

## INTRODUCTION

THAT part of Mr McClean's Bequest described in this Catalogue, though not of great extent, is yet an acquisition of exceptional importance to the University. It contains classes of objects hitherto almost unrepresented in the Fitzwilliam Museum, and rapidly growing so rare that the hope of acquiring them through ordinary channels becomes every year more and more remote. They are the things for which collectors most obstinately compete; they belong to a very restricted group, of which the conspicuous members have been preserved for centuries in sacristies, or have passed in recent times into great permanent collections. The church treasuries, the museums, and the cabinets of wealthy amateurs have between them almost exhausted the visible sources of supply. The finer products of mediaeval handicraft, if they appear at all in the sale-rooms, change hands upon terms which would have seemed incredible to the collectors of fifty years ago.

There are many reasons why mediaeval objects should have thus appreciated in value. Their total number is relatively small, and is not likely to be increased by discovery: in this province great surprises are improbable. The places where the more important works of art are preserved are known; even the typical examples of no more than average merit have almost all emerged from obscurity into positions of comparative prominence. It is not with these things as with Egyptian, or classical, or barbaric antiquities, the sum of which may at any moment be notably increased by the discovery of new tombs or cemeteries. They belong to the Christian epoch; and Christianity, by abolishing the custom of burying valuable possessions with the dead, deprived archaeology of a resource consistently available in the case of earlier periods.

A few tombs of princes temporal or spiritual have preserved for us the insignia which distinguished great personages during life; but these are the exceptions to an irrevocable sumptuary law applied not to the living but to the dead. Christian antiquities of small proportions have therefore suffered more from the vicissitudes of time than those of preceding ages: their brief existence has been more exposed to the chances of destruction. Unprotected by concealment in the earth from the demands of greed or necessity, not always safe even within the walls of the sanctuary, they were already a residue long before the days of the museum or the collector. Such antiquities are, as Bacon has said, "*tanquam tabula naufragii*,"—scattered wreckage to be saved and recovered from the deluge of time."

The perusal of mediaeval inventories makes it only too clear that not a tithe of the treasures which once existed has survived to excite the cupidity of our day. In the centuries before banking works of art were realisable capital, and, if composed of precious metals, were too often converted into money by the agency of the melting-pot. Wars and revolutions, or outbreaks of religious fanaticism, multiplied risks for all things of high intrinsic value; the indifference of the Renaissance for mediaeval art, and the carelessness or ignorance of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, united to reduce yet further a long diminished total. In our own country, where the Reformation made such devastating inroads among the treasuries of the Church, the destruction was even more complete than elsewhere; and but for the fortunate circumstance that England began to collect at a time when opportunities for acquisition were still comparatively frequent, the disproportion between our mediaeval collections and those of France or Germany would be even greater than it is.

For these reasons alone Mr McClean's Bequest is of peculiar importance. But in addition to these qualities of rarity and intrinsic worth, it possesses an exceptional educative value. It is not a collection gathered at random. The late owner wisely concentrated his attention upon definite classes or groups; and although the several series would undoubtedly have been increased had he lived longer, while certain objects might have been withdrawn, the groups remain sufficiently comprehensive to introduce

the student to the branches of art which they represent. The importance of such collections is not exhausted by the artistic pleasure which they convey; it is also to be sought in their power of exciting a reasonable curiosity, and of acting as an incentive to individual research. Even when they are of comparatively small extent, they may become the basis of a knowledge which will not only increase the pleasure of continental travel, but may serve a more serious purpose by enhancing the interest of historical studies. Things made and possessed by the men of whom we read in history are a visible commentary upon the written text; they lend an added touch of reality to the narrative; and when their genealogy can be traced back through a long series of centuries, they help in their degree to quicken the historical sense. It is remarkable how much the conception of a remote period will gain in colour and relief from an acquaintance at first hand with the products even of its least conspicuous arts. If, for example, we know that the brooch (no. 4) is of a type worn in Kent when Augustine began his mission, that enamels of the kind represented by nos. 47—59 were common features of our church-furniture from the reigns of John and of Henry III down to the Reformation, that ivories like nos. 34—35 were carved in the great monasteries of the Rhine in the time of Charlemagne and his immediate successors, that the chalice (no. 61) is a typical product of the goldsmiths' guild of mediæval Siena, we do not merely feel that a certain lustre of great association is reflected upon these objects: there is something more than this. The times in which they first saw the light have been brought a step nearer to us; they have received a new and more intimate significance. To say so much is to repeat a commonplace; but the repetition may be justified on the ground that students who take full advantage of concrete illustrations to history still constitute a rather small minority.

