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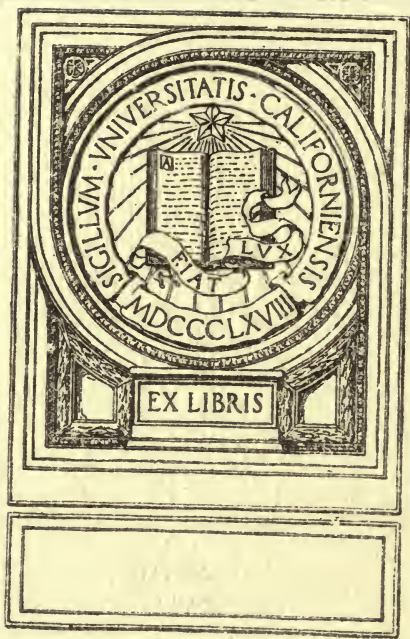
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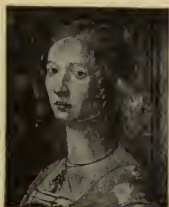
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Masters in Art

A Series of Illustrated Monographs

The January number was devoted to Edouard Manet; the February number to Carlo Cavelli. Among the other artists to whom numbers will be devoted during 1908 are Duccio, El Greco, Bordone, George Innes, and probably Hokusai.

PART 100, THE ISSUE FOR

April, 1908

WILL TREAT OF

Sir Frederic Leighton

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Nicolaas Maes

BORN 1632: DIED 1693
DUTCH SCHOOL

THE life of Nicolaas Maes or Maas (pronounced Mās) can be told in a few lines, for the facts known about him are very meagre. He was born in 1632 at Dordrecht, whence came also several other Dutch painters — Albert Cuyp, Ferdinand Bol, and Godfried Schalcken. The year 1632 was a significant one in the development of Dutch art, the year that Rembrandt painted the great picture of his youth, 'The Anatomical Lecture.' Maes doubtless studied with some unknown painter before, at the age of eighteen, entering Rembrandt's studio, where he remained four years. M. Bürger says that he learned drawing of some insignificant painter, but that he learned painting from Rembrandt.

Maes's best pictures were his earliest ones, delightful pictures of genre, painted while still in Rembrandt's studio, or at least in the years immediately succeeding, that is, between 1655 and 1660. Generally they were small pictures of interior scenes. Unlike Gerard Terborch and Gabriel Metsu, who depicted gallant scenes of the Dutch upper classes, and unlike Jan Steen and Adrian van Ostade, who painted scenes of rollicking tavern life, Nicolaas Maes chose simple scenes of humble peasant life. Frequently he gives us an old woman, busy about her daily vocations, either spinning, as in the two pictures now belonging to the Ryks Museum at Amsterdam (plate x), or preparing vegetables for dinner (plate III), or asking a blessing before partaking of her simple repast. The light generally falls from an unseen window on the left of the picture, in the masterly handling of which Maes shows himself a veritable pupil of Rembrandt, though he was never over-influenced by the great master. There is one picture by Maes in the Louvre entitled, 'The Blessing,' a marvelously beautiful picture of an old woman with her hands folded in prayer, as she sits before a table laid out with simple viands for the evening meal, while her cat plays with her slipper. This picture is signed, and dated 1648, but M. Lafenestre thinks the signature is forged and considers the date as doubtful. If genuine, Maes must have painted it when only sixteen years of age, which seems almost incredible, as it is painted in his very best manner and seems hardly the work of an immature lad.

At other times he painted less somber subjects, for example the two versions of the so-called 'Indiscreet Servant,' one in the Six Collection at Amsterdam, the other in Buckingham Palace (plate 11). 'The Milkmaid' of the Van Loon Collection of Amsterdam is another charming work of these early years. Here the scene is laid outside an old Dutch house, and the subject is the very simple one of an older woman in white cap with gold ornaments giving some money to a young girl dressed in a straw hat and red petticoat, and holding a milk-pail. This picture Lord Ronald Gower called "a superb specimen of the most Rembrandt-like pupil of Rembrandt; the coloring of this picture is splendid."

It is to be regretted that Maes ever left the master's influence, as he did about 1660, when he went to Antwerp to see the works of the great Flemings and to visit the painters still living. From this time he gave up the painting of simple genre subjects, in which he excelled, for the painting of portraits, for the reason, it is thought, that there was a better livelihood to be gained at that time in this branch of art. Rembrandt had rather lost favor with the public during his later life, and Van der Helst and Dirk Hals, brother to Franz Hals, were the popular portrait artists of the day in Holland. In Flanders the great masters were all passed away. Rubens had died in 1640, Van Dyke in 1641, and Snyders, at the age of seventy-eight, in 1657. Only Jordaens and Teniers the Younger were left, with the former of whom Maes made friends. Maes did not adopt the splendid Rembrandtesque manner of portrait-painting, but rather that of the degenerate Flemings, who had become vitiated by French taste. Most of his portraits are smoothly finished, commonplace, and uninteresting, and he seems to have abandoned his rich color and splendid chiaroscuro.

In Antwerp Maes remained more than eighteen years, and was most successful from a popular and financial point of view. In fact, it was as a portrait-painter that the artist was best known until within a hundred years, when interest was aroused again in his exquisite little pictures of genre. It has been said that the 'Little Masters' of Holland were only successful when they kept to the painting of small canvases; that when they attempted large themes they lost themselves, they became weak and uninteresting; but that the pupils of Rembrandt alone, and among them Maes, were successful at both large and small pictures.

Some of the later portraits attributed to Maes are so inferior in conception and handling that it has been thought by some critics that they may have been painted by another artist of the same name, possibly a son, as the name Maes or Maas is a common one in Holland. The manner of signature, too, on the early genre pictures and that on the later portraits is quite different in character. In the former the artist wrote his name, N. Maes, either in large Roman letters or with the M, A, and E, the first three letters of the surname, joined in a monogram. In the later pictures the initial N and the initial M of the surname were joined together with many flourishes.

On the other hand, M. Bürger points to a portrait of a boy in the Museum

of Rotterdam with the earlier form of signature, and painted in such a manner as to show plainly the transition from the pictures of genre to the later portraits dating from 1675 onward. In this picture is a life-sized, half-length figure of a boy dressed in a handsome costume of gray and white, with knots of gray and white ribbon at his girdle. He is offering cherries to a parrot perched on a balustrade. Behind him is a rich red curtain drawn back to show a sunset. M. Bürger says of this: "We have come to portraits *composed*, with balustrades, curtains, vistas of sunsets, with accessories and pretexts for decorative combinations. From the simplicity of Rembrandt we go to the elegant *recherchés* of Van Dyke, to the emphatic richness of the Flemings." The reds, though rich and beautiful in themselves and recalling the color so often used in the sleeves or jackets of his peasant women, are much too intense for the grays and whites; and, used in strong contrast without moderating half-tones, the shadows have lost their transparency and the clear tones their limpity. "His future decadence," continues Bürger, "is already prophetic in this portrait, as well in color as in composition." Until we have some further information on the subject, let us consider, as does M. Bürger, that these portraits as well as genre pieces are by the same man, one only Nicolaas Maes.

