

FORGERS DEALERS EXPERTS

SEPP SCHÜLLER



STRANGE CHAPTER:
IN THE
HISTORY OF ART

FORGERS, DEALERS, EXPERTS

STRANGE CHAPTERS IN THE HISTORY OF ART

Who are the forgers and who are the experts? It is not always easy to say, so great is the skill and ingenuity employed by forgers when copying a work of art. The greatest art experts can be, and have been, taken in by a clever piece of forgery and though the forger's motives are questionable his skill deserves recognition.

Here is a comprehensive study of the most notorious art forgeries in history: the artists who employed their talents in imitating the talents of others, the dealers who wittingly or unwittingly sold their wares, and the experts who exposed, or were taken in by, their duplicity. Calling upon his substantial professional knowledge and his personal interest in the subject, Sepp Schüller has turned the investigation of art forgeries into a field of lively speculation having artistic, social, and psychological implications.

Although art forgeries have been known since the time of classical Greece and Rome, the vast proliferation of the visual arts and an ever growing demand for things artistic since the 19th century, have led to an increasing number of ingenious swindles, frauds, and imitations. Scores of talented men have been induced to copy accepted masterpieces and pass their imitations off as the real thing.

Often they are merely scoundrels motivated by nothing more than the desire to extract cash from the pockets of the gullible and the naive. But nearly as often, as Schüller conclusively demonstrates here, they are thwarted geniuses who feel compelled to prove their equality to the

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FORGERS, DEALERS,
EXPERTS

Strange Chapters in The History of Art

SEPP SCHÜLLER

translated from the German by James Cleugh

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Introduction

THE PAINTER Maurice Vlaminck relates that one day, while he was in the shop of Vollard, the art dealer, in Paris, a respectable-looking man came in, with a picture under his arm, and asked Vollard what he thought of it.

Vollard examined the work with interest. 'It's good,' he said. 'I like it very much. It's very fine.' 'But do you think it's an original?' the man asked. 'Original?' Vollard exclaimed. 'My dear Sir, you can't expect me to guarantee that the painting is by this, that or the other artist, or that it's not a modern copy. It looks well over three hundred years old. But I couldn't possibly tell for certain.' He smiled enigmatically. 'Why not consult my colleague across the way? He's got a brass plate up, with "Art Expert" written on it.'

This little episode is characteristic of the situation in the art world to-day. The amateur collector is always afraid of being landed with a forgery. The dealer may feel instinctively that a picture is authentic or spurious. But he will refer the collector to an 'expert' for a definite opinion. The latter is called in to eliminate the risk of acquiring a forged work.

During the last few decades such forgeries have repeatedly disturbed artistic circles. Nowadays no dealer or expert will examine a picture without remembering that it may be forged. A forgery may have come about in various ways. Some artists become 'forgers' quite involuntarily, simply because their works are attributed to someone else. Others deliberately mislead the public out of sheer caprice and self-confidence, sometimes teaching a salutary lesson by doing so. Ambition, vanity and poverty are other motives which induce people to make a bid for fame and fortune by this unusual method. A good many others simply

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swindle in order to get rich quick and are quite properly sent to prison for their frauds. But such punishments do not annul the success of their proceedings. The potential forger remains on the look-out for a favourable opportunity, for both dealers and famous experts are often deceived.

Dealers move in a peculiarly ambiguous world. Forgery trials sometimes expose them as cheats. But more often they appear for the prosecution, having discovered the swindle in their professional capacity. Many prominent dealers have entered art history as a result of their relations with artists and detections of fraud. The trade is certainly a unique and mysterious one. The Roman antiquary Augusto Jandolo writes: 'A dealer's life would provide the writer of farce with endlessly hilarious material. Shrewd plans, matured over long periods in utter seclusion and secrecy, craftily concocted frauds of the most subtle or impudent character, end in situations which Boccaccio might have contrived. When such deceptions are sooner or later brought to light, they send half the world into paroxysms of fury or laughter.'

Experts are to be found occupying university Chairs and acting as Directors of galleries. But genuine, though not formally acknowledged, experts also exist among dealers, artists and connoisseurs. Martin Porkay writes: 'Theoretical study alone will not enable a man to understand pictures and judge their quality, so as to pronounce on their authenticity. Personally, I had no desire to become a Professor or the Director of a gallery. So I didn't trouble to take a degree.' Porkay exposed a number of frauds and knew by experience what practical difficulties beset an art expert. He not only has to cope with forgers and their forgeries, unmask them and render them harmless. He is also involved in hostilities with the owners of such forgeries, who resent their detection and sometimes do not hesitate to institute proceedings themselves with a view to having the suspected works declared genuine. Some of the greatest of acknowledged experts, men whose names are only mentioned with bated breath, have certainly in their time made sensational discoveries. But often their mistakes have been equally sensational.

Art forgeries are 'news' to-day. But they are as old as art itself. Many works in great demand and of correspondingly high market value have at all times and in all parts of the world

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been forged. In Horace's own day, he writes, 'A man in a quandary is capable of a thousand tricks to get what he wants. He'll try a thousand short cuts and rogueries to gain his purpose.'

There were such things as art forgeries even in ancient Greece. Apelles is said to have signed and offered for sale certain works by Protogenes, whom he wished to help in this way. Phidias is recorded to have done the same thing for the same reason in the case of a statue of Aphrodite by his favourite pupil Agoracritus.

Such frauds were also common in Roman imperial times. Paintings and statues bearing the signatures of well-known Greek artists were offered to dealers and connoisseurs. Certain studios, we are told, specialised in the production of silver cups and bronzes of animals, hundreds of which were thrown on the market. Two cups by the then famous artist Calamis were so closely copied by one Zenodorus as to be indistinguishable from the originals. Other works are known to have been inscribed, by profit-seeking swindlers, with the names of Praxiteles and Pausias.

In the sixteenth century the demand for specimens of antique art became so insatiable that a regular industry was devoted to their fabrication. Its practitioners excused themselves with a smile, observing that 'believers and unbelievers have always deceived the credulous'. At that time such forgeries were not taken very seriously, since a certain level of technical skill was required for their production and in the case of a genuine work of art commanded exceptional admiration. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Lorenzo de' Medici persuading Michelangelo to give his statue of Cupid a look of the antique and sell it as such. When the fraud was discovered the young sculptor was quite proud of having executed work comparable with that of the ancients. Other sculptures by him were also subsequently advertised as 'antiques' and must accordingly be regarded as forgeries. No doubt many other falsifications occurred at that time with no intent to deceive. Paintings were altered on grounds of taste or for political or religious reasons and thus became frauds.

The archaeological discoveries of the nineteenth century also provided models for those engaged in the dangerous trade of art forgery. The site of Homer's Troy was investigated. Nineveh was found, Babylon excavated. Study of the secrets of the

Pyramids began. The first striking discoveries were made, at the same time, in the shadowy realm of bogus art. Sensational revelations excited the Press throughout the world and gravely disturbed artistic circles. The story of Giovanni Bastianini, the 'reluctant forger', was told. Dealers detected the mistake made by experts who had taken the portrait of a modern factory-worker for that of a sixteenth-century philosopher, Benivieni, by an artist of that period, and allowed it to pass as such. Other dealers cheated by representing to experts as originals a certain mysterious 'pre-Christian' tiara, fabrications by Dossena and copies of works by Van Gogh and Spitzweg. But in the controversy over the bust of Flora and in the exposure of many French forgers of paintings dealers proved themselves experts in tracking down imposture.

During the last few decades numerous scandals in this field have greatly damaged the prestige of authorities on art. In some cases confessions by the forgers themselves led to censure of the dealers and experts concerned. Outstanding swindlers in this connection have been, in Italy, Holland and Germany, Alceo Dossena, Han van Meegeren and Lothar Malskat. Such culprits spoke of 'deception for beauty's sake' and their 'reaction against conspiracy by cliques and especially critics' to suppress their work. They expected to be admired like film stars and artists of great reputation. They haughtily pointed out to their accusers that they were fully the equals of the well-known masters 'in whose spirit' their works had been 'conceived anew'. They gave interviews to the Press in which they explained and defended their artistic methods. Many people, in secret, thought highly of them. It was found only too easy to disregard the meanness of the deliberate fraud. The forgers, condemned by connoisseurs and sentenced by the Courts, were often pitied. A mysterious glamour enfolded such episodes in an artist's life. The tragic fate of many artists thus branded as cheats and the attraction exercised by events so extraordinary gave rise to much discussion. The phrases 'comedy of errors' and 'art's merry-go-round' were heard.

'Do such forgeries really do any harm to the trade in antiques?' asks Augusto Jandolo. 'No,' he continues. 'On the contrary, curiosity is aroused and knowledge improved in the trade by these revelations.' Wolfgang Goethe agreed with him. For

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Goethe himself tells us he collected counterfeits of antique coins 'in order to make me more and more appreciative of the originals through comparison with deceptive imitations.' The same result can be obtained in other fields of art. 'Nothing is so apt to sharpen one's ability to discern the genuine as the recognition of a forgery,' writes Friedrich Winkler. It was the practical importance of these discoveries which the great connoisseur had in mind.

The study of art forgery brings to light the basic distinction between the genuine and the spurious, facilitates the detection of fraud and reveals the true nature of art. During the last few decades, accordingly, numerous exhibitions, lectures and publications, as well as sound and television broadcasts, have drawn attention to the subject in circles far beyond those directly concerned with art. This consideration has also led to the compilation of the following pages. Their object is to survey, for the first time, in its entirety, the wide field of battle between forgers, dealers and experts and thus clarify the real character of art.

SEPP SCHÜLLER

CHAPTER 1

Egypt, the Forgers' Paradise

ART FORGERIES were perpetrated on the banks of the Nile even in the early historical period. A number of metal and stone objects found in Egyptian tombs, dating from the pre-Christian era, have proved to be imitations. After excavation began, with a rising demand for the objects unearthed, their fabrication became an industry and the country, consequently, a forger's paradise.

Mohareb Todous, an eminent collector of Egyptian works of art, has stated: 'There are three main categories in any Egyptian collection, those of genuine antiquities, imitations of high artistic merit and forgeries of little value.' He has been careful to divide his pieces into authentic and spurious items, making a clear distinction between old and new. But he declares that it is extremely difficult to come to a decision. A sure taste in matters of art is required in these preliminary investigations and a lifelong concern with Egyptian history and civilisation is necessary for accuracy of judgment.

Kurt Lange, in his *Pyramids, Sphinxes and Pharaohs*, describes the methods of the art forgers of Dira Abu'n-Naga. They occupy cavities in the fields, completely concealed from view and yet close to the road used by foreigners to enter the Valley of the Kings. Works of art are counterfeited by primitive means and may include large and small stone heads and sarcophagus masks. The ancient Egyptian style is imitated, being copied from illustrations in guide-books to the Cairo Museum and other collections. New works in stone generally show a combination of incongruous features, such as lips taken from the Amarna period, Tuthmosis eyes and Rameses noses. But such productions can scarcely rank as forgeries. The term is really only applicable when craftsmen in the dealers' workshops at Luxor lay on 'ancient'

traces of colour or otherwise give the illusion of age by various cunning procedures. The imitations then become, in the eyes of enraptured tourists, venerable and genuine masterpieces.

At times even experts are deceived by these subtle devices. Excavations of the sculptor's studio at King Ikhnaton's palace, the modelling room of the Court Sculptor to Tuthmosis and the treasures of King Tutankhamun's tomb, inspired the forgers to special efforts of imitation. Genuine old material was treated, with an ancient type of tool, in a fashion so close to that of the original as to be hardly distinguishable from it.

The high demand for mummies led to repeated forgeries of these objects. Every stage of counterfeit work, from the most refined to the coarsest, is represented in this field. The more primitive productions are often detected by their smell alone. Even the most 'perfect' imitations can be exposed by Röntgen rays. Public and private collections are constantly dispensing with pieces which had never formerly been suspected by anyone. For example, a certain Egyptian mummy had been regarded for the last fifty years as the showpiece of the Dutch provincial gallery of archaeology at Zwolle. It was supposed to be 3600 years old. But in 1955 a Röntgen photograph proved that the mummy contained four bones and a torso that did not correspond anatomically. It is known that the Bedouin still sell mummies consisting of fragments of human bones artfully wrapped in ancient cloth. 'Egyptian antiquities' are even fabricated to-day in western Europe. The history of a monumental statue of Rameses in a French collection is as follows. A certain amateur was looking for an effective figure to decorate his largest apartment, used for receptions. The dealers he consulted naturally bestirred themselves to supply such a statue. One day an agent reported that a colossal figure of Rameses, over lifesize, had just been discovered in the ruins of Thebes and could be bought for 100,000 francs. The collector was told that other offers had been made. In spite of the unusually high price demanded he agreed to purchase the statue. The dealer proceeded to inform him, in a number of successive reports, that very arduous and prolonged work had been necessary to load up the statue, transport it up the Nile to Alexandria, where tedious negotiations with the authorities ensued, till at last the figure was placed aboard a new steamer, and carried in rough weather across the Mediterranean

to Naples, Genoa and finally Marseilles. When the long expected consignment eventually arrived at its destination, the size and beauty of the statue captivated everyone who saw it. Then the figure was examined more closely by connoisseurs and some preliminary doubts were expressed. Disquieting variations from the style of the alleged date of origin, the 20th dynasty, were discovered. The state of preservation, moreover, was surprisingly good. Traces of the use of modern tools were found. It turned out that the statue was not made of Egyptian basalt at all, but of ordinary clay-slate from the Angers district. In fact, the figure of Rameses bought for 100,000 francs had been made, for 1100 francs, out of rubble from Trélazé, near that city. All the stories about difficult preparatory work, secret acquisition and transport were lies, invented to gain time for the manufacture of the statue, which had only just been completed. The fraudulent seller was put on trial and found guilty. It was not only collectors of ancient Egyptian works of art who learnt a good deal from this affair.

CHAPTER 2

The Cardiff Giant

IN OCTOBER 1869 a farmer named Newell was digging a well near the small village of Cardiff in the State of New York when he came upon an immense mass of stone. On closer examination the shape of a massive foot, with a toe to match, was discerned. The whole figure was unearthed and proved to be that of a giant nine feet high, with one hand placed against the stomach and the other touching the back. The find was too heavy to lift. Its weight was ascertained later to be 2990 lbs. No one at first thought it surprising that the farmer at once stopped digging his well and concentrated upon making a profit by showing his 'miracle man' to a great many interested visitors. He only made a charge for inspection, he said, because these people trampled down his fields and spoiled the crops.

A tent was put up over the pit in which the figure lay. Each visitor paid Mrs Newell fifty cents. Later on the charge rose to a dollar. More and more persons were attracted to the spot. A regular horse-omnibus service was organised from a neighbouring town. People came to reside in the locality. Shops were opened. Newell made quite a good profit.

A Red Indian 'guide' was appointed. He informed the astonished visitors that his ancestors had once fought against giants, capturing them in deep pits. Strolling preachers affirmed that the find substantiated what the Bible had to say about giants. Scholars and experts arrived. Some expressed no opinion. But others thought that the statue might date from the period of the Jesuit missions. A further group favoured the theory that it was a fossilised specimen of prehistoric man. Demands arose on all sides for a thorough investigation of the discovery. With the aid of powerful cranes and levers the mysterious colossus was

hoisted up and taken to Syracuse, where it was exhibited to eager crowds, hotly debating the question of its fossilised or artificial nature, its antiquity or modernity, its genuine or spurious character.

Professor Marsh of Yale University and his colleague A. D. White of Cornell University were the first to call attention to the possibility of forgery. White detached a small fragment from the figure for examination. His results were amazing. The material was ordinary plaster of Paris, of quite recent manufacture.

As in nearly all scandals of this kind people were reluctant to believe the truth. Many continued to hope that the much admired figure might yet prove to be genuine ancient work. At any rate the statue made a sensation in the State of New York which proved profitable. The great American circus proprietor Barnum took a chance, offering Newell a high price for his 'find'. The sum of 100,000 dollars was mentioned. But the farmer declined this proposal. Instead, he sold the 'giant' for 37,000 dollars plus 25 per cent of all future takings from exhibition. But when the statue reached New York, the shrewd Barnum was already showing a second 'Cardiff giant', which he had quietly been manufacturing, as the 'real thing'. The competition between the two exhibitors proved an extraordinarily effective draw. The two 'giants' travelled the country far and wide and attracted equal admiration.

But the true story of the origin of Newell's 'find' soon came out. The fraud was exposed by a journalist who ferreted out the actual course of events as follows.

The farmer had not needed a new well at all. His digging activities and 'accidental' discovery had been cleverly planned. He had been making over a high percentage of his earnings from the affair to his brother-in-law George Hull in New York. Investigations of Hull's career revealed that some years before he had acquired a large block of gypsum in a quarry near Fort Dodge. It was found that he had forwarded this block to a stonemason named Edward Burckhardt in Chicago. Burckhardt admitted that he had manufactured the figure.

He said he had taken very great pains with it. Hull had sat as a model for the head. Sulphuric acid had provided the 'evidences of age'. Hull confessed that he and Newell had buried the figure at night in the farmer's clover-field and that he, not Newell, was

primarily responsible for the plot. He had got the idea in the first place, he said, from the sermon of a Methodist clergyman on the subject of the giants mentioned in the Bible and allegations that their remains had been found. Hull's expectations of profit from his fraud were not disappointed. The swindle turned out to be good business for himself and Newell in particular. It was stated that they had cleared about 100,000 dollars between them. At the same time, however, it appears that the affair damaged the reputations of several scientists.

The story of the Cardiff giant is by no means unique of its kind. A number of similar cases are known. But they could not always be elucidated so fully, with every step in the tale of fraud exposed, as happened in the foregoing example.

CHAPTER 3

Fame comes to the village of Glozel

IN THE NINETEEN-TWENTIES the attention of the whole world was drawn to finds in the small village of Glozel, situated in the Madeleine Hills, some $12\frac{1}{2}$ miles south-east of Vichy. Scientists were confronted by entirely new problems. For the mysterious objects found suggested that the 'cradle of civilisation' might after all be located in central France.

One March day in 1924 Emile Fradin, a farmer's and builder's labourer, aged twenty, was ploughing in a field near Glozel when he came across traces of a wall and bricks. A shallow, oval pit about nine feet long and three wide was marked out by stones. Fragments of pottery lay at the bottom. Next day, only a few yards from the pit, he stumbled upon a small stone pickaxe and a stone slab with clearly visible, man-made marks on it.

News of these and other finds spread in the district. More and more people came to inspect and wonder at Fradin's discoveries. The village schoolmistress, Mlle Picandet, brought her pupils to the site to show them the surviving traces of their ancestors and point out the new importance of Glozel, hitherto so obscure. She notified her professional superiors of the occurrence. They in their turn applied to a local committee concerned with improving trade conditions and encouraging tourists. Representatives called at Fradin's farm to enquire about the feasibility of further investigations of the site. The family, however, demanded payment. Although the site was not fertile, they wanted fifty francs for every two days that digging lasted. As the land had scarcely any economic value, the figure was extortionate. The committee, moreover, had no funds available for such a purpose. Nor could the sum required be raised in any other way. So no further steps were taken.

At this point Dr A. Morlet of Vichy took a hand. As a student of Gallo-Roman civilisation he took a great interest in all excavation work in France. On hearing of the finds at Glazel he immediately betook himself to the village in order to form some idea, on the spot, of the importance of the discoveries and the possibility of further digging. He deduced from the character of the material and the way in which it had been treated that an earlier period than the Gallo-Roman must be assigned to it.

In conversation with the Fradins he was told of previous finds in the same field. It appeared that when the family bought the house in 1870 the outgoing owner had shown them a clay pitcher with peculiar marks on it. He said he had kept it on the mantel-piece for a long time. But it was thrown away when the Fradins took possession.

Dr Morlet was much impressed by this information and above all by the finds themselves. On hearing that Fradin intended to put the field under cultivation and prevent further excavation, the doctor offered to take a nine years' lease of the land at an annual rent of 200 francs. The agreement signed included rights of pre-emption, photography and publication secured to the lessee in respect of all articles found.

Further excavation yielded a large number of objects, mostly carved bones and strange stone slabs with indecipherable markings. They were at first attributed by scientists to the presence of old glazing works, such as had occasionally been found in the neighbourhood. But the pictures of reindeer, the teeth of this animal and of panthers amazed the specialists. For hitherto it had been taken for granted that reindeer ceased to exist in France at the end of the Old Stone Age. It was therefore suspected that the finds were even older than had been originally assumed and dated back some 30,000 years.

In 1926 Morlet published an account of his discoveries, which immediately became the subject of international dispute among scientists. Some declared that the finds were bogus, deliberately forged by Fradin for profit. The doctor himself was attacked for his arbitrary proceedings in the matter. Other scientists, however, were convinced that the objects found were genuine. A Dutch specialist took impressions of all the written characters and after studying them in Amsterdam announced that he understood their meaning. 'These characters', he wrote, 'reveal

intimate glimpses of the lives and ideas of these perfectly honest, simple and yet somewhat advanced specimens of humanity. They provide the unique phenomenon of a limited and primitive type of Hebraic literature.' He continued: 'The inscriptions and their extremely complex alphabet are of Semitic origin. The people were Jews of partly Aramaic descent, formerly employed in the turquoise mines on Mount Sinai. They were brought to France by the Phoenicians, as slaves, and settled in the Phoenician colony of Sen at the mouth of the Rhône. Thence they migrated northwards, at first up the river and later by land, establishing themselves eventually in the Glozel district.'

The International Institute for Anthropology despatched a committee of scholars to the village who were instructed to prepare a unanimous report. The French Government declared the site to be of the greatest importance and prohibited access to it. But the whole affair grew more and more mysterious.

At the beginning of 1928 a surgeon who was also, like Dr Morlet, a student of archaeology, though unlike the doctor he was convinced that the Glozel finds were bogus, laid a formal accusation of fraud against some person or persons unknown. The police searched Fradin's premises. They confiscated about a hundred excavated items. Hundreds of other slabs, stone axes and carved and chased bones were left in the barn, and continued to be exhibited at the 'Fradin Museum'. The duly certified pieces were studied by Edmond Bayle in the Paris Police Laboratory throughout the rest of the year.

The services of the Lyons Police Laboratory were simultaneously called upon. An international committee was charged with the duty of carrying out tests of the suspected material from the most diverse points of view. This body comprised such eminent experts as the Parisian archaeologist Salomon Reinach, the geologist and palaeontologist Dépéret, of the University of Lyons, Loth, the specialist in Celtic languages, the Latin scholar Audollent of Clermont University, whose particular field was the interpretation of incantations in medieval Latin, and the British Hellenist Dr Foat.

An impassioned debate ensued. Accusations and counter-accusations darkened the air. More and more complications and doubts beset the case. The Swedish criminologist Harry Söderman, in his memoirs entitled *On the Trail of Crime*, gives an

account of his experiences as a member of the research committee at Glozel. In his opinion the original layers of soil must have been disturbed if the materials were forged and had been buried at a later period. As, however, further finds were made among the roots of ancient shrubs, below untouched layers of soil, the authenticity of the items, regarded from this standpoint, appeared conclusively proved. Nor did the fingerprints found on the articles correspond in any way with those of the Fradin family and Dr Morlet. Accordingly, the committee in question, after long investigations, decided that the finds were genuine. Local enthusiasm knew no bounds. It was actually proposed that the State should officially recognise the position by conferring crosses of the Legion of Honour on both Fradin and Dr Morlet. Then came the thunderbolt of M. Bayle's expert testimony from the Paris Police Laboratory. The following points were made. A thread of aniline-dyed cotton had been found on one of the Glozel slabs and a potato seed on another item. Chlorophyll had also been identified in the remains of plants found in the argillaceous dust from the potsherds. Yet chlorophyll cannot be retained longer than thirty years. Consequently, it was certain that the vegetable remains identified must have belonged to plants cut approximately during the period 1920-7. Another line of investigation proved that metal tools had been used on the pots, which could not, therefore, date from the Ice Age. Bayle stated emphatically that the clay had not been fired, but merely sun-dried. He adduced a simple and convincing proof. When the clay-dust was mixed with water it became easily malleable. Those who had always been suspicious of the genuineness of the Glozel finds referred to the affair as 'one of the biggest frauds in history'. But their adversaries would not give in. They pointed out that Fradin had not been allowed to be present at the investigations, that individual articles had not been packed separately, as prescribed by law, and transported under seal, and that the production of forgeries in such quantity would have needed the collaboration of an entire factory and for that reason alone was out of the question. Provincial newspapers carried such headlines as 'Glozel Demands Legal Action', 'A Community Fights for its Honour' and 'Bayle's Irresponsible Dilettantism'. The first ditties about 'Pots and Pans from Glozel' began to be heard in the cabarets of Montmartre.

Meanwhile, however, Bayle established conclusive proof of fraud. He placed one of the fragments of pottery alleged to be thousands of years old in a vessel filled with water, which was then sealed before witnesses. Next day the fragment was found to have dissolved. It was the simplest and most convincing evidence possible of fabrication. Material supposed to have withstood burial in the damp earth for millennia had vanished in a single night.

But many inexplicable features of the case remained. The finds had undoubtedly been forged, though the villagers refused to believe it and continued to exhibit their treasures at the 'museum' as 'certified by the highest authorities'. But who was the guilty party who had manufactured the things? What could be the object of so elaborate a swindle? How could its perpetrator have penetrated below undisturbed layers of soil? Could an ignorant peasant lad of twenty have taken so much trouble to study prehistory? And where did he find those perfectly genuine reindeer bones? Had the previous owner of the land or some other person staged the affair as a practical joke?

These and many other questions can no longer be answered, especially as most of those concerned are now dead. The 'Glozel Case' remains one of the riddles of the story of art forgery.

CHAPTER 4

The Venus of the Turnip Field

THE DISPUTE over the discovery of the 'Venus of Brizet', also known as the 'Venus of the Turnip Field', from the place where it was found, ended in laughter.

On the 2nd May 1937 a farmer named Gonon, of St Just-sur-Loire, near Brizet, turned up a large block of stone while ploughing a turnip field. On being dug up the block proved to be part of a marble statue of Venus executed in the antique style. It became known as the Venus of Brizet (see illustration), attracting much attention and admiration.

Such experts as Georges Huisman and Noel Thiolier described the figure as genuine Greek or Greco-Roman work of the first century B.C. Journalists wrote excitedly of a 'masterpiece of the first rank' and a 'new birth of Aphrodite'. The statue was compared with the Venus of Milo. Some people even thought it might be ascribed to Praxiteles or Phidias. Gonon put the figure on exhibition in his house. Amateurs of art and tourists boldly faced the journey to the lonely farm. Prominent personages advocated transfer of the new find to Paris. A purchase price of 250,000 francs was mentioned.

But in 1938 Francesco Cremonese, a young Italian sculptor living in France, made a statement. He deposited an affidavit with a solicitor to the effect that two years previously he himself had executed and buried the 'Venus of Brizet'. He said he had done so in order to convince his fellow-citizens of his talent, which they had neglected to recognise. He added that an eighteen-year-old Polish girl, Anna Studnicka, had served him as a model, that the work had taken him three years and was completed in 1934. He went on to describe how he had removed the left arm, the nose and the lower part of the figure in order to give the

impression of the ravages of time. His brother had helped him to bury the statue in the hope that one day it would be 'discovered'. It was not until the sculptor heard of the plan to buy his 'antique Venus' for the city of Paris that he revealed the secret, thus clearing himself of the serious charge of deliberate deception and forgery that might otherwise have been made.

The public laughed at the credulous specialists who had so easily been cheated. But the latter in their turn smiled at the self-styled 'artist' and declined to entertain any doubts of the genuine antiquity of the statue. More and more interest was taken in the 'Venus of Brizet'.

But on the 16th December 1938 Cremonese demonstrated the truth of his statements in the presence of a large number of witnesses, including experts, dealers and representatives of the Press. He produced his Polish model. He displayed the three sections of the figure which he had removed. No further hesitation was possible. Admiration of the 'Venus of Brizet' dissolved in smiles at the 'Venus of the Turnip Field'.

The public followed with amusement the controversy over the ownership of the work, made by Cremonese but found by Gonon on his own land. But soon the matter was forgotten, for with the outbreak of war France had other things to think about. In 1954-5 however, the 'Venus of Brizet' constituted an item in some important exhibitions of art forgeries held in Paris.

Counterfeits of Dürer's Works

'*Mundus vult decipi*', wrote the Alsatian poet and jurist Sebastian Brant in his *Ship of Fools*, published in 1494. 'The world likes to be deceived.' He might well have been thinking of art forgeries, among other things, for a great many were perpetrated in his day. Dürer was one of the chief victims.

This artist, who lived from 1471 to 1528, was regarded even in his lifetime as the most eminent citizen of Nuremberg and the most important of German painters into the bargain. His paintings, drawings, copper engravings and woodcuts were admired, sought after and highly prized by his contemporaries. His imitators were therefore tempted to pass off his works as their own and thus incur the guilt of forgery.

Dürer complains, writing to his friend Willibald Pirckheimer from Venice in February 1506: 'I have many enemies who copy my works in churches and wherever else they can get hold of them.' At this time, while the Nuremberg master was painting his 'Festival of the Rose Garlands' in Venice, the first copies of his 'Life of the Virgin', fabricated by Marc Antonio (c. 1482-1533), appeared on the market. Dürer applied for redress to the Venetian Signory. That body, in 1506, forbade the copyist to use Dürer's monogram.

In those days only an artist's signature could be protected from imitation. The picture itself was 'free from copyright'. Anyone could make and sell a reproduction of it. No attempt was made to restrict distribution of prints copied from those of Dürer's 'Life of the Virgin' so long as they did not bear the master's sign manual. Marc Antonio could not, therefore, be prevented from reproducing thirty-seven prints of Dürer's 'Little Passion' woodcuts and other works by him. The Italian is

reported to have copied no less than eighty. His place in the history of art is simply that of a forger. He is praised for his 'rare capacity to elucidate and thoroughly understand the style and spirit of another's work in his engravings'. In the case of other, more or less free, borrowings from Dürer, it is hard to draw the line between instances of inspiration and mere copying, the permissible and the impermissible. Agostino de Musi, Giovanni Antonio da Brescia, Nicoletto da Modena, Benedetto da Montagna, Hieronymus Hopfer and Virgil Solis are recorded to have produced such imitations.

The art historian Sandrart (1606-68) states that Dürer's works were also copied by German artists. His *German School of the Noble Arts of Architecture, Sculpture and Painting*, the primary source of German historiography in the artistic field, mentions the Nuremberg painter Hans Leonhard Schäufelein (1480-1540) as being so exact an imitator of Dürer's style 'that often the best authorities were in doubt whether to ascribe his works to Dürer or himself'. Schäufelein, like other painters of his day, seems to have taken the greatest possible delight in copying the productions of outstanding artists. He is said to have drawn attention with pride to his delusive imitations of works by Dürer, Cranach and other German artists. There is no reason to suppose that he was a deliberate forger, though some of his pictures were taken at a later date to be forgeries. But he himself never claimed originality, so far as is known.

The so-called Master of the Death of the Virgin (c. 1510-30) also copied Dürer. Thausing considered his Madonnas 'more charming even than those of Dürer himself', though he adds that the younger man did not hesitate to append Dürer's well known monogram to these delightful productions (see illustration).

Hieronymus Greff, called Hieronymus of Frankfurt, sent out copies of Dürer's 'Apocalypse' series from Strasbourg, signing them I.V.F. Dürer complained to the Nuremberg municipality that his 'handiwork' was being 'fraudulently reproduced'. The city council cautioned the copyists. On the 3rd January 1512 the Nuremberg magistracy prohibited the marketing of imitations of Dürer's engravings and woodcuts.

After Dürer's death the prices of his work rose and forgeries increased. In 1528 his widow Agnes demanded protection of her rights against the competition of such imitations. The difficulty

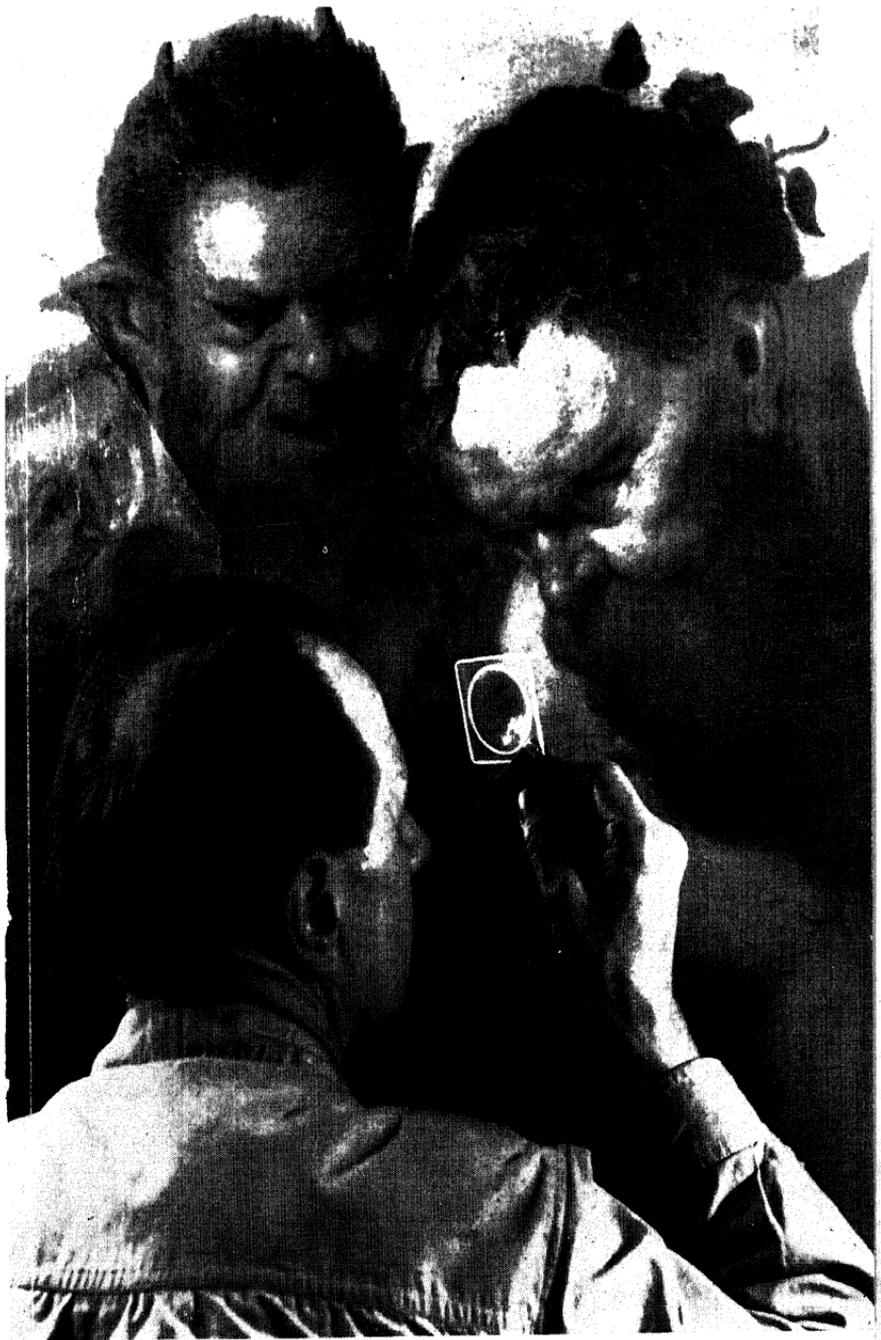
of dealing with this problem in Nuremberg at the time is illustrated by the fact that Agnes was obliged to purchase the forged blocks for the sum of ten gulden, in order to prevent further prints being issued. The local magistracy contributed half the cost, as no other means of assisting the widow could be contrived.

Fraudulent reproduction of Dürer's works reached a climax at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By that date originals were in great demand by collectors. But supply was far from adequate to meet it. The forgers pricked up their ears. Whole collections of alleged works by Dürer were fabricated. In the mid-sixteenth century, for instance, Leopold Wilhelm of Austria was cheated into buying no less than sixty-eight supposed to be by the artist.

Contemporary forgeries found their way into the famous collection of Rudolf II at Prague. Some of them were by masters of the craft. Even to-day their productions are praised as 'technically perfect'. One of the artists who specialised in drawings, water-colours and oil paintings in Dürer's style, which were 'sold as originals by Dürer', was Hans Hoffmann (d. c. 1591). His pictures were so highly esteemed that Rudolf II summoned him to Prague in 1584. A year later this prince paid 200 gulden for a 'Hare' copied from Dürer's work of that name. Of the famous water-colour in question, preserved at the Albertina Museum, Vienna, there is a version in oil (see illustration) at the Barberini Gallery, Rome. This oil painting was for long regarded as an original work by Dürer. But in comparatively recent times closer study has led to its attribution to Hoffmann, who imitated so many other works by Dürer and died in Prague towards the end of the century.

But there can be no certain solutions of such problems to-day, for many of Dürer's contemporaries made more or less faithful copies of his pictures. In addition to Hoffmann, Daniel Fröschel of Augsburg, Ruprecht, Georg Gärtner and Imhoff, a grandson of Dürer's friend of that name, are mentioned in this connection. It is even supposed that Joachim Patinir (*f.* 1520), an artist of high reputation nowadays, painted works based on Dürer's copper engravings.

The first Elector of Bavaria, Maximilian I (1596-1652), regarded Dürer as the ideal German artist. But as he could not obtain any originals, he ordered his Court Painters to copy



1 A genuine Rubens or a forgery? This painting turned up in the possession of an unemployed man; the experts disagree about its authenticity.

- 2 'Virgin and Child.' Oil painting in the style of Dürer and formerly ascribed to him. When later additions to the painting had been removed it was recognised as an imitation.



certain works. Whether these imitations were later taken for originals to any extent and could accordingly rank as forgeries is another question which cannot now be answered.

In those days the authentic and the spurious were not viewed, where art was concerned, in the same light as at the present time. Modern critics would consider that original works were being falsified by modification and overpainting. But Maximilian I ordered the wings of the Paumgartner altarpiece, the chief glory of the Old Pinakothek at Munich, to be overpainted. Accordingly, Johann Georg Fischer, in 1614, substituted landscape and horses for Dürer's original dim, neutral background of 1498. Fischer, one of Maximilian's Court Painters, took motives from Dürer's famous copper engraving, 'The Knight, Death and the Devil', cleverly reproducing the master's style. It was not until 1903 that this falsification was removed and the picture restored to its original condition.

It is known that in later times forgeries of Dürer's work were perpetrated even outside Germany. About 1650 the painter Luca Giordano was accused by a certain Prior, before the Royal Court of Justice at Naples, of having counterfeited a picture by Dürer. It is not quite clear whether the case was in fact one of what would be called forgery to-day. It was found that Giordano had signed his own name on a hidden spot at the back of the picture. The Court decided the case in his favour. The senior magistrate of Naples was so delighted by the work in question that he bought it from the indignant Prior for 600 scudi.

Centuries later another forgery scandal in connection with Dürer's work occurred in Naples. One of his drawings had been copied in the design of a relief preserved in the National Museum as part of an 'antique marble fountain' supposed to have come from Pompeii. Dürer's art had thus actually served as a model for counterfeiting the antique!

Dürer forgeries were given a wide circulation and considerable importance by bogus copper engravings and woodcuts. Some were offered at high prices, as so called 'first printings'. Modern critics believe that about half a million forged drawings were produced. The figure seems fantastically exaggerated but is not really so. It becomes intelligible when one realises that in the course of about 450 years countless artists and swindlers were engaged in copying the master's engravings and woodcuts.

Prints which were originally made quite honestly as part of an artist's self-education, for practice, without being given Dürer's monogram, were subsequently turned into forgeries by the addition of his initials. It is known, for example, that Jan Wierix, the distinguished Flemish engraver on copper, copied Dürer's woodcuts in the sixteenth century. But he acknowledged them to be imitations by appending his own signature. Later, however, his name was often erased and the prints marketed as originals by Dürer.

Both forgeries and imitations of original prints can easily be detected nowadays by comparison with the works of proved authenticity from which they were derived. Differences are apparent in the type of paper and above all in the linear technique. But the most inconspicuous details are sometimes decisive. For example, in a copyist's print of Dürer's copper engraving of 'St Jerome in his Study' the claw of the little toe of the lion's left forepaw was left white, whereas in the original it was slightly shaded. This variation was enough to demonstrate forgery.

'The most shameless of all imitations of Dürer's work' is the copy of his self-portrait, preserved as such, in the house he once occupied at Nuremberg (see illustration). The portrait in question is the famous one, with the face framed in long curls, which has come to be regarded as best representing the artist's personality (see illustration). The original had been owned ever since the sixteenth century by the municipality of Nuremberg, where it was kept in the plate-room of the Town Hall. But in 1799 it was lent to the Nuremberg painter Abraham Wolfgang Küffner (1760-1817), probably in order to have a copy made. The panel, made of limewood, was some 15 mm thick. Küffner separated the front from the back by sawing in a direction parallel to the painted surface. On the front of the second panel obtained in this way he painted a copy of Dürer's original. He supplied this copy to the Council as if it were the original, thus committing both forgery and theft.

It is intelligible enough that the fraud was not immediately detected. No one had any reason to suspect such a thing. In any case the original rear face of the panel, with its seals and other marks of identification, had remained undisturbed. The reduced thickness of the wood, which might otherwise have led to exposure of the trick, was concealed by the edges of the frame.

Probably no precise measurement of that particular dimension had ever been taken. Nor is it likely that the panel as delivered was at all closely examined, especially as Küffner, a professional painter, engraver and printer, was considered quite reliable.

His previous career had been perfectly unexceptionable. From 1779 to 1780 he had attended the university of Altdorf and given drawing lessons there. He had resided in Nuremberg since 1786, painting portraits and small-scale illustrations of history, which he signed either with his full name, the initials AWK or a monogram of those letters. Though he was regarded, so far as his copper engravings and etchings were concerned, as a typical self-taught practitioner, he was nevertheless esteemed as 'one of the best artists' in the city and later described as 'the Nuremberg Chodowiecki'.

But the chief reason why his deception did not come to light for so long was the political unrest of the times. The fact that nearly all the more sensational art forgeries were perpetrated under the shadow of war or widespread political agitation is no mere coincidence. In 1796 the French revolutionary forces under General Jourdan reached Nuremberg. The art treasures of the city were hidden or conveyed to safety elsewhere. They probably included Dürer's self-portrait. The citizens continued to be pre-occupied by political events during the following years. Consequently, Küffner's duplicity remained undetected for some considerable time.

At last he felt sufficiently secure to offer the stolen work by Dürer for sale. In 1805 it was purchased at third hand, the previous owner being one G. E. Petz, a lawyer, by the Elector of Bavaria for his collection at Munich. The price paid was 600 gulden. It was only then that the Nuremberg Council began to feel uneasy. They compared the picture in their possession with that which had just turned up at Munich, and realised that they had been cheated. The sale of the original work to Munich had been quite legal and could not be annulled. Munich retained the work, thus acquiring one of the gems of the present collection in the Old Pinakothek. Nuremberg had to put up with the forged copy and the fame which the scandal of its substitution had caused. It was transferred to the Germanic National Museum in the city and after the last war put on permanent loan to the House of Dürer near the Zoological Gardens Gate.

The art historian Franz Winzinger has recently made an exhaustive study of both the original and the forged copy of this work. His conclusions are important for their revelations of the essential contrasts between old and new, genuine and spurious. He observes with regard to the copy that the figure's facial expression 'is quite blank and unreal'. The copy is much darker than the original at Munich, a result only partly due to fading of the pigment through age. Kuffner worked from an original even darker, prior to its comparatively recent cleaning. The background has acquired a muddy and greasy aspect, the paint being so cracked and furrowed as to render the gold lettering of the inscription almost illegible. The writing, however, appears to correspond exactly with that on the Munich panel. The curling hair so splendidly painted by Dürer has become a formless, pulpy mass in the copy, perhaps in consequence of a careless attempt at cleaning.

'Dürer primed only the surface to be painted. He merely sized in irregular streaks the bare wood of the rear face of the panel, to prevent warping. This process was intended to neutralise distortion imposed on the front face of the panel by the priming. Kuffner, probably with a view to reproducing as closely as possible the condition of the original, also laid in streaks of size on the new rear face of the original, constituted when the panel was split. The step was of no practical use, for the panel was by then so old as to have long lost the early tendency to warp. But the unilateral distortion imposed on the back of the original by Kuffner's sizing immediately bent the panel as soon as it was taken out of the frame. The back was also given a thick coating of red pigment, perhaps red-lead. On the back of the Nuremberg copy, in the upper right-hand corner, a small red seal, somewhat defaced externally, has been affixed. Nor is the copy now shown in the frame provided by Dürer, which held the original, and must be presumed lost.'

Kuffner later fell a victim to the typical forger's obsession and turned to coining. Old documentary evidence records that in 1807 he was sentenced for this crime to several years' imprisonment in the castle of Rothenburg. On his release he returned to Nuremberg, where he was 'still held in esteem'. Characteristically enough, he took to issuing from his own works copper engravings copied from foreign originals. His prints were widely

used to illustrate calendars and almanacs. He died at Ingolstadt in 1817.

Even in later times the Munich self-portrait was repeatedly the subject of discussion. Most connoisseurs believe that little now remains of its original state, which has been largely 'falsified'. Ochendovsky calls attention to 'subsequently imposed highlights, probably covering putty marks'. He considers that 'the face has been finely painted over, but the neck in a coarser style'. In his opinion, too, the left-hand area of the cloak 'has been completely coated with a somewhat muddy shade of brown'. The Dürer expert Curjel thinks that the authentic portrait had already 'been gone over' by 1526. Friedrich Haack argues that the greater part of the picture as we have it has been overpainted. But other specialists, Winzinger for instance, describe the Munich panel as 'in excellent condition, quite intact'. It is, however, generally taken as certain that the inscription on the right has been renovated. But views differ even in this connection, some critics supposing that Dürer himself revised the lettering, while Wölfflin declares, in his well-known book on Dürer, that 'neither the monogram nor the date is genuine'.

In 1954, at Rio de Janeiro, a well-known South American collector brought an action against a Hungarian nobleman, charging him with the sale of a painting alleged to be by Dürer but actually spurious. It was supposed to be a self-portrait and had been described by a number of experts as a first version of the famous Munich panel of 1500. But it was eventually proved to be a sixteenth-century work, probably by one of the copyists active under Maximilian I.

A similar verdict was passed on a coloured version of the well-known copper engraving of 'The Knight, Death and the Devil'. The work was offered for sale in 1954 by a Dutch dealer and collector, who was found to have also offered it in 1934 to a syndicate of West German industrialists, at the price of 250,000 marks, as a birthday gift for Hitler. On that occasion it had been proved a forgery and accordingly no scandal ensued.

Doubts have been expressed about many works supposedly by Dürer. Expert opinions are often widely divergent and questions of authenticity cannot be decided for certain. Some of the disputed pictures are well-known works in leading galleries, for example the 'Virgin at Prayer' in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum,

Berlin. This painting, first discovered in 1894 in a private collection at Venice, was enthusiastically greeted at the time as an original composition by the master. But to-day it is assumed to be a copy executed at the end of the sixteenth century. The work is dated 1518 and is similar in style to Dürer's productions of that period.

The Dresden 'Crucifixion' is also regarded by modern critics as derived from a work by Dürer, since in its present state no one could assert it to be by his own hand. The picture was acquired in 1865 from a private owner in Vienna. Its previous history cannot be ascertained. In this case the recorded date, 1506, cannot be stylistically supported. It must have been chosen at random quite arbitrarily, at a later time.

