

posture are the same as that of the other figure, but her head is inclined more to the front and her flowing hair contrasts with that of the other figure, which is caught up at the back of the neck. Both figures have inverted shells behind their heads and their arms are raised in support of the entablature. Most of the mouldings of the entablature are carved. The frieze is ornamented with delicately wrought acanthus-leaf rinceaux diverging from the center. At intervals acorns emerge from the foliage, recalling the Vanderbilt arms. The entablature breaks slightly forward over the heads of the two caryatids.

As for the overmantel, the mosaic was designed by John La Farge and consists of a seated, draped, female figure holding garlands which are caught up at their outer ends by two circular cartouches, one of which bears the Vanderbilt arms which may be described as per pale—dexter gold, a demi-eagle sable; sinister sable, three acorns leaved proper. The other cartouche

contains the Vanderbilt crest: a lion rampant or, having between his paws a boar's head silver on a sable field. Also in this same cartouche is the Vanderbilt motto, DEO NON FORTUNA, which translated means, "By God's grace not fortune's." The space on either side of the head of the figure is occupied by an inscription: DOMUS IN LIMINE DOMINI VOLUNTATEM BONAM MONSTRAT HOSPITI INEUNTI SALUTATIO VALEDICTIO ADJUMENTUMQUE EXEUNTI—"The house at its threshold gives evidence of the master's good will. Welcome to the guest who arrives; farewell and helpfulness to him who departs." Above this mosaic extends the second entablature wrought in oak with its mouldings beautifully carved and its frieze decorated by two female figures whose bodies terminate in leafy rinceaux. Not only does the mantelpiece embody the work of two of America's most noted artists, but also it will stand as a survival of a period of New York life which is vanishing altogether too rapidly.

PRESTON REMINGTON.

JEAN DUVET

It would be impossible in a few words to give any adequate description of the exhibition with which the new galleries of the Department of Prints are opened to the public, but among the things which the Curator of Prints was able to acquire last year at the sale of duplicates of the Albertina and Hofbibliothek Museums in Vienna is a very important group of engravings by Jean Duvet. A number of these will be shown in the Fourth Print Gallery, and the others may be seen in the Print Study Room.

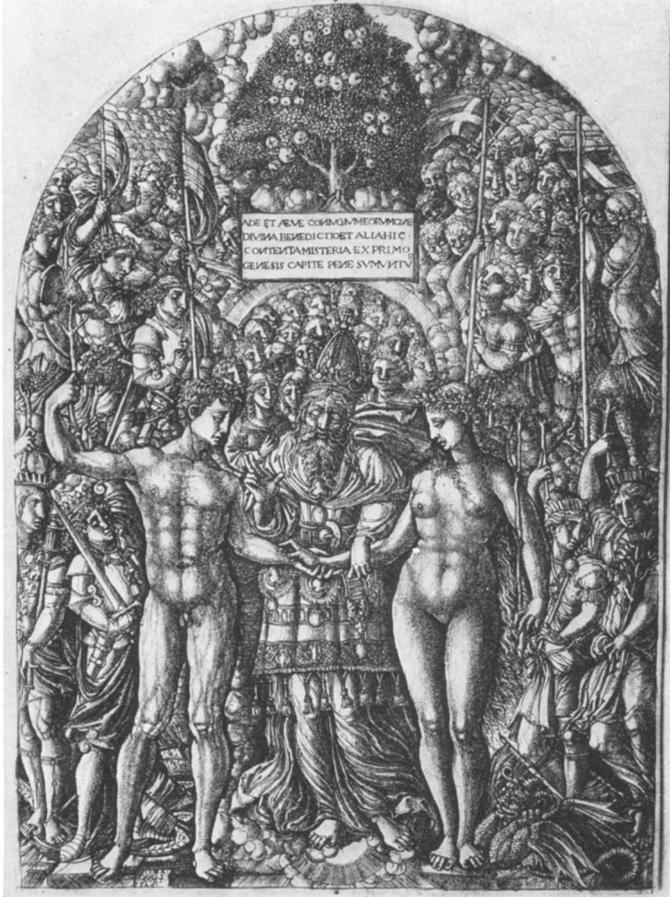
The oldest and the greatest of French Renaissance engravers was Jean Duvet of Langres, who was born in 1485 and presumably died sometime after 1561, the year in which his illustrations to the Apocalypse were printed in book form. Little or nothing is known about him except that he was goldsmith to the king. For those who desire to read the few and

irrelevant facts that are known, reference is made to the study of his life and work by Jullien de la Boullaye, published in 1876, and to the article by A. E. Popham in the *Print Collector's Quarterly* for July, 1921. His work is very little known, as typical groups of it hardly exist outside the greater European national collections, and even isolated specimens are of the greatest rarity. His prints for the most part being plainly signed, and his style being so definite and easily recognized that there is little or no question about his authorship of the unsigned plates, he has been of little interest to the students and practitioners of attribution, to whose labors so much of our modern knowledge of primitive engraving is due, and in consequence his work has not been reproduced as has that of lesser but more "fräglich" men.

