

ANCIENT PORTRAITURES OF OUR LORD.



PRESENTES

FIGVRE · AD · SIMILI  
 TVDINEM · DOMINI · IHE  
 SV · SALVATORIS · NOSTRI  
 ET · APOSTOLI · PAVLI · IN · AMI  
 RALDO · IMPRESSE · PER · MAG  
 NI · THEVCRI · PREDECESSORES · AN  
 TIA · SINGVLARITER · OBSERVA  
 TE · MISSE · SVNT · AB · IPSO · MAG  
 NO · THEVCRO · S · D · N · PAPE  
 INNOCENCIO · OCTAVO · PRO · SI  
 NGVLARI · CLENODIO · AD · HV  
 NC · FINEM · VT · SVVM · FRA  
 TREM · CAPTIVVM  
 RETINERET.

Bronze Medal in the British Museum, and Inscription on the Reverse.

(Original size.)

## The Archaeological Journal.

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JUNE, 1872.

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### ANCIENT PORTRAITURES OF OUR LORD.

AFTER THE TYPE OF THE EMERALD VERNICLE GIVEN BY BAJAZET II.  
TO POPE INNOCENT VIII.

Notice Supplementary to a Memoir by Mr. C. W. KING, *Archaeological Journal*, vol. xxvii. p. 181.)

THE investigation of the earliest types of sacred portraiture, and especially of those of the Saviour, presents a subject of such pre-eminent interest in the History of Christian Art, that any details connected with it cannot fail to prove acceptable to readers of this Journal. In a previous volume we were indebted to the tasteful erudition of Mr. King for a valuable dissertation on "the Emerald Vernicle of the Vatican," that inestimable relic of early art, now unhappily lost almost beyond all hope of recovery, and of which no tradition even seems to have survived, beyond the garbled inscriptions on certain paintings of the sixteenth century, which, from time to time, have been brought under the notice of the Institute by the examples exhibited at our meetings.

It appeared to me desirable to bring together any available evidence connected with the highly interesting tradition of this portraiture, which, as might be anticipated from the glyptic nature of its prototype—a cameo probably on plasma—is not, like the other early portraits of our Lord most familiar to us, in full face, but in profile. It has, moreover, not been noticed in various dissertations on the subject. We seek for it in vain in Peignot's elaborate work,—"*Récherches sur la Personne de Jésus Christ*,"—in Heaphy's "*Examination into the Antiquity of the Likeness of Our Blessed Lord*,"<sup>1</sup>—and even in the exhaustive researches by the writer of "*Portraits of Christ*," in the *Quarterly Review*.<sup>2</sup> Neither

<sup>1</sup> *Art Journal*, Series iv., vol. vii., 1861.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. cxxiii. p. 490.

is this particular type mentioned in Mrs. Jameson's "History of Our Lord," edited by Lady Eastlake, in which so much valuable information will be found.<sup>3</sup>

It is very remarkable that no trace of the gift of so precious an object as the *icon* should be found in the works of contemporary authority, and in which we find the most ample relations of Bajazet's propitiatory gift of the Holy Lance to Innocent, and also of his annual largess to the Holy See in favour of his captive brother. To our learned and lamented friend, Canon Rock, I am indebted for the assurance that his researches had been wholly in vain. We find minute narrations by Ciacconius, and his laborious annotator Victorellus, of the august ceremonial on the reception of the "celestial lance." Matthew Bossus, Canon of Verona, an eye-witness of the pompous welcome accorded to Zemes, relates the minutest particulars, and describes the unsightly aspect and grotesque figure of the barbarian prince; but no allusion has been found to the precious emerald, that could not fail, we might suppose, to excite the utmost veneration.

