

**DESCRIPTIVE
CATALOGUE OF
"OLD MASTERS"**

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Descriptive Catalogue of "Old Masters" by James J. Jarves

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JAMES J. JARVES

**DESCRIPTIVE
CATALOGUE OF
"OLD MASTERS"**

DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE

OF

“OLD MASTERS,”

COLLECTED BY JAMES J. JARVES,

TO ILLUSTRATE

The History of Painting

FROM A. D. 1200 TO THE BEST PERIODS OF ITALIAN ART.

CAMBRIDGE:

PRINTED BY H. O. HOUGHTON.

1862.

5498

PREFATORY REMARKS.

IN putting before the public this Catalogue of "old masters," some explanation is due of the origin, aim, and character of the collection.

During a long residence in Europe, chiefly in Italy, the writer was led to the study of art at large, the preliminary results of which, in the shape of abstract suggestions, were given to the public in "Art-Hints," in 1855. Its favorable reception was an additional encouragement for the continuance of a pursuit, which, while so full of enjoyment to him individually, seemed also to be not without interest to his fellow-citizens generally. The historical and critical researches required for the preparation of "Art-Studies," — a work chiefly referring to the Italian schools of painting, with special reference to the aesthetic wants of America, — now in course of publication by Messrs. Derby and Jackson, New York, led to the conception of a gallery or museum of olden art for America, based upon a chronological and historical sequence of paintings, arranged according to their motives and technical progress. Without such a museum of reference, it was evident that a work on Italian art would possess but slight interest for our public; while, if formed, each would illustrate and add to the value of the other. Accordingly, he determined to attempt it. Familiar with Italian life; living in the midst of the art that was his daily study; in constant intercourse with many of the best European connoisseurs; assisted by sympathizing artistic friends, and particularly by a Greek artist, Sig. G. Mignaty.

whose knowledge of the history and technical processes, combined with a keen perception and deep feeling in art, is very remarkable; after several years of search in the highways and byways of Europe,—the writer succeeded in getting together the pictures described in this Catalogue, believing that ultimately they will be found worthy of forming the nucleus of a Free Gallery in one of our large cities, and thus be made to promote his aim,—the diffusion of artistic knowledge and æsthetic taste in America.

It is unnecessary here, though it would not be devoid of entertainment, to give a sketch of the experiences acquired in the pursuit of old pictures in Italy. In some degree, this has been done in the introductory part of "Art-Studies," under the head of "Authenticity." But in view of the very natural doubts and questionings which must arise in this country, where there exists no standard of comparison and but little critical knowledge of "old masters," there has been added to this Catalogue a series of documents, showing the estimation in which the collection is held by English, French, Italian, and American authorities. The weight of their joint opinions, to which others might be added, is, he trusts, sufficient to induce the public to give it their candid attention, without fear of being called upon to examine or enjoy works that are not *genuine*, and of the epoch and schools they profess to be. It should be kept in mind, that, for several years, they have stood the severest test possible; to wit, the brunt of European connoisseurship in Florence, alongside of the most famous galleries known, where it has been but a step from a "masterpiece" to some characteristic specimen of the same master in this collection. At the same time, the public must not expect to find in it those masterpieces which give reputation to the great painters: they are either fixtures in the edifices for which they were painted, or have been long since absorbed into the chief public galleries, and can never be seen in America. All that he proposed to get together, was *characteristic* specimens of the schools and artists that illustrate Italian painting, in a series which should, at a glance, give a correct view of its progress from A.D. 1000 to 1600,—six centuries, embracing its rise, climax,

and decadence. In no collection are all pictures of the same standard of excellence. So in this there will be found some that illustrate rather particular *motives* in art, with especial reference to its Christian inspiration, than any special technical excellence; it being part of his aim to show the topics most in vogue during past centuries. Further, the nomenclature is based upon the same system as that of the public galleries of Europe in general. But comparatively few pictures have undoubted historical pedigrees. For the rest, catalogues are the result of the best available criticism, based chiefly upon *internal* proof, sustained, where it exists, by collateral documentary evidence or trustworthy tradition. The author has conscientiously and studiously followed this system, aided by European criticism; and the Catalogue, as it now appears, is the result of several years' patient and close inquiry. Wherever he has felt there might be a diversity of opinion among critics, or he had any cause to distrust the evidence, it has been so indicated in the Catalogue; which, as a whole, will be found to be as correct as those of the galleries in Europe relied upon as authoritative. No gallery is immaculate in this respect. The severest acumen and thorough investigation cannot always decide upon technical facts hundreds of years old. All that can be required, therefore, are honesty and diligence in inquiry. Too many instances, however, occur of desire to exaggerate the importance of works of art at the expense of truth. In the Louvre and National Galleries, there are a number of pictures misnamed, without, however, materially affecting their period or school. But, in the Royal Institution at Liverpool, we find a large number of wretched specimens of old painters exalted to a rank that in Italy would excite the ridicule of the most careless observer; and in several instances, as Masaccio, Lippi, Cimabue, named without the smallest pretence to the qualities of those masters: and this spurious baptism sanctioned by the official certificates of the Committee of the Manchester Art Exhibition. Such carelessness brings disrepute upon the old masters, and misleads students.

The collection will be steadily increased and improved, as means and opportunities permit; better examples of the artists,

when procured, substituted for others of a less degree of excellence; and it depends but upon the public eventually, by their encouragement, to make of this a gallery which shall do credit to the rapidly growing artistic taste and ambition of America. We must have our own means of aesthetic education, independent, in some degree, of Europe. This collection is mainly important in showing that it is possible even now, when means and knowledge are practically applied, to fill, in part, the chasm that separates us so widely, in artistic enjoyment and information, from the peoples of Europe. It is, however, but a *beginning*.

More than forty of the pictures have been engraved on copper by Vincenzo Stanghi, a pupil of Raphael Morghen, for "Art-Studies," in order to give an idea, so far as composition and general character are concerned, of the progress of art during several centuries in Italy. Those, therefore, who cherish the "old masters," will have an opportunity, not only of studying the pictures themselves, but of taking away with them very carefully prepared outlines, with partial shadings, of many of the most interesting specimens. It should be borne in mind, that the larger number of these paintings were *old* before America was discovered; and necessarily they bear the marks of time. The newness and freshness of a modern painting would be sadly out of keeping on an ancient picture. We must accept them as they are, doing our best to get paintings as intact and well preserved as possible; and, when repairs or restorations are necessary, limiting them to what is required to *preserve* the picture; keeping, so far as is possible, the original tone and manner, and in no case permitting, as is too often done, entire *repainting*, which obliterates the old artist and substitutes the new.

JAMES JACKSON JARVES.

September, 1890.

MEMORANDA.—The paintings are numbered chiefly in chronological order. The numbers wanting on the walls belong to paintings not yet arrived from Europe.

ABBREVIATIONS.—*w.*, wood; *g.b.g.*, gold back-ground; *tem.*, tempera; *can.*, canvas; *enc.*, encaustic. Figures indicate the size in inches, in general including the frame.

For a full account of the Italian schools and masters represented in this collection, we refer the reader to "Art-Studies," a work on Italian Painting, in the course of publication by DEEBY & JACKSON, New York.

