by Lorenzo Veneziano are chiefly notable for their decorative ſplendor. They have the minor merit of being by one of the rareſt Italian maſters and the pioneer of Gothic painting in Venice. The tendereſs of the Sieneſe School towards the end of the XIV century is charmingly exemplified in a *Saint Catherine* by Bartolodi Fredi. There is a fine echo of the great Giambellino's auſtere vein in the ſigned panel by Palmezzano representing St. Jerome and St. Francis in a craggy wilderneſs. The High Renaiſſance picture which ſtrikes me as moſt important is Sodoma's *Chriſt at the Column*, though the Venetian portrait group, called *Venus and Cupid* and aſcribed to Paolo Veroneſe, is moſt ſumptuouſly painted and in the fineſt technical tradition of the full-blown Venetian School.

But the northern paintings of a primitive or transitional ſort conſtitute the moſt coherent and impressive group. Here everything yields in merely archaeological ſignificance to the fine early copy of Roger van der Weyden's *Deſcent from the Croſs*. It is a creation which exiſts only in copies that have been partially liſted by Dr. Friedlander. And, in default of an original which is never likely to turn up, this expreſſive

souvenir of the great Master of Tournai is peculiarly desirable for a Museum. Unquestionably the rarest of the Northern series is the little *Ecce Homo* by that Delft "Master of the Virgin among Virgins" in whom Dr. Friedlander recognizes the master of Jerome Bosch. Nothing more demurely yet seriously grotesque, more complete in color and characterization, or more perfect in condition can be imagined. A good second in interest is the admirable *Agony in the Garden* by the pioneer landscapist of Antwerp, Joachim Patinir. One would like to know who contributed the uncommonly strong and expressive figures. It is the only fine Patinir I have ever seen in the New York auction market. Though the *Epiphany* is modestly and correctly offered as a school piece of Gerard David, it has much of the gravity and sweetness of its prototype in the Brussels Gallery. Singularly attractive to me is the *Madonna with Two Female Saints* which, retaining much of the idealistic tradition of Memling, shows in the facial types that sophisticated and mannered grace which at Antwerp followed the reign of Matsys. Conceptually of the decadence, it has the qualities of its defects in a most fastidious workmanship.

Those Flemish and Dutch painters who surrendered to the spell of Italy have often not received the favor they merit, yet the museums at least must reckon with them; and they will, when at their best, make their way eventually with discriminating collectors. We have them at their best in Jan Matsys' highly mannered, yet to me, fascinating *Bathsheba*, in Scorel's *Isaac and Jacob*, and in the strangely noble *Pietà* by Aertzen in which the assimilation of Dutch and Italian elements is singularly successful.

The Early German group is small but it includes one tremendous

picture in Altdorfer's *Crucifixion*. It is a purely mystical conception, the evening hour evoking the vision of the most moving of all evenings. Here the often latent romanticism of this German primitive finds unhampered expression. There are various attractive minor examples. I can mention only the very early and vigorous panel of a Martyrdom [I think the martyr is Thomas à Becket] which seems to me one of the very first expressions of the rare Danube school. The developed Flemish style is scantily represented, but there are rare items, true collector's pieces, in oil sketches of Rubens and Van Dyck.

The seventeenth century school of Holland offers many desirable items. I pick almost at random a Pieter Codde which has almost the authority of a Terborch, a brilliant conversation piece by Dirck Hals from the Stroganoff Collection, a very luminous and grandly composed harbor scene by Jan van Goyen, a radiant little Nicholas Berchem, and a sterling David Teniers picture, chiefly of landscape interest. By all means the most curious picture in this group is *The Nuptial Prayer* by Jan Steen, in which the habitual wag shows himself a sentimental pietist. He was after all a devout Roman Catholic among Calvinists, and we have in this famous and much commented picture a very instructive document of the artist's mentality.

Considerations of space and a lesser familiarity with the periods prevent me from continuing this survey into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Here too, the well-informed amateur will find much to his purpose.