If the enhancement thus lent to historical studies is to have more than a temporary influence, the knowledge of ancient handicrafts must be as complete as we can make it. We should not confine ourselves to the story of the industrial arts, their origin, progress and decay; we should also learn something of the technical processes by which their masterpieces were produced. A slight

acquaintance with the practical side of goldsmiths' work or enamelling increases many fold the appreciation of an ancient jewel or reliquary: those who have tried and failed with the most elaborate of modern appliances will entertain a greater respect than the mere student of the library for the Anglo-Saxon jewellers or the early enamellers of Limoges, because they will have learned to understand the difficulties which the ancient craftsmen had to overcome. There are few who would not profit by a short experience gained in a school of arts and crafts, and by the practical familiarity with technical methods which such institutions have it in their power to bestow. Unfortunately, the haste and pressure of modern life leave scant time for this salutary alternation of labour; the interminable tasks imposed upon the brain tend to exclude the training of the eye and hand. As things now are, it is almost a counsel of perfection to serve even a light apprenticeship in the industrial arts and at the same time thoroughly to master their history and affinities. Yet those responsible for education would do well to bear in mind the wisdom of Ponocrates who relieved the labours of the schoolroom by carrying his pupil abroad to visit the various workshops of mediaeval Paris.

In a short introduction like the present it is impossible to attempt an adequate treatment, from the technical side, of the arts here represented; it must suffice to follow their growth through the centuries, and to bring before the reader's notice the range and continuity of their development. But it is hoped that these preliminary pages may prove of some service alike to the beginner and to the student already in some degree familiar with the subjects of which they treat. The information which they contain is not original. But as it is in great part only to be found, at the cost of much time and patience, in the pages of widely-scattered publications, it may help to prevent unprofitable delays; while the numerous references to authorities should be useful to those who desire to consult the primary sources. In what follows, the attempt has been made to present the reader with the essential facts concerning the more considerable groups in the Bequest,—the barbaric jewellery, the ivory carvings, the enamels, and the paintings under glass.

### *Barbaric Jewellery*

THE barbaric jewellery includes examples ranging from the Bronze Age to the later Frankish period (nos. 1—11). But the remarkable Faversham brooch (no. 4) represents a well-defined class with an ascertained history so instructive that we may profitably follow its genealogy back as far as the evidence will permit.

This ornament ranks among the finest existing specimens of that cloisonné jewellery which, as far as our country is concerned, is characteristic of the county of Kent<sup>1</sup>. To the observer ignorant of the rarity of invention in the arts of design, it would appear that an object of this kind might result from a happy idea suggesting itself spontaneously to a goldsmith of exceptional ability; that it might well be an isolated masterpiece of technical skill independent of models and without a pedigree. It would be easy, he might think, to arrange a few pieces of garnet or coloured glass in simple patterns upon a gold surface; there would be no need for any dependence upon others in the conception of such elementary motives; the method of fixing the stones is an obvious method to which anyone would have recourse. But the life-story of ornamental motives, like that of practical inventions, should inspire distrust of this easy explanation. Artistic methods and designs are only modified step by step, like the firearms and the locks of which General Pitt-Rivers traced the gradual evolution. Originality is seldom found, and what appears a novelty is often no more than the reinvestment of an old inheritance. The decorative process here so admirably illustrated is an excellent example of this slow transmission from century to century and people to people. So far from being original, it has perhaps descended through as great a tract of time, and travelled over as wide a geographical area,

<sup>1</sup> *The Victoria County History, Kent*, Vol. 1, p. 346. See also the same history, *Berkshire*, Vol. 1, p. 241. Coins of the period from Justinian to Heraclius have been found in association with this kind of brooch, and the elaborate examples probably date from about the year A.D. 600. Fine collections of Kentish antiquities, including cell-work brooches, are to be seen in the British Museum, the Canterbury Museum, and the Free Public Museums, Liverpool.

