

JUNE, 1903



NOTES ON THE PICTURES AT BELVOIR CASTLE BY LADY VICTORIA MANNERS PART I.

BEFORE attempting to describe in detail some of the principal pictures at Belvoir, it may be well to give a short account of the history of the collection, especially as it is so intimately connected with the greatest days of English art, when Sir Joshua Reynolds was in his zenith. The third and fourth Dukes of Rutland were both ardent collectors and patrons of art; Charles, the fourth Duke and Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, with the advantage of a long minority, was able fully to indulge his passion. When quite a young man, his chief adviser in artistic matters appears to have been Alleyne Fitzherbert, afterwards Lord St. Helens; later, however, the Duke became the fast friend and patron of Sir Joshua, making him his chief counsellor and agent in all matters connected with the purchase of pictures, besides frequently employing him to paint portraits of his wife, the beautiful Mary Isabella, and their family. The letters from the great painter to the Duke are so interesting,

and throw so much light on the Art world of that time, that I propose to quote from them freely. The almost passionate admiration displayed by Reynolds for the cold and rigid classicism of Nicholas Poussin, and the extraordinary transactions relating to the purchase of *The Seven Sacraments* by that master, are among the remarkable features of the correspondence, revealing in the latter case the great difficulty experienced by Italians, even in those days, in evading the law against the export of works of art. Had it not been for the lamentable fire in 1816, which almost entirely destroyed the then existing castle, and in which perished no less than nineteen pictures

by Reynolds, sixteen by Van Dyck, and many others by different masters, the collection would have been almost unrivalled in examples of the English School of that date. However, a fair number were saved, and remembering the excellent adage "that it's no use crying over spilt milk," we will leave so painful a subject, which only awakens vain and useless regrets. The earliest picture in point of date is the very interesting "Star Chamber" panel (*Henry VII., Empson, and Dudley*). All three portraits are in profile, and are, probably, admirable likenesses. The young man on the right of the



HENRY VII., EMPSON, AND DUDLEY ARTIST UNKNOWN



CHARLES II., WHEN PRINCE OF WALES
BY VAN DYCK

picture is in all likelihood Dudley, who was made a Privy Councillor at the age of twenty-three! A small red seal on the back of the frame shows the lozenge surmounted by a coronet. The arms appear to be those of Howard impaling Montagu. The picture probably belonged to Anne (Montagu), Countess of Suffolk, who died in 1720. Hanging in the centre of the picture gallery on the opposite wall is a magnificent full-length of Henry VIII., by Holbein, purchased by the fourth Duke at Lord Torrington's sale in 1787 for the modest sum of £211. The King is represented standing; he is magnificently dressed, "white hose, with the Garter on his left leg; a gold chain round the neck with the letter H, with a pendant circular gold case without any device; another gold chain or collar across the shoulder over the surcoat is mounted in jewels set in gold and enamel. The whole of the dress and ornaments is most

elaborately painted and gilded, and in excellent effect of light and colour, being in an absolutely perfect state of preservation" (Redford's Catalogue). Dr. Waagen says of this portrait of Henry VIII., "Although painted on canvas, this picture is of such truth, delicacy and transparency, that I consider it an original."

Perhaps the most interesting of the Royal portraits is Edward Bower's three-quarter length of Charles I. The King is seated, wearing a high crowned black hat, and around his neck the ribbon and George of the Garter; the Star of the order is on the mantle; his hair and beard are quite grey, and his expression sad and melancholy in the extreme. The picture is signed "Edward Bower att Temple Bar fecit 1648," and is supposed to have been painted during the trial. The chair is also supposed to be the actual one in which he sat, and the staff, which the King holds in his right hand, that which lost its top during the trial. Other versions of this picture are at All Souls' College, Oxford, and St. Andrew's; while Sir R. Bulkeley has one, we believe identical with the Belvoir portrait. At the Winter Exhibition at the



PORTRAIT OF A MAN BY REMBRANDT

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New Gallery, it was interesting to compare this portrait with the Duke of Norfolk's magnificent Van Dyck of the Royal Martyr in armour in his earlier and happier years, when full of life and vigour. Little is known of Edward Bower; in Bryant's *Dictionary of Painters* he is mentioned as living in the time of Charles I., and that he painted portraits of John Pym and General Fairfax; but he must have been an artist of considerable merit and gifted with much sympathetic insight. Historically interesting is Van Dyck's sketch in oils in amber and white, hanging in the New Library, of the *Procession of the order of the Garter*, purchased by Sir



PORTRAIT OF A MAN BY ALBRECHT DÜRER (Size 33 ins. by 24 ins.)

Joshua Reynolds for the fourth Duke. A portrait by Van Dyck of Charles II., when Prince of Wales, hangs near his ill-fated father in the Picture Gallery. It is a charming picture, and depicts the young prince in armour; the dark boyish face is most attractive, and we do not wonder at the epithet bestowed on him by Mr. Metcalf, who presented the picture to the Duke, as the following extract shows:—
 “James Metcalf to the Duke of Rutland, 1786, October 7th, Fordham Abbey. I want you should have a special portrait of King Charles 2nd by Vandike, which hangs up in this house, a full length, and the prettiest brown boy I ever saw. The canvas at the



DUTCH PROVERBS BY D. TENIERS

The Connoisseur

bottom is a little soiled, but the figure is complete. It is too large for a house I have built and am going to live in, in Bedfordshire, next year. I desire you will accept of the picture, and I will send it anywhere you like when I leave this place" (*Belvoir MSS.*, vol. iii., p. 348).

