

REPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS.

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REPORT

PRESENTED TO THE

**Cambridge Antiquarian Society,**

AT ITS FORTY-FOURTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING,

MAY 26, 1884,

WITH AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY,  
1883—1884.

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ALSO

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MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

No. XXVI.

BEING THE FOURTH AND CONCLUDING NUMBER OF THE  
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# REPORT

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WITH APPENDIX.



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XIX. ON A SILVER STATUETTE OF FORTUNA NEMESIS.  
Communicated by C. W. KING, M.A., Trinity  
College.

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[November 12, 1883.]

IN proportion as antique art declined in beauty of form, and excellence of workmanship, so much did it increase in richness of symbolism and combination of ideas. This was the necessary consequence of the change in the spirit of the religion that had insensibly crept over the Roman world, at the time when the nude, simple anthropomorphism of Greece was respectfully superseded by the mysticism of Persia, and of Egypt :

“qualia demens  
Aegyptus portenta colat,”

where the *symbol* was the only thing of importance, and good taste, or elegance in its representation were for the most part entirely disregarded. This change has bequeathed to us innumerable evidences of itself in swarms of talismans in every variety of fantastic combination,

“All that on Folly Frenzy could beget,”

the offspring of Serapis-worship, Mithraicism and Astrology. From the same source came multitudes of other works, from colossal statues down to pocket-idols; of which however, from their more perishable nature, comparatively few have survived the various accidents of time.

Of all such monuments that have passed under my inspection the *Fortuna Nemesis* (fig. 1) of the Charvet Collection (originally found in France) expresses the doctrines it was meant to teach with the greatest elegance both of form and of execution. I shall first minutely describe the different members that go to its composition, and then offer a few remarks upon the ideas which they were intended to convey.



FIG. 1. Silver statuette of Fortuna Nemesis.

A draped female figure, with long drooping wings, bearing the cornucopie in the left hand, in the other what appears to be a bridle and the trumpet-shaped handle of a rudder at the foot of which rests a wheel, while with the thumb and fore-finger she holds the money-bag (*crumena*) of *Mercury*. Above her shoulders are placed busts of *Sol* and *Luna*, the one crowned with rays, the other with the crescent. But it is upon her head that, as reason would, the designer has lavished all the wealth of symbolism. She wears the *helmet*, the peculiar distinction of *Virgo* in the Zodiac, which again is encircled by the turreted crown of *Cybele*: from each side spring the cow's horns of the great goddess of Egypt; on its crest is set the *modius* of *Serapis*: on the summit of all rests the Winged Orb, the *Mir*, the universal Phoenician type of the Supreme Being, "the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings."

The man who designed this image was assuredly not of Juvenal's opinion, [Fortuna]

"Nullum numen habes si sit prudentia,"

when he thus concentrated all the Powers of Heaven in the person of his pretty Panthea,—to which may be justly applied what Propertius says of the Etruscan Vertumnus:

"Unum opus est; operi non datur unus honos."

That the Greeks expressed the (apparently) capricious deity who rules the affairs of Man under a visible form, is certain from the story of the Athenian wit who put forth the satirical picture representing Timotheus lying asleep whilst *Tύχη* was catching cities for him in her net<sup>1</sup>; but under what form the

<sup>1</sup> Which so piqued the Athenian general that he publicly enumerated several of his successes with the remark "In all these Fortune had no share." After this ungrateful boast, it was noticed that she had turned her back upon him, for all his subsequent enterprises ended in disappointment. Plutarch *Sulla*, vi. iii.

goddess was painted, or sculptured by them, there seems to be no certain evidence.

Far otherwise was it with the Romans, who subdivided the functions of this Ruler of Events with such precision as even to erect a temple to the "Fortuna hujusce diei." In some of her characters, especially as "Redux," they depicted her as seated, holding *cornucopiae* and *rudder*: in others, identifying her with Nemesis, they furnished her with *wings* and *wheel*. Under this latter form did she present herself to the mind of Horace, when he wrote

"huic apicem rapax  
Fortuna cum *stridore acuto*  
sustulit,"

as he beheld her swooping down from aloft with the shrill whirr of her eagle-wings<sup>1</sup>—a trope often recalled to my memory when some new Ixion finds a malicious pleasure in startling me on the highway by the graze of his noiselessly approaching *mononon*<sup>2</sup>.

When Julius (who, like his adopted son, lived in wholesome fear of Nemesis) put her figure upon his coin, a *serpent* is added as attribute for some unknown reason; and Claudius



FIG. 2. Aureus of Claudius.

repeats the type on an aureus (fig. 2)—a proof that it was copied from some highly venerated original. "Wings" were the special distinction of Nemesis, for Pausanias instances the twin "Wingless" Nemeses of Antioch as an exception

<sup>1</sup> Like the eagle on the cap of Tarquinius Priscus, as he first entered the gate of Rome.

