

CHRISTIE'S SALEROOM NEWS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON NORTHWICK PARK AND
THE LATE CAPTAIN E. G. SPENCER-CHURCHILL'S ART COLLECTION.

Captain E. G. Spencer-Churchill, M. C., died on June 24th aged 88, and he gave instructions in his Will that Christie's should auction his famous collection of pictures and works of art. The first sales will not be until April, 1965.

The original basis of the Northwick Collection was laid by the 2nd Lord Northwick who succeeded his father in 1800 when he was 30. He spent the next 30 years indulging his passion for collecting pictures and other works of art. In 1832 he added a special picture gallery to Northwick Park, the earliest part of which was built in 1686.

The 2nd Lord Northwick died in 1859 intestate, as a result of which the whole of the art collection came under the hammer. The sales went on for 22 days and, in all, 1,500 pictures, antiquities and other works of art were sold for a total of £91,000 which, allowing for the value of the £ then, was a tremendous sum. During the sales the 3rd Lord Northwick managed to buy back a number of the pictures.

The 3rd Lord Northwick died in 1887 and left the contents of the house to his widow who died in 1912. She left the house and art collection to Captain Edward George Spencer-Churchill, only son of Lord Edward Spencer-Churchill, and grandson of the 5th Duke of Marlborough. The 3rd Lord Northwick's widow was, in fact, Captain Spencer-Churchill's maternal grandmother. He was also, of course, a cousin of Sir Winston Churchill.

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PICTURES

There are approximately 400 pictures collected by the 2nd Lord Northwick in the collection. These cover the English, German, Dutch, Flemish, French, Spanish, Italian and Byzantine Schools.

In addition there are approximately 200 pictures which Captain Spencer-Churchill collected between 1912 and his death. These he called his "Rescues" as it was his custom and delight to buy pictures - generally for comparatively small sums - which were black with dirt or varnish. These he had cleaned, often with amazing results.

"The greatest thrill I get from collecting," he said once, "is when I am fortunate enough to rescue a damaged or almost entirely obscured picture which could not possibly have been giving pleasure to anyone and finding it a thing of beauty and interest when it has emerged from the hands of these highly skilled restorers. One feels almost as if one had recalled the artist to life and got him to paint another picture. The same of course applies when a hoard of Greek coins is found, probably stuck together, and deeply encrusted with horn silver etc., and when with ammonia, caustic soda, or citric acid, one takes them apart and sometimes discovers some of the most beautiful things existing - real bits of ancient Hellas."

'Northwick Pictures' of Special Importance.

"A Miracle of SS. Cosmas and Damian" by Fra Angelico, c. 1420.
On panel. $7\frac{3}{4}$ in. x $8\frac{3}{4}$ in.
Bought by the 2nd Lord Northwick for £2.12s.6d; bought back in
in the 1859 sale by the 3rd Lord Northwick for £77.14s.

This picture tells of the legend of the man suffering from cancer of the leg who prayed in the Church of SS. Cosmas and Damian. He fell asleep and dreamt he heard the twin doctor saints resolving to amputate his bad leg and replace it with that of a Moor who had died recently. On waking he found that he had two healthy legs and that one was black.

"The Presentation in the Temple" by Lorenzo Monaco, c.1400.
On panel. 13in. x 15½in.

"A Peasant Wedding" by Pieter Brueghel the Elder. On panel.
27in. x 45in. Signed with a horse's skull.

"The Adoration of the Magi" by Gerard David.
On panel. 27¼in. x 28¾in.

"Portrait of a Notary in the Character of Saint Fiacre" by
Quentin Matsys. On panel. 30½in. x 24in.
Bought at Christie's in 1832 for £25. 14s. 6d.

"Tanaquil and Marcia" by Domenico Beccafumi, 1520 (Pair).
On panel. 36in. x 20½in. The 3rd Lord Northwick bought them
in 1833 for £52. 10s.

"Portrait of Daniel Lock" by William Hogarth, 1750. 36in. x 27¾in.
"Bought In" at the Northwick sale for £63.

"Self-Portrait" by Thomas Gainsborough. 29¾in. x 24½in.
Bought by the 3rd Lord Northwick for £14 in 1832 in a country sale.

"Portrait of Warren Hastings" by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1768.
49in. x 39½in. This portrait was painted 20 years before Warren
Hastings' trial, and Sir Joshua Reynolds was paid 70gns. for it.

Captain Spencer-Churchill's "Rescues".

These are particularly strong in the Netherlandish and English Schools.

"Madonna and Child" by Dirk Bouts, c.1550. 11in. x 12in.

"Vase of Flowers" by Nicholas van Verendael. 16in. x 23in.

This picture, one of many Still Lifes of flowers, birds and insects "rescued",
was completely black when Captain Spencer-Churchill bought it in a saleroom
in 1936. Only an ear of corn was visible. It has now been beautifully
restored and was exhibited at an exhibition in Bruges in 1956, as was the
'Madonna and Child' by Dirk Bouts.

"Queen Elizabeth of Bohemia" by an unknown artist. Dated 1612.
32in. x 43in.

This picture was covered with dark brown varnish when bought.

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ANTIQUITIES

Captain Spencer-Churchill began collecting antiquities at the age of 13 in Egypt where he had been sent because of ill health. The collection as it stands now is probably the largest ever collected privately, and ranges over bronzes, Greek and Etruscan vases, axe heads, coins, jewellery, scarabs and cylinder seals.

Bronzes of Particular Importance.

Minoan Bull. Approx. 6in. long. 1600 B.C. - the highest peak in Minoan art.

