

# BULLETIN OF THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

VOLUME I

BOSTON, DECEMBER, 1952

No. 282



*Death of the Virgin*

Bohemian (Prague ?) Master, ca. 1450

Detail: the Virgin's Soul

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

SUBSCRIPTION ONE DOLLAR

## RETIREMENT OF ASHTON SANBORN

Secretary of the Museum, 1925-1952

Librarian of the Museum, 1923-1952

THE Director announces with regret the retirement on September 1, after more than a quarter of a century's service to the Museum, of Mr. Ashton Sanborn. Mr. Sanborn, a classical archaeologist, had tastes so catholic and interests so broad that he was qualified to act not only as Secretary of the Museum but as Librarian, as Editor of the *Museum Bulletin*, as head of all other Museum publications, and, for a time, as Editorial Secretary to Dr. Reisner (Curator of Egyptian Art and director of the Museum's excavations in Egypt). At the age of seventy he asked permission to retire. Happily, although he severs his connection with the Museum, he has accepted the editorship of the *American Journal of Archaeology*. His scholarly contributions will, therefore, continue though he is relieved of the burden of administrative duties. He leaves with the regrets but with the most cordial best wishes of the Trustees and of his colleagues.

G. H. EDGELL, Director

## A Masterpiece of Bohemian Art

THE *Death of the Virgin*,<sup>1</sup> (Frontispiece, Figs. 1, 4-6, 13) purchased two years ago by the Museum and labeled *Bohemian School*, was found in 1905 in the *Mater Dei Chapel* of the castle of Košátky. Ever since its discovery and its first publication, it has been considered as one of the five known pictures which stylistically can be grouped around the Altar of Hohenfurt, the masterpiece of Bohemian painting in the XIV century.<sup>2</sup> It is, beyond any doubt, one of the few truly great creations of panel painting produced in this period north of the Alps. People not accustomed to modern art historical classification might easily wonder that such a bold statement can be made of a painting which comes from so obscure a place, and they may rightly ask how is it possible that a work of art of such superior qualities could be produced in a country seemingly so remote. We must admit the word *Bohemian* conveys something slightly derogatory. Characteristically, in French, the word means plainly gypsy-like or, to quote the Oxford Dictionary, "An artist, literary man or actor, who leads a vagabond or irregular and unconventional life." Hence, as a geographic and historical term, it had to be substituted in the French language by the word *Tschèque*, which at least for the period with which we are concerned here, has a somewhat misleading connotation, raising the dangerously subtle and highly problematic question of the German and Czech contribution to the creation of Bohemian art — a question the solution of which has been often blurred during the last century by a tiresome and biased nationalistic approach on both sides.

<sup>1</sup> Accession No. 50.2716. 100 x 71 cm. Oak, covered with canvas. Tempera. A cleaning done in 1934 in the workshop of the National Museum, Prague, revealed the almost perfect condition of the panel. Only in the center, around the face of Christ, are slightly damaged passages. — Collection: Count Kolowrat-Krakowsky, Košátky Castle. On loan at the National Museum, Prague, from 1923-1939.

<sup>2</sup> See A. Matejček, *Gotische Malerei in Böhmen*, Prague 1939, pp. 66 ff., Pls. 38-41. This standard work gives the complete bibliography of the panel. An abridged edition in English, *Czech Gothic Painting*, without bibliography, appeared in Prague, 1950.

Perhaps "School of Prague" would be a more satisfactory label. Prague became, under the reign of Charles IV (1346-1378), not only the capital but also the intellectual and artistic center of the Reich. This ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, whose father was French and whose mother was Czech, belonged to the House of Luxembourg. Born in the East, in Prague, he was by blood, as well as by his first marriage, closely related to the French kings. Thus it was natural for him to choose his education at the French courts and to exchange his baptismal Czech name of Wenceslas for that of Charles, after his uncle, Charles IV, King of France. To live in Prague and to create there a cultural center of pivotal consequence must have exercised on him an intriguing and enticing allurements — chiefly the allurements and fascination of the foreign and the exotic, perhaps comparable with the feelings of his successor of almost two centuries later, Philip II of Hapsburg, when he chose to live in the Escorial. The Escorial and the Burg Karlstein, Charles IV's castle near Prague, breathe somehow a similar atmosphere, a related spirit of strange piety, fanatic mysticism, and foreign orthodoxy. It would indeed be tempting to follow the parallels between these two rulers of the Holy Roman Empire.

