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ENTOMBMENT OF CHRIST

Paduan School. XVth Century Gift of Mrs. Jesse H. Metcalf

THE distinguishing characteristic of the Italian Renaissance was a distinct union of realism and deep religious feeling which permeated the whole world of art at that time, but especially found its expression in the sculpture of the period. This is true of the work of not only the great artists but of the minor ones whose existence in many cases is only known through the few examples of their artistic skill which have survived the course of years. In spite of the lack of the genius of a Michelangelo, or a Della Robbia, these sculptors of lesser creative ability frequently produced works of the greatest interest which are not only impelling but which reveal the potent forces which awoke so great a movement in Italy during the early Renaissance.

Students of Renaissance sculpture then, as well as all who appreciate the expression of beauty, will be greatly interested in an original terra-cotta group, representing the "Entombment of Christ," which is a recent gift to the Museum

from Mrs. Jesse H. Metcalf. This altar-piece dates from the fifteenth century and is the work of an artist of the Paduan School.

The persons taking part in this last mark of respect to the dead Christ and who are represented in this group are Joseph of Arimathea, St. John, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Cleophas, Salome and Nicodemus. Similar groups in marble and terra-cotta must have been a feature of the altars in many churches of the period, and all that have been preserved to our time are full of the Italian feeling.

While it is not essential to our enjoyment of the group to have any definite idea about the artist, it will doubtless be of interest to scholars to compare this new acquisition of the School of Design with the examples of the work of three North Italian artists of the end of the Quattro-cento, namely Bartolomeo Bellano, Andrea Riccio, and Giovanni Minello. Of these the last is the most important, and there are many points in common between the modeling of the new relief and the examples of Minello's work which may be seen and studied elsewhere. An unusual opportunity is offered for such a comparison since there is a work of Minello in Fenway Court in Boston, the home of Mrs. J. L. Gardner's superb collection of works of art. This is a Pieta with similar treatment of the hands and a like feature in the division between the figures, which deserves attention.

Giovanni Minello, although by no means among the greater artists of the Renaissance is one who achieved considerable distinction. Although doubtless much of his work has disappeared, an eminent critic* has brought together an extended list of sculpture which may be attributed to him. Minello was born in Padua in 1460 and must have been greatly influenced by the emphasis which was laid upon high standards in art in his own city and in Florence. The chief demand of the time was for sculpture designed for church use in decoration, so Minello received many commissions of that nature for churches in Padua and vicinity. Among these were the churches of S. Giustina at Padua and S. Giovanni Battista at Bassano. Other examples may be seen in the Museo Civico at Padua.

The work of Bartolomeo Bellano and Andrea Riccio lacks in general the refinement of line and the balance in the composition which is characteristic of the work of Giovanni Minello, and the group in question possesses these very features of artistic merit. Moreover a like refinement of treatment is evident in the drapery.

Whether the group which has now become one of the chief acquisitions of the Museum is by Minello or not is but secondary to its great interest to those who find enjoyment in the genius of an artist who could so well embody in terra-cotta the passion and sorrow of that last moment of respect, and yet so skillfully that the visitor is sympathetic and not repelled. Throughout the whole treatment there breathes the spirit of an artist who not only felt the inspiring age in which he lived, but was able to create a work decidedly above the average, if we may judge by what has survived in Italian, and other Museums. In any case the acquisition is of such importance as to merit the attention and enthusiasm of every friend of the institution, and of such museum-quality as would render it a notable accession in any Museum of Art.

While there was a considerable demand for church sculpture of this type, it was not all executed in marble, for the Renaissance accepted the tradition of earlier Greek and Roman days and modeled in terra-cotta, a medium which admits of much greater ease of treatment than marble. The great possibilities of this material are exemplified in the enameled terra-cotta sculptures of the Della Robbias and their followers.

*(See article by Cornelius von Fabriczy on Giovanni Minello, in Jahrbuch der Königlich Preuszischen Kunstsammlungen, April, 1907, pp. 53-89.)

Other artists, such as Minello, found equal possibilities in the same medium but with the feature of painting the surfaces. Of this class of painted terra-cotta sculpture the "Entombment of Christ" in the Museum is a good example, and has the further interest of not having been damaged by repainting. —L. E. R.

