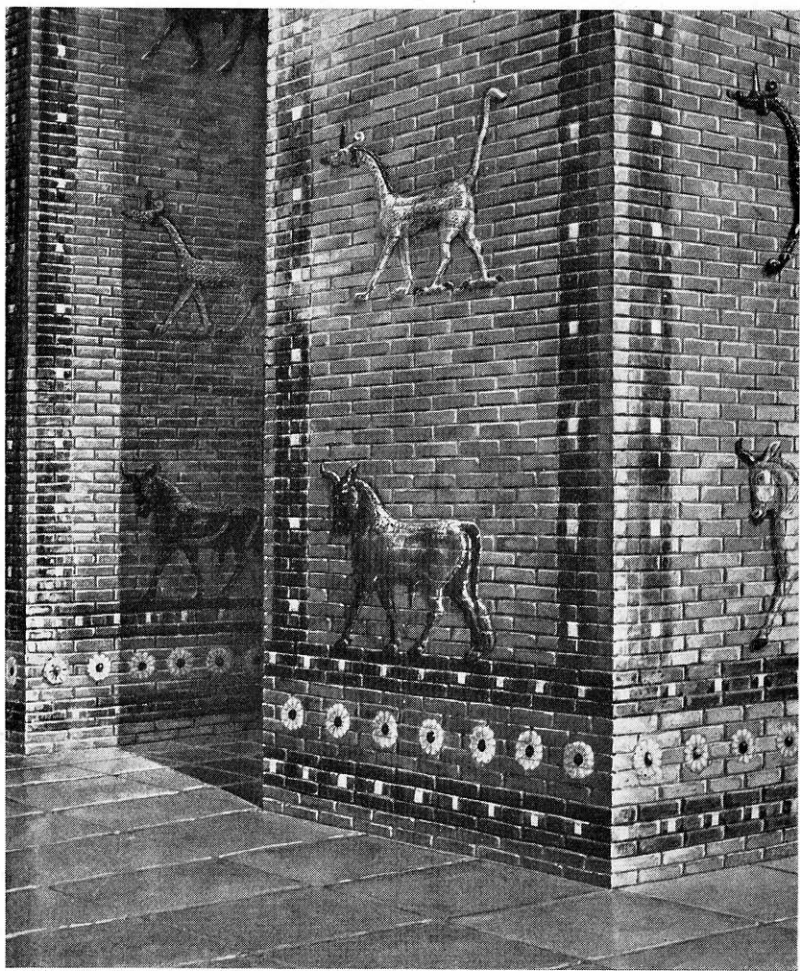


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No. 7



RESTORATION OF PORTION OF ISHTAR GATE FROM BABYLON,
IN THE BERLIN MUSEUM



A DRAGON RELIEF OF THE TIME OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

The Institute is indebted to the Founders Society for the acquisition of one of the most interesting and, as we hope, most popular works of art of the Asiatic Department of the Museum: a dragon relief of glazed tile executed in the seventh century B. C., at the time of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. It is, at the same time, a work which has a special significance for Detroit, as it belongs to the oldest productions of the art of glazed terracotta, which lives again in our own city in Mrs. Stratton's excellent ceramics at the Pewabic Pottery.

Many readers admired in the February number of *Art and Archeology* the reproduction of the recently installed Ishtar Gate from Babylon as one of the chief treasures of the Berlin Museum. It is of particular interest as our relief

is similar to several of the examples which are built into this gate. At the time the gate was installed, it was found that there was one relief too many, and in this way we had the good fortune to acquire one. With the exception of those in the Berlin Museum, and in the museum in Constantinople, there is beside ours no other dragon tile in any museum, whereas of the lions of the frieze there are examples in several museums.¹

The Ishtar Gate, a double gate consisting of two similar structures one behind the other, and mightiest of the eight principal gates of Babylon, was excavated in the year 1902 by Dr. Robert Koldewey. He describes it in his work, *Das Ishtar Tor in Babylon* (published 1918). It became accessible to the public in the new building of the Near

