

III.

NOTICE OF A CRUCIFIX OF BRONZE, ENAMELLED, FOUND IN THE CHURCHYARD OF CERES, FIFE. BY JOHN M. DICK PEDDIE, ARCHITECT, F.S.A. SCOT.

Through the kindness of Dr Keith Macdonald of Cupar, I am able to exhibit to the Society this enamelled figure, which evidently formed a portion of a crucifix; unfortunately, the cross to which the figure was probably attached is gone.

It was found at Ceres, Fife, in the churchyard, at a depth of 3 feet from the surface of the ground. It is $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, of copper gilded, the drapery being filled in with blue and green *champlevé* enamel, and the eyes, now empty, were probably filled with precious stones. On the head is a crown of simple form, and it will be noticed that the hair and ornaments of the dress are indicated by dotted engraved lines.

A leading characteristic at once distinguishes this figure from the usual representations of the Crucifixion. I refer to the long tunic or toga with which the body is entirely draped; and on what may be inferred or rather surmised as to its date and origin from this and some other features, and on the subject of enamel and crucifixes in general I have put together a few notes.

Schnasse, in his *Geschichte der bildenden Künste im Mittelalter*, states, in common with other writers on the subject, that the art of enamelling is extremely ancient—the Egyptian and Oriental nations having practised it at an early date; and numerous specimens are, he says, still extant of Greek and Etruscan enamelled ornaments. He then proceeds to say that both Greeks and Romans, at the time when their art attained to its highest development, neglected the process; that it was revived in Byzantium, and from thence introduced to Western Europe. Dr Anderson has, however, kindly pointed out to me that this history of the art is at least open to grave doubt, and that, in his opinion, and in the

opinion of others well qualified to speak on the subject, the art was not known to these nations at this early date. In support of this theory, in a treatise on the enamelled ornaments of the Louvre, Monsieur Laborde states, that after minute examination of the national collections of Europe, he has been unable to find an instance of true enamel amongst the productions of these nations. A coloured inlay, to casual inspection, resembling enamel, is of frequent occurrence, but the process was the simpler and more imperfect one of pressing into cavities in wood or metal prepared for it a coloured mastic or paste. The Greeks and Romans learned from the Egyptians the art of combining coloured glasses, sections of which were used in mosaic work, but the application to metal of colours afterwards vitrified was, he says, unknown to them.

To whom must we then turn as the originators of this art? Although in the tenth century Byzantine work was largely introduced to Western Europe, and eventually Byzantine workmen taught the Germans the art, certain it is that in Celtic ornaments enamel is found of perfect workmanship of a date coeval with the Roman occupation of this country. Dr Anderson suggests, as at least a possible solution of the question, that the art was borrowed at a late date by the Romans from the Celtic or Germanic nations, and Schnasse mentions a fact which is of interest in view of this theory. A few years ago there was discovered in Ravenna a peculiar ornament, which is preserved in the library there. It is described as being of filigree work filled in with enamel, and it is stated in the catalogue to be a portion of the trappings of King Odoacer or Othocer, who captured Rome in A.D. 470. Without assenting to this somewhat arbitrary assumption, this ornament is without doubt of Celtic or Germanic origin, and is in all probability a relic of one of the invasions of Italy by the Barbarians about or before this date.

Byzantine enamel was almost, if not altogether, confined to the class of work called *cloisonné*. This process was both costly and difficult of execution, and shortly after its introduction to Western Europe the simpler *champlevé* enamel was introduced or at least practised. The introduction to Western Europe of this and some allied Byzantine arts excited an ex-

traordinary influence. Ordinarily speaking, metal work and the allied subordinate arts were influenced by the higher arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture, but here the case is precisely reversed, and these Byzantine ornaments not only revolutionised, but appear to have obliterated all traces of native style, and to have stamped their impress on all Mediæval sculpture and painting.

An early transition from the Byzantine *cloisonné* enamel is to be found in a crucifix erected between the years 1039 and 1054, in the cloister of the church at Essen. Here the parts to be enamelled are sunk below the general surface, and although the organic lines of the figure are still formed by vertical walls of metal confining the enamel, the sinking of the whole surface made possible the omission of the enamel from the rest of the plate. Soon after it was found that the whole drawing might be produced by digging into the metal, leaving the organic lines of the drawing as divisions between the cells for the enamel; and, later still, it was found that copper afterwards gilded might take the place of the gold background.

