





MAX MELDRUM, PICHERIT'S FARM, Oil on canvas, 2 ft. 9½ in. x 3 ft. 4½ in.

Felton Bequest.

MAX DUNCAN MELDRUM.

Max Duncan Meldrum was born in Edinburgh in 1875 and was educated at George Heriot's Hospital School. When fourteen years old his parents decided to migrate to Australia. Once settled in Melbourne he commenced his art studies at the National Gallery Schools. The precocious talent that was later to revitalize the local art world appeared early in his career. In 1899 he was awarded the Triennial Travelling Scholarship.

Following precedent, Meldrum left for Paris. Septical of the value of conventional training, he ignored established schools, and elected instead to study art from the masterpieces in the Louvre. This was an unusual, but eminently practical and characteristic action. As son of a rationalist father and mother, he had been trained to suspect all learning not substantiated by the logic of the senses. It is not surprising therefore, that he should find his way to the realist tradition flowing through Western art. His study of the paintings left by Da Vinci, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Constable, Corot, and Whistler led him to the conclusion that the art of depiction is an exact science, and that the artist-painter is a scientist whose function is to interpret nature through analysis of optical impressions. "I am convinced", he says, "that the goal of the great painters was a purely objective one. I believe that all past stages in the development of painting now called periods of Renaissance, were characterized by an objective attitude towards nature, and that the true artist is a humble interpreter of visual phenomena." Meldrum is not alone in this belief. Early in the 19th century John Constable said, "In such an age as this, painting should be understood, not looked on with blind wonder, nor considered only as a poetic aspiration, but as a pursuit legitimate, scientific, and mechanical."

Rich in experience and achievement, Meldrum returned to Melbourne in 1913, and very soon his voice was heard in the land. With characteristic energy he established a school from whence he preached the doctrine of tonal relationships. As students gathered to the cause of pure art the atmosphere of dull complacency investing the art world was rapidly dispelled. Although the movement spread among the younger generation, the leader's insistence that artists must return to the basic truths underlying all great art was unpalatable to artists used to more accommodating fare. Following publication in 1917 of a thesis, "The Invariable Truths of Depictive Art" (see Max Meldrum, *His Art and Views*, by Colin Colahan), the art world erupted with flatulent acidity.

In order to pursue his studies into the development of painting he returned to France in 1919. "My Lady's Table" (1927), exhibited at the Beaux-Arts and now in the National Collection, is a product of this period of research. This little still life is executed in strict accordance with the artist's theorem. When in 1928, Meldrum was engaged for a lecture tour of the United States of America, the work, which had been photographed at various stages of development, was used to demonstrate the validity of his utterance.

Meldrum claims that the extreme subtlety of the Australian landscape has made it a painter's paradise. Although established abroad, he returned to Melbourne in 1931 and re-opened his studio. In 1937 he was appointed a Trustee of the National Gallery of Victoria, and in 1939 and 1940 was awarded the Archibald Prize for portraiture. His magnum opus "The Science of Appearances", was published in 1950. This work is the most brilliant exposition of the nature and craft of painting yet written by an Australian artist.

Before an artist may add a cubit to the pyramid he must first work through the tradition of art. This credo Meldrum has followed by practice. Witness the continuity of development demonstrated by the three reproductions accompanying this appreciation. "Portrait of the Artist's Mother" (1913) is executed in the meticulous technique and manner prevalent in the time of Titian. By general consent the painting is regarded as the finest portrait by an Australian artist. Dignified in presentation, superb in subject and craftsmanship, it has an air of simplicity and distinction which would permit it to hang in any company.

Similarly "Picherit's Farm", painted in Brittany, represents another stage in the artist's confident advance to realization of a pure art form. Herein the influence is of Corot and the Barbizon School. Although an element of romanticism is still apparent, the broader treatment tells of greatly increased visual knowledge. Here is evidence that Meldrum was approaching the objective ideal in which the artist is completely subservient to his subject.