The recent production, through the friendly courtesy of Sir Edmund H. Lechmere, Bart., of another example of these portraitures of our Lord, in unusually good preservation, has suggested to me to offer such incidental notices as I had formerly collected, and which may, I hope, prove serviceable as supplementary to the memoir by Mr. King. To him, our valued guide and master in all the intricate questions of ancient Iconography, the student of the incunabula of sacred art is indebted for the elucidation of the origin of the remarkable portraits in question, that seem undoubtedly to have been singularly esteemed and treasured in former days, as shown by the numerous *sei-cento* reproductions still existing. It is to be regretted, however, that hitherto no example has been brought to our knowledge that can be regarded as the immediate prototype, possibly by some renowned master of the Italian school, of the period when the *icon* on the precious emerald of Bajazet may have excited the veneration of the Eternal City at the close of the fifteenth century.

The painting above mentioned, made known to us through the kindness of Sir Edmund Lechmere, has been long in possession of his family in Worcestershire, and is now pre-

<sup>3</sup> Vol. i. p. 31.

served at his residence, the Rhydd, Upton-on-Severn. It is on panel, measuring  $10\frac{3}{4}$  in. in height by  $5\frac{1}{2}$  in breadth. In the upper part the head of the Saviour is seen in profile, to the left, on a gold ground; the features are of mild, pleasing expression; the long hair, of dark chestnut colour, falls on the shoulders; the beard is short, and slightly forked; the dress dark green. The lower moiety of the panel bears the following inscription in gold letters (Roman capitals) on a black ground:—

THIS PRESENT FIGURE IS THE SIMILITVDE OF OVRE  
LORD IHV OVRE SAVIOR IMPRINTED IN AMIRALD BY THE  
PREDESESSORS OF THE GRETE TURKE AND SENT TO OVRE  
HOLY FATER (*sic*) THE POPE INNOSENT THE VIII. AT  
THE COST OF THE GRETE TURKE FOR A TOKIN FOR  
THIS CAUSE TO REDEME HIS BROTHER THAT WAS TAKYN  
PRESONER.

Several examples of this “similitude,” it may be remembered, have been brought before the Institute, at the London meetings and in our temporary museums. Those hitherto known to me appear without exception to be repetitions of a valued type, probably from the hand of some Italian painter, who had access to the precious emerald as his model; in every instance the date of their execution seems to be about the commencement of the sixteenth century, possibly a few years earlier. Whilst they differ slightly in certain details, they are nearly uniform in dimension, and the inscription, that sometimes contains slight blunders, is always in English, and constantly sets forth the gift of the emerald prototype to Innocent VIII. by Bajazet II. to propitiate the Holy Father in favour of his younger brother, Zemes or Zizim, who had been defeated at Brousa in 1482, and sought refuge with the Soldan of Egypt. These curious details have been set forth by Mr. King in his memoir above cited. The examples of the painting previously submitted to the Institute, differ only from that transmitted to Mr. King from the Isle of Man in the absence of the radiant aureole, which is found in that instance only.

In 1851 one of these portraitures had been exhibited by Mr. Thomas Hart, of Reigate; it is described in this Journal (vol. viii. p. 320). The inscription asserts that the similitude had been “FOUND IN AMARAT,” evidently a blunder for

emerald, and that the captive prince was taken prisoner by the Romans. Another, also slightly blundered, was brought in 1857 by Mr. Cumming, as recorded in vol. xiv. p. 95 ; a third was in possession of Henry Howard, Esq., at Greystoke Castle. It is described in the *Beauties of England and Wales*, vol. iii. p. 167.

In the *Antiquarian Repertory*,<sup>4</sup> an engraving will be found of one of these portraits communicated in 1780 by Mr. W. Loltie, of Canterbury, and described as painted on oak, on a gold ground, the colours fine, the legend in gold letters on a black ground. In 1793 Mr. Urban received also from Mr. T. Woolston, of Adderbury, a description of one in the possession of Mr. J. Barber ; the legend is precisely the same as on the painting at the Rhydd, with the exception of the concluding lines, stating that the prototype, "imprinted in amirald by the predesessor of the Great Turke" was "sent to Pope Innosent (*sic*) the VIII. for a token to redeme his brother that was takyn presonor."<sup>5</sup> In 1793 another is described by R. K. as existing at Langton, near Spilsby ; the legend contains several blunders, and sets forth that the "seymlytude" was imprinted in "amyrlld."<sup>6</sup>

I may here mention also that in the *Révue Archéologique*<sup>7</sup> there is a notice of a profile portraiture of the Saviour, with the inscription in English. This painting preserved in the South of France claims special consideration as being the only specimen of the series hitherto found on the Continent.

