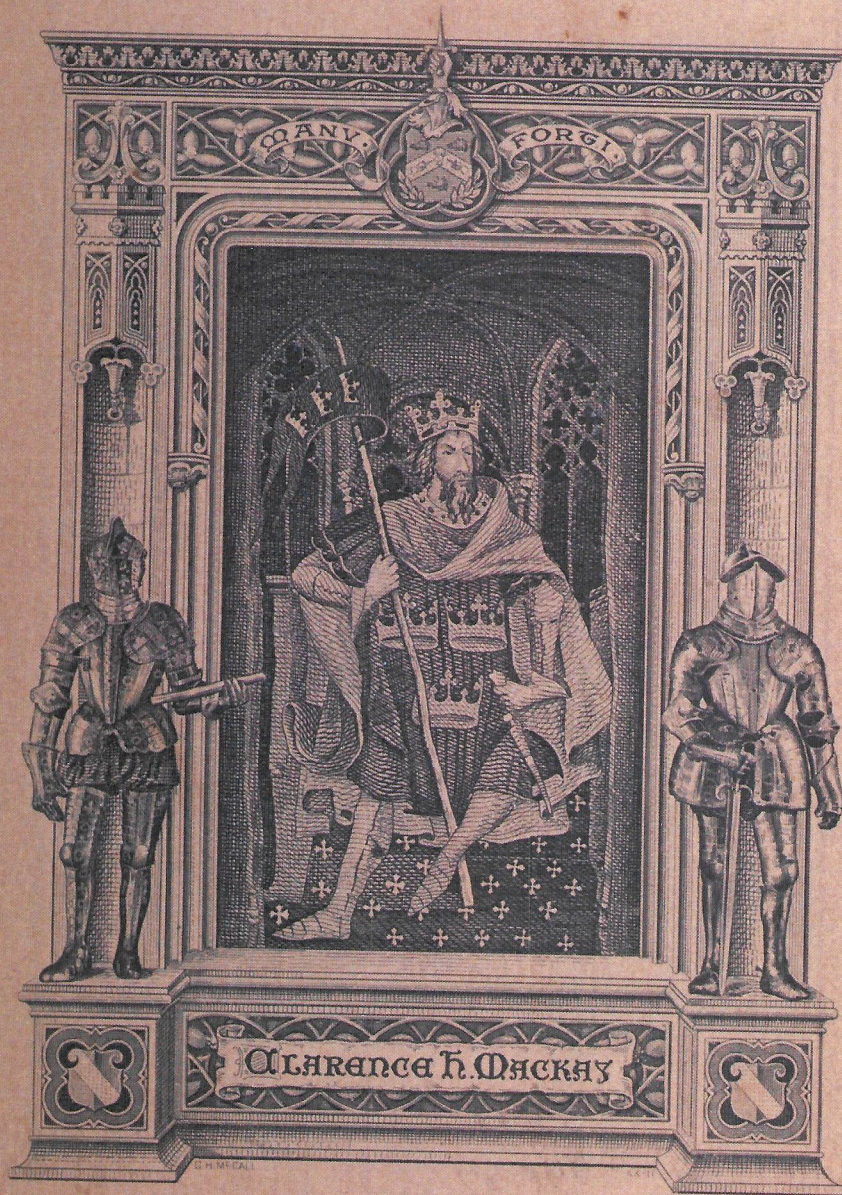


The Clarence H. Mackay Collection



Harbor Hill, Roslyn
Long Island

THIS HANDBOOK IS PRINTED BY
THE NORTH COUNTRY GARDEN CLUB
OF LONG ISLAND
IN HONOR OF THE VISIT OF
THE GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA
TO HARBOR HILL
MAY 21ST, 1931