The authenticity of Dürer's famous 'Green Passion' was long ago questioned by such connoisseurs of the artist's work as Jaro Springer, Cürlis and Meder. Waagen wrote in 1867: 'Some of the prints have been badly damaged, while others show weaknesses in draughtsmanship, particularly in the case of several heads, which can only be by another hand.' 'Dürer's preliminary sketches for certain items of the series of pen drawings supposed to have been executed in 1504 are still extant. They are so much better than the reproductions that it is scarcely possible to believe that the green prints are genuine.' The suspicion of forgery repeatedly arises in connection with this artist's work. As soon as a new picture is discovered its authorship is disputed. In England, for example, in 1957, an extremely interesting and puzzling version of the 'St Jerome' turned up. It was attributed to the Veronese painter Caroto. But comparison with early drawings by Dürer led Carrit to the bold conclusion that it was an original work by the master. Then other critics adduced arguments invalidating his opinion. It was suggested that Albrecht Altdorfer of Regensburg might be responsible.

In 1958 it was reported that a painting of the head of St John the Baptist had been ascribed to Dürer. Later it was declared to be by Grünewald. Then items in the Press stated that the picture had been transferred to the Metropolitan Museum of New York for safe keeping, but had subsequently disappeared.

Works have quite often been attributed alternately to Dürer and Grünewald. A chalk drawing of an elderly man at the Stockholm Museum bears Dürer's signature and also a specific

indication of his authorship. But the expert Max J. Friedländer attributes this production to Grünewald. In this case, however, a work purporting to be by Dürer may well have been turned into one ostensibly by Grünewald.

Signatures carry no authority in such instances. Countless works are provided with Dürer's well-known monogram. This very feature has enabled modern research to establish the fact of forgery. Guy Isnard, a Chief Commissioner of the Paris Police, relates a case in point. He states: 'In the spring of 1955 an American art collector called upon the Paris police to investigate the forgery of a painting alleged to be by Dürer. "You're in luck", the Commissioner told him. "That picture is really old!" A Dürer after all, thought the collector, with a sigh of relief. But he had not noticed, in the first flush of his delight, the officer's serious expression. The latter went on: "Well, you haven't been so exceptionally lucky as all that, you know. The picture is only a copy, probably by Imhoff, of one by Dürer. It's a very good imitation, though. You've only paid, at worst, twice its value. If it had been a modern copy, you'd have lost far more." The American, wincing at the hateful word "copy", demanded excitedly: "What about the signature, then? That AD, and the date 1508, in the bottom corner? Isn't that a clear proof of the authenticity of the work? You've just told me it's 'really old', haven't you?" "Unfortunately," retorted the officer, "It's an unmistakable proof that the picture's an imitation. We had that monogram examined by a well-known expert. Chemical analysis showed quite conclusively that the initials had been superimposed on the varnish, not the other way about. They had been put there by someone else after the painting had been completed. Albrecht Dürer never signed that picture."'

Works forged as by Grünewald, Holbein and Cranach

QUESTIONS OF AUTHENTICITY are constantly being raised in connection with works by other great German painters. In 1949 six drawings in the style of Matthias Grünewald (c. 1470-1528) were found in a rubbish-heap at Gisselberg, near Marburg-on-the-Lahn. They were regarded by some experts as indubitable originals, by others as old copies and by others, again, as modern imitations. After the first natural excitement over the discovery had died down, it had to be acknowledged that the drawings were in fact copies, technically forgeries. But since they had been found by chance they had not been prepared and distributed with any fraudulent intention.

The numerous works of Hans Holbein the Younger (1497-1543) include many which have been thought spurious. Two views are current of one of his masterpieces, the 'Jakob Meyer Madonna', in the Dresden Gallery. It was at first considered to be by his own hand. But in 1871 intensive comparison with the Darmstadt version showed the latter to be the original. It was assumed that the copy at Dresden had been executed in 1621 by Bartholomäus Sarburgh. The work was acquired by Marie de' Medici, who had been looking in vain for the original. After her death the copy reached Venice by way of Amsterdam. It was bought from the Delfino family in 1743, by Count Francesco Algarotti for Augustus III of Saxony. It thus became known as the 'Dresden Madonna' and, since it was described as an original work by Holbein, a forgery.

Recent comprehensive exhibitions of art forgeries revealed a case in which a portrait alleged to be by Holbein had been fabricated. It was based on two separate originals by the master. The face was taken from the important work, dated 1543, depict-

ing Duke Anthony the Good of Lorraine, and the hands from the 1541 portrait of an unknown man in the Vienna Gallery. The procedure was one in high favour with forgers. But it can be detected with relative ease by comparison with the originals.

The paintings of Lukas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553) were an especially happy hunting-ground for forgers. Hans Leonhard Schäußelein (1480-1540) personally boasted of having more successfully imitated Cranach than he copied any other painter except Dürer. F. W. Rohrich (1787-1843) is also regarded as a typical counterfeiter of works purporting to be by Cranach. He was a German-Swiss who turned out copy after copy of the same work, all most remarkably faithful to the effect of the original. About forty copies of the portrait by Cranach of a Saxon duchess and her son are ascribed to Rohrich. They reproduced the old master's technique with flawless accuracy and were provided with Cranach's signature. Consequently, they found their way, as originals by Dürer's famous contemporary, into leading collections. One hung for several decades in the Hamburg Art Gallery before being transferred, as of questionable authenticity, to private ownership. Another of the same series belongs to the Bavarian State Collection at Munich. It has been shown in several big exhibitions of art forgeries in Holland, Germany and France as characteristic of works falsely attributed to the artist.

The much admired Bust by Bastianini

THE FIRST world-wide sensation in the domain of art forgery was caused by the 'Benivieni Bust Scandal' (see illustration). This lifesize work, depicting a man of advanced age, astonished people by its naturalism. Every wrinkle in the clean-shaven face, every vein, was reproduced with absolute truth to appearance. The eyes were directed upwards. The chest and shoulders were represented as clothed in a simple Renaissance garment. The headgear also recalled that period. Its fold was clearly inscribed, in Renaissance lettering, with the name *HIERMUS BENIVIENI*. In consequence of this reference to the Florentine poet and philosopher Benivieni (1453-1542), highly popular with his contemporaries, the work became known as the 'Benivieni Bust'.

It was acquired in 1864 by a collector in Paris, M. de Nolvos, from the Florentine dealer in antiquities Antonio Freppa, for about 700 French francs. The newly discovered work became well-known in the following year on its exhibition in the Paris Hall of Industry. It was praised by the entire Press as the outstanding item of the exhibition and a masterpiece of the Florentine Quattrocento. Paul Mantz wrote in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*: 'All the subtlety of the Italian character is disclosed in this expressive countenance. It is marked both by good humour and deeply-felt experience. The creases at the lips, the precociously furrowed brow and the intent gaze betoken amazing vitality. Every feature bears the stamp of a striking personality. We have no other portrait of Benivieni. But we could swear that this is a good likeness. The age of the subject and above all the style of execution suggest that the work should be dated at earliest in the last years of the fifteenth century or preferably at the beginning of the sixteenth.'

The bust attracted attention and admiration far beyond the frontiers of France. The German periodical *Plastic Arts* published a photograph of it. The accompanying article asserted it to be the portrait of a thinker, represented with all the simplicity, honesty and captivating naturalism of fifteenth-century Florentine art, as innocent of false idealism as of the precise documentation of a police-warrant. Not a fold, the writer continued, of the deeply-wrinkled face was suppressed, and yet the brow was unmistakably the seat of reflection, the eyes the mirrors of the soul and the mouth eloquent of personality.

Efforts were naturally made by historians to identify the artist. Several important Renaissance sculptors were suggested. The names of Donatello, Verrocchio, Desiderio da Settignano, Mino da Fiesole, Antonio Rossellino and Benedetto da Maiano were mentioned. Mantz's attribution of the bust to Lorenzo di Credi (1459-1537) found particular favour. Though referred to as 'Pictor Florentinus', di Credi is also known to have been a sculptor. Some of his drawings showed affinity with the style of the 'Benivieni bust'. He was stated by Vasari to have produced a portrait of Benivieni, 'his friend'. So the supposition could hardly be evaded that the bust was in fact the contemporary portrait of the poet mentioned by Vasari and believed lost.

The great interest aroused in the bust by these investigations and ascriptions was proved by proceedings at the auction of M. de Nolivos' collection at the Hôtel Drouot, Paris, in January 1866. A stubborn contest for the possession of this mysterious work developed between Baron de Triqueti, acting for the Duc d'Aumale, and Count de Nieuwekerke, Director of the Imperial Museums of the metropolis. The latter eventually bid highest and secured the prize. Its purchase price amounted to 13,250 francs, augmented to about 14,000 by the usual subsidiary charges. The figure of only 6000 francs disbursed by the French Government for the Venus of Milo, discovered in 1820, indicates the high value placed upon the Italian production.

It came to be regarded as one of the chief items in the Italian Department of Sculpture and indeed in the Louvre as a whole. The work was given a place of honour among the masterpieces of the Florentine Renaissance, close to Cellini's 'Nymph', the female portrait bust by Desiderio da Settignano and Michelangelo's celebrated 'Slave'. But the Louvre's new acquisition

was not destined to enjoy unanimous approval for long. On the 15th December 1867 an article in the *Chronique des Arts* by Antonio Freppa disclosed some remarkable facts. He affirmed that the supposed Italian Renaissance masterpiece so proudly exhibited in the Louvre was not three hundred years old but only three. He explained that he himself had ordered the bust in 1864 from the sculptor Giovanni Bastianini of Fiesole and paid him 350 francs for it. Freppa went on to assert that M. de Nolivos had bought the work for twice as much, not as 'an antique', but 'on the evidence of his own eyes'. The antiquary further alleged that the presumed bust of Benivieni in reality portrayed a tobacco factory hand named Giuseppe Bonaiuti. This man, it appeared, had since died. But a number of his fellow-workers had stated that they recognised his features in the bust.

The article attracted attention in circles far beyond those concerned with art in France. But the Louvre management did not consider it necessary to investigate Freppa's data and clear the matter up by ascertaining the facts. The Florentine dealer's 'revelations' were received with a tolerant smile, as pure inventions, inspired by vexation at having sold the bust at such a low figure. It was said that Freppa, in a frenzy of envy at the price obtained in France, almost twenty times that which he himself had charged, had conspired with friends, by way of vengeance, to prove a genuine antique a 'forgery'. But the Florentine group indignantly repudiated this insinuation and the sculptor Bastianini himself entered the fray. Controversy raged in the newspapers between the Italian and the French 'fronts'.

The French sculptor Eugène Louis Lequesne (b. 1815) offered to knead Bastianini's clay for him 'for the rest of his life' if the Italian could produce evidence that he had executed the bust. Lequesne published in the Paris *Patrie* his own 'evidence' for the attribution of the work to a Florentine Old Master. Bastianini replied in the *Gazzetta di Firenze*. Debate on the question of origin assumed international proportions.

Lequesne wrote: 'The bust was produced by an antique process, the clay being pressed into a mould and modelled subsequently. Seams are visible on both shoulders and on the back of the neck, where sections of the mould came together. The hair also shows traces of the liquid clay with which the interior of the mould was smeared.'

Bastianini commented: 'The bust was modelled freehand, leaving as much of it hollow as possible. The cast was taken after firing and that is why the seams and slip show.'

Lequesne objected: 'On one of the curls on the left side of the head the clay was insufficiently bound in and a small piece dropped off. The place still shows the original fingerprint by which it was replaced.'

To this Bastianini merely retorted: 'Aren't fingers always used for modelling?'

Lequesne: 'The clay differs from that used in Italy to-day. It has become porous with age.'

Bastianini: 'What makes you say that? I'll send you a specimen of the clay ordinarily used here. Neither chemically nor from the artistic point of view does it differ from that used in the "Benivieni bust".'

Lequesne: 'Patina was applied to the surface by tobacco smoke.'

Bastianini: 'Well, as you haven't guessed my method, I'm not giving any secrets away. But I shall be happy to apply the same patina to any terracotta you like. I can hardly believe that you use tobacco smoke for the purpose in France. One dealer in antiquities, at least, smiled grimly when he heard of it.'

One of Bastianini's friends, Dr Foresi of Florence, published an account of the 'Benivieni' scandal entitled 'The Tower of Babel'. In Paris J. Charvet issued a pamphlet headed 'The Ass in the Lion's Skin, A Florentine Hoax'.

The general public was amused by this quarrel between experts. But the Louvre management could no longer shirk the issue. Count de Nieuwekerke seemed quite convinced that the work was a genuine antique. He repeatedly affirmed that no nineteenth-century artist could possibly have executed so perfect a masterpiece and that there could be no question of a sculptor like Bastianini being responsible for it. In private conversation he declared that he would be willing to pay the Italian no less than 15,000 francs for a new companion piece of equal merit.

Bastianini, hearing of the Count's offer through the Press, agreed enthusiastically to undertake this solution of the problem. In a letter addressed to Dr Foresi and subsequently published in *La Nazione* he issued a challenge in his turn to the Director, who had not yet decided to make his own offer officially. Bastianini stated that as soon as he received it he would not for the time

being invite the Count to visit his studio but would propose the following arrangement:

'Deposit your 15,000 francs in safe hands. We will then choose between us a jury, not composed entirely of Frenchmen, and I will for my part guarantee to make a bust, for 3000 francs, as good as the "Benivieni". As for the other 12,000 francs, I will undertake to meet you half way, since you are one of the pillars of the Second Empire, by modelling for you busts of the Twelve Caesars at the price of 1000 francs apiece.

GIOVANNI BASTIANINI
Florence, 15th February 1868.'

This announcement gave the Count his last chance of emerging from the affair with honour. But he still remained silent. Then, on the 29th June 1868, Bastianini died, aged only thirty-seven. No doubt people interested in the Louvre were still hoping that the bust might continue to be considered Renaissance work. But the question had been settled even before Bastianini's death. The subject of this prolonged and fervent dispute had been quietly removed from the Renaissance Room at the Louvre and banished to a cupboard in the apartment housing the Sauvageot Collection.

It was only then, after the artist's decease, that more was learned about the man whose works so much resembled those of the great Florentine sculptors and whose 'Benivieni' had been put on exhibition among the masterpieces of Michelangelo. Bastianini, who was born on the 17th September 1830, had developed at an early age, like so many of his contemporaries, a deep interest in Quattrocento portrait sculpture. After 1848 he produced mainly more or less free imitations of old works, which were marketed by Antonio Freppa. The dealer did not sell them as 'antique originals'. Nor did Bastianini deliberately give them an appearance of age. In fact, he sometimes modelled direct from nature. Nevertheless, a number of his busts were taken for Renaissance works. They became well known only after the 'Benivieni' dispute.

The Edouard André Collection in Paris, for example, catalogued its 'Singing Girl' as a product of the Italian Renaissance until Bastianini was proved to have executed the piece.

The figure represented a charming young Florentine in a brocaded dress, holding the score of her song. Traces of old

gilding and paint were visible. As in the former case, people continued to insist, when it was suggested that the statue might be modern, on its Renaissance origin. The sculptor Paul Dubois, Director of the School of Fine Art since 1878, stated quite positively that no contemporary artist could have entered so completely into the spirit of the Quattrocento. His views were accepted the more readily as he had made a prolonged study, in Italy itself, of early Renaissance sculpture.

Bastianini also made a statuette which he called 'Giovanna Albizzi'. The origin of this work is known. A joiner glued and bolted together a number of pieces of worm-eaten wood. Then an assistant carved the result roughly into the shape of a woman. Bastianini completed the figure, coated it with a paste concocted out of plaster, tow and rags of cloth and then painted and gilded it in sixteenth-century style. His creation, when put on the market, elicited general admiration as an 'antique'. A French collector bought it for a large sum. But neither his name nor the price paid is mentioned in the account given of this affair.

A portrait bust of Girolamo Savonarola, the famous Dominican preacher of San Marco, had a fate similar to that of the 'Benivieni' bust. This work, copied from a medallion of the period, was purchased by a Florentine dealer, Vincenzo Capponi, for 640 lire. He sold it for 10,000, making a profit of no less than 9360 lire. The secret of its manufacture came out when the bust was exhibited at the Palazzo Riccardi in Florence in 1864 as a genuine product of the Renaissance. Bastianini was identified as the artist responsible. The disappointed owners, Banti and Costa, presented the bust in 1869 to the Monastery of San Marco, which had then just been rebuilt as a museum. The work was given a place of honour in the cell formerly occupied by its subject when Prior of the establishment.

Another bust of Savonarola by Bastianini was acquired in 1896 by the South Kensington Museum of London and exhibited as an example of neo-Renaissance nineteenth-century sculpture. The same Museum, now the Victoria and Albert, had previously bought, as original works of the Florentine Renaissance, three other pieces by Bastianini. A sum of £80 was paid in 1857, in Paris, for a marble relief depicting the Madonna and Child, with cherubs' heads. It was at first attributed to a member of Donatello's circle, Antonio Rossellino (1427-78). In 1861 a portrait

bust in terracotta, believed to be by an unknown Florentine of the Renaissance period, was purchased from the Gigli Campana Collection for £60. In 1863 the same amount was disbursed by the same museum for a similar work.

The London authorities continued to show great interest in Bastianini's productions. In 1869 a plaster cast of the 'Benivieni bust' was acquired and by way of comparison an equally informative bust of a certain Baron von Jenisen. In 1891 they bought the wax model of the marble relief obtained in 1857 (see illustration). It only cost them about £5, though £80 had been paid for the alleged Renaissance Madonna. Nothing could be more revealing of the enormous difference in the values ascribed to old and new, genuine and spurious works respectively.

The inevitable question arises whether Bastianini, the creator of the 'Benivieni bust', should be regarded as an artist or a swindler. It is usual to modify in his case the severity with which a forger is normally judged by calling attention to his outstanding professional skill and describing him as 'an aristocrat among forgers'. He is admitted on other counts to have been a remarkable sculptor and genuine artist, whose works were rendered forgeries through no fault of his own but simply owing to lack of discernment by specialists. Respectable museums like the Victoria and Albert did not hesitate to acquire Bastianini's productions and exhibit them as specimens of nineteenth century art.

In books on Italian sculpture Bastianini is referred to as the successor of Bartolini. Wilhelm Lübke, in his *History of Sculpture* (1880) laments that 'the development of gifts of such high promise was cut short by sudden death'. He recognises the 'absolute mastery' of the 'Benivieni bust'. Giuseppe Delogu also praises Bastianini, in a book well-known in Germany, for his consummate technique and 'fine realism'.

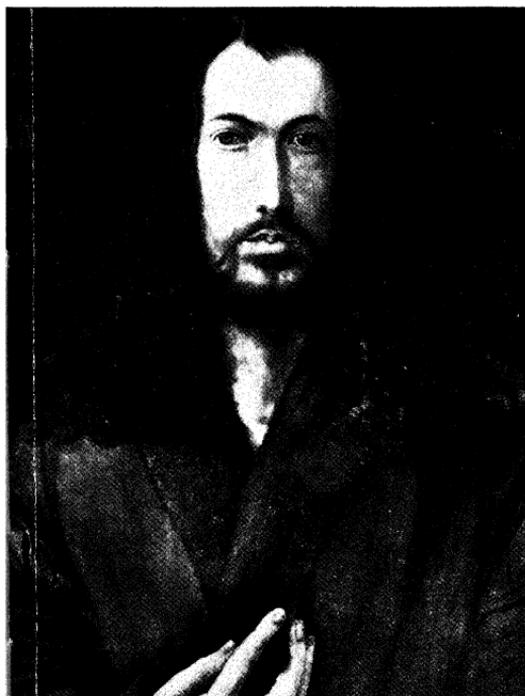
Friedrich Winkler stresses Bastianini's astonishing ability to adapt his style to that of earlier centuries. He asserts, writing in 1930, that 'even to-day, after nearly a hundred years, it is very difficult to see that Bastianini's best counterfeit portrait busts are nineteenth-century work'.

It is clear that Bastianini intended no deception. On the contrary, like a true artist of his day, he was inspired by earlier works to do the same kind of thing himself. He was not concerned, in his choice and treatment of material, to give the



3

Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) self portrait. Limewood panel, 67 by 49 cm, Old Pinakothek, Munich. This painting was hung in the Nuremburg Town Hall from the sixteenth century until 1799 when it was lent to the painter Küffner, who made a copy from it and returned the copy in place of the original.



4

Albrecht Dürer, self portrait. Forgery by Wolfgang Küffner (1799). Limewood panel, 67 by 49 cm, Dürer's house, Nuremburg. The forgery was discovered in 1805 when the original, which came up for sale in Munich, was bought for the royal collection.

- 5 'The Hare,' Oil painting after a drawing by Dürer, probably by Hans Hoffman (d. 1591). Barberini Gallery, Rome. Dürer's contemporaries and followers used his drawings for their paintings and for many years a number of these passed for originals by the Master.



impression of an older production and so defraud purchasers. If this had been his purpose, he would certainly have destroyed his preliminary sketches and models. But he never did. He kept them and even sometimes presented them to public bodies.

There are other cogent arguments against the theory that he consciously cheated. The question of financial gain is of decisive importance here. His prices remained well within the limits of those current for new work at the time. The man's fundamental decency is also evident in his answer to the enticing offer of Count de Nieuwekerke. Until then he had been obliged to earn his living more or less precariously by producing copies, imitations and creations of his own. But he refused to accept money for nothing. If fraud had been his object, he could have easily made faithful reproductions of old works, giving them false signs of age, and thus dishonestly obtained large fees.

Nor need the dealer Antonio Freppa be considered a swindler. His fifty per cent profit on the sale of the 'Benivieni bust' was nothing out of the way. If he had described it as old work he would naturally have charged a great deal more. The fact that he voluntarily disclosed the history of the bust also goes to show that he behaved quite honourably and correctly.

Certain of Bastianini's works were only made to appear forgeries after experts had endowed them with an antiquity, an importance and consequently a value, for which there were no foundations in fact. The experts must not of course for this reason be regarded as swindlers, for they had merely been mistaken in their judgments. The case is really one of 'forgery without a forger'.

The 'Benivieni bust' scandal was soon forgotten. Those concerned had every reason to hush it up. Other scandals and lawsuits in the artistic field soon crowded out the fuss over Bastianini. It was not until 1952 that the 'False or True?' exhibition, shown first in Holland and then in Switzerland, Germany and the United States, reminded people of the revelations in connection with the Florentine sculptor.

The object of the exhibition was to bring to light the fundamental distinction between old and new, genuine and spurious works of art. Expert and layman alike were to be shown characteristic examples of imitation, contrasted with original creative products, and thus improve their understanding of art as a whole.

In pursuance of this aim the 'Benivieni bust' was placed side by side with that of Baron von Jenisen, executed by Bastianini at about the same time. Though the external features of the two works, the facial expressions, poses and clothing, were those of two utterly different human beings, the style was unmistakably the same. The treatment was surprisingly similar in the identically intent eyes, slightly incongruous placing of the nose, thick, down-drawn underlip and, most noticeably, in the wrinkles and consciously contrived naturalism of the hair. There is also some similarity in the indication of dress. Bastianini does not seem to have tried to reproduce the typical Florentine robe of the Renaissance, with its many folds, in the 'Benivieni bust'. This feature appears to have been taken direct from the living model and to represent the overall habitually worn by the factory hand Bonaiuti.

A careful study of this bust at the present time, after the lapse of nearly a century, shows that it bears only an outward resemblance to Renaissance work. The unerring sense of style characteristic of the period is missing. It is replaced by a certain modernity of feeling which suggests imitation. The strict linear formality of the fifteenth-century Florentines is absent. The casual manner of Bastianini's own day, very near to naturalism, can be traced. It seems incredible to-day that such eminent experts were so completely misled. Nineteenth-century works of art can of course now be seen with more objectivity than was possible to contemporary critics whose familiarity with such products rendered them to some extent blind to the differences between past styles and those of their own time. The relation of Bastianini's art to former practice and that of his period is strikingly clarified by a comparison of certain of his reliefs of the Madonna with Renaissance originals, a comparison which could only be made after the exhibition of art forgeries had been opened. In 1857, when Freppa sold Bastianini's relief to the South Kensington Museum, the authorities there were convinced that it was genuine Renaissance work, probably by Antonio Rossellino (see illustration). They were only enlightened as to its true provenance when the 'Benivieni bust' scandal broke out. In 1891 the wax model of the relief (see illustration) was acquired in the knowledge that it was a preliminary study by the artist for the work in marble.

Subsequent investigations proved that he had copied an old fragment of a relief by Desiderio da Settignano (1428-64), preserved in the Museum of Fine Art at Lyons (see illustration).

Bastianini resorted to other Renaissance reliefs in order to supply, in his own version, the missing upper parts of his original. The wax model appears at first sight to be unquestionably a faithful copy, though a certain effeminacy, inseparable from the material as from the character of any imitation, cannot be denied. This trait appears very noticeably in the marble relief.

When the original is compared by a modern observer with the imitation, which has even the outward aspect of comparatively recent work, the ascription of it to a member of Donatello's circle becomes inexplicable. For the style as well as the material gives a strong impression of late date. The exquisite line, especially that of the head of the Madonna, bowed over the Child, was reproduced to some extent in the wax model, but not in the marble. Nor does the latter convey the Child's nestling posture. Bastianini's work also lacks the highly stylised yet natural fall of the drapery in the original. The faces and hands in the copy show the typical nineteenth-century sculptor's preoccupation with the living model. The cherubs' heads have the naturalistic expression of those turned out by Bastianini and his contemporaries in imitation of the Florentine portraits of children. But they do not suggest, as do those of Desiderio and artists of his period, messengers from heaven.

Mark Twain once observed that modern copies were more agreeable to look at than originals by Old Masters. For imitations often substitute a pleasingly soft treatment, concentrated upon external effects, for the stern, uncompromising devotion to inner truth expressed by their models. Understanding of the art of former times has to be cultivated by a slow process, on occasion not without effort. But an imitation requires no such trained study. As a rule it captivates the spectator at the first glance. Such is the explanation of the enthusiasm aroused by the 'Beniveni bust' and Bastianini's Madonna relief.

The Renowned Sarcophagus of Cerveteri

IT WAS NOT only connoisseurs who pricked up their ears at the revelations in the 'Benivieni' case. The extraordinarily high value placed upon the bust and the discussions about its authenticity had shown the art forgers how easily experts could be deceived and how difficult it might be to prove a work spurious. The recognition of these opportunities undoubtedly led to the production of further clever forgeries, among which the British Museum's Etruscan sarcophagus must be included.

In 1873 the Museum was offered a sarcophagus which had been excavated at Cerveteri, site of the ancient Etruscan capital.

Such was the story told by the Roman dealer. The English experts believed him. They were enraptured by the size and beauty of the work, in terracotta, lavishly adorned with reliefs and surmounted by the figures of a man and woman. Its date was assumed to be about 500 B.C. The sarcophagus was duly acquired by the Museum and came to be regarded as constituting, together with related works in the Louvre and at the Villa of Pope Julius in Rome, an important item in the study of Etruscan civilisation.

London critics were especially loud in their praises of the figures on the tomb, seated in an erect posture, with most naturalistically rendered features, full of life. But admiration of these artistic treasures was accompanied by certain doubts about the authenticity of a good many finds at Cerveteri. It was considered that the sarcophagus might be a forgery. Resemblances to the Louvre sarcophagus, some details of which were similar, and inconsistencies in the inscriptions, gave some colour to the suspicions expressed.

Archaeologists at the site were taken aback by the discovery

that a local family, the Pinellis, displayed an amazing familiarity with the details of the alleged antiquities. The disquieting statement was made that Pietro Pinelli, the head of the family, was acquainted with the inscriptions on Etruscan bracelets in the Louvre. On further enquiries being made, a relative of Pietro confessed to having fabricated the bracelets in question. He readily explained how he had manufactured them in the 'Etruscan' style. A closer comparison of the Paris inscriptions with those of the London sarcophagus revealed such clear correspondences that the latter, too, had to be acknowledged as a modern copy. But as the Pinellis stoutly denied having had anything to do with it and no other clues to its provenance could be obtained, no definite conclusion on the subject was reached.

Later on repeated rumours about the forgeries at Cerveteri became current. It was said that the London sarcophagus had been hacked in pieces by the brother of its manufacturer, buried at the site and the fragments then dug up under the eyes of delighted experts. But nothing more precise could be ascertained. In 1935, sixty years after the sarcophagus had been bought, it was quietly removed from its place of exhibition at the Museum. This step amounted to official admission of the forgery.

CHAPTER 9

The Tiara of Saitaphernes

AT THE END of February 1896 the Russian art dealer Schapschelle Hochman of Orschakov exhibited in Vienna a remarkable collection of antique goldsmiths' work. It included earrings and fingerrings, hornbooks, necklaces and, largest and finest of all, a ceremonial headdress in the form of an antique tiara (see illustration). The dealer stated that all the items were found in the ruins of the former Greek colony at Olbia on the Black Sea, near Odessa.

The collection was offered, through the Vienna agents Szymanski and Anton Vogel, to the Imperial Court Museum. The pieces, especially the tiara, were inspected by a number of connoisseurs and collectors, such as the archaeologists Benndorf, Bohrmann and Schneider and the collectors Count Wilczek and Baron Rothschild. All were convinced that the items were genuine and of exceptional value. But the Director of the Museum, Bruno Buchner, felt the gravest doubts. He considered it highly suspicious that all the damaged parts of the articles were to be found in a kind of pattern at unobtrusive points on the flat background to the reliefs, whereas the latter had escaped injury. The tiara, accordingly, did not find a purchaser in Vienna.

The British Museum in London returned a negative reply to an enquiry by letter. Vogel and Szymanski then, in March, betook themselves to Paris. Each item of the collection was there thoroughly examined. The tiara, in particular, was inspected by two experts, M. A. Kaempfen, Director of the National Museums and of the Louvre, and M. E. Héron de Villefosse, Keeper of the Greco-Roman Department of the Louvre. The crown was found to be 17.5 cm in height. It was of pure gold

and weighed 460 grams. The shape was that of a tiara, the head-dress of Persian kings, afterwards adopted by the Popes. The oval in this case was divided by embossed ornament into two friezes in relief, with many figures. The lower and narrower ring showed scenes of Scythian life, freely chased. The broad upper band constituting the chief decoration illustrated the Iliad, including the episode of the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles over the captive Briseis. An inscription between the two friezes read in translation: 'The Senate and People of Olbia to the Great Invincible Saitaphernes.' The crown had therefore apparently been presented by the Greek colonial city of Olbia, as tribute, to the barbarian king. The article would have to be dated, if manufactured in the settlement, about 200 B.C.

The Paris experts had no doubt of its authenticity. Further research only confirmed their opinion. It was discovered from other sources that the city of Olbia had in fact paid tribute to Saitaphernes. The inscription on the tiara corresponded with that on a column presented to the commander in question. Moreover, earlier finds in Olbia tombs showed remarkable resemblances in subject and style to those of the articles in the collection. These other items, however, were in Russia and not therefore easily accessible to West European observers.

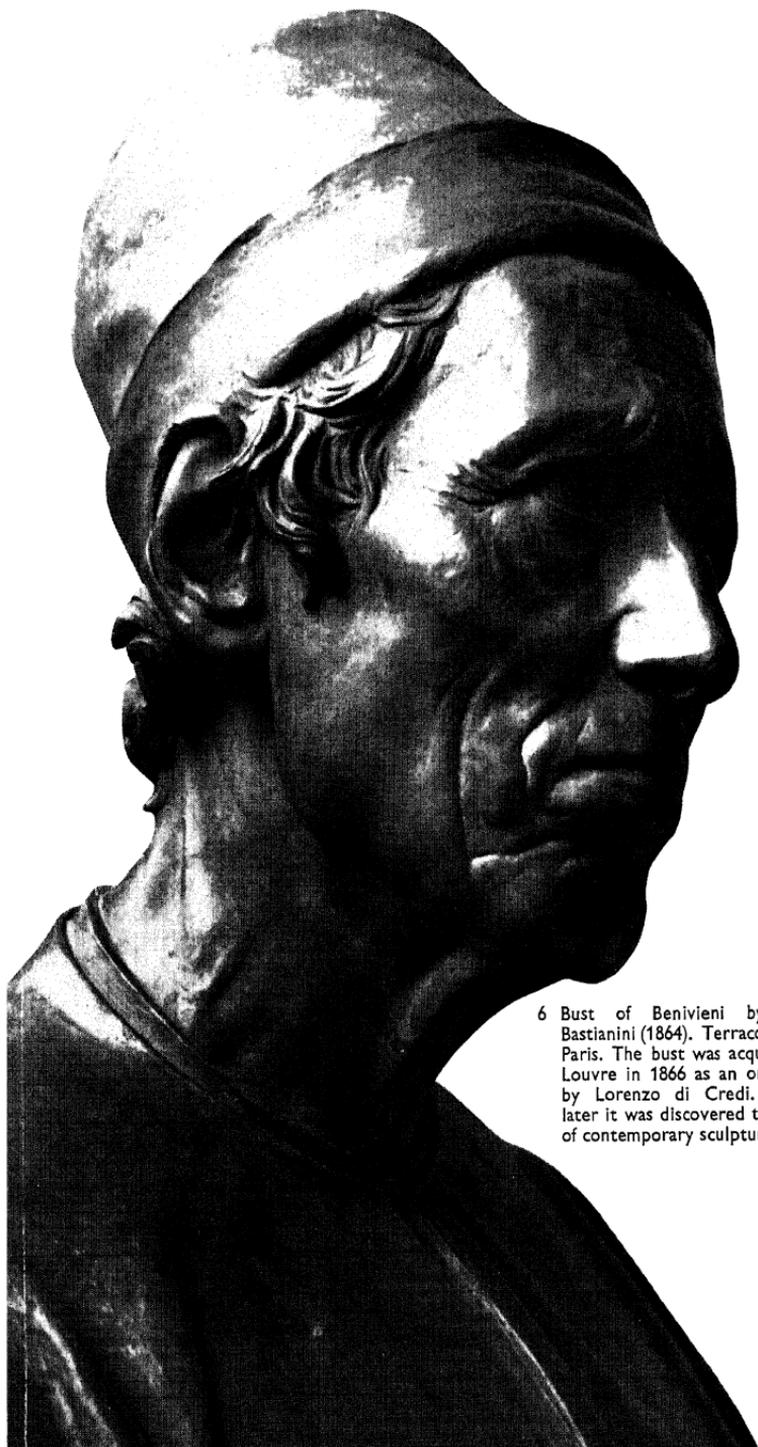
In these circumstances it was not surprising that Paris decided to acquire the 'priceless' tiara for the Louvre without further ado. The excitement was such that no more enquiries were made about its origin and the details of its excavation. It was feared, perhaps, that prolonged tests and investigations might arouse interest in Russia and raise the question of pre-emptive rights in that country. Negotiations with the Viennese agents were put through in some haste and without publicity. A price of 200,000 francs was paid for the tiara.

The purchasers did not have to await the sanction of the Chamber of Deputies for so considerable an expenditure. The money was supplied privately by two patrons of art, Corroyer and Theodore Reinach. Anton Vogel signed the receipt and left Paris immediately. It was later revealed that he turned over 86,000 francs to Hochman, 40,000 francs to Szymanski and kept 74,000 francs 'commission' for himself.

On the 1st April 1896 the tiara of Saitaphernes was given a place of honour, as the legitimate property of the Louvre, in the

Antiquities Department. The new acquisition attracted little attention from the public. A good deal of criticism, mostly of an adverse kind, was expressed by connoisseurs, especially abroad. In May Professor Wesselovsky of the University of St Petersburg, who was in a position to judge, being familiar with antiquities found in Russia, described the tiara as a typical modern production of the forgers active at Orschakov. He mentioned other similar forgeries in museums at Odessa, St Petersburg itself and Cracow. A little earlier the Munich archaeologist Adolf Furtwängler had committed himself to the view that the tiara was a forgery. He supported this opinion with detailed arguments before the year was out, writing of the work as a 'forgery so tasteless that it could only excite disgust'. Considerations of the technique, style and subject-matter of the production proved it to be fraudulent. The reddish-brown coating found on genuine pieces was absent. The tone of the gold was characteristically modern. The style was a mixture of those of many periods, had no relation whatever to the antique and could not be anything but contemporary. The garments of the figures were not worn in the ancient fashion, their faces and gestures were not those of former times and everything about the tiara suggested modern melodrama. The vessels beside the funeral pile were of the present, not the past, as were also the clumsy incompetence of the representations of the human form and the lack of feeling for correct proportion. Furtwängler drew attention to a number of models used by the modern manufacturer, such as the Tamen necklace, objects found in tombs at Kertsch and Nikopol, South Italian vase-paintings and a silver dish of late Roman workmanship, the so called 'Shield of Scipio' (see illustration). The German scholar also found the Homeric reference and its representation suspicious features of the tiara. Nor could the Winds, those formidable deities of the ancient world, be rendered as childish figures except by modern misunderstanding of them.

Other experts agreed with Furtwängler's convincing arguments. In August 1896, at a congress of Russian archaeologists in Riga, Professor Stern, Director of the Odessa Museum, declared the tiara to be a clever forgery. The brothers Hochman were alleged to have established a workshop which manufactured not only the crown in question but also another on exhibition in Cracow. These statements attracted much attention among art



6 Bust of Benivieni by Giovanni Bastianini (1864). Terracotta, Louvre, Paris. The bust was acquired by the Louvre in 1866 as an original work by Lorenzo di Credi. One year later it was discovered to be a piece of contemporary sculpture.

- 7 'Virgin and Child.' Marble relief by Desiderio di Settignano (1428-64). Musée des Beaux Arts, Lyons. Giovanni Bastianini in the nineteenth century, used this work as a source for his imitations.





8 'Virgin and Child' by Giovanni Bastianini (1860). Wax, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The work was acquired by the museum in 1891 as an example of the derivation of new works from Renaissance originals.

9 'Virgin and Child' by Giovanni Bastianini. Marble, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The work was bought as an authentic Antonio Rosellini and later discovered to be a forgery by Bastianini.



experts throughout the world. An offer to the British Museum of objects recently found at Olbia was peremptorily refused.

Paris at first, intelligibly enough, made no comment. The Chamber had not yet sanctioned the outlay on the tiara. If such sanction was withheld, those who had so generously advanced the funds required would be seriously embarrassed. The authorities, in declining to admit they could have been mistaken, reminded those who referred to foreign criticism that the fox in the fable had said the grapes he couldn't reach were sour.

The supporters of the Louvre were pleased when Kieseritsky, Keeper of the Department of Goldsmiths' Work at the Hermitage Gallery in St Petersburg, declared the tiara to be genuine. The fact that he later withdrew this opinion was hushed up in Paris. Further unpalatable news was to come. In the spring of 1897 Schapschelle Hochman was charged with the sale of forgeries and a goldsmith named Ruchomovsky was proved to have manufactured articles very similar to the tiara. He, however, repudiated the 'undeserved honour' of being held responsible for the tiara itself. French experts such as Villefosse, Reinach, Michon and others tirelessly laboured in 'the cause of truth' and still maintained that the crown was genuine. It remained at the Louvre. The cost was eventually sanctioned by the Chamber.

The tiara of Saitaphernes continued on exhibition as a pre-Christian work for seven years. But the debate on its origin and authenticity went on. Then the storm broke. In a few weeks what Furtwängler and other specialists had suspected turned out to be true.

On the 17th March 1903 a Montmartre artist named Elina Mayence was charged with forging paintings purporting to be by Henri Pilles. Mayence boasted that he had also made the much-disputed tiara. The statement became headline news throughout the world, which was just what he wanted. His wild lie had broken the uncanny silence about the alleged Scythian tiara and raised anew the question of its genuine or spurious character. The Press took the matter up and started a search for potential witnesses. Intense public interest was aroused. Boys went about the streets singing, to the tune of a popular song of the day:

*It's the tiara, tiara, tiara,
the tiara we want!*

Crowds besieged the work in the Louvre. On the 19th and 21st March an observer is said to have counted 30,000 of them. On the 23rd *Le Matin* published a letter from the Russian jeweller Lifschitz, a resident of Paris. He declared that he had personally watched his 'best friend Ruchomovsky' at work on the tiara. He added that the goldsmith in question had taken eight months over the job in 1895-6 and received some 2000 roubles for it. He insisted on the perfect good faith of his friend, who had known nothing of the projected swindle and false attribution. His statements were shortly afterwards confirmed in a letter from a Russian woman living in Paris, Mme Nageborg-Malkine. She had spoken to the artist a few months previously. The 'poor man, who had undertaken such an unusual task, so open to mis-construction' had told her that his 'antique' was in the Louvre and that he didn't know what to do about it.

Paris was divided into two camps, that of the 'Saitaphernists', who still contended that the work was genuine, and that of the 'Antitiarists', convinced that it was spurious. The French experts continued their efforts to set public anxiety at rest. André Falice and Lalique, in particular, maintained that the crown must be ancient and genuine, since no artist, since Benvenuto Cellini, had been capable of producing such a thing.

In some quarters a certain amount of amusement was caused by the news that Villefosse had been instructed by the Ministry of Education to remove the tiara 'provisionally' from its showcase 'in order to submit it to the most searching examination'. The information was generally taken to mean that the Louvre had given up the struggle. As no official announcement was made, a daily newspaper directed its Russian correspondent to contact the mysterious goldsmith in Odessa and report the result. The following telegram, in large type, soon afterwards appeared in the *Figaro*.

Odessa, 25.3.03. 'The engraver Israel Ruchomovsky, 36 Ouspenskaia Street, Odessa, states categorically that he produced the tiara in 1896 to the order of a person unknown, resident in Kertsch. Ruchomovsky is ready to come to Paris to prove his assertion on receipt of travelling expenses amounting to 1200 francs.'

This news caused an enormous sensation among those con-

cerned. The Government itself could no longer decline to accede to the public demand for an investigation. Chaumié, the Minister of Education, informed the Senate that an official enquiry would be held and its findings published. On the 28th March it was announced that Clermont-Ganneau, Member of the Institute and Professor at the Collège de France, had been put in charge of the investigation. Meanwhile the tiara would be withdrawn from exhibition and held under legal seal.

Ruchomovsky reached Paris, by way of Warsaw and Berlin, on the 5th April. The greatest secrecy was observed, his room at the Central Hotel being booked in the name of Bardès. But the secret could not be kept. The hotel was besieged by inquisitive persons who wanted to see the 'great Master' and obtain his autograph. He received tempting offers for appearances in public 'on tour'. The American circus proprietor Barnum proclaimed that he would buy the tiara at the full cost paid, provided he was sold the 'real' forgery.

Newspapers and magazines published details about Israel Ruchomovsky's career. He was a White Russian Jew born at Mosyr in 1860 and came to Odessa in 1892, where he taught himself the goldsmith's craft, engraving and chasing. Later on his sons Jacob and Solomon assisted him in his work. He was said to have produced, among other things, a silver ecclesiastical vessel, together with some statues and plate. Verdicts on his skill varied between hymns to the 'greatest goldsmith since Benvenuto Cellini' and indignant censure of a swindler who had perpetrated the 'most scandalous forgery in art history'.

The tiara became the craze of the moment. Innumerable copies of it, even in the form of sleeve-links, were offered for sale. Meanwhile a committee of experts studied the whole question behind closed doors. There seemed little chance of reaching an impartial conclusion. For the Louvre representatives took every opportunity to suggest that Ruchomovsky could not have been responsible. Clermont-Ganneau could only say, after weeks of cross-examining the goldsmith, that he found the Russian such a commonplace person, so lacking in intelligence and every sort of archaeological knowledge, as to be quite unreliable in his statements.

Ruchomovsky was asked for 'proofs'. He provided them. His account of the matter was as follows. The tiara had been ordered

by a client, whose name he refused to give, as a gift to a Russian archaeologist in recognition of his long and distinguished career. The client had sent Ruchomovsky illustrated books to serve as a guide to the work. The goldsmith could not remember their exact titles. But he described the volumes in some detail and they were eventually traced. One was *Antiquités de la Russie Méridionale* by Tolstoy-Kondekof-Reinach, published in Paris in 1891. Another was the *Bilder-atlas zur Weltgeschichte* by Ludwig Weisser, published in Stuttgart in 1860.

Ruchomovsky copied certain passages from the 'Victory of Constantine over Maxentius', one of the Vatican frescoes designed by Raphael and executed by Giulio Romano, which was reproduced as an engraving in the German book. A drawing of the 'Shield of Scipio' preserved in the Medal Room of the National Library of Paris was used by the goldsmith as a pattern for one of the chief groups of figures on the tiara, that representing the restoration to Achilles of the abducted slave Briseis. The scenes of Scythian life in the lower frieze were taken from the French manual.

Without seeing the tiara again, Ruchomovsky described its execution in three separate sections, which he had afterwards soldered together. He also explained precisely how the signs of damage and age had been counterfeited.

These statements were found to be perfectly accurate. The goldsmith was nevertheless required by the Louvre authorities to submit a 'conclusive proof' by reconstructing part of the tiara without reference to the original. It has never been made clear whether Ruchomovsky thereupon executed the small copy at present in a private collection at Stuttgart, or other sections either retained by the Louvre or taken back by the artist to Russia. But in any case he performed the task satisfactorily and thereby proved the tiara to be a forgery.

He had been treated in the same way as most other forgers, being first extolled as the 'hero of the hour', who had 'routed all the experts' and was a 'great artist', only to be subsequently shunned as 'forger' and 'imitator'. Ruchomovsky returned in dudgeon to Russia, indignant with the Parisians who had given him such an uproarious welcome and then meanly deserted him. He proceeded to produce a number of works in mockery of the Paris 'tiara craze' and the deluded specialists. He made a 'Sai-

taphernes of 1895', seated on a sarcophagus and wearing the crown, with as counterpart a 'Saitaphernes of 1903' uncrowned and weeping, on his sarcophagus, while children played ball with his tiara. After these efforts nothing more was ever heard of him.

The end of the long years of controversy was greeted with relief by those interested in art throughout the world. No one took seriously the attempts even then made to evade censure by



i. Caricature from le Figaro (1903). Israel Ruchomovsky proving that he was the maker of the Tiara of Saitaphernes

maintaining that 'an old piece' had been fraudulently 'worked up'. The date of the tiara had to be advanced by 2100 years. But people were glad to find that the authorities were not ashamed of having been corrected and continued to display the tiara, like the 'Beniviene bust', as a remarkable imitation of ancient style by a modern artist.

The 'tiara of Saitaphernes' retained its name even after the forgery had been revealed. It was shown in a number of special exhibitions. In the imposing procession of art forgeries it was

generally regarded as a 'royal piece', 'the best of them all'. No doubt the pure gold of its material had a good deal to do with this verdict. The precious metal imparted a meretricious brilliance to the work. Nevertheless, its technical and artistic merits were duly recognised.

The tiara showed no sign of the 'sentimental', tentative manner which can usually be detected in forgeries. Ruchomovsky had worked with conscious, untroubled pride. He would hardly have had the courage to undertake the task if he had ever dreamed that the result was going to set the greatest experts in the world by the ears. It cannot be denied that for many years, not only in France, many people were convinced that no one since Benvenuto Cellini had been capable of such perfection.

