

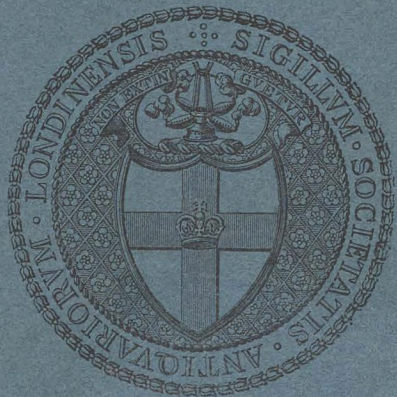
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THE
CRYSTAL OF LOTHAIR.

COMMUNICATED TO THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES

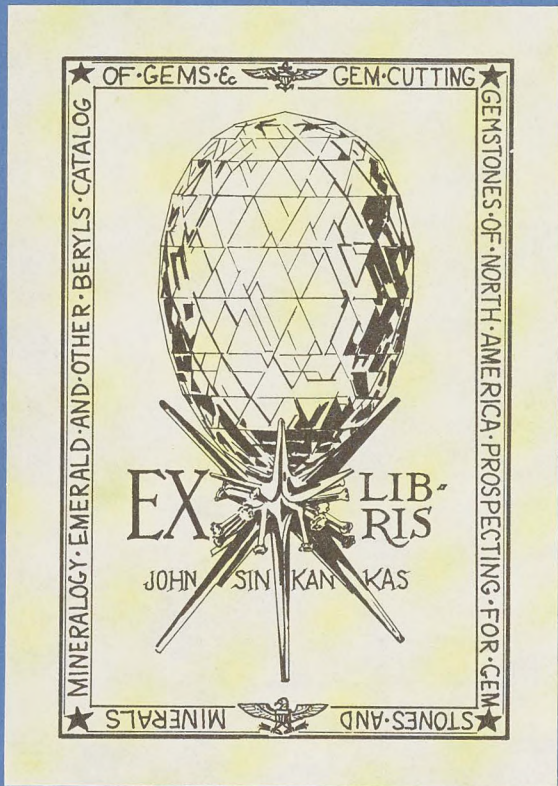
BY

ORMONDE M. DALTON, ESQ., M.A., F.S.A.



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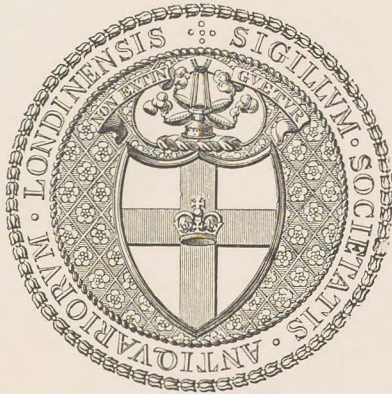
F. J. Kenyon
from the author
Jan. 1909.

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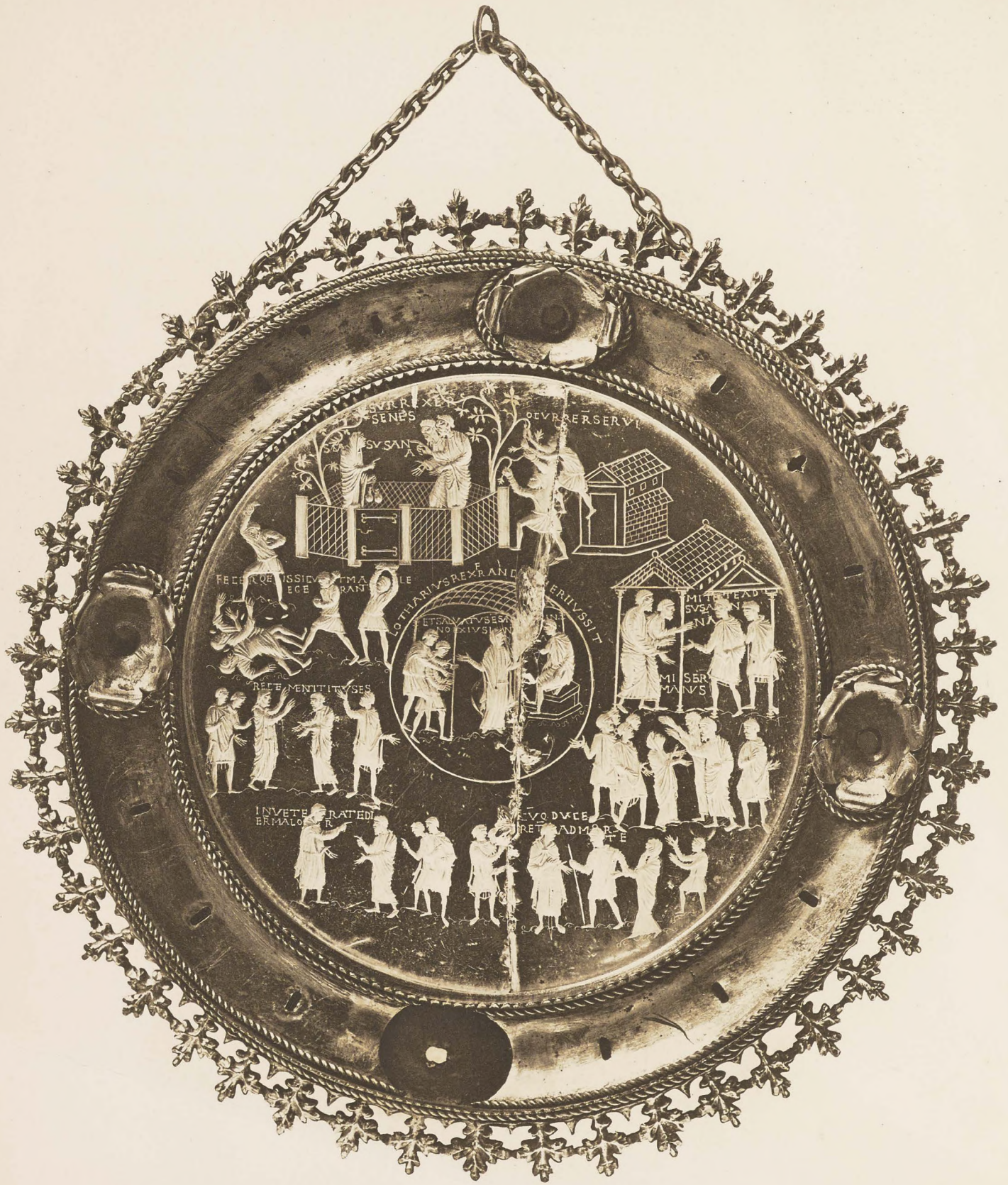