THE CLARENCE H. MACKAY COLLECTION

WITH AN

Introductory Article

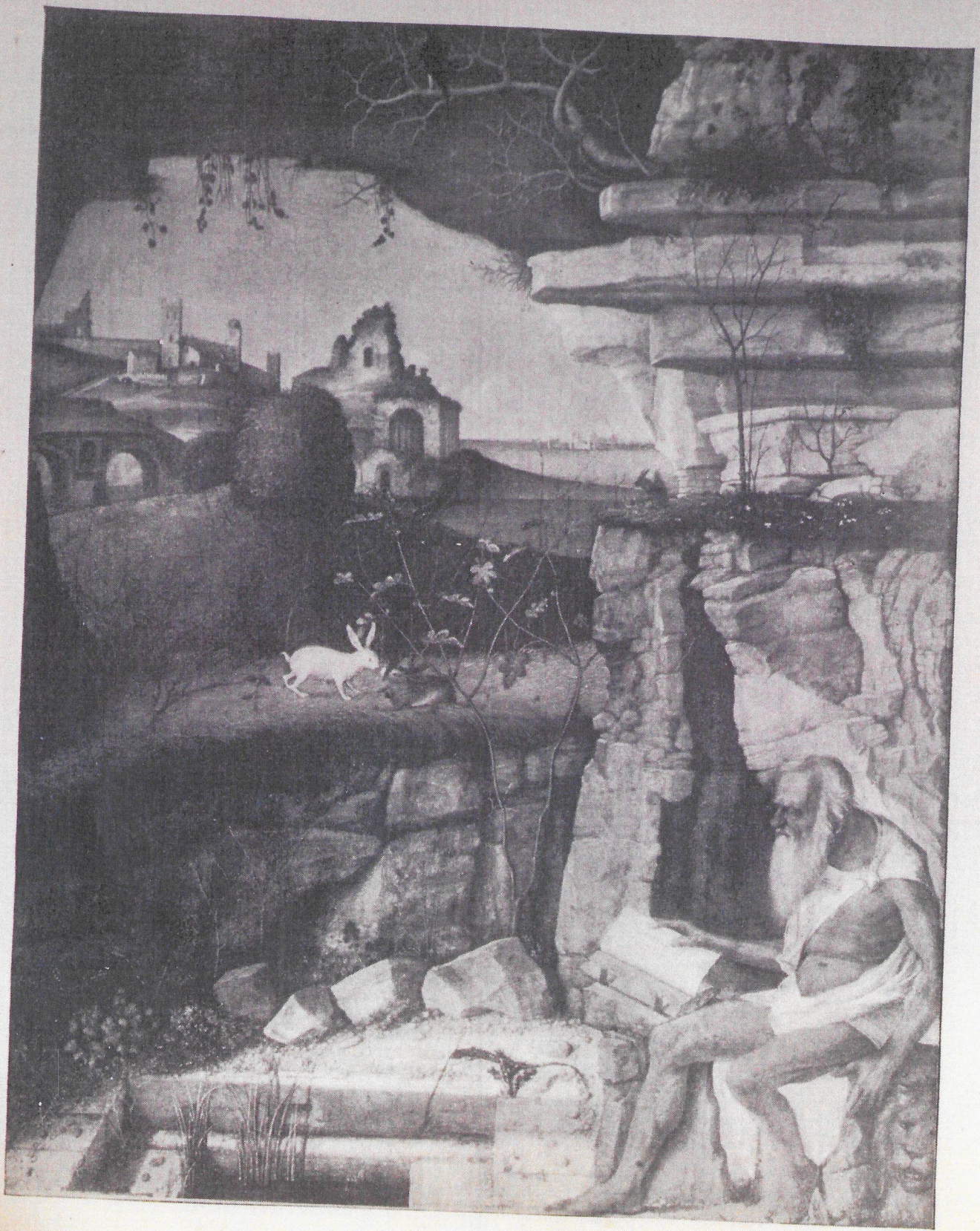
By

ROYAL CORTISSOZ



PRIVATELY PRINTED

1931



GIOVANNI BELLINI: "ST. JEROME, READING"
Renaissance Room

school in private hands. I might, indeed, make a long list of the great Italian paintings which have come to this country since economic conditions released them from European custody. But nowhere, here or abroad, has the Italian tradition been commemorated quite as it has been commemorated by Mr. Mackay, in a group so choice, maintained on such a high level. I never recall the Dreyfus collection of Italian sculpture without a thrill, but not even that rare body could outshine the assemblage at Harbor Hill that embraces Donatello, Leonardo da Vinci, Desiderio da Settignano, Rossellino, Antonio Pollaiuolo, Verrocchio, Benedetto da Majano and Mino da Fiesole. The Verrocchio terra-cotta of Lorenzo de' Medici is, for me, the portentous monument in the whole company, in its bold, naturalistic yet curiously subtle portrayal of the Florentine despot, an exposure as in a microcosm of the spirit of Renaissance virility and craft. I find it hard to relinquish the plastic theme but I must pass to the paintings, which stand as conspicuously for the collector's judgment—and his good fortune.

For Clarence Mackay has obtained some almost unbelievable prizes in the field of the picture collector. I can well remember the time when outside the Jarves collection at Yale and Mr. Johnson's house in Philadelphia the Italian tradition was practically unknown on this side of the water. When once cultivation of it got under way there were a few lucky buyers like Mr. Altman in New York and Mrs. Gardner in Boston. Mr. Mackay's luck has been unsurpassed in respect to the rarity, beauty and condition of his examples. There were nine of them on the walls when Dr. Valentiner's catalogue was printed and of the nine each had the full-rounded integrity of a pearl. Two of them were secular in subject, portraits by Pisanello and Botticelli. The first of these is eloquent of that good fortune touched upon just now. Pisanello is primarily a medallist and the tale of his paintings is soon exhausted. If twenty-five years ago anyone had told me that a new panel by the painter of the picture in the National Gallery might come into view I would have been more amused than edified. But in due course the *Portrait of a Young Princess* did turn up, in Paris, and presently arrived at Harbor Hill. I love its naïve charm as a portrait and its pure, linear accent. The Botticelli *Portrait of a Young Man*, much later in date, nevertheless preserves a good deal of the same early freshness and

