SOME NOTES ON THE CHINESE EXHIBITION

Little attention has been paid as yet to an aspect of extreme importance, perhaps the most important thing about the Exhibition of Chinese Art at Burlington House. This is the first time in which groups of objects representing the views of Chinese and Western connoisseurs have been shown side by side. A comparison of the different standards of criticism in the light of actual pieces shows considerable discrepancies between the two and certain inferences appear of some interest. First as regards the paintings. It is quite clear that some steps must be taken to put the apparatus critique of Chinese painting in better order, and that more rational intelligible critics of Chinese painting one, Mr. Waley, Mr. Winkworth, and Mr. Kenneth Clark, observing critics of Chinese painting one, Mr. Waley, and Mr. Winkworth are great admirers of the Eumoropopoulos Wang Yuan-chi (No. 1536); the Chinese authorities consider it a clever copy. The Chinese authorities believe in the Han Kuei A Myriad Miles down the Yangtze; Mr. Waley, myself, and Mr. Kenneth Clark, speaking as a judge of drawing with European standards, think it a later version. Now this is not good enough. How often do you not hear two or three critics of reputation at the Exhibition force a statement on some such lines as "Well, it's..., and then no more is heard. Meanwhile the distant gnu, in the shape of the real date of the painting, observes its opportunity and flies. One of the results of all this confusion is that of two of our most intelligent critics of Chinese painting one, Mr. Waley, turns wearily from the earlier scrolls and describes the Chinese contribution as "almost a fiasco," while the other, Mr. Winkworth, though admitting the importance of many of the paintings from the Palace Collection, is a reference library of reliable data in photographic form. There are, after all, a number of interesting paintings, notably Nos. 2545, 2174, 2176.

As regards Chinese painting, with a very large proportion of genuine examples; the Ming and later groups are good, with some particularly interesting paintings, notably Nos. 2545, 2174, 2176. The general quality is on a much higher standard than that of the scrolls now on view at the British Museum. The Exhibition shows that what is badly needed is a reference library of reliable data in photographic form. There are five points of technical evidence in the study of Chinese painting: the seals, the inscriptions, the material, the brushwork, the colour. With the first, the question of seals, I am not concerned; I do not think it is possible for any European to be able to distinguish between a genuine and a forged seal.

As regards the inscriptions, the study of calligraphy is necessarily difficult in Europe and it may be impossible to collect photographs of genuine and important examples of the style of one's own days, but it is unlikely to be feasible to get together a sufficient group and, in particular, enlargements of characters should play an important part.

Professor Rowley's micro-photographs of the meshes of various silks show what an important corpus can be brought together. The question of colour-range needs considerable attention, we have a chance before the Exhibition closes of doing something in this line. In China, there is no opportunity of a centralized institution on a permanent basis; their students will come more and more to Europe and we must provide them with what is needed.
SOME NOTES ON THE CHINESE EXHIBITION

A—LANDSCAPE WITH PALACE PAVILIONS (DETAIL). HERE ASCRIBED TO THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY (MR. KAICHIRO NEDZU, TOKYO)

B—BLUE-AND-WHITE JAR (DETAIL) EARLY FIFTEENTH CENTURY (VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM)

SHORTER NOTICES: AN EXHIBITION OF CHINESE PAINTINGS

A—MOUNTAINS UNDER SNOW, BY PIEN WEN-YÜ. EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. 88.9 by 53.3 cm. (MESSRS. C. T. LOO)

B—LANDSCAPE, BY CHI LUN-HAN. EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. FINGER-TIP PAINTING. 36.8 by 30.4 cm. (MESSRS. C. T. LOO)
the delicate opaque tones of the famille rose; the scheme of 1224 dated 1640, with its bright red, turquoise blue and pale green is exactly that of certain later Ming enamelled porcelain jars; the subdued greens and blues of the Palace kiln are very close to those used in Sung landscape; the grass-green, dull blue and orange of the T'ang pottery in the Lecture Room is echoed in the Buddhist paintings hanging above. Such a prevalence of certain colour-schemes at stated periods is a normal outcome of the taste of the period and can be paralleled in Europe and though, naturally, a very large amount of reliable data is necessary to prove such a contention in Chinese painting and the individuality of the artist must always be running contrary to any kind of fixed scheme, it does seem possible that some data of importance could be worked out on these lines. M. Stoclet's Drunken Orgy (No. 810), in which the colour has always seemed to me to have been restored in the sixteenth century, a date at which the colour-scheme used would, on the analogy of enamelled porcelain, be very suitable. The various ways of treating colour at different dates are also important. The light and shade in the trees in the Eumorfopoulos Ma Yuan (No. 183) are executed in no less than three separate colours, a method very out of keeping with Sung ideas, and it is probable for that reason that it is a Ming copy.

