

MATTERS OF ART

The Museum Veronese — Books for Lovers of Painting and Prints.

The news we have recently printed, that the Metropolitan Museum has purchased one of the masterpieces of Veronese, the "Mars and Venus Bound by Love," carries with it a double gratification. The picture will be a source of joy and pride. Furthermore, its acquisition reminds us that, while most of the old Italian masters are irrevocably fixed in their places abroad, now and then one of the most resplendent of them may still be brought to America. It is inspiring to have it thus demonstrated, too, that when a rare opportunity of this sort is offered our museum has not only the resources but the courage whereby to take advantage of it. Mr. Robinson's appointment to the full directorship of the institution in Central Park could not have been more happily marked than by the purchase of this famous canvas.

Its long sojourn in the collection of Lord Wimborne has already been noted in The Tribune, as well as its sale to Mr. Asher Wertheimer, from whom it has now passed to our own possession. We have also cited the testimony of Mr. Claude Phillips to the perfect preservation of the work. The accompanying reproduction gives some idea of the "unimpaired freshness" of which the English critic speaks, and even of the radiant color which characterizes the picture. Even from a monotone one may divine its glowing tints, and especially the breadth and purity of that color. More obvious, of course, is the majestic opulence of the Venetian master's form and his fusion of stateliness with a certain intimate quality. The types here portrayed are very familiar among his productions. You find the self-same Venus and the self-same Mars over and over again in his pictures and decorations, sacred or profane. He loved to paint the sumptuous blond beauties of his time, and for the black bearded, curly haired Venetian noble he had the same admiration. You think first of their sensuous grace as you contemplate them in the long procession of his pictures. But though he was faithful to these types he never confined them within the narrow limits of a formula of design. In each new scheme they take on a new beauty, in each case they are extraordinarily vitalized, and, into the bargain, adjusted to a fresh web of line, form and color. An ardent painter of the great mundane spectacle of Venice, this master was also, and above everything else, a decorative genius. The museum painting is one of the noblest of his "arrangements," a work of positively architectural balance, and saturated, too, in the charm of the invented scene, the episode crystallized at just the right poetical moment. The old gods have left us, but their glamour remains. Veronese re-creates for us the golden beauty of the pagan mythology, and does it not only, as we have said, poetically, but with that curious humanizing touch which was his birthright as a sharer in the Venetian joy of life. It is impossible to exaggerate our good fortune in acquiring this magnificent work.

GREAT MASTERS OF LANDSCAPE PAINTING.

The galleries are steadily filling at this time with things of interest to the student of art. So, likewise, are the bookshops, and we appropriately consider to-day a number of recent publications. Taking a leading place among them is a luxurious folio on "Great Masters of Landscape Painting" (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company), translated from the French of M. Emile Michel, and embellished with nearly two hundred reproductions, some forty of which are photogravures of unusual excellence. The subject should have a rather special interest for American readers. Our own landscape school has conquered for itself a peculiarly honorable



MARS AND VENUS BOUND BY LOVE.
(From the painting by Paolo Veronese.)

place in modern art. For that very reason, by the way, it is disappointing and very surprising that M. Michel should have nothing whatever to say about it, but he might retort that he did not set out to go beyond the limits of the European schools, save for one excursion on Turner and his countrymen. Moreover, it would be ungracious to dwell upon the omission in question, since the schools actually traversed are dealt with so well.

We observe with particular appreciation M. Michel's avoidance of anything like a hard and fast theoretical system. He has not sought to frame a complete history of the subject, nor does he make too much of the links binding one school to another, or one master to another, freely recognizing that in many instances, to be sure, there are no such links to be identified. His aim has been simply to pass the landscape masters in chronological review, with such interpretative and appreciative notes as should serve to wake the reader's sympathy and take him a little deeper into an enchanted world. He begins with the early Italians, and so proceeds through all of the historic schools. We like the justness and delicacy with which he appraises his earlier types, paying due tribute to those landscape elements which creep into the works of the Primitives, but clearly showing that his enjoyment of the sylvan backgrounds in early religious art does not blind him to their modest relation to the true standard of open air painting. He discloses the steps taken from the conventional ground forms of Benozzo Gozzoli to the larger and more naturalistic habit of Titian, and again, when he passes to the Low Countries, he exhibits his masters with the same discriminating art. It is stimulating and very pleasant to follow him through his pages on Foussin, say, or Claude; to pause in his company not simply before Hobbema or Constable, but before those masters like Rembrandt, Velasquez, Fragonard and Vermeer, who, though not primarily landscape painters, exercised supreme gifts when they worked face to face with nature. M. Michel, we may add, cares for nature as he cares for art, and hence his book is one not of learning alone, but of a kind of gusto. His remarkable collection of illustrations would by itself make this volume worth while. It is in text and picture a work of permanent value.