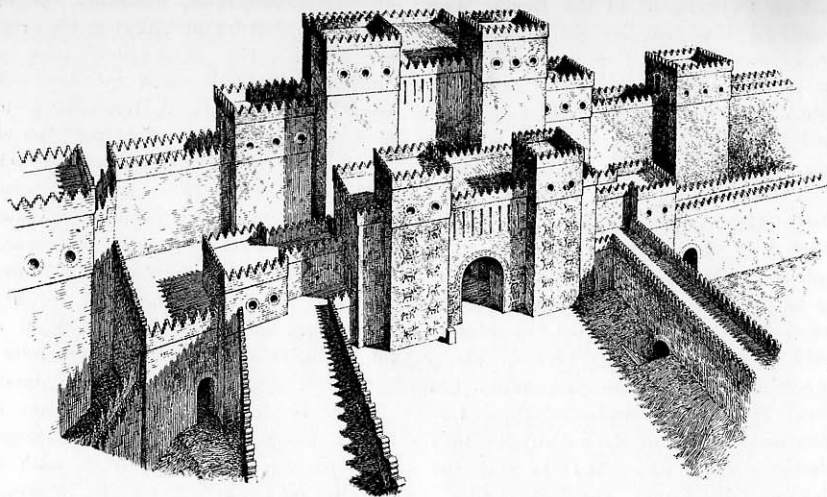
¹The manner in which the dragon relief was built into the gate can be seen in the reproductions of the two towers from Koldewey's photographs and the reconstruction drawings of the plan of the gate.

Eastern Department of the Berlin Museum only last year, on the occasion of the Hundred Year Celebration. It is one of the gates of the inner walls of Babylon which surrounded the city upon the left bank of the Euphrates—the only gate of the north front, probably identical with the gate of Semiramis, of which Herodotus speaks. This wall, which was constructed of baked tiles, asphalt and layers of reeds, was, according to the German excavators, about 42 metres thick. It surrounded the mighty quadrangle of the city, whose sides, Herodotus states, were 120 stadia (20 miles) long. The builder of these fortifications, indeed of the entire city, in a splendour which was still to be noted by Alexander the Great, was Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562 B. C.), the great ruler of the new Babylonian kingdom. This kingdom, at times also called the Second Chaldean Empire, to distinguish it from the older Babylonian or First Chaldean Empire, was of only short duration (689-538 B. C.). It arose from the ruins of old Babylon, which had been destroyed by the Assyrian king Sennacherib in 689, and ended, after a period of brilliance which lasted about one hundred years, with the conquest of Babylon by the Persian king Cyrus in 538. Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, began the erection of the fortifications of Babylon and the royal palace; but it was only the greater son, who, with his astounding propensity for building, brought about a new florescence of art which resulted in the construction of temples and palaces not only in the capitol of the realm, but in all the cities of Babylonia as well. While he is known primarily to the readers of the Old Testament as the destroyer of Jerusalem, the king who allowed thousands of Jews to be dragged to Babylon, and while political histories celebrate above all his campaigns in Syria and Egypt, he lives in art history as one of the few old Oriental rulers who, according to

his own inscriptions, mentions not his campaigns, but his buildings as his original deeds. The astonishing idea of adorning city gates and avenues with brightly colored glazed decorations—indeed, the manufacture of glazed high reliefs in this hitherto new form of brilliant colors on a blue ground—seems to have originated with him. It must have made an overpowering impression of fairy-like enchantment upon the traveler who entered the city for the first time, when he saw in the full light of the southern sun these colored reliefs with their majestically striding animals.

Were he to pass from the gates of Ishtar along the processional avenue, accompanied by the long frieze with its lions facing towards the north, he would approach the mighty temple of Marduk, the ruling deity of Babylonia. Farther on he would see the Tower of Babel, with its many stories crowned by a sanctuary, to which the Jews had attached their legends, and he may, perhaps, have marvelled at the celebrated hanging gardens of Semiramis, one of the seven wonders of the world, which Nebuchadnezzar had had planted for his Median bride, Amytis, to take the place of the mountains of her native land: an art garden laid out in the form of terraces, each of which rested upon vaults.

