ON AN INTAGLIO PROBABLY COMMEMORATING THE GOTHIC VICTORY OF ÆMILIAN.

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No remains of antiquity exhibit in so striking a manner the difference between Greek and Roman ways of thinking as do the gems used for signets by the two races. Their other works of art that have come down to us—of sculpture and painting, for example—are far from affording the same light, for the very sufficient reason that in these branches the Romans were mere copyists of the great masters of ancient Greece, and continued to reproduce their works in an endless succession of facsimiles, and finally of caricatures, as long as the taste for such embodiments of ancient ideas had influence throughout the empire. The diversity of feeling, that really did so strongly exist, is consequently only to be discovered in those artistic productions of the latter people that, belonging to everyday life, are inspired by the spirit of the hour, and are in every sense of the word *original;* and this is peculiarly the nature of the subjects selected for signet devices. Signets had in the ancient world an importance of which the modern can form but a faint idea; they authenticated and secured all the transactions and possessions of the civilized society. It is in this department, then, that the difference of national feeling manifests itself most conspicuously through the different nature of the subjects taken for such devices: a diversity that never fails to strike every intelligent student of a complete collection of engraved gems, and which actually furnishes the amateur with one of his surest guides for a just classification of glyphic monuments. The art of the Greeks draws its inspiration entirely from *religion*, its mythology and poetry being so intimately connected together, and the two systems of nature-worship and hero-worship so inextricably interwoven, that it is evident that the scenes from the Epic Cycle (which was the

Intaglio probably commemorating the Gothic Victory of Æmilian.

Drawing enlarged to three times the size of original.

grand repertory for the engraver during the best times) were looked upon by his employers as equally pertaining to the national religion with the actual figures of the deities; which last, indeed, many, sharing the scruples of Pythagoras, deemed too holy to be profaned by promiscuous use. The various animals, also, which the early Greeks loved so much to carry in their signets, appear to have received this honour as being the recognised attributes of different deities, and therefore empowered to act as their representatives, and to shed the same beneficent influence upon the devotee who went about adorned with such symbols. Even in those rare instances (all later than Alexander's reign), where the portraits of living persons were transferred to the gem, the so doing was of itself an assumption of divinity, and was carefully restricted to the signet of the Sovereign. The same observation equally applies to the kindred art of numismatics, where practice was confessedly subjected to the same laws as in glyptics; the two branches being carried on without distinction by the same professors. Greek coins offer representations of mythological scenes, and the ceremonial of local religions, even to the date of the extinction of all autonomous coinage under Diocletian; notwithstanding the example to the contrary so long set by the concurrent imperial mintage. But how different becomes the case as soon as the Romans begin to have an art of their own, and grew independent of the effete Etruscan, itself, at best, only a copyist of the archaic Greek. The majority of Roman signets do indeed carry, as before, the patron-god of the owner, or the ensign of his profession or trade, but a great and important innovation is now visible—people of family assuming for badge the head of some illustrious ancestor, or (what equally interests posterity) the record o some exploit of their own, which they regarded as the crowning glory of their life. It is only necessary here to allude to the signet of the degenerate son of Scipio Africanus; to that of the more degenerate Lentulus; to Pliny's often-cited examples of the "Duel between the Spanish chief and Scipio Æmilianus" (an event on which the victim's son so greatly prided himself); Sylla's seal of the "Surrender of Jugurtha," which he, later in his career, exchanged for that more boastful memento of his perpetual successes, the "Three Trophies;" and Pompey's assumption

of the same device, with a similar signification.[1] I have also had the happiness of discovering a memorial of the same nature in the signet of Q. Cornelius Lupus, and making it known to the reader of this Journal.[2] The custom was kept up as long as the art itself survived; intagli exist displaying the military feats of Trajan and of Constantine: and the series closes very appropriately with the famous "Sapphire of Constantius," who, having no warlike trophies to display, glorifies himself by spearing the monstrous wild boar, "Xiphias," in his park at Cesarea.

