AN ENAMEL OF THE CAROLINGIAN PERIOD FROM VENICE.

By H. P. MITCHELL.

The object shown in the plate consists, as may be seen, of a ring surmounted by a cross, terminating above in a loop for suspension. It is made of a core of bronze originally covered on the edges and on the loop with silver, of which only fragments remain, and overlaid back and front with a casing of copper, gilt and set with plaques of cloisonné enamel, interspersed with oval pastes, of which only two on each face are preserved. At the bottom of the ring on each side is a long curved setting, now vacant wholly or partially. The object is bordered with a beaded edging. It was purchased at Venice for the South Kensington museum by the late Sir J. C. Robinson in 1881 for £50 (no. 100–1882). Nothing more is known of its history. It measures 11·7 inches in length, and the external diameter of the ring is 5 inches (29·7 cm. by 12·7 cm.).

The decoration on both faces is the same and the enamel-work of which it mainly consists is of great interest. Each plaque is separately made of the required shape and inserted in a collet setting. The thickness of the enamel, as can be seen where it is broken away, is about a tenth of an inch. It is made by the cloisonné process on copper, the outlining fillets being of the same metal and their edges gilded. The designs are of flowers with petals radiating from a circular centre (fig. *a*), or seen in profile with curved petals springing on either side of the 'eye' of the flower (*b*). The colours employed are blue, bluish green, red, yellow and white. The enamels are dull in colour and opaque, the red mottled or 'marbled' with brown, and their polished surface is pitted with air-holes. The execution is crude, the cloisons forming the petals of the flowers being roughly shaped, and the colours running into one another from one cloison to the next. The two largest of the enamel plaques, those in the middle of the cross back and front, are circular and set in deeper collets than the rest, rising one-tenth of an inch above the

VOTIVE OFFERING DECORATED WITH CLOISONNÉ ENAMELS.
Probably Lombard work of about the 9th century.
(Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington.)