100 MASTERPIECES OF PAINTING.

Not long ago we recorded the appearance of a capital handbook on "One Hundred Masterpieces of Sculpture," a convenient anthology illustrating the traits of Greek, Roman, mediæval and Renaissance masters. The very good idea embodied in it has been applied to the sister art, and now we have a companion volume in Mr. R. C. Witt's "One Hundred Masterpieces of Painting" (the John Lane Company). It is easy to be captious about a book of this sort. There are, to begin with, several hundred masterpieces of painting in existence. Every con-

noisseur would make a different selection from these. And yet would not each of a dozen such anthologies be sure to contain certain renowned pictures? In other words, the transcendent jewels of the art can be brought together with something like finality. Mr. Witt is not infallible. For example, he gives us nothing by Ingres and he includes the "Sir Isumbras at the Ford" of Millais. But, on the other hand, he does not fail to give us pictures by Botticelli, Holbein, Velasquez, Titian, and so on, about which all of the doctors would be in complete agreement.

In doing so, what does he accomplish? Some-

Drink deep of the delight that the masters have to offer, and little by little, almost unconsciously, you will find a sound instinct for the best in painting strongly developed. There is the chance of a book like Mr. Witt's, whose reproductions of glorious portraits, subject pictures and landscapes are so many touchstones of great art. His introduction and his notes are helpful, too, and they are helpful in the best way; they seek merely to stir the reader's sense of pleasure in artistic beauty.

THE STORY OF SPANISH PAINTING.

Another serviceable little volume for the layman is "The Story of Spanish Painting" (the Century Company), in which Mr. Charles H. Caffin rapidly surveys the art of the Peninsula from the earliest age down to such types of today as Sorolla and Zuloaga. He opens his investigation with a few pages upon national history which point to the mood which the reader would do well to keep in mind, and then, with a chapter on characteristics which brings us to closer quarters with the temperament of the Spanish painters, he analyzes the traits of individual Primitives and the salient men of later times, El Greco, Velasquez, Murillo, Zurbaran and others, of course not forgetting Goya. The author has had to cut to the bone, since his book is very brief, but he gives a sufficiently comprehensive view of his masters and admirably exposes the broad atmosphere of the school. The full page halftones could not be better.

A HISTORY OF JAPANESE COLOR PRINTS.

In sheer thoroughness and practicality we have not in a long time found a book so good as Herr W. von Seidlitz's "History of Japanese Color Prints" (Philadelphia: the J. B. Lippincott Company), a handsome quarto, lavishly illustrated in color and in black and white. The simplicity and almost businesslike directness with which this author treats his subject are in sharp contrast to the highfalutin in which many a writer on Japanese art has been moved to indulge. It is an art discovered by the West not so very long ago; its history is still full of obscurities for us, and in the strangeness of its nomenclature alone, to say nothing of its peculiar conventions, nine students out of ten find heartbreaking barriers. That a considerable literature on Japanese prints has been piled up is shown by the bibliography given in the present volume, but a place has been kept waiting for Herr von Seidlitz.

His first sentences are typical. "Japanese painting," he says, "like its parent art, Chinese painting, differs from modern European painting in this, that it deliberately foregoes all means of producing an immediate illusion. It knows nothing of the third dimension, but confines itself to decorative effects in one plane. At the same time the extraordinarily developed powers of observation in the Japanese enable it to convey an unusual amount of life and spirit." Does this not immediately start the reader upon a clear understanding of the subject? We wish that we had the space in which to make further quotations from Herr von Seidlitz, to show by concrete examples how luminously he unfolds the history of the Japanese color print, the technical processes which have gone to its making, the evolution of the schools and the special qualities of the different masters. He smooths a



THE EMPEROR CHARLES V, BY BARTEL BEHAM.
(From "The Golden Age of Engraving.")



VIEW OF DELFT, BY VERMEER.
(From "Great Masters of Landscape Painting.")

thing of what Matthew Arnold had in mind when he told his readers to collect touchstones of great poetry, specimens of the poetic art whose magic would subtly enrich and sustain their taste, guiding them to whatever in poetry is right and fine. So it is in the realm of painting. Art education is not seldom discussed as if it were a very esoteric thing, but, after all, a good deal of it is embraced in nothing more nor less than adventures among good pictures.

thorny path, makes it, we will not say absolutely easy, but still far less difficult to grasp the nature of an art alien to all our habits of thought, and presently to discriminate among types almost inevitably confused by the un-instructed or half-taught observer. These forthright chapters are worth reams of enthusiastic generalities. Every one is familiar with the vague rhapsodies which have been improvised in honor of Hokusai. Let the wearied reader-