

## The Unknown Charles Le Brun: Some Newly Attributed Drawings

Jennifer Montagu

WITH SOME three thousand drawings already attributed to Charles Le Brun in the Louvre, the claim that there is anything unknown about his work as a draughtsman may appear almost impudent, and the search for further attributions supererogatory. The only excuse for such an activity would be that these drawings, hitherto resting in the little-studied "anonymous" files, or confusing the outlines of another artist's personality, can illuminate an obscure period or demonstrate a facet of Le Brun's many-sided production inadequately represented among the known works.

Almost the whole of the Louvre's Le Brun collection is composed of those drawings seized from the artist's studio at his death. Inevitably, therefore, it is richest in his later works, and weak in those of his youth, or those drawings which, given to another workman to execute in a different medium, passed out of his keeping.

It is hoped that this selection of six new drawings, all in public collections in Paris, will go some way to redress the balance, and to call attention to some aspects of Le Brun's work which have been unjustly neglected.

THE DRAWING of the Virgin and St. John (Pl. 34) is attributed in the Louvre to Simon Vouet.<sup>1</sup> The emphatic strength of the lines, the well articulated fingers and the expressively lowered eyebrow of St. John break from the facile lyricism of Vouet and suggest an artist who was capable of a more exact draughtsmanship and a surer grasp of three-dimensional form, while missing something of the master's broad rhythms. Almost all the artists who rose to prominence in France in the second half of the seventeenth century, and many more who have disappeared

from the pages of art history, passed through the studio of Vouet, and their early work remains to be identified and extracted from that of their master.<sup>2</sup> In this case, however, we have an engraving by Nicolas Tardieu (Fig. 1), known to me only from an impression in Stockholm, which identifies the artist as Charles Le Brun.

On the strength of this engraving we can link with the Louvre drawing another anonymous sheet in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Pl. 35).<sup>3</sup> It shows exactly the same characteristics, the same degree of dependence on Vouet's teaching, with a sharper angularity in the lines of the drapery, a stricter delineation of the contours, and a greater mastery of expression. With this goes a young artist's uncertainty in the modelling of the torso, and an awkwardness in the relationship of the head to the left shoulder, which is corrected in the engraving.

Le Brun is known to have painted a number of Crucifixions, but one recorded by Nivelon must have corresponded closely to this composition:

La Madeleine est assise aux pieds de la croix dans une attitude de langueur et de tristesse, soutenant sa tête en regardant et écoutant son cher maître parlant pour la dernière fois à sa mère ayant pris le moment que Jesus-Christ la racommanda à St. Jean l'évangéliste. Elle est debout regardant le verbe mourant et un peu appuyée sur une masse de tombeau et soutenue de St. Jean pour la soulager dans ces moments douloureux en portant son intention à ce que J. C. lui dit en si peu de mots. Jean voilà ta mère.<sup>4</sup>

This painting was commissioned by the President of Malta for the Grand Master, who must have been Jean-Paul Lascaris Castelard who held the position from 1636 to 1657. The composition included a standing figure of the patron of the order, St. John the Baptist, and also St. Francis, "dont le grand maître portoit le nom," as Nivelon says, presumably owing to some misunderstanding. It would be hardly surprising if these two saints, whose presence could have had no general significance, were omitted from the engraving, and this would even explain the asym-



Fig. 1 CHARLES LE BRUN.

Crucifixion, engraved N. Tardieu.

(photo: Stockholm, Nationalmuseum).

metry of the composition, where the wall and tree hardly balance the figures on the left. Nivelon must have known the painting well, for when he wrote it was visible in Paris. He describes it as about two feet high (that is, two seventeenth-century French feet, slightly longer than our modern measure) and painted on copper; it was, so he assures us, "peint avec bien de la délicatesse et surtout le Christ qui est d'une grande étude."<sup>8</sup>

The date of this picture, painted in Rome and therefore between 1642 and 1645, a period to which no drawings have hitherto been assigned, fits exactly with our analysis of the style of Plates 34 and 35. This showed Le Brun emerging from the influence of

Vouet and developing a character of his own, substituting for his master's mannerisms a closer examination of nature and a profounder understanding of the expression of the emotions.

