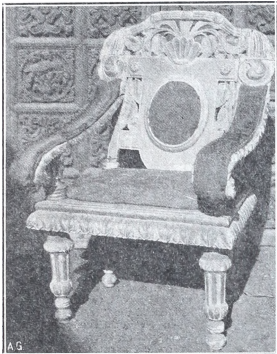


Things Rare and Beautiful in Manila: The Heirloom

By MRS. GEORGE READ

To the acquisitive connoisseur, amateur as well as professional, Spanish antiques in the Philippines have an augmented value. Following the Versailles conference of June 1919, when every unfettered individual in the United States rushed off to Europe to view the battlefields



Antique Chair at *The Heirloom*. See text

and to check off everything from Montmartre to Verdun, collectors became the opportunists of the general confusion. The inroads they made upon the cherished treasures of museums, churches, precious collections public and private, brought down upon the cosmic American head the ingenuous epithet, *Spoiliators*.

Though Il Duce is understood to have levied a similar restriction in Italy, it was in Spain that the first steps were taken to prevent the exportation of objects of art without the permission of the Committee of the Bureau of Fine Arts.

While there are audacious desperadoes in the game of diplomatically wresting beautiful objects from their possessors and bestowing them whither they will, it takes more than a bit of doing today in the land of Primo de Rivera. More power to the timely sojourner in the Philippines where the highways and byways shelter works of art, of greater and lesser degree, either brought originally from Spain or inspired by artists and artist-craftsmen of the mother country.

One of the most felicitous displays of Spanish objects d'art in Manila is the Welch-Haughwout collection at *The Heirloom*, calle Mabini. A great many of the objects are for sale. Some

are there purely to be looked at and enjoyed and not for any consideration to be wrested from the owners. Some few things are temporarily loaned.

One day I was looking rather sketchily at a book by George F. Kunz on *The Curious Lore of Precious Stones*, dedicated to J. Pierpont Mcrgan. The cover design was of a pair of turquoise earrings. The clasps were a sort of generic fleur-de-lis, and the pendants followed a similar design although somewhat elongated. Where had they come from? Russia? Egypt? They were the type of jewels one might associate with the adventures of a Marco Polo. If I had had time, I should have searched the book for a description of them. However, the jewels themselves were not far to seek.

That same afternoon, for the first time I walked into *The Heirloom*, and there lay the earrings, supreme and sole upon a chest of antique tindalo. Against the flat black surface of the wood the pure, cool, proud color of the matrix was unforgettable.

"Yes," said Mrs. Haughwout, "they are the ones displayed on the cover of the George Kunz's book. From Tibet."

From the viewpoint of the antiquarian, perhaps the two doors of carved molave, shown in the background of accompanying illustrations, are the rarest objects in the collection. They were found in the first church and monastery built in Manila, the Augustinian, completed in 1619 under the celebrated Fray Antonio Herrera, son of the architect of the Escorial, who followed a design furnished by his celebrated father.



An Heirloom Jar. See text

The doors, each a solid piece, are in excellent condition; the elaborate carvings of tropical birds, fruits and conventional foliations which adorn the 28 squares hardly bear a nick or blemish. The escutcheon of the Augustinians adorns two of the top squares: the shielded heart, the shovel hat, the mitre, crozier and Bible. No trace of wicked varnish has ever marred the surface of the seasoned and beautifully resistant wood. It retains its original soft

light-brown color, embracing the light yet not refracting too much of it. A rich yet unobtrusive decoration, beautiful enough to have a museum built around it.

The superb ecclesiastic chair of gilded narra is 300 years old and might well have come from the same cathedral that housed the doors. Its companion chair, in duplicate, is also here. Their once cardinal-red upholstery has naturally deferred to time but it would be criminal not to accept them as they stand. These chairs are museum pieces, too eloquent for any ordinary



Antique Pedestals at *The Heirloom*. See text

usage. They are treasures which bear witness to a royal milieu as effectively as if they could speak. Ornate? Undeniably, but too nobly graceful and suave to be oppressive. Considered historically one must respect their right to lean toward the florid.

