

**SOME EARLY ITALIAN
ENGRAVINGS BEFORE THE
TIME OF MARCANTONIO;
PP. 252-289**

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Some early Italian engravings before the time of Marcantonio; pp. 252-289 by Arthur M. Hind

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FOGG ART MUSEUM
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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THE TIME OF MARCANTONIO**

BY

ARTHUR M. HIND

Of the Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum

Author of "Catalogue of Early Italian Engravings in the British Museum,"

"Short History of Engraving and Etching," "Rembrandt's Etchings:
an Essay and a Catalogue," etc.

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS
BOSTON, MASS.
1913

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Some Early Italian Engravers before the time of Marcantonio

"We may have to admit . . . that there is nothing in Italian engraving before Marcantonio quite on a level with the achievement of Albrecht Dürer, but the indefinable allure that characterizes so much of the work of the minor Italian artists of the earlier Renaissance is more than enough compensation for any lack of technical efficiency, . . . and it is still the youth of artistic development, with its naive joy and freshness of outlook, which holds us with the stronger spell."

Arthur M. Hind.



PROFILE BUST OF A YOUNG WOMAN

After Leonardo da Vinci

"Of the prints attributed to Leonardo, the fascinating *Profile Bust of a Young Woman* stands out from the rest for the sensitive quality of its outline, but even here I would be more ready to see the hand of an engraver like Zoan Andrea, who after leaving Mantua seems to have settled in Milan and done work in a finer manner influenced by the style of the Milanese miniaturists (such as the Master of the Sforza Book of Hours in the British Museum)." Arthur M. Hind.

Reproduced from the unique impression in the British Museum.

Size of the original engraving, $4\frac{1}{2} \times 3$ inches.

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FIFTEENTH-CENTURY Italian engraving is not an easy hunting-ground for the collector, but it is one of the most fascinating not less for its own sake than for the difficulty of securing one's prize.

From the time of Raphael onward Italian engraving presents an overwhelmingly large proportion of reproductions of pictures, and loses on that account its primary interest. But in the fifteenth and the early sixteenth century, the engravers, though for the most part less accomplished craftsmen, were artists of real independence. We may in some cases exaggerate this independence through not knowing the sources which they used, but the mere lack of that knowledge adds a particular interest to their prints. Treated not only in virtue of their special claim as engravings, but merely as designs, we find something in them which the paintings of the period do not offer us.

In general, the presence and influence of one of the greater artistic personalities of the time may be recognized, but seldom definitely enough for us to trace the painter's immediate direction. Mantegna is the most

brilliant exception of a painter of first rank who is known to have handled the graver at this period. But forgetting the great names it is remarkable how in the early Renaissance in Italy even the secondary craftsmen produced work of the same inexpressible charm that pervades the great masterpieces.

One of the most beautiful examples I can cite is the *Triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne*, which is known only in the British Museum impression. It has all the fascination of Botticelli's style without being quite Botticelli—unless the engraver himself is to account for the coarsening in the drawing of individual forms. Mr. Herbert P. Horne, the great authority on Botticelli and his school, thinks it is by Bartolommeo di Giovanni (Berenson's "Alunno di Domenico"). But whether immediately after Botticelli or after some minor artist of the school, there is the same delightful flow and rhythmic motion in the design that one thinks of in relation to Botticelli's *Spring*.

Botticelli was in early life under the immediate inspiration, if not in the very service, of the great goldsmith Pollaiuolo (witness his picture of *Fortitude* in Florence). One almost expects in consequence that he may at some period have tried his hand at engraving, but there is no proof that he did anything besides supplying the engravers with designs. His chief connection with the engravers was in the series of plates done for Landino's edition of Dante's "Divine Comedy" (Florence, 1481). Altogether nineteen plates (and a repetition of one subject) are known, but although spaces are left throughout the whole edition for an illustration to each canto, it is only in rare copies that more than two or three are found. Even



TRIUMPH OF BACCHUS AND ARIADNE

After a design by a close follower of Botticelli, possibly by Bartolommeo di Giovanni "But whether immediately after Botticelli or after some minor artist of the school, there is the same delightful flow and rhythmic motion in the design that one thinks of in relation to Botticelli's *Spring*. We could ill afford to lose the charm of the early Florentine. *Fraxipha of Bacchus and Ariadne* for all the finished beauty of Marcantonio's *Lucretia*, and it is still the youth of artistic development, with its naive joy and freshness of outlook, which holds us with the strongest spell." Arthur M. Hind.

Reproduced from the unique impression in the British Museum

Size of the original engraving, 8¼ x 22 inches