VALUABLE PAINTINGS

Loaned to Corcoran Art Gallery by Senator Clark.

WORKS BY OLD MASTERS

Exceedingly Fine Portrait of a Lady by Rembrandt.

FAMOUS CANVAS BY BOUCHER

One of a Series of Four Pictures Which Were Painted for Madame du Barry.

Senator W. A. Clark has loaned to the Corcoran Gallery of Art fifty-six extraordinarily interesting and valuable paintings from his private collection, which have been congregated in a single room and formed into a special exhibit. This in art circles will doubtless prove one of the most notable events of the winter, and to students and art lovers it will afford uncommon privileges.

The exhibition was opened last evening by a private view, to which the Vice President and officers of the Senate, the senators and their families, members of the cabinet, directors of galleries in other cities and many prominent art collectors of the country were invited.

About a year ago Senator Clark loaned to the Corcoran Gallery twenty-five—recently acquired—canvases, and these form the nucleus of the present collection, a collection which it has been said few museums could duplicate. Its value as it now stands is estimated conservatively at $700,000, but its intrinsic worth far exceeds its commercial valuation. It comprises not only modern paintings, but works by the old masters, and it boasts rare examples of the several great schools. It has been well selected and nicely arranged. Each picture seems to be a unit fitted into a large, coordinate scheme. The general effect is harmonious and pleasing, and the single exhibits are of rare and of lasting interest.

A large portion of the collection was acquired at the time of the great Preyer sale in Vienna, the senator supplementing his own knowledge at that time by the expert advice of Dr. Bredius, the director of the Amsterdam gallery. A number of the modern works were purchased last winter when the J. W. Kaufman collection was disbursed in New York, and several of the important recent accessions were procured through Mr. V. G. Fischer of this city. It reflects unquestionably the taste and judgment of the owner, and while there may be among connoisseurs discussion and disagreement as to the merit of single exhibits, collectively it will be conceded by all to maintain an uncommonly high standard.

Portrait by Rembrandt.

Interest will necessarily focus upon the portrait of a lady by Rembrandt which centers the south wall. This alone should create a sensation. Not only is it the work of a great master, but an exceedingly fine example. In it the last word has been said, the consummation of painter's craft arrived at. It might have been differently done, but it could not have been better. Nothing remains to be asked—every demand is satisfied. The Dutch painters, it has been said, were given to realism—were reproducers of nature—and it is true that Rembrandt here presents a living reality. The woman he has pictured literally stands before the observer in lifelike semblance. Her personality is more insistent than her mere person; she becomes instantly vital and credulous to the observer. Who she was no one knows; possibly the painter's sister-in-law, Saskia's own sister, some say. But her name and identity are of little consequence. The face is typically Dutch, yet very individual. The eyes are frank and seeing, the mouth firm, but sensitive. The features show much character, and yet the expression is inscrutable. It allures, and at the same time baffles.

According to the accepted code, this lady is not beautiful, and yet she charms. She is a human document to whose pages one might gladly turn with reverent regard. If all this while it has not occurred to the onlooker to admire the art of the painter it is merely on account of its perfection. Every suggestion of medium is lost, every trace of labor obliterated, and yet with what consummate skill is it done! Every detail is truthfully interpreted; every value properly related.

The woman stands reposefully at an arched casement, one hand holding a fan, the other laid against the frame. Behind her is a brownish wall, around her air in abundance. The light is focused on the face, the outlines of the figure are lost against the background. The transparency of the shadows, too, should be noted, and the gentle merging of light and shade. It is a work most masterly in its supreme simplicity. It does not discourage effort, but rather inspires by its own success and by its apparent ease of expression. Such paintings are not only a delight to the wise, but a liberal education to the studious. They do not need to be explained—they manifest themselves.

