Bronzino, Michelangelo's Night reappears in the medium of paint, figures reminiscent of Botticelli's Primavera take part in court pageants which painters promptly record on canvas.

In the background of our Birth of Cupid, the three Graces have prototypes in Raphael's ceiling in the Villa Farnesina, where three maidens with butterfly wings scatter flowers at the marriage feast of Cupid and Psyche. These little creatures appear repeatedly on Limousin enamels, and a wingless one, exactly like our little maiden who pushes back the curtain at the head of Venus's couch, is found looking backward over her shoulder in the fascinating Fontainebleau painting at the museum of Sanssouci, Potsdam, which is generally thought to be an allegory on the birth of a son of Henri II.

Such classical allegories as this Birth of a Prince, at Potsdam, were the fare upon which the Valois court doted. The triumphant mother (perhaps Diane de Poitiers) is shown sitting amid ministering Muses, some of whom attempt to beguile the newborn child. Symbols of power, a helmet, a baton, and a wreath, are in evidence. That the Museum's Fontainebleau painting is also to be accepted as a birth scene is clear enough—sufficient are the recumbent position of Venus and the presence of the ministering maidens, one of whom anoints the head of the newborn infant. The Olympian scene is presented more or less like a French royal accouchement in which curtains are drawn back at the right moment, so that the entire court may witness the legitimacy of the heir. Lesueur's series on the life of Cupid in the Louvre shows the birth taking place with the Hours in attendance as in our painting.

No such specific attributes as appear in the Potsdam painting the Birth of a Prince are found in our Birth of Cupid, yet it is by no means impossible that it was painted in honor of some royal event. How tempting to suppose that it celebrates the birth of one of the two sons of Charles IX by his lovely mistress Marie Touchet!

Harry B. Wehle.

12 See R. Ménard, La Mythologie dans l'art ancien et moderne (Paris, 1878), pp. 442-443.

AN EXHIBITION OF COLT PERCUSSION REVOLVERS

The history of improvements in firearms since they were introduced into the military systems of Europe in the fourteenth century shows very slow progress. It was not until the early decades of the nineteenth century that inventions were accelerated. Improvements made then were in the direction of simplifying construction and of combining safety with celerity in firing, and the tendency of the gunsmith was to become a painstaking mechanic rather than an artist. The first use of fulminate ignition in 1807 and the subsequent development of the percussion cap were essential steps toward the invention of a practical revolver.

A firearm that would deliver successive shots rapidly had from the beginning been one of the chief goals of inventors. The problem was solved by Samuel Colt, who in 1836 patented the first multifiring arm that had practical value as a military weapon and the first to be made in quantity. The basic Colt patent was the automatic revolution and locking of the cylinder, operated by cocking the hammer. Colt was not only a prolific designer but a pioneer in mass production. He had the advantage of his early competitors in that their pistols were almost entirely handmade arms and therefore more expensive than the Colts and less suitable for military use on a large scale.

As Colt was a vital link between ancient and modern firearm designers, it is appropriate to exhibit in this Museum, in close proximity to our ancient firearms, which illustrate over three centuries of prescientific development, a collection of Colt revolvers showing progressive changes in design. The exhibition, which will be held in Gallery A 33 from February 4 through May 3, comprises Colt percussion revolvers and conversions of the period from 1836 to 1873. The catalogue, compiled by John E. Parsons, one of the generous lenders, describes and illustrates one hundred and thirty different types, including twenty Patersons, as well as Whitneyvilles, Hartford models, Presentations, Conversions, and Confederates. This sequence of Colt revolvers commands more attention than any other an-
tique firearms in America; and the interest of students and collectors is kept vitalized by many questions concerning the subtle variations of Colt’s numerous designs.

The earliest model (the Paterson Colt), the border troubles proved the worth of the revolving pistol, and in 1847 one thousand Colts of improved design were fabricated at Eli Whitney’s plant in Whitneyville, Connecticut, to fill an order for the United States Army, then engaged in the Mexican War. As it was Captain Sam Walker of the Texas Rangers who was responsible for the acceptance and success of the Colt revolver in the Mexican War and on the Western frontier, these revolvers are designated the Whitneyville Walker Colt. They were the first Colt arms made sufficiently standard

with single action and chambered for five shots, was first manufactured in 1836 at Paterson, New Jersey, by the Patent Arms Manufacturing Company. A demand for the arms did not immediately arise, however, and the company failed in 1842. But a few Patersons used by army officers in the Seminole War and by Texas Rangers during
to have interchangeable parts, and many collectors consider this model the rarest and most valuable. Albert Foster, Jr., who has very kindly helped in organizing this exhibition, made the original investigation which established the fact that the Walker Colt was made at Whitneyville in 1847 and not at Paterson as had earlier been thought.