The eyes of this ruler, whose name has come down to us through twenty-five hundred years as a patron of art, must thus have seen the relief which has come to Detroit. And not only his, but probably also those of the spiritual leader of the proscribed Jews, the prophet Daniel, who, through his divinatory power, had attained such high honor at the court of the Babylonian king. It might even be proved that the dreadful animal of Daniel's vision, with the one horn which waxed ever greater, and which is called "Sirusch" in the cunieforn inscriptions, may have been suggested by the sight of this dragon of Babylon. We are also reminded that



RECONSTRUCTION OF ISHTAR GATE IN BABYLON
(AFTER KOLDEWEY)

the destruction of the dragon by Daniel was accomplished in a manner similar to that of the dragon Tiamat of the original Chaos, by Marduk, the world creator in the Babylonian religion.² ("By driving a storm wind into the dragon, which renders it asunder").

Of the three holy animals which were depicted in rows upon the Ishtar Gate and the processional avenue—the lion, the bull and the dragon—the dragon, which is represented in our relief, is, perhaps, as an imaginary creature the most interesting. Made up of various animal forms,—the head reminding one of a snake and a ram, the tail ending in that of a scorpion, the body scaly, the forefeet those of a tiger, the hindfeet those of an eagle,—it goes back to the oldest traditions in Babylonian art. Dr. Koldewey is even reminded of the similarity with certain prehistoric animals,

for he assumes that the dragon, according to the idea of its creator, must have had two horns, which appear in the profile view as only one—analogue to the representation of the bull, which also appears one-horned—and points to the following similar animals of the paleozoic age: "*Triceratops serratus* had two bony horns upon the front of the forehead, with the parietal bones elongated toward the back and arched toward the top. Our dragon has in common with many dinosaurs (*Brontosaurus excelsus*; *Allosaurus fragilis*) the small head, the long neck, the long tail and, particularly, marked differentiation between the fore- and hind-extremities. The four-toed bird foot, with three toes at the front and one at the back, is found in the *Anchisaurus dananus* and *Anchisaurus colorus*. *Iguanodon bernisartensis* shows clearly the bird claws of

² The meaning of the storm wind in the Babylonian religion is explained by Perrot and Chipiez (*History of Art in Chaldea and Assyria*, 1884, I, p. 74) as a phenomenon peculiar to Mesopotamian climatic conditions, where a destructive storm wind with thunder and lightning appears suddenly out of an almost clear sky.

the hind feet joined with quadruped tarsal bones and five-toed front paws. If one were to find a form in nature like that of our 'Sirrusch,' it would have to be numbered with a species of dinosaur and even with the sub-species of *Ornithopoda*. The *Iguanodon* of the Belgian chalk-cliffs is a near relative of the dragon of Babylon." (Koldewey, p. 29.)

It is not to be assumed that the early Babylonian artists, to whom the idea of the form of our dragon is to be traced, knew such prehistoric animals, as many hundreds of thousands of years lay between their existence and the earliest beginnings of culture in Babylonia. One might, nevertheless, assume that parts of the skeletons of such a creature may have been found in the desert sands, which might have acted as a motive for the embodying and deifying of the Babylonian dragon, out of which there developed later the idea of the dragon of St. George and St. Michael in the Christian legends. But it is more natural to suppose that the artistic imagination of early times was strong enough to fashion out of separate parts of living creatures a convincing representation not

unlike something that might be found in nature. At any rate, what appeals to us today in our Babylonian dragon is the expression of an outspoken artist-will, a concentrated reserve of irresistible energy which is peculiar to the old Oriental figures in the highest degree,—more so than to any other later forms of art. Doubtless there is revealed in it the spirit of the time, of which a belief in the necessity of the despotic subjugation of the human being by a ruler and the increase of the self-consciousness of this ruler to the delusion of god-hood, are characteristic. As in the representation of the human being, it expresses itself in a corresponding manner in that of the animal: head and eyes of this dragon are unflinchingly fixed upon the destruction of the enemy, the powerful forward movement of the elastic body will brook no interference; the claws will tear the enemy to pieces, the talons will crush him. But in the rigid line of the back, the erect tail, and the boldly arched neck is expressed the pride and vanity of a boundless will-to-power as it stands at the threshold of human history.

