



The Hastings Hours: The Book of Hours of William, Lord Hastings

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From the Preface of this beautiful 159 page book which is a 15th century Flemish Book of Hours: "When Duke Charles 'the Bold' of Burgundy married Margaret of York, the sister of King Edward IV of England, in 1468, the splendour of the festivities, which continued for nine days, taxed even the powers of the heralds to describe; and Englishmen declared that the magnificence of the Burgundian court was paralleled only by that of King Arthur. The Flemish painter Hugo van der Goes was employed on the decorations for the wedding; one of those present was a Welsh knight, Sir John Donne, for whom Hans Memline painted the Donne Triptych, now in the National Gallery, London. Sir John was the brother-in-law of William, Lord Hastings, the chamberlain and friend of Edward IV, for whom apparently, was made in Flanders - the beautiful manuscript book of devotions which is reproduced in the present publication. Fine hand-made books, ornamented with miniatures and decorative initials and borders, were about to disappear as a major form of art, but before they did so, they enjoyed a glorious coda in the work of the Flemish makers of books in Bruges and Ghent. It is on the pages of their products that the middle ages seem most accessible to us, and the illuminated manuscript in general has become for us the characteristic artifact of the whole medieval period. The Hastings Hours has been little studied or reproduced, but knowledge of it is vital for appreciation of the Ghent-Bruges school of Flemish manuscript illumination, and beyond that of early Netherlandish painting in general. As a historical document the Hastings Hours is fascinating because of its association with the England of the Wars of the Roses, of Edward IV, Richard III and the princes of the Tower. It is a world in transition that looks out at us from the pages of the Hastings Hours, a world striving to reconcile tradition and invention, decorative art and art for art's sake."

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