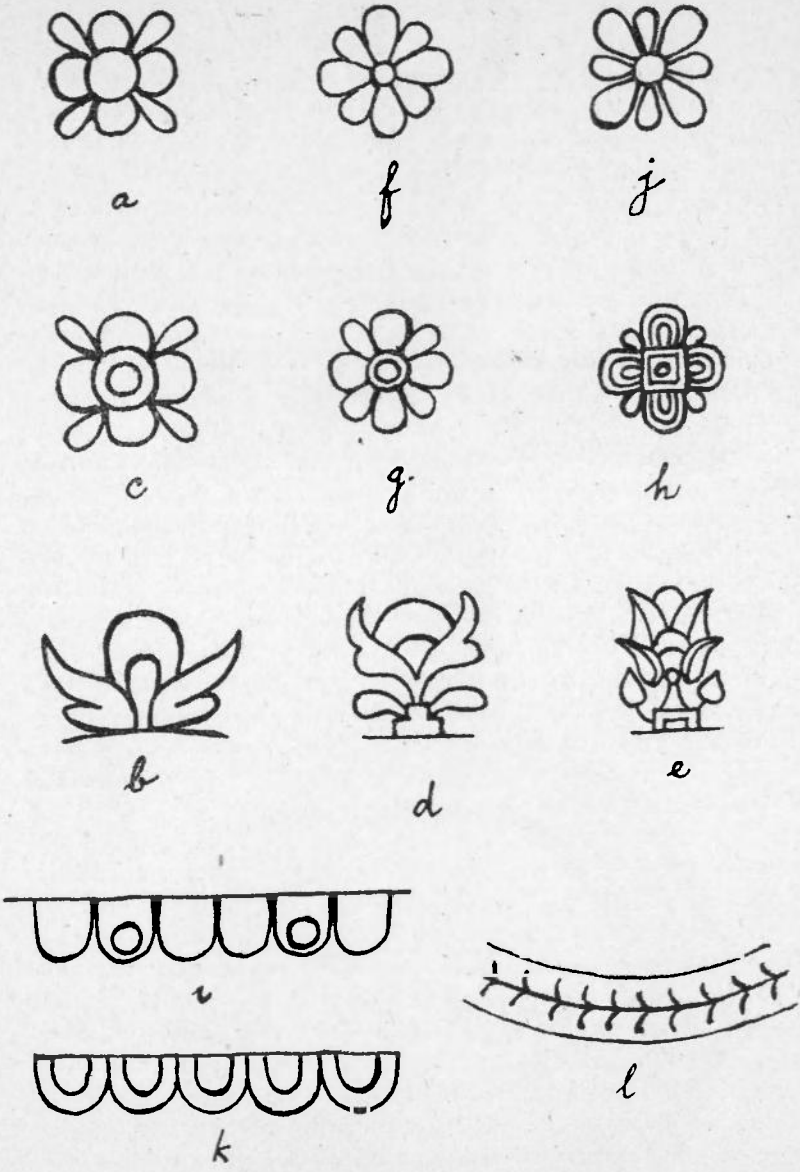

FIG. I. SOME MOTIVES OF CAROLINGIAN GOLDSMITHS' WORK.

face of the enamel. The suggestion has been made, and I think justly, that they probably held cabochon crystal bosses, which would magnify the enamelled flower (fig. *c*) beneath, and give importance to the central feature.

As has often been observed with regard to other early enamels, their appearance recalls the remark of Theophilus that enamellers in his day (eleventh century) made use of the opaque glass cubes from the mosaics in Roman buildings to supply their materials for enamelling on gold, silver, and copper. The colours thus mentioned by Theophilus are white, black, green, yellow, blue, red, and purple, a scale which includes more than all of those employed in this object, and that he is speaking of cloisonné enamelling is clear from his description of the process.[1] There is nothing improbable in such a practice having already endured for several centuries before the time of Theophilus.

These enamels appear to be very similar in quality to the plaques, with rude representations of birds, reptiles, and fishes, on the reliquary from Enger near Herford in Westphalia, supposed to have been given by Charlemagne in 785 to Wittekind duke of Saxony. Though the colours in this are not identical (yellow is entirely wanting) and the metal is gold instead of copper, the workmanship is similarly crude and the impurity of the colours seems even greater. The plaques are surrounded by borders of cloisonné inlay of red and green glass.[2]

Of floral patterns early examples are supplied by the altar-covering of the church of St. Ambrose at Milan, made by the goldsmith Wolvinius about 835, and the 'iron' crown of Monza, the enamelled decoration of which is probably of the same period. Both of these are regarded as Lombard productions. They are executed on gold with a high degree of technical skill, on grounds of translucent green enamel, the first in white, red, and blue, the second in white, purplish brown, and blue. They are thus superior in quality to the crude work of the present object, but in the designs of a flower seen in profile a close

[1] Theophilus, ed. Hendrie, bk. ii, chap. xii; bk. iii, chap. liv. See also de Linas, *Les expositions retrospectives en* 1880, p. 117.

[2] v. Falke und Frauberger, *Deutsche Schmelzarbeiten*, pp. 2, 3, 123, pl. 1; de Linas, op. cit. pp. 108–110. The form of this and other reliquaries of the same type, known to German writers as a 'pouch-reliquary' (*Taschenreliquiar*), irresistibly recalls the early Irish bell-shrines.

analogy is offered by certain of the motives of Wolvinius (fig. *d*).[1] This motive, which in various modifications is a feature of Byzantine woven fabrics, and goes back to a Sassanian and ancient Persian parentage,[2] occurs in a more elaborate form (fig. *e*) on the enamels decorating the gold jug in the treasure of Saint-Maurice d'Agaune, another piece of Carolingian work, again on a translucent green ground. In this also variations of the eight-petalled rosette occur (figs. *f*, *g*, *h*).[3]