In the same volume of anonymous drawings in the Bibliothèque Nationale is a drawing of the Angel of the Annunciation (Pl. 36).<sup>9</sup> This is a study for a painting now known only through Rousselet's engravings of the busts of the Virgin and the Angel (Figs. 2 and 3). According to Nivelon, the altarpiece was made on the orders of the Chancellor, Pierre Séguier, for the Petits Pères de Nazareth, and he remarks particularly on the iconography: the Virgin does not kneel, but stands at a *prie-Dieu*, her head inclined, eyes lowered, and hands crossed on her breast. Le Brun omits the anachronistic prayer-book and the symbolic lily; the angel, dressed in a light white drapery, inclines gently and points with his right hand to Heaven.<sup>10</sup>

Nivelon places this picture before Le Brun's departure for Rome, but the accounts of the monastery suggest otherwise. It was on November 4, 1646, that Séguier gave 3,000 livres "pour employer a la contre-table et tableau de l'église dud. couvent," and already sieur Parent had undertaken to make the "contre-table."<sup>11</sup> The distribution of this sum is recorded on page 36:

A Monsieur Parent pour la menuiserie & sculpture de lad <sup>e</sup> contretable & tabernacle	1800 <sup>ll</sup>
Au mesme sur & tant moins des autres ouvrages de menuiserie quil a faite pour l'église	600 <sup>ll</sup>
A Monsieur Nicolas peintre sur & tant moins des deuis & peintures quil a faites pour led <sup>e</sup> tabernacle & corniche de tableau	350 <sup>ll</sup>
A Mons <sup>r</sup> Le Brun peintre sur & tant moins de ce qui luy est deu tant pour le tableau du grand autel qu'autres tableaux quil a faits en la petite chapelle de Monseigneur le chancelier	300 <sup>ll</sup>

Both the small sum and the wording of this payment indicate that it was not the full price for the work, yet this would not justify the assumption that the picture had been painted before Le Brun left for



ECCE ANGELA DOMINI

Fig. 2 CHARLES LE BRUN.  
Virgin, engraved G. Rousselet.  
(photo: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale).

Rome. Twice during the intervening period he had written to his patron, Séguier, asking for money,<sup>9</sup> without ever suggesting that he was still owed anything for work already completed.

The drawing, which is not among Le Brun's most pleasing productions, is markedly different from Plates 34 and 35, just as it is from the few surviving drawings of his pre-Roman period. In its soft hatching and the careful modulation of the shading it has close affinities with a study such as that in the Louvre for Aegeas, for the *Martyrdom of St. Andrew* (Pl. 37)<sup>10</sup> presented as the "Mai" for Notre Dame in the following year, 1647.

An outstanding example of French seventeenth century goldsmith's design, now in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (Pl. 38),<sup>11</sup> was sold from the Destailleur collection under the improbable name of Ballin (to whom it is still attributed on the label), but it has



AVE GRATIA PLENA

Fig. 3 CHARLES LE BRUN. Angel of the  
Annunciation, engraved G. Rousselet.  
(photo: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale).

been published more than once as by Thibault Poissant.<sup>12</sup> Both attributions derive from the inscriptions. These are torn, but what remains can be read as follows:

Recto: ... tur par Thibault Poissan / ... Philippe  
& Girard debonnaire / ... ant entre eux  
pour raison / ... roit devant les no<sup>rs</sup> /  
... nez ce jourd'huy vingt trois / ... quante  
quatre / ... ant / de Bonnaire / Pallu.

Verso: Paraphé ne varietur par M<sup>me</sup> Ad. . . . / par  
Philippe et Girard Debonnaire mais . . . /  
marché par acte passé entre eux ce jour  
de . . . / cinquante quatre par devant les  
notaires . . . / possession de Pallu l'un  
diceux . . . / Gaultier.<sup>13</sup>

The brothers Debonnaire were goldsmiths of some standing; Thibaut Poissant, one of the sculptors who was to work under Le Brun at Vaux-le-Vicomte, is quite unknown as a draughtsman,<sup>14</sup> and we may question whether he would have had the skill to produce such a drawing, or whether he would have been commissioned to design such an elaborate and costly work. Far more plausible is the hypothesis that he, rather than the two goldsmiths, modelled the four-foot figures of the angels. The drawing seems to be the work of two hands, one for the ornamentation, including the repetitive rows of cherubs' heads and the terminal foliage above, and a more artistic hand responsible for the angels, the beasts of the Evangelists, and the relief (Pl. 39). The style of this hand suggests the authorship of Charles Le Brun; the use of gray wash is typical of his work, and the disjointed angularity of the Moses scene is to be met in other pen drawings by Le Brun, such as those for Vaux-le-Vicomte.