W. R. VALENTINER.

OLD POTTERY AND BRONZES FROM PERSIA

Since the successful excavations in Persia by the French archaeologist, J. de Morgan, at Susa, the old winter residence of the Achaemenian kings, we know that this settlement, dating back at least into the second millennium B. C., was also one of the most important centers of pottery production in the Orient. The pottery brought to light through these excavations (now in the Louvre) belongs mostly to the Bronze and Copper Age, and bears relationship both in form and in decoration to the contemporary pottery of the rest of the Asiatic domains extending from Syria to China.

It is elegant in shape, fashioned mostly of fine yellowish clay and decorated with various ornamentation, painted in dark brown or orange-red.

The decorative designs of this pottery from Susa, which archaeologists usually have ascribed to an earlier era, consist chiefly of zigzag stripes, broad double bands, crosses, circles and other geometric motives, together with nature forms, such as human beings, birds, animals and trees, which are stylized almost beyond recognition, but drawn with astonishing accuracy. There is no particular wealth of forms, but by a fantastic



FIG. 1

combination of these motives the certainty of taste in the decoration has given each individual object a definite character.

In close relation, from an artistic viewpoint, to this Susa pottery of pre-historic times, are the ceramics of another Persian production center, Nihavend, a town of no importance today, which lies on the north bank of the river Gamasiab and to the southeast of the city of Hamadan. Nihavend is the historic site of a battle which took place in the year 641 A. D., where the Arabs under the second Caliph Omar sealed the fate of the national Persian Sassanian empire. In this place, so fateful for Persia, we find the remains of an ancient civilization, which apparently is older than that of Susa and which most archaeologists ascribe to the third millennium B. C.

So far as we know today, the artistic activity was here, as in Susa, chiefly confined to the making of pottery, of which several noteworthy specimens were acquired by our museum last year. Here, too, the vessels are of yellowish clay, fashioned on the potter's wheel and embellished with painted ornamentation.

The large vases are especially characteristic of the Nihavend ware (fig. 1). They have a round body, without a base, a sharply tapering shoulder and quite a broad open mouth, a shape which seems peculiar to this group. The round body of our vase is adorned with parallel bands and wave lines in relief, painted black, and repeated again on the upper part of the vase. The painted decoration on the shoulder is noteworthy. Two eagles with outspread wings in coat-of-arms style are represented in minute de-

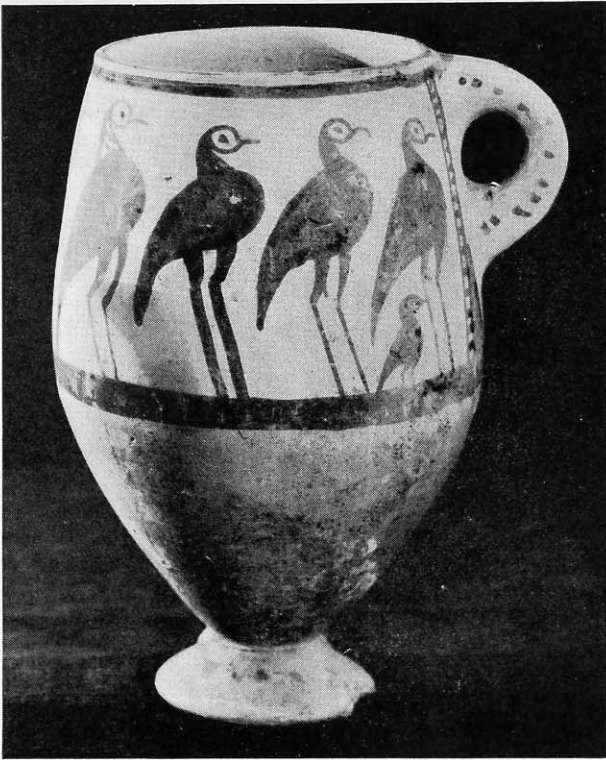


FIG. 2

tail, but stylized in abstract geometric form with such taste and skill that the bird is scarcely to be recognized. Above these eagles a network pattern edged by broad bands encircles the vase. There is a similar vase in the Louvre with the same eagle motive and originating in the same place.