Work of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

On the east wall, in a position of prominence, is to be found a portrait of "Mrs. Prado," painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds. It is a three-quarter length, and shows the lady out of doors, gracefully resting against a wooden pedestal. In color it is peculiarly charming; in brush work most accomplished. The gown is a white material daintily flowered; the outer garment a brown pink edged with ermine. Trees and a bit of dull blue sky form the background and help to enhance the harmonious effect. Here, too, definite personality has been rendered, but in this case it has been subordinated to the motive of decoration. It is not Mrs. Prado who appeals to the observer, but the painter's artistic arrangement of color and skillful wielding of lines. Regardless of subject, it charms the eye and gratifies the senses; but for this reason it is none the less worthy.

A little incident in connection with this painting is well worth relating. Mrs. Prado, so the story goes, was a South American, the wife of a wealthy London merchant. Horace Walpole was her friend and neighbor and it was he who persuaded her to have her portrait painted by Sir Joshua. One day when it was almost finished he stopped in at the artist's studio to see it. "That is an excellent likeness of Mrs. Prado," he said, pointing to the canvas on the easel.

"Prado!" exclaimed the painter; "that is Miss Prideaux."

"Oh, no," responded Walpole, "that is Mrs. Prado. I sent her to you."

"I am sorry to disagree with you," said Sir Joshua, "but I know it is Prideaux, for I have it so written down in my journal." And by both names it has been called to this day.

Another Delightful Picture.

There is another delightful picture by Reynolds in this collection—a portrait of pretty Kitty Fisher, one of his favorite models. It is quite different in tone from the former; richer, perhaps, and apparently suffused by a golden light. There is a certain reticence in the rendering which is very attractive; a breadth in the handling which bespeaks command of medium. It is sincerely pictorial and yet it portrays a rather elusive personality. The Kitty Fisher it sets forth was at least thoughtful and not too conscious of her beauty.

Sir Joshua Reynolds was one of the most successful portrait painters in history and a prolific producer. He was intolerant of competition and held himself in questionably high esteem. Possibly this was the result of an unappreciated youth. He was the son of a prosaic Plympton school master, who far from encouraging his studies, wrote across one of his earliest efforts, "This is drawn by Joshua in school, out of pure idleness."

Next to the Kitty Fisher hangs a likeness of the young Marchioness of Townsend, painted by Reynolds' rival, George Romney; a picture which in charm would be hard to excel. It has been on exhibition at the gallery with the first installment of Senator Clark's pictures, but so distinguished is its merit that through familiarity it has nothing to fear. Beyond, is an attractive head by Hoppner, another colleague; broadly painted, good in color, and not unlovely in expression—a canvas which was given prominence in the great "Portrait Show" held in New York winter before last.

Between these will be seen a landscape by Gainsborough, painted in 1787, and remarkable not only for its merit, but on account of being both signed and dated. Without this identification, however, the work would directly proclaim itself, so thoroughly characteristic and unmistakable are its earmarks. It is neither realistic in color nor rendering and yet it is exceptionally convincing and delightful. Its tone is rich and resonant; its composition admirably balanced.

A Canvas by Boucher.

One of the most notable paintings in this collection is a canvas by Boucher. It, with three others, formed a series entitled, "The Elements," which was painted for Madame du Barry. Two of these, "Water" and "Earth," are now owned by the city of Paris; one, "Fire," is in the private collection of Count Boni de Castellane, while the fourth, "Air," has found its way here. The painter, Boucher, was a prix de Rome man. At twenty his pictures brought good prices. In 1755 he was made inspector of the Gobelins, and later, upon Van Loo's death, he became first painter to the king. He was a great court favorite, something of a profligate, but a good engraver and accomplished brushman. His art took on the spirit of the time—it was frivolous, but clever. Of recent years it has rather returned to appreciation.

In Paris not long ago a single canvas by Boucher brought $61,000; and a Fragonard at a famous sale last fall was bid up to $92,400. The interest in the panel in the Clark collection centers in its decorative effect. Subjectively it is curiously imaginative. Four hearty young cherubs have camped on the edge of a hill and are making merry over a cage of doves. The sky is partly overcast, and in the distance, agreeably situated, is a castle. The composition carries with it little significance, but its crisp handling and fresh color atone for lack of thought. It may not be a great work of art, but it is an excellent decoration and a typical example of its period.