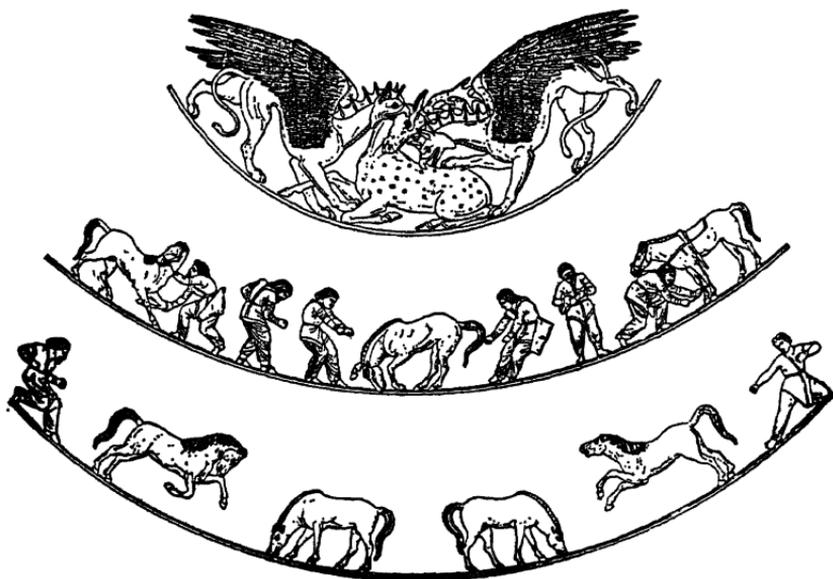
Recognition of the imitative character of the work is facilitated for modern critics by its excellent 'state of preservation' from the start. The kind of damage a work has undergone is the first point a connoisseur considers when there is any question of its authenticity. It is relatively easy to see the difference between naturally and artificially induced injuries. Imitators and forgers generally place them at subordinate positions in order to enhance the value of the product. An arbitrary 'pattern' of damage often leads to the detection of a forgery.

When a hitherto unknown work of art turns up, an expert first looks for parallels to it, which may afford clues to the time and place of origin and in the case of borrowed features may reveal imitation or forgery. Comparison of the tiara with similar original productions proved difficult, as they were for the most part only to be found in Russia. Many of these, however, are now known through books and articles. Some idea of the importance of that era in the last phase of antique art has recently been given, for instance, in a book by Tamara Talbot Rice. Illustrations in scientific works had already enabled Furtwängler to find surprising points of correspondence with the tiara and consequent proofs of its counterfeit nature.

On Ruchomovsky's own showing he had utilised book-illustrations of details from the well-known Vatican fresco of the 'Victory of Constantine'. But specialists had already discovered the relationship in question and pointed out that passages from a work of the sixteenth century A.D. could not have influenced one of the third century before the Christian era. This circum-

stance alone should have been enough to establish the fact of forgery.

Further tell-tale resemblances to well-known original works can be traced in the scenes of Scythian life. Representations of horse-taming and pictures of other animals on the tiara come from the Nikopol (Ukraine) silver vase dating from about 400 B.C. This piece, being in Russia, may well have escaped the attention of the Paris experts. But it is hard to see how they can have remained ignorant of the tiara's derivations from the 'Shield of Scipio' in their own capital (see illustration).



ii. *Detail of an amphora from Nikopol used as a model for the frieze of Scythian scenes on the forged Tiara of Saitaphernes*

Style, however, affords the most important clue to the authenticity or spurious character of a work. In the tiara, though both general design and details are traced with an amazingly sure hand, the practised eye at once perceives the lack of personal feeling for form and structure. Several faults, never found in ancient originals, are apparent. For example, the stems of the vineleaves and grapes do not grow out naturally from their tendrils, which, again, are pieced together rather than rendered as organically extending. The folds of the garments do not fall naturally. Some

of the hands and feet are in the wrong position. Ignorance of anatomy is also evident in the representations of animals, which the ancients regularly delineated with astonishingly lifelike accuracy.



iii. *Amphora, silver, partly gilded, from Nikopol. The model for parts of the Tiara of Saitapbernes*

The tiara is beyond question an interesting work of art, quite apart from its aspect as a forgery. It proves that the skill of the old goldsmiths has not died out and that obscure workshops can still produce admirable specimens of the craft. The crown was conceived by the artist as a free imitation of the antique. It was only through a fraudulent dealer that it was presented as an original and thus became a forgery.

In 1909 the Louvre nearly fell a victim to a third scandal in the

world of art. The authorities were then about to purchase for 125,000 francs a lunette in clay attributed to Andrea Verrocchio.

Doubts about its authenticity arose while sanction for the expenditure was being awaited. In order to avoid a scandal, the work was returned to Italy. The manufacturer turned out to have been a certain Florentine with the strikingly suggestive name of Bonafede. A connoisseur paid him 14,000 francs for the piece, which would thus have realised nearly ten times the price through the intermediary of a dealer in Paris. It may have been the lesson learnt by the Louvre authorities in the case of the tiara that warned them not to purchase this particular forgery.

The Bust of Flora

THE CASE of the bust of Flora in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin, is one of the most baffling and therefore most discussed in the history of art forgery (see illustration). Extremely inconsistent statements about it are to be found even in modern literature on the subject. Some writers briefly dismiss the question of authenticity as having been thoroughly investigated and settled once for all in favour of the ancient and completely genuine character of the bust. Others describe it as one of the most remarkable and clever forgeries ever perpetrated. In these circumstances it appears of importance to have a clear statement of the problem.

The bust, depicting the goddess Flora, was acquired in the summer of 1909 by Wilhelm Bode in his capacity as General Manager of the Prussian Art Collections in Berlin. The material of this fine, lifesize work is purified wax. The height of the head is 22.5 cm and that of the entire work 66 cm. The back has been left unfinished, indicating that the bust was intended for a niche. The cast wax foundation was repeatedly coated by the artist with thin layers of the same material, which were painstakingly modelled and painted in mellow tones of water-colour, much of which is preserved on the reddish hair with its coloured wreath, the blue robe and white undergarment. The flesh tints, on the other hand, have been reduced to scanty traces of the underpainting, visible especially under the right arm. A warm, waxen tone of some subtlety has thus been produced. The work has suffered serious damage, both forearms having been broken off. Their placing, however, has survived sufficiently to enable the original attitude to be gauged. The purchaser was Murray Marks, the London art dealer, who found the bust, according to Bode,

in a shop in King Street, where the work had been on view for some months at a moderate price. It was said to have been knocked down for a few pounds at a London auction in 1907, and thereafter to have come into a number of different hands. At one time the firm of Durlacher bought it for £150. Bode paid 160,000 marks for it. This large sum seemed justified, as Bode considered the bust to be an original work by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) or one of his closest collaborators. It was for this reason that the damage was discounted by the purchaser.

Part of the missing right hand was found through the agency of a former owner, Mr Long, and acquired by the Berlin Museum in 1909.

The Times was much vexed by this triumph of the dreaded competition of Germany in the international art market. The newspaper observed grimly that the case did little honour to British connoisseurship. Bode was intensely pleased with his acquisition. He extolled it as a 'work of the very first rank', referred to the 'fascinating smile' of the goddess and pronounced 'the modelling of the face and neck' to be 'as masterly as that of the Mona Lisa'. The report of the committee of experts appointed to express an opinion recommended the bust as 'one of the most outstanding additions' to the Berlin collections. In view of the many important acquisitions made by the museums of the capital under Bode's guidance this was praise indeed.

Amateurs of art, however, had little time to rejoice over the Director's discovery and Berlin's new treasure. A few weeks after the purchase a dispute began, in the full glare of publicity, about the authenticity of the work. On the 23rd October 1909 sensational revelations were made by *The Times*. Charles F. Cooksey, a Southampton art dealer and auctioneer, declared the bust of Flora to be an imitation and therefore a forgery. It had been manufactured, he said, by the sculptor Richard Cockle Lucas (1800-83), in the spring of 1846, to the special order of the London art dealer W. Buchanan. A painting in the possession of the latter had served Lucas as a guide to the work (see illustration).

These statements were confirmed and supplemented in the *Burlington Magazine* and in communications to *The Times* on the 12th and 13th November by the sculptor's son, Albert Dürer Lucas, then eighty-one years old. He wrote that a painting of the goddess Flora, which was also known as the 'Joconda', had

been brought to his father by a Captain Berdmore. It was an oil, either by Leonardo himself or one of his pupils. The bust was a reproduction of this picture in wax. Mr A. D. Lucas added that he himself, as a lad of eighteen, had helped his father to 'prepare the material for casting and assisted him personally with the painting of the flowers in the hair'. There was no reason to doubt this last statement, for the son was widely known as a flower painter.

One of his friends in youth, Mr Thomas Whitburn, endorsed this account of the matter in letters published in the *Daily Mail* on the 28th October and in *The Times* on the 11th November. He wrote: 'I met Mr Richard Cockle Lucas in the British Museum . . . I remember quite well that he was then modelling a wax bust in his studio after a painting alleged to be by Leonardo.' A former maid also recalled the presence of the bust of Flora in Lucas's house. She affirmed that it had stood for decades on an open veranda. According to Mr Cooksey 'the signs of age in the bust and also the loss of the forearms are due to the fact that it stood for years in a garden, unprotected from the weather'.

Lucas's son suggested that tangible evidence might be found that the bust was by his father. He stated that the latter was in the habit of packing unwanted material into wax casts in order to reinforce their stability. A. D. Lucas advised the still incredulous Berlin authorities to investigate the interior of the bust, where they would probably discover the materials mentioned.

This disturbing news reached Bode in Florence. He immediately hastened back to Berlin, where his colleagues were by then in a most unpleasant position. The Director, owing to his eminence in the art world and his spirited resistance to all imputations of forgery, had made many enemies. They were now jubilant, for it seemed that the champion of the authenticity of so many works of art which had been called in question had this time clearly been mistaken. The moment had arrived, they felt, to take the field against the detested 'Art Pope' and 'Art Bismarck' and to discredit conclusively, through the proved forgery of the bust of Flora, his reputation as an expert in Italian art. In these circumstances, the dispute over the bust had a one-sided, non-objective character from the start.

According to an article in the periodical *Cicerone* 'a serious question for scholars had been handled from the beginning as a

sensational event and dragged down to the level of a cheap novelette. It is clear that it eventually involved considerations of domestic politics. Some of the Liberal and all the Socialist papers made the affair of the bust the platform for a furious attack on Bode's character and activities. Meanwhile the Press of the Right took a decided stand, just as unqualified, in defence of Bode. A leader in the *Kreuzzeitung* explained the passions aroused. It bore the title: "The Bust Is Not the Real Issue".

A campaign of this sort in Germany, directed against Bode personally from the start, involved him in a painful situation. If he admitted that the bust must be a forgery, he would be surrendering his reputation as a connoisseur. He had obviously determined at once to accept this particular challenge to it. He threw the whole weight of his personality and innate obstinacy into the struggle, against growing opposition. He never owned himself in the wrong, though many other specialists in this field withdrew their support from him in that particular matter.

He refused at first to enter into a newspaper controversy. He had learnt from the tiara case how dangerous such participation might be for the expert. He took up the attitude that questions of this kind only concerned scholars. When the bust had been first acquired three eminent members of the specialists' committee called in had declared themselves in favour of the 'outstanding addition' to Berlin's works of art. But now they had nothing to say. Bode could not doubt that he was being abandoned to his fate. He therefore made a public declaration, pointing out the masterly execution of the work in dispute. He tried to minimise the whole affair, admitting only that Lucas might have restored a Renaissance original.

Bode opened his defensive campaign with a very clever move. He exhibited in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum some other works by the alleged forger of the bust of Flora. They consisted of interesting restorations of antique productions and certain sculptures imitative of figures by Albrecht Dürer and other well-known masters of various periods and countries. The style was typical of the English School of the first half of the nineteenth century in its frigid and smooth versions of older manners. Bode hoped to afford a better proof by this display than with words that the bust of Flora could not be attributed to an artist in this tradition and must be ascribed to the Renaissance.

But the exhibition, convincing as it might be in this respect, did show that the sculptor took older models for his works. Nor could it dispose of the adverse criticism and weight of suspicion in the world at large which had resulted from the disclosures in England. Bode's position grew still worse when old newspapers and rags dating from the previous century were found inside the bust, proving that the statements of A. D. Lucas had been correct.

It is surprising that, when the first alarming reports were received from England, A. D. Lucas was not immediately invited to come to Berlin and answer all the questions that arose on the spot. But Bode, instead of doing so, sent his Berlin colleague, Dr Posse, to London. But there it was soon found that Posse was only looking for proofs of authenticity and deliberately brushing aside all evidence to the contrary. For this reason Lucas declined to receive Bode's envoy. Posse then tried to ascertain whether the bust had existed before R. C. Lucas's time. He finally stated that it had formerly belonged to Lord Palmerston and had been given by him to Lucas to restore. A Southampton bookseller, Mr Tolfree, affirmed, by way of 'proof' of this circumstance, that at the auction of R. C. Lucas's effects the bust of Flora had been put aside as not being the property of the deceased but, 'in the auctioneer's view', that of Lord Palmerston. There could be no doubt of the artist's relations with Palmerston, who was known to have been one of his patrons.

But this hypothesis stood in direct opposition to the positive assertions of A. D. Lucas and Thomas Whitburn that the bust was a first-hand work modelled in imitation of a painting owned by Buchanan. Posse's 'evidence' was decidedly weakened by the fact that the picture in question existed and was proved to have been used as a guide by the sculptor. Pauli writes: 'If the bust was in fact excluded from the auction of 1884, the reason, in my opinion, is not far to seek. Mr Buchanan may have ordered it but not taken delivery. In these circumstances it would be very natural for the younger Lucas not to consider the work as his own inherited property without further enquiry, if he had the slightest ground for believing that his father had received any payment or advance on account of the bust.'

While the Press of the world revelled in one sensational revelation after another, experts in Germany maintained a very

reserved attitude. They were reluctant to undermine Bode's standing and thus respect for German connoisseurship as a whole. This feeling is clear from their replies, published in the *Cicerone's* last issue for its first year, 1909, to a questionnaire sent out by that periodical. Adolf Goldschmidt entirely evaded the problem of authenticity by demanding 'proof of the modern origin' of the bust. 'So long as no such proof is forthcoming,' he declared, 'the critic who considers the bust genuine is right.' Apparently he did not regard the sworn statements of Cooksey, A. D. Lucas and Thomas Whitburn as 'proof'. Heinrich Wölfflin merely referred to his personal 'impression of the bust'. He could 'not believe that any nineteenth-century forger could have developed sculptural rhythms of such quality by copying a painting'. But he did point out 'that large and important sections of the head are of later date'. It is characteristic of Wölfflin's anxiety to discredit Lucas's disclosures that he considered a restoration 'before the father's time' to have been possible. One wonders why an incontrovertible aspect of the matter was ignored by this commentator.

Longer expositions of the history of the bust were provided by the experts Georg Gronau and Gustav Pauli in reply to the *Cicerone's* questionnaire. Their interpretations are full of interest, especially as they come to quite different conclusions. Gronau starts, like Bode, from the assumptions that R. C. Lucas could not have been in a position to create a work of 'such great beauty', that the son of the alleged forger, in his old age, could no longer remember the most important details of the affair and that the bust of Flora was in fact not listed among the sculptor's productions. It is not until Gronau reaches the end of his account of the 'probabilities' that he tackles the main issue of deliberate forgery. He then simply declares that he cannot 'believe' in it.

Pauli, Director of the Hamburg Art Gallery, takes a decided stand against these views. He considers that there are three main proofs that the London sculptor R. C. Lucas imitated the Flora painting. In the first place the kind of wax used is remarkably like that in the case of other works by the artist and very unlike that of proved Renaissance originals. Secondly, the technical process of rinsing the cast suggests nineteenth century methods. Thirdly, a number of extremely important facts confirm the theory of forgery. Pauli begins by refuting the notion that a

second bust, a genuine work which Lucas might have copied, may still exist. He goes on to say that the proved fact should not be disregarded that Lucas did much imitative work and made sculptural versions of paintings. He is proved to have been an 'imitator'. He reproduced such fundamentally diverse styles as the antique, the German Renaissance and the Dutch Baroque. So he can hardly be denied his leap into the Italian Cinquecento, especially seeing that he was commissioned to do so. Finally Pauli, as an art historian of the first rank, did not shrink from taking up the question of style. He refers to a 'superficial mimicking of the formal elements of Leonardo's manner', which lacked the 'subtlety and incomparable precision' of that artist's period. Pauli is also doubtful whether the greyish-brown deposit was 'only the effect of centuries' and reminds his readers that certain skilled forgers had been known to do the centuries' work for them.

The Berlin sculptor Martin Schauss, whom Bode had called in to examine the materials used in the bust of Flora, advanced a new theory in 1910. His article, entitled 'The Leonardo Flora', argued that the bust was modern. He believed that Bastianini and the latter's teacher Torrini had something to do with it. He gave detailed reasons for supposing that the work had originated in Torrini's studio at Florence in 1845, and that it might accordingly have been restored by Lucas in England. But these views made little headway at the time.

Pauli's 'heads of indictment' put the supporters of authenticity in an awkward position. They did their best to invalidate his statements, declaring that the argument from materials could never be conclusive and attempting to dissolve all doubts by reference to the high aesthetic merits of the bust. They went into raptures over Leonardo's unique quality and greatness. Bode was well aware that artistic circles respected his judgment of Italian works and had hitherto trusted it. By way of protest against all possible hesitations he took every opportunity of emphatically characterising the bust as a 'production of the very first rank' and one of the chief glories of the Berlin museums. Official quarters backed him up. In 1910 he was granted the title of 'Excellency' and in 1914 admitted to the hereditary nobility. In 1911 an official edition of the guide to the Kaiser Friedrich Museum appeared, with a frontispiece reproducing the bust of



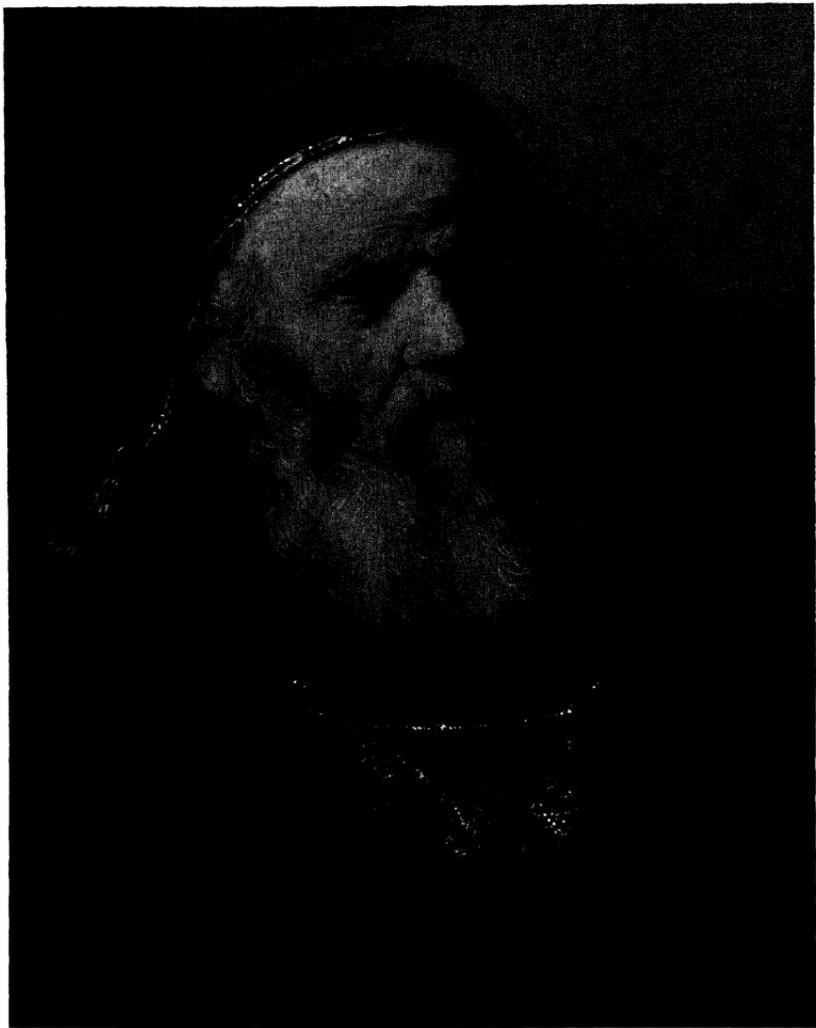
10 The 'Venus of Brizet', also known as the 'Venus of the Turnip Field' from the site of its discovery. Marble, life-size. The statue was dug up in a field in 1937 and pronounced to be a masterpiece of the Antique. In 1938, Francesco Cremonese, an Italian sculptor living in France, declared that it was his own work and was able to prove his assertion.



11 The 'Shield of Scipio', fourth century AD, silver dish. Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris. The figures on this antique dish were used for the main motif on the Tiara of Saitaphernes by a modern imitator.

12 The Tiara of Saitaphernes by Israel Ruchomovsky (1896). Gold, Louvre, Paris. The crown was bought by the museum for 200,000 francs as a work of the third century B.C; it was exposed as a forgery in 1903.





13 'Rabbi.' A copy by Gerbrand van den Eeckhout (1621-74) after a painting by Rembrandt (1606-69). Oil, 70 by 60 cm, Suermondt Museum, Aachen. Eeckhout, the pupil and friend of Rembrandt, was so faithful a copyist of his master that his copies were long held to be original Rembrandts.

Flora. The caption was equally challenging. It read: 'Leonardo da Vinci, Coloured Wax Bust.' But the text, by Frieda Schottmüller, was phrased differently, with more reserve. The bust was said to be 'very closely related' to the work of the Florentine master and 'might well be from his own hand'. The author proceeded: 'The affinity with antique art to be traced in the productions of most Cinquecento sculptors in Upper Italy, including Florence, both in large-scale carvings and small bronzes, is also to be seen, at a glance, in this case. Moreover, the characteristic Leonardo smile, especially when the profile is observed from the left, and the charm of the quiet, steady gaze of the beautiful model, thoroughly typical of the first mature style of the High Renaissance, between 1510 and 1520, should not be overlooked.' There were no references in the official catalogue to the disputed authenticity of the work.

But a later edition stated: 'This bust, very closely related in style to the work of Leonardo and possibly from his own hand, suffered much damage as time went on, especially as it was later used by boys as a target for toy pistols. Consequently, about 1845 it was partially cleaned and restored as necessary by a wax-moulder named Lucas, in England.' The assertion here made of wanton damage plausibly accounted for the 'working over' and 'restoration'. It was the first time that any relationship between the bust of Flora and R. C. Lucas had been admitted by the Berlin museums.

The controversy did not come to an end as a result of the attitude of the Berlin authorities in maintaining the attribution of the bust to the Italian Renaissance period. By recognising 'collaboration' by Lucas they had in effect owned that the bust was partly forged. Emil Waldmann, in his book on *Collectors and Their Friends*, treats the work as a proved forgery. He points out that the supporters of its authenticity had omitted to furnish clear, scientific proof of its genuine character. For Waldmann the very resemblance of the bust to a number of works by Leonardo confirms its spuriousness. He comments: 'The general effect of the work is too much like Leonardo's to be his. This is not a paradox. Such considerations and conclusions are part of the common and permanent experience of scholars in the artistic field.' His readers are reminded that a picture is known to have served as a model for the bust and that some of the details

of the painting were wrongly transferred in the wax copy. Waldmann further calls attention to the exaggeration of mannerism characteristic of forgeries and evident in the questionably overstressed 'Leonardo smile' of the Flora bust. In conclusion, he notes how dangerous the suggestion of a fascinating personality as responsible for the work proved in this case.

Nevertheless, connoisseurs from Bode's circle, from the Berlin museums and the ranks of Leonardo specialists abroad continued even then to maintain that the bust was genuine. The most distinguished representatives of this opinion were the Austrian Suida, the Italian Malaguzzi-Valeri and Edmund Hildebrandt, Professor at the University of Berlin. As no one could prove that the work existed before R. C. Lucas's time, their case was based mainly on stylistic considerations. In 1927 Hildebrandt regarded this evidence as 'so extraordinarily important as to outweigh all other factors'. Opponents were censured for seeing 'only superficial analogies of outward, formal design, not the inner essence'. Hildebrandt was so bewitched by the bust that he wrote: 'The heads of the Leda and the St John look far more sentimental to modern eyes than that of the Flora.' He was equally enraptured by the compositional features, 'the conspicuous rhythms, suggesting satiated sensuality, of the lines of neck and nape that form an indissoluble unity with head and arms'. In comparison, the picture supposed to have served as a model seemed to him a 'poor, second-hand work'. He adds: 'It is really asking too much of the credulity of readers to insinuate that the enthralling harmonies of this highly articulated work could have depended in any degree upon its alleged prototype, a painting which shows every sign of utterly incompetent weakness and the most vulgar sentimentality. The impressions of a strong personality, of perfect self-possession, conveyed by the bust are signs manual of the genius of Leonardo himself.' Hildebrandt might just as well have declared outright that the picture had been copied from the bust.

People certainly differ in their ideas of beauty. For other connoisseurs thought the bust no more than a feeble imitation. Pauli, for example, stoutly maintained that the bust resembled its proved model as closely as 'any sculpture in the round can resemble any two-dimensional work'. He had also found in the bust of Clytie, preserved in England since 1771, a treatment of

the hair similar to that in the bust of Flora. Further statements of the same kind were published, confirming the theory of a late date of origin for the Flora bust and thus completely contradicting Hildebrandt's opinion.

In 1924 the Berlin museum made an attempt to settle the controversy once for all. It was alleged that a certain man named Lucas had visited the Kaiser Friedrich Museum and disposed of all previous evidence by announcing that the bust was not the work of R. C. Lucas. According to one rumour the visitor was the latter's son, A. D. Lucas, while others mentioned a namesake, E. V. Lucas, an amateur of art, as the person in question. But these new disclosures were of as vague a character as the identity of the mysterious Englishman. At any rate no fresh data were adduced bearing upon the origin of the work.

A reference to the dispute was made in an article by Friedrich Winkler which appeared in 1935, with the title 'In Memory of Wilhelm von Bode'. The author admits that Bode bought the bust 'rather hurriedly and at a relatively high price'. But he affirms that Bode 'emerged victorious' from the debate. 'The bust is old and genuine,' he continues. 'It was simply Bode's misfortune that he did not notice Lucas's touching up of the work.' But Winkler was distorting the facts, as supporters of the authenticity of the bust repeatedly did. The work cannot be described as 'old and genuine'. Lucas's handling of it, admitted by the Berlin authorities themselves, obviously amounted to some alteration and adulteration of the original condition.

Moreover, the question whether the bust must be regarded as an out-and-out forgery not only remains open but has an excellent claim to be answered in the affirmative. Credible statements by different witnesses obstinately confront the isolated attempts of individuals to weaken them. After the lapse of half a century it is possible to study all the problems involved more objectively than was possible in the circumstances of emotional excitement and blind partisanship prevalent in 1909. Modern opinion tends to the belief that the picture of Flora formerly owned by Buchanan and now in the Basildon Park Collection was used as a model for the bust. If the supporters of its authenticity remain convinced that Lucas only touched up and restored the work, they should at least have bestirred themselves, during the last fifty years, to find some trace of its earlier existence.

The assumption that the bust was forged also rests upon the fact that R. C. Lucas was in the habit of imitating old masters and fond of making sculptural versions of pictures. But he cannot be stigmatised as a deliberate forger, for his bust of Flora was not offered for sale as a genuine work by Leonardo. It was not until the experts proclaimed it as his that it became a forgery.

The development of events in connection with this bust followed much the same lines as the stories of the 'Benivieni bust' and the tiara of Saitapharnes. In all three cases a dealer raised the question of authenticity, the actual artist responsible was named and the experts loftily denied the facts. But a special feature of the Berlin affair was the obstinacy of the few who believed the work genuine. For this reason the matter was not officially regarded as closed, the work was not withdrawn from exhibition and never designated as either a new creation or a forgery. Consequently, the bust of Flora did not figure in any of the big exhibitions of forged works recently held. Yet it might justifiably have been accorded a place of its own beside Bastianini's portraits and Madonna reliefs (see illustrations) and Rucho-movsky's gold crown (see illustration).

The case of the 'Flora' revealed new opportunities to the forgers. There are relatively few sculptures by painters. So little chance of comparison would arise and a wide field for future fraudulent activities could be anticipated. It was regarded as a very favourable circumstance that a number of modern painters, for example Degas, Gauguin, Renoir and Matisse, were known to have produced sculpture. In this connection the large number of three-dimensional works - 'previous owners unknown' - alleged to be by the painter and draughtsman Honoré Daumier, affords ground for suspicion.

Alceo Dossena

SCARCELY ANY FORGER of works of art has achieved such fame as an artist in his own right as the Italian Alceo Dossena (see illustration). He is still often referred to as the 'king of forgers' in this field.

This mysterious sculptor attained such general recognition because he did not copy individual works but merely imitated bygone styles. He by no means restricted himself to a single period nor is he known only in European countries. The revelation of his activities attracted attention in American art circles as well as elsewhere. Innumerable publications have since dealt with him as man, artist and forger. For the very reason that, in consequence, his case has become so overlaid with romantic and sensational features and even made to resemble a 'crime story', some account of the true sequence of events in the scandal he caused may not be out of place here.

On Christmas Eve 1916 the Cremonese stonemason Alceo Dossena left his military quarters at Poggio Mirteto for Rome. Under his short, grey-green soldier's cape he carried a marble relief of the Madonna and Child. He had carved it in his free time and now wished to sell it. In the Via Mario de' Fiori, close to the Piazza di Spagna, the Roman artists' quarter, he met Alfredo Fasoli, a goldsmith and art dealer. The latter's experienced eye detected profitable possibilities in the relief. He readily paid Dossena 100 lire for it. Subsequent sale of the work by Fasoli as an 'old original' realised many times that sum.

Dossena was at first rather worried when the dealer called the relief an 'old piece'. He did not suspect that the shrewd fellow soon saw what it really was and meant to exploit his recognition. Fasoli took care to meet Dossena again and make him attractive

offers, saying he would be glad to have further works from the sculptor and indicating the possibility of future collaboration on a large scale.

In order to appreciate Dossena's delight at this piece of luck, it is necessary to take a glance at his earlier struggles. He was born on the 8th October 1878 at Cremona, where he grew up among artists. His family did not specialise in any particular field, but worked at any task that promised reasonable remuneration. They were by turns sculptors, architects and painters. Alceo showed at a very early age that he was quick to learn any handicraft and had astonishingly good taste. He made violins which are said to have been as good as the highly prized old instruments. He acquired an equal mastery in the treatment of marble, clay, bronze and wood. But he took little interest in the new styles. He was devoted above all to the ancient art of sculpture as exemplified in the cathedral and churches of his native city. He soon began to study, restore and copy these works. Their various styles inspired his own first productions, tombstones, decorative figures for buildings and fountains and statuettes for the mantelpiece or shelf.

He earned little by these activities, though friends and connoisseurs were repeatedly surprised by the young sculptor's assurance both as craftsman and stylist. He had to work hard to provide himself and his family with a tolerable living. As there were few chances for an artist to develop in Cremona, he migrated in turn to Milan, Parma and Bologna. The first world war interrupted a promising career. Military service did, however, allow a certain amount of time for modelling.

Fasoli recognised the gifts of the simple soldier-artist and saw in them an opportunity to distribute false 'antiques'. The dealer consulted Romano Palesi, the 'wood-worm king', whose reputation as a salesman of ancient art extended far beyond Rome and was even appreciated in America. The two men worked out a bold plan. Dossena received the tempting invitation to settle in Rome after the war and enter the service of the two dealers and their contact men.

In 1919 he moved into a studio in the Via del Vantaggio, in the Lungotevere district, near the Piazza del Popolo and the Piazza di Spagna. He felt happy. There was much work to be done. But he found continual stimulation in the streets and

squares, palaces, churches and museums. He was well treated by his 'bosses'. Sometimes they stood him special meals and champagne. But they did not always pay him punctually and often complained that 'business was bad'. Dossena was simple enough to wonder whether they 'could meet their expenses even with my help'.

He was given orders to execute certain carvings in the manner of this or that master. As a craftsman he saw nothing out of the way in such instructions. He searched museums and books for examples of the works of the artists in question. Then he would produce a new work in the style, spirit and technique of the master concerned. After some years he became an expert in the characteristics of Giovanni and Nino Pisano, Simone Martini, Vecchietta, Donatello and Mino da Fiesole. He had not only learnt to copy the typical peculiarities of these artists but also the outward signs of age in the originals. For Italians have achieved during the last few centuries a remarkable skill in the artificial rendering of the ravages of time.

Dossena's monthly income at this period averaged about £80. It can only be regarded as pocket-money when one realises that a fraudulent sale of some of Dossena's 'old masterpieces' could run into millions for his exploiters. For example, he would be paid 200 lire for a figure the subsequent sale of which brought in 3000 lire. The few thousands of lire he earned contrasted with the millions paid for his works at a later date. Altogether the dealers are supposed to have made about 40 millions out of his productions. But the precise figures never came to light. According to Augusto Jandolo, the friend and biographer of Dossena, his best imitation was a statue of Athena (Minerva). The goddess was represented lifesize, ready for battle, with helmet and breastplate, a circular shield on the left arm. Jandolo extols the figure as a 'work of art perfect in every respect, equal to the Apollo of Veii, the Charioteer of Delphi and the Aegina sculptures. It is enough to dumbfound any connoisseur. The false patina is the finest ever seen, yellowish in colour, with here and there traces of a chalky deposit so hard as to be impervious to the sharpest steel.' Jandolo describes in his *Confessions* how Dossena contrived to cover the whole statue, which weighed about 6 cwt, with an even, bright patina.

He had a kind of bath sunk in the floor of his studio and filled

it with acid, the composition of which remained his personal secret. The statue was dipped in this bath, with the aid of a pulley, about forty times. It was only by so prolonged and troublesome a process that the stone could be thoroughly impregnated by the acid, the dazzling white marble given a warm, golden tone and the effect of an excavated image obtained.

When this so-called 'antique' came on the market soon afterwards specialists were enraptured. Jakob Hirsch, the prominent New York dealer, paid thirty million lire for it. He was so delighted with his purchase that he took the figure in his arms and kissed its stony mouth.

A second masterpiece by Dossena was the 'Savelli tomb'. It was offered in 1921 by Romano Palesi to Miss Ellen Frick, the well-known New York collector. The story went that it had been discovered in a half-ruined church and that very highly placed ecclesiastical authorities had stipulated that its sale and export should be arranged in the greatest possible secrecy. The price asked was six million lire. The figure appeared reasonable, as the tomb was ascribed to Mino da Fiesole. Miss Frick agreed the sum. But meanwhile she privately instructed certain of her agents to investigate the dealer's statements. They could find neither the ruined church, the persons named as intermediaries nor any other proofs that the marble sepulchre was genuine. But they did come across Alceo Dossena, who immediately acknowledged that he was responsible for the work. He had been paid 25,000 lire for it, so that Palesi, by selling it in America as an original by Mino da Fiesole, would have made a profit of 5,975,000 lire.

A scandal could no longer be avoided. The art world now knew who Palesi and Dossena were. The sculptor had found out what was going on behind his back. He had thought the dealers were his sincere friends. But it was proved that they had robbed him of millions. Soon afterwards a further development brought the whole sordid affair into the open.

In May 1927 Dossena's wife Teresina died, after a long illness which had cost a great deal of money. The sculptor found himself penniless. He couldn't even pay for the funeral. In despair, he applied to the employers for whom he had worked so long, for a loan. But they declined to help him in any way, alleging that he had not delivered work for which he had been



14

'Flora', painting in the style of Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). The model for the bust of Flora by Lucas. The correspondence between the painting and the modern bust is striking enough to establish a probable connection.



15

'Flora', probably by Richard Cockle Lucas (1846). Painted wax bust, Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin. Wilhelm Bode acquired the bust for 160,000 marks in 1909 for the Berlin collection as a genuine Leonardo.



16

Alceo Dossena, the Cremona mason, in his studio. On his own admission he was the sculptor of numerous pieces which passed unchallenged for many years as genuine works of the Antique, Medieval and Renaissance periods.

17

'Madonna.' Wood carving by Alceo Dossena (1925). Dossena took the starting point for this work from an Annunciation by Simone Martini (1285-1344). Martini's style has been so convincingly imitated in this Madonna that it was adduced as proof that Martini was a sculptor as well as a painter.



18

'Virgin and Child.' Marble relief by Alceo Dossena (1929), Victoria and Albert Museum, London. This relief appeared after Dossena's forgeries were known and shows the sculptor's signature and the date prominently on the lower part of the surround.

paid in advance. Dossena could not understand why he, who had produced so many imitations of antique, medieval and Renaissance art, should meet with such a refusal. Surely he could claim some share in the profits of millions that had been made? Disappointed and embittered by the dealers' behaviour, he consulted a well-known Roman lawyer. Photographs and sketches which he had carefully preserved proved to his amazed legal adviser that Dossena was responsible for many works on exhibition in public and private collections as ancient originals and accordingly constituting forgeries.

This disclosure ran through Rome 'like wildfire' and caused indescribable consternation. By 1928 the whole world knew that innumerable 'old masterpieces' and 'artistic finds' which had cropped up in the last eight years were not old and genuine at all, but new forgeries. Certain experts declared that they had long been of opinion that some of the works were spurious. But most amateurs and connoisseurs would not and could not believe Dossena's statements. A Munich specialist went so far as to maintain in public that an archaic group said by Dossena to be his was 'perfectly genuine' and that the sculptor was simply 'boasting'.

When Jakob Hirsch of New York first heard of Dossena's confessions and consequently that the Athena statue was a fake, he thought the sculptor must be making a bad joke or simply being malicious. But he embarked at once for Italy, wired his agent in Venice and hastened, with the latter, to Rome. Jandolo describes Hirsch's meeting with Dossena. The New Yorker angrily called the sculptor a 'braggart' and a 'wicked slanderer'. But the latter insisted that he had been responsible for the Athena statue. When the American still declined to believe him he produced the figure's hand, which he had broken off. Even Hirsch then had to admit that the work had been forged.

Dossena offered a further proof of the truth of his statements by allowing himself to be filmed at work. Dr Hans Cürliis, Head of the Berlin Institute for Cultural Research, has described the scene. 'We watched Dossena modelling for some time before we started shooting. He was working on a group in clay . . . his technique was the last word in academic precision. The figures were first thoroughly shaped in the nude from the living model . . . then he draped the model and reproduced the robing in clay

on his figures . . . at this point we saw the most amazing performance we had ever observed by a sculptor. Without the aid of any preliminary sketches in either three or two dimensions the figures were given, in a few minutes, without haste, both high and low relief. Dossena worked so fast and his results were always so unexpected, that our camera could hardly keep up with him . . . we also naturally very much wished to see him tackle an antique statue. He asked what he should make and I requested him to construct the archaic figure of a goddess. He enquired whether a seated or standing posture was wanted. When we decided for the latter, he at once began to build up the armature with a few small boards. Half an hour later he had modelled in clay the figure of a goddess some 60 cm high, in the Attic style, with all the captivating beauty of an only slightly relaxed formality so much admired in the best genuine specimens of the period . . . in this case, too, the figure was roughed out in the nude first and then draped. He modelled the head with equal ease, till, quite suddenly, the face bore the smile of a goddess to whom the Greeks would have prayed 2500 years ago. We also photographed Dossena at work with hammer and chisel on the prostrate form of an early Greek warrior. The sculptor showed a perfect mastery of his technique and no concern whatever about the outcome of his labours.

'We watched him at work day after day. He never made the slightest attempt to impress or mystify us. Now and then he would hum snatches from an opera or give us a friendly smile. The rarity of his achievement seemed to come with such ease that we only realised later that we might have been watching the reincarnation of a Renaissance or Attic master. The idea was bound to shock and at the same time fascinate an art historian like myself. It seemed to make nonsense of that fundamental principle in the study of all art according to which a distinct style can only arise once, as a result of specific conditions operative at a certain period. It was as though causality no longer existed and the force of gravity had ceased to act, so that theories hitherto securely founded upon experience had been torn from their anchorage.'

This statement and others of the time show what an extraordinarily disturbing effect the Dossena affair had upon people interested in art at this date. As in the case of other scandals of

the kind the revelations aroused rapturous enthusiasm for the 'genius' of the man who had deceived an entire world. The innumerable spectators of Dr Cürli's film entitled *The Creative Hand* had been privileged to see Dossena at work in his studio and admire the way in which he produced his 'antiques'. They were made known to the public in a number of special exhibitions. A room was set aside in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, in 1929, for the display of Dossena's forged masterpieces depicting maidens of ancient Rome. In the same year the Coroni Gallery at Naples showed a large collection of his sculptures. In 1930 it was transferred to the Berlin Hall of Art in the Bellevue Strasse. This exhibition enabled a comprehensive survey to be made, for the first time, of Dossena's borrowings and imitations, and at the same time of his undoubtedly creative 'modern' touch.

But the total impression made by these shows proved disappointing. The sculptor clearly relied more on old models than had hitherto been recognised. Many of his original works, too, were weak. It is known to-day that even before the sculptor's confession several of his productions had been returned to the fraudulent dealers as 'spurious' or 'doubtful'. An 'ancient statue of Athena' was declined and sent back by the Cleveland Museum. The 'doubtful' head of a Roman maiden was proved a forgery in New York by investigation of the materials used. The Berlin Museum found that a Madonna alleged to be by Pisano had been copied from the Scrovegni Madonna at Padua and accordingly rejected it. A so-called Renaissance relief submitted to the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna by a Venetian painter was recognised as a modern imitation and therefore a forgery.

Few of Dossena's counterfeits were detected as such on their first appearance, since he had treated the aspect and materials of his originals with some freedom. Some of his sculptures were copied from Italian paintings. He made a wooden version (see illustration) of an *Annunciation* by Simone Martini. This work seemed so 'genuine' when it came on the market that even experts believed it was by Martini. The 'new discovery' was regarded as a proof that the distinguished Quattrocento painter had also been active as a sculptor. When Dossena copied three-dimensional works he used different materials. He imitated Pisano's marble Madonna in wood and gave it a new look by

laying on various shades of colour. Technical skill was used to obliterate stylistically weak or obviously derivative passages. Dossena had something of the craftsmanship of the old masters, so seldom possessed by modern artists. It was above all owing to his mastery of technique, also exemplified in the artificial appearance of age he imposed on his productions, that they were so often taken to be by Donatello, Simone Martini, Mino da Fiesole and Giovanni Pisano.

As soon as Dossena became recognised as the creator of so many 'ancient' works, he was hailed, as is usual in such cases, as a great *maestro*. His countrymen in particular took great pride in the man who had revived the glories of Italian art. He was entrusted with important commissions, such as the erection of a war memorial in his native city of Cremona and the provision of statues for Roman churches and palaces. Outside Italy more attention was paid to his imitations and reproductions. For example, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London acquired in 1930 three terracotta reliefs of the Madonna and Child executed by Dossena in the Florentine style of the fifteenth century (see illustration). The emphasis given to his signature and the date in this piece is significant, for it distinguishes the work from those previously ascribed to the Early Renaissance period. But while the latter commanded enormous prices, a 'Dossena' only cost £12. The artist himself considered this difference in market value unfair. He regarded his productions, with the excessive complacency characteristic of many forgers of works of art, as fully equal to those of the great masters of the past. 'Yes,' he said, 'I was the man, I am he who made all those sculptures which caused so much astonishment and admiration, sarcophagi, Madonnas, cherubs, reliefs and all the rest of them. But I'm not a forger. I'm not a swindler. I never copied works. I simply reconstructed them. Even as a boy in the industrial art school at Cremona I grew to be perfectly familiar with the various styles of the past, not as represented by any particular treatment of line or mass, but as manifest in the spirit to which they gave material expression. I could not assimilate them in any other way. And that was how I produced all my sculptures, which really deserve to be prized as highly as those of Donatello, Verrocchio, Vecchietta or da Fiesole.'

In 1930 Hans Cürliis wrote: 'Dossena's commanding ability is

indisputable and so is his capacity for sympathetic absorption of other men's styles. He cannot be proved to have deliberately forged anything. Everything we know about his methods of work and his career is impartial testimony against the assumption that he is a forger. I will say nothing about my personal impression of the man, which fully endorses the facts stated above.' Dossena was not a forger in the legal sense. He neither copied the works of the old masters nor did he concoct new works from different passages in theirs. He produced more or less free versions of their manners in another medium. He did not make great profits by selling his sculptures as those of old masters. On the contrary he disposed of them as his own at current prices. It is not however quite clear whether, in the last period of his collaboration with his fraudulent employers, he knew of their activities and thus rendered himself in a sense their accomplice in forgery. The Roman Courts could find no grounds for proceeding against him. But he does not quite escape the suspicion that he may have helped to promote forging.

A study of the sensational scandals that have occurred in this field inevitably leads to comparison of Dossena with other artists of his type and especially with Giovanni Bastianini. Jandolo calls both sculptors 'highly gifted'. No less an authority than Max Friedländer described them as the 'aristocrats of forgery'. In coming to this conclusion he was probably most influenced by the facts that neither man consciously deceived anyone, or wanted to make a fortune, and that neither could therefore be branded as a forger in the usual sense of the word. In addition, the spirit in which both sculptors worked was about the same. Their portrait busts and reliefs of the Madonna are so much alike that the ordinary observer can hardly distinguish them. The connoisseur, however, detects in Dossena's work a streak of realism which neutralises the strict stylisation of the old masters and accordingly reveals the difference between the new work and the old.

He met the fate which overtook many other notorious art forgers after their activities had been revealed. Universal admiration and respect turned in the end to repudiation. The very people who had praised his works as prodigious masterpieces discovered faults and shortcomings in them. The productions which had formerly been described as 'chiselled under Divine

guidance' were criticised as being 'within the capacity of any ordinary craftsman'. Dossena shrugged his shoulders. He was disappointed. But he went on working as long as he could. After a while nothing more was heard of him. It was not known until long after his death how he spent the last few years of his life. He had already entered art history when in 1937 he died in a paupers' hospital in Rome. The funeral expenses were borne by the parish. Apparently no one now knows where he was buried. But an attempt to revive his reputation was made in an exhibition of his works at Rome in February 1956 and in a volume which appeared shortly before that date. The book contained an appreciation of that 'extraordinary artist', Alceo Dossena, by his son Walter Lusetti. The writer declared that Dossena's productions in the spirit of the past were not copies but 'new creations inspired by old styles'. Both book and exhibition showed examples of Dossena's freely conceived sculptures, a Jesus of the Sacred Heart from the Church of the Gesu, a St Anthony of Padua from the Chiesa Nuova, marble Stations of the Cross from San Patrizio and a Christ from the Papal University of St Gregory. But these works are reminiscent of various prototypes. The lack of a personal idiom and the stress laid on external features are more evident now than they were thirty years ago. An effect of fussiness and incoherence is to be noted in every case. The figures are aesthetically uninteresting. No one would take much notice of them to-day if it were not for the artist's name, that of a man who once commanded the attention of those concerned with art throughout the world.

Wacker's 'van Goghs'

WORKS OF ART in great demand, highly regarded and fetching big prices, are those which are most often imitated and forged. So long as amateurs and collectors were only interested in productions of the past, forgers and swindlers concentrated upon the art of former days. But at the present time, when new departures in this field are being recognised, modern works, too, are forged.

The first of such counterfeits of contemporary styles are associated with the name of Camille Corot. Some modern pictures are so cleverly imitated that the artists themselves cannot always distinguish their own efforts from those of others and at times it proves impossible to decide between the genuine and the spurious.

