

NOTES ON PICTURES IN THE ROYAL COLLECTIONS

ARTICLE V—A TRIPTYCH BY LUCAS CRANACH¹

BY LIONEL CUST, M.V.O., F.S.A.

IT is not surprising, seeing that H.R.H. Prince Albert was a Saxon prince of the house of Saxe-Coburg, to find in him some special predilection for the works of the great Saxon painter Lucas Cranach. The fact is noteworthy because at the time of the Prince's arrival in England the works of Cranach were practically unknown, although a few survived in the royal collection at Hampton Court Palace, where they were treated with even more neglect than the works of the early German or Netherlandish artists were at that date, under the influence of the hopelessly Italianate authorities. It is interesting to watch how by slow degrees the importance of Lucas Cranach in the history of art began to assert itself, until Cranach has at last been given his full rank as one of the great original pioneers of art at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Although the style of Lucas Cranach is one so peculiar to himself, he still to some extent remains an enigma in painting, and his præminent merits as a painter are still far from universally recognized. As an engraver on wood and on copper, Lucas Cranach has been given more readily a very high place. Yet in all his paintings, sacred history, mythology, landscape, hunting scenes, portraits, etc., there is something inherent of the true spirit of beauty, an element of poetic fantasy, even if there be occasionally present some weakness, grotesqueness, or deliberate eccentricity, which jars upon the spectator.

It would not be possible within the limits of this short notice to give an account of Lucas Cranach's life, and of the picture-manufactory which he started at Witten-

berg; to estimate his share in helping the Wittenberg press to spread the Reformation through the words and writings of Martin Luther, with whom he was on terms of personal friendship; or to trace his relations with his patrons the great Dukes Frederick, John, and John Frederick of Saxony, or with the famous Cardinal Albert of Brandenburg. It will not be possible to explain thoroughly the so-called pseudo-Grünwald or to criticize thoroughly Dr. Flechsig's identification of this artist with Hans Cranach, the youngest son of Lucas. The mind, however, likes to dwell upon the 'good gray' painter who followed his master John Frederick, the Elector of Saxony, after the disastrous defeat of Mühlberg, into exile at Augsburg, and afterwards into a royal retreat at Weimar, where Cranach found an honourable grave at an advanced age.

There are fourteen paintings ascribed to Lucas Cranach in the royal collections, ten of which at least were procured by or for Prince Albert.

The most important of these is a large triptych² on panel, the central portion of which measures 65½ by 49 inches, and each wing 65½ by 34 inches. In the centre stands the Virgin Mary at full length, standing on the crescent moon, in the hollow of which under the Virgin's feet are the features of a man. This curious piece of symbolism occurs in other paintings of the Cranach workshop. Above the Virgin's head float two angels holding a crown. On either side of the Virgin stand St. Catherine and St. Barbara, in rich costumes such as were worn by German ladies at that date, which are particularly characteristic of Cranach's paintings. They stand on a stony ground, but the figure of the Virgin and the upper part of the saints are relieved on

¹ For Articles I to IV, see THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE, Nos. XIII, XIV, XVIII, and XX, April, May, September, and November, 1904.

² Reproduced, Plate I, page 205.