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FROM
ARCHAEOLOGIA,
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THE CRYSTAL OF LOTHAIR.
(BRITISH MUSEUM)

Published by the Society of Antiquaries of London. 1804.

The Crystal of Lothair. By ORMONDE M. DALTON, Esq., M.A., F.S.A.

Read 10th March, 1904.

THE famous jewel known as the Crystal of Lothair, now in the British Museum, was preserved from the first half of the tenth century down to the French Revolution in the Abbey of Waulsort or Vazor, on the Meuse, seven kilomètres from Dinant. Its truly remarkable history has already been briefly related for English readers by Mr. W. H. James Weale,^a while its importance to art and archæology is discussed in French and Belgian publications by M. Ernest Babelon, of the Cabinet des Médailles, Paris, and by M. Alfred Bequet of Namur.^b But it has never been described in English at any length, nor has it been hitherto reproduced by a photographic process on a scale worthy of its exceptional interest. The late Sir A. Wollaston Franks, P.S.A., went so far as to have a negative taken, and intended to publish it in *Archæologia* a good many years ago; but unfortunately the pressure of other work prevented him from carrying out his purpose. It is from this negative that the photogravure illustrating the present paper (Plate I.) has been produced.

The jewel of Lothair is a lenticular rock crystal $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, engraved in intaglio with eight scenes from the Story of Susanna, and enclosed in a gilt bronze mount of fifteenth-century work which has replaced an earlier set-

^a *Magazine of Art*, December, 1900. Mr. Weale had at an earlier date drawn attention to the identity of the crystal with the jewel described in the *Chronicle of Waulsort*.

^b E. Babelon, *La gravure sur gemmes en France* (Paris, 1902), pp. 24 ff; *La gravure en pierres fines*, p. 231; *Compte rendu des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, 1895, p. 410. A. Bequet, *Annales de la Société Archéologique de Namur*, xviii. (1889). Earlier references are: J. Labarte, *Histoire des arts industriels*, i. 199 ff; A. Darcel, *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, xix. (1865), 130; Charles de Linas, *Orfèvrerie Mérovingienne*, 48.

ting. At some time unknown, but probably at the close of the eighteenth century, it was damaged by the vertical crack visible in the plate. It has been suggested that, like the Merovingian crystal spheres referred to below, it may have been worn round the neck as an amulet; but even without its setting it would be so large and heavy that it would be an awkward thing to wear except upon rare occasions.

Susanna persecuted by the elders was regarded in early Christian times as a symbol of the persecuted Church and of the redemption of man from the powers of evil. Her name occurs in the *Commendatio animæ*^a among those of other just persons who have been saved by divine aid in the hour of peril. She is represented in the catacombs as a lamb between two wolves, and it is the scene of her temptation which is most usually found upon Christian monuments, though it is often indicated rather than represented, by a single figure in the attitude of prayer. Groups of more than one scene illustrating her history are less frequently met with; but it is perhaps significant that some of the best examples are to be seen on the fourth-century sarcophagi of the South of France,^b which must have been familiar to Carlovingian artists. Each of the eight episodes selected by the engraver of the crystal is accompanied by a descriptive legend in Latin, and the last of the series is enclosed in a central medallion, above which is the historical inscription:

LOTHARIVS REX FRANCORVM FIERI JUSSIT.

It may be noted that the letter F in the word *Francorum* was at first forgotten and afterwards inserted above the first R.

