

J. H. SMITH ART TREASURES

SOME OF THE THINGS ABOUT TO BE SOLD AT AUCTION.

The House and Its Furnishings the Crowning Achievement of Stanford White

With the coming sale at auction of the home of the late James Henry Smith

stained glass, and the art of the Oriental potter. Since the catalogue which the American Art Association is preparing will require something like 2,000 numbers it is evident that only comparatively few among the wealth of objects in the house can be told of in a newspaper article and fewer still illustrated here, but the reproductions picture some of the most notable of them and indicate something of their variety.



THE GREAT BOUCHER TAPESTRY OF THE BALLROOM—A FOWLING FETE.

Approaching the entrance the visitor is met with one of the artistic sights of New York that are always on public view, the massive entrance gate. This is of wrought iron, of antique manufacture and came from the Doria Palace, Venice.

The entrance or reception hall and the main hall are paneled in rare marbles, all brought from other lands, and the great staircase is also of marble in massive blocks and ornamented with artistic carvings.

In this hall is one of the most imposing features of the interior arrangement, a huge mantel and overmantel of the time of Henri II. in carved stone.

Even before entering the house two things which attract attention may be mentioned, each in its different way, marking the scale of what follows within

famous equestrian portrait of Charles I, which now hangs in Windsor Castle. For the original Charles paid the artist \$8,000, no small sum, particularly in view of the value of money in that day.

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TEMPLE JAR OF MANY PANELS, WITH FIVE COLOR FLORAL ORNAMENTATION.

of such standing that it has been sought by at least one of the world's big museums. It was purchased originally by the Duke of Ferrara in 1502, during the painter's lifetime.

In the drawing room, which with the library opens from the main hall at the Fifth avenue end of the building, the two occupying the whole avenue frontage, is a set of furniture which constitutes the costliest single group in the house.

There is in the first set a sofa, two bergères and six arm or side chairs. The sofa and one each of the accompanying types of chairs are here pictured. Note the characteristic coquetish scenes depicted on the backs and imagine them worked in tones of rose, blue and pale



A KANG-HSI PLAQUE OF THE FAMILLE VERTE DECORATION, COMMEMORATING THE EMPEROR'S RECEPTION OF A HOME-COMING CONQUEROR.

yellow mingled with gray, green and cream. Is it true, as some interested young women who have seen the sofa say, that the maiden in the balcony at the rear is mutely inviting her too devoted admirer to take a leaf from the book of the cooing young man in the centre of the picture?

The backs of the armchairs picture young women alone or with attendant swains or loving one another, sometimes fondling lambs or caressing birds. The designs on the seats represent pastoral scenery and sundry bucolic pursuits.

The second set consists of a sofa, eight armchairs and a fire screen. In this library, a corner of which is here shown, Mr. White made a very satisfactory and pleasing use of a set of choir stalls from a church in Naples combined with part of a sacrists from another Italian church or chapel.

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mental library, finding somewhere a ceiling that worked excellently with his general plan and turning out a \$50,000 room. The bookcase is really six cases, four wall and two corner cases. The pilasters and brackets are boldly carved, and over one of the cases is a carving of the "Baptism of Christ."

On the opposite side of the main hall is the great dining room, and here again Mr. White exhibited successfully one of his original ideas. In the real or fabled room, where only candle light, and that coming from no perceptible sources, furnished the illumination, there could not be a more agreeable atmosphere than that which Mr. White succeeded in creating in this room.

Somewhere in Italy he came upon some enormous canvases of decorative value, paintings with great groups of figures in the tones of old masters, and these he used here in place of panels, papers or tapestries.

He glued the canvases to the walls and designed the whole room in a color scheme in which they take their places with most agreeable effect, and then keyed the illumination to the decorations. He even cut these old canvases to make service doorways, flush with the wall surface, with neither moulding nor sill nor lintel.

Beyond the dining room is the splendid ballroom, but instead of entering it this way it is a good time to bring to attention another of the attractive features of the luxurious house, a long corridor to the

westward, leading from the main hall directly to the ballroom. This corridor is paneled with interesting examples of carved wood and marquetry, obtained at a cost of \$50,000. The woodwork came from the Chateau de la Bassie d'Urfé in the Department of the Loire, which was built in the middle of the sixteenth century by Claude d'Urfé.