beauty—with more sheer genius in it. It is, again, a magical thing in the matter of draughtsmanship, only Botticelli's line is more fluid, more animated, fuller of life and grace, especially in the definition of the hair and the lad's entrancing hand. Berenson has said of this portrait that "it is more 'Botticellian' than any other Botticelli in existence." There is so much of the painter's personality in it, so much of the essence of his art, that the critic wonders what remains of the sitter. "Very little," he adds, "I confess." That is one way of saying that the painting is all compact of pictorial beauty. With these two works I find myself irresistibly associating Mantegna's *Adoration of the Shepherds*, so long held in obscurity in England. I place it beside the others from some sense of the singularity which, like them, it possesses. I have made a devoted study of Mantegna and have seen, I fancy, every work of his that exists. In the entire mass I recall no other painting which so joins as this one does his marmoreal feeling for form and drapery to a kind of patient, Venetian realism and an overwhelming devotional poignancy. Other designs by him have more grandeur and, by the same token, more of pure force. This one stands by itself for a certain almost artless religious lyricism. He was never nearer to the truth of human life and the visible world than in the *Adoration* and he was never more the poet.

Of the remaining Madonnas that Valentiner catalogued, those by Baldovinetti, Verrocchio, Matteo di Giovanni, Francia and Perugino, all are beautiful, but the first two I have named are, to my mind, the most distinguished and inspiring. The Baldovinetti is fifteenth century Florentine devotional painting in what I would call its most personal estate. All the masters in that golden period were sensitive and exalted. Baldovinetti, like a Piero della Francesca or a Botticelli, has a hauntingly individual note, filling out a familiar formula with a gentle, wistful touch made only the more appealing through the sober charm of his color. I remember feeling his special quality—which I would call piercing if there were not something about it very delicate, very poetic—when I first saw the fine example of him in the Louvre. I feel it even more in the example at Harbor Hill. The Verrocchio is fifteenth century Florentine painting in all its might and majesty. Where Baldovinetti gets at your heart strings softly and, as it were, unobtrusively,

Verrocchio, with his ringing colors and his strong forms, takes you by storm, obviously the puissant sculptor handling the brush as vigorously as though it were a chisel. I linger over the two persistently, unwilling to leave them even for the melting emotionalism of Francia and Perugino, or the mingling of Peruginesque sweetness with a greater master's traits in the little Raphael that Mr. Mackay owns, the *Agony in the Garden*. This was once part of the *predella* of that big altar piece given to the Metropolitan by the late J. Pierpont Morgan. It belonged, in other words, to something like an architectural whole. Even seen by itself it reveals the artist's genius for design, and, with it, his capacity for spiritual rapture.