Engravings like the last preserve to us some faint idea of the stupendous works of statuary raised to Imperial vanity by the adulation of their times; all of which have yielded to the ravages of age, and of which great part, even in their own day, did not survive the next change of rulers. This may be gathered from a remarkable passage of Gregory Nazianzen's,[3] where he inveighs against Julian for setting up his own statues accompanied with those of his gods, with the view of entrapping the unwary Christian into adoring the latter whilst doing homage to the figure of his sovereign. He says that his predecessors, even in times of Paganism, had done nothing of the sort, but had regularly caused themselves to be figured in the act either of receiving offerings from subject states, or of being crowned by Victory, or of trampling down their enemies, or of performing some feat in hunting; in which last remark the preacher probably had in view the actual memorial of his much-lauded Constantius, only known to us now through the medium of the gem already quoted.

The object of these statements and citations is to bring before the reader what appear to me sufficient grounds for my explanation of the gem which gives its name to this memoir. This explanation will doubtless, at first sight, strike even persons possessing a special knowledge of the subject as very speculative, not to say rash; but if they carefully weigh the arguments about to be adduced, they may probably find that there is no antecedent impossibility against discovering, with me, in this little relic, an extremely interesting historical monument. They will be led to per-

[1] Valerius Maximus III., 5; Cicero. Catilin. III., 5; Pliny, Nat. Hist. xxvii. 4; Plutarch, 'Sylla.'

[2] Vol. xxiii. p. 79.

[3] Oration iv. 'Invective against Julian.'

ceive, if my reasons are well founded, that *action*, *actors*, and *attributes* in the tableau supply evidence for attaching the nature of the event commemorated to a person and circumstances almost beyond the reach of doubt: considerations of art likewise lend their aid towards defining the period of its execution within very narrow limits of time; the only uncertainty remaining being which of the two personages, whom all these circumstances appear equally to fit, has the best claim to the honour of the memorial?

But it is now time to come to the description of the object which it is my aim to elucidate. This is a pale sard, of oval form, engraved with a group of an *Imperator*, indicated for such by the helmet on his head and the *paludamentum* thrown over his left arm; whose right hand, Victory, standing in front, clasps, proffering to him at the same time the laurel wreath; whilst her sister, behind, is placing on his head a radiated crown; at his side is seen a stag—an adjunct of which the importance in explaining the scene shall be pointed out in the proper place. The drapery of these Victories is treated in a peculiar style, being composed of large and heavy folds, violently agitated, as though by the rapid movement of the bodies. The same manner may be recognised in the medallic art of the third century, whenever similar figures are introduced. The design of this group is not without merit; the action of the figures is spirited, and tells its tale expressively enough, and they are deeply cut; but their work is without detail, and heavy and coarse in the extreme, much resembling that which so strongly marks the Sassanian style. All these peculiarities combine to point out a late period of the Roman Empire as that at which the engraving was produced, yet one prior to the establishment of Christianity, as the costume and attributes declare. None but an artist reputed the most skilful of his times would have designed so ambitious a composition, and his failure in carrying out his grand conception must be imputed, not to the fault of the individual, but to the decrepitude of the art,—a consideration supplying us with an approximate date for its execution. And that such date is anterior to Constantine, may be certainly inferred from the Pagan symbols that shine so conspicuously in the scene,—the *stag*, for example,—as well as from the *beard* worn by the hero of the piece; that badge of heathenism which dis-

appeared together with its latest professor from Imperial portraiture. But the early part of the second century of our era would have produced a very superior specimen of the glyptic art, when called for by an event of the evident importance that inspired our engraver (as the numerous gem-portraits of the family of Severus remain to evince); the period for our inquiry, therefore, becomes reduced within the half-century of rapid degeneracy that ensued upon the fall of Decius; whence date the first irruption of the barbarians, and confusion and rebellion throughout the Empire.