In the ballroom is another very handsome set of furniture, this one of eleven pieces in Beauvais tapestry, a sofa, two bergères and eight armchairs, which cost \$300,000. Golden brown with a tinge of rose, pale yellow, green, crimson and cream are among its colors.

The temple jar with its hat shaped cover is adorned in a profusion of panels, each painted in the five colors with birds, flowers and symbols. The plate, one of the most interesting of its kind that has turned up here in many a day, depicts a court scene, the Emperor and his suite welcoming some conquering warrior and his followers. The figures are most carefully painted and the decoration is enriched with gilding.

Although the illustrations here given include some of the most notable of the

two grand Yung-Cheng jars, more than four feet tall with their covers, from some Chinese palace. To refer briefly to the illustrations accompanying this fractional survey of the house which have not yet been touched upon, the antique Gobelins tapestry, which discloses gold and silver threads, is one of many fine tapestries in the house and hangs in the drawing room. The two Chinese porcelains are Kang-hsi pieces in famille verte.

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Lion," "The Tortoise and the Hare," "The Dog and His Master's Dinner," "The Wolf and the Crane," "The Lion and the Gnat" and "The Dog and His Shadow."

In this room also is the large Boucher tapestry, the chief single ornamental feature of the room, which occupies the centre of the north wall, or that wall opposite the windows and opposite the

contents of the house. It would be a error to gather the impression that they represent anything like all there that is notable. In tapestries alone the house is unusually rich, containing not less than twenty-seven remarkably fine examples.

One, a cloth of gold tapestry of "The Holy Family," brought at the sale of the late Henry C. Marquand's collection \$21,000. Eight tapestries of the Italian Renaissance, illustrating the sieges of Tyre and Jerusalem, were lent by a former owner to King Edward for the ceremonies of his coronation. Six of them were then hung in the banquetting hall of Buckingham Palace and two were hung



PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG WOMAN BY ZOFFANY.

"A Fowling Party." The apparel of the young people is of blue and pink and crimson and the foliage of the dwarf trees is blue green and buff against a milky sky.

The walls of this palatial room are paneled in antique French walnut from the chateau of Phœbus d'Albret, Baron de Foix, a chevalier of the Grand Monarch who was a Field Marshal of France. The Baron's monogram adorns the lunettes over the doors and windows. On the dais at the head of the room—it might well be a throne—stand in majestic state

in Westminster Abbey and appear in E. A. Abbey's coronation painting. There is an eighteenth century Gobelins tapestry with a Boucher design telling a story of "The Fortune Teller." There are sixteenth century Flemish tapestries with woken tales of the simple life and one with a story of less simplicity, picturing great people picking jewels from a chest, while one of their number clasps a handsome nude boy as her jewel—possibly the "Mother of the Gracchi."

A French Renaissance tapestry which was in the Reproductive Exposition at Paris in 1900 illustrates a combat of the Romans and the Sabines when the Sabines have returned for their revenge and find their women defending their captors. It is a fabric full of action. An Italian Renaissance tapestry shows Psyche on her journey across the Styx, and another one of earlier date, with a complicated design of a life above the weavers, whose work outlasts it, is prodigal of kings and great ladies in diversified armor and draperies.

Yet other Flemish tapestries of the seventeenth century deal with ordinary life as it is found in town and country. One of these pictures shows a farm, peasants and cattle, while a companion piece shows a town vegetable and flower market with tulips and cherries, celery, turnips and asparagus, women marketing and cavaliers. There are also two highly illustrative Diana tapestries picturing forth two of the legends in which the goddess figures.

One of the interesting objects which deserves a further word is the cassone, already mentioned as being in the main hall. This ornate chest, nearly eight feet long and standing nearly four feet all told from the floor, is elaborately decorated. There must be fifteen figures pictured on it.