In the last three or four years the Mackay collection has been strengthened by as many paintings as were in it when the catalogue was made. A remarkable addition is to be cited in the field of portraiture. The Pisanello and the Botticelli are now accompanied by a Crivelli, notable, like the former, for its extreme rarity. The fifteenth century Venetian is famous for his pictures of the Madonna and the Saints. None of the lists contain any reference to a portrait. Mr. Mackay's *Portrait of a Man*, brought to light, I believe, in a German collection, is exactly what one would have expected of the painter when straying into the sphere of mundane subjects. The hand and the profile denote his grasp upon bony structure. The vivid coloration and the treatment of the costume are significant of his decorative habit. A powerful, sumptuous thing, it strikes a happy note in the trio I have indicated as now existing in portraiture at Harbor Hill. Another Venetian acquisition is the *St. Jerome* of Giovanni Bellini, formerly in the Benson collection, in London, which was bought *en bloc* by Sir Joseph Duveen and brought to this country in 1927. It is one of the most purely exquisite of the Mackay pictures. A figure of serene old age, made sufficiently impressive, the Saint counts in it hardly as much as the rocky landscape, with animals and flowers in the middle distance, and, beyond, a little hill town looking out upon the sea. There is a kindred landscape of Bellini's in the Frick collection, a beautiful *St. Francis Receiving the Stigmata*. It has the familiar stony stratifications which Bellini and Mantegna painted with such loving care. But, by coincidence, this *St. Jerome* has something of the same special character which I have ventured to

assign to the *Adoration of the Shepherds*. The scene is realized with the meticulous accuracy of a geologist and in the same moment Bellini functions as a poet. He dwells upon the nuances of color in earth and sky. Like some monkish miniaturist, caressing his illumination, he turns his picture into a prayer to beauty, making his jewel-like tints to gleam with a spiritual fire. And he is, withal, touching, intimate. There is grandeur in the Frick *St. Francis*. The *St. Jerome* is in a more human and endearing category. This picture and the Mantegna are the two sacred pastorals in the Mackay collection. In the Bellini, as in the other, nature breaks through the crust of design and brings with it something that is half fragrance, half music. Therein lies the soul of Renaissance painting, the interpretation of the things of this world by the spell of an imponderable, holy beauty. You find it in still another comparatively recent addition to the collection which revives the earlier Venetian tradition, a majestic *Madonna* by Antonello da Messina, who came out of Sicily to travel in Flanders, interest himself in the oil medium developed by the Van Eycks, and ultimately create a great stir in Venice. He has his intensely realistic aspect, which was only strengthened by his contact with the precise craftsmanship of the Flemish school. You feel it in the solidity of this *Madonna*, in the pure, exact draughtsmanship, in its luminous color and in the vitality throbbing in the strong, pyramidal design. But the close student of nature, so familiar to students through his portraits, like the famous *Condottiere* in the Louvre, was also a religious painter having profound sensibility and this is magnificently proclaimed in the *Madonna* at Harbor Hill. Form and color are endued with the fires of exalted feeling.

It is a motive affirmed nowhere in the collection more penetratingly than in the works to which I now turn, the works of the Sienese school. The little panel by Duccio, *The Calling of Peter and Andrew*, is one of the monuments in the history of art.