The first scene, across the upper part of the gem, represents the temptation of Susanna. She stands in a polygonal enclosure with a door at the front, and containing two trees to signify that it is a garden. In her left hand are two vessels for unguents, and her right hand is raised with extended forefinger, showing that she is expostulating with the elders, who stand side by side before her. Behind them two servants in short tunics are seen running up in response to their mistress's cry from a building at the back, and grasping the boughs of a

^a *Libera, Domine, animam ejus, sicut liberasti Susannam de falso crimine.*

^b E. Le Blant, *Étude sur les sarcophages chrétiens antiques de la ville d'Arles* (Paris, 1878), pl. viii. The story of Susanna is also found on the famous carved ivory reliquary of the fourth century at Brescia (Garrucci, *Storia dell' arte Cristiana*, vi. pl. 441-445; photographs, H. Graeven, *Frühchristliche und mittelalterliche Elfenbeinwerke*, part ii. nos. 11-15.

tree with the object of scaling the wall. Above the principal group is engraved the legend, SVRREXER SENES (*surrexerunt senes*), and on either side of Susanna's head, SCĀ SVSANA (*Sancta Susanna*). Above the servants we read, OCVRRER SERVI (*ocurrerunt servi*). (*History of Susanna*, vv. 15-26.) In the next scene (below, to the right) the two elders appear in the house of Joacim ordering two servants to bring Susanna before them; legend, MITTITE AD SVSANAM ("Send for Susanna," v. 29). Below this is a group with the two elders in the centre extending their hands over Susanna's head, MISER MANVS (*miserunt manus*, "And laid their hands upon her head," v. 34). At the bottom, on the right, an official with a staff is leading off Susanna, but is confronted by Daniel, who accuses the men of Israel of folly in condemning a daughter of Israel without knowledge of the truth; to right and left two figures raise their arms in astonishment. Legend, CVQ DV CERET AD MQRTĒ (*Cumque duceretur ad mortem*, "Therefore when she was led to be put to death:" vv. 45-49). To the left of this group Daniel is seen rebuking one of the elders, while two figures behind by their gestures express their indignation at the base conduct of the culprit and their approval of Daniel's words: "O thou who art waxen old in wickedness," INVETERATE DIER MALOR (*Inveterate dierum malorum*, v. 52). Above, Daniel is convicting the second elder of falsehood, while the onlookers give vent to their feelings of wonder and disgust: "Well, thou hast lied against thine own head," RECTE, MENTITVS ES (v. 59). Above again, comes the punishment of the delinquents, a vigorous scene of lapidation: "And according to the law of Moses, they did unto them in such sort as they maliciously intended to do," FECER Q̄ EIS SICVT MALE EGERANT (*feceruntque eis, etc.* v. 62). The central medallion contains the conclusion of the whole matter. The liberated Susanna stands before Daniel, who sits in the seat of judgment. A canopy supported on four pillars indicates that the scene occurs in a building. Legend, ET SALVATVS Ē SANG INNOXIUS IN D̄ A (*Et salvatus est sanguis innoxius in die illa*), "Thus the innocent blood was saved the same day" (v. 62).

Throughout these representations the secondary persons are clad in the short tunics and cloaks worn by the Franks in everyday life, and similar to those in common use during Roman times. The principal actors wear the garments familiar to us on early Christian monuments. The elders are represented in the long tunic and pallium; Daniel has the same tunic, with a mantle (*lacerna*) fastened by a brooch over the breast; Susanna a long tunic and a mantle (*palla*) thrown over her head. The hair of the male figures forms a marked line across the heads, as if it had been cut with a basin, a fashion which is also found on

Carlovingian ivories,^a but can be traced on works of an earlier period, for example on a sixth-century diptych^b in the Carrand collection.

The architecture, which is identical with that of contemporary ivory carvings and illuminations, also betrays its debt to that of late Roman times, and the canopy in the central medallion is allied to the *ciborium* of early Christian churches.^c The enclosure surrounding the garden, with its lattice-like sides, is strikingly similar to a higher polygonal enclosure surrounding the figures of the Virgin and St. Anne in the *Salutation* in a miniature^d of the ninth-century Gospels of St. Médard from Soissons, now in the National Library at Paris. In the present case, the limbs below the knees being invisible, it is probable that a solid fence or wall is intended, and not a garden trellis, which would not be strong enough to support such a door as that here represented. From a comparison with the MSS. and ivories^e we might conclude that the date of the crystal is not far from the middle of the ninth century, even were there no central inscription with its reference to Lothair. Unfortunately this inscription is of a character which admits of more than one interpretation, and it is possible to dispute the identity of the person for whom the jewel was made. There were two Lothairs, father and son, whose respective reigns fell within the years 843-855 and 855-869. But the first was associated in the empire by Louis the Debonair as early as A.D. 817, so that his proper title would be *imperator* and not *rex*. And though it may seem strange that the younger Lothair, who was King of Lorraine, should not so describe himself, but adopt the title of King of the Franks, it is more probable that he should do so than that one who possessed an undisputed right to the name of emperor should content himself with a title of inferior dignity. M. Bequet, following Labarte, would assign the crystal to the earlier Lothair. But the French archæologist explained the singularity of the inscription as due to the patriotic sentiment of a Byzantine engraver unwilling to grant to one whom he regarded as a mere barbarian king the style of right belonging to the Eastern emperor. To accept this view it would be necessary also to adopt

^a *E.g.* on a panel in the Bargello at Florence (Graeven, *Frühchristliche und mittelalterliche Elfenbeinwerke*, part ii. no. 29).