Vincent van Gogh (1853-90) has come to be considered a typical artist of recent times. His paintings are therefore frequently forged. Born in the Netherlands and later living in France, he attracted hardly any attention while he was alive. His works were rejected with indignation even as gifts. 'What am I supposed to do with such daubs?' the disconcerted artist was asked by the enraged director of a gallery at Arles. In 1886 van Gogh's 'Red Crabs' was valued at five francs. But after his death prices slowly rose. In 1890 one of his works was sold for a hundred francs. In 1900 a thousand francs were paid for the same picture. By 1925 his productions were costing anything from 50,000 to 70,000 francs. A sum of 240,000 marks was paid in 1929 by the Berlin National Gallery for his 'Daubigny's Garden'. In 1948 a van Gogh fetched 100,000 dollars in the United States. Soon afterwards figures of a quarter and half a million marks were being quoted. To-day prices of a million marks and upwards are quite common.

The rising market put the forgers and impostors on the alert.

The artist's manner could be imitated with comparative ease. Van Dantzig, the Amsterdam connoisseur and expert on forgery, has stated: 'Anyone familiar with van Gogh's career will realise how readily counterfeits of his work can be produced.' The circumstances in which most of his pictures were painted remain obscure. He worked in many different places. As he could never sell his productions, he gave them to friends or left them lying about in attics and cellars. Years later they were destroyed as rubbish by the ignorant or else rescued by connoisseurs as important masterpieces. It was not particularly difficult for a fraudulent dealer to put forgeries on the market if he asserted that they had been found in one of the many Dutch, Belgian or French regions where the artist had lived. Reliable information would never be forthcoming, as the unsophisticated inhabitants of the locality could not be brought to see the importance of the affair.

Nor need a forger hesitate to appropriate and copy any of the painter's familiar subjects. For the master himself was fond of repeating his themes, some of which he recast as many as eight times. Consequently, suspicion would never be aroused if, when a new van Gogh cropped up, it was found to deal with an idea the artist had already treated. Moreover, as van Gogh did not trouble himself much about materials and methods of execution, the forger could also afford to neglect them.

It is intelligible, therefore, that the works of van Gogh were much favoured by counterfeiters. In fact, it is quite certain that hitherto more forgeries than original productions by the artist have been current. Steps have been taken to assemble pictures identified as forgeries and familiarise the public with them by reproductions. In 1929, for example, a supplementary volume was issued to the catalogue of van Gogh's paintings. No fewer than 128 forgeries were listed by the eminent specialist J. B. de la Faille, an authority on van Gogh, in this additional publication. But later writings by the same expert prove the great difficulty experienced even by connoisseurs in identifying van Gogh forgeries. For de la Faille subsequently changed his mind in six of the cases he had first listed, affirming that the pictures in question were after all originals. Of these one was a self-portrait from the Chester Dale Collection and another a 'Sea at Saintes-Maries' from the Dutch Kröller-Müller Collection at Otterlo. Both originally came from the collection of Otto Wacker. The

greatest scandal in connection with van Gogh forgeries and one of the most sensational in art history is associated with this collector's name.

In January 1927 the prominent German art dealer Paul Cassirer held an exhibition of paintings by van Gogh in Berlin. It comprised just under a hundred works from various collections. The pictures differed a great deal in quality. Some seemed extremely 'dubious' to the experts. On investigation all the questionable items were found to have come from a single collection, that of a certain Otto Wacker, of whom few people had ever heard (see illustration).

He was born in Düsseldorf. As a boy he had sold pictures painted by his father, who combined with this occupation those of a day-labourer and domestic servant. In 1917 Otto Wacker was arrested for trying to sell a forged painting alleged to be by Franz Stuck. After the first world war Wacker earned his living as an art dealer and dancer. During 1923-4, under the high-sounding name of 'Olindo Lowael', he appeared in public, in his native city, as an interpreter of 'Old Spanish Dances'. It was in these circumstances, according to his own account, that he met a Russian collector, with whose examples of van Gogh's work he set up as an art dealer in Berlin.

The items in Cassirer's exhibition were closely examined. Meier-Graefe, who had made a thorough study of van Gogh's painting, expressed grave doubts of the authenticity of the pictures supplied by Wacker. He imparted his opinion to de la Faille, who had certified them as genuine. In November 1928 the public was startled to learn from the latter that no fewer than thirty-three of the works from Wacker's shop had proved to be forgeries.

The dealer defended himself by quoting the judgments of acknowledged experts and demanded in his turn proof of forgery. But he returned unsatisfactory answers to questions about the provenance of the works. He referred to a certain Russian living in Switzerland, whose name he was not at liberty to give. This attitude he attempted to excuse by the statement that the former collector concerned would be exposed to 'endless embarrassments and reprisals' if it became known in the Soviet Union that his van Goghs had come from Russia. Wacker declared that for this reason he had destroyed all the documentary evidence and letters relating to the paintings in dispute.

His lawyer, a well-known Berlin practitioner named Ivan Goldschmidt, contributed an article to the *Frankfurter Zeitung* relating the history of the pictures in question. He began by stating that he would not deviate a hairsbreadth from the truth. But any defence counsel must of course be heard with reserve. He went on to say that in the years 1925-8 Wacker acquired some twenty-five works by van Gogh, of which he sold all but one to various art shops. The first few were not certified. But the next twenty were authenticated by de la Faille, the editor of the van Gogh catalogue. Other specialists in the artist's work, such as Meier-Graefe, Rosenhagen and Bremmer, had written formal reports testifying, without qualification, that the paintings were genuine.

The Berlin art dealers Thannhauser, Matthiesen and Goldschmidt considered, as soon as these doubts of the authenticity of the pictures became known, that they had been cheated into offering the disputed works for sale. They demanded an enquiry and gave Wacker until the 14th December to reveal the whereabouts of the mysterious Russian collector and until the end of the month to submit documentary evidence of the origin of the items concerned. But as Wacker made no attempt to keep his promises and continued his efforts to talk himself out of the affair by references to the 'impossibility of finding' the Russian, the Art Dealers' Union, in December 1928, applied for proceedings by the Berlin Public Prosecutor.

At the request of the Criminal Investigation Department Professor Ludwig Justi, Director of the National Gallery, drew up a formal report on the pictures. His attitude on the subject was already well known. He stated that 'ten of the works originally from Wacker's collection and now in the Palace of the Crown Prince must be declared spurious, on such incontrovertible evidence as is rarely available'. The proofs were as follows. Van Gogh, from his Paris period onward, used normal French canvases, whereas the forgeries were painted on a different kind of canvas, not French. Nor did their brushwork correspond with that of the originals. The colours of the forged paintings, again, were muddy, dull and dismal compared with the enamel-like glow of the artist's own work. Chemical tests showed that they had been mixed with siccatives, so that they dried rapidly and turned hard. It was also found that the chrome yellows had been broken down by calculated admixtures of blue, red and

green. The analysis of style indicated that the forgeries had not been copied from originals but from black and white versions. Röntgen photography revealed that layers of stucco, with the effect of a relief, had been applied to the canvases, so as to reproduce the structure of van Gogh's impasto as though on a relief map. The forger thus imitated, by laying colour over the stucco, the actual process in which the artist applied colour direct from the tube.

Wacker aroused further suspicion by going off to Leyden in the Netherlands and not complying with an order of the German police to return to Berlin by the 21st January 1929. He explained that he was ill and therefore not able to attend a hearing of his case. Meanwhile the police searched the studio of his brother Leonhard at Düsseldorf. They found and confiscated a copy, only just finished, of one of the pictures offered for sale by Otto Wacker and also a study of one of the van Gogh forgeries. Although these discoveries afforded no proof of the origin of the works in dispute, they did suggest that both brothers were concerned in fabricating van Goghs.

Otto Wacker, still in the Netherlands, continued to maintain that he was in poor health, personally did not understand any art except that of the dance and in particular could prove that several eminent experts had guaranteed the authenticity of the suspected paintings. He said that, even after the question had been raised in public and caused such a scandal, renowned connoisseurs like Meier-Graefe and the Dutch specialist Bremmer remained convinced that the pictures were genuine.

Bremmer taught applied aesthetics at the Hague. He had assisted Frau Kröller to organise the unique collection of van Goghs which is still so great an attraction of the Kröller-Müller State Museum in Otterlo, near Arnheim. In 1928 he had purchased from Wacker the 'Sea View from Saintes-Maries' which is still on exhibition at the Museum. Even after de la Faille had declared that painting to be spurious, Bremmer continued to be certain it was authentic. He announced that he was ready to prove his complete confidence in Wacker's collection by buying another work from it. But the German police prevented him from doing so. They had no intention of allowing important pieces of evidence to go abroad.

The preliminary investigations dragged on, protracted by the

prolonged absence of Otto Wacker from Germany. The most diverse views were expressed by experts, to the amusement of the lay public. Just as in the case of the Paris 'tiara sensation' numerous ditties and jokes on the subject were current. In one popular ballad the line 'Mother, the coke-man's here!' was altered by the invariably quick-witted Berliners to 'Mother, the Gogh-man's here!'

On the 6th April 1932 Otto and Leonhard Wacker appeared in the Moabit Court, Berlin, charged with the production and distribution of forgeries of van Gogh's paintings. Sentence was passed on the 19th April. Otto Wacker was condemned to a year's imprisonment for persistent swindling. It was proved that the accused had in three cases given demonstrably false names of previous owners, viz., Osthaus, Ozmella and Bernhard Wacker. A further damning fact was that the origin of the works could not be substantiated by any correspondence, transport vouchers, customs certificates or bills relating to payment. The Court found the brothers guilty of maintaining a 'shuttle service of pictures'.

In some cases comparison with originals enabled the forgeries to be identified (see illustration). Röntgen photography was particularly serviceable in this connection. X-rays showed, for example, that in the famous 'Reaper' owned by the Berlin National Gallery, 'the sun is represented by fluid brush-strokes. But in a version of the same subject marketed by Wacker the marked thickening and thinning of the pigment in the original has become a feeble ripple. Van Gogh's significant accents in the top layer of paint are copied in the Wacker replica for their own sake and so become empty mannerisms. Accidental touches in the sky to the right, above the line of hills, are scarcely visible in the Röntgen photograph of the original. But in Wacker's reproduction they are given disproportionate, conspicuous emphasis, thus acquiring an inexplicable importance. The brushing in of the sky is in fact hesitant and timid throughout. Each stroke is so shakily applied as almost to blend with the background.' These statements were made by Wehlte.

Both Wacker and the Public Prosecutor appealed against the sentence of the 19th April. The appeal was heard on the 6th December. The whole case, with all its contradictory features, was examined afresh for seven weeks. Special stress was laid this time on the investigation of painting methods and especially

on the material indications of fraud. The most weighty evidence related to abstracts of accounts, forged documents and declarations on oath. But the general aspect of the matter remained unaltered, except that Wacker's operations were found to be more extensive than had at first appeared. The revised sentence was based on this discovery. The accused was sent to prison for one year and seven months and fined 30,000 marks or in default thereof ordered to serve a further 300 days of imprisonment. He was put under arrest immediately after sentence, in order to prevent any attempt at escape. It was rumoured that the case would be brought before the Supreme Court. But no such official announcement was made in the Press.

Little, in fact, was published in Germany about the hearing of the appeal. In the Netherlands, however, the proceedings of each day were reported in detail. It is surprising to find that Bremmer still believed Wacker's van Goghs to be genuine and that other experts agreed with him. One of the Dutch commentators wrote that only a Dutchman could be a fair judge of van Gogh and his works. The results of the German investigations were not accepted in Holland.

Several connoisseurs continued to maintain the authenticity of the pictures marketed by Wacker. As time went on more and more experts adopted this attitude. De la Faille himself, who had first raised the question, now began to have his doubts. He wrote that 'the matter has not yet been settled'. In 1939 he published a new book on the artist in which he explained: 'I have now changed the views expressed in my book *The False Van Goghs* and am certain that the six works named below are genuine. They were all originally in the Wacker Collection. My opinion is shared by the Dutch specialists H. B. Bremmer, W. Scherjon, Jos de Gruyter and others. German scholars, on the contrary, consider all the works from this collection to be forgeries.'

A number of disputed points relating to van Gogh's productions still remain obscure. These include not only the question of the works which cropped up in Wacker's collection but also many items which have come to light in various countries. Some of these are mentioned in de la Faille's supplementary volume. The pictures differ a good deal in quality. A few are quite remarkable and interesting. They can plausibly be referred to van Gogh's period and places of activity. An artist named Murer

is cited by de la Faille as probably responsible for the Parisian scenes. Théodore Duret believes that they came from the Café Segatori where van Gogh left some of his works. But in any case few people suppose to-day that the productions in question are by the master.

De la Faille has nothing much to say about possible further groups of forgeries. He attributes four drawings to a Belgian named Ost, active in Holland during the German occupation of his country. He thinks that ten others, from Arles and St Rémy, may be by Giran Max, a painter mentioned by Coquiott in *Les Indépendants*. Max is known to have been acquainted with Pissarro, Gachet and Murer.

One hundred and seventy-four forgeries are listed by de la Faille. After completing the two main sections of his Catalogue he cautiously leaves unspecified a number of further works. A final note indicates that he does not regard his labours as finished. Further forgeries must, unfortunately, be expected.

They are in fact frequently referred to in subsequent years. Van Gogh is the favourite artist imitated in the big Parisian centres of faked production. Some of these copies are amazingly faithful. But new methods of detecting such shams often expose them. In August 1948 several hundred drawings and eighty oils were brought to the Director of the Municipal Gallery at Amsterdam for verification. They were all supposed to be by van Gogh. But without exception they proved to be forgeries. The fraudulent manufacturers of these works could not be discovered. But as the public had to be put on its guard against them 'certain persons unknown' were cited in a petition filed with the Public Prosecutor.

Van Gogh's 'Self-portrait by Candlelight' was much discussed. It had been discovered in 1949 by Charles Lewenthal in a Paris café, and was eventually sold to William Goetz, the Hollywood film magnate, for 50,000 dollars. A number of van Gogh specialists were enraptured by this 'masterpiece', which, with de la Faille, they admired as 'one of the most lively of Vincent's works'. But others denounced it as a subtle forgery. Van Gogh's nephew, who had spent years trying to separate the false from the true in his uncle's work, described the self-portrait as an imitation.

'One word more,' roared Goetz to the painter's nephew, 'and I'll have you arrested for improper language!' But the experts of

the Metropolitan Museum, whom he consulted 'could not commit themselves to recognition of the picture as an original'. On the other hand five connoisseurs in Paris told Goetz later on that they considered the painting 'absolutely genuine'.

The purchaser's delight, however, soon turned once more to gloom. The American Customs demanded an import duty of no less than 5000 dollars on the work. Goetz quoted a regulation according to which original productions could be imported free. The Customs confronted him with the Metropolitan Museum's written opinion, signed by four experts, in which no mention was made of any proof that the painting was an original. Goetz naturally retorted with the contrary evidence of the Paris certificate.

Vast sums were spent on further investigation. The United States Treasury was said to have set aside 30,000 dollars for the purpose. A total amount of something like 125,000 dollars seems to have been paid out in fees for expert opinion. Yet no unqualified decision could be reached. Those who considered the work genuine cited, among other confirmations of their views, a passage in one of the artist's letters, which had meanwhile come to light, referring to a portrait study he had made at night. At last the Customs let the picture through as a 'proved original'. But many doubts about it remained unanswered and a number of specialists persisted in regarding the portrait as an imitation and therefore a forgery.

The case was by no means the only one of its kind. There are still quite a lot of paintings ascribed to van Gogh the provenance of which has never been determined. Their authenticity continues 'questionable'. One is constantly hearing of such works and contradictory expert opinion concerning them. New pictures attributed to the artist are bound to go on appearing. Whether they are genuine or not is a matter which will have to be left to individual judgment. It is clear that specialists themselves feel much uncertainty in this particular field. Van Gogh's own nephew has tried hard to track down every indication of forgery in order to protect his uncle's work for the future. But he had to abandon his efforts. The reason he advanced for capitulating to the forgers is shocking to read. 'I had indisputable proofs of their activities in my hands. But I found myself faced with impregnable defences erected by rich and powerful persons, in whose interest it was that certain secrets should not be revealed.'

Forgeries of French Paintings

PICTURE FORGERY began in France as soon as art freed itself from close dependence on the medieval cathedral and turned to new, profane subjects. As paintings became more and more appreciated and admired, they were sought after by collectors. The more famous works were copied. At that time ideas of true and false in art were not those of to-day. No doubt many copies were only later given a false attribution or fraudulently put on the market as 'originals', so that they became forgeries.

Measures were taken in France against fraud and imitation as early as the seventeenth century. Claude Lorraine (1600-82) tried to stop the counterfeiting of his works by producing a book which contained sketches of them, together with notes of where the originals were to be found. He called it, in Latin, the 'Book of Truth'. Similar catalogues were issued by other artists in later times. But it is always difficult to ensure that such records are complete. Consequently, these 'books of truth' can only be used with caution. No doubt some originals by Claude were not included, for one reason or another, in his own compilation. It is said that his best works are not authenticated by any such notes. In any case he did not entirely achieve his object, for the London National Gallery and the Palazzo Doria in Rome both maintain that they possess the original of a certain picture by him.

The painter Sebastian Bourdon (1616-71) is known to have imitated Claude's works. Bourdon was born at Montpellier and after various adventures reached Italy at the age of eighteen. There he was employed by a Roman dealer to copy contemporary paintings, especially those of Claude and Nicolas Poussin (1593-1665). After these 'years of apprenticeship' Bourdon returned to Paris in 1637. In 1652 he was active in Sweden, as Court Painter

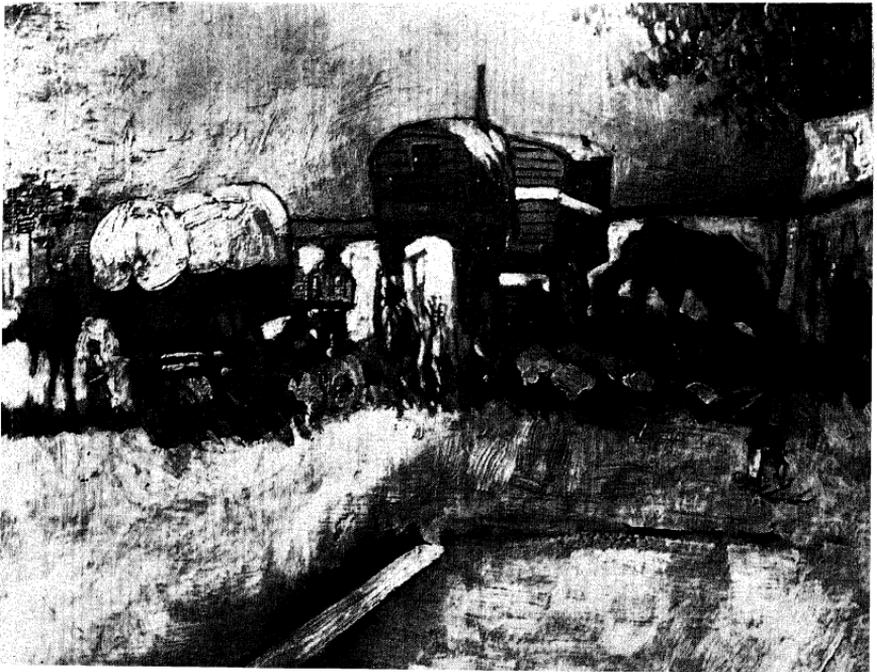


19
Self portrait with pipe by Vincent van Gogh (1889). 51 by 45 cm. This famous painting was used as a model for forgery.



20
Forged self portrait of Vincent van Gogh. The forger has elaborated the surface of the painting in an attempt to cover up his shortcomings.

21
'Gypsy Caravan.' Forged van Gogh. Copy of an original in the Louvre, Paris. The name of the Düsseldorf dealer, Otto Wacker, is associated with one of the great forgery scandals in the history of art.





22 'Old Montmartre.' Oil painting by Claude Latour, Paris, in the style of Utrillo. Paintings such as this, while not intended as forgeries, have frequently had Utrillo's signature added and then been sold for high prices. Utrillo forgeries of this kind are numbered in thousands.



23 'Tahitian Women.' Forgery of a Gauguin by Fortunato of Naples. Sold in 1951 as a genuine Gauguin for six million francs. The forger has betrayed himself by the unskilled way in which he has combined various well-known elements from different works by Gauguin.

to Queen Christina. Subsequently he is recorded as living in his native town, Montpellier, and in Paris. He prospered in the capital and died there, a copyist to the end. His versions of certain Dutch pictures and of some by the brothers Le Nain are mentioned as having been completed during his last years.

At this date, moreover, a certain swindler is stated to have passed off as originals by Claude some paintings executed in his style by Patel and to have obtained correspondingly high prices for them. It is also known that Watoin and van Loo copied and imitated works by their teacher Boucher (1703-70) and that Margu r te G rard, the sister-in-law of Jean Honor  Fragonard (1732-1806), made copies of that master's pictures. Productions by Ingres (1780-1867) were imitated in great numbers. A Paris connoisseur complained: 'In a single month I have been shown at least three times as many works as Ingres can possibly have painted.'

Many artists did not regard the imitation and forgery of their compositions as falsification or depreciation of the value of their work. They showed a certain indulgence to such frauds and even, with a magnanimity incomprehensible to the modern mind, promoted them. Boucher, for example, is said to have permitted copying of his rococo masterpieces by his pupils, to have corrected such copies and signed the most successful with his own name. In thus certifying works by his school as by himself he really committed forgery. The counterfeiting of works of art by appending a genuine signature to productions not by the signatory has been fairly common. Ingres considered a copy, executed by his pupil Amaury Duval, of the master's own portrait of Bertin, so good that he willingly signed it, thus turning it into an 'original'. But Corot (1796-1875) is the artist who is most widely known to have signed forgeries.

A substantial section of the history of picture-forging is associated with his name. Few painters have been so systematically imitated and counterfeited, for so many decades, right down to the present time. According to a famous and often quoted witticism: 'Of the seven hundred odd proved originals by Corot eight thousand are to be found in America alone.' The latest estimates of the numbers of works purporting to be by Corot which have reached the United States in the last twenty years put the figure at over 100,000.

FORGERS, DEALERS, EXPERTS

The fact is that even to-day the demand in America for Corot's pictures remains so extraordinarily heavy that it can only be met by the mass production of imitations and forgeries. But those of early date are exceptionally difficult to detect, for the master took no interest in possible subsequent problems of authenticity. He not only did not object to but actually encouraged counterfeiting of his productions. He was delighted when pupils copied his works so well that they were mistaken for his.

The following anecdote, which may well be perfectly true, is recounted. One day Corot was shown by a pupil one of the latter's recent efforts. 'What do you think of it?' asked the pupil. 'Pretty good,' replied the venerable master. 'But some passages don't quite come off, this one for instance.' He proceeded to improve and change certain parts of the painting. 'Oh, dear,' the pupil exclaimed, full of admiration. 'Now that you've finished it off so beautifully, it's not really mine any more . . . surely it won't matter if you sign it? I'd love to have a picture of yours!' Corot duly appended his signature to the other's work, which he had only corrected.

After the master's death and the dispersion of his school in 1875 the 'Corot' industry at once got into its stride. Forgeries being cheaper and therefore easier to sell, fraud flourished. But some cases of it were soon detected. In 1887 a forger of Corots named Vernon was brought to trial and the public learnt how widespread such deceptions had become. More and more forged works and their perpetrators came to light as time went on. But sometimes verdicts had to be qualified, when parts of a painting were found to be really by the master. Such pictures were called 'half' and 'quarter' counterfeits. There were also works produced quite innocently by Corot's pupils and only later regarded as forgeries owing to the activities of some fraudulent dealer or over-confident expert. Even those stamped 'Corot Sale' are by no means necessarily considered genuine by modern critics.

The lawsuit brought by the well-known imitator of Corots, Trouillebert, in 1883, was hotly debated. One of his landscapes had been sold by the Paris dealer Georges Petit to Alexandre Dumas for 12,000 francs with Corot's signature added. Trouillebert sued the dealer, demanding to be recognised as the real executant of the work. The Court decided in his favour. Trouillebert's lawyer had excitedly proclaimed: 'My client's honour as

well as his professional reputation has been attacked!' But a commentator observed at the time: 'Reputation, eh? Well, I'm sure he's a delightful artist. But I wonder if anyone would ever have heard of him if he hadn't committed forgery?' In 1953 Georges Braque made a reference to the case in describing the difference between the genuine and the spurious work of art. 'A style in common,' he said, 'indicates authenticity, mere resemblance a counterfeit. Trouillebert's style resembled Corot's. But they had nothing in common!'

The demand for Corot's paintings continues, though others besides specialists are to-day aware of the existence of forgeries. Consequently, his works are still being imitated. It is supposed that they are mass-produced in so-called 'schools'. No less than 235 'Corots' were exported to France in 1888 from a single Brussels workshop. The painters were paid 300 francs for each copy. The Paris counterfeiters added Corot's signature and the trademark of the firm that supplied his canvases. The forged work was then complete. During the first world war the industry was stimulated by the presence of German troops of occupation. Soldiers interested in art believed, in their ignorance of the background of the trade, that they would be able to pick up masterpieces of French painting in the capital, on the spot, so to speak, at prices within their means. The Berlin art dealer Paul Cassirer reports that after the war some two hundred 'Corots' were offered him by soldiers on leave. 'There might have been one genuine work among them,' he adds. 'But I didn't dare to take it.' Both artists and amateurs of art were amused by the number of Corot forgeries being distributed. A popular sketch by the painter Forain shows a young woman urging an artist to take his works to the dealers. The caption reads: 'Come on, dear, get your portfolio and we'll sell the dealers some Corots.'

Many collectors were desperately anxious to obtain works by Corot. A Dr Jousseune boasted of possessing between two and three thousand drawings by the master without ever having paid more than 110 francs each for them. After his death his collection, consisting of 2414 oils, water-colours, gouaches, drawings and autograph sheets, was shown in London, in 1928. Next year a catalogue was published. The items, designated as 'from the artist's own collection', were stated to have been produced in Corot's studio at Coubron. The master was supposed to have

left them with a certain Gratiot, with whom he had stayed, and to have later bequeathed them to that gentleman. In 1929 Eugène Bouvy exposed the trick. Some of the forged works, however, when the collection was dispersed, found their way into well-known public galleries in England and America. René Huyghe has described this particular scandal as 'one of the most amazing swindles of the day'.

At the climax of the uproar over Otto Wacker's 'van Goghs' in 1930 France was shocked by revelations in connection with the work of J. F. Millet (1814-75). Forgeries of his pictures had been planted on an unsuspecting dealer across the Channel, who put seven of them, concocted by Paul Cazot, on exhibition and afterwards rejected a perfectly genuine painting by Millet. The fraud would perhaps never have been discovered if Cazot's wife, who was living apart from him, had not purloined one of his pictures and tried to dispose of it in 'uninformed circles'. Her activities led to the detection of a 'Millet factory'. Cazot was exposed as a forger, in addition, of 'Corots' and 'Daumiers'. His miserable daubs were well paid. He received, for example, 150,000 francs for an alleged 'Millet'.

The big lawsuit that followed in France in 1935 excited everyone concerned with art. The chief person accused was the grandson of the famous Barbizon painter J. F. Millet, whose works his descendant had for many years been forging on a large scale with the assistance of Paul Cazot. It had proved relatively easy for the grandson, by forging certificates to accompany the pictures, to place the counterfeits with French, American and other private collectors, who had paid him high prices for them. The trial disclosed that one London collector had acquired sixty of the forged works for a sum of about three million francs. But the most astounding statement made at the proceedings was the grandson's declaration that all the items in the much frequented Millet Gallery at Barbizon were forgeries.

Forgeries may also be found at important temporary exhibitions, as the sensational revelations at the Zürich Kunsthaus proved in 1936. In a comprehensive survey of the work of Gustave Courbet (1819-77) held there it was established, after considerable research, that every fifth item was forged and every tenth dubious or touched up by another hand. Two of the paintings were traced to the known forger Pala.

It is clear from recent exhibitions of proved forgeries that nearly all the great French painters, as their reputations grow, have been more and more imitated. So long as the 'Customs Officer' Rousseau only made people laugh, no counterfeiter dreamed of copying his primitive style. But as soon as the first signs of his future fame became apparent, the fakers pricked up their ears. In one of the first big shows devoted to this painter Maximilian Gauthier declared about half of the items to be imitations or forgeries. Uhde, the friend and biographer of the artist, has drawn attention to a book on him in which more than twenty-five counterfeit works are reproduced as authentic. In 1924 two bogus 'Rousseaus' were sold for 50,000 francs.

A special chapter in any history of French art-forgery should be allotted to alleged works by Maurice Utrillo (1883-1950). This painter, who achieved renown so suddenly, often used to joke about his imitators. His 'Moulin de la Galette' ironically depicts a poster which reads:

ARTISTIC PICTURE FACTORY
LANDSCAPES A SPECIALITY
FINE OILS BY
MAURICE UTRILLO V
RUE CORTOT, PARIS, 18ME
BEWARE OF IMITATIONS!

Mme Claude Latour, famous by the name of Zézi de Montparnasse, is fond of painting in the style of Picasso and also, in particular, in that of Utrillo (see illustration). She renders the manners of these esteemed artists freely and does not sell her work as by themselves. On the other hand the clever twenty-two-year-old dealer Jacques Marisse acquired imitations of pictures by both painters at prices from 100 to 1000 francs and sold them as originals for as much as 70,000 francs.

When this deception was unmasked in 1948 an expert declared that 'every week a spurious Utrillo turns up at the Drouot Gallery'. At Marisse's trial Utrillo found to his embarrassment that he could not say for certain whether he or Zézi had painted some of the works produced. Consequently, he was unable to pronounce them either originals or forgeries. Mme Latour commented, in triumph: 'Utrillo has no talent. I paint better than he does. I can copy any modern painter.'

In the following year thirty-six counterfeit Utrillos were discovered. Friends of the artist affirmed that one of his former secretaries had been arrested. He had for some time been distributing cleverly faked works as genuine productions by the master. But suspicion was aroused by the certificates of authenticity which he also forged. Prices running into millions are now paid for originals by Utrillo.

Later on Jean Pinson-Berthet became known as an especially successful fabricator of alleged 'Utrillos'. He was condemned in 1952, in his absence, to five years' imprisonment. The extent of his fraud may be deduced from the length of the sentence. The pictures he produced are said to have been masterly imitations. Experts sometimes pronounced them to be originals, while maintaining genuine works by Utrillo to be forgeries by Berthet. The latter was reported in the Press to have paid two million francs damages to the artist.

One of Utrillo's friends, the Paris connoisseur Paul Petrides, has recently made a profound study of forgeries of this painter's productions. In February 1959 he found two at an exhibition. He states: 'No doubt the history of these pictures is quite accurate. Their owner has a high reputation. The colour scheme has been precisely rendered and the technique is remarkable. I happen to know the studio that turns out such works. The signature itself has a convincing look. But it's all too good to be true. Utrillo's shortcomings and faults have been forgotten . . .' Petrides, who was also a dealer, recorded all the forged Utrillos that came to his notice. About a thousand of them are listed in an appendix to his complete catalogue, issued in 1959. Through the information he provided the French police were able to confiscate eighty in all, which had been traced to various towns in France. These fabrications were ordered to be publicly burnt in Paris.

People laugh at Utrillo's inability to distinguish forgeries of his own work. But he was by no means alone in this failing. Other important artists have confessed to similar doubts. Vlaminck was once reproached for incapacity in this direction. His excuse was that he himself had formerly painted a picture in the style of Cézanne which that master had certified as his own.

During the last few decades many scandalous forgeries of works of art have been disclosed. After the second world war, in particular, French paintings were counterfeited in such num-

bers that even pictures known to be genuine were sometimes scrutinised with distrust. The mass production of 'masterpieces' threatened to undermine the prestige of art in general. It was natural enough, therefore, that a special police department was set up in Paris to deal with the growing menace of art forgery.

In 1950 the French police seized eighty bogus paintings. These were mostly old works by obscure artists to which such distinguished signatures as those of Corot, Renoir, Gauguin, Utrillo, Bonnard and Vlaminck had been appended.

In 1951 the police of Geneva found thirty faked pictures in a squalid attic occupied by an elderly man. They were mainly imitations of the French Impressionists. The man confessed that during the last two years he had sold 600 of these forgeries in Switzerland alone. He turned out to belong to a Lyons gang which smuggled such works into Switzerland and had already disposed of hundreds of them in Belgium and Britain.

In 1952 there were persistent rumours of a 'forgers' metropolis on the Seine' which supplied 'masterpieces on demand'. Traces of the operations of a 'faker of genius' were found. He had produced about a hundred copies of works by the French Impressionists, duly provided with certificates of authenticity, and sold them at enormous prices. Pictures of almost all the important modern artists have been forged in this 'workshop'. Six hundred and fourteen of these productions are reported to have been confiscated in the last three years. The figure indicates how many others must have found their way into collections.

In the same year it was revealed that the Lübeck painter Lothar Malskat had been forging French works of art. He was alleged to have imitated six hundred drawings and paintings by old and modern masters, especially French. These forgeries were more or less ingenious versions of or extracts from well-known pictures (see illustration).

In 1954 an Italian painter was arrested and charged with numerous forgeries of the works of the French Impressionists. The faked productions had been packed in false-bottomed trunks and smuggled into France, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States.

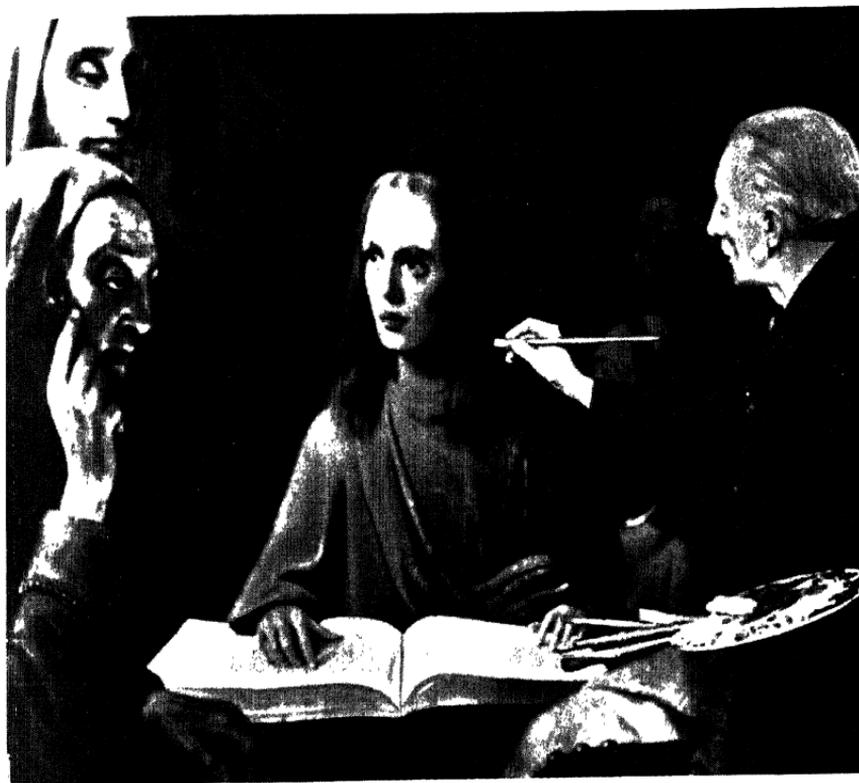
In 1955 fresh Press reports were current about the big forging centres. A Paris gang was said to have sold twenty bogus 'masterpieces' in Switzerland. 15,000 Swiss francs were paid for

a supposed Renoir and 18,000 for a 'Sisley'. In 1957 the French Customs seized twelve of such fakes destined for the United States. But despatch had been so cleverly organised that neither the forgers themselves nor their accomplices could be identified. Eighty-four million francs were paid for a bogus Renoir. In the same year a gigantic fraud concerned with old furniture and sculpture was discovered. The President of the Paris Art Dealers' Syndicate declared that he and the police between them had ascertained that over 90 per cent of all the old furniture sold in the last fifty years had been forged. In this field, too, it was suspected that a ring with far-reaching ramifications had cornered practically the whole international market.

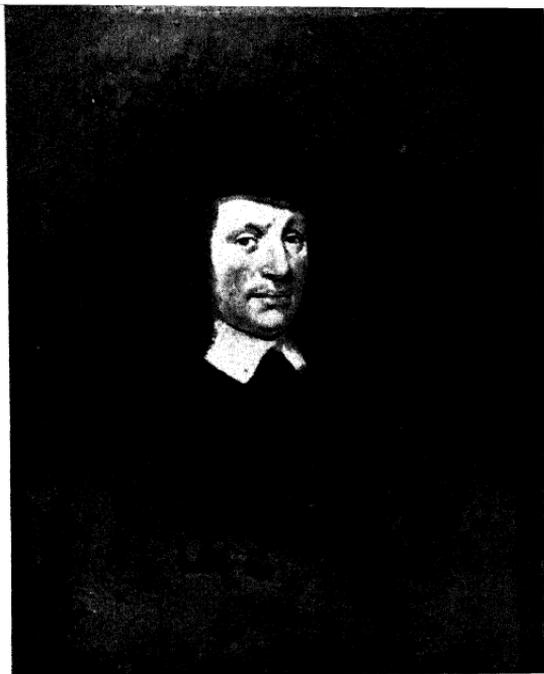
During the last few years, in consequence of the rising reputation of Marc Chagall, the Russian artist who worked in France, his paintings have often been forged. His life itself may have begun with a falsification by his parents of the date of his birth. When his seventieth birthday was being celebrated on the 7th July 1957, he observed to a friend: 'Am I really seventy? In spite of my grey hairs I feel much younger. It's quite possible that my parents registered my birth with the wrong date. I was the eldest of many children and if my parents could prove that I was four years older than my next brother the Tsarist Government would excuse me from military service. Two or three years may have been added to the correct date on my birth certificate in order to provide evidence that I was the eldest son by four years and therefore necessarily required for the support of my family.' Such may be the reason why Chagall's birth is ascribed to various years between 1887 and 1890.

Many imitations of Chagall's works have been made and distributed without any intention to defraud. As he occasionally signed his representations of Jewish subjects in Hebrew script, these pictures are easily confused with similar ones by other Jewish artists. Paintings by Lissitsky, for example, appeared on the market in 1945 as by Chagall. Other instances of works by Russian Jews wrongly supposed to be by Chagall were collected by Woldemar Klein in 1955 under the title *Schri Kunst Schri*. They constitute a warning to purchasers, especially at the present time, when many people consider Chagall a typical modern artist.

An odd story is told of the painting of a wedding by the



24 Han van Meegeren painting 'Christ among the Scribes' in prison (1945). When van Meegeren confessed that he was the author of several 'Old Masters', nobody at first believed him. The 'Vermeer' which he painted under supervision finally convinced the doubters.



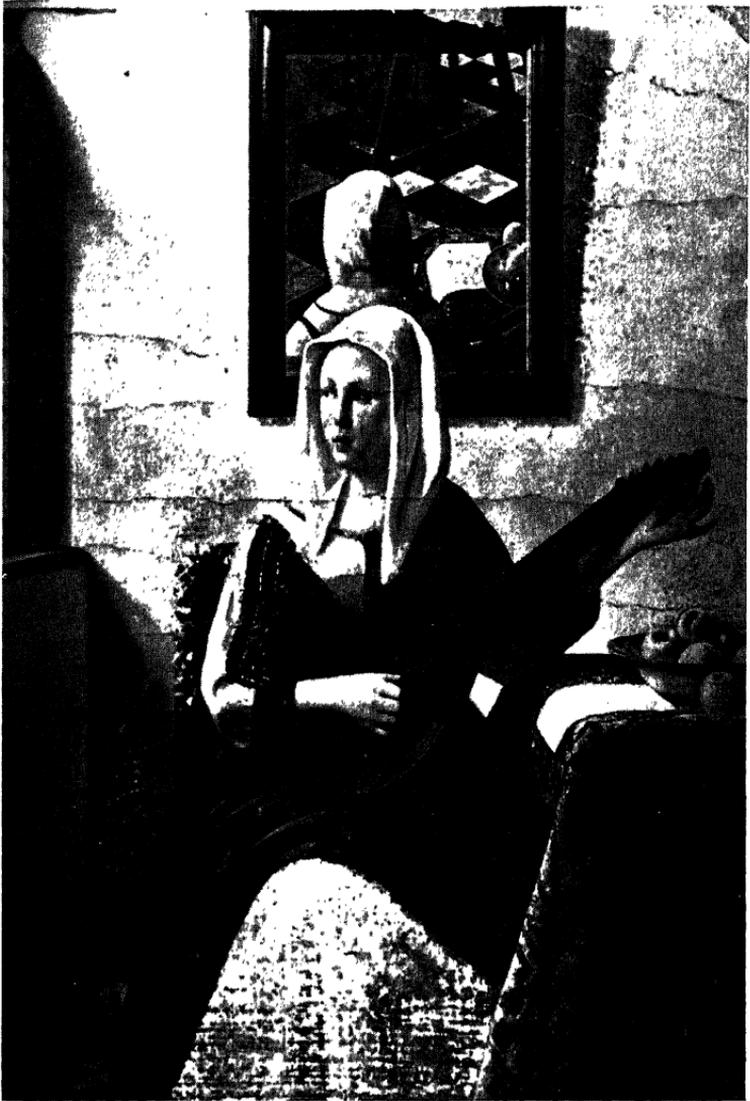
25

'Portrait of a Man.' Forgery of a Terborch by van Meegeren (1935-6). On old canvas, 30.5 by 25 cm. Van Meegeren's experimental forgeries were exposed during the investigation of his case. They showed extensive study of the style and technique of the old Masters.



26

'Woman Drinking.' Forgery of a Frans Hals by van Meegeren, (1935-6). On old canvas, 78 by 66 cm. The well-known 'Hille Bobbe' by the Haarlem Master was the model for this forgery, which shows little deviation from the original.

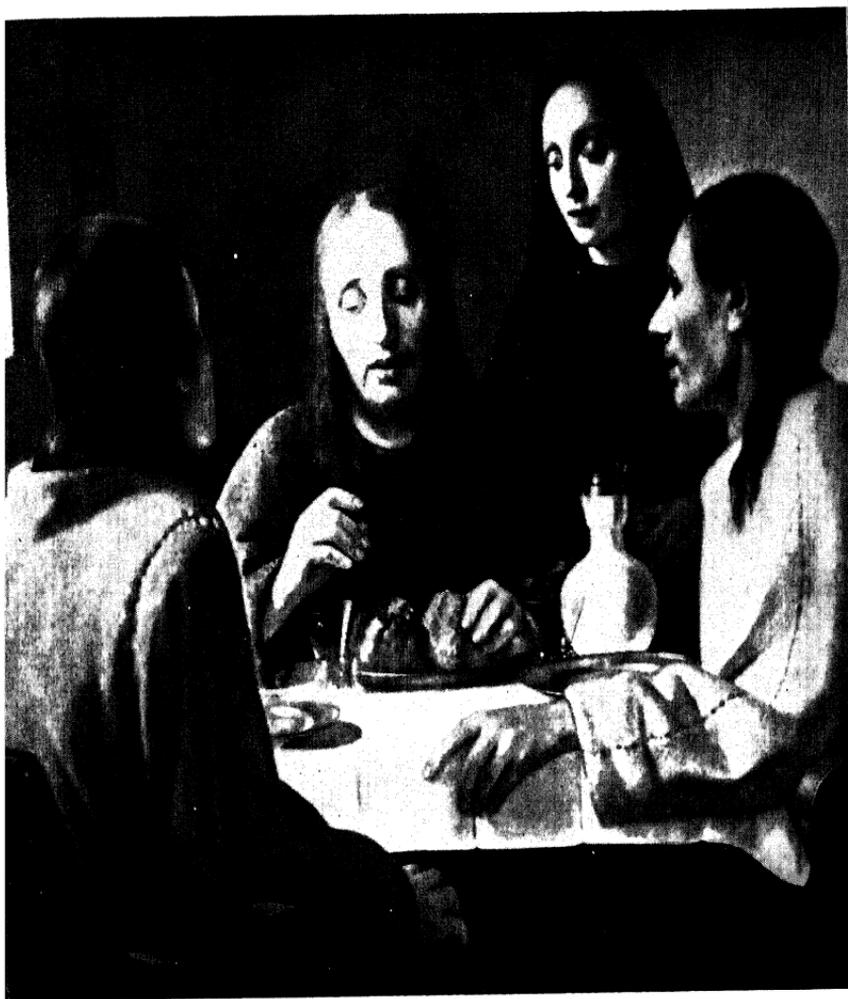


27 'Lady Making Music.' Forgery of a Vermeer by van Meegeren (1935-6). On old canvas, 63 by 49 cm. A careful study of Vermeer's style and technique has produced a convincing forgery.



28 'A Drinking Party.' Forgery of a Pieter de Hooch by van Meegeren, (1937-8). On old canvas, 80 by 69 cm, van Beuningen collection, Vierhouten. The well-known collector paid 219,000 gulden for this 'seventeenth-century masterpiece'.

29 'Christ and the Disciples at Emmaus.' Forgery of a Vermeer by van Meegeren (1936-7). On old canvas, 115 by 127 cm, Boymans Museum, Rotterdam. In 1937 Abraham Bredius declared the painting to be a genuine Vermeer of Delft; it was acquired for 500,000 gulden for the museum in Rotterdam and exhibited.





30 X-ray photograph of the forgery. It confirmed van Mee-
geren's suspicion that he had seized upon the contents of



31 'The Last Supper.' Forgery of a Vermeer by van Meegeren,
(1940-1). On old canvas, 174 by 244 cm, van Beuningen

- 32 'Head of Christ.' Forgery of a Vermeer by van Meegeren (1940). On old canvas, 48 by 30 cm, van Beuningen collection, Vierhouten. The painting betrays the forger's poverty of ideas; he seems to be simply repeating his earlier forgeries.





33 'Jacob's Blessing.' Forgery of a Vermeer by van Meegeren (1941-2). On old canvas, 125 by 115 cm, W. van der Vorm collection, Rotterdam. Before being exposed as a forgery, the painting was valued at 1,275,000 gulden.