When compared with the "Olinda Falls Road, Winter" (1932), "Portrait of the Artist's Mother" and "Picherit's Farm" are, in view of the artist's theory, a relatively primitive performance. Though small in size the Olinda sketch is large in its implications. Not only does it epitomize Meldrum's contribution to the craft and advancement of artistic knowledge, but it exemplifies a truly visual approach to landscape painting.

ARTHUR V. COOK.

MAX MELDRUM, OLINDA FALLS ROAD, WINTER, 1932, Oil on canvas, 14¼ in. x 17¼ in. Felton Bequest.





GEORGE STUBBS, LION ATTACKING A HORSE (detail), *Oil on canvas, 27 in. x 39 in.*
Felton Bequest.

When we think of the "sporting picture" we are inclined, with a sort of smugness of race, to think of it as a branch of painting that is almost purely English, but a little research on the subject shows us that much of its inspiration, or the influences which brought it about, came from the Continent, and that some of its greatest exponents — the Sartorius, Alken and Herring families — were of foreign origin.

However, the fact remains that from the beginning of the 18th century to the middle of the 19th century the cult of the sporting picture in England reached a peak which has not been surpassed either before or since. Eighteenth century England was a country governed largely by sporting squires; it was the day of the stage coach and the whole country depended on the horse for its locomotion; the horse and all that went with it was the idol of the people, and as Arthur Bryant says — from the peers of the realm to the lowest stable boy the whole country "stank of the stables".

It was only natural that a country with a passion for the chase, the prize ring and cock fighting should produce a host of artists who have left us a magnificent record of the sporting exploits of the time.

The Melbourne Collection is weak in English sporting pictures of this great period but we have a few examples worthy of note, three of which are reproduced here.

The "Lion Attacking A Horse" by Stubbs (1724-1806) — the doyen of English horse painters, although not representative of his work generally, shows to perfection the artist's amazing knowledge of horse anatomy; every muscle and underlying bone from the terror stricken head to the sagging hind quarters are admirably understood and the bodies of the horse and lion welded together in perfect statuesque unity.

R. B. Davis (1782-1854) was not in the first flight of sporting painters but his tranquil picture "Equestrian Group" showing a huntsman with his second horse and groom against a background of trees is well composed and is one of the best examples of his work I know.

Herring the elder (1795-1863) and Landseer (1815-1873) came towards the end of the great period and both yielded to the sentimentality of the day, the greater part of their work was over-polished and lacks the robustness and feeling for character of their predecessors. Both were, however, craftsmen of a high order who had their great moments and the examples of their work in the Melbourne Collection show them in this mood.

Herring's "Cleveland Bays" is obviously a picture painted when he was taking a day off and painting for his own pleasure. Herring started life as a coach painter and for four years drove the stage coach between London and York, and in this picture we see the coachman's love of highly polished harness and a well-groomed horse. The picture came from an old Newmarket sporting family and A. J. Munnings in discussing it with me said, "How he painted that tail beats me". There is every reason to think that the two coachers in this picture were Herring's own horses as a few years before he painted this picture he wrote to his friend Charles Stanhope, "I have now a stable which I have built where I paint all my animals and have three very clever horses, two I use in double harness and the other my son uses as a hack".