M. Jules Courtet, Sous-Préfet of Die, author of the memoir, states that at Granbois, a village in the south of France (department of Vaucluse), several paintings are to be seen in a small country house, that retains its old furniture and ornaments. Amongst the paintings the most remarkable is a bust of our Lord, in profile, bearded, the head surrounded by an *aureole* composed of cherubs' heads winged. The ground is gilded ; the dimensions of the picture, which is on copper, with a frame of ebony and silver angle-mounts, is about 12 in. by 8 in. The countenance of the Saviour is that of a man in the prime of life, of noble expression, rather serious than sorrowful. The lower part of this curious relic of Byzantine art, as M. Courtet considers

<sup>4</sup> Vol. iii. p. 101, edit. 1808.

<sup>5</sup> *Gent. Mag.*, vol. lxiii. part 2, p. 1177.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. lxx., part 1, p. 870.

<sup>7</sup> Vol. iii. pp. 101, 185.

it to be, is occupied by the following inscription, in six lines :—

THIS PRESENT FIGVRE IS THE SIMILITVDE OF OVR LORD  
HĪN (*sic* for IHV ?) OVRE SAVIOR IMPRINTED IN AMARILD BY  
THE PREDECESSORS OF THE GREATE TVRKE AND SENT TO THE  
POPE INNOSENT THE VIII AT THE COST OF THE GRETE TVRKE  
FOR A TOKEN FOR THIS CAWSE TO REDEME HIS BROTHER  
THAT WAS TAKVN PRESONOR.

After noticing the history of the captive Zemes, M. Courtet states, apparently on the authority of the owner of the painting, that it was given by the family of the Surintendant Fouquet to Pierre Rappélis de Roquesante, one of the Commission appointed to try Fouquet in 1661, and through his exertions sentence of exile not of death was passed : he refused all recompense from Fouquet except the painting and a medal ; the former, as was asserted, had been stolen from the Vatican, probably at the sack of Rome by Bourbon.<sup>8</sup> Of the medal no particulars are given ; it may have been one of those bearing the profile bust, with a Hebrew inscription, or of those of larger module, of which notices will be given hereafter.

There is also another reproduction of the same type of the profile from the emerald, but slightly varied in the expression of the countenance, the pose of the figure, and some other details. It is, moreover, not a painting, but a piece of tapestry that was in possession of the late Mr. Samuel Bagster, the eminent publisher of many beautiful editions of the Holy Scriptures. It is familiar to collectors of engravings by a striking mezzotinto, published some years since. Under the bust there is the following inscription, accompanied by an English version, as follows :—“ Vera Salvatoris nostri effigies ad imitationem imaginis Smaragdo incisæ jussu Tiberii Cæsaris, quo smaragdo postea ex Thesauro Constantinopolitano Turcarum Imperator Innocentium VIII. Pont. Max. Rom. donavit pro redimendo fratre Christianis captivo.” This is accompanied by the following English version :—“ A true likeness of our Saviour, copied from the portrait carved on an emerald by order of Tiberius Cæsar, which

<sup>8</sup> The ebony frame in chased silver mounts might suggest, as Mr. King remarked to me, that the picture had been

appropriated from the Collection of Charles I. at the Revolution.



emerald the Emperor of the Turks afterwards gave out of the Treasury of Constantinople to Pope Innocent VIII. for the redemption of his brother taken captive by the Christians."

On the lower margin of the plate is inscribed,—“Drawn from an ancient tapestry in the possession of the publisher, Mr. Sam. Bagster, Paternoster Row.” The plate was accidentally destroyed, as I was informed by Mr. J. Bagster, in 1851; he stated that the tapestry had been in his father’s possession. An inferior reproduction of the print above described has subsequently been in the market. Of precisely the same type, and probably from one of the engravings above mentioned, a small oval photograph has been recently taken, entitled, “A true likeness of our Saviour,” and stated as above to have been from the emerald.<sup>9</sup>

It will be noticed that here the alleged origin of the gem as having been derived from the ancient treasury of the Empire of the East, a fact not found in any of the inscriptions on the numerous painted portraitures, described in the present notices, is found to be asserted on the representation of this interesting relic of ancient textile art in Mr. Bagster’s possession.