Another example of this class of enamels is found on the casket in the treasure of the abbey of Quedlinburg, Saxony, known as the reliquary of Otto I (d. 973).[4] These are executed similarly on a translucent green ground in opaque colours, white, milky blue, and milky greenish blue, and the character of their designs is much more closely related to the Carolingian examples just cited than to the enamels of the Egbert school of the last quarter of the tenth century. Certain other portions of the casket, which is not homogeneous, are indicated by M. Marquet de Vasselot as of the date of its ivory carvings (tenth century), and among these portions it is interesting to note a border of U-pattern (fig. *i*) and a band of eight-petalled flowers (fig. *j*) both in filigree-work. Of these elements a variant of the U-pattern occurs on Wolvinius's altar-frontal (fig. *k*), and the flower is a modification of those shown beside it; both, however, in filigree instead of enamel. When it is recalled that in the preliminary stage of cloisonné enamelling the pattern is set out in filigree, this difference of technique is not important. It seems probable, therefore, that both the enamels and this part of the filigree-work of the casket may be of even earlier date than M. Marquet de Vasselot suggests, and might be assigned to the ninth century rather than the tenth.[5] The flower-patterns on the

[1] A photogravure of the Milan frontal is given in Molinier, *l'Orfevrerie*, pl. ii, p. 84; details in Molinier, *l'Emaillerie*, pp. 62, 63, and Kondakoff, *Emaux byzantins*, 1892, col. pl. 23. The 'iron' crown of Monza is shown in Bock, *Die Kleinodien, etc.* 1864, col. pl. xxxiii.

[2] Cf. A. Riegl, *Stilfragen*, fig. 44.

[3] E. Aubert, *Tresor de l'abbaye de Saint-Maurice d'Agaune*, 1872, col. pl. xix–xxii; Molinier, *l'Émaillerie*, pp. 74–77.

[4] J. J. Marquet de Vasselot, *Un coffret-reliquaire du tresor de Quedlinburg* (*Mon. et Mem. de l'Acad. des Inscr.* vi, 1899, p. 175. 2 pl.)

[5] See Luer und Creutz, *Geschichte der Metallkunst*, ii, p. 106. M. Marquet de Vasselot hints that the enamels on the casket may be of early date (p. 181). It is worth noting that two bits of the filigree flower-decoration seem made to fit between the enamel plaques, proving the latter to be of either the same or earlier date.

South Kensington object may also be compared, though less closely matched, with the medallions on an eighth-century reliquary at Cividale, probably Lombard work, enamelled in opaque white and 'solid' red and green.[1]

The examples cited provide analogies of the Carolingian period, for some of which, at least, a Lombard origin is probable. It is no doubt true that the general diffusion of Carolingian art throughout the territory that owned the sway of Charlemagne makes local distinctions somewhat hazardous. In the words of Molinier, speaking of such arts as that of the goldsmith, 'Les vestiges qui nous restent . . . se ressemblent si bien entre eux que le mot d'international appliqué à l'art dont ils sont l'expression est absolument juste. A peine par-ci par-là distingue-t-on quelques différences dues aux influences locales.'[2] Still, if any importance is to be attached to the Venetian provenance of the object under consideration, the evidence of the Lombard examples is of peculiar interest. Before this examination is finished, further support for such an origin will be found.

The enamels alternate both on back and front with settings for eleven oval cabochon pastes, of which only four remain, two amber-coloured on one face, two green on the other. The gilt copper collets in which they are held are about a quarter of an inch in depth, and surrounded by a thicker band round their outer circumference forming a narrow shoulder or rim at one-tenth of an inch below the edge. The more usual form of setting in early medieval work is a concave band surrounding the stone, perhaps a variant survival of the broad flat band in which stones are often set in ancient Roman jewels. Other forms are found, however, in the settings of the votive crown of queen Theodelinda (d. 625) at Monza,[3] and of the Guarrazar objects.[4]

As regards the metal-work, the gilt copper casing back and front which carries the enamels and pastes is attached by rivets to a solid core of bronze about a quarter of an inch thick extending throughout the object. This core was

[1] See remarks on Lombard enamels by Sir W. Martin Conway in *Burlington Magazine*, xxiii, pp. 340, 347, fig. 5.