Among the large canvases containing a number of portraits, members of a guild or trustees of a hospital, and of which Rembrandt and more especially Franz Hals painted so many, there is only one that is attributed to Maes; namely, a picture in the Six Collection at Amsterdam. Formerly it was in the Van der Hoop Collection, and attributed to Jacob Backer. It is now thought to represent the Corporation of Surgeons in Amsterdam, and M. Bredius has pointed out that any one conversant with the history of costume in Holland could see that it was painted too late to be by the hand of Backer, who died in 1651; and also the astute critic has discovered a similarity in the portrait heads to two portraits by Maes in the Brussels Museum, painted in his transitional manner, "when he has still all the power and brilliance of his color, and when he still professes also some respect for the truth of chiaroscuro."

Of the pictures painted from 1665 to 1670, there are few in existence to-day bearing his signature, but there are numerous portraits painted by him after 1675 to be found in many of the Dutch galleries. John Smith, in his 'Catalogue Raisonné,' mentions forty-five pictures of genre, but does not catalogue his portraits. About two thirds of the former are in England, several fine ones in the National Gallery, but many more in private collections.

In 1678 Maes returned to Holland to pass the rest of his days, and settled in Amsterdam. Heer Houbraken says that he was quiet and courteous in manner, that he enjoyed society and entertaining, and was of a cheerful and happy disposition until the last year of his life, when he suffered much from the gout, of which trouble, like Gaspar Netscher, he died, in December, 1693, in his sixty-first year.

As Frederick Wedmore writes, Nicolaas Maes was "one of the strangest instances not of a talent that was promising, but of a genius that was great,

an art consummate and accomplished, though limited, which became too soon perverted, and then was somewhat early buried out of sight — yet a genius and an art that left us after all, in our day, no irritating array of ambitious failures on which attention must be fixed. During ten splendid years, from 1650 to 1660 — or it may be a little later — there is a series of high work. What followed is really known less, and we can afford to ignore it.”

The Art of Nicolaas Maes

H. HAVARD

‘THE DUTCH SCHOOL OF PAINTING’

NICOLAAS MAES, of all Rembrandt’s pupils, is perhaps the most successful in the management of his light. His interiors, lighted by a sun-beam thrown upon a wall, recall Rembrandt’s style. Besides this, they are painted with a fulness and power at once remarkable. His ‘Old Woman at the Spinning-Wheel’ in the Museum of Amsterdam, his ‘Dutch Home,’ and his ‘Lazy Servant’ in the National Gallery are paintings of the very highest merit. His ‘Inquisitive Servant’ in the Six Collection is a work of the first order, but in this work his light is less concentrated and less brilliant. Maes’s favorite color seems to have been red. No artist uses this color with more boldness or more success than he does in his earlier works; and for this reason doubts have been raised if he ever did paint the series of large be-wigged portraits which have been attributed to him, somber and morose faces, uniformly set against a dark background. It is difficult to imagine the brilliant painter of ‘The Cradle’ forgetting his skill in light and shade and his love of nature to give himself up, as in these commonplace productions, to mannerism and affectation.

LORD RONALD GOWER

‘THE FIGURE-PAINTERS OF HOLLAND’

WE should feel puzzled if we had the choice given us between a good example of Pieter de Hooch and one of Nicolaas Maes’s pictures. There is much likeness in the subjects which these two charming painters placed on their canvases; much resemblance between them also in the superb coloring and perfect grouping of their figures: these two artists, with Ver Meer of Delft, have in their way never been surpassed, and it would be no easy question to answer which is the greatest of the three.

It is a matter of doubt whether De Hooch and Ver Meer were pupils of Rembrandt, but it is certain that Maes studied under him. During his lifetime, and until the end of last century, Maes was chiefly known as a portrait-painter. When he visited Jordaens at Antwerp he was questioned by that artist what manner of painting he practised. Maes replied, “I am but a portrait-painter.” His reputation is, however, not now maintained by his

portraits, which are inferior to Honthorst's, but rests on the superb little pictures of scenes from every-day life — a Dutch housewife nursing her child, or surprising her maid asleep over her pots and pans; a girl leaning out of window, or listening to a group of lovers who imagine they are unwatched and unheard; an old woman saying grace, or peeling potatoes; a child knitting a stocking; an old man reading a book; and other similar objects. To these simple scenes Maes gave a charm and a beauty that only two or three painters have ever equaled; as Charles Blanc observes, his coloring is as fine as that of Rembrandt and of Titian.

FREDERICK WEDMORE

'THE MASTERS OF GENRE PAINTING'

NICOLAAS MAES was one of those gifted and brilliant men who should have died young, for the immense achievements of his youth were never supported by the work of his middle age. The last-century criticism of the sagacious Descamps has nevertheless classed him in chief as a painter of the works by which he is least entitled to live — a painter of portraits, with whom pictures of the kind that we have got to like him for were but a less important business. Some day the laborious historian may accumulate material which shall enable us to trace with accuracy of detail the rise and fall of Nicolaas Maes, from that early but fascinating and already well-nigh masterly picture in the Amsterdam Museum — a portrait ennobled by imagination — and so through the series of his interiors, as splendid in tone as refined and subdued in sentiment, to the later portraits in which his early preoccupation is leaving him, and so to those in which it is utterly gone, and only a painter feebly forcible or avowedly degenerate remains to play fast and loose with the fag end of talent debauched.

Born at Dordrecht in 1632, he enters, in 1650, the studio of Rembrandt at Amsterdam, and for the next ten years the greatest of the Dutch masters has no worthier pupil. Just what De Koninck was to Rembrandt in landscape Maes was to him in pictures whose interest centered in humanity; he was the pupil, that is to say, with whom the seed of Rembrandt's teaching fell on the kindest and fittest ground. He had too much of individual and personal genius to be an imitator, but he had too profound a sympathy with Rembrandt to avoid resembling him. Like his master, he was a painter of shadowed places and of sad and quiet lives. Of course he lacked Rembrandt's endless variety. He shut himself up, in the main, with too few types — narrowed himself, in the main, to the expression of too few characters. Rembrandt himself was interested in, and Rembrandt understood, the men of action; these he grasped no less strongly than the figures of reverie. But with Maes it is the mind that broods, the character that meditates and ponders, rather than acts, which interests him. Others subordinately interest him: even a little the servant in her work; or the servant idle, in a brief sleep which has a snatch of the humor that pleased the age; or the woman at the spinnet, but her music is already of reverie; or the child with the Dutch housewife — but the child, I note it, is neither at play nor at work, but, true to her part in

Maes's drama, watching, observing, considering, though it is but the scraping of a parsnip. . . .