As before stated, this effort to represent motives taken from nature in unnatural form was likewise a peculiarity of the Susa ware. Besides these, however, we find on Nihavend pottery representations of animals and birds that are surprisingly realistic. The large cup (fig. 2) is without doubt one of the finest works of art of this early age that has come down to us. It is elegant in form

and has a broad frieze with a repeating pattern of birds painted dark brown. The drawing is very sketchy, but so realistic that there is no difficulty in recognizing the bird as a crane. The second cup (fig. 3) is smaller and more slender, and the frieze of geese is accompanied by a purely geometrical decorative pattern.

Though separated by the great Zagros mountain range, Susa and Nihavend seem to have been the original centers of art pottery in the Near East in prehistoric times. This art, probably spreading from these centers, continued in the Mesopotamian valley and in the countries of Asia Minor. Our pieces are reproduced by Arthur Upham Pope in



FIG. 3

An Introduction to Persian Art Since the Seventh Century A. D. (London, 1930), fig. 22, and in *An Illustrated Souvenir of the Exhibition of Persian Art*, London, 1931, first edition, fig. 52.

Just as Susa and Nihavend attract archaeological interest by their ceramic products, so the mountain country of Luristan, which lies between these two cities, is of importance for its bronzes. Archaeologists interested in the pre-Islamic art of southwestern Asia were greatly astonished by the numerous bronze objects recently unearthed in this province. These were found not as the result of organized scientific research excavations by archaeologists, but quite by chance by the nomad inhabitants of the district. To such an extent did these

bronzes attract attention on the art market that today almost every public and private collection in America and Europe has several specimens. They consist chiefly of accoutrements for horses and various ornaments and vessels cast in bronze, which were placed in the tombs with the dead as a ritual service. According to a preliminary but as yet incomplete report made for the Persian government by the French art expert, A. Godard,¹ these tombs, found in groups scattered through the whole of Luristan, especially in the environs of the present settlements of Harsin, Tarhan, Awland, Karkavan, Kubad, Mimavand, etc., are constructed in two different forms. The oblong tombs are constructed of six stone slabs, one for the bottom, four for the walls, and one as a cover, and are about six and a half feet long and three feet wide. As yet we have no information as to the construction of the round tombs. They seem also to have been built of stone, and are a little more than three feet in diameter. The oblong ones are found most frequently and contain the best and most richly ornamented objects. In technique these bronzes show a mastery of material and a high stylistic development. There is a great diversity of objects: horse bits decorated with



FIG. 5

¹ See appendix to an article by René Dussaud: "Haches a douille de type asiatique," *Revue Syria*, XI, Troisième Fascicule, 1930, p. 260 ff.

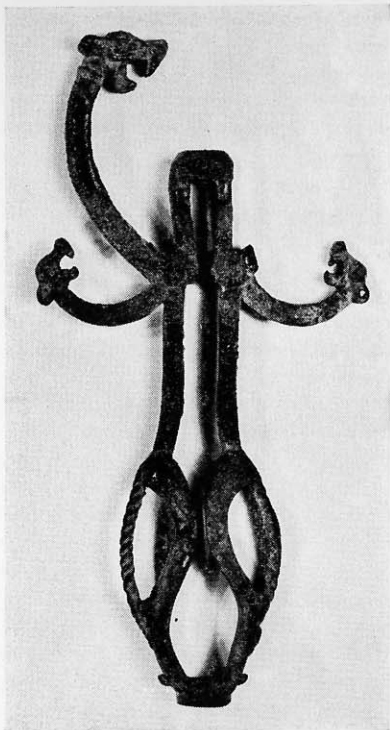


FIG. 4

a winged ibex, bull, or horse, tops of ceremonial objects generally ornamented with confronted animals, pins of various sizes and forms, axe-heads, daggers, and a great number of trinkets of surprising artistic refinement.

