

MEMORABILIA MCMXIX.

Our President, Lord Rosebery, has lately made a valuable gift to the nation in presenting to the Print Room of the British Museum a book of highly-finished Italian drawings, of about 1460, which has long been preserved at Mentmore. These drawings, which are not absolutely identified, have been attributed to Mantegna, but differ from his authenticated work while greatly showing his influence. It seems not unlikely that this greater accessibility to students may lead to their identification. The book consists of 30 leaves of vellum, of which 28 are filled with drawings on both sides. Lord Rosebery has also given a complete little sketch-book of studies by Nicolas Berghem.

The year was, amongst other things, a great year of sales. So many large estates in England were sold that it was, not inaptly, said that England was "changing hands." In this county sales of moveables were more remarkable than those of real estate. Of these, the Britwell Court Library takes a first place. It is described by Messrs. Sotheby as "108 exceedingly choice, rare and valuable books from the renowned library at Britwell Court, the property of Mr. C. R. Christie Miller." No less a sum than £110,356 was realised—a record for one day's sale of books. *The Times* (Dec. 17, 1919) reported that Mr. G. D. Smith (the American agent, whose death has since been announced) bought to the amount of £84,705. * "Most of the books having been bought during the second and third quarters of the last century, *The Times* estimates the profit on them at about 90 per cent. on their cost."

* It is supposed that a considerable proportion of his purchases will find a permanent home in Mr. H. E. Huntingdon's library, the finest in the world in private hands.

The Times continues: "Until recent years the Britwell Court Library was guarded with the strictest secrecy, and even serious scholars were not allowed access. The reason for this may now be given. Lot 99, a fine copy of the first edition of Spencer's *Faerie Queene*, 1590—'96, was stolen from the shelves by a lady who with a friend visited the great uncle of the present Mr. Christie Miller, and had tea with him. No trace could be found of the book, which was returned many years later by a priest."

The highest price realised for a single volume was reached by one containing Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, 1599, the only copy known, bound up with the "*Passionate Pilgrim and Sonnets*, 1599," of which only two other copies are known, and Davies and Marlow's *Epigrammes and Elegies*, 1598. This was started by Mr. G. D. Smith at £2,000, and followed by Mr. Dring (of Quaritch's) at £5,000, and eventually fell to Mr. Smith at £15,100, the highest price ever paid for a book at auction, either printed or MS. The first edition of Gray's "*Elegy*," 1751, brought £750.

Some fine decorative furniture was sold in November at Great Brickhill Manor House by Messrs. Wigley and Sons, of Winslow, who issued a good illustrated catalogue. This collection included some pieces from Stowe House which Sir Everard P. Duncombe tells me were bought at the great sale at Stowe by his great-grandfather. Amongst them are some decorative pieces designed by William Kent, architect and *protégé* of the Earl of Burlington, about which I hope to have more to say in our next issue.

W. N.