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C NOTES
& MONOGRAPHS



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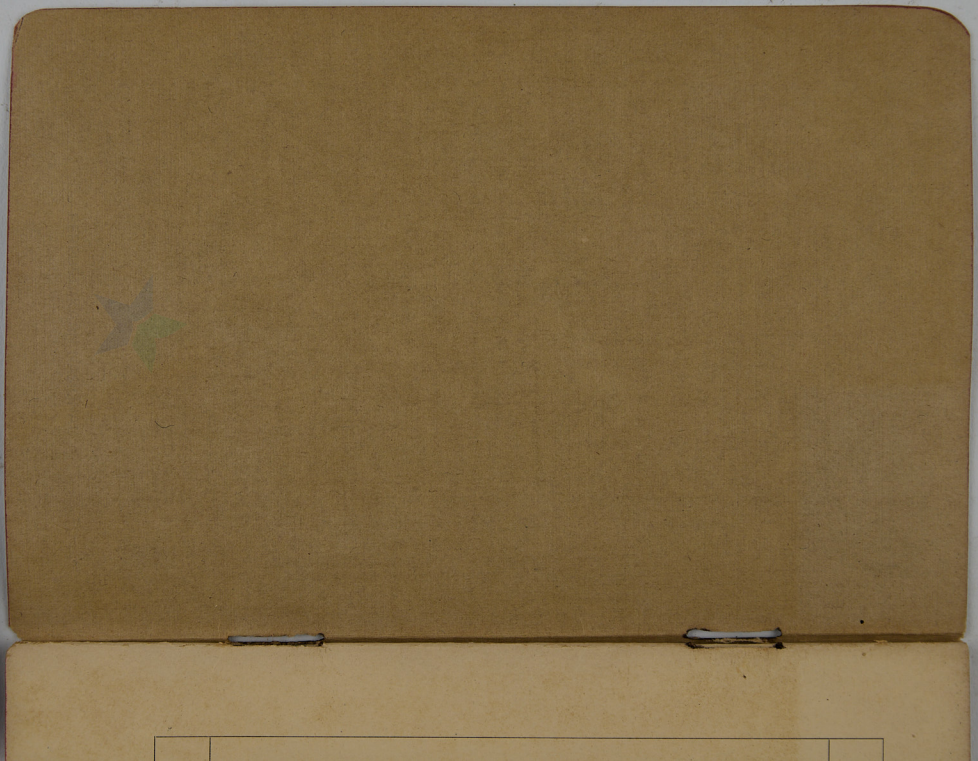
LUIS DE MORALES



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HISPANIC
NOTES & MONOGRAPHS

ESSAYS, STUDIES, AND BRIEF
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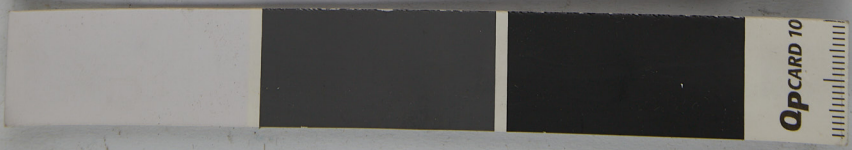


QPCARD 10





HOLY FAMILY
Madrid. Count of Albiz

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MORALES

IN

THE COLLECTION OF
THE HISPANIC SOCIETY
OF AMERICA

THE HISPANIC SOCIETY
OF AMERICA
NEW YORK
1925

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QP CARD 10

BIOGRAPHICAL PREFACE

Luis de Morales, called the Divine, was probably born at Badajoz, in that distant region of Extremadura which was also the birthplace of Francisco de Zurbarán. Although it is possible that his birth occurred in 1517 no documents have been discovered to prove it. Little is known of his family save that in 1540 he married Doña Leonor de Chaves, by whom he had two sons, Cristóbal and José. The elder son, Cristóbal, became an artist. Equally without documentation are the works of Morales. He seems rarely to have dated them. *The Virgin with the Little Bird* (Madrid. Collection of Doña María Moret) is perhaps the only exception as it bears the date 1546. According to some writers, Ceán Bermúdez among them, it was painted for the parish church of the *Concepción* at