This great *tre cento* master was a pioneer so potent that, in Vasari's phrase, "he deserved to carry off the palm from those who came many years after him." In 1308, he embarked upon a prodigious scheme for the Cathedral at Siena, a huge Gothic *ancona* to be painted on both sides. Enthroned in the center of this "Majesty,"

as it was called, he placed the Blessed Virgin and in the many subdivisions of the altar piece he set forth the story of her life and that of the life of Christ. Of the fourteen *predella* pieces four were detached by some chance of fate and ultimately found their way into the Benson collection aforementioned. It is said that while they were there the authorities of the Louvre cast covetous eyes upon them, to the exclusion of all else, and the Benson collection was packed with priceless things. The Duccios came, instead, to the United States, *The Temptation of Christ* to pass into the Frick Museum; *Christ and the Woman of Samaria* and *The Raising of Lazarus* to be bought by Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and the one I have already named to find its home at Harbor Hill. Vasari's saying, that Duccio "wrought, as it were, in the Greek manner but blended considerably with the modern," is exactly confirmed by these pictures. It is as though the foreshadower of Sieneese efflorescence in art were inspired to breathe a more palpitating life into the old Byzantine tradition. He sets a new energy stirring beneath its wonted immobility, makes his design truer to a realistic impulse and more nobly spacious, and still endues the painting with the sweet, innocent ecstasy of the morning of the Sieneese school. *The Calling of Peter and Andrew* illustrates also the lovely purity and radiant force of his color, set against a background of gleaming gold. From the point of view of dramatic narrative the panel seems the least sophisticated thing in the world, yet it has the unified, balanced and greatly dignified effect of a big fresco.

After its calm solemnity come the traits of another Sieneese painter, Sassetta, who is represented in the Mackay collection after a fashion to excite, again, the envy of the Louvre. He in his turn painted an altar piece destined to have its various parts separated by time, an *ancona* for a church at Borgo di San Sepolcro, dedicated to St. Francis. Mr. Berenson has the central panel, in which the saint, "in glory," is portrayed at full length. Episodes in his life fill the series of eight panels which rounded out the decorative plan. One of these is lodged forever at Chantilly but all the rest are at Harbor Hill, six panels from the Chalandon collection, where they long rested in Paris, and one from that of the Comte de Martel, in the provinces. The subjects are innately picturesque fragments from the Franciscan legend, the Saint renouncing his heritage, the

Saint and the wolf of Gubbio, the Saint before the Soldan and before the Pope. In his treatment of them Sassetta, always a straightforward, humanly sympathetic chronicler, carries on with an animation of his own the realistic movement established by Duccio. He is very simple, unaffectedly explicit, almost matter of fact. In the *St. Francis Before the Pope*, for example, he is as baldly descriptive as some prose historian. Yet there exhales from this panel and from all the others the invigorating fervor of an authentic passion. He paints prose, yes, but the Franciscan poetry shines through it and carries a deep spiritual conviction. In the *St. Francis Receiving the Stigmata* the limitations of early fifteenth century convention are clearly marked but how Sassetta transcends them through the intensely emotional nature of his vision! With his landscape and his architecture he opens windows upon the Italy he knew, and with his powers of divination he causes them to look out also upon unearthly scenes. He matches his clairvoyance with his skill as a colorist and draughtsman.

Sassetta brings me back to the central appeal of the Mackay collection. Here the cult of the Madonna and other phases of devotional art are mirrored in extraordinary vividness, the sentiment of an epoch and the tradition of its artists being disclosed in a body of painting comparatively small yet wonderfully representative, wonderfully brilliant and eloquent. In these brief and rapid notes I have been able to touch only as it were in passing upon the qualities of this or that painting. But even a more exhaustive survey would necessarily close upon the same declaration—that as a privately formed group of Italian masterpieces the Mackay collection takes a place apart.

GREAT HALL

A FLEMISH GOTHIC TAPESTRY representing the *Marriage of David and Bathsheba*. Woven at Brussels in the Fifteenth Century, during the minority of Philip the Handsome, circa 1490.

Formerly in the Collection of John H. Wright, Boston, who acquired it in Spain.

ARMOUR OF ANNE DE MONTMORENCY (1493-1567), Constable of France. Worn by the Constable when he was wounded and taken prisoner at the Battle of St. Quentin, August 10, 1557. The suit, which emphasizes the Constable's robust proportions, is of Italian workmanship and is etched and gilded. Embossed volutes figure prominently in the ornamentation. The armour has been preserved at Wilton House since 1557, and was removed to Harbor Hill in 1929.

