As the Museum's gallery of Spanish paintings grew through the years to be one of the greatest of all its displays in the field of European painting, the lack of a great Velazquez representing the master's mature style became more and more conspicuous. Two splendid works by Velazquez had entered the Museum with the Altman collection, but both represented the early style. Christ and the Pilgrims of Emmaus was painted apparently about 1620 when Velazquez was only twenty-one, and the Portrait of Philip IV is designated by a document as a work of the year 1624. Both pictures are still in the cold, sculptural manner which the artist brought with him from Seville.

This deplorable hiatus in our collection of Spanish paintings has now been filled to the Museum's great satisfaction by the Portrait of Cardinal Borja, a gift of Samuel H. Kress. The portrait, on canvas thirty by twenty-five inches, is painted in the solid yet partly freed style of Velazquez's developed middle period, and should probably be dated, as accredited scholars have supposed, about 1643. Its closest stylistic parallel appears to be the portrait of the dwarf "El Primo," whom Velazquez painted at Fraga in 1644 at about the same time as the Portrait of Philip IV now owned by the Frick Museum. The cardinal, verging on old age, is seen wearing the red biretta and cape of his high office. The biretta, the head, and the hand (as much of it as shows), all are modeled with a good deal of the solidity which we associate with the artist's early portraits. The atmospheric vibration of the ultimate style has by no means been attained, yet the work as a whole exhibits prodigious dexterity and exquisite feeling for texture. The background is of a dark luminous brown, thinly painted so that the grain of the canvas may be seen as in many of Titian's works. The cardinal's "purple" cape is arranged in a broad yet complex system of folds. The ground is painted in pale, neutral creamy color over which cool pink is slashed on with a brush almost an inch wide and moving with all the bewildering adroitness of a fencer's sword. The head gives the beholder the enduring satisfaction that comes from complete confidence in the artist's having expressed precisely and significantly the thing he intended to convey. Only the great artist gives one such a secure sense of standing on solid rock.

No such feeling of confidence arises to comfort us when we attempt to puzzle out the character of Cardinal Borja the man. His material exterior as revealed by Velazquez tells a story of powerfully opposed forces within. The high, swelling forehead, painted with...
heavy impasto, is of a type popularly supposed to be correlated with intellectuality. The deep-set brown eyes with their cold stare and the full, firm lips express inflexible purpose, whether good or evil. The nose is fleshy and almost pendulously long, with a tendency to ruddiness. The graying, truncated imperial on his chin and the sparse hair at his temples are arranged with scrupulous care. The prominent cheekbones give a clue to a body burned out with unresting struggle. The entire expression is that of an alert, narrow, obstinate, courageous, and withal highly complex man, a man whose qualities one is bound to respect but whose ends are perhaps achieved in ways that leave us more astonished than enthusiastic. This baffling impression of a “difficult” and rather dangerous personality is amply borne out by what we know of the sitter.

Gaspar de Borja y Velasco, son of Don Francisco de Borja, Duke of Gandía, and great-grandson of Saint Francis Borja, third general of the Jesuit order, was born on April 3, 1582. His family was the Spanish branch of the famous Italian family of Borgia. Gaspar de Borja was destined for the Church from an early age. In 1611 Pope Paul V made him a cardinal, and for twenty-two years he was in Rome entrusted with the delicate task of upholding the prestige of the Spanish crown at the Papal court. A brief account of some of the political dramas in which he played a part may serve to throw light upon the traits of character which we have already suspected from looking at his portrait.

Little is recorded of the first years Borja
spent in Rome. Meanwhile at Naples the Duke of Osuna was acting as viceroy for Philip III of Spain. Osuna was a man of broad interests, who gave his official patronage to such artists as the poet Quevedo and the painter Ribera. He ruled with considerable pomp and energy, ordering many glittering popular festivals and sending his navy repeatedly against the Barbary pirates. Philip III encouraged Osuna to employ his fleet of galleys against Venice, the traditional foe of the Hapsburgs, but instructed him to use his own flag and make believe that the incursions were undertaken without the knowledge of his king. Osuna succeeded in cowing the Venetian Adriatic fleet, even forcing the abandonment of Istria, but he also succeeded in making bitter enemies not only in Venice but also among the Neapolitan nobles whose money supported Osuna's navy. Envoys were hurried to Spain to inform the king that Osuna was leading a profligate private life and at the same time plotting to seize Naples for himself. Thus, before long, word was sent to Borja in Rome, instructing him to go to Naples and oust Osuna, but of course to do so tactfully and as though he were acting without the knowledge of his king. Realizing the personal danger of his mission, the wily Borja refrained from setting foot in the city of Naples until he had won the adherence of the governor of the Castello Nuovo. Then, one early morning before Osuna was awake, Borja arrived to the mingled music of cannon and church bells, while the cry went forth everywhere that a new viceroy was in office. Osuna returned to Spain to finish out his life in prison. When the coup d'état had been accomplished, Borja, who seems to have cared nothing for common caution, let alone the persuasions of diplomacy, wrote to the king, chiding him for having let matters get to such a pass. His own reign in Naples lasted only six months.