as any other process with which we are familiar. Its story is a classic instance of that universal tendency to repetition and imitation which makes the appearance of fresh motives in decorative art so rare. Convinced by experience that men seldom try to create when they can conveniently borrow, the archaeologist, confronted with a process or a pattern which is not childishly simple, immediately searches for its antecedents, and following it back along the course of its development, endeavours to discover the distant sources to which it owes its distinctive character. He may not always succeed in picking up the trail, but in almost every case a trail exists; in the present instance it will carry the enquirer into each of the three continents of the ancient world. It is worth while to pursue so remarkable a course, and realise by an example of almost classical precision, how difficult invention is, and how persistently the most insignificant discovery lives on when once it has been found to satisfy a general and popular taste.

French archaeologists have described as *orfèvrerie cloisonnée* the method of decorating personal ornaments by the use of coloured stones or glass pastes, cut into the flat or “table” form, and set in cells or cloisons so as to form continuous designs<sup>1</sup>. For this we may conveniently substitute the general English term “inlaid jewellery,” rather than the more exact translation “cell-work jewellery,” because the French words fail to describe an allied variety which we shall find existing side by side with cell-work from the earliest times. Although in both cases the object of the goldsmith was to produce a brilliant effect by bands or masses of colour contrasting vividly with the gold of the setting, in the second case he did not fix his stones in applied cloisons or cells, but in apertures cut in the continuous gold plate. The distinction is somewhat analogous to that between constructed tracery in Gothic architecture and the earlier form for which the term “plate tracery” has been suggested, the type in which the apertures are cut through a solid panel of stone. This second kind of jewellery may therefore be described as plate-inlay, and it will be understood as included with the allied cell-work under the generic term inlaid jewellery. It is perhaps not too venturesome to suppose

<sup>1</sup> Ch. de Linas, *Les origines de l'orfèvrerie cloisonnée*, 1877.

that, as in the case of the Gothic windows, the more delicate variety was developed from the simpler, and that the two are essentially the same thing, or rather, different expressions of a single artistic effort. Such a development is perhaps confirmed by the absence of this more primitive method in the Kentish jewellery, which, as we shall now proceed to show, represents the latest stage of a method originating in very distant countries at a very remote period of time.

There can be no doubt that the art of inlaying jewellery in this fashion spread across Europe from east to west through the agency of the Goths and of the Franks, the former tribe playing far the more important part in its dissemination. It is equally certain that the early Teutonic inhabitants of Kent imported it from the opposite shores of the Channel; it may be well however to cite a few prominent instances in order to mark the principal stages of the journey. Among the classical examples from French soil are the sword of Childeric in the Cabinet des Médailles at Paris, discovered at Tournai in 1653<sup>1</sup>, the treasure of Pouan<sup>2</sup> in the Museum at Troyes, historically associated with the great battle of Châlons (Maurica) in A.D. 451 when the power of Attila was broken; the chalice and paten of Gourdon in the Côte d'Or, discovered in 1845, and now preserved with the sword of Childeric<sup>3</sup>. These objects are closely related in technique to the celebrated votive crowns of the Visigothic Kings found at Guarrazar in Spain, some now at Madrid, others in the Musée de Cluny at Paris<sup>4</sup>. The crowns

<sup>1</sup> J. Chiffet, *Anastasis Childerici Francorum regis* &c., Antwerp, 1655; J. Labarte, *Histoire des arts industriels*, 2nd ed., Vol. I, pl. xxvi; F. Bock, *Kleinodien des heiligen Römischen Reichs*, pl. xlvii; H. Havard, *Histoire de l'orfèvrerie* &c., p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> Peigné Delacourt, *Recherches sur le lieu de la bataille d'Attila* &c., 1860; Gaussen, *Portefeuille archéologique de la Champagne*, pl. i; de Linas, *Origines* &c., III, pl. i; Venturi, *Storia dell' arte italiana*, II, fig. 23, p. 25; Rohault de Fleury, *La Messe*, Vol. IV, pl. 284.