ARMOUR OF DUKE BERNHARD OF SAXE-WEIMAR (1604-1639). The principal motif on the breastplate presents a triumphant scene, and all of the elements are richly embossed with running ornaments in a sumptuous and elegant arrangement with splendid colour contrasts. This armour was a time-honoured heirloom of the archducal family of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, and according to tradition was presented by Louis XIII of France to the great general of the Thirty Years' War.

ARMOUR OF GEORGE CLIFFORD, EARL OF CUMBERLAND, K. G. English, 1580. This is one of the most complete and finest of existing suits of blued and gilded armour. The etched and gilded motifs include emblems of the Tudor family, open cinquefoil roses with a fleur-de-lis between connected by true lovers' knots; also the cypher of Queen Elizabeth, two E's addorsed. The left gauntlet belongs to the armour of Henry, Prince of Wales, now in Windsor Castle. From Appleby Castle, the home of Lord Hothfield, a descendant of the original owner.

ARMOUR OF HENRY HERBERT, SECOND EARL OF PEMBROKE (1534?-1601). English, 1580. It records in its decoration the history of the great Pembroke family epitomised in twenty-two coats-of-arms on the achievements etched on the helmet and other helmets.

From the Collection of the Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery



ARMOUR OF THE EARL OF CUMBERLAND
Great Hall

GREAT HALL

COMPLETE ARMOUR. German, 1550. Etched in bands enclosing foliage and trophies of armour; each band is bordered by a series of embossed semi-circles enclosing foliate scrolls, the embossed areas being gilded over all.

From the Collection of the Duke of Altenburg, Schloss Altenburg in Thuringen.

TWO MARRIAGE CHESTS (Story of the Journey of Tobit). Roman Workmanship, circa 1550. Carved Walnut, gilt.

Formerly in the Collections of Baron Adolphe de Rothschild, and Baron Maurice de Rothschild, Paris.

A HIGH THRONAL CHAIR. French Renaissance, Sixteenth Century. Burgundian School, circa 1565. (With oak-tree in panel.) Carved Walnut.

Formerly in the Collection of Oscar Hainauer, Berlin.

A HIGH THRONAL CHAIR. French Renaissance, Sixteenth Century. Lyonnaise School, circa 1580. (With colonne-candelabra supporting a shield in panel.) Carved Walnut.

Formerly in the Collection of Oscar Hainauer, Berlin.

A FRENCH GOTHIC TAPESTRY representing Country Life: *Sunshine*. Woven in France in the Fifteenth Century, circa 1480. Inscribed in archaic French:

*"We see the weather adorned with verdure,
Sometimes as pleasant as an angel,
Then suddenly changed and very strange,
Never the weather continues the same."*

Formerly in the collection of Prince de Broglie, Château du Chaumont, near Blois, Touraine.

A FRENCH GOTHIC TAPESTRY, representing Country Life: *Youth*. Woven in France in the Fifteenth Century, circa 1480. Inscribed in archaic French:

GREAT HALL

*"Youth plays while ruddy health remains,
And thinks all lies within its grasp,
But this triumph is not endless.
Here you see the example quite plainly,
Even he is happy with death at his breast,
This by youth should be noted."*

Formerly in the Collection of Prince de Broglie, Château du Chaumont, near Blois, Touraine.

A MONUMENTAL SCULPTURED CHIMNEY-PIECE, supported upon two demi-columns, and ornamented with an escutcheon between medallion bust portraits of a man and a woman in high relief. French, sixteenth century.

JACOPO SANSOVINO. 1486-1570. Venetian School. A pupil of Andrea Sansovino, whose name he adopted instead of his family name of Tatti. Influenced by Michelangelo, and later by the Venetian School of painters. Active in Florence, Rome, Venice, and Padua. He was the greatest architect and sculptor in Venice.

A PAIR OF BRONZE ANDIRONS (Mars and Venus)

Formerly in the Collections of Baron Adolphe de Rothschild, and Baron Maurice de Rothschild, Paris.