The appearance and the criteria of the so called International Style, the "Style of the Soft Lines" and the "Beautiful Madonnas", which we are accustomed to date around 1400, have, as a matter of fact, their origins in the Prague of Charles IV. He made the city in 1344 the See of an Archbishop. In 1347 he founded the University of Prague and made the city the seat of the Chancellery of the Empire. In 1353 he appointed as Chancellor the Silesian Johann von Neumarkt, perhaps the first humanist north of the Alps in the modern sense of the word, and certainly the first modern bibliophile.<sup>3</sup> His illuminated manuscripts rival in their ambitious and precious

<sup>3</sup> K. Burdach, *Vom Mittelalter zur Renaissance*, 1928, II, 1.

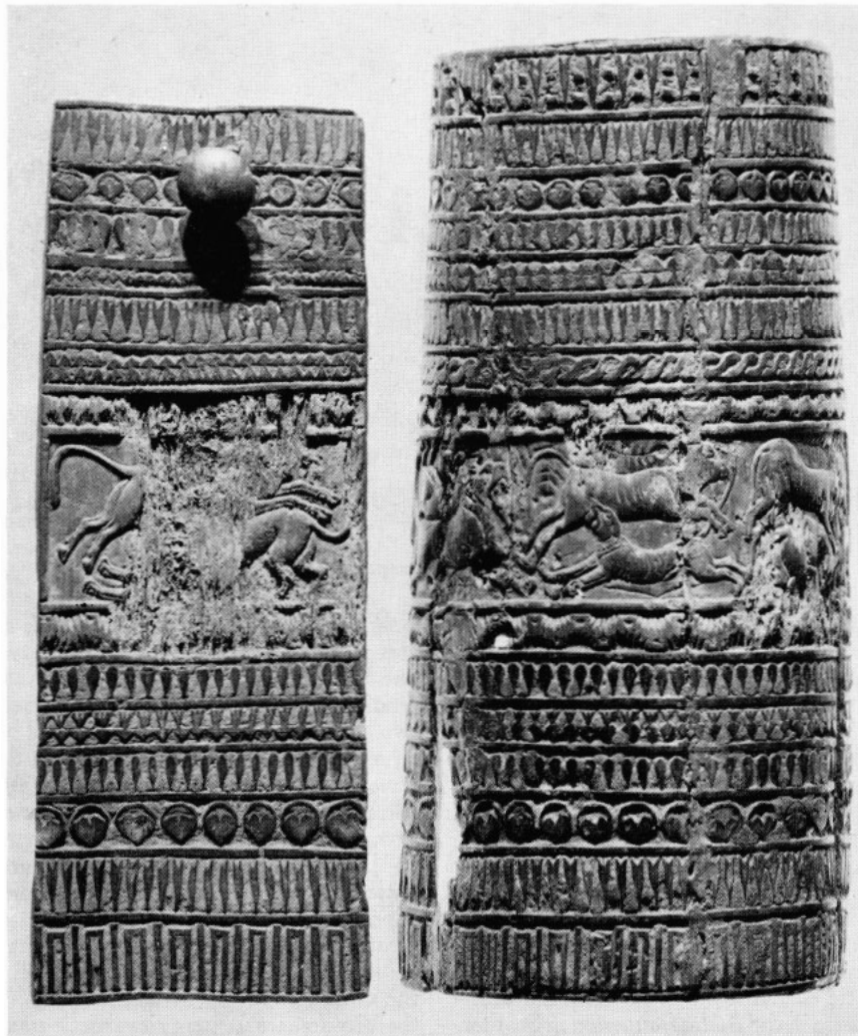


Fig. 1. Toilet Box and Lid

William F. Warden Fund

### An Eighteenth Dynasty Egyptian Toilet Box

**I**N 1898 attention was first called to a beautifully carved wooden toilet box in the collection of the Rev. William MacGregor at Bolehall