In an Exhibition arranged like this one on a chronological and cultural basis, the principle of continuity of development and correlation of types of pattern in different materials is clearly demonstrated. A brief study of the Koeloff embroidered fragments makes clear the connexion with the inlaid bronzes of the so-called Chin ts''un type (Nos. 378-392), generally classified as of the Warring States period, and some of the weavings may be compared for pattern with mirror-backs of the same date. It seems that, owing to the presence of the inscribed lacquer bowl of the year 2 B.C., some modification of the dating as, for example, in the Han period, will be necessary. Almost the only group which does not fall into line with this progression of development is that of the more elaborate type of the Spring and Autumn Annals bronzes (e.g., Nos. 65, 71). On normal stylistic development, the Shang-Yin and early Chou types seem to go straight on to those of the Warring States and the intervening period, as at present classified, appears to feature a breakdown of style-principles or an archaistic revival of a much later date. The corpus of inscriptions is, however, indisputable, and we can probably regard these bronzes, in the light of style-progression, as a localized and fashionable metropolitan school with foreign elements predominant. Nothing is more remarkable in the bronzes shown at the Exhibition than the number of pieces of individual States, and it is a pleasure to see that Professor Yetts, in his article in the January issue of this Magazine, gives a hint that he will develop this question of local styles in his forthcoming book. It has always seemed to me too little taken into consideration.

It is curious to find Chinese connoisseurship still considering a piece of K'ang Hsi soft-paste blue-and-white (No. 1754) as certainly Chi'eng Hua, and a certain number of the fifteenth-century vessels decorated in underglaze copper-red seem to me far more probably K'ang Hsi (Nos. 1608, 1623, 1631), but the Chinese Government's contribution of ceramics is of extreme importance and, as regards the Palace kiln wares of the Sung dynasty, of cardinal interest. LEIGH ASHTON

SHORTER NOTICES

AN EXHIBITION OF CHINOISERIE.—The exhibition now being held at the Burlington Fine Arts Club is an essential, if modest, pendant to the present magnificence at Burlington House. Chinese art still retains for us so much of the quality of a revelation that we are apt to forget the admiration and delirium with which our ancestors had already discovered it, two and a half centuries ago. Yet China, and the idea commonly held of it, profoundly influenced European life and art through most of the eighteenth century; until the Romantic Revival— to which it was in some respects godfather—the Chinese was the only taste since the Middle Ages that had dared, however lightly, to dispute the dominion of Greece over the Western mind.

From the time of Giovanni de Montecorvino and Marco Polo, the fabulous splendours of the Great Khan's dominions had fired the imagination of Europe. The voyages of discovery in the fifteenth century had those golden territories as their chief goal, and we are apt to forget that Columbus came almost by mistake. The coast of China itself was, however, attained by the Portuguese early in the sixteenth century; thenceforward Chinese works of art (which had hitherto trickled into Venice by way of Cairo or Antioch) reached Europe in increasing profusion: the inventories of Philip II of Spain refer frequently to porcelanas de la China; in Measure for Measure (1603), Shakespeare talks of China dishes; the sickly young Louis XIII took his gruel from a bowl of Chinese porcelain.

It was at about this time that there began in Europe that emulation of Chinese art which was to develop into chinoiserie, as we know it. The Ille des Hermaphro- dites, published about 1600, talks of cabinets ornez à la façon de la Chine ou il y a toutes sortes d'oiseaux et d'animaux representez; while the rare oak cabinet in the exhibition (Cat. No. 70) dating from about 1620, affords conclusive evidence of attempts being made in England to imitate oriental lacquer as early as the reign of the first Stuart. Curiosity regarding the remote Empire of China was steadily growing. In 1585, Mendoza had published his famous Cosas mas notables, del gran reino de la China—the first considerable attempt since Polo's day to give a general picture of the Middle Kingdom; with the arrival at Peking of the Jesuit, Matteo Ricci (1599), and the establishment of a mission there, a fresh source of information was afforded to Western enquirers; it was almost certainly from this source that Rubens received inspiration for his chalk drawing of a man in Corean dress (Cat. No. 157).

During the second quarter of the seventeenth century, the flow of Chinese products and influence into Europe, seems to have ebbed. This may have been the result of the civil and international troubles which then pros- trated both Europe and China, or of the maritime