With these reproductions of the profile portraiture may be mentioned an old painting on panel, possibly from a different type, which in 1855 was in possession of Mr. Kerslake, a well-known bookseller at Bristol; it was a half-length portrait inscribed thus:—“This pictur is the similitude of our Lord Jesus Christ as he did walke upon the earth, and was sent by Publius Lentullus to Tiberius Claudius Emperour of Rome under whom Christ did suffer.” Didron, in his *Iconographie Chrétienne*, it may be remembered, observes that Constantine had caused portraits of the Saviour to be painted, after the description given by Lentulus, whose remarkable epistle, alleged to have been addressed to the Senate, will there be found.<sup>1</sup> The learned Fabricius informs

<sup>9</sup> This photograph may probably have been reproduced from a small folio engraving, published some years ago by Messrs. McLean. More recently a beautiful plate has been executed, that appears to reproduce the beautiful type of the tapestry in Messrs. Bagster’s possession. The bust is in an oval compartment, surrounded by an elaborate frame of ornamental work, measuring 9½ in. by 11¼. Beneath is written, “The Only True Portraiture,” &c., with the usual

mention of the emerald given to the Pope. London, published July 6, 1869, by William Lucas and Co., 17, Great Portland Street.

<sup>1</sup> Didron, *Iconographie*, p. 229. See also Fabricius, *Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti*, p. 302; Hamburgi, 1703. A translation will be found in Mrs. Jameson’s *History of Our Lord*, vol. i. p. 35. Mr. King mentioned this popular legend. *Arch. Journ.*, vol. xxvii. p. 185.

us that in a MS. in the library at Jena was preserved a portrait of our Lord, accompanying a copy of that epistle in golden letters, and “ad prosopographiam hanc affabre depictæ.”

It is to be regretted that no description of the type of portraiture was given by Mr. Kerslake ; it may possibly have been full-face, with forked beard and long falling hair, a type of which numerous striking examples exist. It has indeed been believed that the portraits connected both with the legend of Lentulus and that of King Abgarus and the linen Vernicle are always in full face.

I proceed to notice briefly certain interesting reproductions of the profile type of another description. Mr. King has figured a beautiful medal,<sup>2</sup> from an example in my own possession, a portraiture that had been described as most precious by Ambrosius, who wrote in the times of Julius II. and Leo X. (1503—1521). It had been supposed contemporary with its divine prototype. Mr. King states that this medal is not uncommon, and that it is a sand-cast in white bell metal ; Ambrosius describes it as of brass ; that which belongs to myself had long been accounted as of silver. Besides the engraving that has been given by Dr. Walsh, a medal of nearly similar type, and as I believe identical with that under consideration, was figured by Rowlands, in his *Mona Antiqua*. It had been found, about 1723, at the “round cirque at Bryn Gwyn,”—the supreme tribunal—in Anglesey.<sup>3</sup> This medal is described as of brass ; this, however, might obviously designate bell-metal, especially if its surface were discoloured or decayed. We cannot marvel that the discovery, having occurred near Tre'r Dryw, with its supposed Druidical grove and megalithic monuments, was advanced in confirmation of the conjecture that the place had been the *Forum* or tribunal of the Druids. Edward Lhwyd, the learned *custos* of the Ashmolean, willingly sought aid from the most eminent Hebraists in the university to elucidate so rare a relic of antiquity, in those hazy times when erudite scholars gravely discussed the probability that Hebrew was the tongue of Noah and his family. Be this as it may, and whether the want of precise conformity between the Tre'r Dryw medal and

<sup>2</sup> Arch. Journ., vol. xxvii. pp. 182, 186.

93 ; see also, in the Appendix, pp. 297—300, the remarks of his learned correspondents at Oxford.