^b E. Molinier, *Ivoires*, pl. v.

^c A similar canopy occurs in the Bible of the Monastery of St. Paul near Rome; see *post*.

^d Reproduced by C. Louandre, *Les Arts Somptuaires*, i.

^e Especially the ivory panels upon the great book-covers in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris, panels in the British Museum (Graeven, as above, part i. nos. 36, 37), at South Kensington (Graeven, nos. 59, 68), and Florence (Graeven, part ii. no. 29).

Labarte's theory of a Byzantine origin for the jewel, a theory which hardly does full justice to the remarkable talent evoked in the Frankish dominions by the Carolingian Renaissance. Difficult though the engraving of so hard a substance as crystal may be, there is surely no good reason to suppose that such work as that of Lothair's crystal was altogether beyond the powers of the Franks; there are so many details in which the engraved figures closely agree with ivories and miniatures of undoubted Carolingian origin that the Byzantine theory appears superfluous. But although we may deny that the jewel is the work of an engraver from the Eastern Empire, the suggestion that the Franks were led to practise the glyptic art by Byzantine example is not to be lightly rejected.

Remembering the old proverb that he who teaches himself has a fool for his master, we might say that the Carolingians had too much wit not to be good disciples when they were really eager for improvement. It has always been known that from the time of Charles the Great they copied early Christian monuments in Italy and the South of France, and that their ivory carvings and their manuscripts show many motives which testify to an acquaintance with the sarcophagi and ivories produced in those countries. But it is only in recent years that scholars have begun to appreciate the part played by the Christian East in the development of Frankish art. Evidence is rapidly accumulating that not merely in architecture, but in the minor arts of manuscript-illumination and ivory carving, the best work of the ninth and tenth centuries owes much to early Oriental models produced for the most part in Syria and Egypt.^a The oldest school of Carolingian miniature painting, that which derives its name from the Ada MS. at Trèves, reveals numerous traces of Oriental influence; and allied to it in style are several remarkable ivory carvings preserved in European museums. The Utrecht Psalter itself, distinguished though it is by a marked individuality of treatment, is now said to be largely indebted to Greek models, perhaps as ancient as the fourth century; so that its vigorous style, formerly attributed to the exuberance of the virile northern temperament, may be rather due to the inspiration of Græco-Roman antiquity.^b The illuminated psalters and the remarkable ivory caskets, mostly with secular subjects, produced in Constantinople about the same period,

^a Among recent contributions to this subject may be mentioned the essays of Dr. A. Haseloff, Sauerland and Haseloff, *Der Psalter Erzbischof Egberts zu Trier*, and *Jahrbuch der Königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, xxiv. (1903), 47 ff.; the valuable articles in the *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* (Berlin—Stuttgart), by Dr. W. Vöge (xxii. (1899), 95 ff., 446 ff., xxiv. 195 ff., xxv. 119 ff.); and Professor A. Goldschmidt (xxii. 44 ff., and xxiii. 265 ff.).

^b H. Graeven, *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, xxi. (1898), 28 ff.

betray a similar late-classical influence, and are sometimes marked by a like rude vigour of treatment; it is not impossible that East and West were at this time drawing upon models of the same character, and that this may account for affinities which occasionally assert themselves in spite of all the obvious differences of manner and style.^a

In the ninth century Constantinople must still have been rich in late-classical gems, MSS., silver vessels, etc. to the study of which a new impulse was probably given by the outbreak of iconoclasm. Original monuments of this early date would naturally be less abundant in Gaul, where their influence was chiefly felt at second-hand; but the work of the Christian East during the period between the fifth and seventh centuries, when Syria and Egypt were perhaps the most active artistic centres, must have been brought to the ports of Southern France in considerable quantities, for the commercial relations between Gaul and the Eastern Mediterranean were then close and uninterrupted.^b The ivories and MSS. which came into Western Europe by this route are held to have affected the development even of monumental sculpture, to say nothing of the minor arts like ivory carving where their influence is manifest. When we consider the manifold, if often devious and obscure, channels by which Eastern influence permeated Italy and Southern Gaul, and thence reached Central and Northern Europe, it would be strange were gem engraving alone to prove unaffected; and all the more strange on account of the great rapidity of its development. For in the matter of cutting hard stones the Merovingians had not advanced beyond fashioning the crystal spheres which they wore as amulets, and even Pepin and Charlemagne used antique intaglios for their seals. MM. Babelon and Bequet have therefore reason on their side when they argue that the sudden appearance of the art of engraving gems postulates some kind of tuition from craftsmen of experience and skill. It is true that early Byzantine gems of any quality are rare; but among the few which remain there are examples which are not without merit and may well have served as models.^c Given the accessibility of such models, the territories non under Frankish rule were capable of producing apt imitators who would soow

^a Cf. especially the casket in the *Museo Kircheriano* at Rome. G. Schlumberger, *Monuments et Mémoires publiés par l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres (Fondation Eugène Piot)*, Paris, 1900. pl. xviii. For the Byzantine psalters see N. Kondakoff, *Histoire de l'art Byzantin considéré principalement dans les miniatures* (Paris, 1886); and J. J. Tikkanen, *Die Psalterillustration im Mittelalter*, i. (Helsingfors, 1895).