<sup>2</sup> A word coined on the analogy of *τέθριππον*, similarly expressing the motive power.

to the universal mode of representing her. The Romans also worshipped a *dual* Fortune, for the "Fortunæ Antiates"



FIG. 3. Denarius struck by Q. Rustius.

who presided over the oldest and most celebrated oracle of Italy, appear as twin-sisters, the one helmeted as cruel, the other olive-crowned as kind, upon the remarkable coin (fig. 3) struck by Rustius, one of the Augustan monetarii. The Zodiacal Virgo always appears with a helmet on her head: Statius calls her "Marathonia Virgo," probably on that account; not merely as being the daughter of Icarus, king of Attica. As this Sign is figured holding the next in order, Libra, in her hand, the Romans seem to have often confounded her with Astraea, the emblem of Justice.

All these examples appear to give sufficient proof of the character under which this pretty little image was intended to be adored.

It now remains to consider the modeller's reason for introducing the miniature busts—perfect masterpieces of his art—the extraordinary amount of care bestowed upon their finish arguing the importance of the part they play in the composition of the *tableau*. Similar types of the Solar and Lunar Powers are



FIG. 4. Sard representing Isis.

not-unfrequent on gems, as accessories to the principal figure of some deity. In my own collection was a sard figured above (fig. 4) to double the original size, bearing a full-length figure of Isis, with the Ibis perched on her arm, and these self-same busts in the field, and similarly arranged<sup>1</sup>. Their meaning in such connexion requires no great penetration to divine: their presence declares the deity to rule over all that lies below the Sun and Moon.

This interpretation of these accessory emblems seems to me preferable to another which would make them to signify *Eternity*. It is true that Pescennius Niger symbolizes *ÆTERNITAS* on a denarius of his by a Crescent and seven stars; and that the Sassanian kings add the crescent inclosing the sun-star to their portraits, as a boast that their power should last "so long as the Sun and Moon endureth"—but to the Roman who solicited the patronage of our statuette, the *extent* of her influence was a matter that concerned *him* infinitely more than its never-ending *duration*.

The *modius* or corn-measure on the head of the goddess is the most obvious emblem of abundance of all good things, and as such is regularly borne by Serapis, the great god of Egypt, the granary of the world, in her later days. The mystics of Macrobius' times, who sought far below the surface for the occult sense of every religious type, explained it as meaning "that out of him all things proceed, and into him all things shall return": but as an attribute of *Fortuna* the more commonplace understanding of its import is certainly the best.

The *date* of workmanship may be approximately fixed by comparing its style, especially in the treatment of the wings, with that of similar figures as found on the coins of the second and third centuries. Another criterion is the quality of the

<sup>1</sup> This intaglio may possibly be a record of Cleopatra's arrogance in publicly appearing in the character of *The New Isis*, and giving her twin sons the titles of Sun and Moon.

silver itself, which is evinced from its colour to be much debased by an alloy of lead, being probably of the low standard first brought into the mint by the emperor Severus. There can be no doubt that under the Roman empire, as is still the custom all over the East, the material for any work of art or domestic use in the precious metals, was obtained by melting down the necessary weight of current coin. The already noticed merit of the miniature heads, as contrasted with the somewhat slovenly execution of the chief figure, reminds us of the singular anomaly in the coinage, which every intelligent numismatist must have remarked—that the later artists retained the faculty of drawing spirited and well-finished portraits long after they had entirely lost that of engraving full length figures. The never-ceasing demand for portraits and busts in all materials long kept up the art of modelling from the life.

I have said, at starting, that such Pantheistic figures were the offspring of the old age of Paganism; it is possible that the Vertumnus, above alluded to, may have been an exception to the rule. It was a bronze statue, the work of Mamurius, brought to Rome from Volsinii along with the two thousand others in the plunder of that city, and set up in the Forum to replace its rude predecessor in maple-wood that had stood there even before the days of Numa. Propertius has bestowed upon it one of his most charming poems: but unfortunately his description is so flowery and capable of as many meanings as the god of change himself, that the precise nature of the representation can hardly be guessed. His opening line, however<sup>2</sup>,

“Quid mirare meas tot in uno corpore formas?”

would lead to the supposition that the god was surrounded by emblems of all the trades and occupations of man. But as the Tyrrhenes, an Asiatic race, drew their first inspirations of Art

<sup>1</sup> Pliny, *H. N.* xxxiii. vii. (16), 34.