They are of the period when Renaissance Italy, toward its decline, had come definitely to Seville, at that time the art center of Spain. El Greco, who died in 1614, was one of the channels through which the influence of Venice, Florence, Rome and Naples—bnt above all Venice—had poured. He had gone to Venice to paint under Titian, which meant, vicariously, Tintoretto. It was the florescent in painting, the rococo in architectural decor which had been transplanted to Spanish building-stone, wood-work, walls and canvases. But it was a decadence that fell into the hands of masters; a decadence that was to become infused with new vigor springing from the physical health and zest for life of the Spanish people. Velasquez brings this period to its grand climacteric. Velasquez, not content simply to represent an anemic court,

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must with dramatic insight and matchless skill portray the whole epoch.

Certainly priceless tradition attaches itself to these old pieces at *The Heirloom*.

The handsome escort lamps shown in one of the illustrations were, according to creditable tradition, carried in the inaugural procession of Miguel Lopez de Legaspi, Philip II's adelantado to the Philippines, perhaps on May 19, 1571, the day of the formal founding of Manila. It is amazing that these lamps never got into the hands of any of the castellans of the royal governor's palace or of Malacañang, and especially amazing that they escaped the tyrant Venegas; but their long history is unknown, after all, and on the night Venegas fell the guard may have snatched these lamps from the new posts of the palace to light his way to prison in Fort Santiago. Some lingering spark of decency in him might have led him to say, "Dogs! Preserve the lamps!"

Of the two charming figures in polychrome wood only one remains. If not the more graceful and light, perhaps a more significant interest compensates for the lack of delicate wings, so energized they seem to be upon the point of flight. This quieter figure is the blind Santa Lucia, in the characteristic act of bearing her eyes, the price of her martyrdom, upon a little platter. There are legends without number woven around this heroic saint, originating in Italy perhaps and thence sifting into Spanish annals. The saint once inspired a desperate but successful defense of Manila, legend says; and so there is a city gate, the east one, named for her, and a street and military barracks besides. She is one of the patronesses of "the very noble and ever loyal city of Manila."

There is a rectangular mural of polychrome molave with the virgin and child and two cherubs in high-relief; enfantin certainly, yet one is curious about it and fond of it for its very simplicity. It is known as Our Lady of Solitude, and there is history behind it.

Las Obras Pias organized by Don Luis Dasmariñas in 1594, established Santa Isabel College in 1634 in honor of Isabel II, the purpose being to educate Spanish girls and give them a dot upon marriage. A charge was made upon those who could afford to pay, but orphans were cared for free. The school persists today, much as in the beginning, save that the racial restriction was removed long ago. The carving now at *The Heirloom* was placed in the chapel at the inauguration of the school and was revered as the Guardian Mother for 230 years. The chapel was badly damaged in the earthquake of 1864. When a new one was constructed it was dedicated to the Señor del Tesoro and the panel of Our Lady was removed to the entrance hall, where it remained until last year.

The dignified jar of reddish brown stoneware among the illustrations suggests the sort of hiding place a geni of really excellent taste would select. According to Japanese authority, jars of this type belong to the time of Cheng Te, 1506-1521, and were made in the province of Kiangsu, at Yi-hsing.* They are little known in China today and would be unrecognized in the West as well, according to Hannover, were it not for the collection in the Field Museum at Chicago. The paste of which these jars were made was apparently very plastic and gave itself easily to the uses of modeling, molding, engraving, piercing or the application of relief ornament; and for a long time it was preferred in China to porcelain. At the close of the Ming period, this ware was highly prized; according to Hsing's Album a single small teapot brought as much as 250 taels, roughly 350 silver dollars.



Lamps That Lighted Legaspi Into Manila. See text

*See *Porcelains & Pottery, A Handbook for Collectors*, Vol. II; *The Far East*. Translated from the Danish by Emil Hannover, late director of the Museum of Industrial Art at Copenhagen.

The large jars, often of colossal size, solid, durable and refined in execution, were made largely for export. They have been discovered in considerable numbers in the southern Philippines, on Borneo, and on Luzon. The oldest of them are believed to date from the 13th to the 15th centuries.

"They are often," says Hannover "decorated with one, two or three large dragons coiled round the jar, showing up either in relief or incised in the stoneware, under a glaze which may be black, reddish brown, brownish yellow or dark green. Handed down from ancient times, invested with all kinds of supernatural powers (including that of speech), they are regarded by the savage natives as of such enormous value that they are even used as payment for a bride."