The fundamental reason, however, for his lack of renown is probably the same thing that has made his work rare, the

fact that it is not cast in a popular mode and is probably more personal and idiosyncratic than that of almost any of his successors in the long line of French print makers. He began as a neologist and he has remained one—and thus aloof from

general rule been noteworthy rather for their admiration of mastery in the technique of process than for their perspicacity in the discovery or appreciation of genius. The attitude of earlier writers is more or less adequately represented by Bartsch,



ENGRAVING BY JEAN DUVET

those who must read as they run—a personality too highly developed, too thorny for all but the few who are willing to give the necessary time to an understanding of his artistic record. Especially has he been undervalued and misunderstood by the professional students and keepers of prints, who, while amiable gentlemen for the most part, have also as a

who says nothing in Duvet's favor except that his style of engraving is a mess (*strapassonnée*) and may perhaps be understood when it is remembered that his *Apocalypse* was done after he had reached the age of seventy. Even our contemporary authorities, Professor Hind and Herr Kristeller, in their guarded praise and frank faultfinding, remind one very much

of the note inserted by Dr. Thornton at the foot of the page in which appeared the first of Blake's woodcuts: "The Illustrations . . . are by the famous Blake . . . who designed and engraved them himself. This is mentioned, as they display less of art than of genius, and are much admired by some eminent painters." Although the eldest of French engravers, Duvet in time came after Dürer and Marcantonio, and he has never been wholly forgiven by the professed historians for his failure to follow in the technical path laid down by one or the other of his predecessors. At the very beginning he revolted from the path his French successors were to take, and a revolutionary is no more appreciated when he comes before than when he comes after the series of precedents that others lay down. Particularly in France this was and is a serious matter, for France is *par excellence* the land of academies, the country where precedents are of the utmost importance, where clarity is of more moment than virtue, the only highly civilized land where eighty is still "four twenty." Not until quite modern times has any spirit akin to his made prints in France, and even yet he is regarded askance for his rebelliousness against the rules long after to be laid down by Audran under the reign of the Grand Monarque.

Thus the fact, quite obviously, is that Duvet failed in elegance, that his lines were not tidy and neat, and that he had never studied the academic rules for the indication of swelling muscles or the ripple of light upon women's hair, and that he actually was so brazenly sinful that he sometimes used two or three bold lines to reinforce and make more prominent the contour of a leg or arm. He is also reproached because his designs for the Apocalypse are "crowded" and not open and simple—but of that more anon. His engraving crimes are thus many and awful, and only to be put up with on the ground that he was a poor provincial and the first Frenchman to make an engraved plate.¹

It therefore becomes us, in this land where academies are merely mutual ad-

¹Topie, who presumably did the 1488 Breydenbach, was an Italian.

miration societies and without authority, to look at Duvet through our own untutored eyes, and to see if possible what we find in his work.

First of all, and to get rid of it as quickly as possible, we find that he was an unkempt, uncertain draughtsman when it came to the representation of things in what are accepted as their actual, normal shapes—as unkempt and uncertain as some of our own contemporaries who prefer to put the big ends of tables on the far sides. But just as these contemporaries play hob with the rules of perspective, knowingly and of malice prepense, so possibly did Duvet—thinking perhaps that after all his tables were not real tables but pictorial elements which his hand was free to treat as he wished for his own purposes. There are much more improbable things which are believed as "laws of nature" by the most ardent and accurate of our modern painters and by scientists who, never yet having met up with David Hume, believe that they are in a way to discover "reality." If one stops to think of it for a moment, however, there is little in life that is philosophically more comic than adverse criticism of a picture on the score of its lack of reality, especially when every one knows immediately what it does represent. There is a whole chapter in the encyclopedia of futility to be devoted to that subject when the time for it comes, a chapter as long and as entertaining as de Morgan's book on the squarers of the circle.

"And some they said—'What are you at?'
And some—'What are you arter?'"