The four bronze pieces recently acquired for the oriental collection of our Institute belong to the best products of this class and give us a conception of the style and of the wealth of ornamentation of this unknown pre-Achaménid art of Persia. Fig. 4 shows the top of a ceremonial object, probably a scepter, having two confronted double-headed lions (the head of one is missing), which are joined by their front and hind legs and in this position make

a symmetrical whole. The exceedingly graceful form and stylization and the harmonious delineation of the animal bodies give evidence not only of the technical ability but also of the highly refined artistic sense and decorative skill of the people who made them. No less decorative is the ornamental object represented by fig. 5. Here also the symmetry is distinctive in style. On the upper part of the ring is the head of an ibex, the large horns of which touch the shoulders of the two flanking lions, which, in turn, hold the ring with their paws. There seems to have been a continuation below. Along with this purely decorative symmetrical style, the third piece in our group (fig. 6) shows a plastic tendency. It represents a prostrate horse with the head of a bird, and was probably part of an apotropaic object. The plastic roundness of the back of the body, which we find also in several Luristan bronzes, reminds us of the well-known horse reliefs of the Han period of China. Whether there is any relation here to the art of the Far East will not be discussed at present.

Though the artist shows great power in depicting animals, his human beings appear very awkward and primitive. This is clearly seen in our fourth piece (fig. 7), a pin, the head of which has two confronted lion heads with long

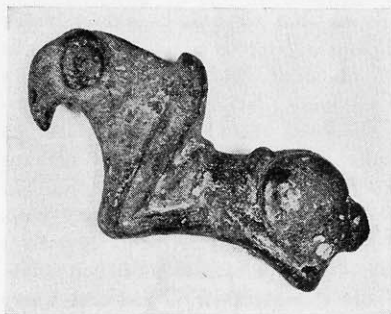


FIG. 6

² "The Luristan Bronzes," *Apollo*, Vol. XIII, No. 74, February, 1931.

necks that form a circle in which appears a human face flanked by the two animals. This is doubtless intended to be a representation of a divinity.

It is scarcely possible at present to determine where these highly interesting bronzes belong ethnographically. Professor V. Minorsky sets forth the claim that they may be the product of the Kassits, who lived in Luristan in the pre-Christian era.² Our knowledge of the history of this people goes back to the second millennium B. C. They were called Kashshu by the Babylonians, and Kassaioi by the Greeks, and long held sway over Babylon, where a national dynasty founded about the year 1760 B. C. reigned. Much later, even the Achaemenian kings of Persia were unable to crush the power of this warlike mountain people. Alexander the Great was the first to succeed in defeating them for a time, in the year 324 B. C., during his Persian campaign. As determined by the latest research, the Kassits had a language very different from that of their neighbors, and no doubt migrated into Luristan in ancient times from Central Asia.

The date and the style problem of the Luristan bronzes were important subjects of discussion at the second International Congress of Persian Art in London in 1931, where Professor Rostovtzeff of Yale University defended his belief that these were not utensils for ordinary use, but were made expressly for apotropaic gifts to place in the tombs with the dead. He connects them with the Gelgamish legend and from a stylistic viewpoint considers them related to Hittite and Scythian art, and believes that they are of no earlier date than the sixth century B. C. In any case, we must wait until scientific investigations of the tombs give us definite data for determining their period and where they belong ethnographically.

MEHMET AGA-OGLU.