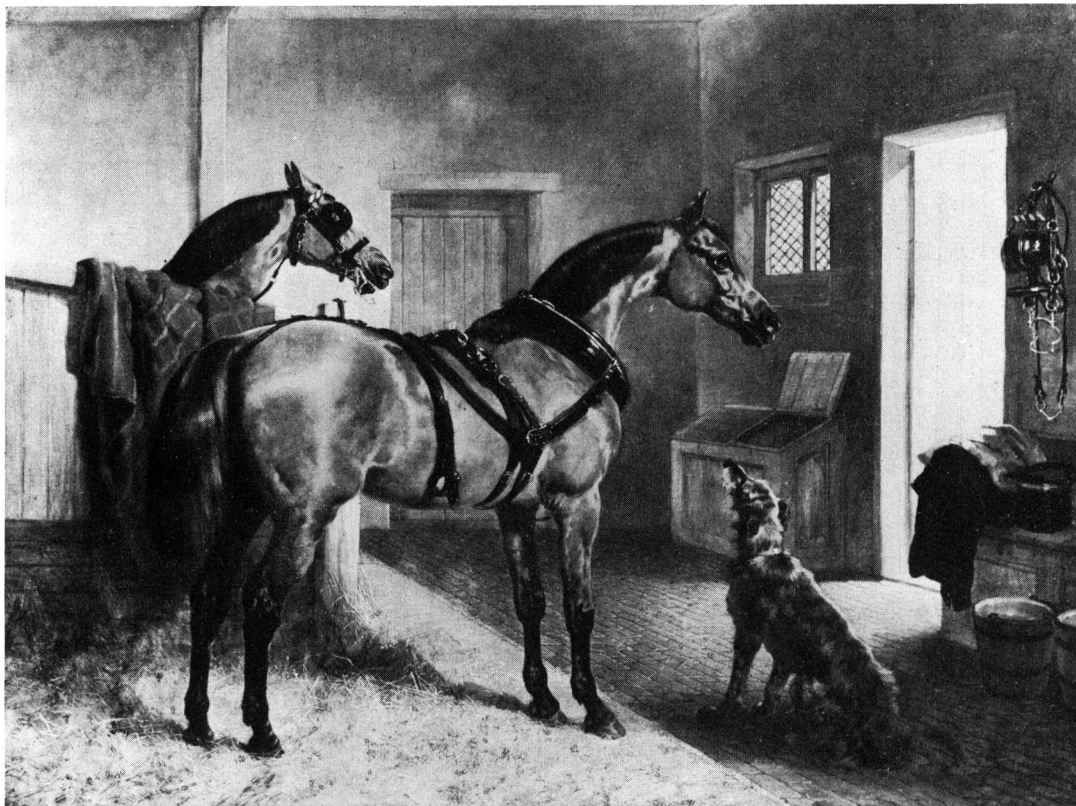
One can only hope that in the near future the Melbourne Collection will be enriched by examples of other great sporting painters such as Marshall, Ferneley and Sartorius.

DARYL LINDSAY.



R. B. DAVIS, EQUESTRIAN GROUP, 1845, *Oil on canvas*, 28 in. x 36 in.

Felton Bequest.



J. F. HERRING, CLEVELAND BAYS, 1852, *Oil on canvas*, 34 in. x 44 in.

Felton Bequest.

GEORGE II OCTAGONAL TEAPOT,
Silver, London, 1735, maker's mark illegible,
Height 6 in. Howard Spensley Bequest.



THE TEAPOT AND OTHER TEA EQUIPMENT.

Trade relations between England and the Orient were greatly increased by the formation of the Dutch East India Company in 1602. Through its inception seventeenth century England witnessed the introduction of many luxuries and commodities of Eastern vintage.

The earliest known evidence in English appertaining to tea is that contained in a letter dated 1615 by Mr. Wickham, an agent of the Dutch East India Company written from Firando in Japan to Mr. Eaton, another officer of the Company resident in Macao (China), asking him to send him "a pot of the best sort of chaw".

In the *Mercurius Politicus* No. 435 of September, 1658, the following advertisement appears: "That excellent by all Physitians approved china drink called by the Chineans Tcha, by other nations tay alias tee is sold at the Sultanness Head, a Cophee house in sweetings rents, by Royal Exchange London". Samuel Pepys states in his diary of September 28, 1660: "I did send for a cup of Tee (a china drink) of which I had never drank before".

The English teapot dates from the same period as the custom of tea drinking. One of the earliest teapots is the Charles II teapot bearing London hall-marks for 1670 and now in the possession of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. It is 13½ inches high, and of plain cylindrical form tapering towards the mouth with a conical lid and leather covered handle at right angles to its short, straight spout. It is engraved with the Arms of the East India Company and of George, Lord Berkeley, and bears the following inscription: "This Silver tea-Pott was presented to ye cmtte of ye East India Company by ye Right Honorue George Lord Berkely of Berkeley Castle A member of that Honourable & worthy Society and a true Hearty Lover of them 1670". It is undoubtedly the most important tea vessel to have survived the vicissitudes of the seventeenth century.