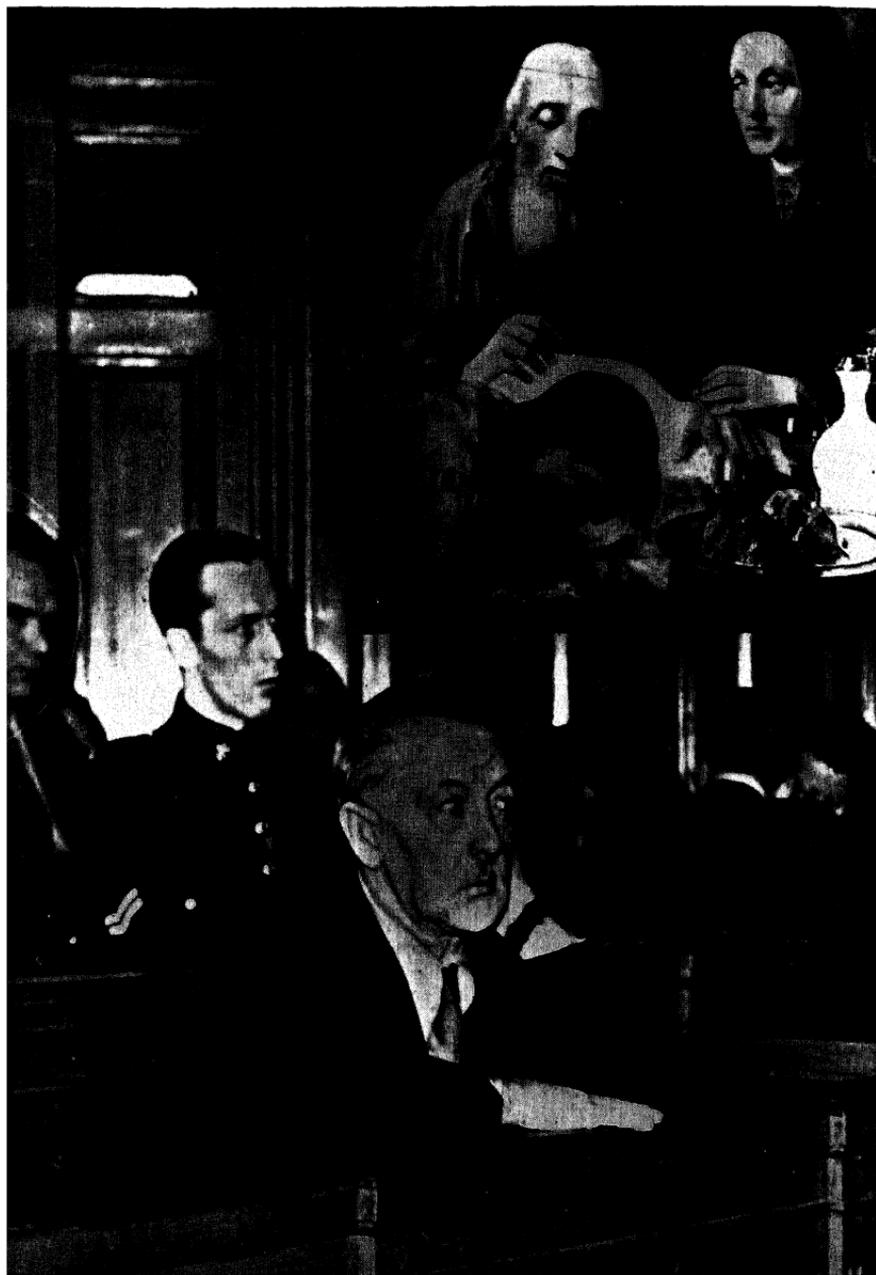


34 'The Washing of the Feet.' Detail of a forgery of a Vermeer by van Meegeren (1942-3). On old canvas, 115 by 95 cm, property of the Dutch Government. In 1943, a sum of 1,250,000 gulden was paid for this false Vermeer.

- 35 'Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery.' Forgery of a Vermeer by van Meegeren (1941-2). On old canvas, 96 by 88 cm, formerly in the collection of Hermann Goering, who paid the enormous sum of 1,650,000 gulden for this 'Vermeer'.



- 36 Han van Meegeren in the Amsterdam court in 1947. He was sentenced to one year's imprisonment. His world-wide swindles amounted to some £800,000. He died in prison some months after his conviction.



Lübeck forger Lothar Malskat, executed under the influence of Chagall. A certain dealer was so delighted by the merits of this work, and the poetic and intoxicating effects attained by the imitator, that he ventured upon an interesting experiment. He showed the picture to the elderly Chagall himself, with the remark: 'I've found one of your early paintings. But unfortunately it's not signed.' Chagall examined the canvas. 'It's good work,' he said. 'But I've painted such a lot that I can't quite remember doing this one.' Nevertheless he scrawled his signature on the picture with a finely haired brush. The painting was subsequently sold to a private collector, for a considerable sum, as a curiosity. It is to be hoped that, at a later date still, it won't become a forgery!

Art Forgeries under the Third Reich

IN THE precarious days when the Third Reich was trying to give a new direction to German civilisation the forgery of works of art flourished. The very persons who banned genuine creative effort as 'falsified' and 'degenerate' were themselves deceived by the shoddy and the pretentious. The success of the counterfeiters in Germany during the years of National Socialist rule was no accident. When orders were given for the 'restoration' of medieval frescoes discovered in the cathedral at Schleswig, the so-called 'restorers' were expected to reveal the figures of ancient German heroes and thus tempted to concoct motives of their own. When a turkey was 'found' to have been depicted, amateurs of art all over the world were startled. For the bird in question originally came from Mexico and was not introduced into Europe until the sixteenth century. Consequently the turkey could not have been known to medieval painters. The Third Reich, announced however, that an 'unmistakable proof' had thus been obtained of the exploration of America by navigators from Schleswig long before Columbus.

One of the most subtle frauds of the time was perpetrated on Hermann Göring. He bought for the enormous sum of over two million marks a bad copy by Han van Meegeren of an original by Vermeer, supposing it to be genuine (see illustration). But in his delight at finding himself the possessor of a work by that eminent Dutch master, the Marshal omitted to have the authenticity of his new purchase verified by experts. It was only in the confused circumstances of war that the Dutch forger van Meegeren could obtain high prices for his mostly incompetent fabrications without being exposed.

In addition to this famous case there were others in which

both Göring and Hitler, each of them so fond of posing as patrons of art, fell victims. But most of those concerned are now dead and others, naturally enough, decline to testify. It would be a laborious process to establish the extent of such frauds. But occasionally works of art crop up which formerly belonged to National Socialist leaders. Some of these items have proved to be forgeries. A chalk drawing, for instance, from Göring's collection, was shown at the big exhibition of forged art in Paris in 1955. This work bore the initials P.P.R., which suggested the great Flemish master Peter Paul Rubens. But the drawing was really a primitive, bungling version of a well-known Rubens motive and consequently a forgery.

Hitler relied on his own aesthetic judgment, which he considered infallible. He had originally intended to be a painter or architect. But his artistic ability was very moderate and his taste was guided rather by the subject of a work and its technical craftsmanship than by any purely aesthetic considerations. The Munich painter and poet Karl Spitzweg (1808-85), who depicted life in small towns, was one of his special favourites. Hitler's weakness in this respect was of course exploited by counterfeiters.

Highly significant 'word-pictures' of the magnate of the Third Reich are presented in Hjalmar Schacht's memoirs. They indicate the superficiality of Hitler's understanding of art and how easily he and his circle were victimised by forgers.

Schacht, who was then Economics Minister, received on his sixtieth birthday, from Hitler, an 'original' painting by Karl Spitzweg. It represented a subject well-known from reproductions, that of a mail-coach at the frontier, and was entitled: 'Only thoughts are free of duty.' Schacht observes: 'I had barely glanced at the picture, polished and gleaming under its varnish, before I said to my wife: "It can't possibly be genuine."' He was interested in art and had noticed that in other works by Spitzweg, which he had seen at exhibitions, hairlike cracks had appeared, due to age. But there were no such blemishes in the painting before him. Its surface was of 'eel-like smoothness'.

Schacht adds that he addressed Captain Wiedemann, Hitler's aide-de-camp, as follows: 'Please convey my sincere thanks to the Chancellor for this splendid gift. I see that it is one of Spitzweg's most famous works. I should therefore be very grateful to you if you could give me some information about its history. Every

collector, you know, takes a great interest in the pedigrees, so to speak, of his items.' Wiedemann replied: 'I'm afraid I can't give you any such information. I can only tell you that Herr Heinrich Hoffmann bought the picture for the Führer.'

Schacht made up his mind to get to the bottom of the affair. He had the painting examined by several experts. They all stated positively that it was a forgery. The address of the owner of the well-known original was obtained from the Munich dealer Zinkgraf. It was found adorning the flat of a senior officer at Regensburg. The counterfeit could therefore be compared with its model, the authenticity of which was above suspicion. Significant variations were found. The pictures were of different sizes. The original was on canvas, the other on wood, of a peculiar, exotic kind. At a later stage it was discovered that this particular wood had only been imported into Germany after Spitzweg's time. Surprising and incomprehensible dissimilarities of colour between the two works were noted. After prolonged study it was established that Schacht's painting had been copied from an inferior colour-print issued by Hanfstaengl at Munich. The 'artist', ignorant of the original, had indulged his own caprices in reproducing the colour scheme of the print. This proceeding had been brought to the notice of the publisher, who immediately withdrew his issue. But he was unable, of course, to prevent one of the series, which had meanwhile been acquired, from being employed in the 'counterfeiting of a counterfeit'.

Schacht did not hesitate to inform Hitler that his gift had been proved a fake. The latter wrathfully ordered the work to be re-examined. A few months later he told the astonished Minister that careful investigation and further opinions had established the authenticity of the picture. Schacht asked to see the new report. But he never received it. Many years later it was revealed in the process of a lawsuit that the certificate in question had been prepared by one of the forgers concerned, who had been instructed to draw it up by Heinrich Hoffmann, Hitler's personal buyer and photographer.

The case would have attracted little attention if a sensational trial involving art forgery had not been instituted shortly before the war. The proceedings disclosed the fabrication of fifty-four paintings alleged to be by Spitzweg, including the one owned by Schacht. In 1936 a rich woman in the Rhineland had paid

132,000 marks for four important 'originals' by the artist. In the apartment of this admirer of Spitzweg one of these apparently valuable works, hung near the radiator, had begun to show signs of warping. It was found that the colours of all the pictures had been laid on very thin panels glued over thicker boards. This discovery naturally led to suspicion of fraud.

Further investigation proved that the supporting boards were made of the African mahogany known as okoumé. But it was known that Spitzweg used only cedarwood, cardboard and canvas. Old consignment lists in the Hamburg public records relating to industrial timber showed that the first three tons of okoumé wood were delivered in 1891, six years after Spitzweg's death. This fact alone was evidence enough that the four supposed Spitzwegs were imitative forgeries.

Thereupon the Cologne gallery which had sold the works sued the agent who had supplied them and the whole affair was made public. It had begun in the studio of a completely innocent copyist of Spitzweg's paintings named Toni, who lived at Traunstein. He had never seen any originals and was content to work from reproductions, mainly on ordinary postcards. He very honestly signed his own name to his productions, adding the note 'After Spitzweg'. Since about 1935 he had been selling them for about seventy to a hundred marks apiece to the South German dealer Friedrich Blum. The pictures were then turned into 'old originals' by the Munich 'decorator and restorer' Hastreiter, who charged between 100 and 130 marks for each item. In this process the top layer of plywood was removed and the painting mounted on artificially aged okoumé. Toni's name and note were erased and replaced by Spitzweg's signature. The whole surface of the picture was then coated with a certain varnish which, in drying, produced the typical 'cracks of age'. The forgery was elementary enough. But the results, sold separately, realised between 20,000 and 40,000 marks. The swindlers were given sentences of up to ten years' penal servitude at the Stuttgart Criminal Court Assizes.

Schacht tells the story of another crudely forged painting received by General Field-Marshal von Blomberg, on the occasion of his fortieth year of service, as a gift from the National Socialist Party. It was a portrait in oils of Marshal Blücher. The work had been taken from a contemporary copy of a portrait of

Blücher in the possession of the Three Rafters Lodge at Münster in Westphalia. As the dealer knew that he could scarcely hope to dispose, in the Third Reich, of a portrait showing the insignia of freemasonry, he had all such compromising implements painted over.

Schacht thought it might amuse the Field-Marshal to learn how his picture had been transformed and falsified. He showed him what had been obliterated and photographs of the original. But Blomberg 'obviously took a serious view of the matter'. He sent all the evidence on to Rudolf Hess. The Führer's deputy replied in a four-page letter of apology, explaining that the painting had been bought in rather a hurry. For months, he wrote, the Party had been looking for a suitable picture to give the Marshal, but hadn't found quite the right one. Then, at the last moment, the Blücher portrait had turned up. Nothing was known of its origin in a masons' lodge, otherwise of course the purchase would never have been made. Hess's final sentence was characteristic. He hoped that the recipient would be pleased with the gift now that fortunately all the masonic insignia and symbols had been removed.

Han van Meegeren

THE DUTCH PAINTER Han van Meegeren caused the greatest sensation ever made by a forger of works of art. After the first appearance of this mysterious personage as a counterfeiter of pictures more and more 'disclosures' and startling reports were current about him. He was said to be an 'important artist' who only became a forger as the result of prejudiced criticism of his work. He was represented as a belated 'genius' comparable with the Netherlands masters of the seventeenth century. Other writers described him as a forger who had cheated the art world out of about ten million marks or as a commercial opportunist whose productions were only fit to illustrate magazines. Contradictory and false rumours repeatedly excited curiosity about the man's career and character.

On the 29th May 1945 two Dutch police officers called upon Han van Meegeren, a professional decorative artist, at his Amsterdam studio, No. 321 Keizersgracht. He was surprised to learn from them that his name appeared in the accounts kept by the art dealer Goudstikker, which had been confiscated by order of the Government. The entries clearly proved that in 1942, during the German occupation of Holland, van Meegeren had sold to Alois Miedl, the director of a German firm who was known as a buyer for Hermann Göring, a genuine work by Johannes Vermeer of Delft (1632-75). As Vermeer's pictures are extremely rare, they were considered a national possession and their export was forbidden. Since, therefore, van Meegeren had sold one to the hostile Occupying Power, he had rendered himself guilty of 'collaboration'.

The painter tried to talk himself out of this embarrassing situation. He alleged that the picture had been offered, without

his knowledge or consent, to Goudstikker by a friend, who had mentioned van Meegeren's name 'in order to do him a service'. As to the previous history of the painting, van Meegeren said it had formerly been owned by an Italian. In this story the artist involved himself in so many contradictions that it was seriously suspected he had engineered the transfer of Dutch national property from the possession of Fascist Italy to that of National Socialist Germany. Meanwhile the advancing American troops had found the picture in question among the art treasures of the former Marshal of the Reich. He had paid 1,650,000 gulden for the work.

Van Meegeren was told that the sale constituted high treason. It would be necessary to find out where the painting had come from, who had been its previous owner and who had negotiated the disposal of it. It seemed obvious that dealings with such a rare and valuable work of art must have been the concern of quite a lot of people. Van Meegeren, however, persisted in his evasions and self-contradictions. No names or definite information of any kind could be extracted from him. Consequently, he was arrested.

On the 12th July he declared, under cross-examination, that he wished to make a confession. He proceeded to affirm, to everyone's astonishment, that he had not 'collaborated'. He had not, he said, defrauded the Dutch Government, but only the German Marshal. 'The painting discovered among Göring's possessions,' he stated, 'representing "Christ and the Adulteress", is not a Vermeer, as you assume, but a Han van Meegeren. I myself executed it.' This allegation was interpreted as an adroit subterfuge by the artist, who thus boasted that he could reproduce the style and beauty of the works of the celebrated Delft master. Van Meegeren, nevertheless, insisted on the truth of his statement. He described his disappointment at the reception of his works and how he had found consolation in familiarising himself with the art of former days. 'You must and shall believe what I say!' he cried out, at one point, in a passion. He went on to explain in detail how for many years his one ambition had been to become a famous painter. But wherever he showed his works they were either ignored or adversely criticised in the Press. Hardly anyone appreciated his style, though it had been formed on those of the great masters. He added:

'One unlucky day, driven half distracted by my anxiety as a result of these considerations, I determined to revenge myself on the critics, by proving that they had underestimated me. I decided to execute a painting entirely in my own manner and according to my own ideas of art, but using the colours employed in the seventeenth century. I took care to produce this work in such a way that it would pass the five tests usually imposed to ascertain whether a seventeenth-century picture is genuine. I meant my creations to be hung in a Dutch national collection. And that is what happened!'

He explained that, after long preparations, he had not only painted the picture eventually bought by Göring, but also a number of works in the style of Pieter de Hooch (1629-77) and others in Vermeer's manner. The latter included the much admired 'Christ at Emmaus' in the Boymans Museum at Rotterdam. But these statements, too, were only greeted with smiles of contempt. These newly discovered works, particularly the 'Emmaus', had been so much praised that the idea of forgery could not be entertained. It was simply supposed that van Meegeren was lying. His attention was called to the enthusiastic ascription of the 'Emmaus' to Vermeer by Bredius. 'Surely you will not seriously maintain', van Meegeren was told, 'that you painted such a picture as that, which the entire world regards as genuine!' It was in fact the general view that this work could not possibly have been forged. The two experts in restoration employed by the Rijksmuseum, who had been familiar for decades with original works of the seventeenth century, declared that tests of the technique alone proved that the 'Emmaus' could not have been executed in the style of the period by a modern artist.

Van Meegeren retorted: 'Naturally, I made no mistakes.' In the course of prolonged hearings he described how he had manufactured canvases and colours corresponding with those of the seventeenth century and made a close study of the methods, which he then imitated, of the old masters. For it was only as a result of such proceedings that his productions could withstand every test. The pictures had been examined by experts. The 'Emmaus' had been passed as old and genuine. Specimens of the colours had been dissolved in alcohol. Chemical reaction had demonstrated the presence of real white lead. Röntgen photo-

graphy also revealed white lead, with no suspicious signs of underpainting. Clear traces of genuine lapis lazuli were disclosed under the microscope. Last but not least, stylistic considerations excluded any possibility of faking. The experts were unanimous that the work could only have been produced in the seventeenth century.

It was agreed that van Meegeren would have to give ocular proof of his dexterity if he wanted people to believe that he had created the 'Vermeers' in question. He was just as ready as Israel Ruchomovsky and Alceo Dossena to do so (see illustration). From July to September 1945, while in prison at Amsterdam, he painted a new 'Vermeer'. The subject he chose, ironically enough, was one famous in art history, 'Christ among the Scribes', an illustration of the text in St Luke's gospel (III.46): 'And it came to pass that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions.' Van Meegeren might well have compared himself, as he stood painting among the experts that summer, with the Lord in the Temple. He, too, was concerned to convince incredulous scholars of the truth. He painted on old canvas, with old colours and genuine old brushes of badgers' hair, entirely in the style of the seventeenth-century masters. He reproduced signs of age, the disintegration of hues and above all the delicate marks of cracking, with such deceptive accuracy that when the picture was finished no one could believe it was not a really old work. It was not so good as his earlier forgeries. But that was intelligible enough in the circumstances. Nevertheless, it fulfilled its purpose. It proved that not only the 'Emmaus' but also the other pictures for which van Meegeren claimed responsibility had been painted by him.

Those who had watched this 'testimonial' being produced under their own eyes were enraptured. They had come to scoff and now they had seen something they would never have believed possible. They lauded to the skies this new 'miracle of the painter's art, which almost transports one to a different world'. They extolled the dazzling brilliance of the colours, especially the blue of Christ's robe, with its underpainting of indigo and lapis lazuli enamelling 'reflecting the spectator like a mirror'. Gotfried Homans, in the first flush of his enthusiasm, proclaimed: 'We have lost a Vermeer, but gained a van Meegeren!'

The representatives of the law, who had been assembling evidence of forgery for the last two years, were not so pleased with van Meegeren's triumph. They proceeded to bring to light the career and activities of this enigmatic personality, both artist and counterfeiter. Four paintings found in his studio were obviously 'experimental'. They comprised the portrait of a man in the style of Gerard Terborch (1617-81), a version of the 'Hille Bobbe', by the Haarlem master Frans Hals (1580-1666) and two depictions of a lady, reading and 'making music' respectively, in the manner of Vermeer of Delft. The derivation of these works from old originals was quite evident. No doubt van Meegeren himself had recognised the fact and for this reason retained them in his own possession (see illustrations).

At van Meegeren's trial, which lasted from the 28th October to the 12th November 1947, the forgeries with which he had deceived the art world between 1937 and 1943 were for the first time recognised. They were:

1. 'Christ and the Disciples at Emmaus' (see illustration), painted at Roquebrune in southern France between 1936 and 1937 and sold by the dealers Strijbis and Hoogendijk to the Boymans Foundation for 550,000 gulden. The picture was exhibited at that important Rotterdam gallery as one of its masterpieces. Its attribution to Vermeer by Abraham Bredius had convinced everyone that it was an original work by the Delft artist.

2. 'A Drinking Party' (see illustration) in the style of and inscribed with the monogram (P.D.H.1658) of Pieter de Hooch. Produced in southern France shortly after the 'Emmaus' and sold in 1939 to the collector van Beuningen for 219,000 gulden.

3. 'The Card Players' in the same style and with the same initials. Probably painted at Nice in 1939. Acquired in 1941 by the Rotterdam collector W. van der Vorm for 220,000 gulden.

4. 'The Last Supper' in the style and with the signature of Vermeer of Delft. Painted about 1939 and left unsold in the studio of van Meegeren's former residence, where it was only discovered after his death. This picture was copied in his 'Last Supper' of 1940-1.

5. 'Head of Christ' (see illustration) in Vermeer's style and bearing his signature. Painted in 1940 at Laren in Holland. Acquired in 1941 by the collector van Beuningen for 400,000 gulden.

6. 'The Last Supper' (see illustration) in Vermeer's style and bearing his signature. Painted 1940-1 at Laren in Holland. Acquired in 1941 by van Beuningen for 1,600,000 gulden.

7. 'Jacob's Blessing' (see illustration) in Vermeer's style and bearing his signature. Painted at Laren in 1941-2. Acquired in 1942 by the Rotterdam collector W. van der Vorm for 1,275,000 gulden.

8. 'Christ and the Adulteress' (see illustration) in Vermeer's style and bearing his signature. Painted at Laren 1941-2. Acquired in 1942 by Hermann Göring for 1,650,000 gulden.

9. 'The Foot-washing' (see illustration) in Vermeer's style and bearing his signature. Painted at Laren 1941-2. Acquired by the Dutch Government in 1943 for 1,250,000 gulden.

This statement indicates that van Meegeren had obtained some seven million gulden under false pretences. Of this sum he himself received 5,460,000 gulden.

It is rather pathetic to remember the prices paid for Vermeer's work in the seventeenth century. The painter was so poor that he could not even raise six gulden for his admission to the Guild of St Luke. All he could manage was one and a half gulden. After the master's death the sums paid for his pictures which were by then more highly esteemed, fluctuated between 17 and 200 gulden. At that time his well-known 'Lacemaker', now in the Louvre, fetched 28 gulden and the 'Little Street', to-day in the Rijksmuseum at Amsterdam, 72 gulden. Top price was reached by the 'View of Delft', preserved at the Mauritshuis of the Hague. That work was sold for 200 gulden. Van Meegeren began by charging a thousand times as much for his forgeries and eventually raised his prices well above the million mark.

Deliberate fraud was the main accusation brought against van Meegeren at his trial. After the question of responsibility for the disputed works had been cleared up and it was proved that van Meegeren had painted the supposed Vermeers and Pieter de Hoochs the fact of conscious deception was duly established. The pictures had been painted on old canvas, with old colours and brushes, in the style of former times, with signs of age and, above all, with the forged signature of Vermeer and the forged date and initials of Pieter de Hooch. These works had been sold by the forger at prices which they could only have fetched if they had been offered as original creations of the masters named. Van

Meegeren's point that the pictures would not be considered genuine if such prices were not demanded did not exonerate him from fraud. His frank confession and poor state of health, the Public Prosecutor stated, were the only reasons why the full penalty provided by law for such a 'cunning swindle', four years' imprisonment, was not called for. Judgment was pronounced on the 12th November 1947. Van Meegeren was sentenced to serve one year in prison (see illustration).

He did not appeal. He merely begged to be allowed to paint during his incarceration. It was rumoured at the time that the 'artist' had received numerous commissions, emanating from the most varied levels of the population. It was further reported that on the very day van Meegeren began to serve his sentence he signed a contract with an American firm to illustrate a book on 'Tracing-Paper Art'. But the strain of the long hours under examination and of the trial itself had told on van Meegeren. He was admitted to hospital. On the 30th December 1947, at the age of fifty-eight, he died of a heart attack in the Valerius Nursing Home.

But the excitement caused by the revelations in this case by no means ceased with the death of the forger. He continued to be the subject of public debate.

Was he a 'misguided artist' or a top-ranking swindler? Passionate defenders of his 'misunderstood and unappreciated genius' were to be found even in artistic circles. At the opening of an exhibition in the Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, the painter Verwey declared: 'Van Meegeren has a right to our admiration. I know that many artists agree with me in thinking so. He deserves a statue.' The *Neue Zeitung* had demanded that van Meegeren should be 'punished' by having to 'prepare at his own expense eight small brass plates engraved with the words "School of Vermeer of Delft" or "School of Pieter de Hooch". These plates should be affixed to the forged pictures. Those that already hang in public collections should remain there, for they are fine works.'

But the art world at large regarded van Meegeren as a clever exploiter of popular taste and magazine illustrator rather than 'artist'. He was censured for resorting to Christian themes simply as a good selling line and also in order to avoid too close a comparison with Vermeer's extant paintings. The attitude of

collectors to van Meegeren's works was clear enough at the auction of his effects in September 1950. It had been hoped that, in view of earlier assessments of the value of his pictures and of the claims for compensation which had been lodged, the proceeds would run into several millions. But the total of the bids made amounted to only 226,599 gulden. So slight an interest in the forger's productions is the clearest possible proof that his pretensions as an 'artist' were not accepted.

Yet there were still a number of people who were determined for personal reasons to follow up the case and give it a new aspect. Van Meegeren's family and friends took every opportunity to call attention to his extraordinary importance as a professional artist and special talent for the interpretation of former Dutch painting. In January 1951, four months after the Amsterdam auction, van Meegeren's son invited representatives of the Paris Press to hear some further 'sensational disclosures' about his father.

He told them that the 'Boy with a Pipe' in the Frans Hals Room of the Groningen Museum was by van Meegeren, as was also the 'Laughing Cavalier' in the Hofstede de Groot Collection. This last painting had attracted much attention in 1926, when it had been discovered by connoisseurs and sold for 50,000 gulden. Other forgeries by van Meegeren, according to his son, were the 'Lady with a Blue Hat', supposedly by Vermeer, in the Thyssen Collection and also a counterpart to the famous 'Head of a Girl' in the Mauritshuis at The Hague. Although the younger van Meegeren gave the dates of these alleged forgeries by his father, it was found that in some cases the pictures had actually been authenticated before the time of production stated by the speaker. Consequently, his 'disclosures' were not taken very seriously and did not lead to any further developments in the affair.

Later on van Meegeren's widow repeatedly supplied authors with 'reliable data' concerning his activities. But this information turned out to be romanticised melodrama calculated to arouse sympathy for the 'misguided artist' by providing the 'human background' to his work and suggesting that the critics themselves were responsible, to a certain extent, for his forgeries.

In 1958 his sister arranged an exhibition of his pictures in connection with the 'Germany and Holland Cultural Week' at Arnsberg. Involuntary smiles greeted the statement that in this small Westphalian town there were displayed works of an

'artist' representing modern Dutch painting and 'undoubtedly one of the most interesting figures of European art in recent times'. The intention was evidently to promote recognition of this 'man of many talents', 'gifted with genius', a decade after his death, and to efface the memory of his forgeries. In the same year a Haarlem dealer undertook the same task by opening an 'Exhibition of the Complete Works of Han van Meegeren'. Advertisements of this enterprise drew attention to the high prices obtained for the paintings as an index to their artistic value. Further characteristic signs of the effort to play down the significance of van Meegeren's forging operations may perhaps be found in the assertions that his genuine productions were being imitated by forgers, especially abroad, and sold for large sums.

But another aspect of the case of van Meegeren has often, during the last ten years, come to the notice of artistic society, with incomparably more disturbing effect. The Brussels 'connoisseur and picture restorer' J. Decoen expressed the opinion, soon after van Meegeren's confession, that the Dutch painter in question was not telling the truth when he boasted of being responsible for all the works in dispute. The two 'Pieter de Hoochs', Decoen affirmed, might well be genuine productions of the seventeenth century (see illustration). The 'Emmaus' and 'Last Supper' in van Beuningen's collection were not, according to Decoen, van Meegeren's work at all, but real Vermeers (see illustrations). The expert went on to say that it was these two works by Vermeer which van Meegeren had taken as models for his forgeries of the other four 'Vermeers' (see illustrations). While years of research had been employed in tracing 'Vermeer' to van Meegeren it was now necessary to trace 'van Meegeren' to Vermeer!

Shortly after van Meegeren's death van Beuningen, as the owner of several forgeries by the deceased, publicly found fault with Professor Coremans, who had given expert evidence at the trial. He reproached the Belgian scholar with 'frivolous' statements and irresponsible confirmation of the forgeries. J. Decoen wrote a book with the startling title *Back to the Truth!* in which he attempted to reopen the whole case and 'prove' the authenticity of both van Beuningen's 'Last Supper' and the 'Emmaus'. This volume, together with other publications and lectures, caused considerable bewilderment even among the knowledgeable.

No new light of any real importance was thrown on the matter. Certain questions of detail cropped up and attempts were made to use them as new 'proofs'. For example, the controversy over resin continued for years. Both van Meegeren and Coremans had referred to an artificial resin first discovered in the nineteenth century and utilised in painting. Later it was declared that the hardening qualities attributed by Coremans to this artificial resin alone might also be characteristic of an old natural resin and that for this reason the employment of artificial resin should not have been represented as part of the evidence for forgery. The question which resin was used could not be clearly decided. Consequently, those who doubted van Meegeren's responsibility for the pictures continued to regard the problem of their origin as unsettled.

Still more efforts were made to establish the authenticity of the paintings. The history of known forgeries is full of instances of collectors concerned to maintain the value of their possessions as well as their own self-respect. In the van Meegeren case years of exertion failed to unearth any new data. This state of affairs was confirmed by an action brought by van Beuningen's heirs at Brussels in 1955 against the expert who had certified the forgeries. The hearing showed clearly that the Amsterdam proceedings had been conducted with the utmost thoroughness and the verdict of forgery justified.

In April 1959 yet another 'sensational disclosure' surprised the public in connection with this matter. Professor Josef Eigenberger, a Viennese specialist in picture restoration, proved by chemical and X-ray tests that the 'Last Supper' had not been produced in the seventeenth but in the twentieth century (see illustration). The surprise element was contained in his statement that van Meegeren could be 'fairly safely assumed' to have employed an assistant in the production of both this painting and the 'Emmaus' (see illustration). Important passages in both works could not, in the Professor's opinion, 'be ascribed beyond doubt to van Meegeren'. The general bewilderment was still further increased by this information. The view that van Meegeren had falsely represented himself to be responsible for the pictures gained renewed currency. But quite apart from the minor question of a potential 'colleague', the new Viennese data did at any rate confirm the fact of forgery.

Proof that Han van Meegeren painted these pictures is not only forthcoming from the 'specimen' he produced under the eyes of the experts but also from the intensive tests conducted by other specialists over a period of years. His own statements were thus verified. He had explained, for instance, that he had painted the 'Emmaus' over an old work which had been scraped off except for a single child's head at a point he was able to indicate precisely. An X-ray photograph in fact revealed the head of a girl in the space between the jug and the hand of Christ (see illustration). Stylistic as well as technical considerations disclosed van Meegeren's characteristic methods in both the 'Emmaus' and the 'Last Supper'.

The case as a whole attracted the attention of the whole world to the dangers inherent in the forgery of works of art and at the same time to the need for combating fraud in this direction. In the years that followed many publications, films and stage plays dealt with the theme in general. A comprehensive exhibition called *False and True* was held for the first time, in Amsterdam. It was afterwards shown in Germany, Switzerland and America. In 1952, also at Amsterdam, an Institute was founded for the detection of such forgeries. It provides an information service for any amateur seeking expert opinion on a picture.

The Lübeck art forgery scandal

WHEN THE scandalous revelations of van Meegeren's activities were made public and he was unmasked in detail at his trial in 1947, many people believed that the opportunities for such forgeries had been greatly reduced. In Europe especially connoisseurs and amateurs alike were supposed to have been put on the alert and in a position, with the help of modern technical resources, to identify spurious works. It was stated again and again, in conversation and in print, that there was now no need to worry, for all the swindlers' tricks were already known and even 'absolutely perfect art forgery' had been detected.

It could not have been suspected at the time that almost as soon as van Meegeren had begun his counterfeiting operations others had been set on foot in Schleswig-Holstein, only a few hundred miles from van Meegeren's own studio. They were to result in an equal decline of respect for the art of former days and to attract equal attention throughout the world.

But it was only fifteen years later that the matter came to light through the forger's own admissions.

On the 9th May 1952 the hitherto unknown painter Lothar Malskat made certain surprising statements, in public, which at first caused more amusement than serious interest. He declared that the much admired medieval frescoes in the choir of the church of St Mary at Lübeck had not been reinstated and restored, as was generally assumed, but were new creations, and therefore forgeries, by himself, acting as assistant to the restorer Dietrich Fey (see illustration). This confession was practically ignored at the time. Artistic and ecclesiastical circles in the city knew that the assistant and his principal had fallen out. It was supposed that Malskat might be avenging himself in this way on Fey, who

was well known as a specialist on restoration in northern Germany.

As a result of a heavy air raid on Lübeck on the night of Palm Sunday, the 29th March 1942, the church of St Mary had been burnt out. Layers of whitewash had peeled off the interior walls in the heat, revealing important remains of hitherto unknown medieval frescoes under the high windows of the nave and on pillars and vaulting. Photographs, tracings and copies were taken of these paintings long before July 1948, when Dietrich Fey and his assistant began the work of restoration.

Fey was known, through the restorations he had carried out in Schleswig Cathedral and many other churches in northern Germany, to be of unimpeachable character both as man and artist. In 1951, on the seven-hundredth anniversary of the founding of St Mary's church at Lübeck, the building was re-opened to the public. The paintings were then examined by experts. Some doubts were expressed as to whether Fey had invariably represented the originals with complete accuracy. But in general his restorations were considered 'exemplary' by both specialists and lay observers. The paintings were highly esteemed, as 'one of the most important discoveries ever made in Europe'. Gräbke, Director of the Lübeck Museum, wrote a book on the subject in which he stated: 'Ideas hitherto current as to the original aspect of Gothic brick interiors will have to be revised in the light of the merits of the works here recovered.' Hirschfeld, a member of the National Trust, welcomed the pictures as 'the most important and extensive ever disclosed in Germany, in fact one of the finest intact frescoes of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries extant throughout western Europe'. At a meeting of the West German National Trust Fey's work was unanimously approved. Application was made in 1951 for a sum of no less than 150,000 marks for further necessary restorations. It was learned later than 85,000 marks in all had been earmarked for the purpose.

When, therefore, Lothar Malskat announced a year later that he had himself forged the paintings in the choir, the statement could only be greeted with a pitying smile. The Press wrote of 'a painter who had gone crazy'. Comment was solidly in favour of Fey, who had been thus accused of such grave misconduct. In general, he was thought to stand in no need of defence.

Malskat, in order to gain a hearing, was obliged to give proof

of his allegations. It is in this sense that his repeated explanations and amplifications of them are to be understood. He drew attention to the models he had used in executing the new frescoes, referring specifically to illustrations in Bernath's *History of Fresco Painting*. The reference was checked by the Press. *Die Welt* published side by side reproductions of the ninth-century portrait of a Coptic saint preserved in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum at Berlin and of a section of the alleged medieval fresco in the church of St Mary at Lübeck. The resemblance was so striking as to render their relationship almost certain. The comparison aroused widespread attention and led to the view that the St Mary paintings were quite possibly forged. But in Lübeck itself artistic and ecclesiastical society attributed no significance to the newspaper's reproductions and refused to discuss them.

In August 1952 Malskat also admitted that he had forged medieval paintings while engaged on restoration work in Schleswig and Ratzeburg cathedrals (see illustrations). He mentioned other forgeries of his in the Hospital of the Holy Spirit, the church of St Catherine and the cathedral at Lübeck, as well as in smaller churches of the neighbourhood. But his assertions were repeatedly repudiated as false, most emphatically of all by the persons chiefly concerned. It was said that the allegations were dictated by the ambition of a minor artist, which took the form of these rash and irresponsible 'confessions'.

Astonishment reached its height when on the 8th October Malskat accused himself of having forged a large number of drawings and paintings supposed to be by old and new masters, which he had sold through Fey's agency (see illustration). Hitherto he had only confessed to the forgery of old religious paintings. But he now included the direct counterfeiting of later works. Six hundred productions 'in the styles of' Rembrandt, Watteau, Munch, Hodler, Liebermann, Barlach, Degas, Corot, Renoir, Gauguin, Utrillo, Matisse, Rousseau, Pasquin and Chagall were mentioned. It was stated that one picture forged in the style of Chagall had been recognised by the master as his own work and thereby 'authenticated'.

The Public Prosecutor had already taken a hand. On the 25th August 1952 Malskat's allegations were officially investigated. The counterfeits stated to have been produced between 1945 and 1950 were studied. A surprise visit paid to Dietrich Fey's residence

resulted in the discovery of seven forged paintings. Consequently, on the 9th October, the latter was taken into custody. It was then revealed that Malskat himself had also offered forgeries for sale in 1948 and been arrested in Bremen for this proceeding. These data indicated either art forgery on a grand scale or simply the ambition of an 'insignificant little artist' who wanted to be thought 'important' in his native town.

The next sensation was the report, issued on the 21st October 1952, of the Research Committee charged with investigation of the frescoes in St Mary's Church. This investigation had been long delayed. It was only undertaken as the result of public demand and after Malskat's other forgeries had been made known. At first it was still believed that work in the choir had consisted only of the restoration of traces of ancient painting to the original state. But eventually X-ray photography proved that all the outlines were of recent date. There were no signs whatever of medieval remains. Clear proof of forgery was thus obtained (see illustration).

But the Lübeck citizens concerned maintained that this proof applied only to the choir. They continued to declare that the frescoes of the nave, revealed when the church was burnt out, were obviously originals. Malskat, however, retorted that even these were new, his own work, and accordingly counterfeit (see illustrations). Further investigation confirmed his statements. The nave frescoes had to be acknowledged as imitative and recent.

Malskat had thus proved that, contrary to the unanimous opinions of scholars, the paintings in dispute were really forgeries by himself. Conscious of his position as the 'hero of the hour' he managed to get the public on his side by giving interviews to pressmen, film organisations and broadcasters. For people were much amused by his outwitting of the experts. His popularity was not in the least impaired by his arrest, on the 23rd January 1953, for a short time. He was not generally regarded as a forger and swindler at all, but as an artist who had given the self-styled connoisseurs a lesson.

An impartial view of the Lübeck scandal must take into account the nature of the tasks of restoration and the local situation. In earlier times restoration was understood to imply renewal and to a certain extent correction and alteration. It has only been in the last few decades that the principles of true

restoration have been laid down and elucidated in relation to certain well-known works. In 1926 these rules were formulated by Otto H. Förster in connection with restoration of paintings in Cologne Cathedral. He writes: 'There must be no element of addition, completion or other conjectured reconstitution of any supposed original state. Such action could only be described as forgery. Extant work must be retained unless it can be proved beyond doubt to be a later, intrusive interpolation. All such disturbing passages must be removed, if this can be done without injury to the ancient, original substance of the work and without prejudice to the artistic effect as a whole. Defective places should as a rule be left as they are. Only if the whitewashed background happens to show through anywhere should it be toned in to wood-colour.'

This modern conception of correct restoration has been criticised even in Lübeck, where it is emphasised that in principle all alteration and completion must be avoided and only preservation of the original condition aimed at. If however completion appears necessary or easy to execute, as in the case, for instance, of simple repetitive pattern, such completion must be rendered recognisable in some way. It should be made obvious even to the casual spectator where the genuine work ends and its later continuation begins. In painting this object is achieved by a difference of tone and in sculpture by a change of material. By this procedure the total impression is not weakened, though the association of the styles of two separate epochs is clearly brought out and no false pretences of originality are asserted. It has however been affirmed in Lübeck ecclesiastical circles that St Mary's Church ought not to be reconstituted as a museum but as a revered place of worship. The authorities meant by this statement that they wished the figures, if possible, not to be presented as barely identifiable traces of a picture but as clearly visible religious symbols. This attitude is perfectly intelligible from a churchman's standpoint. But it cannot be taken as justifying in any way the removal of ancient traces of painting nor, above all, the modern concoction of 'medieval' figures.

It was repeatedly stated in Lübeck by all concerned that restoration had been carried out in strict accordance with modern ideas, so that the ancient work had been preserved. But in fact Malskat had painted entirely new 'medieval remains' on the

almost completely bare brick walls of the choir under the high windows (see illustration). In the nave, where the fire had revealed most important traces of medieval painting, these relics had been scraped off with steel brushes and fresh designs applied to the cleared surface (see illustrations).

Malskat explained, by way of excuse for this extraordinary proceeding, that the old paint had disintegrated to such an extent that it dropped off like dust at the slightest touch of a brush. The truth of this statement cannot of course now be tested. But the photographs taken of the ancient work before restoration suggest that even the technical peculiarities of the original had for the most part survived in an excellent state of preservation. If Fey had called public attention to the allegedly bad condition of the remains and recommended their reinstatement with fresh paint, no one could have complained of forgery. But he made no such reference to the condition of the original and described his own work as restoration in the modern sense of the term. Consequently, that work was regarded as forgery.

Why should Fey, who directed the restoration, and Malskat, who carried it out, have decided to commit this fraud? How was it that the experts did not perceive the deception? It is necessary to have observed a restorer at work in order to realise how much time and effort are required for the smallest details of the remains of old pictures to be carefully tended, strengthened and preserved, so as to keep the total impression in being. It often takes a year to restore a single picture.

It is very much easier, of course, to remove the old traces and paint the work anew. If reports from Lübeck are to be believed, certain individual figures were produced in only about twenty minutes each. Fresh work of this kind allows plenty of scope for invention and, in the case of the choir of St Mary's, a certain amount of celebrity could be obtained from the discovery of hitherto unknown works. Malskat was unquestionably also impelled by the ambition to 'rival the medieval masters'. In his long collaboration with Fey he had doubtless acquired a practised hand, so that he could turn out imitations of medieval paintings almost as a matter of routine.

His disclosures in regard to the Lübeck 'restorations' led to the detection of other, earlier forgeries of the kind in northern Germany. It was proved, for example, that the 'fair-haired, pure-

blooded Teuton heroes and heroines' represented in Schleswig Cathedral and so extolled by the leaders of the Third Reich as testifying to a 'great Teutonic civilisation' were arbitrary inventions of modern times and consequently forgeries.

The 'old' art thus produced in Schleswig was partly taken, like that of the Lübeck choir paintings, from book illustrations and photographs. Malskat admitted, for instance, that a certain 'medieval' Madonna had been derived from a photograph of the film actress Hansi Knoteck (see illustration). Though the first doubts as to the authenticity of this 'ancient' work had already arisen in consequence of the representation by a 'medieval' artist of a bird, the turkey, introduced into Europe from America, official art circles did not suspect any deception. A book by a well-known art historian and obtainable even to-day praises the Schleswig Cathedral frescoes as medieval work of wonderful beauty. 'The master responsible for them', it is stated, 'was a great anonymous artist comparable with the Bamberg and Naumberg sculptors. His work, like theirs, is characterised by a soaring, monumental aspiration and many features of much delicacy and charm . . .'

There were several reasons why the relatively crude forgeries in the churches of northern Germany remained undetected. The troubles of the time favoured deception. Some kinds of counterfeit work were encouraged by the Government on propagandist grounds. The war and its aftermath placed exceptional strains upon various controlling authorities. Lübeck was one of the hardest hit of the German cities. The State, the Municipality and the Church each laid claim to exclusive competence in questions affecting works of art. This confused situation facilitated forgery. It should also be remembered that the paintings under the windows at St Mary's stood at a height of about seventy feet. They could therefore only be studied at a considerable distance. Details which must otherwise have led to discovery of the fraud were hardly visible when the works were observed obliquely at this height. Moreover, in view of the well-known and authenticated traces found in the nave, it did not occur to anyone that the choir paintings might have been forged. Finally, Dietrich Fey's reputation as a conscientious and honest protector of ancient art extended far beyond Schleswig.

Many excellent photographs were taken both of the original

condition of the pictures and after their 'restoration'. It seems incredible to-day that comparison of these prints did not bring the difference to light. Even a layman can see, on making such a comparison, that nothing of the old work has survived. The painting is all fresh.

The complex problem of the forgeries by Fey and Malskat was dealt with in much criticised legal proceedings which lasted for sixty-six days, from the 10th August 1954 to the 25th January 1955. Many people could not understand the verdict which sentenced Malskat to eighteen and Fey to twenty months' imprisonment. Several commentators took the view that Malskat had not committed forgery in the ordinary sense and in any case had not acted from motives of material profit. They affirmed that Fey, on the contrary, was really the guilty party, since he had instigated the affair, kept it secret and lied about it. The trial certainly did not reveal the whole truth. Many of the remoter aspects of the case remained obscure.

A great number of bewildering questions, to some of which it was hard to find the answer, repeatedly arose. But they should not be allowed to mask the main issue of the fraudulent proceedings in St Mary's. Ancient, genuine and valuable medieval paintings in the church were destroyed and replaced by crudely executed new work. There could be no excuse for such a crime. Even if Malskat's activities could be regarded, from various standpoints, as intelligible enough, he cannot be acquitted of guilt. Though he had lied to begin with he had in the end been obliged to confess to forgery. In the earlier interviews he gave he stated: 'I didn't commit forgery, I only did what I was told.' But he declared later: 'I committed forgery against my conscience. And at last he wrote these significant words on a self-portrait: 'Forger and artist.'

The Lübeck case recalls views expressed by Goethe in 1799 and published in his art review, *Die Propyläen*. They are still valid to-day. He wrote: 'All works of art belong as such to the whole of civilised humanity. Possession of them carries with it the duty to preserve the works in question. Whoever neglects this duty or directly or indirectly contributes to the injury or destruction of any such works incurs the reproach of barbarism. His punishment will be the contempt of all educated persons, both of his own day and time to come.'

The Court summing-up emphasised that 'although the ascertainable material damage done may not have been excessive, it seriously endangered the restoration of St Mary's as a whole. The dishonest behaviour of those engaged upon it undermined confidence in the proper execution of all the reinstatement work.' It was natural that this argument should have prompted many demands for the removal of all the forgeries in the church. Hirschfeld wrote: 'The forgeries should first be plastered over so as to obtain a clear surface free from all theoretical pre-conception and thus enable careful plans to be laid for an ideal solution of the problem by substituting true works of art for forgery, honesty for insincerity, with consequent obliteration of the stain upon morality. It should be considered the duty of any truly Christian community to carry out this task.'

The choir forgeries had in fact meanwhile been rendered invisible by whitewash. But they were by no means forgotten for that reason. As President Eisenhower has said: 'It's no use pretending that you can get rid of what you believe to be wrong by destroying everything that reminds you of it.' The nave forgeries were deliberately left as they were. They had been derived from the original medieval frescoes and gave a faint idea of the way in which the space had been formerly filled. In addition, they constituted a sort of warning to all concerned with art, either as amateurs or professionals.

The paintings counterfeited by Malskat, which had been confiscated by the Court, were handed back to their owners, at the latter's request, after the trial. But these works were officially earmarked as imitations in order to prevent their again coming on the market as 'originals' at a later date.

Forty-six oils, water-colours and drawings executed by Malskat in the styles of old and modern masters and sold by him as originals were seized as forgeries by order of the Lübeck County Court. They were transferred by the Public Prosecutor's Office to the Schleswig-Holstein County Museum at Gottorf Castle in Schleswig, where it was intended to use them for purposes of study. They were stored for reference, together with other exhibits and documents relating to the offence of art forgery. The collection is not open to the general public. It is only available for inspection by specialists in the subject.