As usual, the invaluable Nivelon confirms this assumption. On pages 72 to 73 occurs the description of a tabernacle designed by Le Brun for the Carmelites of the Faubourg St. Jacques. The text is difficult to read and not by any means clear, but certain features would seem to be conclusive. He opens with the statement: "Le tabernacle de cette Eglise des Carmélites est du dessein et de la conduite de M. Le Brun; riche non seulement par la matière étant d'argent, mais par sa composition que je dirai nouvelle, n'ayant point entendu parler qu'il y en ait de cette forme, étant construit sur l'idée de l'arche d'alliance." Like the drawing, this tabernacle was rectangular and stood on a plinth. The angles were decorated with consoles, arranged so that two were seen frontally and two in profile, and their scrolls rested on the four beasts of the Evangelists, two of whose six wings grasped the scrolls while the other four served as supports. The brackets of the frieze were carried on cherubs' heads, and the rising lid above was ornamented with festoons and bas-reliefs. "Sur les deux angles de cette construction mystérieuse sont placés deux chérubins soutenant une table d'argent de la manière qu'il est écrit, qui servoit à couvrir les tables de la loi, la gomor de manne, la verge de

Moyse et leurs ailles relevées en haut formant un grand cercle." In the middle of this "arche nouvelle" was "le sujet de la manne qui tomba dans le désert pour sustenter les enfants d'Israël, qui étoit le pain figuratif de la véritable manne de la personne de Jesus Christ."

There were some minor differences: above the cornice, instead of the alternate pineapples and pomegranates, Nivelon describes "petits rouleaux à jour accouplés supportant entre deux une pomme de pin ce qui fait un couronnement très délicat et agréable." He states that "le milieu est une niche qui est l'ouverture du tabernacle" which was ornamented with two sorts of pilaster, but exactly how this was to be fitted in is no clearer in the description than in the drawing. Resting on the table and covered by the angels' wings was a monstrance in the form of a sun, richly decorated with precious stones and silver cherubs' heads in half relief, also designed by Le Brun. That this does not occur in the drawing is explained by the fact that it was not a fixed part of the structure but, as Piganiol de la Force tells us, was displayed only once or twice a year.<sup>15</sup>

This silver tabernacle figures in the guide-books of Germain Brice, Saugrain, and Dézallier d'Argenville,<sup>16</sup> but without attribution. Nor is any attribution made in the Chronicle of the Carmelites, but it is there that we learn that it was presented by M. Le Camus.<sup>17</sup> This benefactor of the convent<sup>18</sup> was also a loyal patron of Le Brun, from whom he commissioned the *Feast in the House of Simon*, *Christ in the Desert Served by Angels*, *St. Genevieve*, and the *Repentant Magdalene*, as well as the designs for seven paintings decorating the "partour" of the chapel of the Magdalene.

Typical of Le Brun's mentality is this reconstruction of the Ark of Moses, the shrine for the most precious relics of the Jewish temple and hence a fitting receptacle for the body of Christ. The *Fall of the Manna* as a prototype for the Eucharist is common enough in Christian typology, but this representation of the scene (Pl. 39) has an additional interest for the student of Le Brun, since it shows notable similarities with Le Brun's painting of *Moses Striking the Rock*, now in the Louvre,<sup>19</sup> and probably painted some five