This is a bronze of a "Bull Jumper" or acrobat performing the dangerous feat of grasping the horns of a charging bull and somersaulting over his head.

Captain Spencer-Churchill bought it from a London dealer in 1921 for £100; its value now is well into five figures.

An August^{ine} Deer. 1st century B.C. Approx. 12in. high.

Chinese Wrestlers. 5th-3rd century B.C. Chou dynasty. 6in. high.

Marbles and Hardstones.

Portrait Head of Hadrian. Approx. 18in. high. Dug from Hadrian's Villa outside Rome.

Pre-Dynastic stone vases and bowls. All about 3000 B.C.

A Frog made of black and white diorite (a hardstone). 11in. long, 6in. high. This is the largest of its kind in the world.

Portrait Head of Gaius Caesar, son of Marcus Agrippa. 1st century B.C. Made of basalt.

Greek Vases.

About 80 of them altogether. Of special interest is a Panathenaic vase, c. 500 B.C. This corresponded to a gold medal for the Olympic Games and has a design of three running Olympic athletes. The winner received such a vase filled with olive oil as his prize.

Axe-heads.

The oldest section of the collection is the stone axe-heads or Paleoliths which are probably 240,000 years old.

CHRISTIE'S SALEROOM NEWS.

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BRITISH ART COLLECTION MAY TOP \$3,000,000 WHEN SOLD AT CHRISTIE'S.

BIGGEST ART SALE SINCE THE WAR.

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL'S COUSIN'S 600 PICTURES AND ANTIQUITIES.

"The greatest thrill I get from collecting is when I am fortunate enough to rescue a damaged or almost entirely obscured picture which could not possibly have been giving pleasure to anyone, and finding it a thing of beauty when it has emerged from the hands of highly skilled restorers. One feels almost as if one had recalled the artist to life and got him to paint another picture."

The words are those of the late Captain E. G. Spencer-Churchill, cousin of Sir Winston and grandson of the 5th Duke of Marlborough. In June this year Captain Spencer-Churchill died, aged 88. Next May his collection of pictures and antiquities, acknowledged as being one of the greatest in private hands, comes up for sale at Christie's, Britain's oldest firm of fine art auctioneers. It will be the largest single art collection to come onto the market since the war and is expected to fetch between £1,000,000 (\$2,800,000) and £2,000,000 (\$5,600,000).

The collection was housed in Northwick Park, a rambling 57-room mansion, partly Jacobean and partly Victorian, in the heart of Gloucestershire. The local yellow Cotswold stone is weathered by 200 years and the house looks down on 5,000 acres of the best farming country in England.

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There Spencer-Churchill lived alone, for he was a bachelor to the day he died. When he inherited the house and collection in 1912 from his maternal grandmother, the widow of the 3rd Lord Northwick, there was a staff of 28 butlers, maids, laundrygirls and cooks. When he died there was only a staff of three. Not that Spencer-Churchill was poor or anti-social. Hardly a weekend passed when there was not a small house-party, but they would be of people interested in pictures and collecting.

Spencer-Churchill was a collector to the day he died, having started at the age of 13 in Egypt where he had been sent because of ill health. Every week he travelled up to London to inspect the pictures coming up for auction in the salerooms. Over the years he developed a very shrewd eye for a masterpiece hidden by the dirt and varnish of centuries, and it was mainly these that he delighted in buying or "rescuing" for posterity. Not for him collecting for sheer investment.

The original basis of Spencer-Churchill's collection was the 400 pictures, covering the English, German, Dutch, Flemish, French, Spanish and Italian Schools, which he inherited from his maternal grandmother, the widow of the 3rd Lord Northwick. The 3rd Lord Northwick, who had little knowledge and only a passing interest in pictures, had managed to buy these pictures during the series of sales in 1859 which followed the death of his father, a passionate collector.

Among the pictures which the 3rd Lord Northwick almost by accident bought was "The Miracle of Saints Cosmos and Damian" by Fra Angelico. This painting, the only Angelico in private hands, illustrates the legend of the man suffering from cancer of the leg who prayed in the Church of Saints Cosmos and Damian in Rome. He fell asleep and dreamed that he heard the twin doctor saints resolving to amputate his leg and to replace it with that of a Moor who had died recently. On waking he found that he had two healthy legs but one of them was black. This picture, bought by the 2nd Lord Northwick originally for £2.12.6d.

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was bought back in the 1859 sale by the 3rd Lord Northwick for £77. 14s.

Ironically, when Spencer-Churchill inherited the collection he found it stuffed away in a cupboard and apparently thought to be unworthy of exhibition.

Other important pictures include:

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On panel. 13in. x 15½in.

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In addition to these "Northwick" pictures, Spencer-Churchill "rescued" approximately 200 other paintings which are particularly strong in the Netherlandish and English Schools. Typical of these is a flower painting by Nicholas van Verendael.

Apart from the paintings, Spencer-Churchill himself formed probably the largest and most comprehensive private collection of antiquities. This ranges over Greek, Cretan, Etruscan, Egyptian and Chinese bronzes, some of them 2000 BC; marbles and hardstones, Etruscan vases, axe heads, coins, and cylinder seals.

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This is the great collection which occupied all Captain Spencer-Churchill's life and which he loved to show to visitors whatever their age. He was, however, a man of many parts: a brilliant mathematician who kept up with the world of science; a first-class squash player; and a classical pianist.

He saw service in the Grenadier Guards in the Boer War, and during the 1914-18 war he was nearly buried alive. He was later shot through the head and presumed dead. His grave had already been dug but he fortunately recovered consciousness in the mortuary. For his services he was awarded the Military Cross.