PERUVIAN TEXTILES

Pre-Spanish Gift of Mrs. Jesse H. Metcalf

THE Museum collection of Textiles has been lately enriched by the gift from Mr. Jesse H. Metcalf, of a number of pieces of tapestry and other woven fabrics which belong to the time of the great Inca civilization in Peru, before the conquest of that country by the Spaniards, and are of peculiar interest, being examples of an early American Art that reached great perfection, but of which comparatively little now remains.

With other objects, implements of warfare, tools of trade, kitchen utensils and articles of adornment have these masterpieces of the art of weaving been brought to light after their centuries of burial, and

have revealed to us a knowledge of the daily customs of this ancient race as have the treasures of Pompeii. These textiles, which were worn and wrapped around the bodies placed in graves, have been preserved, in most cases in perfect condition, owing to the dryness of the climate and the salty nature of the soil. From them we learn to how high a state of development the art of weaving was brought by the ancient Peruvians, and from the objects found in the graves, the looms, the yarn, the shuttles, the needles, we have learned their method of manufacture. The materials are cotton and wool, often of very fine quality; the wool coming from the llama and alpaca, animals still peculiar to the country.

Many of the garments were woven as tapestry and are similar in texture and method to the tapestry which was woven into the clothing of the ancient Copts, or to the finer grade of Kis Khilim rugs. The warp, made of one continuous strand, was stretched on a frame, and the weft or filling was introduced by means of long, wooden needles around which the yarn was wound; the needles pointed at both ends were weighted in the center by a small bead or whorl of pottery which was engraved or painted with some design, or else carved in some curious shape, like a human being, a frog, a bird or some other creature. Besides this method, which was the earliest employed, there was also true loom weaving, and fabrics of varying thickness from heavy and three ply cloths to delicate gauzes were made. These were ornamented in the weaving, by embroidery, by painting on the cloth, or the cloth itself was dipped in dye, certain portions being reserved from the action of the dye by being tied tightly so that it could not penetrate.

The designs of the woven stuffs are often in stripes, with a warp of differing colors used, but the majority of patterns are of spots arranged in rows or bands or in diaper fashion, and the ornament is usually of some form of representation, a human figure, a bird or animal, or in a few cases a plant or flower. Owing to the method used in the tapestries the shapes are distinctly geometrical and follow diagonal lines which become the definite motive in the loom-woven fabrics, so much so, that the original form degenerates into an apparently meaningless shape, the animals and birds becoming mere frets or parts of a zig-zag pattern. There is little so-called grace or beauty of form, the curve being unknown, angles being the predominant feature, but there is often great beauty of color. The tones are harmonious, not only in the earliest examples which are simple in arrangement, being made in natural browns, in reds and blues, but also in the later work which often has a great range of color, rich and brilliant, among which are some masterpieces of design, the play of colors alternating and repeating with an ingenuity of invention that only finds its equal in the eastern rugs.

Our collection, though small, has examples of tapestry and loom woven fabrics, an embroidered net and a unique fragment of gauze, its design made by being tied and dipped in dye. The patterns are typical, consisting of bird and animal shapes, and some with the human figure, as well as others merely geometrical. Though but fragments they are not only of great value to the student of design and of weaving, but are of extreme interest historically and artistically to the casual observer. — H. H. C.

A SPECIAL feature of the work of the year was the production of a mediæval masque by the students of the School of Design. The custom of previous years had been to give a costume party in which special dances of an allegorical nature were offered. While some of these costume parties were in the nature of a pageant, the masque of last May easily surpassed all of the earlier productions in artistic merit, in its ambitious nature, and in its historical feeling.

Not only should the School of Design

be pleased over the success of this masque but it was of interest to friends of Brown University as well, since it was written by Mr. George Boas, and the music was arranged by Mr. Marshall Sheldon. Both are upper-classmen at the University and former students at the School of Design.

The choice of the period of the masque was unusually happy. The date was the fifteenth century, which was alive with a sense of the beautiful and an appreciation of the heritage of human achievement which it had received.

The masque was presented to the audience as in the garden of a villa near Florence in the year 1475. Here the Lady Simonetta, with Lorenzo the Magnificent and Giuliano di Medici, attended by their pages and the brilliantly costumed members of the court, found their places on the palace loggia, and took a serious interest in the allegory presented for their consideration and that of the audience, in the garden terrace below. The masque was given in honor of the Lady Simonetta and concerned itself with the Triumphs of Science, Death and Love. Prefaced by a stately and measured dance on the part of some of the ladies in the court, the masque opened with the appearance of Prologue who gave in outline the story and introduced the many characters.