Where and in what precise year this *champlevé* enamel was perfected cannot be definitely ascertained, but it is at least probable that it was in the districts of Trier and Cologne, from which places there are specimens dating as far back as the middle of the twelfth century.

Champlevé enamel is now generally known under the name of Limoges work, but recent investigation has shown that its first home was in Germany. The introduction of the art to Limoges was not unlikely brought about by the close relationship which existed between the monks of Gradmont at Limoges and those of the monastery of Sugburg, near Bonn. In 1181 a deputation from Gradmont received an enamelled casket from the monks of Bonn containing relics of the 11,000 virgins of Cologne, and it is not impossible that in this way they learned the new technique.

Of enamelled work done in Great Britain at this date I know no specimen. In the abbeys of St Alban and Gloucester the art was practised, but at the same time foreign work was introduced. There is in

the British Museum a medallion with an effigy of the Bishop of Winchester and relative inscription of Rhenish origin, and at a later date Limoges work was also introduced.

We may then, I think, safely draw at least a negative conclusion as regards this crucifix, namely, that it is not Byzantine; but before hazarding any more definite opinion on the point of its origin and age, I shall shortly refer to the treatment of the figure, which is not unimportant as helping to a conclusion.

In the early Christian Church there existed that strange mixture of Christian and heathenish elements which led to such an anomalous result in the Catacombs as the representation of our Lord as Orpheus. Later a great controversy arose as to the propriety of depicting our Lord, excepting by such symbols as the Lamb and Good Shepherd. Constantia, in the fourth century, having requested the Bishop Eusebius to procure for her a picture of our Lord, received in reply a rebuke on the sinfulness of the desire. Gradually, notwithstanding opposition, the story of the life of our Lord more and more frequently became the subject of art. Until a comparatively late date, the culminating moments of His life—His crucifixion and crowning with thorns—were avoided as perhaps too sacred, perhaps as forming too great a contrast with the joyful representations of the divinities of heathen mythology. About the middle of the ninth century crucifixions in Byzantine work began to appear, and from that date they increase in number. In these earlier works the intention appears to have been not to present the shame and agony of the cross, but Christ triumphing over death. He is sometimes represented as standing free on the cross in erect attitude, and generally robed, more frequently nailed to the cross, sometimes with four, sometimes with three nails—four nails being more usual in the earlier examples. In the twelfth century the long tunic becomes shorter, and in the thirteenth, and still more commonly in the fourteenth, it has given way to the cloth round the loins.

Turning to the Ceres crucifix, we find the long robe entirely covering the body, and the attitude has still the characteristics of the earlier repre-

sentations. In the elaborate work by Hefner-Alteneck entitled *Trachten, Kunstwerke und Geräthschaften vom frühen Mittelalter*, in the second volume, is a crucifix, probably of German origin, which has many similarities with the Ceres specimen. The hair and beard are of precisely the same treatment, and the head is crowned. This specimen is assigned to the middle of the twelfth century. It will be noticed that in this case the figure has only the cloth round the loins. To attribute it on that account to a later date than the Ceres crucifix would not, I think, be justifiable, as, although I have indicated the general tendency which art took in representations of the Crucifixion, many instances occur at an early date of the substitution of the cloth on the loins for the long tunic. On the other hand, I have been unable to find that any reversion took place to the older custom in this matter, and I think in general the retention of the long tunic may be regarded as evidence of comparative antiquity.

After careful consideration, I am inclined to think that this crucifix is of German origin, and that it is not unlikely one of the earlier specimens of Champlevé enamel of perhaps the middle of the twelfth century. This figure, whilst it has not the characteristic of the latest Byzantine figures, disproportionate length, has, on the other hand, the conventional and impossible arrangement of the folds of the tunic, strongly reminding us of its Byzantine prototypes. It is within the limits of possibility that this crucifix is of native workmanship, but, as I believe no work of this class has ever been found in this country, it is at least improbable, and the weight of the evidence is, I think, in favour of the origin I have indicated.

[The crucifix has since been presented by Dr Keith Macdonald to the Museum.]