Manor House, Tamworth, when Edouard Naville published drawings of this attractive little object.<sup>1</sup> The same year von Bissing published another toilet box in the Cairo Museum (then at

<sup>1</sup> *Revue Archéologique*, 33 (1898), pp. 1-11.

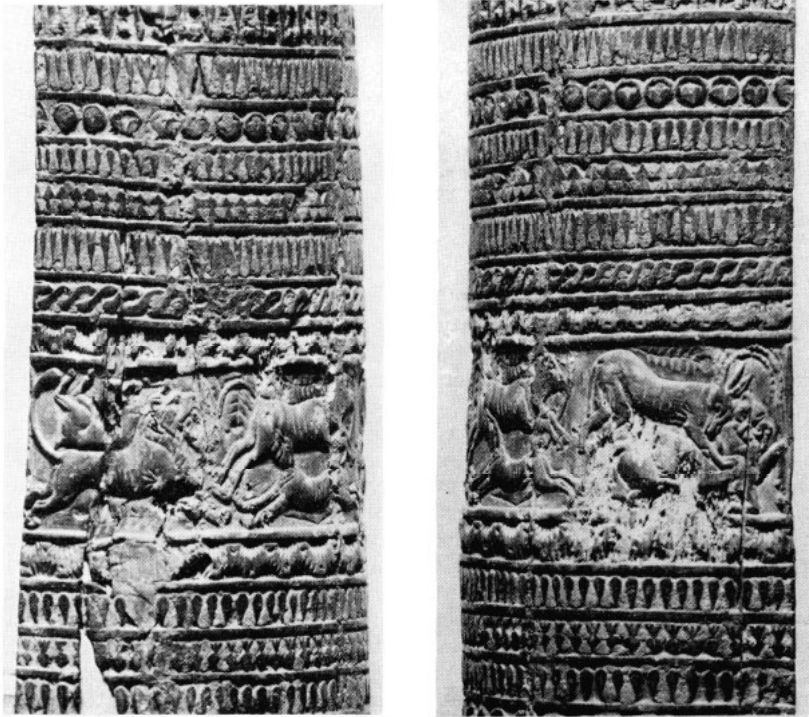


Fig. 2. Details of Box

Giza) which had been found by Petrie at Kahun,<sup>2</sup> as well as a decorated metal bowl in Cairo.<sup>3</sup> The examination of these three objects formed basic studies of the problem of Egyptian relations with the Aegean which still remain stimulating, sound, and relevant today. The chief difference in point of view now is that hardly anyone would question, as was done fifty years ago, that the two boxes and the bowl were made by Egyptian craftsmen.

<sup>2</sup> *Mitteilungen des Kaiserlich Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abtheilung*, 23 (1898), pp. 242-266.

<sup>3</sup> *Jahrbuch des Archäologischen Instituts*, 13 (1898), pp. 28-56.

The Aegean influence upon these craftsmen seems clearly evident although not easy to define precisely, in spite of the large quantity of comparative material which has appeared from excavations in Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean in the ensuing half century. Naville and von Bissing were then, of course, only familiar with Mycenaean reflections of the Minoan culture soon to be revealed by Sir Arthur Evans' brilliant work in Crete, but von Bissing was already speculating as to a Cretan source for the people of Keftiu who appear bearing gifts in the

