

The Art Collection of Horatio Greenough

By NATHALIA WRIGHT

WHEN the American sculptor Horatio Greenough returned in 1851, a year before his death, to the United States after his long residence in Italy, his possessions which were transported included one box of pictures, one of silver plate, one of earthenware, and five of books. Born in Boston in 1805 in a prominent family, educated at Harvard and in the galleries and studios of Rome and Florence, he had settled in the latter city in 1828. Here he had executed all his sculpture, including two colossal pieces for the United States Government: a statue of Washington and a group entitled "The Rescue," depicting a pioneer restraining an Indian from massacring the pioneer's wife and child. Here he often acted for his traveling countrymen as cicerone to the art collections and as purchasing agent for small objects of art. Here he married in 1837 a Boston heiress and they lived handsomely.

When Edward Everett visited them in 1839 he found them "charmingly situated amidst pictures of the Ancient Masters, books & music."¹ (Mrs. Greenough played the piano.) The studio Greenough built for himself about 1848 was full, G. W. Curtis reported, "of beautiful bijoux of a scholar—of choice books, medallions, engravings," its central hall "hung with fine pictures, the gifts, chiefly of artist friends in Italy."²

¹ Diary, November 8, 1840 (Massachusetts Historical Society).

² New York *Daily Tribune*, Nov. 21, 1849.

As these descriptions suggest, Greenough's surroundings represented an artist's rather than a collector's taste, and the small collection which he assembled was apparently not in itself very valuable. In so far as the items in it can be identified, however, it is interesting and important for what it reveals about his taste and his career. Its very existence is further evidence of one of the chief differences between him and most other American sculptors of his generation. He was more broadly artistic and also more sophisticated than most of them—notably Hiram Powers, S. V. Clevenger, and Thomas Crawford, who also lived in Italy.

No satisfactory list of the art objects belonging to Greenough exists. There are, however, two lists which include some of these objects, and others are mentioned in correspondence. In the beginning of his career, of course, like other art students, he purchased casts from life—of hands, feet, ears—from which to draw and model. About 1838 he made perhaps his first large acquisition: proof casts of all Michelangelo's figures for the Medici tombs except Lorenzo, which were made when King Louis Philippe of France sent a molder to Florence to reproduce them. Greenough sent the figures of Day and Night to Colonel Thomas H. Perkins in Boston, who had several times assisted him, and Perkins deposited them in the Boston Athenæum, where they remained for many years (see illustration). The other three—Morning and Evening and Guiliano—Greenough

placed in his studio in Florence. After his death two of them were purchased by the Athenæum, but they were lost when the ship on which they were being transported was wrecked.³

A few years later, probably about 1840, Greenough purchased for \$1,000 the bust of John Quincy Adams by Hiram Powers. It was, he thought, the finest bust ancient or modern that he had ever seen.⁴ No doubt he also intended thus to help Powers, who had recently arrived in Florence and was having difficulty supporting himself. Greenough also acquired probably about the same time Powers' bust of John Farrar, professor of mathematics at Harvard.

For several works of his own Greenough used as authorities other works of art of which he possessed copies. As aids in modeling his Washington, he had a copy made in 1833 by the Boston painter Francis Alexander of Gilbert Stuart's portrait of Washington in the Boston Athenæum, for which he paid \$200; and he secured in Paris in 1834 casts of the Houdon bust of Washington at Fontainebleau, for which he paid \$12.⁵ A friend of his friend Samuel F. B. Morse sent him in the latter year a profile of Washington cut in Boston about 1790, as another authority.⁶ For the likenesses

³ Mabel Swan, *The Athenæum Gallery, 1827-1873* (Boston, 1940), p. 143; Greenough to Perkins, *Catalogue of the First Exhibition of Sculpture in the Athenæum Gallery* (1839), p. 7; Henry Greenough to Mr. Norton, March 31, 1860 (Boston Athenæum).

⁴ Edward Everett, *ibid.*; Greenough to Powers, May 3, 1851 (in the possession of the author of this article). This bust is now in the Adams Mansion in Quincy.

⁵ "Statue of Washington," in *27th Congress, 1st Session* (Washington, 1841), House Document No. 45, p. 5.