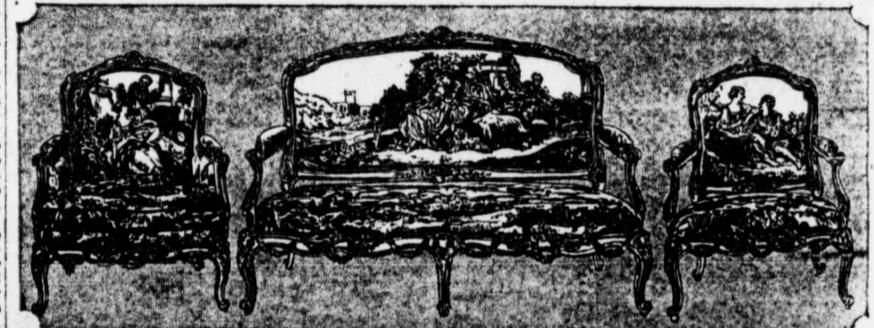
It may have been made for royalty, or at any rate for some one with regnant powers, according to the indications of some of the minor details of the ornamentation. Its standards are the gilded figures of the Evangelists, each with his emblem. The ornamentation is partly carved, but mainly painted and gilded, and pictures the Madonna with the Child and a flaming heart, and a whole series of allegorical figures of young men and maidens, old men and children.

There is a remarkable sixteenth century Italian cabinet and desk, with an intricate inlay of ivory and olive wood in an ebony base. It is of striking appearance and entices study. Its outside ornamentation is of Medusa heads in ivory and wood and eight lions' heads carved in ivory in high relief.

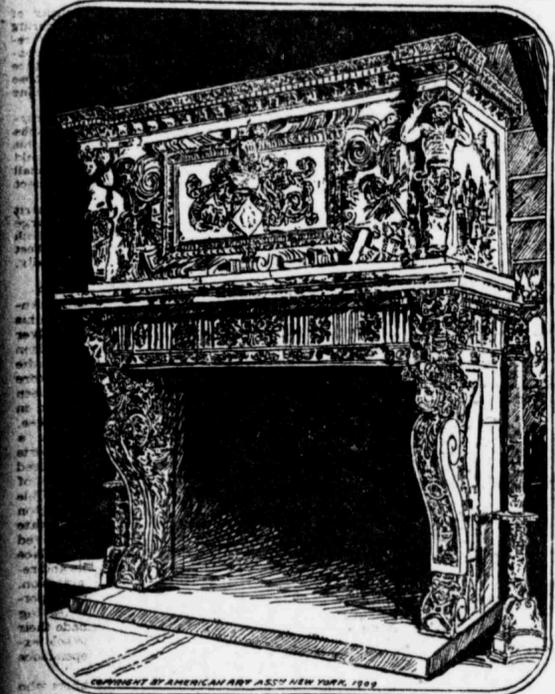
The sliding door leading from the main hall to the drawing room is of oak panels heavily carved, representing a Bishop and John the Baptist, Peter and Paul with keys and sword, and "The Annunciation." In the ballroom is a silk rug about 23 feet by 18, with a bewildering profusion of ornamentation representing many ideas of the people from whom the weavers came.

In an embrasure of this room is a rarely beautiful modern statue, a nude, "La Réve" by Michel. Elsewhere is an antique statue or group in fragmentary shape which was dredged from the Tiber. It is ascribed to the second century of the present era.

Among the paintings besides those already mentioned are a portrait of a Spanish noble in armor by Gaspar de Murillo, "Infant Christ and John"; a portrait of Mrs. Siddons by Lawrence; a portrait of Arabella Stuart by Zucco and two tall panel paintings, by John La Farge, "John" and "Mary."



PART OF AN ANCIENT SET OF CARVED GILT FURNITURE UPHOLSTERED IN BOUCHER TAPESTRY, WHICH COST THE LATE OWNER \$400,000, USED IN THE DRAWING ROOM.



EDGE, MANTEL IN CARVED STONE OF THE TIME OF HENRI II. OF FRANCE, 1518-1559, RECORDED AS ONE OF THE FINEST EXTANT.

country, and indeed such a sale is a rarity anywhere. The building alone and its site have erroneously been said to have an estimated value of \$1,000,000. It has been found that the building and land are assessed at \$1,900,000, and the assessed valuation of course is not supposed to represent the full value of property.