CATALOG, CONTAINING OVER ONE HUNDRED
HALF TONE REPRODUCTIONS SENT ON REQUEST



IN HOC MONUMENTO REQUIESCIT
MAGNUS PRINCEPS BRITANNIAE
RICHARDUS PRIMUS



MADONNA AND CHILD

Simone Martini

OUR LORD IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

Joachim Patinir





THE HOLY FAMILY WITH SAINTS

Herri Met de Bles

TOBIAS AND SARAH

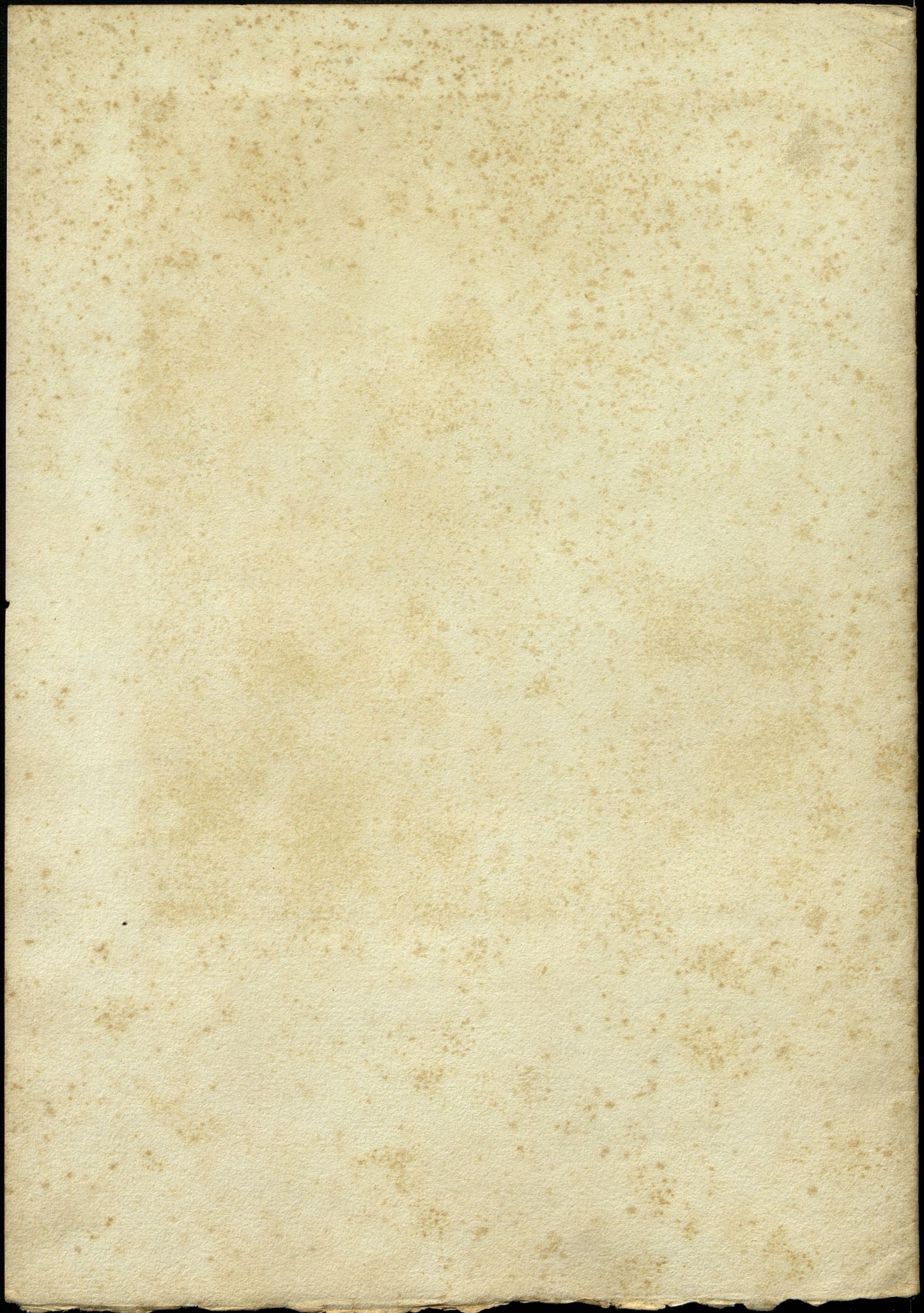
Jan Steen





VIRGIN MOTHER AND ST. ANNE

El Greco



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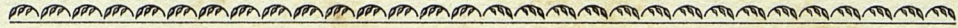
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Again well worthy of notice is the big ikon representing a very familiar type, the *Madonna with the Frightened Child*, but a genuine Balkan piece of early date and of monumental severity of technique. The two panels of paired saints by Lorenzo Veneziano are chiefly notable for their decorative splendor. They have the minor merit of being by one of the rarest Italian masters and the pioneer of Gothic painting in Venice. The tenderness of the Sienese School towards the end of the XIV century is charmingly exemplified in a *Saint Catherine* by Bartolodi Fredi. There is a fine echo of the great Giambellino's austere vein in the signed panel by Palmezzano representing St. Jerome and St. Francis in a craggy wilderness. The High Renaissance picture which strikes me as most important is Sodoma's *Christ at the Column*, though the Venetian portrait group, called *Venus and Cupid* and ascribed to Paolo Veronese, is most sumptuously painted and in the finest technical tradition of the full-blown Venetian School.