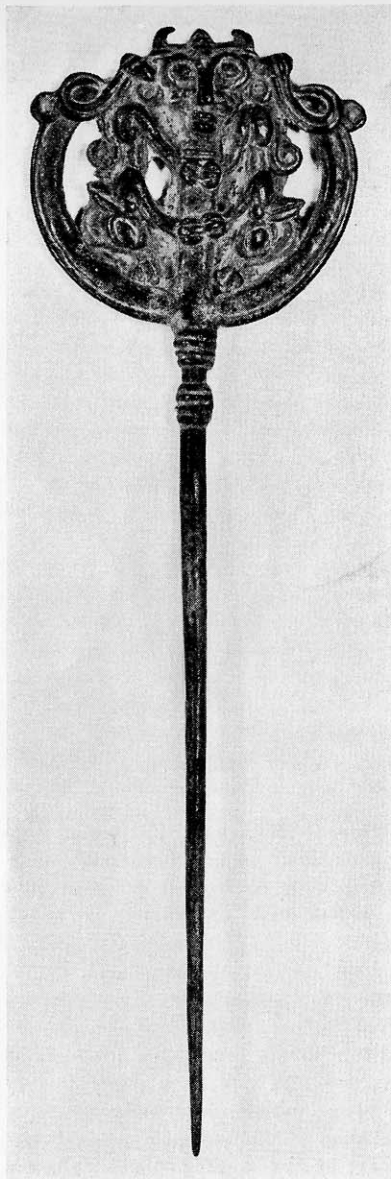


FIG. 7

EXHIBITION OF AMERICAN ART

The Seventeenth Annual Exhibition of American Art will open at the Detroit Institute of Arts on Tuesday evening, April 14, and will continue through May 24. A lecture on "The Trend of American Art" will be given in the lecture hall at eight-thirty, preceding the opening of the galleries, by Clyde H. Burroughs, who assembled the exhibition.

The content of the exhibit this year is rather larger in its scope than those which have preceded it. The two smaller galleries will be devoted to group shows—one, to works by the late Julius Rolshoven, the other, to those of the late Arthur B. Davies, as a memorial to these well-known painters, both of whom have died within the past two years. The larger exhibition gallery will contain selected examples by some sixty living painters, who are making the art history of America today and were chosen from many sources with an idea of covering as completely as it was possible to do with this limited number, the range of present-day American painting, from some of the prize-winning pictures of the National Academy of Design and other official exhibitions to works by members of the Society of Independent Artists. While the choice is largely a personal one and while one will find in the exhibit some few names not heretofore noted in American art, the selections for the most part have been from the painters of today who have made some impression on juries, collectors and connoisseurs.

The group of paintings by Julius Rolshoven affords an excellent opportunity to study the type of painting which had its inception in Munich in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a movement which was developed under the leadership of Frank Duveneck, who had as his associates such men as William M. Chase, John W. Alexander,

J. Frank Currier, Oliver Dennett Grover, and our own fellow-townsmen, Julius Rolshoven, all of whom have left their mark on American art. In their skillful draftsmanship, in the modelling of the human head or the human figure, in the painter-like quality of their material methods, they have not been excelled. While some of the group were influenced by the successive changes that were going on in the neighboring art capital of Paris, Julius Rolshoven remained steadfast to his early convictions and carried the principles of his early training into the very last canvas on his easel.

The contribution of Arthur B. Davies has not been alone his long succession of lyrical pictures, for it was he who, in the now famous Armory Show of 1913, undertook to introduce almost single-handed to America the seething impulses of the post-impressionistic movements of the European art centers. That many of the pictures in that show, which were the laughing stock of complacent New York, have since become recognized as the masterpieces of the period and have been acquired (some of them at fabulous prices) for public and private collections, speaks well for the discernment of Mr. Davies, who personally selected practically every object exhibited. The vitalizing influence on American painting was of great importance, and it was largely due to that exhibition that a regeneration was brought about in American art.

Mr. Davies was able to face courageously the censure and ridicule attending the Armory Show all the more easily because of his absorbing interest in his own work. Living more or less as a recluse, with something of a strain of mysticism in him and possessing a sensitivity to aesthetics which was quite

equal to that of Whistler, he produced those lyrical compositions peopled with beautiful figures that form so large a part of his life work. His excursions into the realms of cubism and futurism were scientific rather than aesthetic, and what we like in these experimental works are the same qualities that we find in his other productions. He worked

in all mediums: oil, watercolor, sculpture, etching—even essaying with great success the tapestry cartoon. Within the limited space of a single gallery we will show a retrospective group of his works, from his early naturalistic painting through the musical compositions of his later days, interspersing with the oils a few of his watercolors and drawings.