^b See L. Bréhier in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 1903, pp. 1 ff., where references to the recent work on the relations between Europe and the East in the early Middle Ages will be found.

^c *E.g.* Babelon, 42.

achieve complete independence. The Rhine, with its memories of glass engraving under the Roman Empire, can hardly have lost all its technical traditions, and in the valley of the Meuse there may also have been sparks smouldering in the ashes which only needed a breath to quicken them into flame. Without denying that the influx into the West of Greek fugitives from the iconoclastic persecution exercised a considerable influence on Western art, we must not forget the more permanent forces which were in existence long before Leo the Isaurian began his crusade.

Though it may thus be claimed that the crystal of Lothair is actually Frankish workmanship, it is hardly possible to conjecture in what particular spot it was made. The best clues which aid us to distinguish the different provinces of Carolingian art are furnished by the illuminated MSS.; but although attempts have been made to assign the schools of illuminators to the various centres such as Rheims, Tours, Corbie, or Metz, few attributions are universally accepted, and the classifications of various scholars have been criticised and frequently revised.^a The subject is one with which only an expert can hope to deal, even though the MSS. are comparatively numerous. The task is more difficult still in the case of gem engraving, where material for comparison is so scanty. Analogies in the treatment and grouping of the figures which recall MSS. and ivories assigned to monasteries in Northern France and on the Rhine make it probable that the northern part of the Frankish territories was the place of origin; but this was a region which in Carolingian times was subjected to a score of interacting influences, the ramifications of which have yet to be completely mapped out. At one time the eye seems to detect in the details of our intaglio resemblances to the work of the school of Corbie; at another time to those of Metz or Rheims. The Utrecht Psalter was written and illustrated at the Abbey of Hautvillers near the latter city;^b and though the difference between the media in which a draughtsman and a gem-engraver respectively work is very great, it does not prevent a certain community of feeling which finds its expression in the attitudes and gestures represented. The Bible of the Monastery of St. Paul on the Ostian Way, which has been ascribed by different scholars to Corbie and to Rheims, has also here and there features which remind us of the crystal. For instance, the man wielding an

^a See H. Janitschek in K. Menzel's *Die Trierer Ada-Handschrift* (Cologne, 1884), and other articles by Janitschek and Leitschuh. In addition to these the more recent books and articles by W. Vöge, A. Haseloff, G. Swarzenski, and A. Goldschmidt should be consulted.

^b P. Durrieu, *L'origine du MS. célèbre dit le Psautier d'Utrecht* (Paris, 1895); A. Goldschmidt in *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* (1892), 156; R. Stettiner, *ibid.* (1895), 199.

axe in the scene where Moses offers a sacrifice before the Children of Israel^a has the same impetuosity in action which we note in the stoners of the guilty elders. Doubtless one thoroughly conversant with the whole group of Carlovingian illuminations would be able to point to resemblances even more marked in other MSS. But Rheims was not only the seat of a school of illuminators, it was also known for its ivory carvers, specimens of whose art are preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris, in the British Museum, at Munich, and at Weimar;^b and its goldsmith's work was very widely distributed.^c The town was in fact one of the most important artistic centres in Europe, and its influence was felt throughout Northern France.^d Such a place might well have had its gem engravers as well as its goldsmiths; and, as it happens, Rheims is prominently connected with the curious history of the jewel shortly to be recounted. But too much stress need not be laid upon this consideration of locality, especially in the case of such a portable object. For in the Middle Ages all kinds of causes combined to dissociate the production of works of art from the places where they were finally preserved. There were, for instance, the nomadic habits of the artists and craftsmen, who constantly moved from place to place; the adoption of a foreign style by native artists trained abroad; the circulation of costly gifts presented by kings, bishops, and abbots in different parts of the continent to each other or to churches; the dispersion of possessions at the owner's death; and the lending of objects to be copied.^e It will be seen that where such conditions are prevalent, it is not safe without a complete chain of evidence to assume that any given object was made at or near the place with which a merely fragmentary history may connect it, or where it has been for centuries preserved.

The Lothair crystal does not stand alone as an example of Carlovingian gem-engraving, for eight other crystal intaglios of smaller size have survived. That at

^a J. O. Westwood, *The Bible of the Monastery of St. Paul near Rome* (Oxford, 1876), with photographs by Parker, photograph 3093. Cf. also other figures resembling those upon the crystal in photographs 2718, 3100, 3104; a canopy like that seen in the central medallion of the crystal occurs in photograph 3300. Professor Kondakoff (as above, ii. 39) notes the resemblance between this book and a Greek MS. with fragments from the Bible in the Vatican Library (*Fonds de la reine Christine*, no. 1). The fact has its bearing on the general question of the relations between Western and Eastern art referred to above.