Malskat was released from custody in August 1957, before he

had served his full sentence. He has since embarked on a new career as an artist. 'I have enough commissions to keep me busy day and night,' he told a Press representative. Many people had been delighted by the success of the 'medieval master' and ordered new works from him. He painted, for example, pictures 'in the style of the fourteenth century' for the Tre Kronor restaurant at Stockholm (see illustration). He designed a turkey, like that of the forged medieval painting in Schleswig Cathedral, for the entrance doors of the Royal Tennis Courts in the Swedish capital. According to Press reports a German gallery is planning exhibitions abroad of Malskat's pictures in the 'Gothic, Romanesque and Byzantine styles'. It is evident, therefore, that the artist means to earn his living through his talent for imitating medieval painting. He himself has said that he intends to develop the Gothic manner as his own 'impressionist-expressionist style'.

Modern Masterpieces by a Museum Attendant

THE CASE of the Cologne museum attendant Jupp Jenniches was a post-war contribution by the Rhineland to the celebrated series of art forgery scandals. It was announced on the 6th October 1949 that the porter of the Cologne Art Club's premises in the Hahnen Gate and an artist resident in the city had been arrested on suspicion of having purloined and disposed of valuable works of art after an air raid. The painter was also said to have forged certain pictures and sold them as originals. Imitations of the work of Emil Nolde and Paul Klee were believed to have been included. The public were asked, through the Press, to notify the police of any existent records of the offer or sale of modern paintings.

The matter had been raised by Professor Dr Leopold Reide-meister, Director of the Cologne Museums. A water-colour alleged to be by Nolde had aroused his suspicions. The picture was sent by a Cologne lawyer interested in art to Nolde himself (1867-1956) for checking. 'I didn't paint it!' he replied. Thereupon other pictures which had also been offered for sale by the artist Schuppner were confiscated and tested for authenticity. They were found to have been forged and the 'dealer' was arrested. This step appeared to be justified, as Schuppner had been sentenced in 1942 to three and a half years' imprisonment for 'dealing in forged works of art' and similar offences and forbidden to exercise the trade in future. So he was already incriminated. No proof of the identity of the forger had been forthcoming at the trial. But it was assumed at the time that Schuppner had been aware, when he sold the pictures, that they had been forged and signed with false names.

The later proceedings very soon revealed who the counter-

feiter was. The guilty party was not Schuppner but, to everyone's astonishment, a certain Jupp Jenniches, who had been for twenty-eight years in the service of the Cologne Art Club. He was known as the Club 'man of all work'. His multifarious duties included packing and nailing down boxes, framing, cleaning and restoring pictures. It was stated that after his release from a prisoners of war camp he had found some damaged paintings in the ruins of the cellar of the former premises of the club in the Friesenplatz. It occurred to him that they might be 'made like new'. The painter and collector Schuppner took an interest in the 'finished articles'. The first transactions 'paid well' and the simple-minded museum employee was accordingly encouraged, perhaps almost unconsciously, to embark upon further deceptions, amounting to positive art forgery. Five counterfeit 'Noldes' and five counterfeit 'Klees' were found at Schuppner's residence. Jenniches readily confessed to other forgeries, which he had committed, he said, to pay for the rebuilding of his private accommodation, which cost more than he could afford on his modest salary.

The case began to be heard on the 18th September 1950 in the First Criminal Court in the Appellhofplatz at Cologne. Nineteen forged paintings hung behind the Bench. They included works in the styles of E. I. Kirchner, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, and Oskar Campendonck as well as a counterfeit 'Max Pechstein' triptych of the South Seas. Schuppner was charged with receiving stolen goods, resuming a previous career of crime, falsification of documents and the practice of a trade forbidden to him by a Court order. Theft and falsification of documents were the charges against Jenniches.

The latter described in perfectly credible and convincing fashion how, on his return to Cologne in 1945, he had found damaged pictures floating in muddy water in the cellars of the gallery, which had been bombed out two years before. It was there that he had discovered the Pechstein triptych, which 'looked as though it had come from a dungheap'. He took seven of the pictures home and 'cleaned them up'. He knew they belonged to a lady who had left Cologne for London in 1936. Probably he never dreamed of the possibility of the owner claiming her property.

As he was aware that Schuppner was interested in good work

by modern masters he showed him the cleaned painting by Pechstein, telling the dealer that he had been given the picture before the war for certain services he had rendered to a Jew who had since emigrated. Schuppner seemed very pleased with the triptych and paid Jenniches 8,500 RM. for it. The latter then proceeded to supply further items, painted by himself in the styles of modern artists. Big exhibitions of works by Klee and Nolde were held in Cologne in 1947. Jenniches had plenty of opportunity to study the paintings at his leisure, take tracings of them and copy them. In his imitation of a female portrait in profile by Nolde he made the features face the opposite way, so that the copy could not be immediately detected. He boldly forged the signatures of the artists concerned on his versions. As he knew that reports by qualified experts determined the value of a picture, he prepared such reports 'just like the original' by the use of sealing-wax stamped with the design of a decoration he had found by chance. It was learned that Jenniches had received from Schuppner for the crudest productions of this kind a total sum of about 28,000 RM.

Schuppner at first simply added these forgeries to his own collection. It was not until later that he handed them to various other dealers for sale. He called witnesses to testify that he had not disobeyed the previous Court order and had not himself engaged in the trade. As to the question of forgery, he swore that he believed what Jenniches told him and never dreamed of the possibility of fraud. He was able to prove that museum directors and connoisseurs repeatedly visited his collection and never expressed doubts as to the authenticity of any item.

The Attorney General demanded a sentence of eighteen months' imprisonment for Schuppner. In so doing he stressed the point that a professional painter must be supposed to have some technical understanding of his art. He characterised Schuppner's defence, to the effect that he had been the victim of a plot, as merely the ingenious expedient of a man who was no stranger to courts of law. But although there were the gravest reasons for suspecting the defendant of knowingly receiving stolen goods, the Attorney General could not prove that he had done so. The prosecution considered however that a degree of association with art dealers had been proved which went far beyond that of an ordinary private collector and should be regarded as engagement

in the trade which the defendant had been forbidden by law to exercise.

The prosecution called for a sentence of fifteen months for Jupp – officially ‘Josef’ – Jenniches. Six months were claimed as a punishment for persistent theft and nine for persistent fraud combined with falsification of documents. It was held to be some excuse for the forger that the cellars from which he had taken the pictures were also being plundered by other people and that a large proportion of the stolen works was in practically worthless condition. The Court maintained, however, that they could not be described as entirely valueless. That opinion was confirmed by the fact that Jenniches had taken them home, restored them and subsequently sold them to Schuppner for considerable sums. Moreover, the copies made and signed with the names of Klee and Nolde constituted persistent and successful fraud and falsification. The prosecution took the view that Jenniches must have been well aware of the illegality of his actions.

The judgment pronounced in this case greatly surprised even those personally concerned. On the 19th September 1950 Robert Schuppner was found not guilty for want of adequate proof, of persistent fraud and falsification. His trial for engagement in forbidden trade was suspended in conformity with certain amnesty regulations. Jupp Jenniches was sentenced to a year’s imprisonment for theft and persistent fraud in combination with persistent falsification. But the sentence was extended to three years, so that he could take advantage of the amnesty law. The penalty would not be imposed if Jenniches remained of good behaviour during the next three years. Grounds for judgment were stated to have been influenced by the assumptions that no further frauds were contemplated by the museum employee and that the painter had acted in good faith. It was also stressed that Jenniches was entitled to special consideration in view of his frank confession, his distressing economic condition and as a ‘victim of the turbulence of the times’. As he had committed no further frauds after 1947 it might reasonably be supposed that he would get into no further trouble.

It appeared very puzzling, especially in artistic circles, that an ordinary museum attendant, quite untrained and unassisted, should have been able to produce forgeries of this kind, which

deceived experts for so long a period. People who knew Jenniches could not understand how so simple-minded a man could ever have hit upon the idea of doing anything of the sort. His own account of the matter in Court was given with a candour so relentless as to be sometimes detrimental to his own interests and with perfect credibility. He said that at the exhibition entitled 'From Nolde to Klee' he had overheard impassioned arguments on the merits and demerits of modern art. Many visitors ridiculed the exhibits and declared that any child of average intelligence could have executed them. Such statements impressed Jenniches. During his long hours of duty he kept wondering whether the pictures could really be taken seriously as works of art. He noticed one which showed only 'a few little wheels and beaks' and yet was entitled 'Continuous Line'.

He went on in his unquestionably authentic Cologne dialect: "Sure," I says, "I can do that what that there Klee do. I've tried it, I have." And didn't I gawp when I saw the fust one I done! He strenuously denied that any of his forgeries were copies, observing, in somewhat 'streaky' German:

'Nah, nah, nah! Them was moy idea, moy own initiative, that was. Allus up ter date in art, that's me!'

All he intended to do was to paint in 'Klee's or Nolde's style'. Actually, his productions were more or less free copies. For example, he took a tracing of a female profile by Nolde and transferred it to face the other way, so as to make it a 'new' water-colour. In the transcription he tried to improve on his model by drawing tidier lines and imposing flatter washes. He thus turned a living, visionary work of art into a dead poster advertisement (see illustration).

Jenniches may well have produced these first imitations out of sheer love of drawing and the desire to equal celebrated masters. If he had intended to deceive people, he would certainly have tried to come closer to his originals. He claimed that it was not until Schuppner had repeatedly enquired after modern pictures – and perhaps offered good prices for them – that he remembered his own attempts at rivalling them. 'After all, I had all that stuff at home, I needed a lot of money, and so I just stuck names on them, touched them up a bit and sold them to Schuppner.'

Judgment in this case put an end to the scandal, one character-



37 Lothar Malskat painted decorations for the 'Tre Kronor' Inn, Stockholm. He calls his style, which he used as a 'restorer' of North German Gothic paintings, 'impressionist-expressionist'.

- 38 'Virgin and Child.' Forgery by Malskat in the manner of the medieval master of Schleswig Cathedral; he painted this head from a photograph of a film actress.





39 Forgery of a medieval fresco by Lothar Malskat in Schleswig Cathedral, using a photograph of his sister Frieda. Nobody questioned her rather modern hat.

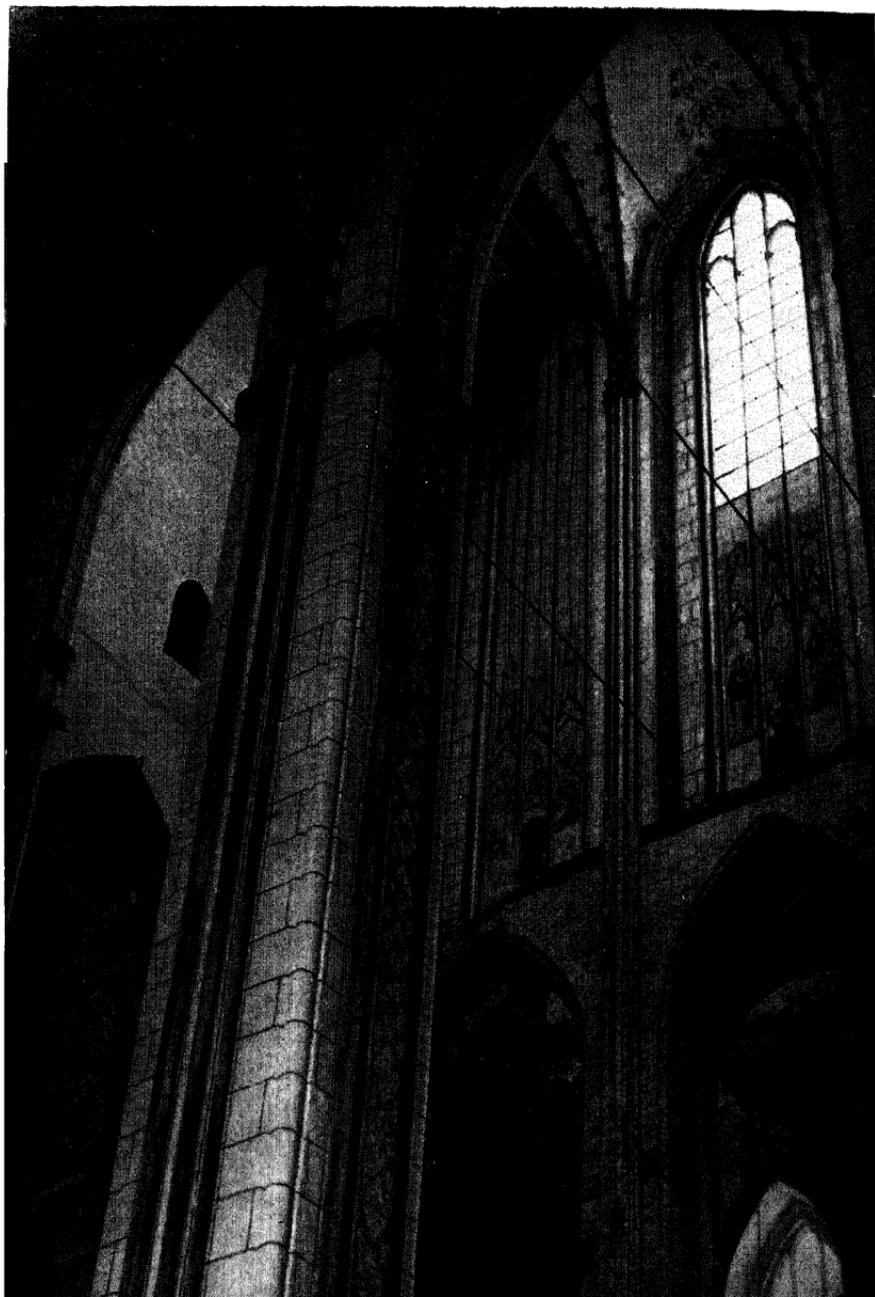
40 Choir of the Church of St Mary, Lübeck, with forgeries by Lothar Malskat below the clerestory windows. He used medieval book illustrations as models.



41
'Madonna.' Forgery by Lothar Malskat in the Church of St Mary, Lübeck. It is a free copy of an old painting and bears no relation to the original paintings in the Lübeck church.

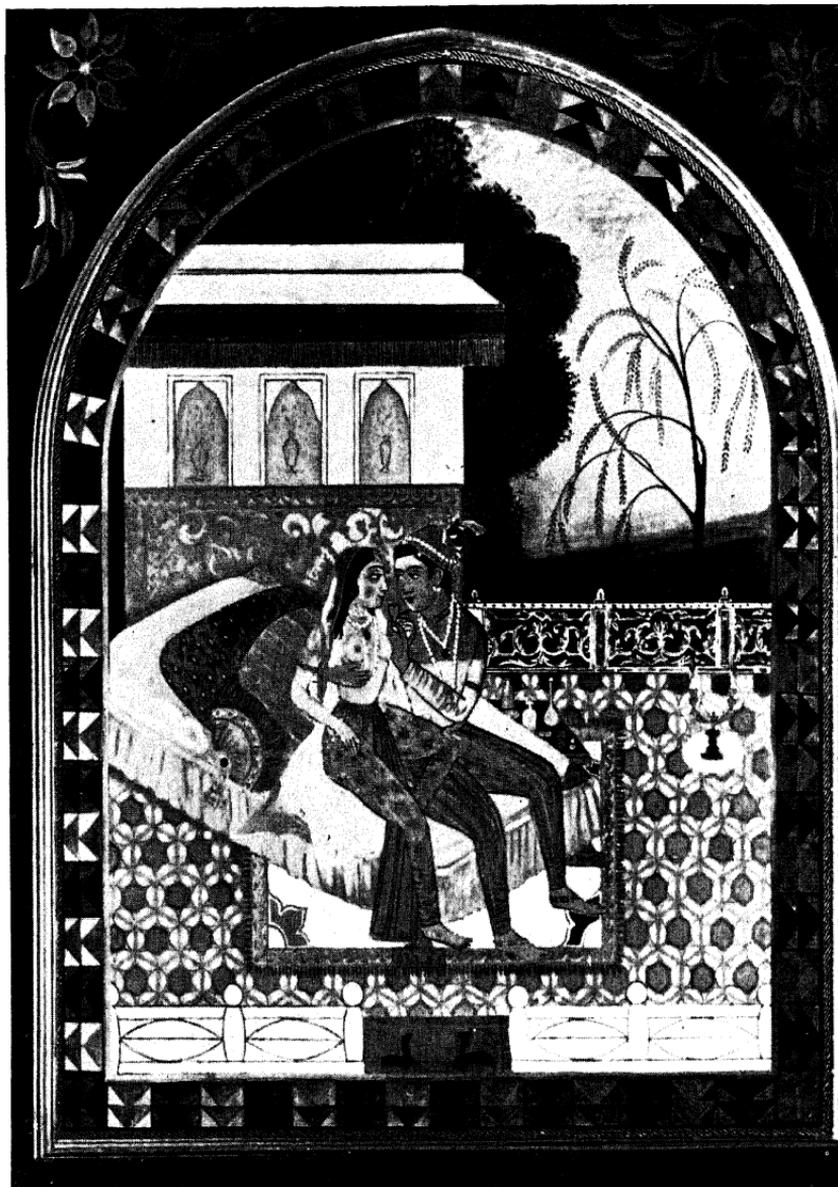


42 Nave of the Church of St Mary, Lübeck, after 'restoration' in 1952. Malskat admitted that he had replaced the remaining fragments of genuine medieval painting with forgeries.





43 Figures of saints in the nave of the Church of St Mary, Lübeck. Forgeries by Lothar Malskat. Nobody suspected forgery because the remains of genuine painting had been discovered here.



44 'Indian' painting by Lothar Malskat in the Delhi Palace, Hamburg. Malskat relied on genuine miniatures for models and made no original contribution of his own. The derivations of his paintings here were known and these are not, therefore, properly speaking, forgeries.

istic of the war years and the confused period that followed. Those circumstances were rightly taken into consideration by the Bench. The general public also regarded the affair as a natural consequence of the chaotic situation that prevailed in the heavily damaged capital of the Rhineland. It was stated at the trial that Schuppner had bartered a picture by Max Ernst for a sack of 'runner-beans' and one by George Grosz for half a pound of butter. Shortage of the necessities of life was accompanied by deplorable and abnormal conditions in the art world. Such was the environment which led a man who had been employed for nearly thirty years at an establishment concerned with art to appropriate articles belonging to someone else from a heap of ruins, to forge pictures and offer them for sale.

Jenniches was not an art forger in the ordinary sense of the phrase. His frauds were certainly committed in the hope of gain, but only because he was in need of money and unaware of the serious consequences that might ensue. The fact that although the 'business' paid so well at first he did not continue it clearly differentiates him from other counterfeiters of art. He stopped, for instance, at the point where Han van Meegeren began.

Naturally enough, the respect accorded to art in general and to modern painters in particular suffered from the revelations made in this case. A lot of people were amused at the resourcefulness of a museum attendant who took the trouble to rummage among forgotten pictures going to rack and ruin in a bombed out cellar. The public were also delighted to find that so simple a fellow, without the slightest training, could paint like such modern masters as Klee and Nolde and take in all the 'professors' with his efforts. A newspaper seller with a pitch in the Friesenplatz at Cologne summed up the general reaction. 'All Jupp did was to save what was due for the dustbin. In 1945 not one of those fine gentlemen who ran him in for theft would have bothered their heads about that old rubbish. If people are so foolish as to buy the stuff, Jupp might just as well earn the cash for it as any professor!'

Art Forgers at Naples

FEW PEOPLE can be unaware that Naples is a 'centre' for art forgery. The bogus productions of the city are as well known, throughout the world, as its genuine works of art.

The Roman art dealer Augusto Jandolo, in a remarkable passage of his *Confessions*, stresses the importance of Naples as a 'town of art forgeries'. It appears that in earlier times each of the Italian provinces specialised in a certain branch of spurious art. Umbria faked works in bone, ivory and majolica. Tuscany went in for 'Renaissance furniture' and pictures with gold backgrounds, Latium for coins and marble sculpture, Emilia for Cinquecento bronzes and Venice for glass. But Naples covered the whole field. Nothing was too difficult for the Neapolitans.

The most extraordinary affairs occur and the most improbable notions flourish in that city. Even the most humble, ignorant and inexperienced of Neapolitan antiquaries is always jovial and versatile. It is impossible to quarrel with him. Many visitors to the town must have been swindled in much the same way as Jandolo himself, who found his own gullibility in the matter as amusing as the fraud practised on him.

'Naples', he writes, 'is a regular gold-mine for unscrupulous dealers. Twenty years ago I simply said, "What a lovely little statue that is on the high altar!" Back came the answer in a flash. "Would you like to have it, Sir? Going cheap!" Thereupon I got, not the real thing, but a copy. When I complained, I was told: "But who's any the worse for it? Certainly not the much respected saint himself, for the lucky fellow's a sacred being and lives in heaven. As for his image, why should a true believer care whether it's ancient or modern? It's only the museum officials who bother about such a thing. The rest of us are as

dumb as fish on the subject, including the parson who sold the figure and doesn't breathe a word about his profit. And in a few hundred years, Sir, you can be quite sure that another antiquary will come and buy the statuette that will then be on view in the same place. The world goes on turning like a wheel. Things keep changing. Why shouldn't this little figure change too?"

The adroit and convincing manner in which these peculiar views are developed disarms every counter-argument. The spurious suddenly appears in quite a new light. It seems perfectly justifiable to equate it with genuine ancient art. Why not imitate and copy? What's fraudulent about it? Where's the harm to anyone? And if we don't snap up such 'bargains', someone else will.

The Neapolitan art forgers have an inexhaustible source of supply in the sites, still under excavation, of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Most visitors to Naples go there in search of souvenirs of the unique experience undergone nearly two thousand years ago by the inhabitants of those ancient cities, when they were overwhelmed by eruptions from Mount Vesuvius. The demand for such mementoes led at an early date to their fabrication and falsification. The most eminent connoisseurs and the most important collections have been deceived by these works. An 'ancient Pompeian' marble fountain, for instance, in the National Museum at Naples was not revealed as a forgery until it was discovered by chance that one of the 'antique' reliefs had been copied from a drawing by Albrecht Dürer.

In 1954 the victimisation of American museums by art forgery produced in Naples caused a sensation. A studio was found in the city where extraordinarily close imitations of antique gold ornaments and silver utensils were manufactured. A Neapolitan dealer and two goldsmiths whom he employed were arrested. They had defrauded a number of galleries and private collectors by selling them copies of old silver implements for high prices, with the assurance that these precious objects had been excavated at the site of a villa near Castellamare, known as Stabiae in antiquity, the spot having been buried under volcanic lava in A.D. 79. The purchasers were also told that the transaction must not be reported in official quarters as it was against the law.

The Italian initiator of the fraud got into touch with the

director of a well-known American gallery through an American military officer who had been concerned with the protection of works of art in Italy during the invasion of the country by the Allies. The director was offered the alleged 'find of silver at Stabiae' as items of exceptional interest. They comprised six large wine-coolers of the amphora type, two ceremonial dishes, twenty plates, a tripod, two candelabra fitted with oil-lamps and eight vases provided with handles and decorated with botanical designs. After long negotiation the price was agreed at 300,000 dollars. The dealer stipulated that the articles should not be publicly exhibited until 1955.

He played the same trick, this time with copies of antique gold ornaments, on a number of private collectors. The fraud was discovered by a British dealer acting as technical adviser to an American gallery, who was informed of these transactions. Similar decorations had been used in genuine old works of art. The designs had been taken from those of silver articles found in 1919 at Trapain Low, those of the Hildesheim silver hoard and those of finds on the Esquiline and at Carthage. The craftsman responsible, who came to be known as the 'Dossena of goldsmiths' work', was reported to have produced 120 such forgeries.

The Vienna Madonna scandal

THIS AFFAIR attracted attention, in 1959, far beyond the confines of artistic society. Students of the history of art forgery were struck by the similarity of the story to those of earlier scandals of the kind in France, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands. In this case Austria was the country concerned. The matter was cleared up and to all appearance satisfactorily dealt with sooner than had been at first expected. But, as in previous instances, consequences of incalculable magnitude ensued. As before, confidence in the sincerity and merit of works of art was undermined and the fallibility of human judgment in this field exposed. These effects were evident in newspaper headlines all over the world, announcing that 'all is not old that is Gothic'.

In November 1958 the catalogue of the Christmas auction held by the Vienna city authorities in the Dorotheum advertised the principal item as a 'Gothic statue of the Madonna in a pronounced S-shaped posture, with crown and wimple' (see illustration). It was of wood, 38 cm high, and described as the 'work of a Burgundian sculptor of about 1380, artistically of the greatest value. It constituted the central figure in an altar-shrine from which another statue was auctioned at the 539th sale, catalogued as No. 351. An outstanding collectors' piece of extreme rarity.' The carving was valued at 100,000 schillings, a note being added to the effect that the price paid for the related figure sold at the former auction was 60,000 schillings. Three connoisseurs had been concerned with the study and assessment of the Madonna statuette, under the direction of Dr Herbst of Vienna, an expert duly sworn in for the purpose. His reputation for learning and critical ability in matters of art stood high.

This information from Vienna was noted in art periodicals

throughout the world, with reproduction of the text and photographs. Several Press articles followed. The Munich *Weltkunst*, for example, discussed the forthcoming auction and its chief item, the Burgundian wood-carving. This notice, accompanied by an illustration of the 'Gothic Madonna', was seen towards the end of November by a traveller in Germany, one Beppi Rifesser, a wood-carver from St Ulrich in the Gröden valley of the southern Tyrol (to Italians Ortisei in the Val Gardena). Rifesser could hardly believe his eyes. For in the 'fourteenth-century Gothic work' illustrated he recognised one of his own productions.

In order to make sure he paid a visit to Vienna. He left the Dorotheum with his head in a whirl of amazement and pride at finding a work he had himself created figuring as the chief item at this important auction. The Madonna was one of five he had freely copied from old models five years before. The statues had not been taken individually from particular precedents. They had simply been executed in the style suggested to the sculptor by Gothic representations and given the appropriate appearance of age by chemical means. But Rifesser was no forger or swindler. He had sold all the carvings as his own work in 1957 to the dealer Josef Auer of Bischofshofen for normal prices, about 350 to 400 marks apiece.

The sculptor would have been glad to explain matters while he was in Vienna and tell the authorities at the Dorotheum that he was himself responsible for the 'Gothic Madonna'. But, intelligibly enough, he was torn between pride at the recognition accorded to his work and fear of possible legal proceedings. In the end he held his tongue. 'I was afraid they might lock me up as a lunatic', he told a newspaper man at a later date.

But Rifesser could not quiet his conscience. He consulted Dr Bernhard Hauser, a Munich lawyer, and told him the story. Hauser immediately communicated the facts to the Dorotheum authorities. Meanwhile, in Vienna itself certain dealers had been expressing doubts as to the authenticity of the Madonna in question. As the auctioneers refused to listen to them and continued to describe the carving as 'undoubtedly genuine' one of the dealers reported the situation to the police.

It might have been expected that in view of Rifesser's statement the statue would have been instantly withdrawn from the

items to be auctioned and further investigations undertaken. But, as previous cases of the kind have shown, disputes about works of art are not so rapidly and easily settled. In Vienna, too, objections were raised to all attempts to justify doubts of the authenticity of the 'medieval' figure. The police, however, took a different view of the case. They saw no reason for querying Rifesser's responsibility for the work, especially as there was no difficulty in proving that Auer had resold it. It was ascertained that he had told prospective buyers in Vienna that the statue came from an 'old altar-shrine'. He was consequently, and rightly, suspected of being the guilty party. On the 6th December he was arrested. The figure had to be withdrawn from the sale-room twenty-four hours before the auction began. This step gave rise to a public scandal.

Josef Auer, at the time of his arrest, was already involved in another investigation, dealing with his alleged theft of works of art. After being taken to Vienna to face the second charge he acknowledged the 'deception' he had practised in the case of Rifesser's Madonna. He had sold the work in Vienna as an antiquity, he said, 'in order to show up the experts'. 'I staged that swindle', he affirmed, 'with Rifesser's statue of the Virgin, simply to spite the Dorotheum.' The statement immediately recalls similar declarations by Han van Meegeren. He, too, asserted that he had prepared and sold his forgeries 'to revenge myself on the specialists'.

Through Auer's arrest the true facts about another statuette by Rifesser came to light. This work had been sold at a Dorotheum auction the year before. The Christmas catalogue of 1958 had referred to its style and origin as similar to those of the figure then advertised. It was discovered that the previous item, too, had been bought by Auer from Rifesser. It had been sold for 5000 schillings to one Hans Reisinger, of Mondsee in Austria, a goldsmith and art dealer. Auer had not mentioned that it was a modern work. It was for the other dealer, he considered, to draw his own conclusions about its date. There was no question, therefore, of a deliberate swindle in this case. Reisinger sold the carving to a Vienna dealer for 7500 schillings. The new owner had it valued by the Dorotheum authorities. They pronounced it to be unquestionably a creation of the Middle Ages and thereby rendered it a 'forgery without a forger', so to speak, in the same

category as the productions of the sculptor Bastianini already referred to in these pages. This image by Rifesser was sold as a 'Burgundian carving' at the Viennese spring auction of 1958. Bidding started at 18,000 schillings and rose to 60,000, at which price it was acquired by a local collector.

Auer, hearing of this large sum, hoped to take advantage of a rising market. He offered the Dorotheum a Madonna by Rifesser. In so doing he expressly stated that the statue auctioned in the spring had originally been his property and that it was included, together with a third carving, in the main group of a medieval altar-shrine. He told the police after his arrest that this idea of making a fortune out of his purchases of figures of this kind was an afterthought. He said that he had bought two of them in Italy at high prices, being perfectly convinced that they were genuine antiques. But the Dorotheum authorities, on examining these works, had declared them to be forgeries, thus involving him in heavy financial loss. In order to recoup himself he had conceived the plan, in his disappointment at the decision of the Viennese experts, to take vengeance on 'that Vienna lot'. He took his second carving by Rifesser to the Dorotheum and contrived, by misrepresenting the facts, to persuade the authorities there that it was a medieval work. He swore that he had no intention of defrauding them, though he had unmistakably done so by his reference to an antique altar. The Vienna police followed up the history of the other figures acquired by Auer from Rifesser. These represented a St Christopher, another saint, a Madonna and Child and an angel's head. But in these cases no proof could be obtained of fraud, whether attempted or executed.

The Viennese experts were by no means satisfied, in spite of Auer's admissions and their confirmation by Rifesser, that the works concerned were really modern. It appears that they did not even take the trouble to examine them in the light of Rifesser's statements. New disclosures enabled a clear answer to be given to the question of authenticity. Rifesser, for example, said he had not used cedarwood for his carving, as the Vienna art historians maintained, but common chestnut. Again, Auer had referred to 'an old altar'. Nothing could have been more natural than to go and look for it. Why such enquiries were not made at the time the carving was accepted remains incomprehensible. For whenever a new work of art crops up it is surely essential to

raise the question of its origin and make the most rigorous investigations of it.

The obstinacy of the Dorotheum in the face of Auer's confessions, in line with and substantiated by Rifesser's own testimony, is exemplified by Dr Herbst's remark: 'I shall only be convinced if Herr Rifesser does a job like that under supervision!' He may have been thinking of the 'evidence' so often produced in these conditions by the defendants in trials for art forgery. But he probably forgot what had happened as a result of these separate experiments in the cases of Israel Ruchomovsky, Alceo Dossena and Han van Meegeren. On each occasion without exception forgery was proved and the specialists shown to have been mistaken. Dr Herbst could not, of course, entirely exclude the possibility, after all that had occurred in Vienna, that the figures were in fact modern. He declared, with suitable dignity, that if such should prove to be the case the Dorotheum would reimburse all the losses incurred and return the amount paid for the auctioned statue.

Rifesser's lawyer told the *Vienna Presse* that his client had carved six similar Madonnas, all very much alike. One of them was the figure purchased by Auer. A second had been sold to a Zürich buyer and a third to one in Hamburg. In addition to the image of a saint disposed of at the Viennese spring auction Auer possessed an almost exactly similar work. In the lawyer's opinion sufficient material existed, therefore, for purposes of both comparison and proof, to enable the matters in dispute to be cleared up and the wood-carver from Gröden to be recognised as the true creator of the statues.

As in former cases of the kind the question was then raised whether a modern artist could possibly be in a position to work so faultlessly and to such deceptive effect 'in the antique manner' unless he made direct copies. But in this case the ancient tradition of sculpture which flourishes to this day in the Gröden valley and especially in the small market-town of St Ulrich, near Brixen and Bozen, must be remembered. Beppi Rifesser was born on the 23rd August 1921. He is a member of one of the oldest families in the valley. Even his great-grandfather had been a distinguished wood-carver. Beppi told a reporter: 'If ever I marry and have a son, he'll be called Josef and become a wood-carver.' The family lived high above the town on the so-called *Stufan*. The

sculptor was accordingly known in the locality as 'Beppi da Stufan'. He had begun by assisting in his father's extensive practice and been further trained in the studio of Jakob Crepaz. For eight years he attended the Gröden Polytechnic and evening classes, acquiring a familiarity with various woods such as is seldom attained by a modern artist. At the same time he travelled a great deal, developing his feeling for style to such a degree that he actually became capable of executing works in the fashions of bygone days without direct copying (see illustration).

The Viennese experts were not aware of these details. They insisted that it was impossible and a 'fable' that such a sculpture as the Dorotheum wood-carving could have been conjured up, with every conceivable sign of age, a short time ago, out of new wood. Rifesser accordingly announced that he was ready to undergo a test. He declared that in seven hours, in the presence of specialists, he would carve a fresh 'early Gothic' figure. 'If I am invited by the Dorotheum to produce a specimen by way of evidence, I'll go to Vienna and carve the work under the eyes of their authorities,' he said. 'Of course, I must be allowed to bring my own tools and chemicals and have a suitable work-table placed at my disposal.' He added that at any trial which might take place he could produce evidence that he had made the Madonna. For example, he affirmed that he knew the exact position of two holes in the back of that particular statue.

Meanwhile, in the Austrian capital, protests had been multiplying against the attitude of the Dorotheum in refusing to acknowledge its error and recognise the modernity of the work. Demands were made in Parliament for immediate and energetic action to be taken by the Minister of the Interior to settle the dispute. These requests were based upon criticism which accused the Dorotheum of employing incompetent persons, not duly sworn in, as experts. The institution was also charged with failing to put the public in full possession of the facts.

Pressure from all sides eventually led to an 'official' invitation to Rifesser to visit the workshop of the Technological Institute for Materials of the Academy of Fine Art in Vienna and there 'to execute from his own resources, under the supervision of competent judges, a second Gothic Madonna similar to that which had been withdrawn from auction shortly before the opening day'. The Dorotheum promised to meet all Rifesser's travelling

and subsistence expenses and to pay him an 'honorarium' for his work. The test was to start on the 8th January 1959. But this date had to be postponed, as Rifesser had injured his hip in a road accident while driving to Waldbruck on the 3rd January and was not in a fit state to travel.

Preparations were made for his arrival in February. He wished to break the journey at Munich, whence Dr Hauser would accompany him. For the sculptor obviously felt uneasy at the raising of the question of forgery and feared that legal proceedings might follow. 'I shall do nothing without my lawyer', he declared. 'Hauser is in any case one of my friends. I've made a couple of figures for him, artificially treated so as to look old.'

Meanwhile, however, further investigations had been undertaken in Vienna. The Technological Institute for Materials, where Rifesser was to give proof of the modernity of his works, had made a thorough examination of the carving in dispute. The results unmistakably confirmed the sculptor's statements. The figure was found to be made of chestnut-wood, not of cedar, as had originally been maintained. These discoveries rendered the contemplated test in Vienna superfluous. On the 13th February 1959 the 'sensational' news was proclaimed in the city that the Dorotheum had admitted its mistake and would not require any further proofs from Rifesser.

He was thus officially acknowledged as the creator of the Madonna concerned. Dr Herbst, the leading specialist, confessed in an interview with the Press that he had erred in his judgment of the carving and had therefore not considered a test of the sculptor's powers necessary. He added that the Dorotheum would reimburse Rifesser for all his expenses in the matter. That institution, moreover, would continue to uphold its high reputation by buying back, at the full price of 60,000 schillings paid for it, the Madonna by Rifesser which it had sold as Gothic.

On the 5th August 1959 Josef F. Auer, dealer in antiquities, was sentenced by the Vienna Municipal Court to a year's imprisonment for fraud. The Bench confirmed the defendant's assertion that the fraud had been facilitated by the experts concerned and that identification of the wood alone would have been bound to reveal the 'forgery'. But Auer, nevertheless, was considered to have been at fault in not drawing public attention to the Dorotheum's error long before the scandal came to light.

By failing to do so he had made a deliberate fraud of what he alleged to have been a mere attempt to expose the specialists' incompetence. At first sight the sentence appears heavy in comparison with those passed at other similar trials. But it was probably dictated by the fact that Auer had been found guilty by the Courts on no less than twenty-five previous occasions.

But these proceedings did not put an end to the scandal of the Vienna Madonna. The case had been a peculiarly convincing demonstration that, however easy the forgery and distribution of works of sculpture may be rendered owing to the enthusiasm they arouse when found and the ardour of the quest for them, such productions are always exposed in the end.

Antique Furniture is not always old

AS SOON AS PEOPLE began to collect old furniture and place a high value on it, artists, craftsmen and swindlers took steps to provide imitations and new versions of it. As in other fields, fashions varied between different countries. In the 1870's, for instance, the Rhineland 'pillar-cupboards' were very popular in western Germany. But if all those supplied had been genuine originals, an expert commented, one would have to assume that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries 'every Rhineland citizen and farmer not only had a fowl in the pot for Sundays but also a pillar-cupboard in the kitchen'.

Imitations were usually confined to half or a section of an article of furniture. Separate components were taken from the remains of old pieces and put together afresh. A certain clever joiner, for example, is said to have constructed a whole series of 'genuine old' cupboards from sections of wainscoting. In the same way a new 'old' cupboard would be composed of a number of serviceable sections from several damaged ones. Old posts, panels and locks of the most varied origins were combined in a new unit. Every part of it might be old and genuine. But the product as a whole would be a modern forgery.

A favourite practice is the alteration of dates. Genuine pieces may be made to seem 'older', and thus become forgeries, by some quite trifling and inconspicuous manipulation. A 9 or a 6, for instance, may be changed to a nought, so that the date 1595, perhaps, appears as 1505, nearly a century earlier. Only an art historian who is also an expert on furniture could detect, from considerations of style, such cunning falsification of dating and so expose the forgery. It is therefore not surprising that even important museums contain furniture handled in this way. The

so called 'Four Countries Chest' which stood for a long time under Raphael's cartoons for tapestry in the main hall of the South Kensington Museum carried the false date of 1526, which made it appear a work of the Renaissance.

Worm-holes are supposed by most people to be a convincing proof of genuine antiquity in furniture. But worm-eaten wood is often used by forgers for the construction of new pieces, while new wood can also be treated so as to look old. The circular holes made by the insects are reproduced by the more painstaking type of forger with the aid of precision gimlets. But the really subtle swindler lets the worms themselves do the work. He breeds them for the purpose. The Roman antiquary Augusto Jandolo refers to a method formerly much in vogue for the fabrication of worm-holes. One day a certain agent took him to see another dealer whose wife was always deceiving and annoying the poor fellow. 'As we were going up the stairs, two shots suddenly rang out, followed by the terrified screams of children and two further shots. "That's done it," I thought. "He's shot her down at last." The agent tore up the stairs ahead of me and nearly pulled the door-bell out. We heard someone coming. Then the dealer opened the door. He was still holding a smoking shot-gun. I stared at him, transfixed with horror. "Ah, good morning, my dear Jandolo," he exclaimed, with a smile. "Do come in. I've just been plugging some worm-holes in a side-board!"' But this shot-gun method has been practically given up in modern times. For connoisseurs now use needles to determine whether the holes have been made by the undeviating line of perforation by a lead shot or the winding course bored by the insect.

The expert relies on touch to guide his judgment. The surface of a genuine old piece of furniture has acquired over the years an even patina of dust and wax which gives it a velvety smoothness. But new wood, however industriously varnished and polished, feels comparatively rough. Antique furniture also has a slightly rippled surface, due to the shrinking of connecting tissue between the rings of harder ligneous fibre. Forgers try to level out the cruder inequalities of new wood by the application of various pastes. But this expedient hardly ever succeeds in producing the genuine old patina.

The layer of dirt deposited by centuries has an entirely different colour from that of the mixture of dust and glue put on by hand.

Varnishes are easier to imitate. The shrewd forgers of Naples have attained a special excellence in the fabrication of mahogany furniture in the British style. The varnish they use is declared by Jandolo to be an incredibly exact facsimile of that employed in former times. Only slight inaccuracies of proportion disclose that it is not the real thing.

Weight is another factor in the determination of the age of furniture. A century is enough to eliminate all moisture from the fabric of the wood. For this reason old pieces weigh less than those of similar size made in recent times. As weight cannot be reduced by artificial means and forgers generally overlook this point, it is one to which experts pay special attention. The trademarks and workshop stamps used by the old masters are also highly significant in this connection. Most forgeries can be detected by the excess of zeal with which such indications are fabricated so as to be as legible and unmistakable as possible.

Workshops' stamps are sometimes repeated at different places on the article. But genuine antiquities never have more than one trademark. If such signs are conspicuous and branded in depth they must be regarded with great suspicion. Eighteenth-century furniture is a favourite subject for imitation, as in this case painted, lacquered and gilded details may enable the forger to compensate for any shortcomings in the general effect. Some important factories in Italy only turn out reproductions of well-known originals and cannot therefore be charged with fraud. Their articles only acquire the character of forgeries in the hands of dishonest dealers or unsuspecting purchasers by whom they are represented as 'originals'. On the other hand, of course, indubitably fraudulent centres do exist for the production of the popular 'eighteenth-century' models. The old types are 'improved', with a view to obtaining higher prices, by the addition of marquetry, painted decoration and spiral ornament. Recently fitted features can be distinguished from original components by their artificial patina, rough surface, thin layers of lacquer, bright glue and new nails.

The highly prized 'Maggiolinis' are often forged. This name is given in Italy to nearly all the 'neo-classical' furniture which began to replace in public favour, towards the end of the eighteenth century, examples of the extravagant Rococo manner. The change was attributed to Guiseppe Maggiolini, a furniture manu-

facturer of Parabiago. After his death in 1814 his business was carried on by his son Carlo Francesco and his two pupils Mezzanica and Maffezzoli. Even in the lifetime of the inventor of this type of furniture it began to be imitated throughout Italy and also north of the Alps. It is often hard to distinguish between the genuine and spurious pieces. A characteristic of the original articles was their combination of several different kinds of wood in their natural colours. As many as eighty-six varieties have been counted in a single example. The inlays have no more depth than that of a line drawn in ink, but never less than two millimetres. Modern imitators, on the other hand, are content with a depth of one millimetre. They employ a soft wood, while Maggiolini invariably worked in walnut.

In the nineteenth century factories specialising in the production of 'antique' furniture were to be found in Venice, Brussels, Nuremberg, Cologne, Constance and Paris. For the most part they turned out Louis Quatorze, Quinze, Seize and Empire models, 'formerly owned by Napoleon'. In 1916 the mass production of faked 'antique' furniture so impressed a certain legal author that he declared: 'Exceptions only prove the rule that genuine antique furniture has ceased to appear on the market.' It should not be forgotten, however, that many factories and dealers do not pretend that their goods are anything but imitations and so hardly come into the category of forgers. A book by André Mailfert, for example, entitled *Au Pays des Antiquaires*, attracted great attention throughout France. He had previously owned a factory of the kind just mentioned. The volume gave a gossipy account of his recollections and triumphs. He expressly distinguishes himself from the ordinary run of forgers as being simply a 'furniture-copier'.

In 1957 a huge fraudulent organisation, dealing in 'antique' wood-carvings and furniture, was unmasked in France. The chairman of the Paris art dealers' syndicate announced that information obtained by himself and the police proved that over 90 per cent of all the 'antique' furniture sold in the last fifty years had been forged. A ring of swindlers was discovered, belonging to a concern with many ramifications, which supplied almost the whole world with spurious works of art. The biggest markets were stated to be America, Holland, Belgium and southern and western Germany.

'Real' and 'Imitation' Carpets

ORIENTAL CARPETS have long been known as 'real' as contrasted with the 'imitations' manufactured in Europe. The main difference is that the eastern variety is made by hand and the western by machinery. Sheep in Asia are bred in such a way that they grow wool peculiarly suitable for carpet-weaving. In the oriental 'knotting technique' each thread of yarn is not only drawn through the basic warp but interlocks with it. This process renders the carpet extremely durable. In addition to this practical advantage the fascinating colours and designs employed endow the product with genuine artistic quality.

It is not easy to distinguish between the 'real' and the 'imitation' article. Many people believe that in eastern carpets the tufted ends of the pile are left loose at the edges of the fabric, while in the machine-made carpet they are visibly knotted up. But connoisseurs know that this feature may be deceptive. The knotted up fringe is no more than a clear proof of non-oriental origin. Some machine-made carpets may have free-lying ends.

An essential characteristic of the 'real' product is the so-called 'gradation', a variation of hue within a given field of colour in the pattern. This happens when the weaver runs short of a certain shade of dyed wool and carries on with new, redipped strands. Such changes lend animation to his work. They are of course reproduced deliberately by imitators and forgers. But just as in forged pictures artificially induced cracks and 'damaged' passages show a certain regularity in their arrangement, so in carpets the contrived 'gradations' do not look natural, but forced and systematic.

Prices for the 'real' articles are determined by the delicacy of the knotting, the quality of the wool, the clipping of the tufts

after knotting, the clarity of drawing in the pattern, the beauty and authenticity of the colouring and the excellence and originality of design. Correct judgment can only be based upon instinctive good taste in this domain of art and an understanding of it gained by experience.

In former times most of these characteristics could be referred to their place of origin. Carpets from each locality had quite distinct qualities of their own. A 'Caucasian' rug is brightly coloured, coarsely woven and durable, the hues being obtained with 'genuine' traditional vegetable and mineral dyes. A 'Tabriz' carpet is delicately knotted and presents systems of arabesques. But these regional designations are no longer entirely reliable. For very few such genuine articles are still being produced in their native districts.

The so-called 'Shirvan' and 'Caucasian' carpets, the colourful 'Anatolian' rugs, the Chinese variety in pastel shades and the 'Turkmen', sometimes dark red and decorated with cruciform, octagonal and rhomboid shapes, nearly all come from the places named. But prospective purchasers of these valuable specimens should not rely on their designations alone. For prized and 'dying out' native products are often imitated by Persian manufacturers and these 'spurious' articles are no longer of the old quality. Persian 'Bokharas', for instance, do not reach the standard of the genuine old Turkmen rugs. Before buying expensive items of this kind the advice of a recognised expert should be taken. But it is essential in any case for the amateur to study the signs by which true oriental carpets can be identified. These characteristics are clearly explained in the literature on the subject.

Present-day production cannot compare with that of earlier times. Few of the regional types still maintain the 'genuine colouring'. Yet the modern 'Tabriz' and 'Kerman' carpets, richly adorned with foliage, flowers and arabesques, are of very high quality. Extremely durable, coarse-textured 'Heratis' and 'Hamadans' are made to-day, as well as 'Shiraz' and similar types which are worth the price asked.