NOTES

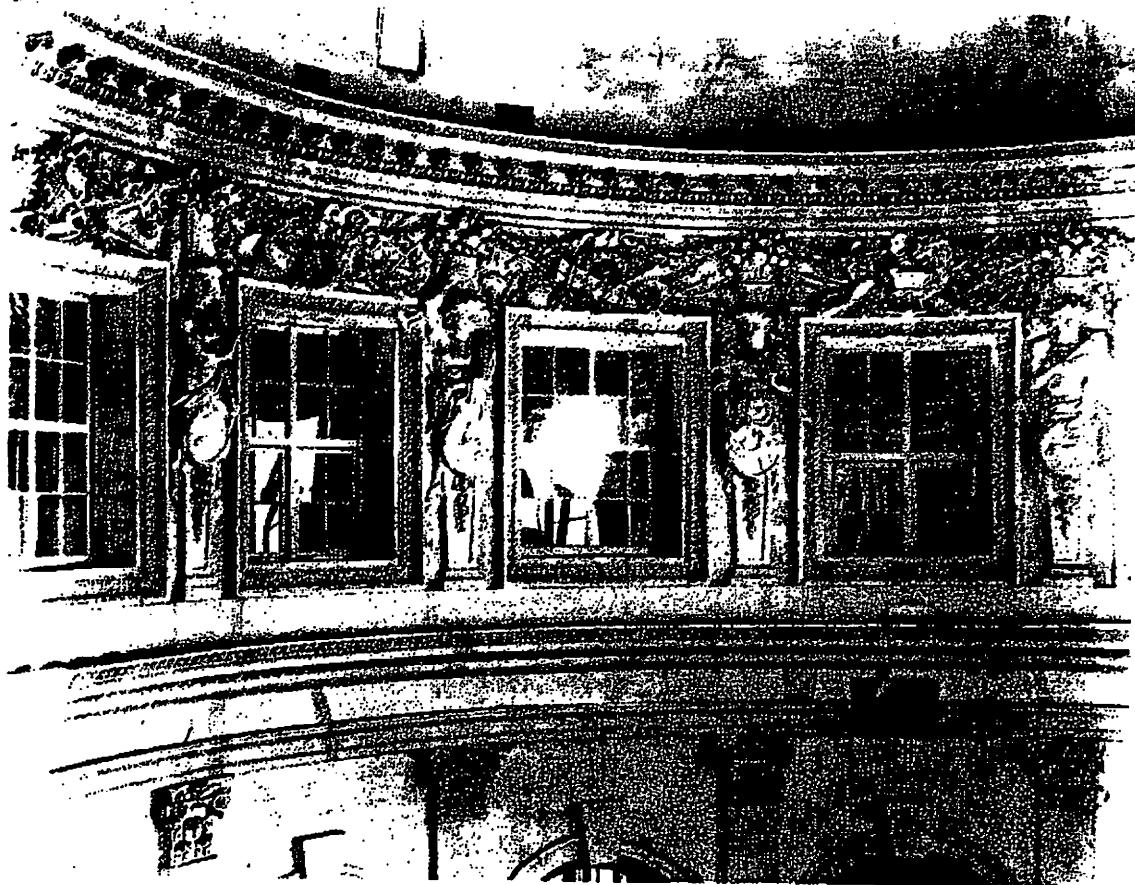
or six years earlier. In particular, the figure of Moses is almost identical, reminding us of the study for the Louvre painting, G. M. 8008 recto (Pl. 40)<sup>20</sup> and, to underline the typological significance, of a drawing for the Christ in a thesis engraving of 1653, G. M. 6824 (Pl. 41).<sup>21</sup>

There is no mention of the tabernacle in the inventory of the convent at the time of the revolution.<sup>22</sup> A work of this size which had cost Le Camus 43,510 *livres* for "l'orfèvrerie seule," and the value of which in the mid-eighteenth century was believed to have doubled, had very probably been melted down in the preceding years of trouble.

When so little goldsmiths' work of the period survives, and no documents of similar precision record Le Brun's work on the silver furnishings of Versailles, this drawing, planned entirely by Le Brun and at least in part from his own hand, remains a unique and invaluable example of an art to which he devoted no small share of his time, and in which he won a large measure of his fame.

During the period of his work at Vaux-le-Vicomte, Le Brun sometimes employed the unusual technique of red chalk and gray wash. The rich effect thus produced is lost in a black and white reproduction such as Plate 42a. This drawing, together with Plate 42b

Fig. 4 Vaux-le-Vicomte. Detail of the stucco decoration in the salon.



on the same page of the album of anonymous decorative drawings in the Bibliothèque Nationale,<sup>23</sup> was made by Le Brun for the stuccos around the oval salon at Vaux (Fig. 4), and must therefore date from about 1660.