Another of Borja's critical moments came on the sixteenth of March, 1632. Urban VIII had convened the cardinals in a consistory. Much dissension existed over the question of throwing the power of the Church against Louis XIII and Gustavus Adolphus. Borja, who had got the floor for the presentation of entirely different matters, switched to the strident reading of a statement which praised the Spanish crown for consistently striving against heresy and for the good of Christianity, a record which gave Spain the right to hope that his Holiness, instead of dilly-dallying. . . . At this point the Pope shouted "Tace," which in contemporary English seems to mean "Shut up." Borja read on, thus stoutly serving his pious king but not his own immediate interests. The Pope never forgave him nor did Borja ever offer apologies.

Some years later the spotlight once more turned sharply upon Borja in connection with a separatist revolt in Catalonia in 1640. In a junta, or council of state, convened to consider what action should be taken to put down the uprising. Borja declared with a striking use of metaphor, "As a conflagration can be quenched only by much water, so the fire of disloyalty and revolt can be quelled only by rivers of blood."

By 1645 Borja had at last been recalled to Spain. Here he was given the highest royal favors. In 1643 he was elevated to the topmost ecclesiastical dignity in the kingdom, the archbishopric of Toledo, the cathedra of San Ildefonso. It was probably at this time that he had himself painted by Velazquez, ordering that upon his death the portrait be placed over his tomb in the chapel of San Ildefonso, one of the principal interior features of the cathedral.

Just as chemists have been able to predict the eventual discovery of elements with stated characteristics, so students had known for the past two generations that Velazquez must have painted a portrait of Gaspar de Borja. Three known studio replicas gave the clue, and it is to the credit of connoisseurship in art that the replicas were recognized by all scholars for just what they were. In one, a "lost" portrait which was formerly in the collection of Ralph Bankes at Kingston Lacy, Dorsetshire, the cardinal is said to have been shown dressed in black. The other two are like the Museum's portrait but are only of bust length. One of these, in the Staedel Institute, Frankfort on
the Main, appears to be very mildly painted. The other, approximately the same size, which Allende-Salazar considered to be partly the work of Velázquez himself, takes its place in a long line of portraits of Toledan prelates hanging in the Vestuario, or Winter Hall, of the cathedral (at least it was there when Carl Justi described it in 1888). It was probably with this destination in mind that Borja ordered the copy made, since the original portrait was to be hung above his tomb in the chapel of San Ildefonso. At any rate, according to the researches of Justi (who never knew of our original portrait) the version which adorned the tomb was taken down for the sake of safety and put in the underground office of works in the cathedral in 1808 at the time of the Napoleonic invasion. No further account of it has been uncovered. In 1929 the portrait which the Museum is now so proud to own came to light in the possession of Edward A. Vesey Stanley at Quantock Lodge in Somersetshire. Stanley had inherited it from his grandfather, Henry Labouchere (1798-1869), the first (and last) Baron Taunton, who had got it heaven knows where. Presumably it is the portrait which once adorned Borja's tomb. Certainly it is Velázquez's original. There is in Madrid at the Academia de San Fernando a black chalk drawing for it, perhaps the finest of Velázquez's few extant drawings.

According to August L. Mayer, our portrait gives evidence in its composition of having been reduced from a larger canvas, probably of three-quarters length. Such a handsome, formal composition could be thought of as the significant forerunner of the artist's portrait of Innocent X, one of the great portraits of all time. We are tempted to connect our Velázquez also with another Spanish portrait, one which was painted some forty years earlier—namely the Museum's stupendous portrait of Cardinal Niño de Guevara by El Greco. In this miracle of psychological revelation, as in the portrait of Borja by Velázquez, the sitter is seen to be a complex and dangerous personality. In each we behold a menacing cardinal dressed in his regalia and seated in an armchair. Each sitter grasps the arm of his chair with his nearer hand. His taut body is turned three-quarters to the left, the baleful eyes watchfully fastened upon the spectator. In each portrait the cardinal's cape is taken by the artist as a special challenge to his genius as a painter, and each after his own dazzling fashion rises to the occasion.

The photograph of the drawing shown on page 117 is reproduced from an article by José Francés, "Los dibujos de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando," in La Esfera for January 3, 1931.