

**A GUIDE TO THE ITALIAN
MEDALS EXHIBITED IN
THE KING'S LIBRARY**

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A Guide to the Italian Medals Exhibited in the King's Library by C. F. Keary

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C. F. KEARY

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SYNOPSIS OF THE CONTENTS
OF THE
BRITISH MUSEUM.

DEPARTMENT OF
COINS AND MEDALS.

A GUIDE
TO THE
ITALIAN MEDALS

KEEPT IN THE
KING'S LIBRARY.

FIRST EDITION.

BY
C. F. KEARY, M.A., F.S.A.

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1881.

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THE Italian Medals described in this Guide have been selected from the collection in the British Museum for exhibition on account of their artistic and historical interest. They are exhibited in the King's Library in the cases marked C, D. In these cases each medal is separately labelled and numbered in correspondence with the descriptions in the Guide. Specimens in gold are represented by electrotypes, and specimens in lead by plaster casts coloured so as to resemble the originals.

The chief interest of this series being artistic, the Introduction gives a brief sketch of the history of the medallie art in Italy. Special information concerning the artists and the eminent persons portrayed on the medals is afforded in the body of the work, so far as the space allows. Each medal is described, and its metal and dimensions in inches and tenths stated, with other particulars needful for its identification.

The larger edition of this Guide is illustrated by seven plates executed by the Autotype process from casts in plaster, and each subsequent edition will present a fresh set of plates, until the whole exhibition has thus been reproduced. The great divergence in the size of the Italian medals makes it impossible to arrange them in a continuous series on the plates. They have therefore been illustrated in three such series, Pls. I-III representing medals reduced to half their actual diameter, Pls. IV, V, medals reduced to three-quarters of their actual diameter, and Pls. VI, VII, medals in their actual size.

REGINALD STUART POOLE.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE exhibition of Italian medals is divided into three series, containing (1) the medals of the fifteenth century, (2) those of the sixteenth century, and (3) a Papal series giving the portraits of most of the pontiffs who sat in the chair of St. Peter between the termination of the Great Schism and the end of the seventeenth century. Each of the first two series is again subdivided into two others, the one arranged under the medallists and designed to illustrate the medallic art of that time, the other giving the portraits of individuals concerning most of whom something is known of a biographical or historical interest. At the end of the medals of the sixteenth century are arranged a number of fine examples of the art of this period, of which the authorship is unknown. Regarding this division of the medals under artists and into personal medals, it will easily be seen that very many pieces cannot of right belong exclusively to either class: many medals which are interesting chiefly as the work of a medallist, display likewise important historical portraits, and other pieces, selected chiefly for the sake of the portraits upon them, are signed by an artist and therefore serve to farther illustrate his special work. To aid the student in obtaining all the information possible in either field of inquiry, indexes are given at the end, containing (1) a list of all the artists whose signatures appear upon the medals exhibited, with references to the medals so signed and to those other pieces which can with reasonable probability be referred to them; (2) a list of all the persons represented on the medals; (3) a list of the events, in the case of the Italian series but very few, which are recorded upon the medals. Biographical notices of the medallists are placed

before the descriptions of the medals made by them, in the series arranged under artists, and biographical notices of the persons represented follow (generally) the descriptions of their medals.

The necessities of arrangement, which require attention to the appearance of the exhibition as a whole—as for example the desirability of not placing the finest pieces where they would be ill seen, or of allowing comparatively poor specimens to intervene between the finest, or again of having small medals continually alternating with large ones—make it impossible to display the medals strictly in accordance with chronological order. But with the help of the following prefatory remarks, as well as with that of the biographical notices and indexes, any difficulty that might thus arise will be removed.

The medallic art of Italy, like most of the art of the Renaissance, was in intention a revival of that of ancient Rome, but in common with sculpture and painting it took, at first, at any rate, a quite original and national character, and though imitative in general intention was not so in execution or detail. The earliest known Italian medals were struck in 1390, at Padua, and bore respectively the portraits of Francesco il Vecchio, lord of Padua, and of Francesco Novello his son. They are classical in style though the inscriptions are in Gothic letters.* The Venetians likewise made proofs for medals in the years 1393 and 1417.† These pieces are, however, quite exceptional. The continuous series of the Renaissance medals begins with those of Vittore Pisano, who is not only the father of Italian medallic art, but its greatest exponent. The following list taken from the first part of Dr. Friedländer's *Italienische Schaumünzen* gives a chronological view of the artists who worked between 1459 and 1580. The dates given are the years during which we know them to have produced medals; the names, if those of artists otherwise known, are given in their usual form, but if an artist is unknown save from the medals, the name is printed in the form which it bears upon these works.

* These pieces are engraved in *Litta Famille celebri d'Italia*, s. v. *Carrara di Padova*.

† Friedländer, *Italienische Schaumünzen*, p. 3.