The nucleus of the collection of pictures was formed, as is so often the case, by family portraits.

years 1602-8, as the Earl married again, Cicely, widow of Sir Henry Hungerford, in 1608. The subject of this beautiful portrait was the mother of Katherine Manners, afterwards wife of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. Her portrait by Van Dyck hangs in the Regent's Gallery. The unfortunate Duchess's life was a remarkably romantic and interesting one. The greatest heiress of her day, and gifted with beauty



THE LAST SUPPER BY LUCAS VAN LEYDEN (?) (Size 65½ ins. by 53½ ins.)

To this category belongs a magnificent full-length portrait of Frances, wife of Francis, sixth Earl of Rutland, daughter and co-heir of Sir Henry Knyvett, of Charleton, and widow of Sir William Bevil, of Kirkhampton, by Zuccherò. The rich red dress, with its gorgeous embroidery, happily lacks the distortion and grotesqueness of some of the Elizabethan fashions, and the colour is as fresh and bright as if it had been painted yesterday; at the bottom of the picture is the inscription, "Frances Knevet," Countess of Rutland. Hence the portrait was probably painted between the

and wit, she married, much against her father's wish, the handsome George Villiers, and remained, in spite of his numerous infidelities, ever an adoring and devoted wife. In this portrait she is depicted dressed in mourning, with a falling lace collar, and is wearing at her bosom a miniature mounted in black velvet of the murdered Duke, who had been assassinated by Felton in 1628. There is a curious full-length portrait of Buckingham by Daniel Mytens, who appears to have been attached to the Duke's household in the same way as the painter Van Somer was connected

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with the great Earl of Arundel, Buckingham's rival in court favour.

Among many other interesting portraits of this period, space forbids us to do more than mention Jansen's full-lengths of Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton, and his wife. This nobleman was the friend of Shakespeare and of Roger, fifth Earl of Rutland—both young men were implicated in Essex's rash attempt of 1601, for which Southampton and Rutland were sent to the Tower, the latter only being released on payment of a fine of the then enormous sum of £10,000. A beautiful and interesting portrait on wood of Benvenuto Cellini is by Angelo Bronzino, and represents the sculptor in his working dress, holding in his hand some specimen of his goldsmith's art; his hair and eyes are very dark, and his complexion olive-colour; altogether he looks a typical Italian of the Renaissance. Portraits of Benvenuto are rare, and this is fortunately in excellent preservation. Hanging as a pendant to this picture is a portrait of a young man, with strongly marked features and pensive expression, by Rembrandt. It was recently exhibited at the Rembrandt exhibition at Burlington House, and in its sombre depth of colour and strength of treatment is a very fine and characteristic example of the great master. Next to this example is a very interesting portrait of a man by Albrecht Dürer, signed with his well-known monogram, and bearing the date 1520; from his dress and attitude it is

probable that the sitter was some distinguished burgher or learned professor, as he is wearing an order suspended from his neck by a heavy gold chain. Dr. Waagen says of this portrait, "Of very animated conception and light yellow flesh tones. An admirably executed work of his earlier time." Another picture, *The Last Supper*, attributed to Albrecht Dürer, has been the subject of much discussion since it was purchased by the fourth Duke. Dr. Waagen's criticism is, "*A Last Supper*, here most erroneously entitled a joint work of Albrecht Dürer and L. Van Leyden, is decidedly a work of the old Spanish School, under the influence of the Netherlandish School, especially as regards the landscape, which is treated in the style of Jan Mostaert." We are enabled to fix the period of the picture by the date "Anno 1527," which is seen upon the gilt work filling the upper part of



THE DUET *BY NETSCHER (Size 15½ ins. by 18 ins.)

the window, through which we see the Jesus riding on an ass and entering Jerusalem, and a beautifully painted landscape beyond.

The collection is especially rich in pictures of the Dutch and Flemish schools; a large canvas, *The Crowning of St. Catherine*, by Rubens, at once attracts the eye on entering the picture gallery; this example of the master was purchased by the fourth Duke for £1,200. The gem of this school, however, is a really delightful little panel, *The Bird Cage*, by Gerard Dou—a boy holding a bird snare and a girl with a bucket standing at a bow window, below which

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FRANCES KNYVETT, COUNTESS OF RUTLAND BY ZUCCHERO



GRACE BEFORE MEAT BY JAN STEEN

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is a beautiful little bas-relief by the artist's friend, the sculptor Duquesnoy. The subject is more refined and poetical than the generality of Dou's pictures, and the technique almost approaches miniature painting, so finished and delicate is the execution. This picture was purchased for the fourth Duke at Brussels, about 1780-87, for £350. David Teniers is well represented by several examples, the largest and most important of which is a very curious picture illustrating the Dutch Proverbs; the figure in the foreground throwing his money into the river as bait to the fish represents "Fools and their Money are soon parted." It is supposed that this young man is a portrait of the painter's son. "'Tis an ill wind that blows nobody any good," is represented by a man sitting down and warming his hands before his neighbour's house which is on fire. To the extreme left of the picture the adage, "The Three Plagues of Life, a smoking chimney, a leaking roof, and a

scolding wife," is depicted; the man rids himself of these evils by carrying the smoke out in a basket, and stopping the leaking roof with cheese-cakes, but no ingenuity can rid him of his scolding wife, whose head, attired in a night-cap of appalling dimensions, is seen appearing through an upper window of the house.

Among many other *genre* pictures of this class, we have only space to notice a fine example by Jan Steen, entitled *Grace before Meat*, exhibited at Burlington House in 1902, and two charming Netschers. One of them, *The Duet*, Waagen attributes to Terburg. "This beautiful picture agrees in essential respects in composition with one in the Louvre, but is far superior as regards singular warmth and lightness." The Dutch landscape painters are well represented; Van der Heyden contributes two carefully finished examples, Ruysdael some typically breezy sea-scapes, and Wynants a fine landscape, signed and dated 1663.

(To be continued.)



THE BIRD CAGE BY GERARD DOU