At *The Heirloom* there are many varieties of curious and beautiful pottery, from China, the Philippines, Java and Japan. There is very little porcelain. But two jars about twelve inches in height, of biscuit, are not without interest to the connoisseur of antique porcelains. They were made toward the close of the 18th century in the Philippines by craftsmen who had brought over the recipe from the Spanish Factory of Buen Retiro, built in 1760 under Charles III. Originally the factory was restricted to making articles solely for the uses of the royal household or for gifts to be presented by members of the king's family. Most of the craftsmen were either Neapolitans from Capo di Monte who brought with them many of the molds in use there, or were native workmen who had carefully studied the Italian methods. Later, when the factory became commercialized, the number of Neapolitan workmen dwindled.

In design, the jars at *The Heirloom* bear a vague relationship to Sèvres, and an unmistakable one to Wedgwood, two factories that influenced the later artisans of the Buen Retiro. The paste is obviously of an inferior quality, due to some important difference in the composition of materials to be found in the Philippines. This disappointment may at least partially explain why the art of making fine porcelains was not developed here. Considering the rarity of such objects, a value otherwise undeserved attaches to this pair of jars of the biscuit décoré.

The delightful pastime of describing beautiful objects tempts one to go on, when perhaps at the first mention of their whereabouts you drop the magazine and go to see them for yourself. Both Mrs. Haugliwout and Mrs. Welch have been residents of Manila for many years, but it was only a year or so ago that they began to form their collection. What magic tempted them? Perhaps the geni of the drag jar.

at play—

That was on the "Bolivar," south across the Bay.

Once we saw between the squalls, lyin' head to swell

Mind with work and weariness, wishin' they was we—

Some damned Liner's lights go by like a grand hotel;

Cheered her from the "Bolivar" swampin' in the sea.

Then a greyback cleared us out, then the skipper laughed;

"Boys, the wheel has gone to Hell—ring the winches aft;

Yoke the kicking rudder-head—get her under way!"

So we steered her, pully-haul, out across the Bay!

Just a pack o' rotten platts putted up with tar, In we came, an' time enough, 'cross Bilboa Bar.

Overloaded, undermanned, meant to founder, we Eueched God Almighty's storm, bluffed the Eternal Sea!

Seven men from all the world, back to town again,

Rollin' down the Ratcliffe Road drunk and raisin' Cain;

Seven men from out of Hell. Ain't the owners gay,

'Cause we took the "Bolivar" safe across the Bay?

We put out from Sunderland loaded down with rails;

We put back to Sunderland 'cause our cargo shifted;

We put out from Sunderland—met the winter gales;

Seven days and seven nights to the Start we drifted.

Racketing her rivets loose, smoke-stack white as snow,

All the coals adrift adeck, half the rails below,

Leakin' like a lobster-pot, steering like a dray—

Out we took the "Bolivar," out across the Bay!

Felt her hog and felt her sag, betted when she'd break;

Wondered every time she raced if she'd stand the shock;

Heard the seas like drunken men pounding at her stroke;

Hoped the Lord 'ud keep his thumb on the plumber-block;

Aching for an hour's sleep, dozing off between;

Heard the rotten rivets drag when she took it green;

Watched the compass chase its tail like a cat

Haphazard Studies in the English Language

The grammatical forms of a language may be acquired by the diligent student without their giving him true facility in the use of the language, which can only come from putting into his memory, ready for instant use, many thousands of its words together with their precise meanings. Anything that will do this is a proper study of the language. One may readily make one's self a critic of one's own diction. One means to this desirable end is to examine one's own compositions for loose and cumbersome expressions, and to refine them until all these expressions are eliminated. Another means is to make every new word or old word in a new sense, encountered in one's reading, a familiar acquaintance to be called upon in time of need.

THE BALLAD OF THE "BOLIVAR"

By RUDYARD KIPLING

Seven men from all the world back to Docks again;

Rollin' down the Ratcliffe Road drunk and raisin' Cain;

Give the girls another drink 'fore we sign away—

We that took the "Bolivar" out across the Bay!