

Weird Tales

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Folks Used to Believe

by ALVIN F.
HARLOW

Some "Old Masters"



THE ignorance of some of the medieval painters, even those now ranked as "masters," is astounding. Tintoretto, in a picture which represents the Israelites gathering manna in the desert, has armed them with guns; while a Dutch painter showed Abraham as about to sacrifice Isaac with a loaded blunderbuss! Brengheli, another Dutch painter, in a picture of the three Magi from the East, drew the Hindoo Wise Man in a full white surplice with boots and spurs and bearing in his hand as a present to the Holy Child a model of a Sixteenth Century Dutch warship. Lanfranc showed medieval churchmen in their robes at the feet of the infant Savior, and Paul Veronese introduced several Benedictine monks among the guests at the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee.

An altar-piece painted by Chella delle Puera, in a church at Capua, representing the Annunciation, shows the Virgin seated in a rich armchair of crimson velvet with gold flowers; a cat and a parrot near her seem very attentive to the whole scene, and on a table are a silver coffee-pot and cup. A later Italian version showed the Virgin on her knees before a crucifix, while thrown

over a chair are a number of elegant gowns; near by is a cat with head turned up toward the angel, apparently listening attentively to the announcement. Another artist in painting the Crucifixion shows a monkish confessor holding a crucifix up before the repentant thief.

The miracle of transubstantiation was represented on an altar-piece at Worms in which the Virgin throws Jesus into the hopper of a mill, while from the other side He issues, changed into little morsels of bread, with which the priests feed the people.

Simon Memmi, a Fourteenth Century artist of Sienna, was the first to show speaking scrolls issuing from the mouths of his figures, a practise which afterward became common. On one of his paintings the devil, almost exhausted from his hot pursuit by a saint, exclaims, despairingly, "Oh! Oh! It is all over with me!"

Paolo Mazzocchi, in painting the "four elements", used fish to represent the sea, moles the earth and a salamander the fire. He wished to represent the air by a chameleon; but as he did not know how to draw that scarce animal, he drew the one whose name sounded most like it—namely, a camel!