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Badajoz, as were also two other works which are now in the Moret Collection: *Christ with the Cross* and *Saint Joachim and Saint Anna*. That in the following year Morales contracted to do some work at Cáceres but that it was never completed is vouched for by Señor Tormo. The artist also executed some *retablos* in Alcántara (Cáceres) *circa* 1551, and in 1554 he did various works for the Cathedral at Badajoz. He worked on a *retablo* at Arroyo del Puerco (Cáceres) from 1565 to 1570 and also completed four pictures for the *retablo mayor* of the Church of *San Martín* in Plasencia. It is probable that the triptych in the *Colegio del Patriarca*, Valencia, can be dated before 1568. The only record in the next year is one showing that Morales appraised some windows in Plasencia. Ceán Bermúdez states that there is an entry in the archives of the Cathedral at Badajoz to the effect that Morales sold some vineyards which he possessed near Mérida for one hundred *ducados* in the year 1575. The following account of an inter-

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Photograph D. Anderson, Rome

ECCE HOMO
Madrid. Academy of San Fernando

view which is supposed to have taken place between Philip the Second and the painter is more or less legendary. The rather shabby garb of the artist attracted the attention of His Most Catholic Majesty, who with great condescension remarked, "You are very old, Morales." "Yes, Sire, and very poor," Morales is said to have replied. Whereupon the King at once ordered that a pension of three hundred *ducados* should be paid to the old man (1). The exact date of his death is unknown though it is generally stated that he died in 1586. The place of his burial remains a mystery. Of special interest in the works of Morales are *The Crucifixion*, *The Resurrection* (Barcelona. Señores Grasses Hernández), and *The Presentation in the Temple* (Madrid. *Museo del Prado*), because they are among the few paintings in which the artist attempted full-length figures. A portrait by Morales in the *Museo del Prado* has been thought to represent Saint Ignatius of Loyola though it is more probably Juan de Villegas. Many times did Morales

ECCE HOMO
Madrid. Academy of San Fernando
Photograph D. Anderson, Rome

PERPUSTAKAAN NASIONAL

repeat his favourite subjects, Ecce Homo, Pietà, and Christ at the Column. His realistic depiction of suffering, in which every drop of blood and every piercing thorn are detailed must have endeared him to a people living during the reign of Philip the Second. The work of his imitators verges on the grotesque; they over-accentuated the miniaturelike treatment which they believed characteristic of the master but failed to rise to the sublimity of feeling which revealed in the works of Morales his very real piety and which elevated his types to something above the ordinary. A Pietà in the Episcopal Palace, Madrid, and another in the collection of Don Ramón de la Sota, Bilbao, are fine examples of Morales's authentic works. Though they are indeed Flemish in technique they are Spanish in sentiment, as are also the *Christ at the Column*, and two Ecce Homos, one in the Academy of *San Fernando*, Madrid, and one in The Hispanic Society of America. It is doubtful if the painting in the *Musée du Louvre*, Paris, described as

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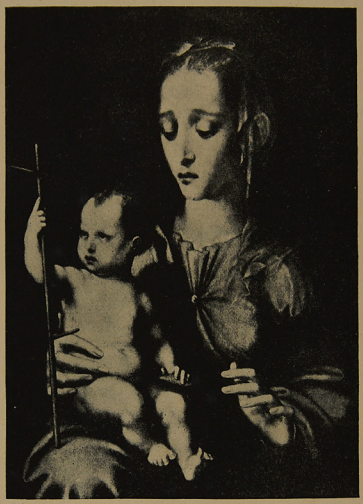
PLATE II



Photograph Franz Hanfstaengl, Munich

VIRGIN AND CHILD

Petrograd. The Hermitage

PERPUSTAKAAN NASIONAL

Christ with the Cross by Morales, can be attributed to that master. Of greater appeal are the representations of the Holy Family and the Virgin with the Child, which show that Morales felt the influence of Italy no less than did his fellow artists, Luis de Vargas, Pedro de Campaña, and Juan Fernández de Navarrete. The Virgins are young and exquisitely fair; the Child sleeps in their arms with charming naturalness. A Leonardesque landscape background is sometimes introduced, with jagged, rocky hills rising from grassy plains. Of this type are two Holy Families, one in the possession of the Count of Albiz, Madrid, and one in The Hispanic Society of America. Three paintings of the Virgin and Child in the *Museo del Prado* and one in the National Gallery, London, prove that Morales did not devote his whole time to depicting the rigidity of death and the human countenance transfixed with grief. Beruete y Moret writes that Morales, ". . . a painter of individuality, isolated in a minor province, and having few re-

lations with the Court, created with his brush an austere art, a little dry and stiff, ascetic in its inspiration and scarcely suggestive at first sight, but striking in its individuality, and reflecting that spirit of Spanish theology and mysticism which was to dawn somewhat later" (2).