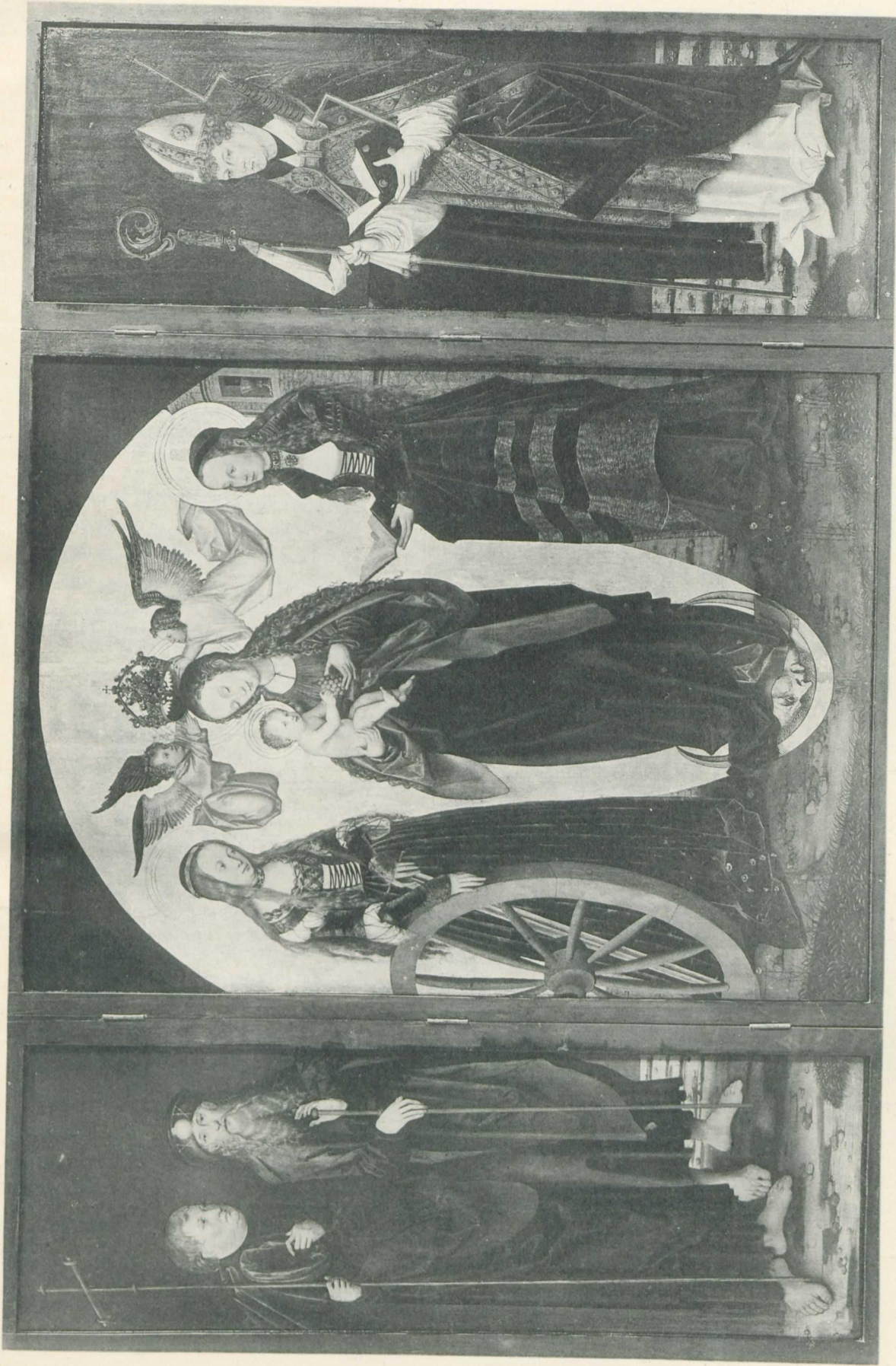


PLATE I. TRIPTYCH BY LUCAS CRANACH,
IN THE COLLECTION OF H. M. THE KING,
AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE.



PLATE II. SHUTTERS OF A TRIPTYCH BY
LUCAS CRANACH, IN THE COLLECTION
OF H.M. THE KING, AT BUCKINGHAM
PALACE.

A Triptych by Cranach in the Royal Collections

a dead gold ground, which is arched at the top so as to show a dull green background in the spandrels. The wing on the spectator's left contains full-length figures of St. Philip and St. James, that on the right a single figure of St. Erasmus in rich episcopal robes. In each case the saints stand on a ground similar to that of the central panel. On the outside of the wings,³ and relieved against a similar dull green background, are figures of St. Nicolas, in episcopal robes, and St. George respectively, these saints being enhanced, as it were, on a gold background, corresponding, when the wings are closed, to that of the central panel.