⁶ SDWB to Morse, Aug. 9, 1834 (Library of Congress).

of Mr. and Mrs. George Gibbs of Newport in the bas relief to their memory which he executed, beginning about 1838, for their daughter Sarah Gibbs, he had copies of Stuart's portraits of them.⁷ In the spring of 1838, Francis Alexander sent him from Boston sketches of the Alexander infant Francesca, then a year old, to guide him in making a bust of her;⁸ apparently, however, this work was not done.

In 1854, two years after Greenough's death and a year after his and his wife's possessions arrived from Italy, a number of paintings and pieces of sculpture belonging to Mrs. Greenough were exhibited at the Athenæum. Presumably they were the major items in the Greenough collection. In addition to works by Greenough himself, the sculpture included Powers' busts of Adams and Farrar (Nos. 38, 42). Certainly one and probably two of the paintings had been inherited by Mrs. Greenough from her mother, Mary Babcock Gore: Stuart's portrait of Bishop Jean Louis Lefebvre de Cheverus (No. 68), which was commissioned by Mrs. Gore, and a "Portrait of a Lady" by Stuart (No. 146), probably the one he painted of Mrs. Gore.⁹ The rest of the list in the exhibition catalogue is as follows:

- No. 74. Italian Landscape. Markoe.
[Probably Károly Markó (1791-1860), Hungarian.]
80. Italian Portrait. Bronzino.
[Probably the same as that called the portrait of Cathe-

⁷ Now in the Channing Room of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts in Boston.

⁸ *Letters of Horatio Greenough to his Brother, Henry* (Boston, 1887), p. 121, (hereafter cited as Letters).

⁹ Both portraits are now at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

- rine de Medici by Bronzino belonging to Mrs. Greenough which was No. 7 in the Athenæum Exhibition in 1855.]
87. Herodias. Vandyck.
116. A Sibyl.
139. St. Cecilia.
141. Landscape.
145. Battle Piece.
154. Marine View.
158. Cleopatra.
159. Landscape.
164. Landscape. Markoe.
168. Landscape. Markoe.
172. Landscape.
194. Ugolino. Bezoli. [Probably Giuseppe Bezzuoli (1784-1855), Florentine.]
199. Adoration of the Magi. School of Paul Veronese.
213. Interior of Sienna Cathedral. Le Blanc. [Probably Alexandre Leblanc (1793-1866), French.]

Probably Greenough knew Markó; the Hungarian settled in Italy in 1832, lived in Florence from 1840 to 1847, and from then on at nearby Antella, in the Villa Appoggi. Certainly he was well acquainted with Bezzuoli, who was one of the leading Tuscan painters of the period; he gave his brother Henry a moving account of the call he made on Bezzuoli, who was ill at the time, in the summer of 1850.¹⁰ The Adoration of the Magi represented one of the schools of painting he most admired—the Venetian. Leblanc traveled in Italy and painted views in Florence as well as other Italian cities. For a few years Greenough and his wife lived in a Casa Leblanc in Florence, but it seems to have been so called from the name of a former English occupant.

¹⁰ *Letters*, p. 220.

Mrs. Greenough survived her husband thirty-nine years. Four years after her death, on May 16 and 17, 1895, other art objects once belonging to him were offered for sale by the Boston auction firm of C. F. Libbie. The catalogue for the occasion bore the full title of: "Catalogue of Rare Etchings, Engravings, Oil Paintings and Framed Pictures. Miniatures on Ivory and Bric-A-Brac from the Estates of the Late Horatio Greenough, sculptor, of Boston and Florence, Italy, and the Late William Clarence Burrage, of Boston, and other Collections." No distinction is made between these collections in the catalogue itself, and thus it is impossible to be sure which items were Greenough's. A few, however, may be conjectured almost certainly to have belonged to him. Certain other items, moreover, are notable for tastes of his or episodes in his career which they suggest.

There are altogether 438 numbered items. Most of them are etchings and engravings; 87 are designated "Painter Etchings . . . From the French Society of Engravers, and are only sold to its members." The oil paintings number only about a dozen. The miscellaneous articles include miniatures, frames, autographs, illustrated manuscripts, medals, bonbonnières, English Spode, and tureens. Excluding those represented by the Painter Etchings, most of the artists are Dutch, German, and French of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries (including Aldegrever, Altdorfer, Bary, Beham, Bergham, Boucher, Callot, Chardin, Chodowiecki, Cranach, Dietrich, Dürer, Edelinck, Everdingen, Gaultier, Goltzius, Goudt, Greuter, Greuze, Holbein, Hornbraken, von Leyden, Lorrain, Molenaer, de Passe, Pencz, Potter, Ostade, Rembrandt, Rode, Roos,