<sup>2</sup> *IV. II. 1.*

from Phoenicia, a fondness for symbolism in them is not to be wondered at.

The purpose for which the numerous figures of this class were originally intended (for it is evident that they were not meant to be *set up* for worship, neither having bases of their own, nor *tenons* for fixing them into another base) long puzzled me, until some incidental notices in ancient authors gave me the hint of a satisfactory explanation. In the last great battle under the walls of Rome, when Telesinus with his Samnites had all but won the day, Sulla drew *from his bosom*<sup>1</sup> a small Apollo of gold, and in his last despair offered to the god the most fervent prayers for succour. Again, Apuleius, when charged with magical practices (on the same grounds as Othello) by the indignant relatives of his wealthy wife, refuted the tale that he always carried about him the figure of a skeleton for some necromantic rite, by producing a little Mercury of admirable workmanship in boxwood<sup>2</sup> and putting it into the hands of the judge<sup>3</sup>. Later still, when the ancient religion was at its last gasp, Ammianus mentions a report that<sup>4</sup> the burning

<sup>1</sup> A golden Mars  $5\frac{1}{2}$  in. high, weighing 3 ounces, formerly in the Bôocke Collection (sold by Sotheby, 1857), must have been the similar "bosom-friend" of some later *imperator*.

<sup>2</sup> By Cornelius Saturninus, *artifex*. "Item minutatim ex tabellis compacta crassitudine Mercuriolum expediri potuisse." *De Magia* p. 67, ed. Bipontin.

<sup>3</sup> "Accipe, quaeso, Maxime, et contemplare: bene tam puris et tam piis manibus tuis traditur res consecrata. En vero quam facies ejus decora, et succi palaestrici plena sit: quam hilaris Dei vultus, quam decenter utrinque lanugo malis deserpat: ut in capite crispatus capillus intimo pilei umbraculo appareat: quam lepide super tempora pares pinnulae emineant: quam autem festive circa humeros vestis coniecta sit! Hunc qui *sceletum* audet dicere profecto ille aut simulacra Deorum nulla videt aut omnia negligit. Hunc denique qui *larvam* putat ipse est *larvatus*." id. ib. p. 69. From other hints dropped by Apuleius, I suspect he wishes to insinuate that his brother-in-law, Æmilian, was a concealed Christian.

<sup>4</sup> "Ferebatur autem licet rumore levissimo." XXII. xiii. 3. The old soldier evidently shared Julian's suspicions.

of the famous temple of Apollo at Antioch (which Julian attributed to the spite of the Christians) was due to the carelessness of the philosopher Asclepiades, who in thanksgiving for his safe journey from distant Gaul, to visit his former disciple, had left, at midnight, his inseparable travelling companion, a silver image of the "Goddess of Heaven" (Astarte)<sup>1</sup>, with lighted tapers set up all round it, before the elevated feet (*ad pedes sublimes*) of the celebrated colossus<sup>2</sup>. And Pliny laughs at people carrying figures of Egyptian gods upon their fingers, specimens of which are still to be found, resembling the Crucifixings worn by certain anthropomorphic religionists in our day.

The two gems here figured illustrate other modes of representing the goddess. In one (fig. 5), a sard, a City solicits



FIG. 5.

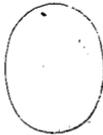


FIG. 6.



protection, as is shown by her gesture; in the other (fig. 6) the motive is expressed by the invocation BOHΘEI added on the reverse<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> "Deae Caelestis *argenteum breve figmentum quocunq; ibat secum solitus ferre.*" XXII. xiii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> A chryselephante colossus, made by Antiochus Epiphanes in emulation of the Olympic Zeus. It is carefully represented on a little coin of Julian's, with the legend APOLLONI SANCTO. Obv. GENIO ANTIOCHENO.

<sup>3</sup> I take this opportunity of correcting a mistake into which I had been led by an imperfect copy of a gem in the possession of Mr Fortnum, described in the *Archaeological Journal*, Vol. XLII., p. 169. The complete inscription reads ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΝΕΜΕΙΣ Η ΚΥΡΙΑ. The goddess is represented making the usual gesture with her right hand, but carries in her left hand what appears to be an orb; at her feet is a gryphon.

Archaeologists ought to be grateful to this pretty and innocent form of superstition, to which they owe the legacy of so many of these miniature treasures of art—the foremost place amongst which is to be assigned to our FORTUNA NEMESIS. From the Charvet cabinet she has recently winged her way to the *lararium* of the Rev. S. S. Lewis; upon whose fortunes may she shed as benign an influence as was ever invoked by her first possessor!

[*The illustrations in this Communication are from originals in the cabinet of the Rev. S. S. LEWIS.*]