According to Nivelon,<sup>24</sup> the groups over the four entrances represent the four elements; this seems hardly likely as three of them, a horse, a salamander and a lion, are the traditional symbols of Europe, America and Africa, while the fourth, a rhinoceros attacking a serpent (Pl. 42b), does not fit into any known system of symbolism, but, even though unique, would not be impossible as Asia. The other twelve sections are all connected with the gods of Olympus, and were of course related to the painting of Apollo with the gods and Seasons which was to have filled the dome. Plate 42a, with its doves, bow and quiver, represents the attributes of Venus.

The development of Le Brun's technique between the early Crucifixion drawings and these masterly sketches is indeed remarkable. The brilliance of his invention, the rapid facility of his chalk lines and the sureness with which he places the touches of wash speak of an artist full of justifiable confidence, creating a style which was completely his own. The lightness and almost rococo grace of Plate 42a was not to last. From Foucquet's service he passed to that of the king; burdened with work, supervising a vast body of workmen at Versailles and the Gobelins, he developed that heavier and often monotonous manner of drawing which has for too long dominated our conception of "Le Brun."

1. Louvre, Inv. 33318. Red chalk heightened with white, 393 x 244 mm. Mlle Roseline Bacou tells me that she and Mr. Jacob Bean had already discarded this attribution.
2. With M. Jacques Thuillier, I hope shortly to publish a study of the early work of Charles Le Brun.
3. Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes, B6a rés. Black chalk heightened with white and touched with red on the loin cloth, 425 x 275 mm. The drawing is somewhat worn.
4. Claude Nivelon, *Vie de Charles Le Brun & description détaillée de ses ouvrages*, Paris, Bibliothèque

Nationale, Ms. fonds fr. no. 12987, p. 24. I have quoted the text as it appears in this copy of the fullest and most reliable life of Le Brun, written by one of his pupils and assistants. I have made no attempt to verify his account of the history of the painting. It is also mentioned by Guillet de Saint-Georges (*Mémoires inédits*, ed. Dussieux etc., Paris, 1854, I, p. 7).

5. The Crucifixion from the *Stations of the Cross* in Notre-Dame-des-Tables at Montpellier shows an echo of this picture: the Virgin and St. John are identical, and the Christ lacks only the strangely billowing fold of his drapery; the Magdalene is quite different, and there is a third figure walking away in the background. It reverses the engraving, thus agreeing in direction with the original painting. The execution is crude and uninteresting.
6. Formerly in the Bibliothèque Ste. Geneviève. Red chalk heightened with white, ca. 420 x 280 mm.
7. Nivelon, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
8. Archives Nationales, S. 4335, no. 5, p. 3. The same transaction is referred to on p. 34v. This manuscript records payments from July, 1640, onwards.
9. H. Jouin, *Charles Le Brun et les arts sous Louis XIV*, Paris, 1889, letter IV from Rome, Dec. 12, 1644, and letter VI from Lyons, Jan. 18, 1646.
10. J. Guiffrey and P. Marcel, *Inventaire général des dessins du Musée du Louvre et du Musée de Versailles*, Paris, 1913 [henceforth referred to as "G. M."], VIII, no. 6991. Red chalk heightened with white, 422 x 280 mm. A further drawing in the Louvre, G. M. 7645, is for the drapery of the soldier in the foreground as he appears in the small version at Althorp and in the engraving by Picart, but not in the painting at Notre-Dame (on the history of this large painting, see B. de Montgolfier, "Charles Le Brun et les confréries parisiennes," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, LV, 1960, especially pp. 335-36, and fig. 3, p. 330). The "Mal" represents not the Crucifixion (as do the Althorp version and the engraving) but the preparations for the Flagellation, a subject of some significance since Domenichino's treatment of the scene in S. Andrea della Valle was a standard butt of French academic criticism (see Félibien, *Conférences de l'Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture*, published in *Entretiens*, ed. of Trevoux, 1725, v, introduction, and H. Testelin, *Sentimens des plus habiles peintres*, Paris, 1696, p. 20).