In addition to the genuine oriental rugs so much in demand many imitations of them are sold. But special caution must be exercised in considering those 'exceptional offers' of 'real' carpets made by travelling salesmen. In 1957 a female witness at a trial in Cologne stated: 'The defendant called at my house and

told me in broken German, which I could hardly understand, that he was a Persian. He said that in order to raise the money for his fare home he was prepared to sell a genuine Persian carpet worth 3600 marks for 800.’ He subsequently lowered this figure to 250. The witness continued: ‘He kept talking away, saying it was a unique, hand-woven bargain, twenty feet long, and showed me a seal attached to it. I didn’t know what to think!’ She rang up her husband, who was at first delighted to hear of such a unique opportunity and advised her to seize it. But afterwards he had doubts, rushed home and was just in time to stop the purchase. When he demanded more detailed information about the rug’s origin, the ‘Persian’ flung the money he had received for it on the table and shouted at the top of his voice in fluent German: ‘All right, if you don’t want it, I’ll take it away!’ The self-styled ‘Persian’ was obliged to confess in Court that his carpet wasn’t ‘Persian’ either. It was a Belgian ‘half and half product’ which he had bought wholesale for 160 marks. His defence counsel pleaded: ‘To charge only 250 marks for an article alleged to be worth 3600 can surely not be regarded as fraud. It’s only a “Jacob’s lie”, which anyone can see through, its purpose being evident. My client might just as well have said he was selling a “flying carpet”!’ But the Court declined to allow the ‘Persian’s’ attempted transaction to pass as a joke. The defendant was found guilty of fraud. He was sentenced to two weeks’ imprisonment and put on probation.

The Lure of Profit

THE ROMAN ANTIQUARY Augusto Jandolo once remarked in conversation with a collector: 'The shortage of genuine pieces necessarily leads to their imitation.' 'I daresay,' retorted the collector. 'But there are far too many forgeries!' 'Well, in the last resort that's the fault of you people,' Jandolo replied. 'You always will have everything perfect! You're obsessed with the idea of something complete, in a flawless state of preservation. That's what gives others the idea of forgery!'

He rightly perceived that most of such frauds arise from the disproportion between supply and demand. There are not nearly so many antiquities about as the trade needs. Nothing, accordingly, seems more natural than to supply imitations to make good the shortage and satisfy the demand. The collector wants 'perfect, well-preserved items'. Consequently, the trader in genuine antiquities is tempted to restore or have them imitated.

Many collectors also stimulate forgery by attaching a special value to 'names'. A work must be from the hand of a famous and much admired artist to 'amount to anything' in the eyes of the public. Ambroise Vollard, who did so much for the new painting of his day, relates in his memoirs that a certain collector, after being absolutely delighted by a picture offered him, suddenly declined it on discovering that it was by an artist not then generally recognised, Pissarro. Vollard also refers to a lady who was at first enraptured by a painting and then, on hearing its low price, remarked: 'How disappointing! I was so pleased with that picture. But really, one can't buy pictures by unknown people!' So it's not the *work* of art, but its *worth*, in financial terms, that decides the question. And those terms are fixed by the artist's reputation. Wilhelm Bode used to say that American collectors

and private buyers were responsible for this state of affairs. As their requirements were impossible to meet honestly and the prices they offered were fantastic, the forgers got to work.

Most of their frauds are quite deliberate, dictated by sheer greed. As soon as art began to be collected and became an object of trade, forgeries multiplied. For the profits earned in this way might be large and the risk was relatively small. Coiners, at all times, in all countries, have been very severely punished, as a rule tortured to death. But the forger of works of art gets off very lightly. Moreover, his profits rise as the market value of art appreciates. When Dossena's imitations were turned into forgeries by the dealers, the latter benefited to the tune of about forty million lire. Han van Meegeren, the forger of Vermeers, made about seven million marks, in a few years, by his frauds. He was sentenced to a year's imprisonment.

Many forgeries undertaken on account of financial distress, ambition or vanity, have also been intentional. Painters and sculptors have considered that their work was insufficiently recognised. They found that productions no better than their own were more highly esteemed simply because they were executed at well-known periods or by famous 'names'. The neglected artists then tried the experiments of reproducing similar work over forged signatures or in the style of a certain epoch. There can be no question of fraud if the truth is made known immediately afterwards. Cremonese's 'Venus of Brizet' comes into this category of spurious works of art. Cremonese did not deceive anybody. He simply wished to draw attention to himself and give the connoisseurs 'something to think about'. Han van Meegeren turned forger, according to his own account, because he needed recognition. But after the 'success' of his experiment he had not the courage to make a voluntary confession and thus rendered himself guilty of cheating.

Forgeries are often initiated by some ruling passion, such as that of collectors not rich enough to form a comprehensive assembly of genuine works of art but nevertheless ardently desirous of 'eminence' in this connection. They may, for example, acquire as many rough sketches as possible by some well-known hand and have them worked up into finished products which then become 'important'. Incomplete pictures and statues may both be 'brought to perfection' in this way. Similarly, copies or

free versions of an original may be touched up and represented as the original itself, thus becoming forgeries. The Millet Museum at Barbizon offers a melancholy instance of this sort of bogus collection.

A curious case is reported in the reminiscences of Henry Rochefort. There was a certain eccentric picture dealer in Paris who would have nothing to do with original works and only accepted forgeries. He laboriously collected the monograms of old masters, which he was in the habit of inscribing on any suitable painting of dubious origin that came into his hands. He would then joyously boast to all and sundry of his new acquisition, saying, for example: 'You remember that wonderful Lancret I picked up yesterday at an auction? Well, I've cleaned it up a bit and found this signature on it in full! That'll be news, won't it, to that fool of an expert who wouldn't commit himself to guaranteeing it?' If this strange type of collector ever did find himself in possession of a genuine masterpiece, duly signed by the artist himself, he did not hesitate, in pursuance of his mania, to obliterate the old signature and replace it with another. When he was asked why he turned pure gold into common lead in this way, he replied: 'Well, if I let it stand, people would soon notice that the signatures on my other pictures are false!' If a purchaser complained of having been swindled he could return the work and get his money back. For example, the dealer in question once sold an alleged Canaletto to a banker for 30,000 francs. A few days later the banker had it examined and certified as spurious. On being challenged the dealer merely smiled. 'Right,' he said. 'Would you like to sell it back to me for 32,000?' That evening he told his friends: 'You're all a lot of asses! I knew that picture was genuine. Monsieur X bought it back from me to-day!' Soon afterwards he remarked to the banker: 'I don't know how to thank you for letting me have that wonderful Canaletto back again. I've just sold it for 45,000 francs. It's gone to England.' He really still had it in a back room. But from that moment the banker bought from the dealer with his eyes shut and never again disputed the authenticity of a purchase. The forger of monograms is said to have made 30,000 francs a year by playing this little game.

Lastly, works of art have also been forged by way of a joke. Those in this category involve no deliberate fraud and therefore

do not come before the Courts. Their exposure as a rule leads only to amusement. But the laughter is of a kind calculated to teach over-enthusiastic and credulous collectors and scholars a much needed lesson.

In 1726 a book by Professor Johann Bartholomäus Beringer, entitled, in Latin: *Fossils Found at Würzburg, Mainly in the Shapes of Insects, Illustrated with Marvellous Engravings*, was published at Würzburg. The author, who eventually became a laughing-stock, was Physician in Ordinary to the Prince-Bishop of Würzburg. But this eccentric scholar was more interested in prehistory than in medicine.

It was on this account that some of his colleagues or pupils decided to play a salutary trick on him. One day Beringer came to the conclusion that he had made the find of his life in a marlpit near Würzburg. He unearthed a number of absolutely unique fossils. There were butterflies with six wings, spiders and their webs, gigantic bees, huge mussels and prehistoric frogs, comets, suns and moons, some with human faces, and tablets inscribed with Hebraic characters. Enraptured by his discovery of these objects, Beringer had drawings made of them and wrote a book about it all, dedicated to the Prince-Bishop. He refused to listen to those who warned him of possible forgery of the 'fossils', ascribing such admonitions to the envy of his colleagues and the childish innocence of his pupils. But during further excavations he found an inscribed stone which deprived him of all his illusions on the subject. Deciphering its Hebrew characters, he found that they spelt his own name, 'Beringer'. He withdrew his book from circulation. He had learned a lesson that would prevent him in future from jumping to conclusions. In 1767 a second edition of the book appeared, called *The False Fossils of Würzburg*, to serve as a cautionary tale for over-zealous archaeologists.

In the middle of the nineteenth century a search was made in Aachen Cathedral for the tomb of Charlemagne. The 'important clues' found in many of the excavations interested other circles besides the scientific. Certain citizens of Aachen conspired to lay a trap for the too readily credulous investigators. A stone with the inscription, 'Here lie the bones of Charles the Great', was secretly placed among the foundations of a certain chapel. When the stone was 'discovered' enthusiasm ran riot in the Press.

LONG SOUGHT TOMB OF FAMOUS EMPEROR FOUND AT LAST the

headlines proclaimed. But it was soon revealed that their joy was premature. The inscription had been etched and was spurious. Nor, in spite of further search that lasted for decades, has the Emperor's tomb ever been found.

While a railway embankment was being dug on a road in France called the 'Chemin des Ânes' a huge stone was unearthed bearing the apparently fragmentary inscription:

I.	C.	I.	E	S
TL	EC		H	E
M	IN		DE	
SA	Ne		S	

The meaning of these letters was long debated. Archaeologists conjectured that they stood for the names of Roman consuls or emperors. But at last one of the 'planters' of the stone read off the 'ancient' text without a moment's hesitation, to the amazement of the scholars and the malicious delight of the lay public, as: ICI EST LE CHEMIN DES ÂNES. This forgery, too, may be recorded as a warning to over-zealous men of learning.

In the Shadows

THERE ARE many different kinds of bogus works of art. By no means all of them are deliberate swindles. Their history proves that a great many 'forgeries without a forger' exist. These include copies, overpaintings, extracts, restorations and free versions, which are all executed without intention to deceive and only later become forgeries, owing to false ascriptions. Only a section of all sham art is planned as such. As a rule it is the dealers who make big profits by consciously misleading buyers.

The fact that forgeries of art are peculiarly successful in unsettled times is something more than coincidence. Forgers and swindlers can pursue their 'calling' undisturbed when people's minds are occupied by other matters. For example, when the troops of Napoleon were invading southern Germany, Abraham Wolfgang Küffner exploited the situation to distribute his clever forgeries and to steal a self-portrait by Dürer. It was during the excitement over the Dreyfus affair that the 'Tiara of Saitapharnes' was acquired by the Paris authorities. In Belgium and France, during the occupation of those countries in the first world war, the trade in bogus modern paintings flourished. The scandals in connection with Alceo Dossena and Otto Wacker have been quoted as typical consequences of that war. The last two important trials in this field, those of the Dutchman Han van Meegeren and the Lübeck painter Lothar Malskat, did not merely chance to occur during the régime of the Third Reich and the second world war. Nor would the case of Jupp Jenniches of Cologne have been conceivable in any period but that of the aftermath of the last war.

Most forgeries begin by being more or less free copies of originals. But the fundamental difference between a copy and a

forgery should be clearly recognised. There can be no objection to any artist copying another's work and selling such copies. The more faithful they are to the original, the more value they have as perfect specimens of their kind. The same may be said of reproductions, the technique of which has quite recently contrived, by 'plastic' renderings, to give the impression of the original brush-strokes. But as soon as such imitations start being issued as original works and command correspondingly high prices, the copies become forgeries.

An honest copyist, in order to prevent any such future exploitation, usually notes on his imitation the fact that it is one. But in spite of this practice such copies are sometimes turned into forgeries by the carelessness of the purchaser, as happened, for instance, in the well-known case of a copy of Raphael's portrait of Pope Leo X. No less an artist than Andrea del Sarto (1486-1520) prepared this copy on the instructions of one of the Medici family. The latter gave it out to be the original painting by Raphael and thus rendered it a forgery of that artist's work. But Andrea del Sarto was neither a forger nor a swindler. He had with perfect propriety initialled the copy. Many of the imitators of the great German, Italian, French, Spanish and Dutch masters have been similarly innocent, unquestionably, of the fraud by which their copies subsequently became forgeries.

In discussing copies and forgeries it must not be forgotten that the distinct meanings now attached to these terms were not always recognised in the past. When Greek sculpture and Egyptian obelisks were imitated in ancient Rome and described as Greek or Egyptian art, these works were nevertheless, though spurious, not forgeries. Nor are the copies of well-known buildings and monuments which are to be seen on historic sites to-day and are admired by tourists as original productions. It is common knowledge, for example, that in the case of many such memorials only a few features recall the environment and the times of the personages to whom they relate. Instances of mere reproductions in important positions include Belgium's most popular statue, that of the 'oldest citizen of Brussels', and the copy of Michelangelo's 'David' in front of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence.

Certain contemporaries and imitators of Rembrandt (1606-69) not only painted in his style but used his signature. Yet they were

not necessarily fraudulent forgers in the modern sense. Some of the works of such artists as Gerard Dou, Nicolas Maes, Ferdinand Bol, Govaert Flinck, Aert de Gelder and Gerbrand van den Eeckhout are so completely Rembrandtesque that it is simply not possible for a present-day critic to distinguish them from canvases by the great master (see illustration). Immerzeel writes of a portrait by Bol that 'it is painted so wholly in Rembrandt's manner that when it is seen in isolation it could not only be taken for a work by that incomparable artist but actually for one of his finest pictures'.

It is particularly hard in the case of Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) to tell originals from copies. The pupils and colleagues who worked in his studio were very numerous. No modern critic can therefore say for certain which of the pictures current under his name were really painted by himself. They amount in all to about three thousand. Many of them were no doubt executed by his best pupil Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641) and others of less note. Rubens, in his grand way, cared nothing for distinctions between originals, copies and imitations. But he never made the slightest attempt to hoodwink anyone. He wrote, for example, in 1618 to Sir Dudley Carlton concerning a 'Last Judgment' copied by a pupil from the picture now at Munich, 'As this reproduction is not yet quite completed, I am going to retouch it throughout myself. So it can pass for an original if necessary.' Sir Dudley, characteristically enough, wanted pictures described by Rubens as his own. But the artist tried to convince the Englishman that the others were by no means 'just copies'. 'I have retouched them to such effect that they can hardly be distinguished from the originals . . . they are perfect miracles at the price.' The master, by thus stressing his collaboration with other painters and taking the fact into consideration when calculating his charges, was deliberately disassociating himself from the conduct typical of forgers and swindlers.

Yet in our own day Rubens has been called a 'forger of works of art'. The American art historian Charles Roger Bordley, who lives in Paris, accuses this 'moderately gifted' painter of fraud because he offered for sale works by other artists as his own and thereby acquired a great reputation. Bordley seeks to prove, in a volume which is the fruit of thirty years' study, that most of the pictures supposed to be by Rubens were really executed by the

manager of his studio Frans Snyders (1579-1657). 'Snyders', he writes, 'produced masterpieces which served to promote the fame of some of his contemporaries, above all that of the shrewdest business man in the whole history of art, Rubens.' This statement represents the hitherto accepted history of Flemish painting in Ruben's time as a myth. The American scholar's bold heresy was criticised by the *Elseviers Weekblad* in the following terms: 'If Bordley's argument meets with general assent, the extensive literature we possess dealing with Peter Paul Rubens and Anthony van Dyck at once becomes obsolete and will have to be drastically revised. All the big galleries will be obliged to rewrite their catalogues and the paintings alleged to be by these masters which are still on the market will immediately lose, with their present attribution, a considerable proportion of their commercial value.' But for the moment no such thing has happened. The question has first to be decided whether Rubens falsified his works or whether Bordley's daring pronouncement falsified the situation.

It is certain that centres of art forgery already existed in the days of the great Flemish painters. The Antwerp dealer Gerrit Uhlenbroch employed young artists without means as copyists. His activities were revealed when the Elector of Brandenburg believed himself to have been defrauded. Uhlenbroch appealed to the municipality. They appointed fifty experts to decide the matter. But no agreement could be reached. At that period protests were already being made against art forgery and measures called for to restrain it. At the beginning of the eighteenth century Arnold Houbraken wrote: 'I find it intolerable that people should be pestered with copies and daubs masquerading as originals, which everyone is then supposed to admire.' The most notorious scandal relating to copies occurred between the wars in connection with Wacker's trial for the sale of bogus 'van Goghs'.

A clever trick involving the substitution of copies for an original was played by a dealer who exhibited in his shop, on an easel, a splendid picture by a famous master. Behind it, in the same blind frame, an exact copy of the original was inserted. Many buyers were attracted and the genuine painting was sold over and over again. For the dealer explained, on every occasion, after concluding the bargain, that he would like to pack up the

work carefully for delivery, but that the new owner had better certify that it was now his property by writing his name on the back of the picture. The unsuspecting customer would do so and subsequently receive, not the original, but the copy underneath it. The fraud was not discovered until a less trustful client insisted on taking the original with him.

Church authorities are not in the habit of checking their purchases very rigorously. Consequently, it is relatively easy in such cases to substitute copies for originals. In the past, when authenticity was not so systematically investigated as it is to-day, there can be little doubt that old paintings and statues were often replaced by forgeries. But as lately as July 1959 a scandal of this kind arose at Lille in France. The venerable miracle-working statue of the Virgin in the basilica of Notre Dame de la Treille, which had been made a cathedral in 1913, disappeared. Thieves had substituted for it the cast carried in processions. But the mantle which had covered the original figure, as well as the costly crowns of Mother and Child, had not been taken. Only the statue itself, dating from the thirteenth century, had been removed.

Forgeries are very often contrived by the simple expedient of affixing a false signature. Such a procedure is of course deliberately misleading and involves fraud. Sometimes the works so treated are of early date. Proof of forgery is then very difficult to establish. It is especially so when only a single letter of the original signature is altered. One such case is reported as follows in Frimmel's *Art of Painting*. 'One of the items in the Jakobsen collection at Copenhagen is a double portrait undoubtedly to be assigned, on the evidence of costume and style, to the second half of the sixteenth century. The hands are treated in the same way as those in Neufchâtel's portrait of Neudörfer at Munich. The range of colours employed is also very close to that painter's. He was active at Nuremberg after 1561 and died not earlier than 1590. But the date 1520 is inscribed on the Jakobsen picture. That surprised me. I examined the work closely and repeatedly. It is unquestionably old and not a forgery. There is nothing suspicious about the inscription, AETATIS SUAE 41. ANO 1520, with the exception of the date. The cracking of the canvas follows the same pattern as in other paintings on this material of about that period. But under the 2 of the date fissuring has been almost

imperceptibly painted over at certain points. The upper portion of the 2 is old and genuine. But the lower is not. At some time or other a 7 has been turned into a 2 by the application of an oblique brush-stroke at the bottom. It was probably supposed that a picture dated 1520 would be worth more than one of 1570.'

Forgeries with similarly 'amended' signatures, or with new, false signatures appended, have been very common for centuries. In Germany they were particularly associated with the name of Dürer. In the lifetime of that master, when it was already proving difficult to stem the flow of imitations of his works, the use of an artist's sign-manual by anyone but himself was prohibited.

Even in those days the productions of unknown and insignificant painters had been made 'important' by the addition of a great master's signature. During the following centuries, no doubt, great numbers of worthless creations had been 'enriched' by the magical suggestions of a name in this way. The appearance of a master's token in a modern forgery is also regarded as decisive proof of intent to defraud.

Copies are often more or less freely executed and transposed in detail. A common practice is to turn a design the other way round by the use of tracing paper. Forgers are also fond of reproducing individual passages of an original as separate works. It is relatively easy to cut out, so to speak, one group or even a single figure from reliefs or pictures which contain many scenes or personages and exhibit them in isolation. A forged 'Goya' was once identified at a showing of that artist's paintings by the fact that it represented solely the group of figures in the Spanish master's own well-known 'Crock-sellers'.

A more cunning type of forger may take extracts and details from a number of different originals and combine them in a single work. For example, the travelling exhibitions of forgeries which started from Holland contained a sham Holbein, a portrait in which the head and the hands had been copied from two different originals. It was this fact which led to its identification. Forgers of 'Gauguin's' produce new South Sea scenes by 'lifting' typical figures from his various representations of standing and squatting Tahitian women. Han van Meegeren proceeded in the same way in the case of his two Pieter de Hooch forgeries, in which individual figures and motives from different pictures by the Dutch master appear.

Some forgers specialise in the painting over of engravings, photographs and other types of print. In former times they repeatedly turned black and white works and drawings into coloured pictures. Well-known examples of such productions, though in this case they were not all intended to deceive, are the early versions painted of Dürer's motives. Even at the Court of the Indian Moguls of the seventeenth century drawings by Dürer, brought by missionaries, were bound in gorgeous portfolios and painted over in a free style by the native artists employed by the sovereign. This comparatively simple process was naturally continued by the forgers of later times. A certain Jan Pieter coloured engravings by Rubens, which he then sold at high prices. But eventually his own country grew too hot to hold him and he migrated to England. Like the hardened cynic he was, he once wrote:

*Pieter Jan, the trading man,
by nature is a charlatan.
In art an anabaptist, he
humbugs the world in trickery!*

Some years ago, in Vienna, an ingenious fraud was perpetrated in connection with two water-colours by Rudolf von Alt (1812-1905). A dishonest servant was persuaded by a dealer to let him have the originals, while the owners were away, in order that copies might be made. A few days later the dealer brought the pictures back. But they were imitations. Exact photographs of the works had been taken and printed on water-colour paper rendered sensitive to light. These had then been copied and coloured by hand. When the originals and the forgeries were laid side by side no difference worth mentioning could be perceived even in the most delicate tones.

Counterfeiters often affix ordinary colour-reproductions to old canvas or board and then apply fresh colour. A Viennese scandal concerned with an alleged Memling, Rogier van der Weyden or Bouts' is related by Eudel-Roessler. The picture looked as if it had been painted on an old, worm-eaten oak panel. The old trademark of the Amsterdam Guild of St Luke had been branded into the wood. The very fissurings seemed genuine. A well-known Viennese collector offered 20,000 kronen for the work, provided it were guaranteed by an expert. When the latter took

the picture out of its frame, he immediately exclaimed: 'This is simply a faked print on paper!' It was found to be an ordinary colour-plate, one of those illustrated in an album of reprints of works by old masters which was issued by the firm of Fischer and Franke under the editorship of Bode and Friedländer. The paper had been carefully affixed to an old, worn out panel, the tell-tale edges had been smoothed away, the cracks shown in the print had been etched in with the needle and rubbed over with dark colour. Then the entire surface had been heavily varnished.

Similar treatment was applied to a genuine water-colour by Eugène Isabey (1804-86) in order to render it in oils. Oil paintings by this artist being very rare, the dealer had not hesitated to forge one from an authentic water-colour. The paper of the genuine work was first rendered transparent by rubbing the back. Then it was pasted on a wooden panel and pressed in, so firmly that it seemed part of the wood itself. Next, the tones were given chemical treatment to bring them out. When a thick varnish was applied the effect was just the same as that of an oil-painting. The picture fetched high prices at various auctions. But eventually damage to the varnish revealed the fragility of the colouring and drawing. This discovery proved the work to be a forgery.

Transformation from one medium to another is a favourite device for the production of counterfeits. Not only are oil-paintings concocted from prints and water-colours but sculptures are often modelled on pictures and vice versa. New drawings may be made on the basis of an already existent oil and then represented as preliminary studies for it. Lothar Malskat performed this feat in connection with Renoir's 'The Bath'. Other cases in which sculptures were taken from paintings included forgeries imitative of Dürer's works, the Tiara of Saitapharnes, the bust of Flora and the productions of Alceo Dossena.

The so-called 'aristocrats' among art forgers, however, do not copy or combine different media. In a sense they create afresh, inspired by the spirit of the past. This is the case especially with works not intended to deceive, which are simply the fruit of a certain type of enthusiasm for the art of former times. Giovanni Bastianini, Alceo Dossena and in our own day Beppi Rifesser belong to this group. Naturally enough, the productions of such artists do show affinities with and even direct borrowings from particular works of the past. But it cannot be denied that an



45

Malskat at an exhibition of his works. After his release from prison, Malskat arranged an exhibition of his paintings in a number of towns in North Germany to show his merits as an artist.



46

Forged paintings by Malskat. Nude in the style of Toulouse-Lautrec and painting in the style of Chagall. These were both exhibited in Essen as examples of modern forgeries.

47

Water-colour by Emil Nolde (1867-1956). Model for a forgery by Jupp Jenniches, a museum attendant, who took a tracing of the original from which he made a reversed impression.



48

Forgery by Jupp Jenniches of a water-colour by Emil Nolde. There is a significant difference between the original and the forgery: Nolde's lifelike portrait of a woman has become flat, like a drawing for a poster.



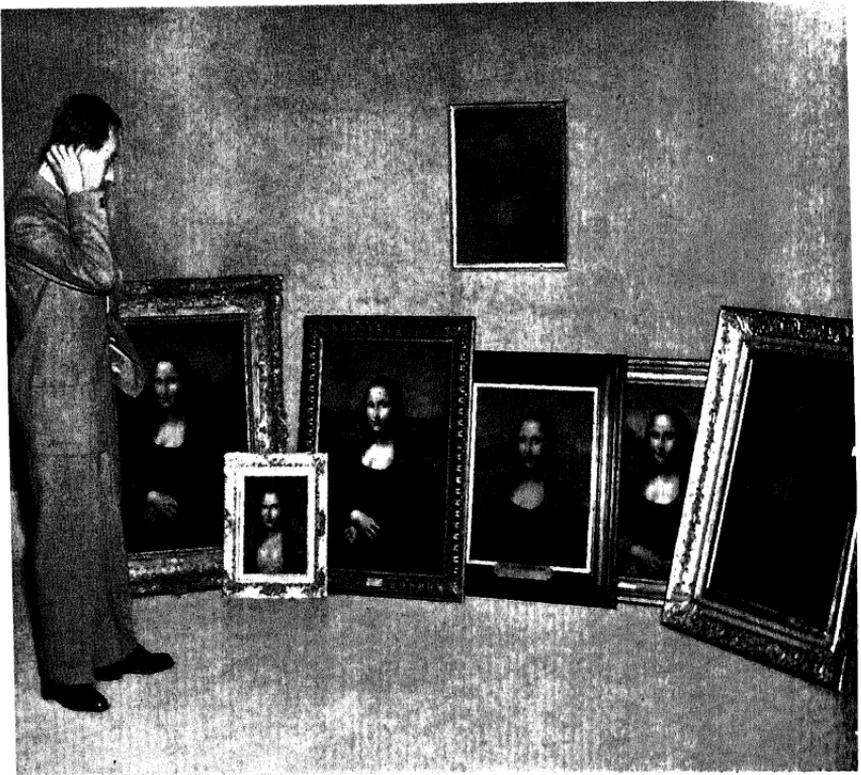


49
‘Virgin and Child.’ Wood carving
by Beppi Rifesser, St Ulrich,
Southern Tyrol. The figure was
accepted by a Viennese firm of
auctioneers as a Burgundian
carving of c. 1380 and exhibited
as such.



50

Rifesser at work in his studio at St Ulrich. When he heard of the attribution given to his carving, he came forward and cleared up the whole matter.



51 Genuine or forgery? Eight versions of the Mona Lisa make a puzzle for the art lover. This famous painting has constantly figured in questions of forgery although no expert has ever doubted the authenticity of the painting in the Louvre.

original, personal element is also present. Even Han van Mee-geren, the forger of 'Vermeers', contrived to assimilate his own style to that of the former idiom of Delft so closely as to delude specialists themselves.

Another form of forgery is constituted by the splitting up of works originally produced as a whole. This trick is much more prevalent than is generally believed. It began with the separation of altar-wings from their centrepieces and culminated in the positive dissection of paintings. The object was to create more favourable conditions for disposal, especially in the case of representations of crowded scenes where the subject was not of much interest, and also, in particular, to make a much higher profit by selling separate sections individually. The history of Manet's 'Execution of Maximilian', for example, is related in Vollard's memoirs. Manet's brother-in-law remarked that 'the picture may be unsaleable as it stands. But we might be able to do something about it. That sergeant, for instance, who is just loading his rifle, could pass as a *genre* figure in isolation.' So the sergeant was cut out and sold separately to Edgar Degas, who was told that the rest of the painting had been accidentally ruined. When he heard the news Degas, who was not exactly domestically minded, exclaimed: 'That's what comes of having a family!'

Augusto Jandolo writes that 'the step from restoration to forgery is soon taken'. It is true that in most restored works old and new passages can no longer be distinguished. And forgery arises as soon as the original state begins to be renovated, with consequent alteration. Former ages judged these matters differently. The impression made by a work of art was regarded as more important than its original condition. Consequently, no one hesitated to complete and 'make like new' the antique productions then discovered. Even famous works were falsified in this way. The 'Laocoon', for instance, found at Rome in 1506, was disfigured by the sculptor Montorsoli, one of Michelangelo's collaborators, who 'completed' it. Further components of the group were unearthed in 1905 by the German archaeologist Pollak. They showed that the original had been quite differently composed. The renowned sculptures from the temple at Aegina, now in the Munich Glyptothek, were also restored by the well-meant efforts of Thorwaldsen, which nevertheless amounted to forgery. Missing portions were carved in marble and fastened

to the originals with iron plugs. It was realised that these restorations were quite incompetent and bore little relation to the grouping of the figures. But no one ventured to revise them. An opportunity was thus missed to state authoritatively which parts were old, which new and which had been remodelled in any way. Thorwaldsen himself, in his old age, could no longer describe the character and extent of his 'restorations'.

Goethe in his *Italian Journey* of 1786 refers to a quarrel about the restoration of antiques in Rome. A French collector 'had acquired, goodness knows where, an ancient fresco. He had it restored by Mengs and gave it an honoured place in his collection. Winckelmann mentions it somewhere with great admiration . . . Then the Frenchman died, bequeathing the picture, as an antique, to his landlady. When Mengs lay dying, he said the work was not ancient at all and that he had painted it all himself. A great controversy ensued. Some people said it was just a careless sketch by Mengs, done as a joke. Others swore that Mengs would never have been able to do such a thing, for even Raphael could hardly have produced anything so beautiful.'

The grand scale on which artists in earlier times completed, overpainted and consequently altered original pictures is illustrated by the fate of the wings of Dürer's 'Baumgartner Altarpiece'. The forged background, by Johann Georg Fischer, was not removed until 1903, nearly three hundred years after its execution. No doubt other famous pictures are still extant which have been partially overpainted. In 1955 J. W. Karstens, a Zandvoort restorer, made the sensational discovery of a genuine work by the Dutch landscape painter Jacob van Ruysdael (1625-82) underneath a 'Ruysdael' which had been 'improperly' restored and overpainted.

Nowadays opinions differ about the desirability of restorations. Some people complain bitterly of the inconsiderate removal of top layers of pigment, which may date from the initial period of the work. It was objected, for example, that the restoration of the Rembrandt landscape at Kassel involved the elimination of a genuine old overpainting by Rembrandt himself. Max Liebermann, again, is known to have been furious at the restoration, excessive in his view, of Rembrandt's 'Family Portrait' at Brunswick. It has also been asserted that Rubens's famous 'Straw Hat' was so over-cleaned that sections of the underpainting have

become visible in the background. On the other hand, there is much enthusiasm for modern methods of restoration, which, it is claimed, do away with every conceivable type of alteration and distortion and recapture the original effect. The pictures thus treated are declared to have never looked 'so radiant'.

But the Lübeck scandal in which Malskat and Fey were concerned proves that even to-day restoration is sometimes undertaken for a fraudulent purpose. That affair revealed with shocking clarity how dangerous such procedures can be. As a result, regulations defining the limits of correct restoration were laid down, perhaps for the first time in the history of art, in order to prevent, so far as possible, such forgeries as were perpetrated at St Mary's Church in Lübeck and at other places of worship in northern Germany.

No doubt many forgeries consequent upon restoration come under the heading of those 'without a forger'. This expression denotes works executed with no intent to defraud and only grouped as forgeries owing to false attribution. They are to be found in all departments of art. The Benivieni bust is cited as a typical example of such productions. In painting, certain school works and early copies have been attributed to their 'original' and thus became forgeries. Pictures by Dürer's followers obviously belong to this group.

But many counterfeits were planned and executed as such. In these cases the responsible artist committed forgery, as did Küffner with his 'Self-portrait of Albrecht Dürer' (see illustration), Wacker with his 'van Goghs' and Han van Meegeren with his 'Vermeers' and 'Pieter de Hoochs'. Even well-known and important artists have been guilty of forgery through their heedless signature of the works of others. Phidias is reported to have signed a sculpture by his favourite pupil Agoracritus. In 1951 Picasso observed to Aly Khan: 'If the counterfeit were a good one, I should be delighted. I'd sit down straightaway and sign it.' Ingres was so pleased with the copy of his portrait of Bertin executed by Amaury Duval, a pupil of the master, that he readily signed the work. It is known that Corot and Utrillo also signed school works and thereby created forgeries by appending a genuine signature.

It has also been repeatedly proved that artists of importance, for one reason or another, have repudiated their own productions

by signing them with the names of other painters. Volland reports in his *Memoirs* that 'Gauguin once gave Mme Gloanec, who kept the inn where he was staying, a wonderful still life as a birthday present. A member of the Committee of Fine Art of the Paris Town Council happened to be staying at the inn at the same time. As soon as he heard the name of Gauguin, he declared in so many words that he would leave the inn at once if any picture by "that swine" were hung in the public room. Accordingly, Gauguin, so that Mme Gloanec could decorate her walls with his gift and still not lose a resident, signed the work 'Madeleine B'. This was the name of Émile Bernard's sister, who was staying, with her brother, at the same inn.' The picture was later acquired by Maurice Denis. Mozart's 'Requiem' nearly became a forgery in this sense. It had been commissioned by a patron who wished to publish it as his own work. If the music had ever been finished, it might have become known under a different name.

Questions of authenticity are sometimes raised by the frequent phenomenon of duplicates from the same hand, which are of course distinct from copies by another person. In former times artists did not hesitate to produce replicas of their work. But to-day such repetitions are regarded as unacceptable. Hanns Gross, Professor of Criminal Law at the University of Czernowitz, designates all duplicates of works of art as, 'from a juristic standpoint', forgeries. Ferdinand Hodler was censured for 'wilful' deceit on account of his four versions of the 'Woodcutter'.

Many other artists, either in compliance with a contract, because they needed money or because the original work had been lost, have produced replicas, copies or slightly variant versions of it. Van Gogh's duplicates, for instance, were executed because he was short of cash. He thus made it easy for forgers, at a later date, to offer copies as originals. At that time artists had no particular objection to repeating themselves. When a collector visited the Douanier Rousseau to fetch a picture he had ordered, the painter confessed that he had sold it, as he was in need of money. But he promised his client to produce another picture 'exactly like it' in a few days' time.

In 1903 Anders Zorn asked the National Museum of Stockholm for the loan of his 'Midsummer Dance', on exhibition at that establishment, as he wished to show the painting in Copenhagen. But his request was refused. So he painted a duplicate, which was

duly displayed in the Danish capital. Marc Chagall had left behind in Berlin, on his departure from the city in 1914, a number of works painted in his first Paris period. On his return to Germany eight years later, the pictures had disappeared. He accordingly produced replicas. Karl Hofer did the same thing when many of his works were destroyed in an air raid on Berlin during the second world war. Such duplicates are in general repudiated by connoisseurs and described as a variety of forgery. It is usually maintained that there can be only one original work by an artist and that all subsequent productions of a similar character are imitations.

Auguste Rodin drew a clear distinction between originals and replicas. According to Vollard a lady visitor once handed him a certain bronze statuette. 'That's a wonderfully fine cast!' he exclaimed. He took an exactly similar cast from a shelf and stood it beside the other. 'They're both perfect,' he remarked thoughtfully. 'And yet one of them is spurious. But which?' He went on at once to explain what he meant. 'I consider a work by myself to be genuine when I have given permission for it to be cast, but spurious if it is cast without my consent. In the case of this statuette I only authorised a single cast. But obviously two were made. Which is the genuine one?'

As a rule forgeries are perpetrated behind the artist's back by fraudulent dealers, like Schapschelle Hochman, Alfredo Fasoli, the 'wood-worm king' Romano Palesi, Otto Wacker and Josef Auer. But this list is by no means exhaustive. Names could be added taken from all periods, countries and fields of art. In 1955, for example, a Seville 'Lothar Malskat' turned up. His name was Manuel Monedero and he was a pupil of the well-known Spanish painter Romero Resendi, a specialist in Andalusian scenes. At the beginning of November 1955 Resendi's agent Rafael Grosso offered eleven of his employer's pictures for sale at astonishingly low prices to the Cubiles Gallery at Seville. He explained that they had been produced 'in an ecstasy'. That was why they were so cheap and so different from the master's other works in style and technique. After some preliminary hesitation Cubiles bought up the lot at a nominal price. When Resendi heard of the transaction he exposed the paintings as forgeries. Thirty similar productions were discovered. Grosso confessed that Monedero had sold him the counterfeits for very little and that his own resale of them as Resendi's had rendered them forgeries.

Anatole France observes that the trade of an art dealer is incompatible with honesty. As a student of cultural history he was astonished, he writes, to find in Augusto Jandolo of Rome 'a dealer who told the truth. The fact seemed so extraordinary that I had to pass it on when I returned to Paris. But I was sure before I started that no one would believe me.' Jandolo himself commented on this passage: 'Prophetic words by a genius!' Picasso once grimly remarked: 'Museums contain nothing more than a pack of lies and people who make a trade of art are usually swindlers.' A Munich Public Prosecutor declared in 1958: 'Art dealing is a business in which it is easy to go off the rails.' The history of art substantiates this opinion.

In 1782 Prange wrote in his *School of Painting*: 'Dealers often treat new paintings with smoke in order to give them the appearance of age in a short time.' Pictures were often 'baked', so as to 'run' the colours and also produce cracks and fissuring. While still warm from the oven, they were smeared with a decoction of milk, ashes, soot and extract of liquorice and ingeniously spotted with traces of dirt, mildew and flyblow. In 1830 the method of forging cracks was described as follows: 'They are best produced if they are literally engraved and then darkened to their characteristic tone by rubbing in colour.' Han van Meegeren's trial revealed many of the secrets of modern 'perfected' art forgery.

Old freehand drawings are relatively easy to imitate. A certain Belgian forger, for example, specialised in imitations of Boucher, Lancret and Pater. He ransacked second-hand bookshops for eighteenth-century ledgers with blank, unlined pages, bought up the coarse-grained paper, fumigated it, singed the edges, tattered them and then covered the sheets with drawings in black and white chalk in eighteenth-century style. Dealers added the initials or abbreviations of the artists' names, which completed the forgery. The sheet would then be pasted on white, gilt-edged paper and suitably framed under glass.

'Antique' sculpture and furniture are manufactured from genuine old, worm-eaten wood. In former times the worm-holes in furniture were artificially made by shotgun bullets. But to-day even laymen are aware that real worm-holes are not bored in a straight line but wind about in various directions. The bogus worm-hole is therefore comparatively easy to identify. But it

is more difficult to recognise the signs of 'age' produced by acids acting on stone and metal.

Alleged antiquity in forgeries is indicated by the infliction of damage. In paintings attention is drawn to cracks and other tokens of the passage of time. In statues projecting parts, such as the arms, are broken off. A certain 'pattern' in the incidence of such injuries often leads to the detection of the work as a forgery. The 'Tiara of Saitapharnes', for instance, when it first appeared in Vienna, was immediately regarded with great suspicion on this ground alone. It is possible for even the untrained eye to notice the difference between the traces of damage really caused in the distant past and those applied artificially at a later time.

Dealers also invent a 'suitable' history for their items by referring to mysterious circumstances, difficult to check, and thus dissipating any doubts that may occur to their customers. They may talk about 'excavations' on the shores of the Black Sea, possible interference by 'Russian collectors' and medieval altars. Or they may say that the article was formerly in a well-known collection, thus implying its 'authenticity'.

As a rule they are responsible for the additional details of a forgery, such as the introduction or alteration of signatures and dates. The change of a single figure or letter may be enough to put the date of origin back a century or indicate a famous name. Alternatively, the dealer may remove some detail insignificant in itself but constituting evidence of the real period. Jandolo, for instance, relates that the hand of a marble statue alleged to be by Canova was struck off by a dealer because it held a small pitcher typical of more recent times. The story of the portrait of Blücher given by the National Socialist Party to Marshal von Blomberg shows how ready a dealer may be to carry out the wishes of a patron. Again, a picture may have its size altered and be 'suitably cut up' for various reasons. Such processes take place more often than is generally supposed. Groups of figures are broken up and individual statues 'concocted'. In 1956, for example, the robbers of a church in a mining district constructed out of various old images of women a forgery of that of St Barbara which they had stolen.

Obviously the price asked by a dealer for a work affects the question of its authenticity. If a 'Rembrandt', for instance, is offered at a very low figure, it must be spurious. But if the quota-

tion is astronomical, the genuine character of the work may fairly be assumed. Van Meegeren told the Court, at his trial, that he had to charge big prices because otherwise no one would have believed that the pictures he offered were originals.

The production and distribution of forgeries is much facilitated by the attribution to them of well-known names and great age. At every period certain artists and styles are more highly valued than others. Works which do not quite come into such favoured categories are 'manipulated' by some more or less gifted forger to simulate the art in demand. Max Friedländer writes: 'The name of a master arouses feelings which obscure the spectator's perceptions of the elements of colour and design composing the work before him.' Examples of the truth of this statement are the Benivieni bust, the bust of Flora, the productions of Alceo Dossena, Wacker's 'van Goghs', the 'Spitzwegs' of the Third Reich, the 'Noldes' of the Cologne museum attendant and the countless imitations of outstanding French artists. If some famous name is suddenly connected with any particular painting its price may increase to ten, a hundred or a thousand times the original figure for that reason alone. But if it turns out that the picture is a forgery the quotation drops back at once to next to nothing. At the auction of van Meegeren's effects 300 gulden were paid for a painting in the style of Pieter de Hooch which, when believed to be an original, had commanded a figure of over 200,000.

A characteristic instance of the influence of a name is the wide distribution, some decades ago, of forgeries of works by Leibl. According to Waldmann sixty such forgeries were current between 1914 and 1920, when Wilhelm Leibl's pictures had a great vogue. There was also a painter called Eibl, whose signature was converted by unscrupulous forgers into 'Leibl' through the addition of an initial L. A certain portrait of a 'Bavarian Officer' was included in an exhibition of Leibl's works at Cologne and subsequently, in 1929, at the Academy of Fine Art in Berlin. This picture had been painted by Professor Hans Blum of Munich, whose signature was, however, later removed and replaced by that of Leibl. It is shameful fact that as Blum's work it was sold at an auction for 800 marks, but afterwards, as a 'genuine' Leibl, disposed of to an eminent Berlin diplomat for 110,000!

Many similar instances could be cited to prove that the market value of a picture soars when associated with a well-known name. It is not the intrinsic merit of a work, but the cash quotation for it, which counts for the trade. Such figures are entirely determined by ascriptions. Superstitious respect for a name tends to cancel out interest in the product itself, as can be very clearly illustrated from experience in the theatrical world. When the famous Yvette Guilbert complained, in New York, that the setting for her stage appearance was not impressive enough, she was told: 'My dear lady, we don't need any artists for that job. All we need is a name to put on the programme. We pay you for your name. We don't care in the least about anything else.' One might well be reminded of this typical business man's statement at many a 'sale of works of art'.

But it is not only the name of the artist but also that of the dealer and especially that of the expert which count in assessing the market value of fine art. The judgment of such connoisseurs as the Comte de Nieuwekerke, Eduard Reinach, Wilhelm Bode or Abraham Bredius is accepted with such devotion that the work is subsequently studied, to all appearance, through the eyes of that particular specialist alone. The attributions made by such authorities have favoured, even more than the artistic merits of the product, the acceptance of many forgeries which were afterwards exposed.

The ecstatic delight experienced by scholars in making discoveries is only too encouraging to the forger. Edmond Locard, Director of the Police Laboratory at Lyons, who was much concerned with questions of art forgery, wrote in 1928: 'Scientists are always supposed to be coldly objective. But in reality many of them are as dazzled by their particular passion as children. If these gentlemen did not so often take an x for a u, plenty of forgers would not find it so easy to hoodwink them. Quite a number of the said authorities really seem to be stupider than any ignorant yokel.' The severity of Locard's views is accounted for by his involvement in the 'Glozel Riddle'. It cannot be denied that scientists in that case showed a most reprehensible vacillation and credulity. History proves that the results of investigations by experts have often led to the acceptance of forgeries as authentic.

Many examples could be given of neglect of the obvious and

needlessly complex theories which were of actual assistance to the forger. One of Dossena's works carried the initials S M, probably intended by the sculptor to stand for 'Santa Maria'. But certain experts, not content with so simple an explanation, believed that the letters referred to Simone Martini (1285-1344). The 'sensational' discovery of a pot inscribed M.J.D.D. was much ridiculed. A member of the French Academy of Inscriptions deciphered the initials, after much study, as those of *Magno Jovi Deorum Deo* - 'To the great Jupiter, God of Gods'. He did not notice that the pot was not antique, but modern, and not dedicated to Jupiter, but to mustard. For the letters were merely an abbreviation of *Montarde Jaune de Dijon* - 'Yellow Dijon Mustard'!

In 1958 a similar case of exultation over the discovery of 'old' pictures occurred at Vorst Castle near Merano. A representative of the Trent Monuments Office believed he had detected under a thin coating of whitewash traces of a fresco dating from the time when the castle was built. In great excitement he at once ordered the removal of an espresso coffee machine as 'barbarously prejudicial to the preservation of a Gothic fresco'. The domestic staff explained that the painting was quite new. But the Professor told the cook to 'shut up and get out!' He demanded that everyone should leave the room, so that he could examine the remains of the fresco in peace. But a certain Fellin then appeared and informed him: 'That painting isn't old at all! I did it myself, just for fun!' It took some time to convince the learned visitor that his discovery had been somewhat premature and had nearly led to the promotion of a forgery.

Such examples of the way in which forgeries gain currency in consequence of mistaken attributions by experts prove that little reliance can be placed on the so called 'Expertise' or guarantee of the authenticity of a work of art. As very few people now care to trust their own judgment such certificates are given on a scale which represents a real danger. Max Friedländer complained: 'Nowadays scarcely a picture is sold without a document in which someone certifies that the work is by this or that master . . . but this nuisance is in present circumstances a necessary evil.' Abraham Bredius, whose erroneous ascription of the 'Disciples at Emmaus' gave rise to one of the greatest scandals in art history, has roundly declared: 'Whenever I judge a work I always say, Don't forget that I'm a human being and that to err is human . . .

the fact should never be lost sight of that even a first-rate connoisseur's "certificate" is not the utterance of an oracle but merely an expression of opinion not necessarily infallible.' It should also be remembered that many such 'guarantees' are given as a 'favour', with criminal levity and, last but not least, sometimes by persons quite unqualified to do so. Augusto Jandolo's account of the origin of the 'Savelli Tomb' exposes a typical instance of the preparation of false 'guarantees' by fraudulent traders. In January 1959 the careless granting of certificates and the way in which bogus documents of this kind are circulated by dishonest dealers were revealed at a trial in Brussels. Auction catalogues prepared by the Trussart Gallery advertised original works by many important painters, accompanied by the certificates of well-known connoisseurs. But in fact some of these documents simply did not exist, while others had been prepared from photographs, without reference to the actual picture. The Court passed sentences on the dealer concerned and also on six Belgian and French experts who had affirmed the authenticity of works without adequate examination of the originals. The sentences were a salutary warning to even the most highly qualified specialists to be careful how they 'guaranteed' pictures in future.