We think of Nicolaas Maes, then, as the painter of a home life cheerful with the merry eyes of childhood, or dignified with the gravity of common pursuits, or sobered and saddened with the experiences of age — the age of the lonely and humble. We think of him as one who, by the Queen's 'Listener' (painted when he was yet young), by the noble interior seen at Burlington House in 1875, and by some other pictures, such as that at the Amsterdam club-house, and that in the Lacaze Collection, which carry also another message more purely his own — we think of him by these as one of the band that carried here and again to perfection what their master left incomplete: the subtleties of passage from breadth of sunshine, glowing or cool, to the effects of the interior atmosphere, on room side, chamber wall, where, with tints strangely neutral, it is difficult to say whether light begins to be shadow or shadow begins to be light, and so amid half-glooms to isolated points of brightness the eye may pass to — as in the Queen's 'Listener,' where the rounded baluster-head catches at just one point of its equal curve the stray glimmer, the glimmer breaking out again, yellow and brassy, on the further nails of the straight Dutch chair that peers from background space and wall, cozy in their gathered dimness. With these men — these poetic Dutchmen — light is more than ever before a presence of slow and changeful life, giving life, too, and sense of companionship to else inanimate things. Maes and his fellows followed its subtleties on chamber wall and hanging, and in its narrow yet eventful journey from window to hearth — they played out for us its little drama there within that limited space they knew so well and calculated so acutely — much as the more commonly extolled painters of our last generation watched it in conflicts of sunshine and shadow in English landscape. Nor when prepossessions are once laid aside, is it easy to say whether the greater praise in art belongs to the one or the other. In itself the tree-trunk, the damp herbage, the clod of earth, even the rain-cloud, is hardly a worthier or more proper object to be painted than hearth and hanging, window and wall.

The artist, giving a quality as well as finding one, transmutes and exalts alike the one thing and the other; and so what Turner, Constable, De Wint, did for the country — in revealing beauty and interest hidden till they portrayed them — De Hooch and Van der Meer and Nicolaas Maes did for the home.

A. BREDIUS

'LES CHEFS-D'ŒUVRE DU MUSÉE D'AMSTERDAM'

AMONG the numerous pupils of Rembrandt we owe a quite special mention to Nicolaas Maes, who, born in 1632, at Dordrecht, died at Amsterdam in November, 1693. From 1650 to 1653 he must certainly have received lessons of the great artist. In his first manner, comprised between 1654 and about 1660, we possess a series of the best productions of Maes. Their collection furnishes us an even level to which under such instruction a

painter happily endowed by nature could attain, for some of these works would almost bear comparison with those of his master. It pleased Maes to paint aged women, sometimes seated at table, before a frugal repast, for which they give thanks to God; sometimes seated before their spinning-wheel, whereby to gain their livelihood. At other times his compositions are of a more pleasing nature. It is thus, in the beautiful work of the Collection Six, he shows us an indiscreet servant, lending her ear to the conversation of an amorous couple placed in the center of the picture; in the background a party of people at table, with a vista upon another chamber and upon out-of-doors. The truly marvelous charm of the color makes of this work, dated 1607, one of the most clever creations of Maes. An analogous composition (dated 1665) is found at Buckingham Palace, and it is in England, furthermore, that his best productions are found to-day. One of his most remarkable works, 'An Old Woman in Prayer,' belongs to the Amsterdam society "Felix Meritis." The naïve expression of that honest face, furrowed with wrinkles, the admirable execution of the hands, the emotion which disengages itself from a subject so simple, the beauty and power of the color, the picturesqueness of effect — all unite to make this picture one of the most exquisite works which have been executed under the direct influence of Rembrandt. In its dimensions much more limited, the Ryks Museum offers us two little canvases, representing each a 'Spinner.' We give our readers the reproduction of the better preserved of the two, belonging to the Collection Dupper. . . . The picture of the Collection Van der Hoop presents a great resemblance to that, but the light is more vivid and still more brilliant. Unhappily, it has suffered a little. We must cite also as one of the most agreeable productions of his first period, 'The Dreamer,' a pensive young girl who looks out of the window. Has her gaze met in the distance some loved person who from below contemplates her across the apricot and peach vines whose festoons surround the window? However it may be, the picture, although deteriorated, attracts the attention of all visitors to our museum.

Maes did not live a long time at Amsterdam. After a short visit at Antwerp, he made a very long sojourn at Dordrecht, his native town. Did he travel, perhaps, in that event, a sufficiently long time before he definitely settled at Amsterdam, which was certainly after 1678? He had in that interval entirely changed his manner of painting, and several pictures of the last epoch have a character so different that even now one meets a number of incredulous persons who persist in attributing these works to another painter having the same name. It is however proved that there has been only one Nicolaas Maes, and that, although some of his works differ very much from others for various reasons, yet they are in accord with the taste which then reigned. His visit to Antwerp, where he found the painting of portraits carried on in ways so opposed to Rembrandt, and the success of Van der Helst and other painters, who followed this master, all contributed to make the Rembrandt-esque Maes of 1655 the Maes so strongly tainted with mannerism of 1670-1690. He had early acquired the habit of painting his models in fantastic

costumes, disguises 'à la romaine,' as they said then (I have found a contract by which Johan André Lievens, the son of Jan Lievens the old painter well known, engaged himself to paint a couple of good bourgeois, the husband as Scipio and his wife as Pallas), and that not as Rembrandt did when he worked at his own portrait, at those of Saskia and of Hendrickje, thus putting to use the rare stuffs or the precious objects which with his love of the picturesque or his passion of collecting he had bought at the dealers. No; all the material of Maes consisted for his men in a red cloak, and for his women in a violet shawl with which he draped them. Then supposing a gust of wind, he made the stuffs flutter a little, and the game was played. The red served to soften the too dark complexion of the men, the violet to whiten still more the flesh-tints of the women. Sometimes, when it pleased him, he changed the rôles. The eyes were always a little larger than nature, but this did not go so badly with his models, and Houbraken recounts to us *à propos* a sufficiently pleasing anecdote. Maes having at one time painted a woman too little favored as regards beauty, and having copied her too closely from nature, the woman complained to the artist. To exculpate himself, the latter made haste to observe that the portrait was not yet finished. Then, taking his brush, he obliterated the marks of smallpox and other imperfections. Having adorned her cheeks with fresh colors, he said to her, "Madame, now your portrait is finished," at which the latter exclaimed, "Oh! yes, now it is!" And that was the same Maes who not long since painted those beautiful interiors with beautiful effects of chiaroscuro in the manner of Rembrandt, and those exquisite compositions which we admire, as the 'Woman in Prayer,' of 'Felix Meritis,' or the 'Spinner' of the Ryks Museum. But his portraits were much sought after, and the vogue which they enjoyed explains to us that among the Dutch artists of the seventeenth century we could hardly cite one, Miervelt excepted, who has produced so great a number, and belonging for the most part to persons of the highest condition.— TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

ARSÈNE ALEXANDRE

'HISTOIRE POPULAIRE DE LA PEINTURE'

NICOLAAS MAES (1632-1693) might be placed as well among the painters of manners (rather than as a pupil of Rembrandt). But a painter of manners, is he truly that? In these last years they have almost given Maes the reputation of a great painter. Without doubt he acquired at the studio of Rembrandt a taste for rich color and generous matter. He profited as well by the lessons in that which concerned the vivid lighting of objects; he knew how to make the reds and blacks vibrate by the clever juxtaposition of gray. In short, of the immediate pupils of Rembrandt we may recognize without too much chicanery that he is the best painter. His 'Card-Players' of the National Gallery would be proof of it; at the same time also, a certain number of pictures of different dimensions, representing old women occupied with spinning, eating, saying grace, reading, or quite simply sleeping. But we perceive quickly that these old women are always the same old woman, that the diversity of her occupations does not give the variety of

interest which her person can inspire; that we find ourselves, in a word, only in the presence of a painter, and not of an observer. This diminishes considerably the place which Maes might occupy in the school. He has only beautiful technique; he is only a dealer in strength of handling, hardly less insupportable in the long run than Gerard Dou, a dealer in its tricks.