FIFTY CENT EXHIBIT

The Educational Department is planning an exhibit, to be made possible by the generosity of the art section of the Junior League, which will be a novelty among exhibitions at the museum. It will be a "Fifty Cent Exhibit," made up of useful articles, such as glassware, china and textiles, collected from among Detroit stores and costing not more than fifty cents apiece. There is a quantity of really charming and well designed glassware, and even china and textiles, to be found today scattered through the inexpensive shops and five-and-ten-cent stores. It is simple and in good taste, in spite of its price; but it is overlooked because no one realizes it is

there and because in the popular mind a beautiful thing still means something showy, expensive and useless. It is the aim of this exhibit to dramatize the fact that good taste means good design, not just expense, by making a display of these things. In a practical city like Detroit, public attention can be caught and the museum's task of improving popular taste can be greatly helped by something on this simple, practical, every-day basis, and by demonstrating good taste on ground familiar to every one. The material is now being collected and it is planned to open the exhibit at the same time as the annual exhibition of American painting, on April 14.

A PICTURE A WEEK

Thousands of people visit the Art Institute every week, but few of all these numbers have ever had an opportunity to study art or to know about the many varying ideas which caused the works of art there to be what they are. But since a picture is always more enjoyable if you know what was in the artist's mind, and what he was trying to do, the Art Institute is each week to put one work of art on special display in the main hall with a note of explanation pasted beside it.

It is not always easy to understand the ways of strange peoples. In fact, it is hard sometimes to understand the other members of one's family, so that there is no need to be surprised if artists of other civilizations do not do exactly as we would expect. In the Art Insti-

tute there are examples of all the great schools of art, whether of recent times, or of hundreds of years ago. Greeks, Romans, Frenchmen, Germans and Italians of the middle ages as well as of today, Chinese, Persians, Hindus, and plain Americans, have all put their own ideas and their own temperaments into the works of art which Detroiters look at every week. It is no wonder if people do not at once see all that there is in these things: yet all are worth knowing and understanding.

By this new arrangement, one work of art a week will have a word of explanation beside it and will be put in a conspicuous place where it can be seen, so that anyone who wishes to increase his pleasure in visiting the Museum may read the explanation.

CALENDAR OF LECTURES AND EXHIBITIONS

EXHIBITIONS

April 14—May 24. Seventeenth Annual Exhibition of American Art.

LECTURES

April 14. "The Trend of American Art," by Clyde H. Burroughs, Curator of American Art, at 8:30 o'clock.

SUNDAY AFTERNOONS

In place of lectures, there will be short talks on a single important work of art in the galleries at 3:00 o'clock.

April 5. Easter. No talk.

April 12. Tintoretto's Ceiling Painting.

April 19. The Korin Screen.

April 26. Chippendale.

Concerts by the Chamber Music Society will be continued through April 26 at 3:30 o'clock in the Auditorium.

GALLERY TALKS

In place of gallery tours there will be short talks on a single important object or group of objects, in the galleries at 8:00 on Tuesday and Friday evenings.

March 31. The great celadon vase.

April 3. Good Friday. No talk.

April 7. Early American silver.

April 10. Four Roman portrait heads.

April 14. Luca della Robbia.

April 17. Ryder, a great American.

April 21. Titian's portraits.

April 24. Michelangelo's drawings.

April 28. Mary Cassatt, American woman painter.

During the special exhibition of American Art there will be a gallery talk every Wednesday afternoon at 2:00 o'clock.

MUSICAL PROGRAMS

(Tuesday evenings at 8:30)

April 7. "Wagner, Liszt," by Frank Bishop, Curator of Music.

April 21. "Schumann," by Edward Bredshall.

(Friday evenings at 8:30)

April 3. Organ recital by Dr. York and Miss Green.