Ruysdael, Saenrдам, Steen, Stoop, Tischbein, Ulrick, Umbach, Velde, Vischer, Wyngaerde). There are a few Belgians, Flemish, English and Italians (the Italians Appiani, Bartolozzi, Longhi, Perugino, Sabatelli), and a few of the nineteenth century (notably Charlet,

not seem likely that he owned this item, else it should have been exhibited at the Athenæum in 1854. He did, however, approve of the Dutch school; spoke approvingly and personally of Delaroche and Gerard; and apparently liked the tradition in which Lorrain worked. (As



STATUARY ROOM OF THE BOSTON ATHENÆUM

From a print in *Ballou's Pictorial*, 1855.

Delaroche, Gerard, Raffet, and Ver-net). The chief subject categories are portraiture (there are a large number of portraits of Napoleon and of various members of his family and several miscellaneous Napoleoniana as well), genre, and classical and Biblical scenes.

The artists as a group do not reflect Greenough's taste, since he most admired those of the Italian Renaissance. The most notable Italian item was an original drawing, "The Triumph of Love," by Perugino (No. 336), to whom Greenough referred with respect; yet it does

an art student in Rome in 1826 he lived in the house on the Pincian Hill once occupied by Lorrain.) He may well have owned some of the portraits of Napoleon. (There were also a bust by David and a bronze statuette of the same subject, but again it would seem that if once in his possession such items should have been shown earlier.) Greenough executed two busts of Napoleon, one of them from a death mask in the Bonaparte family. For several years he and his wife occupied part of the Palazzo Pucci in Florence belonging to a descendant, the Marquis

Bacciocchi, of one of Napoleon's sisters. A portrait, miniature, and autograph of Lafayette represent the subject of another of Greenough's works: his bust of Lafayette, modeled from life in Paris in 1831. He may have owned, too, some of the engravings by Bartolozzi. Seven were listed separately (Nos. 213-219), and a folio volume issued in Pall-Mall in London in 1764 (No. 357) was composed of 155. Several volumes of prints and illustrated works comparable to this one were among the items offered by Libbie's ten days earlier in a sale of books which included a portion of Greenough's library.

The items offered at the sale of art objects which seem most likely to have belonged to Greenough are nine in number, as follows:

- No. 107. David, T. L. [Jacques Louis David?] A Sibyl. Original drawing in red pencil.
351. Washington. George Washington. A curious and rare portrait.
422. Interior of Italian Cathedral. Gold frame.
426. Washington. Statue portrait by Horatio Greenough, Jacoba Bernardo [Jacopo Bernardi], engraver. Proof before letters on India paper, framed.
430. Etching, by Sabatelli [probably Luigi Sabatelli, 1772-1850, Tuscan painter]. Framed.
435. Plaster Bust, large.
436. Plaster Bust, small.
437. Plaster Bas-Relief, large.
438. Another, damaged.

Possibly the Sibyl was the same as No.

116 in the Boston Athenæum exhibition. Though Greenough criticized J. L. David's paintings for their coldness, he was affiliated with the whole neo-classical school. The Washington portrait may have been among those he collected in connection with executing his statue. Very likely No. 422 was Leblanc's Interior of Siena Cathedral, also shown at the Athenæum. The engraving of Greenough's Washington was evidently done in Florence in 1840 or early 1841.¹¹ The Sabatellis were a famous Florentine artistic family. Luigi passed most of his life in Milan, where he was director of the Academy of Fine Arts, but Greenough knew him well; he praised Greenough's Washington extravagantly.¹² Probably the plaster busts and bas reliefs were Greenough's own works. During the 1890's his wife and children deposited other works of his in public institutions. Among his last were several bas reliefs never put in marble and apparently no longer in existence: The Genius of Poetry, The Genius of Italy, Bacchante and Young Faun. Another, Castor and Pollux, was executed in marble, but possibly a cast of it also still existed at the time of the Libbie Sale.

Greenough was throughout his life in a position to assemble a notable art collection and during his later years financially able to do so on a fair scale. A few years after his death his friend Francis Alexander and their fellow Bostonian James Jackson Jarves during sojourns in Florence made important purchases of Italian primitive paintings. For such works as those, however, Greenough had

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¹¹ The only known prints are in the possession of the author of this article.

¹² *Letters*, p. 135.