<sup>3</sup> Rowlands, second edition, pp. 90,



that figured by Mr. King may be due to the imperfect skill either of the engraver or of the Oxford Hebraists, it must be admitted that it would be unsafe to affirm that the medals are absolutely identical. On the obverse, the Hebrew characters denoting the name Jesus are omitted in Rowlands' plate; the five lines on the reverse are also reduced to four, which I have sought in vain to identify with the words on my medal, explained as signifying—Messiah the king came in peace, and being made the light of men he lives. Hottinger, I may observe, mentions such pieces as occurring both in gold and silver. Waser had described the medal, of the same type as that which I possess, as of silver; he adverts to the letter of Lentulus and the description of the Saviour's person, received by Tiberius, as the authority for the portraiture.<sup>4</sup> The Rev. Dr. Walsh, in his "Essay on Ancient Medals and Gems, illustrating the progress of Christianity in the early ages," had obtained from a Polish Jew at Rostoc, in Germany, one of these medals. It excited his curiosity, as appearing to have been struck from the same die as that found in co. Cork in 1812,<sup>5</sup> and supposed to have been brought into Ireland at some early period after the introduction of the faith. His observations will be read with interest; the metal, he observes, is a singular composition, paler than brass, does not tarnish, and is very sonorous. By the engraving that accompanies his account, there seems to have been a projection at the upper edge, possibly a broken loop, by which the piece might be worn as a pendant or talisman.

The learned Leusden figured the medal in question from one of brass in his possession, and describes it as a shekel—"Siclus est Judæo-Christianus," but he has wholly lost the fine type of the features, and, as also in Dr. Walsh's lithograph, the inscription on the reverse is imperfectly represented.<sup>6</sup> It should possibly, as has been suggested, be read thus :—

משיה מלך בא בשלם ואר מאדם עשרי דו

Besides the medal last noticed and comparatively well

<sup>4</sup> Hottinger, de Nummis Orientalium, p. 149; Waserus, de Nummis Hebræorum, fol. 63. See also representations of the medal by Morinus, de Ling. Primæv., c. ix., p. 305; Wagenseil, apud Surenhusius, t. iii. p. 239; Alstedius, Præcognita Theologia, &c.

<sup>5</sup> Walsh, Essay, &c., second edition,

p. 5. The medal had been found in digging potatoes on the site of a very ancient monastery, of the first Christian age.

<sup>6</sup> Leusden, Philologus Hebræus, 1671, pp. 191, 192, Dissertatio de Nummis. The medal is ascribed to Jewish converts by Alstedius.

known, there exists another of smaller module, and of rare occurrence. Both have been figured in the notes on the *Mischna*, in the edition by Surenhusius.<sup>7</sup> The former is described as frequently to be met with—"in multorum manibus"—and commonly ("*passim*") to be seen suspended to the necks of children. A somewhat varied reading of the Hebrew legend is given, with the interpretation—"Messias rex venit in pace et homo ex homine factus est vivus (seu verus)." It is observed, however, that the inscribed obverses of these medals, tooled up by some artificer ignorant of the Hebrew tongue, present many slight discrepancies that render the interpretation very difficult.

Of the smaller medal, apparently a repetition of the emerald type, but measuring, as shown by the engraver, one inch only in diameter, the learned editor had seen a single example, that had been shown to him at Vienna.<sup>8</sup> On the obverse is the head of our Lord, in profile to the right; there are no Hebrew letters in the field, as on the larger medal. On the reverse is the following legend, in four lines:—

ישוע נָצְרִי מְשִׁיחַ יְהוּדָה וְאֶרֶם יְהוּ

thus interpreted:—"Jesus Nazarenus Messias Deus et homo simul."

These medals, as he observes, may be ascribed to some Christian artist acquainted with Hebrew, or to some Jewish convert, who thought that it would be pleasing to pilgrims to the Holy Places to bring home from the land that our Lord inhabited a coin (*moneta*) exhibiting his face. Hence such pieces were executed, and inscribed in Hebrew, so that they might excite greater veneration in the eyes of the unlearned, and, presenting the appearance of antiquity, might realise a better price.