[2] *L'Émaillerie*, p. 60.

[3] Bock, *Die Kleinodien*, pl. xxxiv.

[4] Lüer und Creutz, *Geschichte der Metallkunst*, ii, fig. 63, and see below, p. 18.2

sheathed with silver wherever it was visible (i.e. on the edges and the loop), most of which has disappeared. The silver covering does not adhere to the bronze, but is merely hammered to fit it. An example of copper overlaid with silver, of the Carolingian period, is found in the chalice of duke Tassilo of Bavaria (deposed 788), at Kremsmünster.[1]

The beaded edging is similar to that on the cross of the Lombard king Agilulf (591–615) at Monza, and on the Carolingian cross of the Sancta Sanctorum mentioned below, and is found again on an enamelled plaque from the grave at Cividale popularly assigned, but without evidence, to the Lombard chief Gisulf (d. 611).[2] A similar border is found on the Castellani brooch in the British Museum, said to have come from Canosa and ascribed to a Lombard origin in the seventh century.[3] In these early examples the beads are more carefully formed and rounded than in the similar ornamentation of twelfth-century work.

An important feature of the work remains to be described —the long curved panel at the bottom of the ring on both back and front. One of these is entirely vacant but for portions of the gilt copper collet surrounding it, bordered above and below by a concave band of the same material. The other preserves not only the collet similarly bordered but also a plaque of silvery metal (now blackened by oxidisation) about one-twentieth of an inch thick, covering the bottom of the compartment. The surface of this plaque shows the remains of a pattern in slight relief consisting of a central stem with shorter stems branching off in pairs (fig. *l*). There is some indication that this pattern was first engraved in the plaque, and the filling, in slight relief, is of a perceptibly whiter metal than the plaque itself. This whiter metal is perhaps the solder by which a stem bearing leaves, most likely in gold, was attached, and

[1] For view and details see Bock in *Mittheilungen der k.-k. Central-Commission . . . der Baudenkmale*, iv, 1859, pp. 6, 44, pl. i. For opinion of its Irish origin, Bock, *Byzantinischen Zellenschmelze*, 1896, p. 367. Col. pl. in Lehnert's *Geschichte des Kunstgewerbes*, i, p. 212. Luer und Creutz, *Geschichte der Metallkunst*, ii, fig. 67.

(The Gauls are credited with the invention of silvering, and also of tinning, other metals, and numerous examples of Gallo-Roman work in copper or bronze covered with silver are known. In these, two varieties are found, one in which the silver is adherent to the base metal, and one in which it is not. See Thedenat and Heron de Villefosse in *Gazette archeologique*, x, 1885, pp. 105, 110.)

[2] Sir W. Martin Conway in *Burlington Magazine*, xxiii, p. 340, fig. 1; see also Fogolari, *Cividale del Friuli*, 1906, pp. 37, 39.

[3] Dalton in *Proc. Soc. Ant.* 2nd series, xx, p. 68 and pl.

it seems probable that the surrounding space was filled with translucent enamel, through which the light would be reflected from the metal base. The slightly yellowish tinge of this metal suggests that it is electrum, the alloy of silver and gold used by Byzantine enamellers (presumably when pure gold could not be afforded) in preference to pure silver, as resisting a higher temperature.[1] Borders of foliage patterns on a similar system of a stem bearing leaves in pairs occur in various designs on the Milan altar frontal, executed, as already stated, in gold and translucent enamel.[2] The fact that both of these curved ornaments have disappeared, one entirely and the other in part, while the enamelled copper plaques remain, supports the probability that the design was in gold, for the sake of which they were abstracted.