To complete the diminution of sympathy in regard to him, we find that Maes, in a moment, seems to have abruptly changed his article of trade without becoming in any respect a man of the first order. After a voyage to Antwerp he was enamoured of Van Dyck, as Bol had been, and he set himself first of all to paint portraits minute in detail, smooth, cold, arranged, not having well understood the delicacy of Van Dyck; in a word, to paint portraits with perruques. It is absolutely impossible to consider as a true artist, or indeed simply as an artist, the man who has produced work of a double character, and of whom the first half of his career or his work seems absolutely foreign to the second. That is to say that both Maes and Dou are devoid of sincerity and true conviction, and the beautiful calling of the artist is a secondary thing after all from the moment that art is lacking. In truth, Gerard Dou and Nicolaas Maes represent in Dutch art an almost hateful element, or, at the least, an extremely antipathetic one: knowledge and cleverness of handling put to the service of truly too mediocre brains.—TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

CHARLES BLANC

‘HISTOIRE DES PEINTRES’

THE Count de Vence, a celebrated amateur of the seventeenth century, possessed a picture by Nicolaas Maes which represented a Dutch woman reproaching her young husband, while a pretty servant-girl listens to this reprimand at the foot of the staircase and appears to take some interest in it. But this charming picture, the only picture by Maes which was then known in France, could not have drawn his name out of obscurity. It is only towards the end of the last century that some works of this painter were seen at Paris and that people began to appreciate him. Nevertheless, the biographer Descamps had devoted two pages to Maes in his second volume of his ‘Life of the Painters,’ published in 1755, and the little which he said about Maes was drawn from the historians Houbraken and Weyermann, who have spoken of Maes only as a painter of portraits.

Nicolaas Maes was born at Dordrecht in 1632. His first lessons were given him by a mediocre artist whom he soon left in order to put himself under the tutelage of Rembrandt. As he was an intelligent man, Maes took good care not to servilely imitate his master, but he profited by his instructions in order to create a manner for himself, a manner which is distinguished by an astonishing vigor of tone, extraordinary relief of the figures, and piquancy of effect. He made use of the fantastic light of Rembrandt in order to make brilliant the most vulgar episodes of common life. He put with magical painting a servant-maid in her kitchen or an old woman in spectacles before her Bible. As Gerard Dou, he took from Rembrandt

only his naturalism; but where Gerard Dou had put fineness of execution he put force, and the extreme finish which his fellow-disciple obtained only with pains, skill, and extraordinary patience, Maes attained without effort, sculpturing all the forms, due to a bold brush and vigorous modeling.

Although the painting of Maes does not show the characteristics of facility, it appears that he developed that quality to such an extent that it came to be the means of his making his fortune, which he by no means neglected. As he had above all the talent for getting resemblances, he became a painter of portraits, and instead of returning to Dort, he established himself at Amsterdam, to practise his art there and become rich. In this ambition Maes was not content to make his heads stand out on the canvas; he flattered his models, they said, and this was the principal cause of the great vogue he had at Amsterdam, almost on leaving Rembrandt's studio, although he rendered great homage to the immense superiority of his master. His polish as well as his good manners, his spirit, naturally merry and accustomed to intercourse with the world, still more augmented his clientele of a painter of portraits, and brought him a reputation which he translated into florins, for he made his sitters pay very dear. Descamps and many others after him have said that the pictures of Maes were clear and that he produced great effects without shadows. That is not very just criticism, for the pictures of Maes are ordinarily very vigorously shaded. If the shadows are not extended in great masses, as with Rembrandt, they are at least strongly charged and surrounded, and as the half-tones are very brief, the passage from light to dark is made brusquely, and it is thus that the painter arrives at so powerful an effect, at so much roundness, so much relief.

Once rich, and tired of always painting the bourgeois and bourgeoisie of Amsterdam, Maes had the desire to see the works of the great artists at Antwerp, of whom people talked at that time, throughout Europe. Initiated at Rembrandt's studio into the free-masonry of art, he was cordially received by the Antwerp painters and soon recognized by them as a confrère. When he paid visit a to Jordaens he was taken into a room full of paintings, which he had time to look over while waiting for the master of the house to appear. Jordaens, who observed his visitor through the keyhole, saw that he stood before the most beautiful picture in the gallery. "I see well," said he, on entering, "that you are a great connoisseur, or perhaps a skilful painter, for the best pieces in my gallery are looked at longer than the others." "I am a painter of portraits," said Maes. "In that case," replied Jordaens, "I sincerely pity you. You are then one of those martyrs of painting who so who merit our commiseration?" "And, indeed," said Campo Weyermann, well recalls this anecdote, "Maes had passed his life of a painter in finding himself under the influence of human vanity, so difficult to manage."

Maes was truly too modest when he said to Jordaens, "I am a painter of portraits," not because the portrait must not be considered as secondary to genre in art, and not because it presents the greatest difficulties in painting; but, in the thought of Maes, this word addressed to an artist of the rank of

Jordaens was pronounced in a modest sense. For the posterity of art-lovers, Maes has remained a painter of familiar scenes, as Pieter de Hooch. Less varied than he in his action, less supple, but not less robust, Maes has equaled that master in the power of his effects. The pictures by him which we have seen at London in the National Gallery are marvelous; the triviality of the subject is relieved by the charm of an execution surprising in vigor and spirit. You look, let us suppose, as you pass, into a kitchen, an old woman who scrapes turnips, having near her some housekeeping utensils, a pail, a spinning-wheel. . . . If it is in a picture by Maes that this humble interior has appeared to you, it will be impossible for you not to stop a long time to look into it and to forget it. The painting of Nicolaas Maes is of the kind which enforces itself upon the remembrance. The light shines, the canvas penetrates, the objects stand out before the eye in making its tour, and if the figures were of life-size they would come to meet you, so powerful is the illusion, so solid the tone, so sculptured in relief and so palpable are the forms.