This important painting was purchased by Prince Albert at the sale of the earl of Orford's paintings at Messrs. Christie's on June 26, 1856, for 136 guineas. The story was that it had been purchased by the earl of Orford somewhere in Bavaria, where it had been found serving as divisions to a cornbin. It was then attributed to Matthäus Grünewald.

There is no need here to try to throw any light on the so-called pseudo-Grünewald and his relation to Lucas Cranach. The authorship of the triptych at Buckingham Palace is evident to any student of Cranach's works. The exaggerated length of the figures, the costumes of the female saints, the robes of the episcopal saints, and other details are all characteristic of Lucas Cranach about 1516, though there is no work of this period which surpasses the Buckingham Palace triptych in dignity and importance. If the painting came from Aschaffenburg or its neighbourhood, its ascription to Grünewald becomes intelligible, for, after the days of the famous Cardinal Albert of Brandenburg, Aschaffenburg was for a long time full of the works of Cranach as well as of those of Grünewald, the local painter of renown; and pious enthusiasm assigned to the local hero many

paintings by Cranach or his sons, merely because they happened to be found at Aschaffenburg. The figure of St. George on one of the outer wings is noteworthy from its peculiar relationship to the figure of Lucas Paumgärtner as 'St. Eustace,' according to the recent restoration of the great triptych at Munich. The resemblance may be of a casual nature, but as the Paumgärtner altarpiece was already in existence when the triptych by Cranach was painted, and in view of the probable connexion between Cranach and Albrecht Dürer through Jacopo di Barbari, it is possible that Lucas Cranach may have seen with his own eyes the Nativity by Dürer. A further similarity between the two paintings is shown in the distinct use of portraiture by both painters in the figures of the armoured saints. The altarpiece by Dürer appears also to have had figures of St. Catherine and St. Barbara on the wings, which have now disappeared. If these figures were originally on the *inside* of the wings, as more appropriate supporters of the Nativity, the two Paumgärtner brothers, as the protecting saints, St. George and St. Eustace, would have been on the outside of the wings, which, when closed, would have presented an appearance somewhat similar to that of the Cranach triptych. The details of the armour in Cranach's St. George are particularly interesting, and are repeated on a small scale in a similar figure of St. George on one of the wings of the triptych in the cathedral of Merseburg. The head of St. George, moreover, is evidently a portrait, and resembles the unidentified portrait of a man in the Town Museum at Heidelberg.

It would appear that the gold background mentioned was a later edition in order to enhance the effect of the central figures when seen from below or at a distance. The picture does not appear to be signed or dated.

(To be continued.)

³ Reproduced, Plate II, page 208.



PLATE I. LUCRETIA, BY LUCAS
CRANACH, IN THE COLLECTION OF
H.M. THE KING.

NOTES ON PICTURES IN THE ROYAL COLLECTIONS

ARTICLE VI—PAINTINGS BY LUCAS CRANACH—*cont.*¹

BY LIONEL CUST, M.V.O., F.S.A.



Of the other works purchased by Prince Albert, the most important is a fine painting of Adam and Eve² in a wooded landscape, Eve seated on the back of a stag, which is lying down, and Adam being in the act of drawing a bow. In the background of this painting is a mountainous landscape with cliffs and a castle—very characteristic of Cranach, and perhaps taken from the so-called Saxon Switzerland. In this painting the figure of Adam drawing the bow at once recalls the engraving and drawing of Apollo by Jacopo de' Barbari, on which Albrecht Dürer founded his own famous engraving of Adam and Eve. The resemblance is the more interesting, inasmuch as it is known that Jacopo de' Barbari visited Wittenberg, where Cranach was residing, in 1503 and 1505, so that it seems certain that both Lucas Cranach and Albrecht Dürer were, independently of each other, influenced by that mysterious Venetian artist, of whom so little is really known. This subject is one worthy of special consideration and investigation on its own account.

The painting of Adam and Eve is signed with the small snake with single bat's wing which is usually found on Cranach's later paintings. It was purchased for Prince Albert in 1846 by Dr. Gruner from Mr. Campe in Nuremberg.