^b G. Swarzenski, *Die Karolingische Malerei und Plastik in Rheims; Jahrbuch der Königlich preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, 1902, p. 91.

^c *Ibid.* 92.

^d For the activity of Rheims see also Professor A. Goldschmit, *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, xv. (1892), 166.

^e On these unsettling influences which affected the medieval minor arts, see G. Humann in *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, xxv. (1902), 9 ff.

Aix-la-Chapelle, set in a gold reliquary-cross with cabochon stones and antique cameos, is the most important, having a royal bust surrounded by the inscription + XPE ADIVVA HLOTHARIVM REGEM, which probably refers to the same king for whom our jewel was made. The bust is executed in a good style, which proves that the artist, like the engravers who made the dies for coins of Charlemagne and Louis the Debonair, was able to appreciate and to imitate antique models. The seven remaining examples are: a large rectangular crystal at Rouen engraved with the Baptism; an intaglio at the École des Beaux Arts Paris, with a figure of St. Paul, and legend SCS PAVLVS APSL, which in the proportions and treatment of the draperies reveals a close analogy to the Lothair crystal; a Crucifixion in the Cabinet des Médailles, Paris, again showing the same style; a Crucifixion in the treasury of Conques, set in the back of the chair on which the figure of Saint Foy is seated; two Crucifixions in the British Museum, the smaller almost identical with that at Conques, the larger of inferior workmanship, and probably rather later date;^a and yet another Crucifixion in the central leaf of a great Rhenish enamelled triptych in the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington.^b The representations of the Baptism and Crucifixion on these gems should be compared with those of contemporary ivories, the similarity of their composition proving them to be works of the same country and period.

The list of Carolingian engraved gems is a short one, but there can be no doubt that a number have disappeared in the course of centuries. Eight of these vanished gems engraved with royal busts were used as seals by six kings, and we are able to judge of their artistic merit by the wax impressions attached to diplomas preserved in French archives.^c They are: a seal of Louis the Debonair dating from A.D. 816, with legend + XPE PROTEGE HLDVICVM IMPERATORE(M); two seals of Charles the Bald dating from A.D. 843 and 847 respectively; one of Carloman, A.D. 882; two of Charles the Fat, A.D. 886 and 887; one of Charles the Simple, A.D. 951; and one of Lothair, son of Louis d'Outre Mer, A.D. 967. The earlier examples of the series, which resemble the intaglio of Lothair in the reliquary-cross at Aix-la-Chapelle, are inspired by Roman coins, perhaps of Commodus; but the later seals are imitations of the earlier, and illustrate the decadence which always results from successive copying, the latest of all being extremely barbarous in design. The matrices

^a Both these examples are well reproduced by Babelon, *La Gravure sur gemmes en France*, plate iii. M. Babelon figures all the Carolingian crystal intaglios, and the student of early medieval gem-engraving should consult his book.

^b Babelon, 44, fig. 20.

^c *Ibid.* pl. iv.

of these impressions disappeared during the Middle Ages, but two or three other gems, which may have been Carolingian, survived long enough to be reproduced by drawings in printed books, only vanishing in comparatively modern times.^a It will be gathered from the above lists that there must have been a school of gem-engravers in France whose finest work was produced towards the middle of the ninth century as a result of the Carolingian renaissance. Literary evidence as to their activity is very meagre, there being apparently only one reference at present known, occurring in a letter of Servais Loup, abbot of Ferrières, to Charles the Bald, accompanying a gift of gems made, as the writer states, by his own *opifex*.^b Of the Byzantine gem-engraving which aided the Carolingian art in its sudden rise, we learn no more, and our knowledge in this field is of the scantiest. Intaglios which can with certainty be ascribed to the early Eastern Empire are rare, and Theophilus, our chief medieval authority, barely mentions the existence of engravers working at the same time as carvers in ivory. From the time of the Basilian revival crystal was employed in the Eastern Empire not only for jewels but also for making cups and chalices, and these occur among the gifts which were so frequently sent by Byzantine emperors to Western princes. Thus in A.D. 872-3 Basil sent to Lewis the German a crystal of great size mounted in gold and gems.^c It was also a favourite material with the Saracens, notably the Fatimy Khalifs of Egypt in the tenth century, who caused vases and cups to be made from it.^d But it had been popular at a far earlier period, both for signets and for the ornamentation of drinking vessels, partly, no doubt, because it was believed, like other gems, to possess magical properties, relieving thirst and checking the flow of blood.^e We need not here trace its use further back than the Sassanian period in Persia, which is worthily represented by the *Coupe de Chosroes* at Paris,^f though it was well known to the earlier civilisations of Western Asia. In Europe it was easily obtainable from the Alps and the Carpathians, and its accessibility may partially account for its early popularity in

^a Babelon, 37.

^b *Ibid.* 39.

^c Humann, as above, 14.

^d S. Lane-Poole, *The Art of the Saracens in Egypt*, 194. For the Byzantine and Saracenic crystal vessels in the treasury of St. Mark at Venice, see Pasini, *Il tesoro di San Marco*; E. Molinier, *Le trésor de S. Marc*; and E. Babelon, as above, pp. 54 ff.