In his little familiar scenes Maes is not always insignificant or vulgar in the choice of his subject. Often, very often indeed, his composition is ingenious, spirituelle, piquant. In the first place, it is placed in the most picturesque spot in the house; the painter voluntarily puts himself in a place from where he can see at the same time the height and depth of the house, the stairs which descend to the cellar and those which mount to the first story. The frame of the composition thus almost presents to him an optical interest. Now, the figures which the painter puts into the scene have ordinarily some mischief to do, to listen to some secret conversation, to discover a theft, to surprise an infidelity. I remember having seen at Amsterdam, at the house of M. Six, descendant of the famous Burgomaster Six, the picture which they call 'The Listening Servant.' We were in the vestibule of a noble house. Four women were seated round a table playing a game, in a room looking upon a staircase, whose door was open. A fifth person, a young and pretty woman, had quitted the party, had advanced with a foxy step, and, leaning upon the balustrade of the staircase, was listening curiously to the conversation which in low voice an amorous couple were exchanging in a corridor opening upon some gardens. A scarlet cloak hung on a hook in the wall and a suspended sword by its side told sufficiently well that the cavalier whose proposals were listened to by the young woman standing so near him was a soldier. In truth, the painting of Maes is so powerful that for a long time it makes the same effect as nature upon the memory, whether it is a picture which one has seen, or whether one has actually been witness to one of those amusing episodes which the simple observation of every-day life can offer.

The name of Maes or Maas has been borne by many painters. It is for that reason that the Dutch call Nicolaas Maes the Rembrandtesque Maes, 'Rembrandtsche Maas,' and his name, so allied to that of this great master, will not fall into oblivion. Maes was not only the pupil of Rembrandt; he was, in certain lines of art, his rival. Painted with a free and bold touch, vigorously blended and full of gusto, his portraits of men clothed in black, of

women enlivened with gaudy colors, take something at the same time from Rembrandt and from Titian. As for his pictures of genre, they have almost equaled those of Pieter de Hooch, by their solidity of tone, play of light, and prestige of effect.— TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

JOHN C. VAN DYKE

'OLD DUTCH AND FLEMISH MASTERS'

REMBRANDT'S studio seems to have been a mild sort of lotus-land for his pupils. Once there, they seemed to forget their own individualities, and after they wandered from it they were forever talking about it with the paint-brush. Of the dozen or more pupils, few escaped the impress of the master mind. The explanation of this is perhaps easy enough. They had not master minds of their own. They were able to receive an impression, but not able to create one. There were a few exceptions to this, however; and certainly one of the most interesting of the exceptions was Nicolaas Maes.

If one looks at a picture by Flinck, Bol, or Eeckhout he is reminded of a something that Rembrandt might have done better; but if one looks at the picture by Maes which Mr. Cole illustrates [*'The Spinner'* in the Ryks Museum, from the Van der Hoop Collection, very similar in conception and treatment to *'The Spinner'* of plate x] he is struck with the fact that this is something that Rembrandt never did, or thought of doing. The subject, the sentiment, the feeling, are Maes's very own; and even the technic, the color, the light, are somewhat removed from the Rembrandtesque formula. Maes was a pupil of Rembrandt, yet he had a mind and an individuality that would not stand in absolute abeyance to another mind. He liked and learned Rembrandt's method, but his cast of thought was not in sympathy with Rembrandt's subject, or his psychological view. He painted many portraits, but his heart was not in the study of the human face. They made up his poorest work, and were probably done to keep the wolf from the door. Smooth, flattering impersonations, hued brightly to please the women, they were remarkably successful in a popular way, and it was at one time considered a favor to be allowed to sit to Maes; but the work was never other than just passing fair. His portraits do not show the true feeling of the painter. . . .

That he recognized the power of Rembrandt's method and was apt in learning it is quite true; and yet, even here, he was something more than a follower. Sharp lights and darks, rich tones of color, forceful modeling, were shown by the master and accepted by the pupil; but they were varied, intensified, newly employed by the latter. The shadows were darker, the light was whiter, the reds were deeper and more brilliant. More and more, as we study his pictures, do we find how different he was from Rembrandt in these features. The haunting sense of something like them seen in Italy comes back to us. The sharp light, the blackish shadow, and that intense red are characteristics of Caravaggio's art. He got them from Giorgione, and exaggerated them. But how or where did Maes get them? Did his master and his contemporaries learn them from Italian pictures in the Netherlands; or did the Dutch realize that their type of the human form was not fitted in

proportions and stateliness for line treatment, and so, from necessity, originated the picturesque treatment, with light and shade, to meet their subject? The pictures of Maes seem to ask these questions, but fail to answer them. They are Dutch pictures with something very like Neapolitan color and chiaroscuro. All of which is further proof that Maes was not swept off his feet by the genius of Rembrandt to his own detriment as a painter.

In composition Maes was very simple, and as a draftsman and a modeler he was very strong. He knew how to give the substance and the character of objects, and he did it with a force second only to that of his master. In light and shade he was violent in contrast at times; and then again he would diffuse light through a whole interior. Some of his shadows are to-day almost black and wanting in depth; while his lights are often quite as arbitrary as those of Rembrandt. He was given to handling sunlight in spots, throwing it upon a wall or a floor, as after him Descamps, the painter of the Orient. He gained forceful effects by these means, but with some loss of truth in tone. This is especially noticeable in his famous ruby red, which, in conjunction with black, he was continually using. Oftentimes his colors "sing," as Mr. Cole observes; but they "sing" falsely, because they are out of key. Again at times they are noisy, flickering, and spotty — made so purposely for effect. The Meulenaer portrait at Amsterdam and the Godard portrait at Dresden are illustrations of the flashy play of light in his later style. In them he seemed striving after a jewel-like brilliancy in color, which, when attained, hardly "sang" in harmony with the half-lights and half-tones. In handling he seems to have had two styles, one for the public and one for himself. His portraits are usually smooth, thin, and of a porcelain-like surface. Even the little genre piece, the 'Idle Servant,' in the National Gallery, London, charming as it is in color and composition, is as smooth as though polished and rubbed to an ivory finish. His best pictures, however, such as the 'Two Spinners' at Amsterdam, are broader in every way, the textures are not insisted upon, and the brush is a little drier.

Maes knew how to paint, but doubtless the necessities of life often dictated what he should paint. He seems to have made a business of portraiture and a pleasure of genre. The portraits are too pretty; the genre pieces are too scarce.

RICHARD MÜTHER

'A HISTORY OF PAINTING'

WITHIN the bounds of Dutch art, that of Rembrandt stands isolated. However much his pupils superficially resemble him, his works are the revelations of a genius, theirs are merely good oil-paintings. It is related that Rembrandt in the beginning devoted much time to his teaching. Himself the most individual of all artists, he encouraged individuality in others, and had the atelier in which they labored partitioned off, that no one might influence the others. But while he protected them from each other, he could not rescue them from the power of his own personality. Whatever was transferable they adopted: fabrics, costumes, and the treatment of light. In the be-

ginning, when he was the most admired painter of Holland, it was their highest merit to have their works taken for his; but later, when the favor of the masses turned from him, they trod more conservative paths, along the broad road of the easily comprehensible.

