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A SWISS EXHIBITION OF ASIATIC ART.

(From the April issue of the "Burlington Magazine.")

An exhibition of Asiatic art of more than ordinary interest was opened in the Kunsthalle at Berne, on February 1st. Arranged under the auspices of the Swiss Society of Friends of the Civilization of Eastern Asia, itself founded as recently as 1939, the exhibition set out to illustrate the Art of China, of Japan and of India, exclusively from material available in public and private collections in Switzerland; and the directing spirits of the enterprise — Dr. E. H. von Tschärner and Dr. M. Huggler — have themselves confessed their surprise at the wealth of resources to be drawn upon in Switzerland, which gradually revealed itself as the work of building up the exhibition proceeded. Many of the most notable items came from the collections of two members of a family, which has by now earned for itself a most distinguished place in the annals of Swiss collecting, the Reinharts of Winterthur; the famous collection of Baron von der Heydt represented another accessible source of contributions, owing to the fact that its owner has for some time been settled in Switzerland; but the remarkable thing is really that the number of lenders should be so large — between public museums and private amateurs there were close upon sixty of them. A very rigorous standard of artistic quality had been upheld; and it is greatly to be hoped that a fully illustrated *catalogue raisonné* will be produced as a permanent record of the exhibition. Much praise is meanwhile due to the excellent hand catalogue, which was available ever since the opening day, and which listed no fewer than 636 items, a selection being reproduced on forty plates.

Not unnaturally, the representation of the art of India and of other countries artistically affiliated to her was numerically the most modest; but quality here decidedly made up for quantity. This section could thus offer an item of such outstanding importance as the life-size Torso, in grey sandstone, of a female deity belonging to Baron von der Heydt, a magnificent example of Khmer art of the tenth century, known to students from having been published both by Dr. Bachhofer and Dr. W. Cohn.

Burmese art was seen to particular advantage in the relief in carved wood, with traces of colouring, of an *Elephant mounted by an Expiring Warrior*. This production of the 15th-16th century, originally in the Monastery of Mawlaik, and now in the possession of the Ethnographical Museum at Basle, combines extraordinary dramatic expressiveness with a singularly developed sense of composition.

The art of China constituted in every way the central and commanding section of the exhibition, and presented within the limited compass available a remarkably convincing and graphic picture of the entire development of Chinese art, commencing with the Neolithic Yang-Shao pottery. Space forbids us to no more than allude in general terms to the excellence of the representation of T'ang and Sung pottery — we reproduce, among a host of exquisite examples of the former, the delightful *Pawing Horse* lent by an anonymous Zurich collector, — and to the remarkably numerous paintings, among which, one, *The Autumnal River Scene* from the von der Heydt collection, ascribed to Ma-Lin, can claim truly distinguished rank. On balance, Ming and later art was perhaps least adequately represented in the exhibition; in par-

ticular, the section of Jade and other hard stones, belonging to this phase of Chinese Art, must be regarded as somewhat insufficient.

It was refreshing to find that the claims of Japan were by no means overlooked by those responsible for the exhibition; and it even included an early piece of considerable rarity, a *Phoenix* in carved and painted wood, claimed to belong to the baldacchino of a Hall in the Temple of Horiuji and to date from the very end (about 620) of the Suiko period. The full emphasis laid upon the representation of the Japanese woodcut was wholly justified by the exceptional excellence of the set of impressions of designs by the chief masters, contributed by the leading Swiss collector within this province of art, M. Boller of Baden (Aargau).

Altogether, an exhibition which, not only as the first of its kind in Switzerland, but on intrinsic grounds as well, must be classed as truly memorable.

THE COST AND VICISSITUDES OF CHARITY.

(The following correspondence appeared in a recent issue of the "Tribune de Genève.")

Aux fins de venir en aide aux Suisses dans le besoin, manquant d'alimentation et domiciliés à l'étranger, le département fédéral de l'économie publique, en dérogation aux interdictions d'exportation, a autorisé les personnes de nationalité suisse à expédier de notre pays, des produits admis à l'exportation, dont le poids, avec l'emballage, ne doit pas dépasser 2 kilos, et ce à raison d'un colis par mois pour chaque requérant.

Après avoir entrepris les démarches nécessaires pour l'expédition des marchandises ci-après :

1/2 kilo de sucre fin	Fr. 0.50
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1/2 kilo de fromage	„ 1.85
1 plaque de chocolat au lait	„ 0,65
Total.....	„ 3.35

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1) Demande à la chancellerie d'un certificat de nationalité suisse du destinataire ...	Fr. 2.—
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3) Port de l'envoi du tout à Berne au service des importations et exportations	„ 0.20
4) Dudit bureau à Berne, coût du remboursement postal pour l'admission à l'exportation	„ 1.35
5) Débours au bureau postal pour l'obtention des feuilles de transport à remplir	„ 0.10
6) Enfin, port du colis de 2 kilos pour Bruxelles	„ 5.10
Total	Fr. 8.95
Marchandises	„ 3.35

Ensemble

Ainsi les frais divers représentent plus du double du prix de la marchandise.

Vraisemblablement nos hautes autorités fédérales ne se sont pas rendu compte d'une telle exagération. Serait-ce trop leur demander que de revenir sur ces tarifs, d'autant plus qu'il s'agit d'œuvres de secours et que la Suisse s'est toujours honorée de ses actes d'humanité?