Another remarkable medal is to be found in the King's Cabinet in the British Museum, for a notice of which I am indebted to Mr. Franks. By Mr. Ready's obliging assistance I have obtained a facsimile. This medal had not been mentioned by Mr. King. It bears the head of the Saviour, to the left, with the inscription—YHS. XPC. SALVATOR

<sup>7</sup> Legum Mischnicarum Liber, pars iii. "De re Uxoriam," edit. Gul. Surenhusius, Amstd. 1698, p. 239.

<sup>8</sup> "Non alibi vidimus quam Viennæ

apud amplissimum, etc., nobis dilectum virum Ferdinandum Persium a Lohndorf, ser. Elect. Palat. in aula Cæsarea Legatum Residentem."

MVNDI. On the reverse (in small capitals), "Præsentes figure ad similitudinem Domini Ihesu Salvatoris nostri et apostoli Pauli in amiraldo impresse per magni Theucris predecessoris antea singulariter observate misse sunt ab ipso magno Theucro s. d. n. Pape Innocencio octavo pro singulari clenodio ad hunc finem ut suum fratrem captivum retineret." Here it will be observed that the true motive seems for the first time to be expressed, which induced Bajazet to propitiate the Pope in favour of the captive Zemes. His desire was in fact not to redeem his brother from captivity, but to ensure his safe custody; to this end, as alleged, Bajazet engaged to remit to the Pope annually 40,000 gold crowns, for fear lest Innocent should release the prisoner, on account of the expense of maintenance. Innocent, it is believed, had been desirous to retain Zemes for certain political reasons, probably at the instance of Sultan Bajazet, with whom Zemes had violently contested the sovereignty. Zemes remained at Rome till the invasion of Italy in 1489 by Charles VIII. of France, to whom he was delivered up, and died not long after, as suspected, by poison.

This medal, of the obverse of which a representation accompanies these Notices, measures  $3\frac{1}{4}$  in. in diameter; around the head there is a cruciferous nimb, the limbs of the cross are pierced, as shown in the woodcut. The face is rather long, in profile to the left, and of Hebrew expression, somewhat deficient in grace and dignity. The type, however, is evidently identical with that from which the various paintings above described were taken. At the top there is a small loop for suspension.

There is also in the King's Cabinet, as I am informed by Mr. Franks, the companion medallion of St. Paul, to which the inscription on that last described makes allusion. It bears the head of the apostle, to the right, with the inscription—VAS ELECTIONIS PAVLVS APOSTOLVS. On the reverse—"Benedicite in excelsis Deo domino de fontibus Israel ibi boni animi adolescentulus in mentis excessu." In the Museum collection there is moreover a medallion with the head of our Lord on the obverse, and that of St. Paul on the reverse.

It is with gratification that I would here mention the friendly courtesy of Mr. Fortnum, whose treasures of mediæval art have so often been freely placed at our disposal. I am indebted to him for another example of the striking

medal—the head of our Saviour—that I had obtained from the National Collection. It is apparently a casting of the same type in gilt metal, the details of the obverse with the profile head and the legend are identical; the dimensions are indeed slightly larger, the diameter being somewhat more than  $3\frac{1}{2}$  in., and the reverse bears, within a foliated chaplet tied by a riband at the bottom, the following legend:—TV ES CHRISTVS FILIVS DEI VIVI QVI IN HVNC MVNDVM VENISTI. The slight disparity in size is probably accidental, the edge of the disc having been left somewhat larger in finishing off the margin of the cast. At the top there is a small perforation, for the purpose of suspension.

It deserves notice that certain medals of the fine Papal Series present a profile head of the Saviour, which bears in several instances resemblance to the type of the emerald *icon*. The kindness of Mrs. Meadows Frost, of Chester, has invited my attention to the beautiful medals of Gregory X., Alexander VII., and Pius V., in her possession.

ALBERT WAY.



Medal of white mixed metal, probably a fine sand-casting. Date circa A.D. 1500.  
From an example in possession of ALBERT WAY.