Thus, having admitted the worst and paid our compliments to it in due form, we can go on to inquire what else Duvet did besides draw "badly." The first thing we find is that he was not light (certainly no *léger duvet*) but rather full of a childlike, naïve solemnity and seriousness which led him to indulge in somewhat painstaking efforts to represent the things that were called for by the words of the texts he had set out to illustrate. The historians all criticize him for the lack of clarity and simplicity in his designs for the Apocalypse, saying that they were overloaded with

detail and confused in their general effect. And what they say is true. These designs are chock-full of detail and at first glance they are confused—but, it may be demurred, suppose they are, what of it? Could he have given us a true pictorial view of the Apocalypse had he done otherwise? Of course, the example of Dürer will promptly be cited. *He* did not mix things up like that. And to this one can only say, again: “What of it? Did Dürer really attempt to illustrate the Apocalypse, or did he merely make some designs on its theme?”

Now there is only one way to answer this problem, and that is respectfully to refer our objectors on the score of clarity, etc., to the words of John as they were translated by the forty-seven. In few other books, possibly in no other book in English, is there to be found a more magnificent orchestration of multiple sounds and emotions, nowhere a more astounding sense of close-packed, crowded incident, and sweeping, irresistible movement. Men and devils and kings and armies swarm and trample, and through all is the sound of trumpets and the ceaseless whirring of the wings of angels. There is Babylon, “that great city,” but an incident beside the awe and the majesty of God. We close the volume and our ears still ring with the echoes of the mighty hosts and the dragons and the beasts, and are flooded with that “voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia,” and our eyes recall “the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men,” and we think of “the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars” and “their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death,” and we also think of the city which “had no need of the sun, neither of the

moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof,” and of those therein who “shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.” No, after all, it wasn’t plain and simple and lacking in confusion, and great as are Dürer’s designs he, by making them plain and simple and lacking in confusion, somehow failed to project into them just that particular surge and roar and impossible wealth of detail and movement which are the very pith and marrow of the book of Revelation. Doubtless Duvet too failed in his impossible task, just as any one might, but at least he made a more gallant and effective struggle to accomplish it than any other engraver of whom we have record. Moreover, we know that he was aware of the complexity of his undertaking and that he was at pains to understand it, for on the first print of his series he was careful to put a statement in Latin that the sacred mysteries contained therein were done according to the true letter of the text (*ac verae litterae textus*) with the aid of men more learned than the artist himself (*virorum peritiorum indicio*).

Thus, the charge of complexity and confusion is taken care of and instead of seeing in it the accusation of a fault we find it to be an acknowledgment of at least partial success. And, as we look again at the plates of Duvet’s Apocalypse, we can see how much of movement and surge and roar and thickness of event he managed to crowd into them, and instead of being bothered by it as by an incompetency, we find it to be extraordinary and exciting, and a true sign of the artist’s fundamental honesty and greatness. That he should have succeeded as well as he did is the strongest sign that one could desire of his skill and of his temperament.

But Duvet did other things than the Apocalypse, though that is his undoubted masterpiece, and in some of these other things he, first among French engravers in this respect as well as in the mere temporal sense, exhibited elegance, that greatest and most highly prized of the specifically French virtues. It was not the polished, manicured, marcel-waved

elegance that was developed by his successors in the eighteenth century, nor that more sober variety which flourished in the seventeenth, but the rough, country gentleman's elegance of the time of Francis I and his immediate successors. It is to be found at its best in the plates of *La Majesté Royale* and the *Henri II, roi de France*, which in spite of their rarity are among the finest products of the burin in France.

One more aspect of Duvet's work remains to be noticed, the lyricism which is so patent in his *Marriage of Adam and Eve*. Here again he makes a crowded plate, full of incident in its every portion, and yet the two majestic figures stand forth in glory as they are united in one by the will of God. It is a paean of joy, of happiness—the true springtime, eternal and unchanging, of human life, the conjunction of man and woman.

Of course, it is to be expected that there will be many who never will, never can, throw themselves into the frame of mind necessary to enjoy or appreciate Duvet's work—but for those who are able to do so, few more interesting prints have ever been made in Europe. His work, like the *Apocalypse* itself, is something which can hardly be expected to find many adherents today, its tempo and its swing and its imagery are so foreign to the time and the temperament of those who spend their lives running to and fro in motor cars and whose solitary evenings are redeemed from boredom only by the interference of the radio. He is of a different intellectual temper—a much older one, and one to which some day, when the world shall have discovered the emptiness of mechanism, it may return with relief and spiritual comfort.

WILLIAM M. IVINS, JR.