An interesting contrast are two paintings by Chardin, a contemporary painter, which have been hung almost immediately to the right. One represents a working woman in a white dress standing by a barrel, and the other is a still-life—a table covered with a white cloth, on which are some crocks and vegetables—a cat on the floor, lapping milk from a saucer, an old, worn broom, standing neglected in the corner—all essentially commonplace, serious, uncompromising, and yet artistically interpreted. No wonder that in such a day amid the riot of mad merriment Chardin passed unnoticed and unappreciated. Rarely will one come across franker realism, more honesty of purpose, or a keener comprehension of art values. His canvases suggest Vollon's, but are more reticent and a little less forceful.

Works by the "Little Dutchmen."

An unusual feature of this collection and one which should give it weight is its richness in works by the so-called "Little Dutchmen"—followers in a measure of Rembrandt, who, while accomplishing good work, never attained to the stature of their master. Conspicuous among these is Gerard Dou, two of whose paintings find interesting inclusion. One is a little portrait of an old man, marvelously well rendered, and the other in a genre—an old woman and a little lad in a garret chamber—painted with much nicety of feeling. There is a delightful little brown, toneful landscape by Cuyp, who has been called the "Dutch Claude," and an exquisite little marine by Willem Van der Velde, a sailor-painter, whose talents so recommended him to his nation that the states of Holland placed a small vessel at his disposal, from which he might witness the sea-fights. There is also a fine interior by Van Ostade, the favorite pupil of Frans Hals; a Wouwerman, a Metsu and a Van Goyen. The Flemish school is represented by Rubens and Teniers, the German, by a remarkable portrait attributed to Holbein.

Of the modern works description has been previously given, but attention may with propriety be called to the beautiful Corot which centers the west wall. It is a most characteristic example, and sets forth the painter at his best. It is full of air and subtle sentiment—gray and yet joyous—lowtoned, elusive and at the same time both conservative and strong. There is also a Daubigny of special note—two, in fact, but one uncommonly worthy; several Troyons, a Fromentin, a Ziem and a Diaz well above the average. Breton's "La Fin du Travail" is here, and "Evening," by Mauve.

Trial of Catherine of Aragon.

The "Trial of Catherine of Aragon before Henry VIII and Lord Wolsey," which Senator Clark purchased some years ago directly from Edwin A. Abbey, the painter, still occupies a commanding position on the north wall, and dominates by its brilliancy of color its environment.

What America needs today are examples of the world's masterpieces—not that her students may imitate, but rather learn from them. We have excellent art schools, abundant ability, fresh themes and the courage of our convictions, but we have not a knowledge of the best. Our government makes no effort to foster the art of our people. We have no national gallery of art, no national school, and little national patronage. For these benefits and stimulus we are obliged to look, therefore, to our private collections, and to their credit, be it said, they are not unresponsive. To have such a collection of paintings as that now on view at the Corcoran gallery accessible to the public is a boon not to be underestimated.

LEILA MECHLIN.

Golf and Matrimony.

From Harper's Weekly.

As an illustration of the enthusiasm with which golf is pursued by its votaries, the following anecdote is told of a well-known Scotch author and a young friend of his: The two had spent the whole day on the links, and had had some close and exciting matches. As they left for home the elder man remarked:

"Do you think ye could play again tomorrow, laddie?"

"Well," answered the youth, "I was to be married tomorrow, but I can put it off."

Naturally.

From Harper's Weekly.

The elderly lady who was looking through the shop of a dealer in nicknacks picked up a small handbag. "Are you sure," she inquired, "that this is real crocodile skin?"

"Absolutely certain, madam," replied the dealer; "I shot that crocodile myself."

"It looks rather soiled," observed his customer.

"Naturally, madam," explained the salesman; "that is where it struck the ground when it tumbled off the tree."