<sup>3</sup> Labarte, *Histoire* &c., 1st ed., Album, pl. xxx; de Linas, *Origines*, III, pl. i; Havard, *Histoire* &c., p. 58. For Frankish brooches in this style, see Havard, pl. v; Fairholt and Wright, *Miscellanea Graphica* (Londesborough Coll.), pl. xxix; W. Fröhner, *Collections du Château de Goluchow*, pls. xiii and xiv.

<sup>4</sup> Bock, *Kleinodien* &c., pl. xxxvii; F. de Lasteyrie, *Le trésor de Guarrazar*, Paris, 1860; J. Amador de los Rios, *El arte latino-barbaro en España, y las coronas Vizigodas de Guarrazar*, Madrid, 1861; E. Molinier, *Histoire des arts appliqués à l'industrie*, tom. IV, *Orfèvrerie*, p. 12; R. de Fleury, *La Messe*, v, pl. 389.



illustrate both methods of incrustation, the broad central bands being decorated by plate-inlaying, while the suspended letters composing the royal names Svinthila and Reccesvinth are ornamented with stones set in applied cells after the more usual fashion. The Spanish examples in their turn lead us back by an unmistakable path to the other inlaid jewels which the same Gothic nation left behind it in the soil of Italy and Central Europe. We need only mention here the fragments of inlaid gold armour found at Ravenna, and associated with the name of the great Theodoric<sup>1</sup>, and the inlaid gold book-cover at Monza, perhaps a gift of Gregory the Great to the young Adaloald, and ultimately presented by Queen Theodelinda to the Cathedral treasury, where it still exists<sup>2</sup>. This admirable example of the goldsmith's art, though made in the early Lombard period, is almost certainly, like the jewels of the cemetery of Castel Trosino<sup>3</sup>, the work of Ostrogothic goldsmiths, who had attained a degree of technical skill never equalled by their Lombard successors. Still retracing the steps of the barbaric tribes across Europe, we find in Germany such admirable examples as the jewels discovered at Wittislingen, now at Munich<sup>4</sup>; and in Hungary very numerous inlaid ornaments of Gothic origin<sup>5</sup>. From Hungary we follow the Goths back to their first southern seats to the north of the Black Sea. The famous treasure of Petrossa<sup>6</sup> in Roumania, ornamented, like the Guarrazar crowns, with both cell- and plate-inlay, is held to have belonged to the Gothic King Athanaric, who fled from the Huns in the third quarter of the fourth century, and ended his days in Constantinople. This connection with the tribe of Athanaric leads us directly to the Gothic settlements in the south of Russia, where other examples of inlaid

<sup>1</sup> Now in the Museo Civico at Ravenna. A. Venturi, *Storia dell' arte italiana*, II, p. 27; E. Molinier, *Orfèvererie*, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Bock, *Kleinodien* &c., pl. xxxv; Venturi, *Storia* &c., II, p. 97; Molinier, *Orfèvererie*, p. 9; Labarte, *Histoire* &c., 2nd ed., I, pl. xxviii.

<sup>3</sup> Venturi, *Storia* &c., Vol. II, p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> *Gazette archéologique*, 1889, pls. v and vi. The jewels are in the Bavarian National Museum.

<sup>5</sup> J. Hampel, *Allerthümer des frühen Mittelalters in Ungarn*, Brunswick, 1905: see index *s. vv.* Granat, Glaspasten; A. Riegl, *Spätromische Kunstindustrie in Oesterreich-Ungarn*, pp. 72 ff.

<sup>6</sup> A. Odobesco, *Le trésor de Pétroussa*; *Archæologia*, LVIII, p. 267, where other references are given.



work have been found<sup>1</sup>. We thus reach the third century of our era, and the extreme limits of the European continent. It is safe to conclude from so continuous a chain of evidence that the Goths, coming southward from Scandinavia, where inlaid jewellery was unknown, first learned this new method of ornament in the parts of Russia about the Black Sea, and that they took it westward with them across Europe, teaching it as they went to other Teutonic peoples. They may even have taught it to the rare Roman or Provincial Roman goldsmiths who employed it; for where we find the process employed in Roman jewellery, it is usually upon the borders of the Empire where barbaric influence may be assumed. We now have to ask the further question, from what quarter did the Goths derive the knowledge of this migratory art?