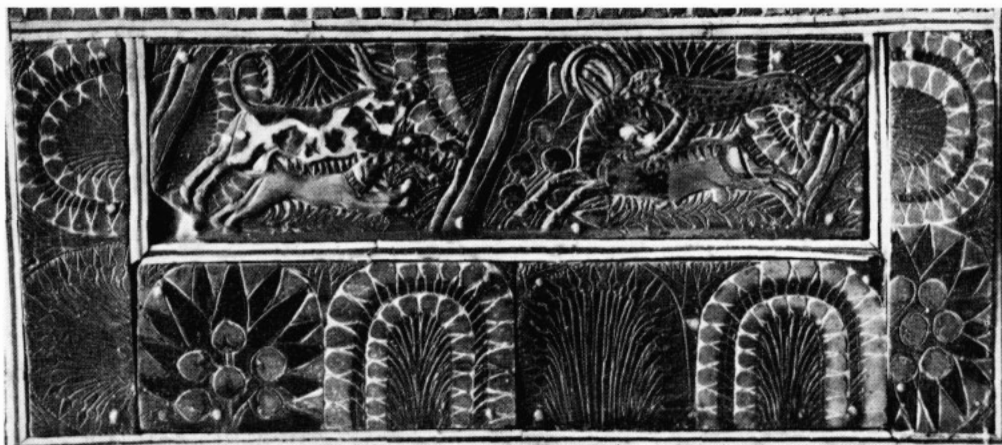


Fig. 3. Animals, on back panel of Cairo Chest of Tut-ankh-amen

Courtesy of Griffith Institute, Oxford

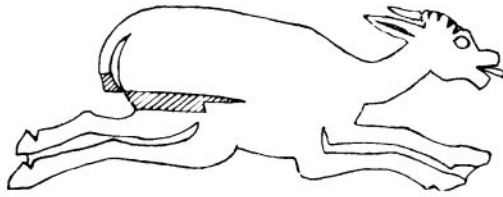


Fig. 4. Middle Kingdom Ivory Inlay from Kerma



Fig. 5. Drawing by Miss Suzanne Chapman of detail of box

Theban tombs of the early Eighteenth Dynasty. Both men emphasized the importance of the Syrian coast as an intermediary ground for contacts between the Aegean and Egypt.

The homeland of the Keftiu has since proved to be a subject of lively debate. Evans and Norman de Garis Davies have convincingly demonstrated that its center lay in Crete, but recent discoveries in Cyprus, at Ras Shamra on the north coast of Syria, and at Atchana in the Antioch Plain have suggested close connections with Crete and the Aegean, which seems to explain why the men of Keftiu are sometimes intermingled with embassies from Syria. In other words, Keftiu seems to have meant Crete primarily but with a wider application to the Aegean as a whole and a more vague association with the Asiatic coast in the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean which is still not clear to us and which was perhaps equally hazy to the ancient Egyptian. It also would appear that the Greek Mainland replaced Crete in the sea trade with Egypt and Western Asia in the New Kingdom which, oddly enough, brings us back to something of the same view held before the importance of Crete as the source of Aegean civilization had been discovered.

Thus the MacGregor box has played an interesting role in the fascinating investigation of early contacts between the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean. When last published by Helen J. Kantor (*The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium B. C.*, 1947, pp. 70, 71, Pl. XXI E), it was cited as an example of the waning influence of Aegean art in the reign of Tut-ankh-amen, assuming that by this time the more conservative Egyptian attitude toward movement had re-asserted itself against the extravagant Minoan representation of animals in the so-called "flying gallop". The box itself had also disappeared from view after the Naville drawings were published in Sotheby's *Catalogue of the MacGregor Collection*, p. 68, Pls. XV, XX, for the London sale in 1922. It apparently passed into the collection of William Randolph Hearst and thence to Joseph Brummer. It was secured for the Museum of Fine Arts at the Brummer Sale in New York in May, 1949<sup>1</sup> (Figs. 1, 2).