TOLD IN A ZOO HOUSE

Stories of Snakes, Tigers and Buffaloes.

HABITS OF CONSTRICTORS

Wild Dogs of India Enemies of the Tiger.

TRAGEDIES OF THE JUNGLE

Attachments of Wild Animals for Human Beings—When the Bison Roamed the Prairies.

Written for The Star.

They were standing in the reptile house of the Philadelphia Zoo watching a couple of big snakes of the constrictor brand lazily coiling and uncoiling themselves on the trimmed tree that was placed in the cage for their convenience.

"Makes me think of something that happened in the Philippines a good many years ago," said the older of the two men, "long before any one in the United States supposed this country would ever have any special connection with those islands.

"I was something of a rover when a boy, and through a combination of circumstances which I won't bother you with I drifted to those islands, and for some time was an engineer on a sugar plantation. I slept in a warehouse, and one of its other tenants was a tame python maintained that it might keep down the rats. I was a little shy of the creature at first, but as I had owned a blacksnake when an upstate boy I soon got used to the python. It was a sure rat catcher, and nobody there thought there was any harm whatever in the reptile. There wouldn't have been if it had been let alone by everybody, but that wasn't to be. There was one clerk in the planter's office, a young Hollander still in his teens, who just couldn't forego the pleasure, as it appeared to him, of occasionally teasing that snake.

"He was told better often enough, but he just had to get his lesson, which turned out to be even more severe than was feared.

Crushing Power of Constrictor.

"One day we heard an awful screech from the interior of the warehouse. It was a frightful, bloodcurdling sound, and everybody who heard it ran to find out what was up.

"I reached the spot in time to see the young Hollander relax his hold on the chines of a sugar cask he had been leaning against just as the python was uncoiling from his body.

"The clerk fell to the ground unconscious and with a peculiar, suggestive limpness. When we reached him he was quite dead. A subsequent surgical examination showed that practically every bone in the clerk's body was broken, not with simple fractures, but into small pieces.

"Later one of the native boys told about the tragedy, which he had seen. He was all cut up about it, as he was very fond of the young Dutchman, but not a bit surprised, for he had often warned the clerk of the very fate which that day had befallen him.

"It seems that for the fiftieth time, perhaps, the foolish chap had put his foot on the snake's tail. Quick as a flash, for it was not sluggish from a recent meal, the serpent had reared its head, seized the young man near the throat, and in less time than it takes to tell it had thrown three coils about his body. You see, those constrictor snakes, though so slow moving ordinarily, are about as rapid as the electric spark when they get ready to act. Anyway, that poor wretch had his life squeezed out of him before he could finish his dying yell."

Though instances of big non-venomous snakes actually killing men are rare, this story is much like one that is told of a keeper in the London Zoo, barring the tragic end.

Shed Their Skins Annually.

Constrictor snakes, like all others, shed their skins once a year. Just after the old skin is off and while the new one is forming they lie very quiet, being tender. They are sometimes ill-tempered a short time before their "moulting," especially if they chance to become hungry just at that time. And as the outer integument of the eye comes off with the rest, they are not very clear sighted at such a time; at least that is the way a veteran snakehouse man always introduces this particular story:

"This here keeper," says the seasoned ophidianist, "was a giving of his feed to the sarpint and it couldn't see very well. The feed was a chicken, and the snake struck for it, as snakes always do, the plan being to kill it first in that way. Partly because of bad eyesight and partly because the chicken dodged—it was alive, of course, and it was natural for it to dodge—the snake's aim wasn't very good.

"So instead of catching the chicken's head in its ugly jaws, as the python expected to, it caught the keeper's thumb and fastened two teeth in it. It was as natural for the keeper to jump around and yell and let go the chicken as it had been for the chicken to dodge, and the keeper sure did raise some rumpus. The other keepers hurried up to help him, of course, but by the time they had got there, the boa had got a couple of coils about the keeper's arm and had its tail hooked to a bar in the cage so that it was almost impossible to make it let go.