The answer is partly supplied by the Petrossa treasure itself, partly by a most interesting gold buckle-plate from a girdle discovered in 1870 at Wolfsheim near Mainz<sup>2</sup>. This object, which is rectangular with a projection from one end, and thickly set with table-garnets by the method of plate-inlaying, bears upon the back, punched in early Pehlevi characters, the name *Artashshater* (Ardeshir). In form and general appearance it differs from any Teutonic jewel: it is clearly of an earlier date, and from another country: even if it had borne no inscription, it could not have been easily attributed to any part of Central or Northern Europe. The sumptuous nature of the work suggests that the owner must have been some person of high consequence; the proposal of von Cohausen to identify the Ardeshir here mentioned with the first Sassanian King of that name (d. A.D. 238) is not so rash as it might appear, for we shall see that the work is closely analogous to that of a gold reliquary of even earlier date found beyond the eastern frontiers of Persia, in a district removed from European influence. We may either suppose that the jewel reached Central Europe by the ordinary routes of commerce, or accept the conjecture that it formed part of the Persian spoil brought home

<sup>1</sup> A. Macpherson, *Antiquities of Kertch*; Kondakoff, Tolstoy, and Reinach, *Antiquités de la Russie méridionale*; *Jahrbuch des kaiserlich deutschen Arch. Instituts*, 1905, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Von Cohausen in *Annalen des Vereins für Nassauische Alterthumskunde und Geschichtsforschung*, Wiesbaden, 1873; de Linas, *Origines*, I, pl. i; Molinier, *Orfèvrerie*, p. 15; *Archæologia*, LVIII, p. 30.

by the Emperor Alexander Severus, who was assassinated near Mainz in A.D. 235. It will be remembered in this connection that the Petrossa treasure contains more than one object ornamented in a similar manner with plate-inlay, while the shapes of certain vessels which form part of it are oriental; and whether these objects are of Persian importation, or produced in imitation of Persian models, it may fairly be assumed that the influence to which they owe their peculiar character came from Iran either round the Caspian, or directly across the Black Sea. Communication between Persia and the south of Russia was established at a far earlier period than that with which we are here concerned; and there is no reason to suppose that it was ever seriously interrupted. The products of Sassanian art were widely exported in all directions. Some of them have been in Japan ever since the eighth century, and must have reached China by the sixth<sup>1</sup>; their appearance in Germany as early as the third century need therefore excite no surprise. We thus reach an important point in the genealogy of the Kentish brooches: they are found to be of non-European descent. The question now arises in what continent did their family originate, and how much further is it possible to carry back their line?

Allusion has been made to a gold reliquary, found beyond the eastern frontiers of Persia, and similar in character to the Wolfsheim buckle-plate. This most interesting object, now in the British Museum, was discovered by Mr William Simpson in the Buddhist stūpa or tope of Ahin Posh, near Jellalabad, in 1879<sup>2</sup>. It is in the form of an octagonal prism, and was inlaid on the plate system with garnet and pale green serpentine, which stones alternate in rows along the sides, and form a kind of rosette at

<sup>1</sup> In the *Shosoin*, or imperial treasure-house at the temple of Horiuji-Todaïji, Nara, to which they were bequeathed by the Emperor Shomu I in A.D. 746. In 794 the treasure was finally closed and has been religiously guarded until the present day. A very early Chinese figured silk, translating into the Chinese style the familiar Sassanian motive of the mounted horsemen in medallions, is reproduced in Dr Julius Lessing's large album of textiles, *Die Gewebesammlung* &c. For the Horiuji treasure see *Toyei Shuko*, an illustrated catalogue of the ancient imperial treasury called *Shosoin*, Tokyo, 1909; Longpérier, *Œuvres*, I, p. 301; L. Gonse, *L'art Japonais*, II, p. 36; A. Odobesco, *Le trésor de Pétrossa*, II, p. 19; *Revue archéologique*, 1901, p. 242; G. Migeon, *Au Japon*, p. 229, &c.

<sup>2</sup> *Proc. Asiatic Soc. of Bengal*, 1879, pp. 77—79; *Archæologia*, LVIII, p. 261 f