As for the value of other supporting documents and the subtle methods by which even genuine, 'official' testimony may be rendered deceptive, the story of a Florentine 'Titus' may profitably be studied. A well-known dealer in Florence had a painting by Rembrandt's son Titus copied on a surface dating from the period. The artist's signature was then obliterated with tempera, an invented name substituted and the remark added: 'Copy after Rembrandt.' The work was insured for six hundred lire and sent to New York. At the same time the American Customs authorities were 'confidentially' informed that a fraudulent Florentine dealer, in order to evade the high duty payable on this 'genuine' Rembrandt, had painted over the master's signature and marked the picture as a copy. When the addressee called for the package, he was told by the Customs that the import was not a copy but an original painting by Rembrandt. The consignee pretended to be thrown into the greatest amazement and even despair by this revelation. He was only convinced with difficulty that a 'genuine' signature by Rembrandt could be traced underneath the note

that the picture was a copy. But in the end he had to agree to pay a fine and the necessary duty, amounting in all to 15,000 dollars. No one except the few who were in the plot could guess that the 'information' supplied had been arranged in advance and that the American dealer, in possession of the 'official' Customs certificate that the picture was a genuine Rembrandt, would subsequently find, with relative ease, a purchaser for the work at the price of 80,000 dollars.

Art forgery is also very often encouraged by the gullibility of many buyers and collectors. Jandolo writes: 'A kind of university exists for the training of forgers. It is kept going by the stupidity of purchasers.' He exposes a number of favourite forgers' tricks, guiding the reader to an 'inexhaustible well of Orvieto', where works of art are buried at night to be dug up the following morning as 'antiques' under the very eyes of the delighted collector. Max Friedländer observes: "The eye sleeps, till the mind wakes it with a question. But that question – "Is this work old and genuine?" – does not always arise. It is never put, for instance, when a reliable dealer offers an item with all the infectious confidence afforded by a good conscience and the quoting of a high price.' It may well be a fact that most forgeries owe their circulation to the ignorance of collectors. Karl Kusenberg has written: 'Every collector who is cheated has only himself to blame. Just as opportunity makes a thief, so lack of knowledge in the potential purchaser attracts the forger and the dishonest dealer. People who don't know much about art should either not start a collection or, if they do, shouldn't complain about the cost of the lessons it teaches them!'

Forgery of the titles of pictures, which is much more widespread than is generally assumed, has also been facilitated by the gullibility of amateurs. Although there is here of course no question of actual art forgery, an arbitrary title may easily lead to a mistaken interpretation of the work. Vollard relates: 'At one of my Cézanne exhibitions there was an item depicting female nudes in the open air and a figure close by which might have been taken for a shepherd from the costume . . . the canvas was in a frame from which I had forgotten to remove the former title, "Diana and Actaeon". The picture's subject was subsequently described in a Press notice as "Diana Bathing". An art critic went out of his way to praise the dignified bearing of the

goddess and the impression of chastity given by the virgins surrounding her. He particularly admired the gesture of one of those standing in the glade, who was stretching out her arm as if to say, "Begone!" He added: "It clearly indicates her anger, as a virgin, at being disturbed." One of my customers was greatly taken with the painting. He said: "If I hadn't already got a remarkably fine 'Diana Bathing' by Tassaert, I should simply have to buy that picture of yours."

'Not long afterwards I was asked for the "Temptation of St Anthony", by Cézanne, to show at an exhibition. I promised to send the picture, but then found it had already been sold. So I despatched, instead, the so-called "Diana and Actaeon". There was now no title on the frame. But the gallery was expecting the "Temptation of St Anthony" which I had promised and had entered that title in its catalogue. One of the newspapers then proceeded to discuss the painting as if it were really the "Temptation". Whereas previously the noble attitude of Diana had been praised, the critic now discovered a "slyly beguiling smile" in one of the daughters of Satan. The former angrily defensive gesture of the aggrieved virgin in question had become a seductive challenge and the pseudo-Actaeon appeared as the august figure of the saint. On the last day of the exhibition that customer of mine who had refused the picture when it was entitled "Diana and Actaeon" came up to me, carrying the paper concerned, while I was actually talking about the article it contained. "I've just bought the "Temptation"," he cried, with a triumphant smile. "Its realism is positively thrilling!"

'Next time I saw Cézanne I told him about the various metamorphoses his picture had undergone. He answered: "I wasn't thinking of any particular subject at all. I was just trying to render certain kinds of movement."'

Fame versus X-rays

THE HISTORY of art forgery proves that many successful forgeries are revealed by the forgers themselves. The artists actually responsible for the 'Venus of Brizet', Bastianini's bust of Benivieni, the Tiara of Saitapharnes, the bust of Flora, Dossena's works, van Meegeren's 'Vermeers', Malskat's 'medieval frescoes' and Rifesser's statues of saints are known because either the creators personally or those in the secret informed the public of the truth.

Countless similar cases, in which forgeries were disclosed through self-accusation, have come to light from many periods, countries and categories of art. In February 1959, for instance, an alleged masterpiece by the great Norwegian painter Edvard Munch (1863-1944) was sold to a well-known collector for 47,000 kronen. A similar picture, 'Road at Sunset', was acquired by the Oslo Modern Art Gallery for 17,000 kronen. Connoisseurs of Munch's work began to doubt the authenticity of these newly-discovered paintings. But when an ordinary cabinet-maker named Caspar Caspersen declared that he was responsible for them, the statement was regarded as a stupid joke. Nevertheless, Caspersen, an amateur painter aged fifty-five, who studied Munch's work in his spare time and copied his pictures, proved that he had the requisite capacity. He complacently produced yet another 'Munch' in the seclusion of a prison cell. He took less than three hours to create a 'Summer Landscape' which looked at the first glance like a typical work by the master. The case made a considerable stir in Norway. The country had apparently been spared art forgery hitherto. But now Norwegians began to suspect every new painting they saw.

It seems curious that forgers should cease to keep their activities

a secret and thus facilitate exposure of them. Yet they may have several different reasons for doing so. The most usual seem to be the inability of people to keep quiet for any length of time about such accomplishments and their longing to enjoy both fame and the discomfiture of the learned world they have deceived. Jandolo's *Reminiscences* record a typical remark by the potter Casimiro Tomba, who imitated ancient work of this kind so exactly that his productions were described as valuable old antiques. One day he heard how enraptured the experts had been with a certain new 'discovery'. Tomba exclaimed: 'I simply can't stand listening to any more of the drivel talked about the origin of that pot. Even a copyist like myself is only human, after all, and has a right to enjoy being famous for once in his life.'

Fame was no doubt the main motive which impelled Lothar Malskat of Lübeck to make his sensational disclosures about his 'medieval' paintings in churches and ultimately to appear in the dock. Alceo Dossena was also unquestionably driven to the same decisive step of self-accusation by the desire for glory, in addition to disappointment at his treatment by fraudulent dealers. Cremonese, van Meegeren and Ruchomovsky all sought celebrity and recognition. Beppi Rifesser, too, though he took no special steps to acquire the fame which his 'medieval wood-carvings' brought him, was nevertheless delighted when it came.

In addition to such confessions, the wariness of dealers and experts has also led to the detection of many forgeries. Though some dishonest dealers have been primarily responsible for the acceptance of forgeries, others engaged in the trade have been true friends of art and deserve special mention for the fact. It was not only the Wacker and Spitzweg trials and the scandal of the Viennese Madonna which they promoted, leading to the revelation of forgery. The dealer Augusto Jandolo, for instance, has launched uncompromising attacks on forgery through his illuminating researches into the origins and nature of authentic and spurious art. He has himself contributed to the unmasking of many bogus works.

An interesting art forgery was once brought to light by August and Dominik Artaria, owners of the long established and highly respected Viennese firm of that name. On the pedestal of a bronze statuette of Goethe which had been offered to them traces

of the initials of the sculptor Fernkorn, together with a date, were visible. Monogram, style and technique all suggested that the work had been executed by that distinguished artist and manager of the Imperial Foundry. His widow confirmed that he had been engaged on a statue of Goethe. Consequently, the work appeared to be indubitably his. But shortly afterwards, at an auction, Dominik Artaria noticed a surprisingly similar statuette. The size, initials and date were the same. But the head was different. Artaria's enquiries about its history elicited the fact that a well-known banker and patron of art, Baron Sina, had commissioned a portrait from Fernkorn for distribution to his friends. A clever forger had substituted, on one of these figures, Goethe's head, copied from one by Rauch, for the Baron's. The exposure of this forgery was due to the alert dealer Artaria.

Scholars have been trying for centuries to find ways and means of differentiating the genuine and the spurious in art, so as to protect buyers against forgery. The investigation of the history of an item has proved one of the most successful of their methods. It consists in the attempt to establish the identity of the successive owners and locations of a work since its execution.

But this line of research has been rendered difficult owing to the police regulations which permit the owners of articles sold at voluntary public auctions to remain anonymous. Forgers try to exploit the resultant obscurity of the history of such objects by inventing the names of previous owners and as many credible details as possible. Experts have to test data of this kind and never allow themselves to be led astray by 'possibilities' and 'probabilities'. If van Meegeren's allegation of the Italian origin of the 'Disciples at Emmaus' had been checked as soon as the picture appeared, the great scandal that ensued would have been avoided. At Otto Wacker's trial his fate was decided by the issue of enquiries as to the provenance of the works called in question. For he could not produce the 'Russian living in Switzerland' to whom he referred. Investigations of the story told by the dealers who employed Dossena about the origin of the 'Savelli Tomb', led first to suspicion and then to proof of forgery. Countless other forgeries have only come to light either because no facts about their production could be established or because their alleged history was found to be untrue.

Another decisive factor in the detection of forgeries is afforded

by comparing them with similar genuine works. On the appearance of any newly-discovered item experts look for contemporary originals, if possible emanating from the school or group to which it belongs. Donath has stated: 'The difference between genuine and spurious can only be made clear to the amateur by inspection and comparison of pictures, drawings, pottery and glass, in each case by the same artist. The best safeguard for the collector is to be tireless in such comparisons and studies of works by the same hand.'

Many forgeries have in fact been detected by comparing them with originals, especially where copies, partial forgeries and 'free versions' have been concerned. Wacker's 'van Goghs', for instance, were exposed as imitations on being confronted with works by the master that were known to be genuine. Küffner's copy of a Dürer was identified on the reappearance of the original, so that both could be examined together. When Lothar Malskat's confessions were not believed, he called attention to the originals he had consulted, in order that comparison might substantiate his statements and prove his work to have been imitation.

In the case of drawings comparison with originals is particularly important. No imitator can ever succeed in making absolutely precise copies. Even in the most faithful of them individual lines do not quite correspond. Sometimes the most minute and insignificant details, barely visible to the naked eye and only clearly recognisable under powerful magnification, decide the question.

Forgeries can also be detected by comparison with originals when only parts have been copied or freely borrowed from the models. Furtwängler, for example, proved that the Tiara was false by setting it beside known originals of similar type. Van Meegeren's Pieter de Hooch forgeries, again, were revealed because he had plagiarised figures and subjects from different pictures. In the same way a Gauguin forgery was at once identified through the awkward conjunction of two Tahitian female figures taken from separate original works. Similar instances could be quoted in the case of sculpture. Thus, if a forger merely changes the head on a standing figure, there is every chance that the trick will be exposed.

Sometimes forgeries are discovered when they are compared with models stylistically and technically diverse from them.

This was the case when an 'ancient Pompeian' fountain-relief in the National Museum at Naples was found to have been designed on the basis of a drawing by Dürer. One of the details of a fresco in the Vatican had been incorporated in the 'pre-Christian' 'Tiara of Saitapharnes'. In both these cases, accordingly, the sixteenth century had been an inspiration to 'pre-Christian' works. No further evidence was needed to prove the latter spurious.

Comparison of dubious productions with known forgeries may also be instructive. This procedure has repeatedly led to the detection of fraud. Friedländer writes: 'It is easier to deduce from certain indications that a forger known to the examiner has been at work than simply to feel convinced that the item cannot be genuine.' The forger is in a sense a manufacturer. As a rule he produces a number of specimens all alike or somewhat similar. When all the 'Vermeers' by van Meegeren are studied together a surprising resemblance is found between them. Curt Glaser notes, in connection with a work by Dossena in the style of Giovanni Pisano, that 'very soon doubts arose, which became certainties when photographs of a number of pictures clearly from the same studio arrived from America. They all imitated in similar fashion, though most ingeniously, the styles of different periods and artists.' At this time Dossena himself was still unknown. Yet many of his works were already suspected to be by the same hand and the existence of a studio for the production of his forgeries was surmised.

Five tests of the authenticity or otherwise of an old painting are said to be imposed to-day. The first and 'most subtle' is described as sensitivity to style. According to Friedländer 'If a forgery cannot be distinguished from the real thing technically, it will still offend a connoisseur by its lack of stylistic logic. It would, for instance, be hopeless to try to produce a "Memling", since the mentality of the forger would be so utterly different from the honest, impulsive simplicity of the artist in question. This diversity is bound to be noticeable, even if the imitator has entered thoroughly, by the exercise of exceptional ingenuity and intensive application, into the character of his model. The difference will be the same as that between forged and authentic handwriting. For while the creations of the artist are spontaneous, but done of his own free will, those of the forger are arbitrary,

subjectively enforced. All forgeries, quite apart from their other shortcomings, can be detected by their pedantically anxious execution. The forger can never let himself go and follow his natural inclinations. He must coldly calculate, painfully pick his way and squint in all directions. He can only hope to succeed if his copy is exact. Every time he yields to a personal impulse he takes a serious risk. If, for example, he takes any liberties with costume, it will soon be evident that he knows hardly anything about the clothing of bygone days. He may have gathered from old pictures what a 1520 hat looked like in outline, but the interior, the sewing and the make-up of the article will be unfamiliar to him. If by some alteration of the angle of the head he brings into view some aspect of the hat that differs only slightly from that which he has noted in the model, he immediately reveals his ignorance of the true facts. For neither he nor we know much more about what our ancestors saw than is presented to us in the mirror of art.'

As a rule the forger makes certain mistakes which lead without much trouble to his exposure. Experts pay close attention to any script on a work of art and apply their understanding of costume, heraldry, liturgy and social behaviour. The appearance of a turkey in a 'medieval' fresco at Schleswig was enough of itself to prove the work a forgery. For the bird was not introduced into Europe until after the discovery of America. In the same way a tobacco-pipe found in 1872 on a site alleged to illustrate Moabite culture and situated in front of the walls of Jerusalem was obviously spurious. For tobacco, too, was not introduced into Europe until after the time of Columbus.

In the 1820's a bricklayer named Kaufmann found a 'Roman kiln' at Rheinzabern. No wonder suspicion was aroused when no less than 117 such 'kilns' were subsequently 'discovered', together with their remarkably fine 'products'. Forgery was proved when one of the plates was found to depict the emperor 'Antonosus', wearing a sword of the Holy Roman Empire, and a full-bottomed wig, while seated on a horse adorned with ostrich feathers and caparison. Even so ingenious a forger as van Meegeren occasionally committed anachronisms. In the 'Disciples at Emmaus', for example, and other 'Vermeers' the lid of a jug is decorated with a double ear of corn. Van Meegeren had forgotten that there were no such jugs in the seventeenth century

and that the vessels in use at that time had been accurately illustrated by the artist. This detail alone conclusively proved forgery.

The counterfeiter is a child of his time, which dictates his outlook. When he attempts to create beauty he falls a victim to the prejudices of his day. He sees and depicts ancient art through the spectacles of his own period. He does not reproduce the work of the old masters but his conception of it as a child of his time. This fact suggests a key to the puzzle of his success as a forger. There is always something 'modern' about his productions, which is overlooked by his contemporaries but clearly perceived by a later generation. To-day, for instance, Bastianini's works seem typical nineteenth-century sculpture, while van Meegeren's 'Vermeers' remind us more of the art of the present than of that of the seventeenth-century Delft painter. Among experts the new science of 'pictology' is regarded as specially applicable to problems of authenticity in painting. Its object is to ascertain from a work, as graphologists do from handwriting, the basic psychology of the artist. Certain data thus derived may help the 'pictologist' to decide whether the executant was a genuine artist or a forger. For the latter never paints impulsively. He has assumed a style like a disguise and is afraid of making mistakes and being caught out. He is full of inhibitions. His calculations lack spontaneity and verve, the expressiveness and conviction arising from experience. As a result, his forms are artificial and dead. 'Pictology' has been used by M. van Dantzig of Amsterdam as a method of detecting forgery and was exhaustively illustrated in the Dutch exhibitions of bogus art.

Technical investigation is another decisive means of exposing forgery. Critics of style may be easily deceived. But the scientist is in a position to make the most precise statements concerning the nature and age of the materials employed in a work of art. Well-known forgeries which passed the test of style criticism without arousing suspicion have been exposed by technical research. As a consequence, some famous pictures, exhibited for decades as the productions of important artists in galleries of the highest standing, have had to be acknowledged as copies and withdrawn from the collection.

In 1955 the London National Gallery, after re-examining an alleged Francia which had long adorned its walls, decided that

the picture was a forgery. Doubts had arisen when an exactly similar work appeared. The brush-strokes of the London painting were studied under a strong double microscope with a view to detecting even the slightest deviation from Francia's well-known technique. Specimens of the paint $\frac{1}{500}$ of a millimetre thick were chemically analysed in order to ascertain whether they could have been used by a fifteenth-century artist. Infra-red and Röntgen-ray photographs of the work in question were compared with those of other productions by Francia. On the evidence thus obtained the painting was pronounced a forgery.

In January 1958 it was announced that a false 'Goya' had been discovered in the Old Pinakothek at Munich. It was a portrait of the Spanish queen Maria Luisa and had been hanging in the gallery ever since 1911. No one doubted that it was genuine. The Director of the Museum, who had acquired the picture, was a connoisseur of Goya's works and had written a book on him. But X-ray examination and chemical analysis proved the portrait to be a worthless copy executed in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In July 1959, during the cleaning of the 'Mystic Marriage of St Catherine', by Murillo (1618-82), at the Vatican, a landscape in seventeenth-century style was found under the painting. Chemical tests proved that the landscape in question had been exposed to light and air for at least a century before being over-painted. The alleged 'Murillo' could not, therefore, have been executed, at earliest, prior to the end of the eighteenth century, over a hundred years after the death of the Spanish master. The work was thus revealed as a forgery.

To-day the larger galleries have their own laboratories in which modern methods, involving ultra-violet, infra-red and X-rays, are applied to their paintings. These devices can not only be employed in testing the gallery's own possessions, but are also available to other collections and to private owners. Such laboratories are accordingly of prime importance in disclosing counterfeits. They are to be found attached to the Old Pinakothek at Munich, the Rijksmuseum at Amsterdam, the London National Gallery, the Louvre, the Basle and Lisbon Museums of Art, the Brussels Central Laboratory, the Istituto Restauro at Rome and other establishments.

After a picture has been examined for style it is usually sub-

jected to the alcohol test. Essence of alcohol generally dissolves recent pigment but as a rule does not affect old paint. This test often suffices to prove forgery. But it is not necessarily decisive. Old colours are sometimes found to be soluble in alcohol and new ones resistant to it. For some counterfeiters apply alcoholic hardening agents to their pigments, while certain seventeenth-century masters manufactured paints which alcohol dissolves. A careless restorer, for example, once applied alcohol to part of a supposedly spurious Rembrandt. The passage thus treated was ruined. But the picture eventually turned out to be genuine.

Old paintings were also checked for the presence of white lead, which was replaced by zinc white in the eighteenth century. There are several ways in which white lead can be detected. It dissolves when sprinkled with nitric acid. Hydrogen sulphide turns it black. Heating gives it a yellow tinge. Under illumination by the quartz tube lamp it appears brown. If the white of a picture does not react to any of these treatments, it must have been painted after the eighteenth century. Yet the presence of white lead does not conclusively prove the painting to be older. For the modern forger, just like the old masters, makes use of the 'genuine' white lead, which he obtains by laying a sheet of lead over a vessel containing vinegar and rendered airtight. The poisonous white pigment then forms as an even deposit over the lead.

X-rays are sometimes decisive. They reveal otherwise invisible layers of paint, exposing secondary coatings and supplementary colour. Luminescent photographs taken by ultra-violet light and quartz tube lamps show up all the retouching in a picture, while infra-red prints disclose the various stages of its construction. Many forgeries and overpaintings have been detected by X-rays, which have also sometimes proved a work to be original. When, for instance, an alleged 'Rembrandt' was found to have been superimposed on a portrait of the last Italian king but one, Victor Emmanuel, all doubts were at an end. Again, a 'self-portrait by Leonardo da Vinci', mentioned in the literature on that artist, had figured in the catalogue of the Uffizi Gallery at Florence ever since 1753. In the 1940's the panel, of thin oak, was subjected to X-rays. A Baroque 'Repentant Magdalen' came to light underneath the portrait, which was accordingly proved a forgery.

When van Meegeren's statement that he had painted the 'Disciples at Emmaus' was not believed and the work continued to be attributed to Vermeer himself, he added that in executing this work he had overpainted the head of a child. An X-ray photograph revealed the head in question and consequently the truth of the forger's confession.

It is not only such tell-tale overpaintings which are disclosed by the Röntgen print. Counterfeiting is also proved in this way by the exposure, which is never traced in copies or forgeries, of every stage in the construction of an original work. The imitator starts with 'preconceived notions of form' taken from the superficial aspect of his model and therefore proceeds in a direction contrary to that followed by the original artist. In these circumstances, changes of mind are naturally rare and, when they do occur, merely corrective.

Forgery in the form of overpainting an original was revealed by Röntgen rays in July 1959 at the Ordrupgaard Museum in Copenhagen. One of the items, an 'Italian Girl' bearing the signature of Camille Corot, proved to be a garish rendering of the delicately toned original beneath it, which was perfectly genuine.

The fact that authenticity can be established by X-ray photography beyond the possibility of doubt is illustrated by the tests applied to Giorgione's 'Venus' in the Dresden Gallery.

The originality of this work had long been seriously queried. The figure of a small cupid, mentioned by old writers as included in it, did not appear. The picture had been exhibited as 'Venus and Cupid' on its acquisition in 1699 by Augustus the Strong. Afterwards it was supposed to have been lost. But it turned up again in 1763 as a 'damaged copy after Titian'. Later it was described as an original painting by Giorgione (1478-1510).

It seemed clear that the work was not that acquired by Augustus in 1699. But Röntgen rays showed that a figure of Cupid had been painted out. The picture proved to be in other respects authentic.

In certain extremely small details revealed by the microscope the characteristic palette, brush-strokes and 'personal style' of a painter become evident. Such signs of dilapidation as cracks and worm-holes indicate differences between old and new, genuine and spurious work. In wooden figures the direction taken by

the worm-holes will be significant. Again, if such holes are filled in with paint or even only partially covered up, the fact bears witness to a later application of colour and consequently to forgery. There is a difference, moreover, between natural and artificially drawn cracks. The former penetrate the preliminary drawing on the canvas, while the latter only go as deep as the paintlayer. Cracks which have been deliberately scratched in can be recognised as a rule by their straight direction and smooth edges. Some of the smaller artificial fissuring is put in with dark varnish. But the connoisseur knows that genuine old cracks may be caused in all sorts of ways and therefore differ in appearance.

'Premature splitting' usually arises from chemicophysical tensions in the drying of separate layers of paint. Such divisions follow the direction of the brush-stroke and form 'grated fissuring' when combined with later transverse cracks. 'Age-splits' occur, after the paint has fully dried out, as the result of inequalities between the respective expansion coefficients of the supporting surface and its coating of paint. There are differences in such 'splits' according to their production in wood, canvas or the underlying size (isolating agent) applied to the picture area. The variations in question are often overlooked by the forger and lead to his undoing.

The components of colours are subjected to very close chemical analysis. Spectroscopy reveals the combinations involved. The fineness of the granulation is tested. Ancient hand-ground colours are decidedly coarse-grained as compared with modern industrial products. Both physical and chemical methods of examination are used. Works of art can therefore now be tested in a great variety of ways. Even the 'perfect' forgery would be exposed by them.

These manifold technical expedients often upset erroneous judgments based on style. For example, in 1926 Hofstede de Groot guaranteed the famous 'Laughing Cavalier' as the authentic work of Frans Hals (1580-1666). As such the painting was sold for 50,000 gulden. But certain doubts having arisen, it was subjected to a number of technical tests. Microscopic examination revealed the presence of zinc white, first generally employed after 1780, and also modern ultramarine and cobalt, which have only been known since the 1820s. X-rays also disclosed, under the paint, nails of the wire type, equally a nineteenth-century in-

vention. The picture was accordingly proved to be a recent forgery in the manner of Hals.

In sculpture, too, the investigation of materials, in addition to the criterion of style, is of decisive importance in detecting counterfeits. It was not only the Glozel finds and the 'Cardiff Giant' which were exposed in this way. In the case of statues different kinds of test are also employed in combination. In 1953, for example, the bust of a Caesar at the British Museum was found to be a forgery. It was one of the most famous pieces on exhibition. For over a hundred years it had been admired as a masterpiece of antique art and an authentic portrait. But it is now known to date only from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Clear traces of the use of instruments which did not exist in antiquity were found in the marble. The modern Roman copyist has never been identified. He evidently modelled his work on the large statue of a Caesar in martial attire on the Capitol at Rome, the overlifesize head of an emperor in the Farnese collection and a bust acquired in 1771 by Pope Clement XIV for the Vatican collection of antiques.

But it is the typically 'classical' style of the London bust which most clearly reveals its origin. Furtwängler's unerring instinct for authenticity has often been proved. It was he who first recognised that the 'Tiara' was a forgery. And fifty years ago he had expressed doubts of the genuine character of the supposedly 'antique' bust at the Museum, now acknowledged to be a comparatively recent work.

The history of the exposure of forged works of art does not imply that many imitations are not still to be found in well-known collections and that questions of authenticity do not remain, in some cases, unsettled to this day. Furtwängler has written: 'Problems of authenticity, even more than others involving aesthetic judgment, demand for their solution such a vast quantity of complex experience in this field that as a rule they defy verbal exposition.' But a knowledge of how forgeries arise is of assistance in their detection. It is therefore important for every expert, collector and patron of the arts to study the history of this kind of fraud.

'Counterfeit Counterfeits'

JUST AS MANY forgeries are to be found among alleged originals, so alleged forgeries may sometimes be originals. The latter category includes not only works the authenticity of which is still in dispute, so that attributions are unreliable, but also productions specified in quite unmistakable terms as imitative and spurious. More of these are originals than is generally supposed.

In 1957 a Bochum labourer acquired, at an auction held by the municipal lost property office, a valuable ornament for which he only paid a few marks. Brilliants were identified by a jeweller among its glass components. The municipal authorities commented: 'The article was so dirty that we really thought it was nickel, especially as it bore no markings.' There must undoubtedly be many similar cases of paintings and statues which, because they are unsigned and in bad condition, are regarded as shams and sold off cheaply.

Such works do not by any means lose their original character in consequence of later alterations or overpainting. Even important artists of high reputation are known to have produced poor work, afterwards intelligibly enough dismissed by connoisseurs as spurious. The painter Max Liebermann referred to this fact when he observed, with the typical ready wit of a Berliner: 'Art historians are not so superfluous after all. If they didn't exist, who would there be to explain, when we are dead, that our bad pictures are forgeries?' No doubt many original works are described, in the process of research, as studio productions and imitations. It was not only Maurice Utrillo who found that genuine works of his own were being declined as counterfeits. On the other hand, counterfeits themselves are frequently declared to be 'absolutely genuine'.

Artists have also often been unable to distinguish between their own work and imitations of it, sometimes designating originals of their own, at a later date, as forgeries. Goethe confessed that his own writings subsequently seemed 'quite foreign' to him. He declared that it was not until some time after reading a French text that he realised it was a translation of a composition of his own. When Bernard Shaw sent the National Library of Ireland his 'Unfinished Novel' he wrote in his accompanying letter: 'I haven't the slightest recollection of this piece. I should deny its existence if it weren't lying here before me.' Rodin once described a bronze with his name on it as a forgery. But it turned out in the course of legal proceedings that the work was really a youthful production which he had forgotten.

On the other hand there have been cases in which artists deliberately repudiated their own compositions and thereby fraudulently represented them to be fraudulent. José Shercliff, for instance, writes in his life of Jane Avril that Renoir once painted a portrait of the actress which he did not like. Someone wanted to buy it for her. But Renoir would only sell the picture if he did not have to sign it. The portrait afterwards came into the possession of a young man who was intimate with Jane. According to Renoir this young man brought him the picture and said that Jane wanted him to sign it. But Renoir told the actress: 'I'm sure the young rascal never asked your permission to bring me that rubbish. So I sent him off with a flea in his ear. You don't think that thing is by me, do you? Good heavens, I never heard of such nonsense!'

A similar case, concerning Giorgio de Chirico, is probably unique. The *pictor optimus*, as he not over-modestly styled himself, had made a new start about the year 1930. He then disowned his former friends and pictures, declaring the latter to be forgeries. But in so doing he fell foul of the law. In 1947 the dealer Dario Sabatello showed de Chirico a painting executed in 1913, representing a typical Italian piazza. As the work was destined for an American collection in Los Angeles, the dealer wanted de Chirico to confirm that he was responsible for it. But the artist refused, asserting that the work was a forgery. He demanded that it should be 'confiscated' and burnt. The dealer asked the Courts to decide whether or not the picture was genuine. If it proved to be de Chirico's he intended to prosecute

the artist and, if not, the former owner of the work, who had sold it to him. Meanwhile, the painting was deposited with a solicitor. The matter aroused great interest even beyond professional circles, for it was remembered that the painter had previously informed Katherine Dunham, the dancer, that one of his own works, in 'metaphysical' style, was a forgery.

The Roman legal authorities began by tracing the history of the work in the art market. Sabatello had acquired it from the brothers Ghiringhelli, owners of a Milan gallery. They in turn had bought it, in 1943, from the widow of a Milanese barrister. He had received it some years before from a Genoese engineer, who had it from de Chirico himself in 1933. The explicit statements of the Genoese collector drove the artist into a corner. He retorted that the picture was not a 'real forgery' but simply a copy of one of his own works. Against this argument it was proved that de Chirico had repeatedly seen this alleged 'copy' in the Milan barrister's house and had never suggested that it was not authentic.

The first owner of the painting, however, provided incontestable evidence that it was genuine in the shape of a photograph which showed, under a magnifying-glass, exactly the same type of weaving in the canvas, with its manifold 'knots', and the same consistency of brushwork. No copyist, not even the creator of the original, could have reproduced these features. The committee of experts appointed by the Court therefore reached the conclusion that the picture in question must be authentic. De Chirico was accordingly fined 330,000 lire for repudiation of one of his own productions. He paid the fine. But he continued steadfastly to deny that he had executed the painting.

De Chirico's attitude gave rise subsequently to a great many disputes about the authenticity of his works. In 1956 the Municipal Gallery of Milan withdrew all his pictures from their exhibitions, pending personal recognition of their genuine character by the artist. This step was taken after a Milan Court had decided that a signed painting declared by de Chirico to be a forgery must be removed from an exhibition in the city. This work, entitled 'Les Fils d'Hebdoomeros', had been bought by the municipality after being certified as genuine by a committee of artists and critics. A year previously de Chirico had denied any connection with his picture called 'Composition', which also

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bore his signature and had been exhibited for five years at the French National Gallery of Modern Art. The establishment had complied with the artist's demand that this 'forgery' should be withdrawn. In so doing, however, the gallery drew special attention to the fact that the painter made a habit of declining to recognise his early works and repudiating all responsibility for them.

The Campaign against Fraud

MEASURES HAVE BEEN taken to suppress art forgery ever since it began. As soon as imitations started appearing collectors and scholars united in efforts to counteract and eliminate them. Eudel-Roessler was justified in exclaiming: 'Forgery is always a crime and it is the duty of humanity to expose the criminal.' Various methods were employed to 'nip in the bud' such attempts at fraud, to hinder their multiplication and unmask any 'success' they might have.

An early instance of this sort of action is recorded to have taken place in the time of Charlemagne. An ecclesiastical dignitary at the imperial Court had a blind passion for collecting. At the emperor's suggestion a Jewish pedlar offered the cleric a dead mouse, wrapped in costly silks, as a 'precious, unknown work of art from Palestine'. The amateur in question had no means of deciding the value of the object. But he began by offering three pounds of silver for it and eventually a whole bushel. When the emperor heard of the transaction he explained the matter in public, sternly rebuking the greed of collectors. Subsequent centuries have been characterised by similar examples of fraud initiated simply to teach indiscriminate purchasers a painful lesson and thus provide effective means of combating the heedless extravagance of collectors.

A number of artists whose works were forged in their lifetime have themselves taken part in the struggle against this type of fraud, by drawing up lists of their original works in order to exclude the possibility of imitation. Claude, as is well known, entered in his 'Book of Truth' sketches of his paintings and notes of their locations. Scholars have also issued catalogues of the genuine productions of famous artists. But the case of

Wacker's 'van Goghs' and de la Faille's hesitations in that affair prove that such records are of little use in exposing and suppressing forgery. Similar instances of the inclusion of both genuine and spurious works in registers of this sort are not confined to the exhaustive lists published of pictures by Hodler and Daumier.

When Utrillo told a lawyer that he could see no way of safeguarding his productions against fraudulent imitation, the artist was advised to leave a fingerprint on his paintings in future. The practical advantage of this expedient has often been discussed. There are still painters who resort to this unusual form of signature. Yet even in such cases forgery cannot be ruled out. Expert research, moreover, would be complicated by the need for consulting a whole series of the finger-prints of well-known artists.

Toulouse-Lautrec, in order to forestall imitations of his lithographs, was in the habit of affixing to each print of a small edition a barely visible symbol in addition to his signature. It is said to have been a dot or line, generally placed in shadow and consequently only just perceptible. No doubt he himself could thus identify his original works. But as he kept this practice secret, the symbols are unfamiliar to investigators and have no significance for posterity. Even if they were published they would also be made available to forgers and so rendered useless as a protective device.

Artists have repeatedly sought to restrain forgers by putting them in the dock. Both Dürer (1471-1528) and his widow complained of fraudulent imitation of his pictures. But at that time there was little they could do against such practices. A legal hold over art forgery, however, was established in the nineteenth century by designating it a violation of 'good faith in business'.

In the Courts the chief object of the artist concerned was the destruction of the forged work. In 1908 Monet wrote to the dealer Durand-Ruel regarding two 'dreadful daubs': 'I assure you that if you had not begged me to send them back to you still bearing my signature I should have cut them to bits, as I had a perfect right to do. I must insist that, after the action which your client has been obliged to bring and after the forger has been sentenced, both pictures be either destroyed in the presence of witnesses or returned to me.' In 1958 Gromaire described how he dealt with forgeries of his work: 'As soon as I see one I

systematically demolish it and would do the same to any others I might come across.' Other painters and sculptors have been equally emphatic on the subject.

Dealers are also much concerned to distinguish between the genuine and the spurious item and to destroy the latter before it can do harm. Paul Petrides, for example, named about a thousand bogus 'Utrillos' in his 1959 catalogue. The police at once confiscated eighty and burnt them in public.

In modern times the law constitutes the main weapon against art forgery. The more serious cases of fraud, such as those of Otto Wacker, Han van Meegeren, Lothar Malskat and Dietrich Fey, ended with Court proceedings and sentences of imprisonment. Punishment, however, rarely fits the crime. A year's incarceration, for instance, seems a very light penalty for van Meegeren's offences. In 1957 an art periodical in France commented: 'A whole arsenal of laws has been erected against art forgery. But it is ineffectual.'

In fact it appears that public enlightenment is more important and effective than any law. Books and magazines, lectures and exhibitions, afford an opportunity to the public, especially the learned world, to become acquainted with the tricks of the dishonest. It is true that such expositions may help the forger as well as the investigator. But the former is bound to recognise that his secrets and capabilities are being progressively laid bare in this way and that it is also teaching all those interested in art new and valuable lessons.

After the Dossena case came to light exhibitions of forged works were held and books, magazine articles and films dealing with the subject in general were produced. The van Meegeren trial led, after 1945, to further useful measures being taken, first of all in Holland, but eventually as far afield as America, for the encouragement of active opposition to the practice of forgery. In many cities institutes were founded, in association with museums, for the testing of works of art. France was especially to the fore in this connection. A separate division of the French police, with a staff of experts attached to it, deals with all suspected cases. Steps are taken, by means of publications and exhibitions, to prevent criminal activities in this connection, clarify the definitions of the genuine and the spurious and promote the idea that art forgery has no future. It would appear

highly desirable for other countries to initiate equally energetic action against the international operations of the art forgers.

The eminent criminal lawyer Thomas Würtenberger wrote in his *Measures against Art Forgery in German and Swiss Criminal Law*: 'All persons active in the artistic field should be educated and trained to recognise at all times and carefully study, conscious of the high responsibility they bear, the ethical aspects of art, such as its truth and dignity, original inspiration and genuine character. However continuous the toil and frequent the setbacks that may accompany their efforts in this direction, they must be renewed again and again if the world of art is ever really to recover its health and the flood of forgeries permanently checked.'

Forgery Detection as a Fashionable Complaint

IT IS NOT ONLY dealers and experts who suffer from the prevalence of forgery and the frequent exposures of it. Public recognition of the existence of distorted works of art leads only too easily to a distorted view of art in general. People no longer dare to give themselves up to unqualified admiration of it. They stare with gloomy and anxious suspicion at the items exhibited, trying in each case to trace evidence of fraud. Donath mentions the common phenomenon of a 'nose for forgery'. Wilhelm Bode observes that it was positively a 'fashionable complaint', spreading like an epidemic throughout artistic society, especially after any sensational revelations of imposture in this connection. This unhealthy state of affairs might well be called 'forgeritis'.

Characteristic signs of the propagation of this 'disease' were noticeable at the time when the whole world was shocked by the discovery of Bastianini's works, followed by the identification of forgeries in a number of different galleries. Those affected by the malady in question sometimes attempted to elicit the respect and wonder of their fellow-citizens by making resounding accusations. 'I have a charge to lay before the civilised world and will if necessary take it further, to the judgment of the learned . . .' begins Professor Theodor Levin in an article of 1886 which maintained that out of the 141 Dutch paintings noted as 'authentic' in the catalogue of the Städel Institute at Frankfurt no fewer than 58 were forgeries. Statements of this sort gave rise to further investigations and doubts, which went so far as to query the existence of certain artists themselves. In 1891 a book was published by Max Lautner entitled *Who Was Rembrandt?* It was declared therein that the great artist in question, the very epitome of Dutch painting, was in reality an insignificant dauber

whose alleged works were executed by Ferdinand Bol and consequently forgeries. In 1909 'forgeritis' was particularly rife in Italy and Germany as a result of the Berlin dispute over the bust of Flora. The Italian professor A. Venturi, after making a bad mistake in identifying as genuine a forged Madonna at the Uffizi Gallery in the style of Jacopo Bellini, proceeded, in his *Storia dell'arte Italiana*, to cast doubts on the authenticity of practically every Italian carving of the Quattrocento on show in the galleries of Paris, London and Berlin. In Germany, about the same time, considerable excitement was caused by suggestions that certain pictures of the former Cologne School, particularly the altarpiece of St Clara in the cathedral and the 'Madonna of the Vetch' at the Wallraf-Richartz Museum, were forged. In the case of the latter painting proved restorations by the Belgian Anton Laurent and the rapid widening of a crack in the panel convinced the restorer Fridt of Cologne and Poppelreuter, Director of the Museum, that the work was not genuine. They believed it to have been executed in the nineteenth century. Well-known connoisseurs like Karl Voll agreed 'both on technical and stylistic grounds and from the standpoints of both aesthetics and art history'. Wilhelm Bode was the most eminent of those who emphatically repudiated this view. He declared that 'the present age has an excessive appetite for scandal and sensational novelty. Its greed has unfortunately affected even scholars. They are much fonder to-day of demolition than construction. It is easy, by sowing suspicion, to display one's erudition and appear before the public as a noble champion of morals and scientific method.' He drew attention to the signs of fifteenth-century work and the characteristic beauties of the old School of Cologne. The history of the disputed paintings was then investigated and they were proved to be genuine. Botanists, however, demonstrated that the usual title given to this small triptych was erroneous. It should be called the 'Madonna of the Garden-pea' or 'Peaflower'. A fresh impulse was imparted to 'forgeritis' by the Dossena and van Gogh affairs. Confused notions of authenticity and spuriousness, old and new, were applied even to the most famous and important works of art. In 1927, for example, it was rumoured in Paris that the 'Mona Lisa' restored to the Louvre after the theft of that picture was not the original production by Leonardo da Vinci, but a forgery. A newspaper reporter swore

he had seen the original in a cellar in the Place Vendôme. Probably this excitable journalist had been infected with 'forgeritis', had caught sight of one of the many faithful copies of the painting and been so intoxicated by his discovery that he had invented the fairytale of a 'forgery at the Louvre'.

During this same period, while the most popular picture in France was being disparaged, attempts were made in Germany to deprive Raphael's Sistine Madonna, 'the finest painting in the world', of its glory. On this occasion no supposed 'original in Switzerland' was invoked as a rival to the Dresden work. The latter itself was 'exposed' by one Shibel as a mere copy, consisting of later additions and overpaintings.

The ravages of 'forgeritis' again caused the very existence of certain artists to be called in question. The most fantastic statements were made in all seriousness and 'supported' by printed arguments. Rembrandt, it was asserted, had never lived. He was an invented character. So all the works ascribed to him were forgeries. It was also denied that Frans Hals had executed the pictures attributed to him. A mysterious 'Judith Leyster', who lived about 1640, was responsible for them. Such pronouncements were almost at once given wide publicity and enthusiastically taken up by many persons avid for 'sensation'.

The van Meegeren and Malskat scandals caused 'forgeritis' to break out again after the last war. The fever, starting in Holland and Germany, infected all Europe and reached America. The Dutch newspaper *De Maasbode* ended an account of the forger of 'Vermeers' with the typical remark that it was 'impossible nowadays to trust anything or anybody'. At Museums and exhibitions all over the world doubts were expressed of the authenticity of the works displayed. Formal investigations were set on foot. Not only Dutch painting but the whole art of the West began to be queried. Italian masterpieces like the Mona Lisa and the Sistine Madonna were once more affirmed to be forgeries. An American professor of art proclaimed that the original of the Mona Lisa had been in the possession of a New Hampshire family ever since 1797 and that the Louvre picture could only therefore be a forged copy. The unreliability of the judgment of scholars in these matters figured as the subject of books and plays. Irresponsible writers used their 'professional freedom' to give currency to absurd declarations, meekly accepted by those

who knew no better. In 1953, for example, a broadcaster in a sound radio programme announced: 'I painted the Mona Lisa!' And on a similar occasion listeners were informed: 'Robert Guiscard is the greatest art forger of all time. No one knows how many works are by his hand. He never tells . . .'

Raphael's Sistine Madonna was again in the news in West Germany when the Soviet Union restored the Dresden painting to the East Zone. Doubts of its authenticity were repeatedly expressed by periodicals. It was firmly believed by very many people that the Russians had only returned a copy, a forgery. It was not until such eminent experts as Professor Justi, Director of the Berlin Kaiser Friedrich Museum, uncompromisingly testified that forgery was 'out of the question' that the rumours to the contrary were silenced.

Artists themselves were again proclaimed to have been 'forged'. The Belgian specialist R. Druwé considered, after twelve years' research, that he had 'proved' Rubens to have never been a painter but simply a diplomat and spy in the service of Spain. It had only been to camouflage these dangerous activities that the pictures of his supposed teacher, Adam van Noort, had been fathered upon him. This view is reminiscent of that of the American connoisseur, Charles Roger Bordley, who ascribed Rubens's works to his studio manager Frans Snyders.

Revelations have become very fashionable. Historical characters who have figured prominently for decades and centuries in books on art must now submit to being 'unmasked'. But whether justifiably or not is another matter. The considerable danger that historical truth may be distorted by 'forgeritis' has been strikingly indicated by Max Friedländer. He writes: 'He who denies not only thinks himself, but also probably appears to others, superior to him who affirms. Consequently, ambitious persons will always feel the longing to attack the authenticity of genuine works in order to win the approval of the maliciously minded. Those who affirm have done more harm, but also more good, than those persist in denying. For the latter can never be trusted if they have never been known to affirm.'

'Take up the Shield of Mistrust!'

'SINCE ALMOST ANYTHING can be adulterated and falsified, there seems little one can do about it. But to give up the struggle would be equivalent to not stirring for fear of being caught in a trap. So all that can be done is to study the question.' Eudel-Roessler, in his well-known book on forgery, adds a clarion call to collectors.

'Be incredulous, take up the shield of mistrust, don't yield to first impressions, curb your extravagant instincts, give yourself time to think, examine everything strictly, without prejudice, always take care you are not cast for the part of the dupe in the farce . . . don't buy anything without a clear guarantee in writing . . . but above all you must be continually seeing and handling items yourself . . . an ounce of practice is worth a pound of theory in this matter as in others . . . if you are a dealer, it is not enough, for the intelligent conduct of your business, to pay good prices, to be amiable and accommodating, have a good eye for profit and a fine showroom. You need not only commercial ability and an interest in art to form a good collection, but also knowledge. So you must study . . .'

Buyers of works of art can never be warned too often or too emphatically to be cautious in all their purchases. They should never be in a hurry. They should always reflect upon and discuss their plans. The best training is to visit museums and be constantly in touch with original works, so as to develop intuitive discrimination between the genuine and the spurious.

The advice of connoisseurs should also be taken and always sought when making a purchase.

A remarkably accurate answer to the question how to protect oneself against forgeries is given by Gustav Pauli. He observes:

‘TAKE UP THE SHIELD OF MISTRUST!’

‘There is only one infallible method. Buy the works of young, gifted artists who have not yet made a name for themselves.’

The Director of the Hamburg Art Gallery has also urged that it is a mistake to concentrate upon famous names and periods, much in demand and consequently subject to forgery. He recommends that a buyer should have the courage of his own convictions in the choice of unknown but attractive new productions. Good and indubitably genuine art can still be picked up at reasonable prices to-day. Duly qualified experts and dealers have acquired works by subsequently famous artists at a time when no one either wanted or imitated them.

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great masters. Then there are the innocent bystanders whose works are mistakenly attributed to someone else and their not-so-innocent opposites, the cynical pranksters determined to expose the smug pretensions of the experts.

Schüller ranges from the frequent and often "accepted" copying of the Renaissance to the more famous scandals of the last half century. The high point is his discussion of that renowned and unholy trinity of Dossena, van Meegeren, and Lothar Malskat. During the 1920's the Italian Dossena acquired the title of "king of the forgers" for his "recreations," inspired far more by his love of beauty than his love of cash, of Italian masterpieces. Van Meegeren's relative obscurity drove him to fantastic extremes in mastering the techniques of the past and producing, between 1937 and 1943, those fabulous "Vermeers" which still have the experts scratching their heads. In his eagerness to salvage German art treasures after World War II, Malskat was not satisfied with merely "restoring" medieval frescoes. Were these misguided artists or arch swindlers? The controversy still rages.

Schüller carefully describes the artistic sleuthing which uncovered these imposters of the art world, the study of tell-tale mannerisms, the analysis of paint and canvas, the use of X-rays. This book is invaluable as a work of reference for collectors and dealers as well as for anyone who appreciates fine works of art.

Sepp Schüller, who is a distinguished German art critic and radio personality, has devoted many years to a special study of this fascinating branch of art history.

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