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Death of the Virgin

Bohemian (Prague ?) Master, ca. 1450

Detail: the Virgin's Soul

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The Amarna letters portray an interesting picture of the relations of Egypt with the different parts of its empire in Western Asia and with the neighboring foreign states in the reigns of Tuthmosis IV and Amenhotep III. There was a continual movement back and forth of couriers, the exchange of gifts, and the arrangement of foreign marriages for the rulers. By the time of Tutankhamen this whole system had broken down, largely through neglect of the empire in the reign of Akhenaten. Revolts in the small city states and brigandage on the roads were further aggravated by the rise of Hittite power in the north. The Cretan sea trade had been taken over by Mainland Greece and now only Mycenaean pottery is found at Amarna and in the ports of the Syrian coast. Our toilet box is a small but vivid reminder of this time of intensive contact. It is the kind of portable object which must have passed back and forth as gifts in the hands of the king's messengers. The inherent Egyptian delight in representing nature has responded here sympathetically to the Aegean method of representing movement, which has been taken over and employed in characteristic Egyptian fashion. The simple elegance of design and cutting has not been obscured by too great a profusion of ornament. It is, therefore, more appealing than larger objects of more valuable materials which have the vulgar ostentation of what we might call the Syrian taste.

WILLIAM STEVENSON SMITH

A New and Fully Revised Edition of *Ancient Egypt*

This volume, by William Stevenson Smith, Assistant Curator of Egyptian Art in the Museum, and Lecturer in Egyptian Art at Harvard, was planned as a handbook of the Egyptian collections in the Museum of Fine Arts. Students and teachers of Egyptian history and art have discovered during the past ten years that it serves equally well as a short history of the development of Egyptian culture. Each historical period is discussed in general before the section which describes the pertinent material in the Museum.

The second edition was reprinted in 1946 without alteration, except for the addition of an index. It now seems necessary to take into account both the additions which have been made to the Museum's collections and the historical and archaeological material which has accrued from excavation and research in recent years. Ancient history is subject to constant growth, both along the main lines of its chronological framework and in important detail. The student should find this third edition a helpful guide to recent developments in a fascinating subject. Copies of the book may be obtained at the Sales Desk of the Museum at \$1.75 each (postage 20 cents additional).

A "Pic Nick," Camden, Maine by Jerome B. Thompson

ONE of the most popular pictures in the M. and M. Karolik Collection of American Paintings 1815-1865 is *A "Pic Nick", Camden, Maine* (Fig. 1). This is due not only to the subject, which so vividly portrays the gastronomic as well as the sentimental pleasures of a summer's day in about 1850, but also to the artist's considerable skill in composition and in treating the details. Soon after the painting was placed on exhibition last year a number of persons noted the similarity between it and *The "Pick Nick" near Mount Mansfield, Vermont*, (Fig. 2) owned by the M. H. De Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco. Since distance prevented placing the two pictures side by side, detailed photographs were forwarded from San Francisco to Boston and skillfully matched by photographs on the same scale taken by the Boston Museum photographer for purposes of comparison. The results (Figs. 3, 4, 5, and 6) persuaded both museums that the paintings were by the same hand, though the unsigned San Francisco picture had been purchased as an example of the work of Jerome B. Thompson, and the Boston picture, also unsigned, had been acclaimed as the masterpiece of the painter Jeremiah P. Hardy.

Both these artists were New England painters of approximately the same period and standing, so that reattributing either picture would not greatly change its significance in the history of 19th century American painting. In fairness, however, to the artist himself, as well as for the future attributing of other similar paintings, the evidence had to be sifted and one painter decided upon.

The Boston picture came into the art market about 1940 with no attribution attached, but with a tantalizingly damaged label on the back (Fig. 7) which showed that the artist's first name began with *Jer*. In 1939 Mrs. Fannie Hardy Eckstorm, Jeremiah Hardy's great niece, had published an interesting account of his life which had drawn the attention of American art historians to the work of this hitherto obscure Maine artist. A photograph of the picnic in the woods of New England was sent to Mrs. Eckstorm, and although she had no previous knowledge of the existence of the picture she felt quite certain that it was by her great-uncle and was able to identify the spot as Camden, Maine, not far from the artist's home, and tentatively identified certain figures as members of the artist's family. On this evidence the painting was given to Hardy.

The San Francisco picture also came into the art market in the 1940's without any traceable history. The dealer who sold it to San Francisco asserted that it came to him as a painting by Jerome B. Thompson, and that it was painted at Mt. Mansfield, Vermont. There was no partic-