By 1848 Colt had established his own plant at Hartford, Connecticut, and the successor to the Whitneyville Walker, known as the Dragoon Colt, was produced. The first decade of the Hartford factory saw the introduction of six progressively improved models of revolvers and many variations of each. In 1848 Colt also made a smaller pocket revolver, usually known as the Wells Fargo model since some were bought by the Wells Fargo Express Company for the arming of employees, especially pony-express riders. The improved-model pocket pistol was brought out in 1849, the year gold was discovered at Sutter's Fort. Thousands left their homes to seek fortunes, and with them went the Colt. The 1849 model was the most popular pocket revolver in the world from the time it was first manufactured until the general adoption of cartridge revolvers in the early 1870's. For the numerous models the reader is recommended to consult the catalogue of the exhibition, which gives much detailed information.

The painting The Faithful Colt by William M. Harnett, which has been generously lent for this exhibition by the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, symbolizes the role that the Colt revolver has played in American history. America in the nineteenth century, as Colt reminded his listeners in a paper read before the Institution of Civil Engineers of London in 1851, was a country with an extensive frontier still inhabited by hordes of aborigines, and the ordinary double-barreled gun and pistol were inefficient for its peculiar kind of border warfare. During the Civil War, still the "cap and ball" era, Colt revolvers, rifles, and muskets were produced by the thousand. As the Confederate Army could not get a sufficient supply of Colts, replicas were made at Southern armories. The story of the Confederate Colt has been written by one of the lenders to the exhibition, Richard D. Steuart, who published his researches in the periodical Army Ordnance (September-October, 1934). The Colt was the ideal weapon of the sheriff, plainsman, and cowboy, although their readiness to shoot has been grossly exaggerated. It was a powerful and accurate weapon, with a range of over four hundred yards, and could send its bullets straight through a buffalo.

Without taking away any credit from Colt's achievement one may point out that many of the features of his revolver had appeared prior to his patent. Firearms with a revolving cylinder containing a number of chambers firing through a single barrel had been in use in the seventeenth century; but it was necessary to move the breech by hand and the limitations of the means of ignition hindered the development of a satisfactory revolver. Elisha Haydon Collier anticipated the two principal features of the Colt revolvers. The first was the revolving of the cylinder by cocking the hammer, as shown in the Collier-Coolidge revolving shotgun; the second the locking and alignment of the chamber with the barrel at the moment of firing, a distinguishing feature of the Collier flintlock revolver patented in 1818. John H. Hall, who invented in 1816 a successful breech-loading flintlock rifle, preceded Colt in the plan to
have military weapons made with uniform parts, and so did Eli Whitney, the inventor of the cotton gin, who built a milling machine in 1818 for the manufacture of interchangeable parts for firearms. The folding trigger, a feature of the Paterson Colt, appears on a pair of pistols in this Museum, made about 1810 by the Paris gunsmith Le Page. Another firearm with a feature adopted by Colt is a seventeenth-century wheellock gun made with a removable shoulder stock so that it could be converted into a pistol. But these are details; it was the combination of good features that made the Colt popular. Colt succeeded in making a breech-loading revolver which could discharge its five or six rounds as rapidly as the eye can wink.

Colt was in the habit of presenting fine specimens of his arms to men in authority. In this exhibition are included inscribed revolvers presented by the inventor to General Echenique, President of the Republic of Peru; Colonel Thomas H. Seymour, who fought in the Mexican War, served as Governor of Connecticut from 1850 to 1853, and was United States Minister to Russia from 1854 to 1857; and General Andrew Porter, who commanded a Union brigade at the first battle of Bull Run in 1861. A revolver presented to John P. Moore has a stock made of wood from the Charter Oak, the tree used as a hiding place for the charter granted Connecticut by Charles II when Sir Edmund Andrus attempted to seize it in 1687. One of the Civil War revolvers belonged to Lieutenant F. R. Kent of the Third Pennsylvania Artillery, who was adjutant at Fortress Monroe when Jefferson Davis was a prisoner there in 1865. Besides these inscribed historical revolvers there are in the exhibition three richly decorated presentation pieces lent by Colt’s Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company. They are a Dragoon, an old Navy, and an old Pocket Model, etched, engraved, inlaid with chased gold plaques, blued and gilded, in mint condition, and of the finest workmanship. The engraving (see ill. p. 32) was put on with a roller-die cutting process, the original dies for most of the work being cut by W. L. Ormsby of New York, whose name appears on a number of the Colts in this exhibition. These three pistols are of the type which Colt presented to royalty. The grips are all of burled walnut, that of the Navy model being carved with a representation of the Charter Oak and inlaid with mother-of-pearl plaques.

The numerous Colt models in this exhibition, studied in connection with the Museum’s collection of historical firearms, demonstrate the lively progress made by the industrial arts in the early decades of the nineteenth century in comparison with the slow development of firearms during the preceding three centuries.

Stephen V. Grancsay.