^e Babelon, 70. On medieval beliefs as to the magical properties of gems, see F. de Mély, *Du rôle des pierres gravées au Moyen Âge* (Lille, 1893), and *Revue de l'art Chrétien*, 1893.

^f In the Cabinet des Médailles, see Babelon, *Catalogue des Camées*, No. 379.

the West, though its magical reputation was doubtless an important factor. We may recall once more the rock crystal spheres worn round the neck as amulets by the Merovingians and Anglo-Saxons, the prototypes of which are perhaps to be sought in the South of Russia.^a

The examination of the crystal having led us to the belief that it is a work executed in the northern part of the Frankish dominions soon after the middle of the ninth century, we may now trace its later fortunes, which are surpassed in interest by those of few other works of art preserved to us from the Middle Ages. For the earlier part of the record we have the authority of the Chronicle of the Abbey of Waulsort,^b in which place, it will be remembered, the jewel remained down to the time of the French Revolution. Where it was during the century between the time of its manufacture and its appearance in the valley of the Meuse history does not record.

In the first half of the tenth century, says the Chronicle, there lived at Florennes, in the present province of Namur, a puissant seigneur named Eilbert, "industrius, strenuus et vir bellicosus." One day he visited the fair at the neighbouring town of Thierache, and there he saw a powerful and beautiful horse, which he at once decided must become his, let the cost be what it might. With such a steed he felt that he would be invincible in any encounter: it would be to him "a tower of strength" in the day of battle. But the owner of the animal was a canon of Rheims, clearly not unversed either in worldly ways or in the science of horse-coping, for he resolutely insisted upon ready money, which Eilbert could not produce. Vexed at the necessity for returning empty-handed, but quite determined to raise the requisite sum by hook or by crook, the count sought his noble consort Heresindis, and laid before her the absolute necessity of concluding the bargain. He played upon her feelings by insisting that the purchase was essential not merely for his peace of mind but also for his personal safety, for by the aid of this horse there was no danger which he would not surmount: once upon its back he would ride in surety through the direst perils which destiny might have in store. But the prudence of the housewife was proof against the most dramatic appeals to her tender solicitude, for the Lady

^a A small sphere of crystal or glass mounted for suspension in very much the same style as the Early Teutonic examples was found in a Græco-Scythian grave dating from the fourth-third century B.C. Cf. *Compte rendu de la Commission Impériale archéologique*, year 1876 (St. Petersburg, 1879), atlas, plate ii. fig. 9.

^b L. d'Achery, *Spicilegium sive collectio veterum aliquot scriptorum*, etc. 2nd edition (Paris, 1723), ii. 709 ff: *Chronicon Valciodorensis*. The Chronicle deals with the years between 944 and 1242.

Heresindis seems to have had her doubts as to the probable issue of the affair, and refused her assent to her lord's extravagance. Then Eilbert in desperation resorted to a mean expedient: without his wife's knowledge he abstracted a wonderful jewel, which was perhaps as much her property as his, though the text does not necessarily imply that this was the case.^a With this he hurried off to the canon, and leaving it as a pledge, returned with the horse to face the reproaches of Heresindis. The chronicler describes the jewel in such a manner as to leave no doubt that it was the identical crystal which forms the subject of this paper, his impossible attribution to St. Eloi, the Merovingian bishop and worker in metals, being due to the natural desire of the churchmen to associate the work with the name of the greatest of Frankish craftsmen.^b The reader of this monastic document will be more surprised to find that the Merovingian bishop and the Carolingian king are evidently regarded as contemporaries, a fact which reflects little credit upon the historical teaching of the day. The use of the word *berillus* in describing a crystal need excite no remark, as it is of frequent occurrence in this sense in medieval registers; but it may be repeated in this place that the original setting, the existence of which is implied by the words *in medio positus*, was replaced in the fifteenth century, to which period the present mount belongs.

When the day for the redemption of the pledge arrived, the count went to the canon duly provided with the money, but to his astonishment was met with a flat denial that any jewel had been pledged at all. The interview seems to have ended in personalities and recriminations, Count Eilbert returning unsuccessful and in a state of fury easily to be imagined in the case of an impetuous warrior thwarted by insidious wiles.^c It was not to be expected that he would for a moment acquiesce in such treatment as he had received. We read that he

^a Sine consilio suæ nobilissimæ conjugis, quæ formidabat casum qui accidit, loco obsidis mirabilem thesaurum quem apud se ipsum conservabat clerico tribuit, diem statuens in quo fieret solutio debiti. P. 710.