At the beginning of the decade following 1650 . . . several excellent masters issued from the school of Rembrandt. Women peeling vegetables, young girls standing dreamily at the window, old women at the spinning-wheel, carcasses of animals — such is the content of the quiet, delicate, and very modern pictures of Nicolaas Maes. The light plays upon the red table-cloth, gray walls, and bluish white jugs. In pictures like his family scene with a little drummer-boy every chronological estimate is silent: they might be exhibited to-day and signed Christoph Bischof.

The Works of Nicolaas Maes

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PLATES

'THE DREAMER'

PLATE I

THIS picture is recognized by all critics to be a masterpiece. Though M. Bürger refers to it as a study, he calls it a "*chef-d'œuvre* of naturalism, grace, and color." It was probably painted while Maes was still working in Rembrandt's studio. Unlike many of his works, this figure is life-size.

Frederick Wedmore describes it as "in technical qualities high already, though not perfect, and in expression sweet, tender, reticent, and true. In an olive-green gown, whose color is set against the deep yet glowing red of the open window-shutters, a girl stands leaning from the window; dark green leaves and clusters of large apricots are around the window and below it. Already there is a pleasant arrangement of form and hue, color sober and yet rich and splendid rather than subtle, and the picture grapples with no special intricacies of light. But here already is the figure of reverie — no reverie, indeed, of the ascetic or the disappointed or the feebly sentimental; but a healthy Dutch girl, rounded in form and supple of flesh, her thoughts adrift in strange places of the life that is before her." It has been suggested, however, that she may be looking at her lover, who is standing below on the pavement, and in this connection it is interesting to note what Timothy Cole writes: "A beautiful girl leans from a window, gazing into vacancy, quite lost in delicious oblivion of the beholder. She is in the heyday of youth, and it is easy to see that she is dreaming of her lover."

The beginning of the artist's signature in large Roman letters is discernible on the window-ledge below the cushion on which the girl leans. The picture was bought for the Amsterdam Museum in 1829 for two thousand florins. It measures two feet high by one foot nine inches wide.

'THE LISTENING SERVANT'

PLATE II

THIS picture, generally called the 'Listening' or 'Indiscreet' servant, another version of which is one of the masterpieces of the Six Collection at Amsterdam, perhaps represents mistress instead of maid, if we may judge by the fur-trimmed jacket she wears, who, as she descends the winding staircase, is about to pull a bell-rope as she listens to her servants regaling themselves in an adjoining cellar, dark excepting for the glimmering light which comes from a lantern that one of them holds. In the Amsterdam picture she is listening to a pair of lovers talking in the hallway. A strong light coming from an unseen window falls full upon the figure of the woman with her white kerchief and apron, upon the newel-post, and brass bowl standing in the hall chair beside the banister. This picture is said to surpass the one at Amsterdam in the management of the light, and John Smith writes that "it is not less distinguished for the surprising power of chiaroscuro than for the interesting expression of the cautious mistress."

In 1811 this picture was sold for one hundred and fifty guineas (about seven hundred and fifty dollars). It now belongs to His Majesty's fine collection of Dutch masters at Buckingham Palace. It is signed, and dated 1665, and measures two feet four inches by one foot nine inches.

'AN OLD WOMAN PARING APPLES'

PLATE III

THIS old woman of the Berlin Museum, paring apples or, as some people think, turnips, gives us another picture of the humble, busy life of the Dutch peasant. Near her stands her spinning-wheel ready for work; on the window-ledge an open book, perhaps her Bible; at her feet a receptacle with a colander over it to receive the fruit. As in 'The Spinner' and 'The Reader,' the chief interest and charm of the picture lies in the transfiguring touch of the light from the window. Mr. Van Dyke says that only in pictures of this sort do we see the poetry in Maes's nature, a quality not to be found in his contemporaries, Steen, De Hooch, Terborch, or Ostade, and that in his intimate feeling for the humble life of his peasant women he is comparable to Millet.

This is number fifteen in Smith's 'Catalogue Raisonné,' which calls it "an admirable example of the master." In 1826 it belonged to the Collection of Count Pourtales; in 1842, the time that Smith's Catalogue was published, to that of H. Phillips, Esquire, who bought it for two hundred guineas (about one thousand dollars). It seems to have passed through many hands, for in 1899 it was bought from the collection of Lord Francis Hope for the Berlin Royal Gallery. It measures something less than two feet square.

'PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN'

PLATE IV

THIS portrait, recently acquired by the Metropolitan Museum from the Ehrich Galleries, represents an elderly woman seated in dignified mien, with arms folded, holding in one hand a fan. Her cap and dress are of black

silk, and she wears a broad white linen collar reaching to the shoulders, and white undersleeves. We think this one of the better portraits by Maes, though totally unlike his master Rembrandt. He has added the accessories of drawn curtain and landscape in accordance with the prevalent taste of his later years.

Elizabeth L. Cary, writing in the 'Scrip,' says of this picture: "The portrait of an old lady by Nicolaas Maes is a particularly striking composition, with wonderful painting of black in the silk gown and a delicate feeling for the diaphanous quality of the kerchief and undersleeves. The face has no suggestion of the peasant type; it is that of a well-born, well-nurtured aristocrat, and this impression of inherited refinement is emphasized by the hands, in which the pale color, the long, slender fingers, the smooth texture, speak of beauty faded but lingering."

The canvas measures nearly four feet high by three broad.

'THE READER'

PLATE V

HERE we have another picture of a woman in her declining years, though she seems to belong to a higher class socially than the 'Spinners.' The full light from an unseen window strikes her as she sits in an armchair on the further side of a table, reading a heavy volume. The color-scheme is rich and dark. She is dressed in a black skirt and red jacket, the thick tapestry table-cloth being yellowish brown in tone. The spacious room with its pillared wall has more pretensions than many others painted by Maes. In a niche in the wall behind her are some jugs and a classic bust; on the table are books, ink-well, and scroll. M. Bürger believes that this must have been painted in Maes's early years, but after 1656, for the head of the statue seen in this picture, as well as a similar one in a portrait in the gallery of Arenberg, he believes came from the studio of Rembrandt, whose effects were inventoried and sold in June, 1856.

The canvas came from the ancient Lyversberg Collection at Cologne, and was bought for three thousand two hundred and forty-five francs (six hundred and forty-nine dollars) in 1858 at the Fraikin Sale. It measures two feet three inches high by nearly two feet long.

'PORTRAIT OF A MAN'

PLATE VI

"THE 'Portrait of a Man' of the National Gallery is," writes Edward T. Cook, "a singularly life-like portrait of a singularly unattractive face." This picture seems, however, to belong to the earlier and better class of Maes's portraits painted only a few years after he went to Antwerp. It is very simply treated. The sitter, who shows considerable force of character in his face, is placed in an armchair in a natural attitude, one hand resting on the arm, the other with the fingers placed between the leaves of a book. He is dressed in a black robe edged with brown fur, and behind him hangs a deep red curtain.