This painting is quite distinct from another painting of Adam and Eve which was in the collection of Charles I, and was described in Van der Doort's catalogue of that collection (p. 160, No. 4 of Vertue's edition) as—

'Done by Lucas Chronich. Item. The

¹ For Articles I to V see Vol. V, pages 7, 349, 517; Vol. VI, pages 104, 204 (April, July, September, November and December, 1904).

² Frontispiece, page 340.

picture of a naked standing Adam and Eve, where by in a bush lying a great stag, with long horns, Adam is eating the apple; intire little figures; brought from Germany, by my Lord Marquiss of Hamilton. 1 ft. 7 in. by 1 ft. 1½ in.'

This painting is no longer in the royal collection. The subject was one for which Cranach showed a special predilection, probably on account of the opportunity which it gave for depicting the nude figure.

3. The next most important painting by Lucas Cranach acquired by Prince Albert was one of Lucretia,³ in which the Roman heroine is represented in the rich dress of a German princess, with her bosom bare to the waist, in the act of inflicting the fatal stroke with a dagger. In the upper corner to the left is a mountainous landscape, seen through a window, resembling that in the Adam and Eve. The painting of Lucretia is signed with the small snake and dated 1530. This painting was purchased by Prince Albert of Mr. Nicholls in 1844. It is a fine example, though apparently heavily retouched, of a subject often repeated by Cranach.

4. A portrait of one Nicolas de Backer, given to Prince Albert by H.M. Queen Victoria in 1844, is a complete wreck through damage and unskilful restoration. It is possible to discern through the repainting that it must originally have been a portrait of no little importance. It represents a man of about sixty years of age, with golden hair, moustache, and beard, clad in a dark-brown, fur-lined robe, wearing a black cap on his head, and holding what appears to be a rosary of pinkheads in his two hands. Above his head on the left is inscribed ÆTATIS LX/ANNO CHRISTI SALVATORIS MDIX, followed by the snake

³ Plate I, page 352.

Paintings by Cranach in the Royal Collections

as Cranach's signature. On the right is a shield of armorial bearings, carrying—sable three storks' heads argent, beaked gules, over all on an escutcheon of pretence argent three trefoils sable (?). The stork's head and trefoils reappear in the crest. Below the shield is inscribed: NOB: D. NICOLAUS DE BACKER/DNS DE WATERPEPE I: CAR/V A CONCILIIS NAT: EQVES. As these inscriptions have all been rewritten, they cannot be regarded as trustworthy. Rietstap, in his 'Armorial Général,' gives the arms of de Backere of Flanders as 'D'arg. à trois trèfles d'azur.'

5. A small painting of Salome with the Head of S. John the Baptist, acquired by Prince Albert, is a weak production of the Cranach workshop. Salome is represented in rich German dress, and in the background is the courtyard of a castle, in which the execution is actually taking place. This painting formed part of the collection of Prince Ludwig von Oettingen-Wallerstein.

6. A painting of The Electress Sybilla of Cleves and her Son, given to Prince Albert by H.M. Queen Victoria in 1840, as the work of Lucas Cranach, is one of many familiar *supercheries* by Rohrich, a German artist in the eighteenth century.

7. In August, 1860, an important painting was purchased by Her Majesty Queen Victoria and presented to Prince Albert. This represents the Judgement of Solomon,⁴ a large painting on panel measuring 45½ in. by 66½ in. The composition is in two planes. Behind, raised on two steps, under a kind of architectural baldacchino, stands Solomon in the guise of a German prince, with his ministers and counsellors grouped on either side. Below in front are the respective groups of the two mothers with their friends and the executioner in the act of carrying out Solomon's command. The picture is signed with the snake and dated 1519. Among the ministers of the king, who appear to be portraits, it is

possible to discern Cranach's patron, Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg, elector of Mayence. It is probable, therefore, that this was one of the paintings commissioned by the cardinal from Lucas Cranach or from the Cranach workshop for the collegiate church at Halle, which the cardinal founded in 1518, but which after a few years he was compelled to dissolve. The pictures were then brought by the cardinal to Aschaffenburg, whence arose the attribution to Grünewald, and the existence of a so-called pseudo-Grünewald, to whom allusion has already been made. It seems fairly certain that this pseudo-Grünewald was connected with the Cranach workshop at Wittenberg, but it would be difficult, if not impossible, to separate the work of the elder Cranach or that of his sons from that produced by their joint efforts in the natural pursuit of their trade.