The late William C. Whitney, from whose estate Mr. Smith bought the property, spent for the interior decorations, embellishment and furnishing of the house a sum estimated at between \$2,000,000 and \$3,000,000, the late Stanford White with carte blanche from Mr. Whitney having traversed many lands in the accumulation of the architectural and decorative effects which he installed there. Mr. Smith spent further sums in the enrichment of this palace, for palace it is in its interior, his expenditure on the ballroom alone reaching \$900,000.

From this brief summary in figures may be seen something of what the mansion represents from the money point of view alone; but art, not mere spending power, was the first consideration in the decoration of the house. It is the beautiful, the interesting, the noble and the admirable works of art and their becoming and orderly disposition in a dwelling that commend this house and its treasures to the artistic imagination; it is not a museum but a home, albeit a home of luxury, and the components of its adornment appeal to collectors and experts on both sides of the western ocean. It is highly probable that some of the treasures will go back to Europe. In an art auction of this kind all the world competes.

In the eyes of friends of Mr. White this house represents the crowning achievement of his peculiar constructive mind. To him a work of art susceptible of architectural treatment immediately brought up a mental picture of it in other surroundings of his own creation, and here, where no limit was placed upon his expenditures, he was free to elaborate schemes of form, color and proportion to the extent of his capacity.

His task effected a result with no jarring note. There is no superabundance of gorgeous detail. The whole agrees with itself like a well composed painting. Its atmosphere is agreeable, its color delightful. It is a place of notable convenience. The entertainment of 1,000 persons in no way crowds it. And from the massive entrance gates, themselves works of art, art speaks throughout the house, the art of the architect, the painter, the sculptor, the weaver of rugs and of tapestries, the wood carver, the inlayer, the engraver, the maker of

membered that the house is 200 feet long on Sixty-eighth street by 35 feet on Fifth avenue it may readily be understood how much it can contain without crowding. Even before entering the house two things which attract attention may be mentioned, each in its different way, marking the scale of what follows within

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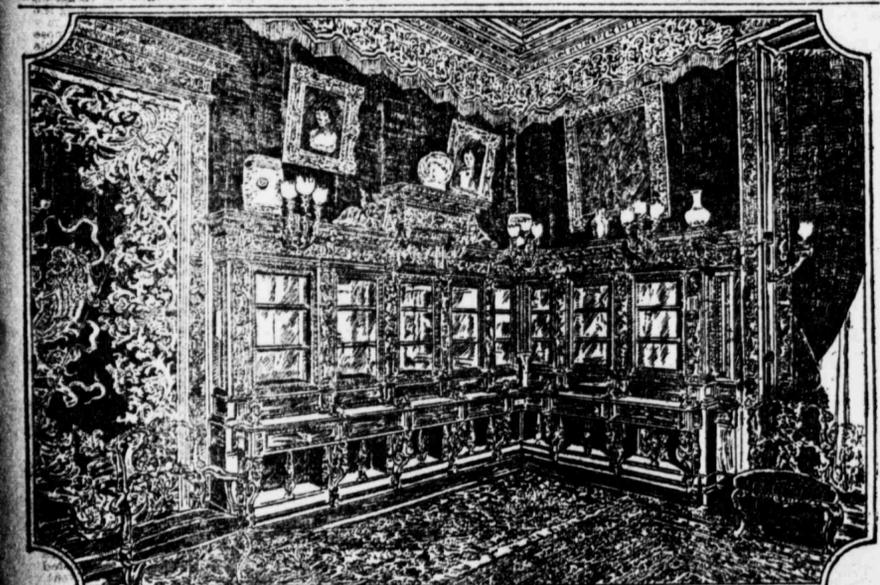
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If one walks to the house from up Fifth avenue he passes over a flagstone so large that to the sightseers in the passing charabancs it is pointed out by their guide as the largest flagstone in the world. It is said to be true that this flagstone is the biggest single stone ever cut and transported.

Flanking the road approaches to this hall, where they receive light from the street, hang two large and elaborate canvases which hold important rank among paintings, an equestrian portrait by Van Dyck and a religious composition by Lorenzo Costa. The Van Dyck, which is here reproduced, is a replica of the

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CORNER OF A \$50,000 ROOM. BOOKCASES CONSTRUCTED BY STANFORD WHITE OF CHOIR STALLS AND SACRISTY PANNELINGS FROM FIFTEENTH CENTURY ITALIAN CHURCHES.