"They did it after a while, to be sure, but the snake had got its mind so set on having a meal right then, and apparently was so well satisfied that the keeper's thumb was a chicken's neck, that they had to tear one of the teeth out of the snake's head to get the man and the sarpint apart. No, the keeper wasn't much hurt, but he was scared blue, also considerably shook up like, for the snake thrashed about some considerable in the mix-up they had together.

"No, I didn't see that mix-up; I ain't never been a keeper in an English zoological garden, but I have no reason to think it ain't true any more than I have that the story of the Filipino python is exaggerated."

Wild Dogs and Tigers.

"Talking about big snakes," said another member of the party, "I've heard that the pythons of India sometimes attack tigers, but I never personally knew of an instance.

"But I have heard often that the wild dogs of India sometimes attack tigers, and in the same way that when the size of the wild dogs of that country is remembered the Hindus consider them about the bravest and nerviest of all the inhabitants of the jungle.

"It isn't pretended that these dogs—'red dogs' they are sometimes called—will singly attack a tiger, but I have been told many a story about a pack of them tackling a full-grown tiger and getting away with the big ugly beast. Not a big pack, understand—the red dogs rarely gather in packs of more than nine or ten—but in about the same force as would assemble to attack a wolf, or a bear, and I know they don't hesitate at a bear.

"As to the dog and grown tiger stories, I want to know more before I say more, but there is no doubt at all but that the 'red dogs' in the Asiatic forests do kill young tigers; in fact, they kill a good many of the young of all the big cat species, seeming to have the same antipathy for them that tame dogs have for domestic cats. All dogs hate all cats anyway—this rule is one of those nearly universal ones of which we say the exceptions 'prove' them—and I shouldn't wonder at all that were the wild dogs in India to be killed off in a night there'd be a rapid and distressing relative increase of the world's tiger population very soon.

"These 'red dogs,' by the way," he went on, "have always been very interesting to me, and I've often been surprised at seeing no more in print about them. They are not big brutes, averaging, say not more than three feet in length from tip of nose to tip of tail, and rather light for their size. One of them mightn't be be very courageous alone, but I've seen enough of them in my time to know that when in small packs they always carry their nerve with them. There is almost no beast in the jungle which they will not attack, except the elephant. Its bulk is so great and its hide so tough and leathery that the dogs let the elephant severely alone.

"The tiger, by the way," declared the speaker with an air of authority, "is by no means a courageous beast, its nerve not comparing with the dog's. It is true that the tiger is ready to attack about anything it ever meets, but that's because it knows it's a match for any animal that prowls, conditions being equal. No, the tiger, like all cats, is a coward.

Tigers and Human Attachments.

"But it is not true that tigers are without the power of feeling friendship for man; at least of simulating it, though, of course, I don't suppose it could possibly be in any tiger to sacrifice its life for its master as dogs have been known to do.

"There are men, however, who seem to have the power of inspiring personal regard in a tiger's breast, difficult as that might seem to be. A very well-known German dealer in wild animals has this power in marked degree—in fact, that man, in my opinion, can win almost any created thing that walks. I don't believe anybody ever did awaken affection in a snake.

"Anyway, this man was in the New York Central Park Zoo about two years ago. He was just looking around when he suddenly came up against a cage in which was an unusually big striped cat of the jungle. The animal man looked closely—then:

"'Dick!' he called softly, 'Dick!'

"The tiger turned his head; his big eyes opened wide. One look was enough; the beast had evidently thought the voice familiar, and now was sure of the voice. Trotting over to the side of the cage the tiger purred with pleasure, rubbed itself against the bars, and finally put its nose through to be stroked. The animal man petted the beast proudly and to the admiration of all beholders.

"'Dick remembers me,' he said. 'It would be a risky thing for a stranger to pet him.'

"Every one in the tiger house at that moment, even the keeper in charge, seemed to agree with him unreservedly.