8. In June, 1854, Prince Albert purchased at Christie's, from the sale of the collection of Sir Henry Lytton Bulwer (afterwards Lord Dalling), a small painting on panel by Lucas Cranach, which had been acquired in Spain. This is now at Buckingham Palace. The painting represents the Virgin holding the Child to her breast, and measures only 9¼ in. by 6 in.⁵ It is signed with the snake and the date 1547. It is inscribed on the back of the panel in Spanish—'Tabla la Virgin y el nino de Lucas Cranach.' This attractive little painting is painted in a rather different style from that of Cranach's usual work. The Virgin is clad in a blue dress, with a red mantle showing ample white sleeves, while her long golden hair falls down her back over her left shoulder. She clasps the Child to her breast as he stands upon her lap and places his left hand on her neck. The composition is of a much later development than that, for instance, of a similar group in the Munich Gallery, which is dated 1525. If it be the genuine work of Cra-

⁴ Plate II, page 355.

⁵ Plate II, page 355.



VIRGIN AND CHILD.



THE JUDGEMENT OF SOLOMON.

Paintings by Cranach in the Royal Collections

nach, it reveals an influence coming from the south.

Now the date on the painting, the difference in the style, and the Spanish *provenance* all point to an interesting suggestion. It was in April 1547, the date of the little picture, that the battle of Mühlberg was fought, at which the Elector John Frederick of Saxony was taken prisoner by Charles V, and sent to an honourable captivity at Augsburg. It is well known that Lucas Cranach followed his master into captivity and remained by his side at Augsburg. That city, like Nuremberg, was always in close touch with Italy, and Italian influence was specially felt at Augsburg. The emperor, Charles V, was a great patron of Italian art, and was actually present at Augsburg for some time in the winter of 1547, whither he summoned Titian in January 1547-8, and here Titian painted not only the famous equestrian portrait of Charles V, now at Madrid, but also the half-length portrait of the captive Elector John Frederick himself, which is now in the Imperial Gallery at Vienna. Cranach can hardly have failed to be present with his master while the great Venetian was painting this portrait. Apart from this, there would have been sufficient Italian influence about the imperial court at Augsburg in 1547 to account for a painting by Cranach, probably done for one of the Spanish court if not for the emperor himself, having been executed in a style somewhat different to the crabbed and archaic productions of the family workshop at Wittenberg.

9. Among the fifteenth and sixteenth century portraits collected together in a small lobby adjacent to the royal private chapel in Windsor Castle there is a portrait of Martin Luther as 'Junker Georg,' attributed to Lucas Cranach. The portrait corresponds to the well-known portrait of Luther at this period which was painted by Lucas Cranach in 1521, and is preserved in the

Town Library at Leipzig. It is probably an early copy, but in its present condition it is difficult to arrive at its original state. It is inscribed 'Dr. Martin Luther, als Junker Jörg.'

The origin of this portrait is uncertain, but as there is no evidence of its having belonged previously to the royal collection, it may have been acquired by Prince Albert, under whose direction the portraits in this lobby were arranged.

10 and 11. In 1840 H.R.H. Prince Albert purchased in Germany two small portraits of Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, and John Frederick the Magnanimous, Elector of Saxony, the latter signed and dated 1535. These are only fair examples of the innumerable portraits of these two princes which were issued by the Cranach workshop at Wittenberg, together with those of Luther and his wife, to advance the cause of the Reformation.

The remaining three paintings by Cranach have been for a long time part of the royal collection.