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PLATE III



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HOLY FAMILY

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I

HOLY FAMILY

In this painting the Virgin wears a red tunic and a blue mantle which covers her head. Her brown hair falls in a plait to her waist. She holds in her arms the sleeping Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes. To the left is Saint Joseph in a brown garment, his right hand resting upon a staff. His hair and beard are brown. To the right is a female figure, possibly the Zelemi of Apocryphal legend, in a white wimple. Her eyes are brown and her hair is brown with reddish tints. She holds in her hands a basket of eggs. A rift in the clouds reveals an angel's head in a shaft of light which descends towards the group. In the background the dark clouds seem to lift, leaving visible green-blue hills and a white light above the horizon. Near the minute

HISPANIC NOTES

figures of the shepherds watching their sheep is a tower, resembling in outline the *Torre del Oro* in Sevilla, with the lettering in red: *Turris ader.* In the upper right-hand corner is a diagram of the horoscope of Christ in red, brown, yellow, and blue, with an inscription in Latin. The Christ Child and the Saint Joseph in this painting resemble closely the same figures in the *Holy Family* by Morales in the collection of the Count of Albiz, Madrid.

Oil on wood. Height 91 cm.—Width 67 cm.

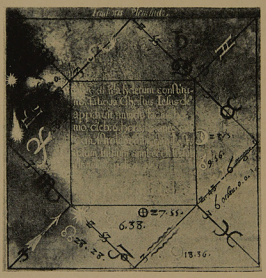

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PLATE IV



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ECCE HOMO

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II

ECCE HOMO

The Christ, who is disrobed, has a brown garment thrown over His right arm and in His hand a slender rod. His left wrist is bound with a brown rope. His hair and beard are reddish brown, contrasting with the ivory pallor of His skin. A man at the right, pointing towards Him, has brown eyes and a light brown beard. He wears a pink hat, a pink tunic with narrow white ruffs at the wrist, and a green mantle. He carries in his left hand a rod. The background is dark. It is of interest to compare this painting with the *Ecce Homo* in the Academy of *San Fernando,* Madrid.

The picture is badly cracked. Oil on wood. Height 75 cm.—Width 57 cm. Formerly in the collection of Thomas Baring, Esquire, Eng-

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land. Reproduced in Blaikie Murdoch, W. G. *The Hispanic Museum, New York* in *The Connoisseur*. September 1917. p. 23.

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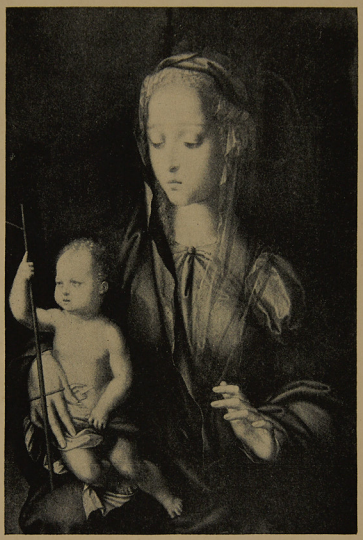
PLATE V



A80

VIRGIN AND CHILD

PERPUSTAKAAN NASIONAL

III

VIRGIN AND CHILD

The Virgin wears a mulberry coloured tunic and a blue-green mantle, which falls from her head to her knees. Covering her golden brown hair beneath the mantle is a transparent white veil. Her dark eyes are lowered. With her right hand she holds a white drapery about the Child, who has gray eyes and yellow curls. In His right hand is a cross formed of reeds and in His left a distaff. The background is dark. The Hermitage, Petrograd, possesses a Virgin and Child which has a close analogy with this painting.

Oil on wood. Height 72.5 cm.—Width 48.5 cm. Reproduced in Sedelmeyer Gallery, Paris. *Illustrated catalogue of the eleventh series of 100 paintings by old masters.* Paris, 1911. p. [67].

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(1) Ceán Bermúdez, Juan Agustín. *Diccionario.* Madrid, 1800. v. 3, p. 186-187.

(2) Beruete y Moret, Aureliano de. *Spanish painting.* London, New York, [etc.] 1921. p. 7.

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