^b Thesaurus autem iste desiderabilis compositus est in similitudinem insignis monilis quem Sanctus Eligius, venerabilis episcopus, honestate et in omni operationis artificio egregius, praecepto nutuque incliti Lotharii Regis Francorum manibus propriis operatus est. Lapis siquidem berillus in medio positus sculptum retinet, qualiter in Daniele Susanna senibus iudicibus male criminata sit, qui varietate sui operis diligentiam ostendit artis, et diligentia venustatem locupletis honoris. *Ibid.*

^c Dignitate siquidem thesauri denudatus, convicioque controversiæ et perversæ operationis graviter vexatus.

called together his relatives and retainers, and recounted to them the whole pitiful tale, not omitting to lay due stress upon the irony of the fate which had made him the victim of such execrable machinations.^a A tenth-century audience of such a speech could not be expected to vote for other than drastic measures; and confirmed by the approval of his own people, Eilbert soon set out for Rheims at the head of an armed force. He obtained complete command of the city, apparently without encountering serious resistance; but when a call was made at the canon's house it was found that the ecclesiastic had prudently taken sanctuary in the great church. Eilbert was in no mood to be baffled a second time; his blood was up, and considerations which in calmer moments might have made him shrink from extremities could not now avail to stay his hand. A cordon was drawn round the church, and a search instituted within the sacred building; but all efforts proved fruitless, for the canon knew the nooks and corners of the edifice far better than any of his pursuers. Then it was that the reckless count gave orders to set the church on fire, and before long smoke and flames were rolling through the aisles. We may allow our fancy to picture the frightened canon holding out to the point of suffocation before bringing himself to leave his place of refuge; but at last the atmosphere grew too thick, and he was compelled to make a dash for safety. He ran straight into the arms of the count's men; and, sad to relate, the Crystal of Lothair was found concealed on his person.^b Count Eilbert had triumphed, but at the cost of a grievous act of sacrilege, for which, and perhaps for other lawless deeds committed in the past, Charles the Simple made war upon him. But fortune continued to follow his standard, for he took the king captive and shut him up in the castle at Péronne, where in later years Louis XI. lay at the mercy of Charles the Bold of Burgundy. In the end peace was concluded, and the count was left in undisturbed possession of the jewel. But after some years had passed, and the chill breath of age had cooled his hot blood, he began to repent of his violent deeds, and to compound for them by the foundation of religious houses. Seven monasteries rose through his munificence, one of them near his castle of Florennes; and to the church of this foundation he at last presented the

^a Exponens illis supradicti mercimonii conventum et sui venditoris execrabilis machinationis periculum, et atrocis fraudis miserabile ludibrium.

^b Et sic flammis urentibus ab ejusdem templi mœnibus ille fraudis commentator ejicitur, et dolus, qui antea versabatur clausus in ejus pectore, evidentibus indiciis in propatulo manifestatur. Nam thesaurus, quem dolosæ machinationis inventionem furtive deliberaverat retinere, ab eo aufertur, et cum detrimento Urbis et Ecclesiæ restituitur.

jewel which had been the cause of so memorable an adventure.^a His charge that the crystal should be faithfully preserved in perpetuity was obeyed until the day when the approach of the French troops led to its hasty concealment and probably to its ultimate loss by those to whom it was in the hour of extremity entrusted. But there had been dangerous moments, as when the Abbot Godefroid, quarrelling with his monks in 960, threatened to present it to Rheims as an act of reparation for the ancient sacrilege;^b or when Godescalc in 1072, seeking a present for the fiancée of a near relation, cast longing eyes upon some of Eilbert's gifts to the monastery.^c In each case the danger was happily averted, and the Crystal of Lothair remained undisturbed for long and peaceful years. We hear of it in the early part of the seventeenth century,^d and again 136 years later,^e as one of the notable treasures of Waulsort. Then came the French Revolution, bringing with it the ruin of the abbey, the dispersion of the monks, and the disappearance of the jewel for a period of fifty years. At last, at some time near the middle of the nineteenth century, it came to light again in the shop of a Belgian dealer, whose story was that it had been fished out of the Meuse. This may well have been true, for one of the fugitive monks may have thrown it into the water to prevent it from falling into unworthy hands. The dealer, unaware of its real value, disposed of it to a French collector for twelve francs,^f and it ultimately came into the possession of the English collector Mr. Bernal, at whose sale at Christie's in 1855 it was acquired by the British Museum for £267.

Most medieval bequests to churches tell a plain tale of piety or compunction, but this jewel has played a part in the lives of lawless and unregenerate men. It has excited cynical cunning and ungovernable revenge; it has called men to arms and been the cause of sacrilege. Possessed in peace for more than eight hundred years, it was driven from its refuge by the rumour of approaching wars, flung into a river, and sold for a song. After all these vicissitudes it has once more found a tranquil resting-place, and all who treasure such relics of a stirring past will join in the hope that no further wanderings await the Crystal of Lothair.

^a Et thesaurum superius memoratum, qui seditionis et controversiæ quondam causa fuit, et pro quo multa acciderant dedit eidem ecclesiæ, et inter alia ornamenta ipsum in eâ præcipuum et excellentiorem præcepit in perpetuum per succedentia tempora non segniter custodiri.

^b Bequet, as above, 6.

^c *Ibid.*

^d *Hierogazophylacium Belgicum, sive thesaurus sacrarum reliquiarum, auctore Arnaldo Raissio Belgâ-Duaceno, ibidemque apud sedem Sancti Petri Canonico, anno 1628.*

^e *Voyage littéraire de deux Bénédictins*, 1764, ii. 132.

^f A. Darcel, *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, xix. (1865) 130. A. Bequet, as above, 2.