12. *The Judgement of Paris*.—This little picture, which is painted on panel, measuring 19½ in. by 13½ in., depicts in a curious way a scene which was apparently a stock subject in the Cranach workshop. Similar paintings are in the Kunsthalle at Karlsruhe, the Götisches Haus at Wörlitz and elsewhere. The representation of Paris as a mediaeval knight and Mercury as an old man with three nude female figures has caused some people to see in this subject not the Judgement of Paris, but a mediaeval legend referring to King Alfred and his three daughters. There seems to be no doubt that the painter intended to represent the former subject.

The painting of *The Judgement of Paris* is probably identical with the picture described in the catalogue of James II's collection as 'No. 976. Heemskirk. *The Judgement of Paris*.' In 1818, when it was

Paintings by Cranach in the Royal Collections

at Kensington Palace, it was described as 'No. 593. Judgement of Paris. By Albert Aldegraaf. A very curious specimen of the early German school.' It is now at Hampton Court Palace.

13. *The Fourteen Patron Saints of Germany*.—This long oblong painting is painted on panel, measuring 14 in. by 33 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. It represents St. Christopher and the other thirteen patron saints (*Nothhelfer*) of South Germany. St. Christopher is in the middle, on a larger scale than the others. In the group of six saints on the left can be identified St. Erasmus, St. Dionysius, St. Vitus, and St. Giles, and in that of seven on the right St. George, St. Catherine, St. Barbara, and St. Margaret. A similar painting by Lucas Cranach is in the Marienkirche at Halle, this being signed and dated 1529. Other representations of the fourteen *Nothhelfer* exist, there being usually some variations in the actual saints included.

This painting was in the collection of Charles I, as is shown from the royal brand on the back of the panel. It does not appear in Vander Doort's catalogue, which was compiled in 1639, but at the dispersal of the collection 'A peece of St. Chrisostom (*sic*) with many figures' was sold to Mr. Marriot on 6 May 1650 for £2. It was recovered at the Restoration, and appears in James II's catalogue as 'No. 921. A landscape with St. Christopher and several other figures.' In 1810, when at Kensington Palace, it was, like the Judgement of Paris, attributed to Albert Aldegraef (*sic*) and described as 'an extremely curious specimen of the early German school.' It is now at Hampton Court Palace.

14. *The Adoration of the Three Kings*.—This painting, which is on panel measuring 55 in. by 40 $\frac{1}{4}$ in., has been attributed to Lucas Cranach with less certainty than those already described. The composition is conventional, the Virgin and Child in the centre, an aged king kneeling before

Christ, and the other two kings, one a negro, standing on either side.

This painting has also been attributed to Lucas van Leyden. The figures seem Netherlandish, but have been cruelly re-painted. The landscape background resembles those of Cranach. The history of this painting has not yet been traced. It is now at Windsor Castle, where it has formed part of the royal collection for a very long time.

Before concluding these notes on the paintings by Lucas Cranach in the royal collections, it should be noted that in Van der Doort's catalogue of Charles I's collection there are entries, in addition to the Adam and Eve already mentioned, of '(p. 12, No. 45 of Vertue's edition). Done by Lucas Chronick. Item. Hereunder, in a little round, turned, black and gilded frame, painted upon a green ground, the picture of some private German gentleman, in a black cap and a golden chain, whereby his name is written, Hans Von Griffin Dorfe, painted upon the wrong light, of. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ by of. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$.' And '(p. 13, No. 51, *ibid.*). Done by Lucas Cronick. Item. Hereunder is the picture of Dr. Martin Lutor, in a black, eight square ebone frame, bought by [the King] at Greenwich, by my Lord Marquiss Hamilton's means, painted upon the wrong light, of. 4 by of. 4.' There is no further trace of these two small portraits in the royal collections. James, third marquess, and afterwards first duke, of Hamilton, in 1631 landed in Germany with 6,000 men to assist King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden on behalf of Charles I. The expedition was a failure, and Hamilton returned to England in 1634, where, in spite of his failure, he at once became his king's most intimate and trusted adviser. Hamilton did not, however, return empty-handed, for he brought several paintings home from Germany with which to please his royal master.

(To be continued.)