The box belongs to one of three fairly common

types known toward the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty, although two examples are as late as the reign of Ramesses II.<sup>2</sup> They were being made, then, roughly about 1400 B. C., and have been discussed by Ludwig Borchardt in *Studies Presented to F. Ll. Griffith*, 1932, pp. 257-262. All have compartments for cosmetics in solid form. Some, like the Kahun box are cylindrical standing on one end, the compartments being reached through the top by turning a disk lid, but the MacGregor box is a long semi-cylinder which rested on the decorated curved under surface. The flat lid with a little knob at one end fitted inside the upper edge of the container against the top of the cross walls of the three compartments. A third kind of toilet box, which is less common, has two half cylinders, like the MacGregor box, joined together, both with compartments, one half forming the lid. One of the two boxes found at Sedment (Cairo 47010) is of this kind and its panels of animals are carved in relief like the MacGregor box, a lid in Turin (No. 6414) and another box in Cairo (No. 29140), although in none of these does the delicacy of the cutting approach that of the MacGregor box. The Sedment box of the reign of Ramesses II also has the curious plant border which frames the animals on the Boston box and which appears on another piece in Turin (No. 6415). Most of the other toilet boxes, in Cairo, Leiden, Paris, and Brooklyn, have similar scenes of dogs and lions attacking game but only indicated by incised lines. The two Sedment boxes were found in graves which also contained Mycenaean pottery.

As in the other examples, both the lid and container of the MacGregor box are decorated below with a false door pattern, and then with bands of floral ornament, flower petals, Persea fruit and pomegranates, as well as the unusual wavy plant border and a guilloche of twisted rope. The interstices have been filled in with green paste which forms a pleasant background for the designs. In the center is a panel of raised decoration with various animals carved in exceptionally fine relief. The panel on the lid has been badly scratched but preserves part of a hound attacking a calf. A similar representation appears in the

<sup>1</sup>Accession No. 49.493 a-b; William F. Warden Fund; length of box: 15.5 cms., width 7.5, height 3.4; lid: 14.4 x 5.4 cms. and .05 cms. thick.

<sup>2</sup>Petrie and Brunton, *Sedment*, II, p. 31, Pl. LVIII, Tomb 1955; see also Tomb 32: p. 25, Pl. LXXI. Brunton and Engelbach, *Gurob*, p. 17, Pl. XXX.



center of the panel on the box, which is fortunately much better preserved. On the left a lion carries on its back a gazelle (?), the head of which has been lost in a crack of the surface. On the right a lioness (rather than a panther as Miss Kantor thought) leaps on the back of an ibex to seize it by the throat. A line marked under the hunting dog is perhaps intended to indicate the rolling ground of the desert, while a somewhat incongruous spray of pondweed has been used as a filling motif between the figures.

The action of the animals is lively but Miss Kantor points to a stiffening of the poses in comparison to the freedom of movement expressed in the hunting scenes of the reign of Tuthmosis III in the tombs of Puyemre and Rekh-mi-re.<sup>6</sup> I am inclined to doubt that there really is a progressive stiffening in the representation of movement as the Eighteenth Dynasty advances, if we stop to consider the tangled confusion of falling Syrians and horses under the rearing forelegs of the king's chariot horses in the stucco relief on the chariot of Tuthmosis IV, which set a precedent for the painting on Tut-anekh-amen's casket and the XIXth Dynasty battle scenes. There are, too, the animals and birds on the floor paintings, ceilings and walls of the palaces of Amenhotep III and Akhenaten, as well as the innumerable leaping animals used to decorate small objects such as the MacGregor box. This same lively spirit is carried on in the magnificent drawing of the wild bulls being hunted in a marsh by Ramesses III, on the back of the pylon at Medinet Habu. It is true that the Egyptian preference for static form does frequently modify the exaggerated Minoan form of the flying gallop and it would be difficult to parallel again the hound in the early tomb of Puyemre which reverses its direction in mid leap somewhat as the body of an animal is twisted on a silver cup from the Argive district of mainland Greece (Axel W. Persson, *The Royal Tombs at Dendra near Midea*, Pl. XVII), where the whole composition is like a small version of the Egyptian hunts of Puyemre and Rekh-mi-re.