To come now to the *action* of the figures, which is so significant that it seems to me to tell a story which can only be understood in one way. The Victory in front presents the hero with a *laurel wreath*, that established announcement of some military success; whilst her sister confers upon him the *radiated crown*, which, from Caracalla's reign, had become the regular form of the crown Imperial, and exclusively used to denote the dignity of an "Augustus." My interpretation of the picture is, therefore, the idea that some military success over the barbarians, conferring great glory upon the leader here complimented, had been closely followed by a second, the result of which was his acquisition of the Imperial dignity. But in searching the history of that tumultuous period (the necessary limits of which have been above defined), I can discover no one amongst the numerous ephemeral Emperors whose fortunes so exactly tally with the requirements of the case as do those of Æmilian; the summary of which I shall here borrow from Gibbon, who has, with his usual lucidity, brought into historical connection the events rather hinted at than narrated by the epitomisers Zosimus and Zonaras:—"The defence of the monarchy, which seemed abandoned by the pusillanimous emperor, was assumed by Æmilianus, governor of Pannonia and Mœsia, who rallied the scattered forces, and renewed the fainting spirits of the troops. The barbarians were unexpectedly attacked, routed, chased, and pursued beyond the Danube. The victorious leader distributed as a donative the money collected for the tribute, and the acclamations of the soldiers proclaimed him Emperor on the field of battle. Gallus, who, careless of the general welfare, indulged himself in the pleasures of Italy, was, almost in the same instant, informed of the success of the revolt, and of the

rapid approach of his aspiring lieutenant. He advanced to meet him as far as the plains of Spoleto. When the armies came in sight of each other, the soldiers of Gallus compared the ignominious conduct of their sovereign with the glory of his rival. They admired the valour of Æmilianus, they were attracted by his liberality, for he offered a considerable increase of pay to all deserters. The murder of Gallus and of his son Valusianus put an end to the civil war, and the senate gave a legal sanction to the right of conquest. The letters of Æmilianus to that assembly displayed a mixture of moderation and vanity. He assured them that he should resign to their wisdom the civil administration, and, contenting himself with the quality of their general, would in a short time assert the glory of Rome, and deliver the Empire from all the barbarians both of the North and of the East. His pride was flattered by the applause of the senate, and medals are still extant representing him with the name and attributes of Hercules the Victor, and Mars the Avenger."

No one acquainted with the ancient principles of pictorial composition will for a moment doubt that some very important signification was conveyed by the introduction of the *stag* which makes so conspicuous a show in the foreground of the intaglio now under consideration. That it declares the patronage of Diana (or the Lunar Power, as spiritualized in that last phase of Paganism [4]) to have been the cause of the good fortune here commemorated, will not be denied by any numismatist who calls to mind the numerous coins of Gallienus and succeeding reigns, which bear the goddess with her stag, or the latter by itself, with the legend "Diana Conservatrix," as they also do her brother's gryphon with similar title declaring his protection. Now Æmilian appears to have taken this goddess for his special patroness, since he first introduces on the coinage the reverse "Dianæ Victrici"; representing her as drawing an arrow from her quiver to destroy the enemies of her votary, not her usual sylvan prey (for in that case the "Victrix" had no applicability): with her *stag* at her side just as it accompanies the hero of our gem. It was into this animal that she

[4] Trebellius Pollio calls her 'Ephesia Luna,' when mentioning the destruction of her celebrated Temple by the Goths in the time of Gallienus; 'Gallieni Duo,' cap. vi.

changed herself, in the fabled "War of the Giants," to do battle with the huge Riphœus; and its figure was consequently employed to express her influence when circumstances, like the present limited field, prevented the introduction of Diana in person. The form of the inscription last quoted has also a significance of its own: its being put in the *dative* case shows it not to be merely explanatory of the type it accompanies, but to declare that this particular type was devised "in honour of," or as a token of gratitude to the Power thus represented. It may, therefore, be reasonably assumed that the Prince who first introduced this legend upon his coins had some special motive for boasting of the favour of the sylvan Queen. To quote other examples from the numismatic usages of the same period, where the well-known *attribute* is singly employed to denote the presence and protection of the divinity to whom it is attached; on the coinage of the same period the guardianship of "Liber Conservator" is symbolized by his panther alone; of Venus, by her dove.