The first part of the masque presented the birth of the flowers. From the colors of the rainbow were born the butterflies and they in turn were the source of the flowers. This evolution was symbolized in a series of dances. Then followed the Triumph of Science, where the knowledge expressed by Astrology, Physick, Botany, Geography, Philosophy, Mathematics and Alchemy brought the flowers and stars into subjection. Their triumph, however, was short for they succumbed to the powers of Death, especially the Four Humors; Choleric, Melancholic, Sanguine and Phlegmatic. Death himself appeared and boastfully pronounced his victory, even daring to summon some of the mighty dead who had felt his power.

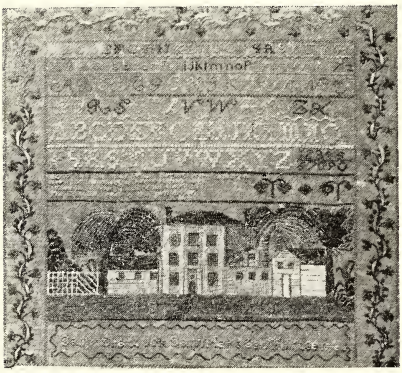
But he in turn had to yield to the deathless power of Love. Dante and Fra Angelico, who through their works had gained the life of immortal fame, bore in the Light of Love, and the masque ended with renewed life for the Sciences, the Stars and the Flowers. After a final word by Epilogue the Lady Simonetta and her train of courtiers left the loggia, passed over the garden terrace and out through the audience.

Such an ambitious presentation can only add to the reputation which the School of Design already enjoys of supplying each year an entertainment of the highest quality. The earnest work of the author and the student body who so ably carried out both the spirit and the letter of the masque was much appreciated, and the committee, of which Mr. Henry Hunt Clark was chairman, may well feel pleased at the success of the evenings of May 16th and 17th, when the masque was given in Memorial Hall for the benefit of the Traveling Scholarship Fund of the Alumni Association of the Rhode Island School of Design.

A MOST interesting addition to the museum has been made by Mrs. Gustav Radeke, who has presented it with two curious old American samplers, both in an excellent state of preservation and duly embroidered with the names of their childish workers. The first is inscribed at the bottom "Sally Shattuck, Sampler, aged Thirteen years," while the other is the work of little "Miss Mary Dusenbery" and is dated "June the 8th, 1802."

It is hard in these days to realize the important part which the sampler played in the childhood life of our grandmothers. Where so many interests and recreations are offered the children of to-day, a hundred years ago it was thought imperative and, at the same time, quite sufficient that the little maid spend endless hours at her embroidery, and the more skill she at-

tained at an early age, the better. Thus the word sampler or samplette or samcloth as they were sometimes called was probably derived from the word "en-



NEW ENGLAND SAMPLERS
Early XIXth Century

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke

sample," meaning a sample of the degree of skill to which the youthful worker had attained.

The sampler was probably the most universal and best preserved piece of embroidery done by our grandmothers and great-grandmothers. Although its reign in America was in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the custom of making it was undoubtedly brought over by our Puritan ancestors from England where needle-work of all kinds had attained a high degree of perfection.

Samplers were usually worked upon canvas or a homemade fabric somewhat resembling scrim. The adornment consisted generally of the letters of the alphabet, both capital and small letters being given; and the Arabic and sometimes the Roman numerals as far as ten. Thus the sampler aided in teaching its little worker her letters and numbers. To this was added the maker's name, age, sometimes place of residence and often a verse indicative of good morals and industry, or a sentence from the Bible. As a further decoration was added some crude representations of impossible birds, flowers, trees, houses or human beings. In the older samplers little attention was paid to the representation of things in their real color. For example, a green horse might be made to balance a red tree with perfect propriety. Neither was there any attempt at perspective. Distance was indicated by a different shade of worsted. The green horse might have his off legs worked in red, a scheme similar to that followed in the famous Bayeaux tapestry.

Little Sally Shattuck's sampler is done on a deep tan scrim nearly square in shape. Beginning at the top is the entire alphabet in printed letters. Next, comes the alphabet in written capital letters, the alphabet a third time in large printed capital letters, followed by the Arabic numerals up to ten. After these comes a brief verse embroidered in white which although it is partly illegible runs somewhat like this:

> "How best the Maid Whom circling years improve
> Her God the object of her warmest love
> Whose useful hours sucesive as they glide
> The book the needle and the pen divide."