But the northern paintings of a primitive or transitional sort constitute the most coherent and impressive group. Here everything yields in merely archaeological significance to the fine early copy of Roger van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross*. It is a creation which exists only in copies that have been partially listed by Dr. Friedlander. And, in default of an original which is never likely to turn up, this expressive

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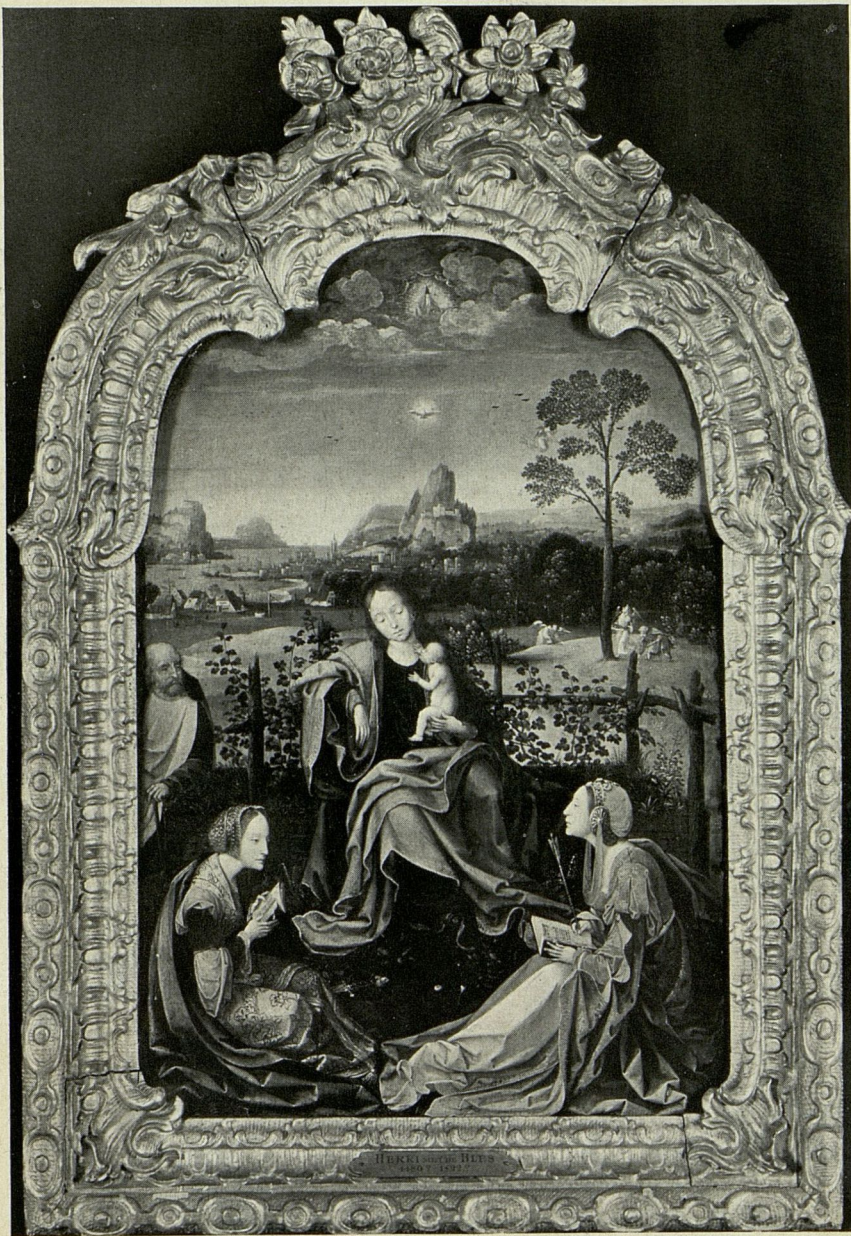
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