"Tigers," he went on, "are among the cannibal brutes. I don't mean that one tiger would single out another and kill it for food if any other food were to be had, but I have been told on what I hold good authority, that the victor in more than one fight between tigers has been known to devour the vanquished. The strength and endurance of the tiger are something enormous, and are shown as markedly in the great distances tigers have been known to travel at night, as in their combats with men and other beasts.

"Tigers don't like to travel by day, for two reasons, both because it is pleasanter to travel at night when it is cool, and because the roads are then clear of the tiger's most deadly enemy—man."

Fast Disappearing Buffalo.

"If you mean it's my turn because you've stopped talking," said the western looking man of the party, "all right. But the only wild animal I can tell you anything about is the buffalo, and there are not 1,500 of him alive today either wild or tame.

"But when I was a boy out in Iowa, there were plenty of buffaloes. That was before there were any railroads west of the Mississippi, even before Gen. Dodge got the Union Pacific surveyed across Nebraska. Buffaloes used to travel great distances in the pre-railroad times—thousands of miles every season. But they traveled days as often as nights, and always in vast herds—at least as long as the vast herds were left.

"The hunting of buffaloes just for the fun of killing them wasn't done so much when I was a boy as it was later, though thousands were killed for their hides even then. I don't know what the hunters got for them, but I don't imagine it was much, for I've been told that even late in the sixties good big buffalo robes could be bought away east here for $8 and $10 each.

"Barring a wolf robe there was never any sort of a traveling wrap that is half as satisfactory as a good lined buffalo robe, but the time was that no young fellow who could afford a woolen lap-robe would think of taking his girl out sleighing without a buffalo robe for a covering—buffalo robes were so common. Today you can't get one at all, no matter how rich you are, unless you're lucky, and when you can, you have to pay a fabulous price."

Street Car Politeness.

From the Chicago Chronicle.

In a town like Chicago, where half a million people are dumped into an area of a mile square in the morning and are taken out of it and distributed to the four quarters of the city in the evening, it is inevitable that some of the courtesies and amenities of life should suffer. It is inevitable that the deference due to women should sometimes be lacking in traction cars and that men should sometimes sit when women are standing. This is to be regretted and it is not to be denied, but it may truthfully be asserted that the situation is by no means so bad as it is ordinarily represented to be.

It is not true, for instance, that no woman can hope to have a seat surrendered to her in a Chicago traction car unless she is young and attractive or old and feeble or carrying an infant in her arms.

Any one who will even casually observe such things will see that men give up their seats to women who are neither handsome nor old nor burdened with babies. Tired men who have been on their feet all day will surrender their seats to the most commonplace women. Not all men will do so, perhaps not most of them will do so, but enough Chicago men will and do give their seats to any woman who may be standing to refute the reproach that there is no chivalry or gallantry in this town.

It is equally true, likewise, that Chicago women are properly appreciative of the courtesy of the proffered seat. Nine women in ten will thank the man who gets up and tenders his place. The woman who takes the seat without a word of thanks is a rare exception. Of course, she ought not to exist at all, just as there should be no men who sit while women stand. There are, however, people of all kinds in a big city and it woud be strange indeed if therel were not among them a certain proportion of inappreciative women and ungallant men. The comfort is that there are relatively so few of either class.

Two four-story brick buildings in the heart of the business section of Shamokin, Pa., were destroyed by fire Thursday night, entailing a loss of $180,000, against which there is an insurance of $75,000.

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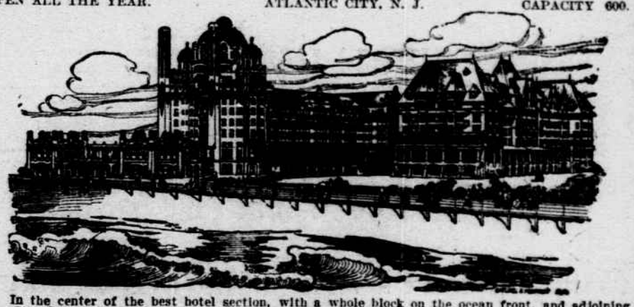

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