

**THE WADDESDON BEQUEST: THE
COLLECTION OF JEWELS, PLATE,
AND OTHER WORKS OF ART,
BEQUEATHED TO THE BRITISH
MUSEUM**

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The Waddesdon Bequest: The Collection of Jewels, Plate, and Other Works of Art, bequeathed to the British Museum by Ferdinand Rothschild

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FERDINAND ROTHSCHILD

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UNDER REVISION.

THE WADDESDON BEQUEST.

THE COLLECTION
OF
JEWELS, PLATE, AND OTHER
WORKS OF ART,
BEQUEATHED TO THE BRITISH MUSEUM
BY
BARON FERDINAND ROTHSCHILD, M.P.
A TRUSTEE OF THE MUSEUM.

WITH PLATES.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE TRUSTEES.
1899.
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**Fine Art Museum
Harvard University**

gift - Haynes *Fig. 1 -*
56
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1899
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B. 183, 1927

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57-4

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Frontispiece. PORTRAIT OF BARON FERDINAND ROTHSCHILD.

(From a photograph by Russell and Sons.)

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taken for the ultimate re-arrangement of the whole under more worthy conditions.

Baron Ferdinand also bequeathed to the Museum a number of fine manuscripts, but these not being subject to the same conditions as the rest of the bequest, are preserved in the Department of Manuscripts, and will be on exhibition in the Manuscript Saloon on the ground floor of the Museum.

The collection, which is briefly catalogued in the following pages, is of exceptional richness, and of a kind that is only to be obtained by those who possess the amplest resources. In nearly all the classes of works of art of which it is composed there are pieces of the highest quality. The prevailing tone of richness and splendour of colour evidences a taste rather for the fully developed productions of the later Renaissance than for the more severe Gothic or quattro-cento styles, where the artist is fettered by the conventions of an immature art. The Classical period is represented by four examples only, but of these, two beautiful heads in high relief may well claim to be in the first rank, and their refined style shows that they date from the period when art had reached its highest point (No. 1, Pl. I). The serene beauty of these heads places them in quite a different category from the great proportion of the rest of the collection; the only other pieces that are at all comparable with them, though far removed in date, are the two busts which have been fancifully called Charles the Bold and his wife (No. 261).

The series of cups and vases of rock crystal and other hard stones is of a kind for the appreciation of which no special training is required. The brilliancy of the colours, the difficulties surmounted in the laborious hollowing of the intractable materials, and the richness and beauty of the enamelled mountings, are readily understood. Among these one piece stands pre-eminent—the mottled agate vase No. 68 (Pl. IV), of which the body is an example of ancient Roman cameo work while the mounts are in the most elaborate style of the Italian Renaissance, and the whole is in the most perfect state of preservation. The skill of the ancient Roman lapidary was fully equal to that of his later collaborator, though the nature of his material exacted a broader treatment. It is somewhat

rare to find an ancient vase of hard stone so symmetrical and graceful in outline, and it is probably this quality that led the goldsmith of the Renaissance to bestow his skill upon it. Others of these cups claim a classical origin, and it may be that one or two of them are of Roman times, and like this one with enrichments of a much later date, but none has such superlative qualities. Of the other vases, in which the cutting of the stones and the ornamental settings are more or less contemporary, several will repay a close examination, and one at least (No. 79) is notable for bearing the name of Akbar, the great Indian emperor, and was no doubt a gift to him from some European prince.

Closely connected with the crystal cups both by their attractiveness and their technical peculiarities, are the jewels and personal ornaments, and in quality of work, as well as in the rarity of the individual pieces, the two classes are fairly on a level. Here, again, one of the series stands far above the rest, both for its historical interest and for the beauty of the workmanship. This is the Lyte jewel (No. 187, Pl. XI), a superb specimen of the goldsmith's work of the early years of the 17th century, possibly from the hand of George Heriot himself, or it may be even by the painter of the portrait, Hilliard, who, it must be remembered, was a goldsmith as well as a painter. The skilful treatment of the white enamel on the back, with the thin graceful lines of gold, forms an agreeable contrast to the brilliancy of the face of the locket. The portrait of King James within is unusually well preserved, and is a good example of Hilliard's work. The king was so flattered by the pedigree that Mr. Lyte produced, in which the king's ancestry was traced back to Brut, that, as Anthony à Wood says, he gave him "his picture in gold set with diamonds, with gracious thanks." This "picture" was left by a later Thomas Lyte to a daughter, and it finally came into the family of Monypeny, and was sold. It was then purchased by the Duke of Hamilton, and was included in the sale of the Hamilton Palace Collection, where it realised £2835, and passed into the collection of Baron Ferdinand Rothschild. A number of the other jewels are of the kind popularly associated with the name of Cellini; but a comparison of the designs with those of the German engravers of ornament