A few teapots are recorded as having been made prior to 1700. However they appear in greater numbers in the reign of Queen Anne (1703-14) when tea drinking was gradually developing from a novelty into a daily custom. These teapots were small and the squat circular bodies were usually of a plain pear or pyriform shape, with a high domed, hinged lid and the handle in line with the spout. Some polygonal teapots of this period exemplify Britannia standard silver (1697-1719) at its best.

The Gallery possesses a Queen Anne Teapot, maker R. Gamble, London, 1713.

Later the teapot becomes bullet shaped or more globular in character, the lid is notably flatter and the rococo influence is prevalent in the decoration of some specimens from about 1720.

The exquisite octagonal George II teapot (illustrated) made in London in 1735 is more typical of the slightly earlier variety. The evolution of the teapot follows the succession of 18th century styles. For example the neo-classical style of the Adam period is adopted in the

work of the silversmiths from about 1765-85. Larger teapots were wrought as the demand for the beverage increased and its price automatically decreased.

The first reference to a tea-kettle is noted in 1687. Illustrated is an elegant George II tea-kettle on stand with spirit lamp, makers Bennett Bradshaw and R. Tyrill, London, 1737. The tea-kettle was superseded to a certain degree by the tea-urn which was added to the amenities of the English household from about 1760.

Receptacles for containing tea were probably first made at the commencement of the eighteenth century. They were originally called canisters, and later received the appellation of Caddy, which term was a corruption of Catty from "Kate" the Malayan measure equivalent to about twenty ounces; this was the amount contained in the small wooden boxes in which tea was first imported into England.

The set of three George II tea caddies (illustrated) maker Samuel Taylor, London, 1749, manifests in its restrained richness of decoration the fidelity with which the craftsman executed his job; the flat sliding panel at the base made for convenience of filling and the domed top are features of the simpler caddies made two or three decades earlier. Later ones are usually larger and have hinged lids. The vase shaped caddy was probably for sugar, however some authorities conjecture that it was used as a tea blending bowl.

The earliest reference to a teaspoon that has been discovered occurs in the London Gazette for September, 1685, where the theft of "six little spoons, one teapot . . ." is noted.

The earliest teaspoons known to me in an Australian collection are four silver gilt cleft top spoons, maker I.C., London, 1685.

By the last quarter of the eighteenth century the custom of tea brewing had pervaded the majority of English households and no doubt stimulated the production of the complete matching tea-set comprising teapot, sugar basin, milk or cream jug, which made its appearance about 1790.

S. LIPSCOMBE.

GEORGE II TEA-KETTLE ON STAND,
Silver, maker Bennett Bradshaw and
R. Tyrill, London, 1737, Height 13¼
in. Felton Bequest.



GEORGE II TEA CADDIES, Silver, maker Samuel Taylor, London, 1749, Height 5½ in., 5¾ in., 5½ in.

Felton Bequest.

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The following publications and reproductions are on sale at the Swanston Street entrance:

Catalogue of the Gallery (5/-). Catalogue of Selected Masterpieces with 30 illustrations (1/6). Gallery Guide (6d.). Six large coloured reproductions of the following pictures: Buvelot, Waterpool at Coleraine; Roberts, Shearing the Rams; Lambert, Sergeant of the Light Horse; Cameron, Durham Cathedral; Pissarro, Boulevard Montmartre; Sisley, Hills behind St. Nicaise; Monet, Vetheuil (25/- ea.). A selection of small reproductions of varying sizes including Christmas cards.

Cover Design in this issue is Portrait of the Artist's Mother, 1913, by Max Meldrum; oil on canvas, 23 in. x 18 in., Felton Bequest.