Beneath the verse comes the decorative glory of the entire sampler, a large white

house with a red roof and green windows. It is a mansion of the true old New England type having the barn attached, and is surrounded by green and yellow trees. In the foreground is a green lawn with a neat black path from the front door. Below this remarkable production comes the maker's name and age and then the whole, alphabet, verse and house, is surrounded by an elaborate floral border in red, green and pink.

The other sampler is equally interesting and intricate. Here the alphabet has been done in both small and large printed capitals, and also in small written letters, together with the Arabic numerals up to twenty. Following is the plea to

> "Remove far from me Vanity and lyes. Give me neither Poverty nor Riches. Feed me with Food convenient For me."

Below, the ambitious child has depicted the Garden of Eden. In the center is a tree, presumably the apple tree, and on one side stands Adam, on the other Eve, while the snake, very black and with a peculiar head, is extended at their feet. Surrounding the whole piece, as in the other sampler, is a conventional floral border in green and white.

Although the day of the sampler has long since gone by, those that have been preserved will always possess a singular interest for us in that they reflect so clearly much of the spirit and customs of those times when the stern, uncompromising attitude towards life and the world, together with an inflexible devotion to duty, was the birthright of every child born in the new country.

— M. M.

ONE of the factors in the development of Providence during the past thirty-six years has been the remarkable growth of the Rhode Island School of Design. The purpose of its founders and the policy of those who have carried on the work was to offer in the institution such features as best supplied the public needs. To this end was the Museum founded, so that all might benefit by its galleries of works of art and its public lectures. With this in mind was started the Mechanical Design Department, that of Jewelry and Silversmithing, and still more recently the Department of Textile Design. The last named is of great importance to the State and to its industries, since nearly forty-seven per cent. of the production of the State is textile. In order that this department might best serve both the textile industry in general and the great body of about fifty thousand operatives in the State, some of whom eagerly welcome an opportunity for advancement, there has been made a most generous offer to the institution.

The growth of the department has been constant and its expansion inevitable. So that the offer of friends to help the institution to build a new building on a part of the area owned by the School of Design, which will admit of such expansion as is necessary to further its usefulness, is decidedly timely.

This gift was conditional on an appropriation being awarded by the State for the purpose of the textile department of $5000 a year until it was housed in its new building, and then the appropriation to be increased to $10,000 a year. Realizing what this opportunity meant to one of the State's chief industries through the instruction of better trained workmen, the State voted such an appropriation, thus securing for the institution and the general public the benefit of a fully equipped building in the immediate future. With such a chance for practical instruction, and with so much assistance in the way of scholarships from the State, there is no reason for any who may be interested in textile work not to secure such training as they may desire.

The appropriation by the State only emphasizes the public nature of the Rhode Island School of Design and the ever increasing interest in it.

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All communications should be addressed to the General Editor, Mr. L. E. Rowe.

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ADMISSIONS.

Hours of Opening.— The galleries are open to the public on every day of the year, with the exception of Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and the Fourth of July. From July 1st to September 15th the hours are from 1 to 5 P. M. on week days and from 2 to 5 P. M. Sundays; from September 15th to July 1st the hours are from 10 A. M. to 5 P. M. week days and from 2 to 5 P. M. Sundays. The Pendleton Collection is open from 2 to 5 P. M. daily.

Twenty-five cents admission to the museum is charged on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and the museum is free on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Free transferable tickets admitting four persons on pay-days are sent to all members of the corporation. Art students and artists, on application to the authorities, may obtain free tickets of admission for pay-day. Teachers with pupils of both public and private schools will be admitted without payment upon application.

PHOTOGRAPHS ON SALE.

Photographic copies of many of the objects belonging to the museum, including photographs of the Pendleton Collection of furniture, are on sale at the entrance to the museum.

PUBLICATIONS.

Three bulletins and a year-book are to be issued quarterly and are sent free of charge to the members, and, on written request, to alumni of the institution.

The "Catalogue of the Memorial Exhibition of Works of Art given by Isaac Comstock Bates" will be forwarded to any address for twenty-five cents. A copy will gladly be sent on application to any of the subscribers of the School of Design who have not as yet received their copy.

COPYING.

Permission to copy or photograph in the galleries of the museum may be obtained in the office. Such permits will not be issued for Sundays or legal holidays.

LIBRARY.

The Library contains 2,292 volumes, 13,000 mounted photographs and reproductions, 600 lantern slides, and about 800 postcards. The attendance during the past three months has been 2,736, while the circulation was 1,088 books and 2,375 plates.