## NOTES

11. AD No. 8460. Brown ink and gray wash, 319 x 287 mm.
12. See, for example, A. C., *Chronique des arts*, 1896, pp. 220-221, and Lehnert etc., *Illustrierte Geschichte des Kunstgewerbes*, Berlin, n. d., II, pp. 101-102.
13. "Pallu" is read by the author of the notice in the *Chronique des arts* as "Ballu," and is presumably the source of the attribution to Ballin. In fact, the signature is identical with that of Pallu who, with Mousnier, signed the inventory of the reliquaries etc. of Anne d'Autriche on Sept. 2, 1666, and the Contract of Foundation of Sept. 2, 1666 (Archives Nationales, L. 1037, no. 2).
14. He worked also as an architect. This tabernacle is mentioned neither by Guillet de Saint-Georges, *op. cit.*, pp. 319-29) nor by H. Macqueron ("Thibaut Poissant," *Bulletin de la Société d'Emulation d'Abbeville*, 1893).
15. Piganiol de la Force, *Description historique de la ville de Paris*, Paris, ed. of 1765, VI, p. 171. That Nivelon should emphasize that it also was designed by Le Brun is a further confirmation that it was a separate feature; his statement that it was three feet high would fit exactly with the scale on the drawing. At the Destailleur sale (Paris, Damascène Morgand, May 19, 1896, and four days following, no. 232) the drawing was described as "projet de reliquaire," but A. C. in the *Chronique des arts* recognised it as the base of a monstrance.
16. Germain Brice, *Description nouvelle de ce qu'il y a de plus remarquable dans la ville de Paris*, Paris, 1684, II, p. 82; Saugrain, *Les Curiositez de Paris*, Paris, 1716, p. 215; Désallier d'Argenville, *Voyage pittoresque de Paris*, 2nd ed., Paris, 1752, p. 265. Piganiol describes the relief on the tabernacle as representing the *Annunciation*, which was also the subject of the relief above the altar; it is therefore probable that he confused his notes.
17. See the publication *Chronique de l'ordre des Carmélites de la réforme de Sainte-Thérèse*, Troyes, 1846, I, p. 284. The nuns now established at Clamart most generously allowed me to consult the manuscript, but I found nothing further about the tabernacle.
18. When the chronicle was written in the second half of the eighteenth century, nothing was known of the life of Edouard Le Camus, beyond the fact that, a widower, he had entered the religious life and was attached to the convent where his daughter was a nun; he was buried in the chapel of the Magdalene which he had founded. A manuscript biography composed by M. de Varillas (Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal, Ms. 676, Recueil Le Camus VI, ff. 103-105) throws light on his particular devotion to this saint. In his earlier days as a lawyer, "la passion pour les dames" had occupied his hours of leisure, and the mother of his children had been not a wife but an unrepentant follower of the Magdalene, whom he had pensioned off on his conversion. It had been as "une espece de réparation publique du mauvais exemple qu'il avoit donné et du scandal qu'il avoit causé dans Paris" that he went each day to Mass at Notre-Dame on leaving the Palais de Justice, and finally abandoned the charge of *procureur général* in which he had won great renown, to devote himself to religion and the cult of this patron of the penitent.
19. Given to the Louvre by Mme Pearson in 1947. Attempts to attribute this painting to Poussin (T. Bertin-Mourat, "Moïse frappant le rocher," *Bulletin de la Société Poussin*, Paris, 1947, pp. 56-65) or to Jouvenet (exhibition "Poussin et son temps," Rouen, 1961, no. 44) ignore the wholly Le Brunnesque character of the color, draughtsmanship, and composition. Indeed there is nothing "mystérieux" about the picture, which is recorded not merely by Désallier d'Argenville, but also by Nivelon (*op. cit.*, p. 40) with particular reference to "le charitable secours que les plus vigoureux rendent aux languissants et affaiblis selon le rang du sang, les uns portant de l'eau à des vieillards d'autres à des femmes âgées tels que peuvent être des pères et mères aggrupées avec des enfants de différents âges." To ignore the complex links between this painting and the *Sacrifice of Manoah* and *Sacrifice of Elijah* (both engraved by Desplaces from the collection of Fagon), and to dismiss Desplaces' engraving of a group from it, inscribed C. le Brun pinxit, may seem wilful; to pass over in silence the five drawings (G. M. 8091, 8123, 6966, 8008 and 8008v) all unquestionably for this painting, and fully consistent with Le Brun's style shortly after his return from Rome, is surely perverse.
20. Louvre, Inv. 28480. Red chalk, 300 x 440 mm.
21. Louvre, Inv. 29087. Red chalk heightened with white, the right hand re-studied in black chalk, 442 x 305 mm. A print of the thesis engraving is in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes.