of the time shows clearly a common origin. One ornament that belonged to Don John of Austria appears to be Italian, and its history bears out the assumption (No. 171). A large number of them, of which No. 149 may be taken as the type, might usefully be compared with the jewels in the Reiche Kapelle at Munich, and with the drawings for such objects made by Hans Mielich and published by Dr. Hefner von Alteneck of Munich.

The enamels are, with one exception, of the later school of Limoges, and most of them date from the second half of the 16th century. The exception is a *chasse* or reliquary (No. 19) of the earliest form of Limoges champlevé enamel, in which the ground is hollowed out with a graver to receive the enamel which is to form the design, while the surface of metal thus left visible is usually gilt and further ornamented with scrolls slightly engraved. The subject is an interesting one, the martyrdom of St. Valérie, the patron of Limoges, where the reliquary was made. A careful comparison of this piece with a fine marriage casket already in the museum collection of enamels has shown that the two are almost without doubt from the same hand; a curious fate that after an interval of six hundred years the two pieces should come together under one roof. The later enamels are principally decorative in character, and the large dishes of Susanne Court (No. 49), Martial Courtois (Nos. 30, 31), and Jean Courtois (No. 33) are very fine examples of these artists. Of the first there are several pieces in the collection, while Martial Courtois, a rare artist, is represented by two. It is curious that one of these, the scarlet woman of the Revelation, is duplicated by one formerly in the Magniac Collection. The portrait of Catherine of Lorraine (No. 24) shows the minute work that was often bestowed by Leonard Limousin on the finish of his larger portraits. Though this portrait was rightly attributed to this artist, both in the Debruge and Spitzer sales, it would seem that the signature had been till now overlooked.

The carvings in wood are of two kinds, one, the microscopic sculptures, the other the portrait busts and panels. The former class cannot fail to excite wonder at the marvellous deftness and patience which enabled the carver to produce on so minute a scale, and usually with so much artistic feeling, the elaborate

and complicated designs. One of the carvings, though it has not the microscopic details of the others, is noteworthy for different reasons. This is the nut-like devotional carving (No. 234) which, besides being about two centuries older than the rest, is also thought to be of English work, while the inherent merits of the design make it a very important monument, though a small one, of the art of an interesting period, the early 14th century. The contorted monsters which form the decoration of one end recall the carvings seen on "misereres" under the seats in cathedral stalls, and it is but rarely that works of this period and style can be found except in connection with ecclesiastical architecture. Unfortunately the seal ring gives no clue by which the original owner of this devotional toy can be traced; the inscriptions upon it would apply to any person, and the ring might well have been bought "ready made."

Of the microscopic carvings in boxwood, two are deserving of note. The first, an elaborate tabernacle, elegant both in general design and in its multitudinous details, is described under No. 233. The arms, motto, and badge on the leather case show that it is connected with the Emperor Charles V. On one side are his paternal arms and the "briquet" badge; on the other the Imperial eagle and his arms as King of Spain. The date of the work, which cannot be far distant from the year 1520, makes it not impossible that the carving was a gift on the accession of Charles to the empire, a purpose fully in keeping with the elaborate character of the work, and the rich mounting of its leather case. The inscription on the bottom, purporting to give the name of the artist, is obviously a later addition, and is besides executed in a rough style altogether foreign to the minute finish of the carving.

The other carving of the same kind of more than ordinary interest is the miniature altar, No. 232. While it bears comparison with any of the others in the minute care with which the details are worked out, it has in addition the virtue of being a satisfactory architectural composition. The proportions are agreeable, and the whole rests solidly and firmly on a base of good design. The semicircle of figures representing the Last Supper is a wonderful example of dignified art on a scale of