However, the T-shaped support which in the old drawing of the MacGregor box appears under the rear foot of the lioness, cannot be used as an example of the conservative Egyptian providing a practical support for a part of a figure otherwise hanging in mid-air. Close re-examination of the box seems to establish conclusively that this is only the lower part of the tail of the lioness, which is unusually long like that of the lion at the other end of the panel (Fig. 5). In fact, there is really nothing stiff or static about this representation. In the case of the paintings of the reigns of Amenhotep III and Akhenaten the swift, rather impressionistic rendering of the brushstrokes really gives a new freedom to the birds and animals which was lacking in the hard, clear outlines of the

early part of the dynasty. The tendency of the birds in the finest wall paintings from Amarna to flirt their wing or tail feathers produces a new sense of movement which has not appeared before. This is accompanied by a shading of pigments in the feathering, as well as stippling of the underparts, in the case of the flying pigeons in a fragment of ceiling painting in the Metropolitan Museum, which lends a new play of life to the surface.

To disagree with a gradual stiffening of movement as the Dynasty advanced is not to doubt Miss Kantor's dating of the MacGregor box to the reign of Tut-anekh-amen, or at least to the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty. The animal groups are used in just this manner on many of the objects from the tomb of Tut-anekh-amen. Perhaps the most striking parallel appears in the unpublished panels along the sides and back of the chest (Cairo No. 1189) whose lid and front appear in Pls. 64, 65 of *Tutankhamun's Treasure* by Miss Penelope Fox. The Griffith Institute at Oxford has kindly allowed me to reproduce for the first time a photograph of the animals on the back panel of the Cairo Chest (Fig. 3). The leaping figure of the calf appears frequently in the floor paintings at Thebes of Amenhotep III and at Amarna. Very close in style of carving and representation is the calf on a fragmentary circular wooden lid from Amarna.<sup>7</sup> The dog is the kind used for hunting throughout the Eighteenth Dynasty. There is a characteristically represented pack of these hounds in the tomb of Rekh-mi-re, while a small ivory carving in the Metropolitan Museum and various objects in the tomb of Tut-anekh-amen again show a type of animal exactly like ours.<sup>8</sup>

Two elements in the plant patterns of the MacGregor box strike one as being unusual. One of these is a wavy band with wedge shaped markings along the edge that produces the impression of clumps of plants, as though the naturalistic plant borders of the papyrus thicket in the "green room" of the North Palace at Amarna, or those framing the panels of the Tut-anekh-amen chest, had been conventionalized. It is somewhat reminiscent of the irregular bands of rock which frame Minoan scenes and which were taken over into Egyptian design on the dagger of Ah-hotep and the dog collar of Mai-her-peri, (Kantor, *loc. cit.*, Pls. XIII, XXI). Probably this resemblance is purely fortuitous, but the twisted rope guilloche band is certainly foreign and appears rarely in Egyptian design. It seems to have originated in Mesopotamia and was a favorite of the Syrian seal-cutter in the time when our box was made. In the New Kingdom I know it only around the mouth of an exotically fashioned ointment box from Gurob, again with Syrian associations (*Bul-*

<sup>6</sup> N. de G. Davies, *The Tomb of Puyemre at Thebes*, I, Pl. VII; *The Tomb of Rekh-mi-re at Thebes*, II, Pl. XLIII.

<sup>7</sup> J. D. S. Pendlebury, *The City of Akhenaten*, III, p. 123, Pl. LXXXVII.  
<sup>8</sup> Lansing, *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 35 (1940), pp. 10, 11.

*letin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale*, I [1901], p. 232, Pl. III). Earlier it occurs rarely on Middle Kingdom scarabs (*Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, XXVIII [1930], p. 53, Fig. 7, No. 20) and on the black ware vessels with incised designs of foreign origin which have been found in XIIth and XIIIth Dynasty context at Kahun, Lisht, and Kerma.