ANDREA BRIOSCO, called RICCIO. 1470-1532. Paduan School. Pupil of Bellano, in whose workshop he was employed as assistant for several years. After Bellano's death, he completed the bronzes on the Roccabonella Tomb in the Church of S. Francesco in Padua. His bronze work in Padua raised that form of plastic art to its zenith.

A PASCHAL BRONZE CANDLESTICK

Composed of six tiers of groups of male and female figures.

A LARGE WARDROBE, or ARMOIRE. French, Sixteenth Century. Lyonnaise School, circa 1580 (with six caryatid figures, two grisaille panels representing War and Justice, and two carved panels of trophies.)

Formerly in the Collection of Charles T. Barney, New York.

GREAT HALL

A LARGE WARDROBE, or ARMOIRE. French, Sixteenth Century, Lyonnaise School, circa 1580 (with six caryatid figures, and four grisaille and gold panels representing St. Prisca, St. Tryphoena, St. Matthew, and St. Mark).

Formerly in the Collection of Charles T. Barney, New York.

A CARVED AND UPHOLSTERED STATE ARMCHAIR. French, Sixteenth Century. With incurved arms terminating in lion masks and supported by carved standing figures of Hercules; plain octagonal legs and base rails; upholstered in red and gold trellis velvet and fringes.

Formerly in the Collection of Jacques Seligmann, Paris.

AN UPHOLSTERED STATE ARMCHAIR. French, Sixteenth Century. With incurved arms, plain square legs, and pierced frontal rail; upholstered at the back with an elaborate acanthus embroidery surrounding a representation of the Annunciation; plain velvet seat.

A POLYCHROME AND UPHOLSTERED STATE ARMCHAIR. French, Sixteenth Century. With straight arms and a wide frontal base-rail; upholstered in red velvet and fringes.

A DANTESCA CHAIR, or FALD STOOL. Florentine, Fifteenth Century. Curule shape, with incurved arms, and base rails ending in claws; back and seat upholstered in red velvet.

A DANTESCA CHAIR, or FALD STOOL. Florentine, Fifteenth Century. Curule shape, with incurved arms, and plain base rails; back and rest upholstered in richly embroidered velvet.

TWO CACQUETOIRE CHAIRS, with curving arms. French, middle of the Sixteenth Century.

Formerly in the Collection of Mrs. Rita Lydig, New York.

A CARVED AND GILT TWO-FOLD SCREEN with Twelve Panels ornamented with allegorical figures. Spanish, Sixteenth Century.

Formerly in the Collection of Charles T. Barney, New York.

GREAT HALL

A LARGE PASCHAL POLYCHROME CANDLESTICK in three tiers, and eighteen panels, with representations of Saints. Spanish Gothic, late Fifteenth Century. Wood, tempera and gilt.

COMPLETE ARMOUR. Augsburg, dated 1554. The breastplate is etched with a crucifix before which is a kneeling knight in armour; on the left side of the breastplate is an etched scroll enclosing the name of the knight who wore the armour: FRANZ ISCHK . V . TEVEN-PAC.

COMPLETE ARMOUR OF DUKE JOHN WILLIAM OF WEIMAR (reigned 1567-1573). Augsburg, 1570. Etched in bands divided into leaf-shaped areas, the alternate backgrounds being gilded and blackened.

From the Collection of the Duke of Altenburg.

A GOTHIC REFECTORY TABLE. Florentine, Fifteenth Century. Oblong top, scrolled ends, and a heavy stretcher carved with flattened scrolls.

SWORD OF AMBROGIO DI SPINOLA, a celebrated Italian General in the Spanish Service. Brescian workmanship, 1600.

The blue-black steel hilt is almost covered with exquisitely chiselled Biblical scenes.

VISORED BASINET. Milanese, about 1390. The bowl, which is forged out of a single piece of metal, is graceful in outline and presents a glancing surface to a weapon.

From the Armoury of Count Trapp in the Castle at Churburg.

TWO CRUSADERS' BASINETS. Italian, 1300-1350. Conical bowl made in one piece. These deep helmets are skilfully wrought.

From the Castle of Chalcis, which was taken from the Venetians by the Turks in 1470.