AA6 Le Brun; it was engraved by Gabriel Le Brun and published by A. Boudan on behalf of Armand de Chaulnes, Charles-Armand de Maupas, François de la Mothe Montberard and Jean-Baptiste de Velle. Another drawing closely linked with this plate and even nearer to the Moses of the tabernacle is in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes, B6a rés. Gabriel Le Brun re-used G. M. 6814 for *St. Thomas* in the series of *Apostles* he engraved after his brother.

22. Archives Nationales, S. 4655, no. 1.
23. Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes, B2a rés. f. 43: *The Attributes of Venus and Cupid*, red chalk and gray wash, 140 x 382 mm. (Pl. 42a); *Symbol of Asia*, red chalk, 150 x 345 mm. (Pl. 42b). As both drawings have been cut irregularly, these measurements are approximate.
24. Nivelon, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

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late seventeenth century or by one or two others in the eighteenth.

The discovery of a second even more circumstantial drawing by Stefano of the Egyptian scene, a *View of Cairo, with Roda Island, and the Pyramids in the Distance* (Pl. 43), in the large collection of his drawings in Florence,<sup>2</sup> seems to me to make it almost certain that such a visit did take place. The inscriptions, in Stefano's own hand, are of considerable interest. At the top, he indicates the distance, "one Italian mile," between the south end of Roda Island and the town of Gizeh; below, to the right, he explains some sort of water festival on the river, where he has sketched (in black chalk only) "two towers mounted on firework-barges, which are called male and female;" and the inscription below center, connected with a dotted line to the archway in the middle of the island building, may be roughly translated: "Inside here is the column, from which it can be ascertained whether the crops are to be good or not." This certainly refers to the famous Nilometer, described by Wilkinson<sup>3</sup> as "a square well or chamber in the center of which is a graduated pillar, for the purpose of ascertaining the daily rise of the Nile."<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to explain these inscriptions as anything but traveler's notes, made on the spot.

Mr. R. W. Hamilton, Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, has been kind enough to examine the photograph, and provide me with some notes on the topography and history involved, which I can do no better than quote, with his permission, since I am almost totally ignorant of those subjects myself. "This is a view," he says, "from the east bank of the Nile looking west across the river past the southern extremity of the Roda Island. The buildings must be those which enclosed the Nilometer — including the large mosque, which occupied the southwestern corner of the island. That mosque, first built by the Caliph al Mustansir Billah in 1092 A.D., was demolished and rebuilt on a larger scale by the Mamluk Sultan al Malik al Mu'ayyad in 1420, so it was presumably that building which Stefano della Bella drew, with the four-tiered minaret at the S.W. corner. The archway annotated *qui dentro è la colonna* ... etc. must be the inlet which allowed the Nile to

## A View of Cairo by Stefano della Bella

J. Byam Shaw

IN THE exhibition *Drawings by Old Masters* in the Diploma Gallery of the Royal Academy, London, in 1953, appeared a remarkable view of the Great Pyramids and the Sphinx by Stefano della Bella, from the Royal Library at Windsor Castle. Sir Karl Parker, who wrote the catalogue entry (no. 147), drew attention to the fact that this is far in advance of any views of the scene which are to be found in earlier or contemporary illustrations. Sir Anthony Blunt in his subsequent catalogue of the drawings by Stefano at Windsor<sup>1</sup> acknowledged the importance of the drawing, but considered it unlikely that Stefano saw the Pyramids with his own eyes: the rendering of the Sphinx does not correspond with near-contemporary descriptions of its appearance at the time; and there is no reference to an Egyptian visit in the early biographical notices of the artist, by Baldinucci in the

Plate 42a

CHARLES LE BRUN.  
The Attributes of Venus  
and Cupid.  
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale.



Plate 42b

CHARLES LE BRUN. Symbol of Asia.  
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale.