Miss Kantor has demonstrated that the striking examples of Aegean influence are confined to the early part of the New Kingdom. This is a period of vigorous artistic development both in Crete and on the Mainland of Greece, as well as one in which Egypt was recovering from the effects of the Hyksos invasion and beginning its conquests abroad. The influence was not one-sided but represents a considerable interchange, which seems to have occurred during Hyksos times and which continues the wide contacts between Crete, Egypt, and Western Asia during the Middle Kingdom, as evinced by Middle Minoan pottery found in Egypt and Syria, and Egyptian objects discovered in Crete and in the Syrian ports, such as the tomb equipment of the princes of Byblos. The treasure found buried in the temple of Tod near Luxor contained cylinder seals, silver vessels, and metal ingots from Western Asia. Egypt played no part in the affairs of Northern Syria at the time when the Mari letters were written about 1800 B. C., but these frequently mention the expedition of imported objects from one place to another. The textiles of Byblos seem to have been particularly in demand, while objects from Crete (Kaphthor) are mentioned a number of times.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the most striking example of Aegean influence in Egypt, and the one most pertinent to the pose of the "flying gallop" of the animals on our box, is the lion chasing a bull in a rocky landscape indicated in the Cretan manner on the famous dagger found with the burial of the Seventeenth Dynasty Queen Ah-hotep. The technique of its manufacture closely resembles the roughly contemporary

weapons from Mycenae which show an even more accomplished facility in the inlaying of metals. However, one of the Mycenaean daggers has adopted the familiar Egyptian river landscape with wild cats hunting birds among papyrus, while papyrus, monkeys, and hunting cats appear in the Cretan frescoes of Knossos and Hagia Triada which were reaching a high point of development at this time. At about 1800 the paintings in the palace of Mari on the Upper Euphrates make use of the spiral which had become common by this time both in Egypt and the Aegean as well as the Egyptian papyrus which has been developed into a sort of artificial tree.

While the New Kingdom method of representing leaping figures certainly seems to have received its impetus from the Aegean, it might be well to remember that the Egyptian artist occasionally attempted to represent figures in motion in very early times. There are even two examples of the flying gallop which can hardly be due to any foreign influence, although both fall somewhat outside the main stream of Egyptian development. Fig. 6 shows one of a pair of hounds chasing hares, from sketches which I made in 1939 and 1951, on the almost illegible east wall of the First Intermediate Period tomb of Sebek-hotep at Moalla a few miles south of Luxor (faintly visible in J. Vandier's *Mo'alla*, Pl. XXIV). The hound is red and white, the hare yellow, and the gazelles have pink markings on white. In this period of the breakdown of the arts following the collapse of the Old Kingdom, the incapacity of the craftsman is combined with a certain vigorous southern quality to produce results which would not have been attempted by better trained artists in a more accomplished period. Somewhat similarly, at the fortified trading post of Kerma, far to the south in the Sudan, Egyptian traditions were mingled with African elements native to the place in the Middle Kingdom. From the workshops there comes the running gazelle in Fig. 4 which formed an ivory inlay from a piece of furniture.



Fig. 6. Leaping Animals in First Intermediate Period Tomb at Moalla

<sup>9</sup> Dossin, *Syria*, 20 (1939), pp. 110, 111.

