THE BEQUEST OF LIZZIE P. BLISS

By the will of Lizzie P. Bliss, who died on March 12, 1931, the Museum became the owner of thirteen works of art from her celebrated collection—three oil paintings by Arthur B. Davies, two water colors and two wax paintings by the same artist, a picture by Claude Monet, three Byzantine paintings, a beaten silver Camel and Rider of Parthian workmanship, and a Chinese vase of the Yung Chêng period. In recognition of the value and importance of this bequest, the Board of Trustees declared Miss Bliss a Benefactor of the Museum, at their meeting held April 27, 1931.

As most of the objects left to our Museum were included in the exhibition of the collection held this past summer in the Museum of Modern Art as a memorial to Miss Bliss, they have only lately been delivered to us. They are now on view in the Room of Recent Accessions.

The silver camel mounted by an Iranian nomad and his son is both interesting and rare. The style shows a mixture of Oriental and Hellenistic elements characteristic of the Parthian art of the first century A.D. It was probably made in the province of Bactria, to which some of the Parthian and Sasanian silverwork must be attributed.

The porcelain vase of the Yung Chêng period (1723-1735) with which the bequest enriched the Chinese collection has an ivory-white glaze of eggshell texture over a delicately incised design representing a plantain tree and flowering shrubs in a fenced inclosure, with a phoenix perched on the fence; on the foot of the vase is a border of parallel S-scrolls. The porcelain is the fine, close-grained variety which is usually referred to as soft paste. The body of the vase is pear shaped with a graceful tapering neck and flaring lip. The Yung Chêng period is transitional in style, carrying on the traditions of K'ang Hsi and aiming at a still more delicate and perfect execution. This little vase is the acme of perfection, both in the quality of the porcelain and in shape and design.

Many of the pictures have already been seen in our galleries. The three oil paintings by Davies and one of the wax paintings were lent, with many others from the Bliss Collection, to the Arthur B. Davies Memorial Exhibition of 1930 (there catalogued “Lent anonymously,” as Miss Bliss always specified); and two of them, the Unicorns and Adventure, as well as the Byzantine picture representing the Presentation in the Temple, were shown at the time of the

ADVENTURE, BY ARTHUR B. DAVIES

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Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration in 1920, when outstanding works of many schools were borrowed from New York collectors to augment the Museum's own exhibits. The Monet has also been seen here, having been included in the Impressionist and contemporary American painting it is exceptionally valuable in the showing of the school which the Museum is most anxious to strengthen and complete. The other works by Davies splendidly fill out the hitherto inadequate representation of this Post-Impressionist Exhibition of 1921. Miss Bliss was a believer in giving the widest usefulness to her pictures and welcomed opportunities to share with others the pleasure she herself took in them, with the result that no privately owned collection in New York was better known than hers.

The Unicorns has come to be generally recognized as one of the three or four most successful and characteristic of Arthur Davies's productions. As a masterpiece of delicate and most personal painter, whose name, we feel confident, is destined to last as an important one in the history of American art. The Bliss Collection began with the buying of a picture by Davies, and his work remained the particular distinction, the specialty of the collection. With whole-hearted and generous partisanship the collector acquired the best examples procurable of all the stages of Davies's evolution, and of the large number of his works she
UNICORNS, BY ARTHUR B. DAVIES
gathered together, the Museum has now received those which it would have chosen, had its choice been limited to a few items.

In the Bliss Memorial Exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, the showing of the late nineteenth-century French painters who were comparatively overlooked by their contemporaries and of the much discussed artists of the next generation—the pictures by Cézanne, Degas, Renoir, Monet, Redon, Seurat, and others of their time—made the sensation of the exhibition. Of this group our Museum received one picture—the superb Monet, Étretat. It dates from the middle eighties, the artist’s best time, and in no other work is his particular invention, the painting of iridescent, radiating sunlight, more convincingly rendered. With the Monets of the Havemeyer Collection, those left by Theodore M. Davis, and this example, the Museum now affords a magnificent showing of the foremost master of Impressionism.

Comments on the three Byzantine panels will be reserved for another issue of the Bulletin. As the subject is difficult and unfamiliar to us, the pictures will have to be carefully studied before a note on them can be prepared. In this announcement, however, it may be said that the acquisition by Miss Bliss of these paintings of such exceptional quality, at a time when no one in New York, as far as we are aware, paid any attention to their school, displays the excellence of taste as well as the independence of judgment which marked all of her artistic activities. These panels, beyond their intrinsic beauty, are of very real importance in our collection, as they are the only works of their sort which the Museum possesses. Altogether in this bequest we profit greatly by the acumen, the vision, and the courage of the collector who made it.

Bryson Burroughs.

2 Eleven of these works were lent by Miss Bliss to the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist Exhibition held here in 1921—an undertaking due in large part to her initiative and support. Her lendings on that occasion were: Degas, Before the Race, After the Bath; Monet, Étretat; Redon, Silence, Roger and Angelica; Gauguin, A Tahitian; Renoir, Landscape; Cézanne, The Bather, Still Life—Fruit and Brandy Bottle, Still Life—Oranges and Ginger Jar, Landscape—Roadway, and Landscape—Rocks and Pines.

THE BOWES-BLAKitSON CABINET FROM STREATLAM CASTLE

A handsome marquetry cabinet (fig. 1), until recently at Streatlam Castle, Durham, where it had been for some two hundred years, has been purchased by the Museum and may be seen this month in Gallery J 12. It was made about 1700 for Sir William Bowes and his wife, Elizabeth Blakiston, and descended in the Bowes (later Bowes-Lyon) family to the present Earl of Strathmore, by whom it was sold several years ago. The cabinet is well known to students of English furniture, who have been generous in their praise of its design and workmanship. MacQuoid and Edwards in their Dictionary of English Furniture 4 describe it as the "superb cabinet from Streatlam Castle, imposing in design and faultless in execution . . . " adding that "it is certain that this specimen . . . represents the apotheosis of marquetry decoration in England prior to the revival of the art by Chippendale." In his descriptive article on Streatlam,5 H. Avray Tipping selects it for illustration as one of two notable pieces of furniture in the castle and says, "There is in one of the bedrooms a very beautiful English marquetry wardrobe which has the Bowes arms in the lefthand panel and in the right those of Blakiston . . . ." It may, I believe, be said without exaggeration that the cabinet is the most important piece of English marquetry furniture as yet acquired by this Museum.

Sir William Bowes, whose arms, together with those of his wife,4 appear on the doors of the cabinet, was a great-grandson of Sir George Bowes, Knight-Marshal of Berwick, an ardent supporter of Queen Elizabeth. It was from the seal of his great-grandfather that Sir William derived the device of six arrows tied with ribbon which appears under the pediment on the cresting of the cabinet. The same device appears also twice on the south front of Streatlam

1 Pages 156–158, figs. 14, 15.
3 Ermine, three long bows bent in pale gules.
4 Silver, two bars gules, in chief three cocks of the last.