It is a fact to be noticed as of much weight in the present inquiry, that this type of the Diana Victrix is employed by none of the succeeding emperors, except Claudius Gothicus. In *his* case, indeed, it was peculiarly appropriate, if we understand it to allude to the signal vengeance taken by the Emperor upon those barbarians who had recently destroyed her famous Temple at Ephesus; but in the case of Æmilian no similar motive is recorded in the brief notices left us of his career. It is, however, easy to be conceived that Diana's aid may have been specially invoked on some great emergency by one who had to combat the innumerable hordes of savages issuing from wood and mountain, and justly comparable in ferocity to the regular subjects of the "montium custos, nemorumque, Virgo."

Upon these grounds the honour of the gem we are discussing might equally well have been assigned to the later of the two Gothic conquerors, had it not been for the circumstance of the *Imperial crown* which the hindmost Victory is conferring upon him: whereas the triumphs which gained Claudius his title of "Gothicus" were not won until *after* his elevation to the vacant throne of Gallienus. But for this the uncertainty had been augmented by the fact that besides his medal already quoted, there exists another

bearing a device of a somewhat similar nature to the composition we are seeking to interpret. The type is two Victories facing each other, between them a palm-tree supporting a shield inscribed S.C. ; legend, VOTA ORBIS. The inscription upon the shield makes it all but certain that we have here the record of some pretentious testimonial voted to Claudius by the grateful senate upon the first news of his deliverance of the Empire from the Gothic invaders : for the notices scattered through the "Historia Augusta" show that although art was fast decaying, yet its productions, such as they were, went on increasing in number, magnitude, and costliness of material. To this same Emperor the senate erected a "palmated column" supporting his portrait-statue, entirely of silver, of the weight of 1500 pounds ;[5] and later, another statue in gold, ten feet high : whilst to his successor, Aurelian, they voted one in gold, and two in silver, of probably the same magnificent dimensions. As it is known from other sources that the deities represented upon coins were exactly copied from certain celebrated statues worshipped in the places of mintage, it is allowable to conclude that the types of these later medals represent the monuments recently erected by the same authority that ordered their being struck.[6]

Some thirty years before Æmilian's reign (the earliest known examples belong to Severus Alexander) a fashion had come in of setting the most valuable rings with *aurei* of the reigning Emperor, instead of engraved gems—a change that gave the last blow to the failing glyptic art. The coins so mounted invariably have reverses setting forth the military prowess of the Cæsar, such as "Victoria Germanica," and others of like nature. This choice of subjects indicates that such rings were badges of military rank, even in the Early Empire. Juvenal alludes to the "semestre aurum" conferring the dignity of Tribune upon the man whose lucky finger it encircled. Our gem may have represented some recently-voted evidence of the loyalty of Rome, and have been cut at the order of some zealous partisan of Æmilian, some "worshipper of the rising sun," who preferred the old style

[5] Trebellius Pollio, 'Claudius,' cap. iv., 'Tacitus,' cap. ix.

[6] Perhaps the most valuable example of this practice, for it settled a long disputed question of date of erection, is Constantine's splendid gold medallion representing the "Porta Nigra" of Treves as a monument raised in his honour.

of intaglio signet that could publish his devotion and admiration every time it sealed his letters, to the new fashion of ring adorned with *aureus*, a mere idle decoration of the hand.

The shortness of Æmilian's reign, indeed, precludes the idea that any complimentary memorial of the kind ever advanced beyond its being voted by the senate, who had hailed in him a deliverer from the misgovernment of Trebonian Gallus: it, nevertheless, allowed time for plans to be prepared, and that the design of our gem was a very natural one for such a testimonial to follow is evident from what Nazianzen, above cited, has remarked upon memorials of the kind. At the late period which the execution of this intaglio bespeaks, nothing in the old classical style was attempted upon gems, beyond the representation of single figures of deities; the chief business of the glyptic art having then sunk to the manufacture of barbarous talismans, emanating directly or indirectly from the superstitions of the East. Some powerful motive in the circumstances of the times must therefore have existed to stir up an artist to so ambitious a flight as the conception of the elaborate group on the gem we are considering. The events above detailed fairly account for such ambition, for the *historical* character of the design appears the more unmistakable the more we examine the details. It is only its attribution to Æmilian that seems to remain an open question; it is, therefore, left for those not convinced by the arguments above induced, to bring forward some other candidate whose history equally well suits the particulars of the picture, and whose date falls within the limits strictly marked out by other considerations.