

**EXHIBITION OF EARLY
ENGLISH, DUTCH, AND
FLEMISH PAINTINGS AT
THE BLAKESLEE GALLERIES**

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Exhibition of early English, Dutch, and Flemish paintings at the Blakeslee Galleries by T. J. Blakeslee

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T. J. BLAKESLEE

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AT THE
BLAKESLEE GALLERIES
353 FIFTH AVENUE, COR. THIRTY-FOURTH STREET



NEW YORK
1898



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INTRODUCTION.

ENGLISHMEN are nothing if not patriotic. A certain clannishness, characteristic of the race, is ever apparent, and is a trait that other nations might well emulate. English painters have, time out of mind, found faithful patrons at home. The magnificent houses of the nobility, the palaces of royalty, the sumptuous mansions of the merchant princes, and the houses of the country gentry attest the faithfulness of all classes to the British artist by their splendid collections of portraits and other art works, from Sir Joshua Reynolds to Opie, and from Constable to Turner. Calm and serene in the satisfaction of his firm belief in British art through all this time, the Englishman may now see his idols worshipped, not only far from his own land, across the sea, by his American kinsmen, but by his old enemy, the Gaul, for the Frenchman is in these days as enthusiastic as the stoutest Englishman could ask.

When a few years ago our great collectors, men of taste and discrimination, began to tire of certain flippant phases of French art, when the group of Barbizon painters had been fully exploited and prices for their best work made them almost prohibitive, it came about naturally that they turned to the canvases of Englishmen known to us here, but in truth, up to this time, never fully appreciated, save by the few. It had hitherto been almost impossible to

find any of the best examples for sale, for when one was offered it was done so privately and generally to personal friends. But times have changed, and with them fortunes once large have shrunk. Stern necessity has compelled the owners to put their treasures on the market. Perhaps some have found in the increasing demand opportunities to realize needed funds, and the temptation has been too great to resist. Whatever the reason, the heirlooms have found their way to dealer or auction room, and the American has purchased freely.

Before this general movement on the part of the collectors came about, however, Mr. Blakeslee had been attracted to this school of sturdy, vigorous painters, and had bought now and then a picture or a portrait, and among his clientele had found an occasional purchaser who, it must be confessed, bought more on the recommendation of the writer than on his own perspicuity. But to live with these paintings and study them was to find revealed day by day new beauties and to become unconsciously attracted by reason of superb color and the greater qualities of humanity contained therein. What began as an experiment developed into a veritable craze, and the demand grew with jumps and strides. Others in the picture trade were obliged to follow the movement. The greatness of these English masters became apparent, and the end is not yet, for every now and then some sumptuous canvas is brought over that comes even now as a surprise to show the latent power of the men who worked seriously and honestly, with a definite purpose in view.

Some recent sales, in this city, in London, and Paris, of these early Englishmen show that, apart from the satisfaction of the possession of their pictures and portraits, as a matter merely of investment their purchase has been a great success. The writer has seen canvases he has sold but a short time previous, go in the auction room at prices

far in excess of what they originally cost, and he himself has bought back again noteworthy paintings at double the price the first purchaser paid him. The collection contained in this catalogue includes, with works of British artists, fine examples of painters not English-born, who yet settled in that country, either through inclination or by reason of royal favor, and whose art had a strong influence on that of the race among whom they came to live, namely: Van Dyck, Ravesteijeu, Janssens, Kneller, and others; and their canvases are historical documents of the greatest interest and importance. It is not strange to the student and connoisseurs that the American should find himself drawn to the great Englishmen, to whom he is bound by ties of blood, language, and kinship. While the subjects they have painted have the sturdy Anglo-Saxon qualities we know and can appreciate, and the frankness of expression, only surpassed by the sureness of their technique, the thoroughness of the work in detail demonstrates the well-equipped workman who knew his tools and wrought out his own conceptions without having to bother with methods.

T. J. BLAKESLEE.