The Amarna letters portray an interesting picture of the relations of Egypt with the different parts of its empire in Western Asia and with the neighboring foreign states in the reigns of Tuthmosis IV and Amenhotep III. There was a continual movement back and forth of couriers, the exchange of gifts, and the arrangement of foreign marriages for the rulers. By the time of Tutankhamen this whole system had broken down, largely through neglect of the empire in the reign of Akhenaten. Revolts in the small city states and brigandage on the roads were further aggravated by the rise of Hittite power in the north. The Cretan sea trade had been taken over by Mainland Greece and now only Mycenaean pottery is found at Amarna and in the ports of the Syrian coast. Our toilet box is a small but vivid reminder of this time of intensive contact. It is the kind of portable object which must have passed back and forth as gifts in the hands of the king's messengers. The inherent Egyptian delight in representing nature has responded here sympathetically to the Aegean method of representing movement, which has been taken over and employed in characteristic Egyptian fashion. The simple elegance of design and cutting has not been obscured by too great a profusion of ornament. It is, therefore, more appealing than larger objects of more valuable materials which have the vulgar ostentation of what we might call the Syrian taste.

WILLIAM STEVENSON SMITH

### A New and Fully Revised Edition of *Ancient Egypt*

This volume, by William Stevenson Smith, Assistant Curator of Egyptian Art in the Museum, and Lecturer in Egyptian Art at Harvard, was planned as a handbook of the Egyptian collections in the Museum of Fine Arts. Students and teachers of Egyptian history and art have discovered during the past ten years that it serves equally well as a short history of the development of Egyptian culture. Each historical period is discussed in general before the section which describes the pertinent material in the Museum.

The second edition was reprinted in 1946 without alteration, except for the addition of an index. It now seems necessary to take into account both the additions which have been made to the Museum's collections and the historical and archaeological material which has accrued from excavation and research in recent years. Ancient history is subject to constant growth, both along the main lines of its chronological framework and in important detail. The student should find this third edition a helpful guide to recent developments in a fascinating subject. Copies of the book may be obtained at the Sales Desk of the Museum at \$1.75 each (postage 20 cents additional).

### A "Pic Nick," Camden, Maine by Jerome B. Thompson

ONE of the most popular pictures in the M. and M. Karolik Collection of American Paintings 1815-1865 is *A "Pic Nick", Camden, Maine* (Fig. 1). This is due not only to the subject, which so vividly portrays the gastronomic as well as the sentimental pleasures of a summer's day in about 1850, but also to the artist's considerable skill in composition and in treating the details. Soon after the painting was placed on exhibition last year a number of persons noted the similarity between it and *The "Pick Nick" near Mount Mansfield, Vermont*, (Fig. 2) owned by the M. H. De Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco. Since distance prevented placing the two pictures side by side, detailed photographs were forwarded from San Francisco to Boston and skillfully matched by photographs on the same scale taken by the Boston Museum photographer for purposes of comparison. The results (Figs. 3, 4, 5, and 6) persuaded both museums that the paintings were by the same hand, though the unsigned San Francisco picture had been purchased as an example of the work of Jerome B. Thompson, and the Boston picture, also unsigned, had been acclaimed as the masterpiece of the painter Jeremiah P. Hardy.

Both these artists were New England painters of approximately the same period and standing, so that reattributing either picture would not greatly change its significance in the history of 19th century American painting. In fairness, however, to the artist himself, as well as for the future attributing of other similar paintings, the evidence had to be sifted and one painter decided upon.

The Boston picture came into the art market about 1940 with no attribution attached, but with a tantalizingly damaged label on the back (Fig. 7) which showed that the artist's first name began with *Jer*. In 1939 Mrs. Fannie Hardy Eckstorm, Jeremiah Hardy's great niece, had published an interesting account of his life which had drawn the attention of American art historians to the work of this hitherto obscure Maine artist. A photograph of the picnic in the woods of New England was sent to Mrs. Eckstorm, and although she had no previous knowledge of the existence of the picture she felt quite certain that it was by her great-uncle and was able to identify the spot as Camden, Maine, not far from the artist's home, and tentatively identified certain figures as members of the artist's family. On this evidence the painting was given to Hardy.

The San Francisco picture also came into the art market in the 1940's without any traceable history. The dealer who sold it to San Francisco asserted that it came to him as a painting by Jerome B. Thompson, and that it was painted at Mt. Mansfield, Vermont. There was no partic-