The portrait recalls Rembrandt somewhat in the chiaroscuro, the most intense light falling on the flesh, the white linen collars and cuffs, and the edge of the book, the head and the figure, being merged with soft outlines into the background. One does not feel that Maes has flattered his sitter in the least. Flattery in addition to skill in obtaining a good likeness were the qualities allègèd to have given the artist such a vogue among the wealthy upper classes.

The canvas is signed on the wall N. Maes, and dated 1666. It was a gift to the National Gallery in 1888 from Sir Theodore Martin.

‘THE IDLE SERVANT’

PLATE VII

‘THE IDLE SERVANT’ gives us the interior of a kitchen, where in the foreground the maid-servant has fallen asleep over her work, her pots and pans being scattered over the floor, while a cat is stealing a young duckling from a plate on the dresser. The young housewife has just discovered her sleeping maid, and, with a humorous expression on her face, holds out her hand as if appealing to the sympathy of the spectator for her maid’s delinquency. In the background, through an open door looking into another room and raised by a few steps, is a group of three people seated at a small table near a window, perhaps waiting for the roasted fowl which has not appeared.

“This is one of the master’s most estimable productions,” writes Smith, “possessing extraordinary effect, combined with admirable finishing.” Smith imported it into England and it formed part of the collection of R. Simons, Esquire, until he bequeathed it to the National Gallery in 1846. It measures two feet three and one half inches by one foot nine inches. It is signed and dated, 1655.

‘THE CARD-PLAYERS’

PLATE VIII

‘THE CARD-PLAYERS’ is rather a unique example by Maes. It undoubtedly gives us two portraits, perhaps a brother and sister, at the same time that it recalls his early pictures of genre in that the two figures are occupied in a most natural manner with playing their game. The young man is dressed in a black velvet suit with gold embroidery; the girl, in a gown of deep red. The table is covered with a brown cover, while the background is dark olive-brown in tone, showing the base of a pillar behind the girl.

The picture was purchased from the Monson Sale by the National Gallery in 1888. The auctioneer attempted to sell it for a Rembrandt, but from its style and color it was adjudged to be by Nicolaas Maes, though some critics have wished to attribute it to another pupil of Rembrandt’s, Carl Fabritius, because of its large size, unusual with Maes. A contemporary article written for the ‘Times’ says: “In any case it is unmistakably of the Rembrandt school, and owes its inspiration to the method of presentation peculiar to the master. From every technical point of view it is first-rate. It is infused with

the largeness of style, the just appreciation of character, and the glowing color to be found in Rembrandt's matured works. It is the turn of the girl to play. She regards her hand in evident perplexity, doubtful which card to throw down. The man is apparently sure of his game."

The equivalent of about six thousand eight hundred and seventy-five dollars was paid for this canvas when it was purchased for the National Gallery in 1888.

'PORTRAIT OF THE DUCHESS DE MAZARIN'

PLATE IX

THIS amusing portrait of a young girl very much over-dressed and bedecked with jewels doubtless belongs to Maes's later years, when his chief aim was to please and flatter rather than to create a work of art. The young duchess with her dark eyes and hair and full lips is pretty and attractive, though she does not give much promise of intellectuality in her later years. She is represented standing, in three-quarters length, gowned in a handsome décolleté dress of white satin embroidered in gold and trimmed with jewels. A red cloak is thrown loosely about her, which her hand clasps as it falls over her left shoulder. Her curling brown hair is elaborately coiffeured, and she wears a head-dress, which seems to be a sort of turban of red and white feathers. The background is dark and somber, showing on our right an indistinct landscape with a troupe of allegorical figures playing on musical instruments.

This canvas was purchased by the Metropolitan Museum in 1871, and measures three feet and a half high by two feet eight inches wide.

'THE SPINNER'

PLATE X

THERE are two pictures of an old woman spinning in the Ryks Museum of Amsterdam, one bequeathed in the Van der Hoop, the other in the Dupper, Collection. They are similar in composition and treatment. Mr. Cole engraved the former in 'Old Italian Masters,' but said that there was nothing to choose between them. Our plate gives us the latter, that of the Dupper Collection, which is slightly the larger of the two. An old peasant woman busy at her spinning-wheel is seated in the background near a table covered with a red cloth of that warm tone so much beloved by Maes. She wears a black cap and jacket with red and green sleeves and green skirt. Upon the table lie the bobbin and spindle, upon the walls are hanging jugs of common blue-and-white ware, while another jug stands upon the floor. This is the simple subject, but the picture is rendered immortal by the handling of the light that falls from a window upon the aged worker, transforming the humble scene into one of great beauty.

M. Bredius, speaking of this picture, exclaims: "What perfection in the *finesse* of the chiaroscuro! What brilliancy in the red of the sleeve of the jacket!" And M. Bürger remarks that these two 'Spinners' of the Ryks Museum and 'The Milkmaid' of the Van Loon Collection in Amsterdam are worthy to be hung on a line with the Rembrandts.



The picture is signed to the right, N. MAES. Before going to the Dupper Collection it belonged to the Collection Rombouts of Dordrecht, the artist's native town. It measures two feet by one foot nine inches.

A LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL PAINTINGS BY NICOLAAS MAES
WITH THEIR PRESENT LOCATIONS

AUSTRIA. BUDAPESTH, GALLERY: Portrait of a Man — **BELGIUM.** ANTWERP, COLLECTION KUMS; The Frugal Repast — BRUSSELS, MUSEUM: A Woman reading (Plate v); Portrait of a Man; Portrait of a Woman — **BRUSSELS, ARENBERG GALLERY:** Portrait of a Man — **DENMARK.** COPENHAGEN, GALLERY: Portrait of a Man; Portrait of a Woman — **ENGLAND.** LONDON, NATIONAL GALLERY: The Idle Servant (Plate vii); The Cradle; The Dutch Housewife; The Card-Players (Plate viii); The Portrait of a Man (Plate vi) — LONDON, HERTFORD HOUSE: A Boy on Horseback; The Servant on the Stair; Boy with a Hawk — LONDON, BUCKINGHAM PALACE: The Listening Servant (Plate ii) — LONDON, DULWICH GALLERY: Old Woman seated, eating — LONDON, APSLEY HOUSE: A Girl selling Milk; A Girl listening — LONDON, BRIDGEWATER HOUSE: A Girl threading her Needle — LONDON, COLLECTION OF LORD NORTHBROOK: The Sleeping Servant-Maid — LONDON, LORD LANSDOWNE: Girl seated by a Cradle — LONDON, COLLECTION OF MR. LABOUCHÈRE: The Listener; The Lace-Worker — **FRANCE.** PARIS, LOUVRE: The Blessing — **GERMANY.** BERLIN, GALLERY: Old Woman paring Apples (Plate iii); Bishop Reading — DRESDEN, GALLERY: Two Women in a Kitchen; Portrait of Baron Godard von Rude-Agrim; Portrait of Graf von Athlone, Herr of Ameronghem — **MUNICH, PINAKOTHEK:** Portrait of a Young Man in a Landscape; Portrait of a Young Woman in a Landscape — **HOLLAND.** AMSTERDAM, RYKS MUSEUM: The Dreamer (Plate i); Old Woman spinning (From the Van der Hoop Collection); Old Woman spinning (From the Dupper Collection) (Plate x); Grace Before Meat (From the Society Felix Meritis); Portrait of Cornelis Evertsen — **AMSTERDAM, SIX COLLECTION:** The Listening Servant; Six Members of the Guild of Surgeons at Amsterdam; Portrait of Willem Six as a Child — **AMSTERDAM, VAN LOON COLLECTION:** Milkmaid at the Door of a House — **DORDRECHT, GALLERY:** Portrait of Jacob de Witt — **HAARLEM, GALLERY:** Portrait of Versyl; Portrait of Catherina de Sadelaer — **THE HAGUE, GALLERY:** Portrait of a Man; Diana and Nymphs Bathing — **THE HAGUE, COLLECTION STEENGRACHT:** An Interior — **THE HAGUE, COLLECTION PRINCE FREDERIK HENRI:** Portrait of a Man; Portrait of a Woman — **THE HAGUE, COLLECTION STUERS:** Portrait of a Man; Portrait of a Woman — **ROTTERDAM, GALLERY:** Portraits of a Family; Portrait of Maria Colve; Portrait of a Boy — **ITALY.** FLORENCE, UFFIZI: Young Girl praying — **RUSSIA.** ST. PETERSBURG, L'HERMITAGE: An Interior, a Mother with her Children; A Woman Fallen Asleep while winding Thread — **UNITED STATES.** NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM: Portrait of the Duchesse de Mazarin, (Plate ix); Portrait of a Woman (Plate iv).

Nicolaas Maes Bibliography

A LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL BOOKS AND MAGAZINE ARTICLES
DEALING WITH NICOLAAS MAES

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"The pictures came Tuesday and are most lovely. We have feasted on them many times since, and it's being truly generous to give one away; but four have gone to their destinations, and have been fully appreciated. The wonder grows upon us how you can afford to do it at that price."—LIZZIE E. MORSE, North Easton, Mass.

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"I am very much pleased with them, they are gotten up in such a beautiful style."—KATE HARDY, 415 Stockley Gardens, Norfolk, Va.

"The Framing Prints even exceeded my expectation and I am delighted with them."—GERTRUDE HEATH, 274 Quincy St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

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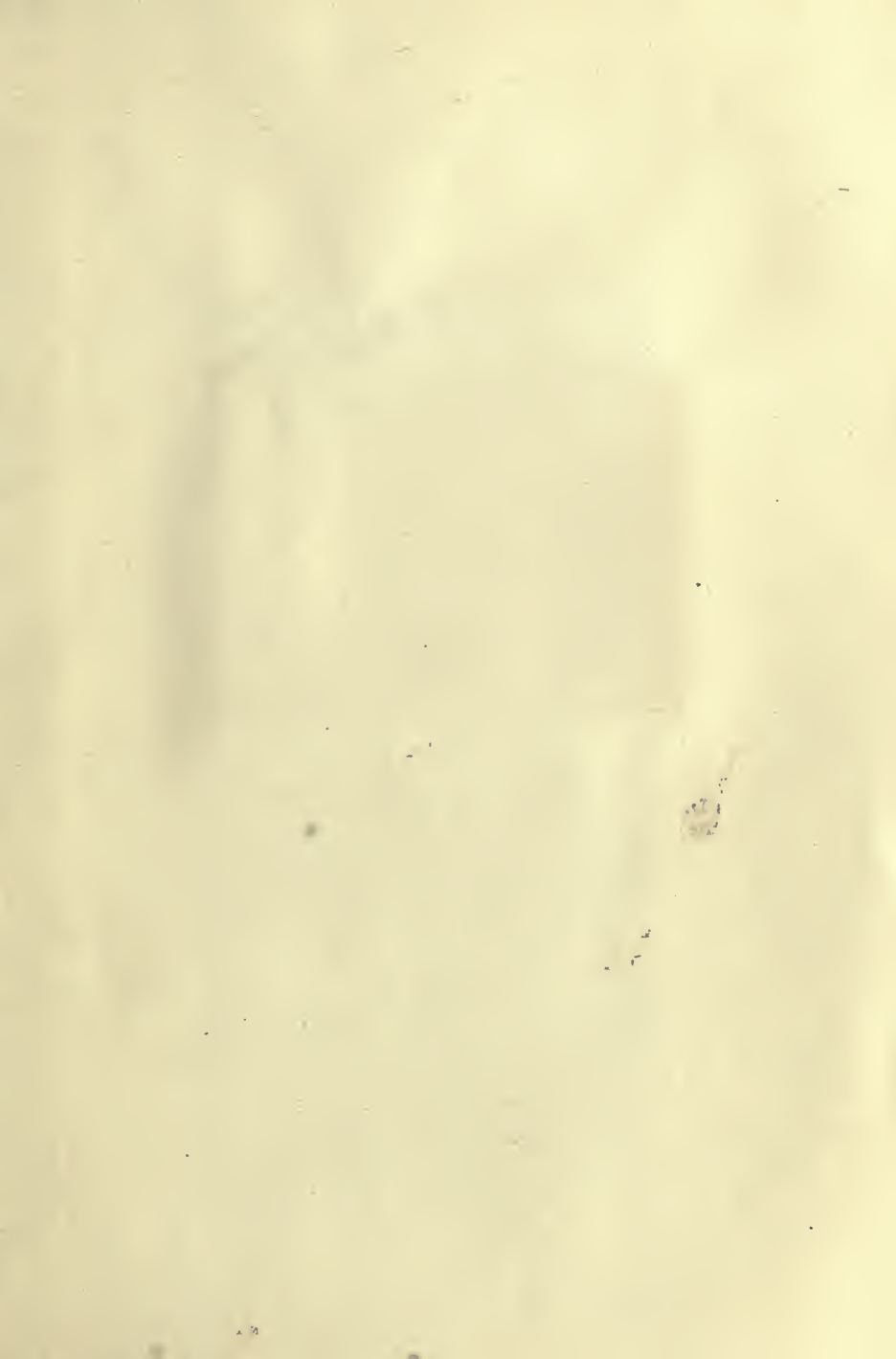
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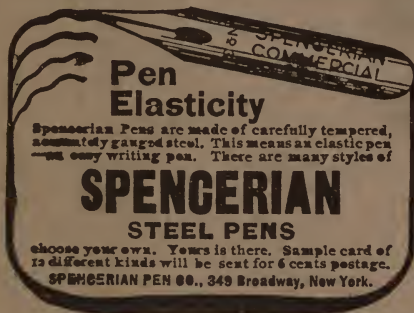
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