It remains to consider what was the purpose of the object. As has been said, the decoration is the same on both faces, implying that it was made to be seen either from back or front, and the loop at the top shows it to have been intended for suspension. It seems probable that it is one of those votive offerings which, especially in the form of crowns, it was the custom of the earlier middle ages to suspend as precious gifts above or before the altars of churches. The best-known examples are the gold crowns found in 1858 at Guarrazar near Toledo, including those of the West Gothic kings Svinthila (621–631) and Reccesvinth (649–672), now in the Royal armoury at Madrid and the Cluny museum, Paris. Several of these crowns still have a pendent cross attached.[3] Another example, the votive crown of the Lombard king Agilulf (591–615), a work of extraordinary splendour, was removed from Monza to Paris in the time of Napoleon and is now unhappily lost. The cross which hung from it, however, remains at Monza, where it is now suspended from the crown of Agilulf's queen

[1] Kondakoff, p. 93. It seems not improbable that the use of the word electrum by Theophilus and other mediaeval authors for plaques of cloisonne enamel as well as for the vitreous material itself (Labarte, *Histoire des arts industriels*, iii, 388, 389, 595, 599; Theophilus, ed. Hendrie, bk. iii, chap. liv, lv) is derived from the metal on which Byzantine enamels were sometimes executed, applying the name of the base to the whole object, just as we apply the name of the enamel paste to the whole in speaking of 'an enamel' for a work in enamelled metal.

[2] Kondakoff, col. pl. xxiii.

[3] F. de Lasteyrie, *Description du tresor de Guarrazar*, 1860 (with 5 col. pl.). See also Bock, *Die Kleinodien*, col. pl. xxxvi, xxxvii.

Theodelinda (d. 625); it is of gold, set with stones and pearls, and like the present object is decorated similarly on both sides.[1]

Such a suspended crown was called 'regnum,' and its use is derived from classical antiquity. The christian practice of hanging up a crown at the altar of a church seems to have originated with Constantine. Thence to the tenth and even eleventh century references to the practice exist in considerable numbers. At Saint-Denis it continued at least until the fourteenth century.[2] Charlemagne gave a votive crown to St. Peter's at Rome on the day of his coronation. Until the tenth century the crowns were frequently accompanied by a cross, but after that date the cross is less commonly found. Sometimes the cross appears without a crown, serving the purpose of the cross upon the altar of later times, and it is sometimes hung with the symbolic letters A and Ω.[3] Such a *crux pensilis* generally disappeared from the altar after the Carolingian period. Nor was the practice confined to crowns and crosses. Vases, chalices, sacred monograms, etc. were similarly suspended about the altar, and a rod called 'pergula' was provided to carry them. The material of these votive offerings was not necessarily precious. An inventory of 813 of the abbey of Benedictbeuern in the diocese of Augsburg, mentions a silver-gilt crown hanging above the altar with a small copper-gilt cross and a crystal globe suspended in the middle of it. St. Gregory of Tours (d. 595) records a cross of yellow metal hung above an altar, which shone so brightly that it was taken for gold and would have been stolen but for a miraculous interposition.[4]

As regards the form of the cross, a Greek cross with slightly spreading ends, it may be observed that the Guarrazar and Monza crosses are of the Latin type, and the ends of their limbs also spread somewhat more widely. The cross of the emperor Justin at St. Peter's, Rome, of the sixth century, is of the same type.[5] Several gold

[1] Bock, (text) p. 166, and col. pl. xxxiv.

[2] Félibien, quoted by Sir W. Martin Conway in *Archaeologia*, lxvi, p. 147.

[3] Molinier, *l'Orfevrerie*, fig. p. 100. See also J. Amador de los Rios, *La Camara Santa de la catedral de Oviedo* (*Monumentos arquitectonicos de Espana*, ii, 1877, pp. 24, 25).

[4] See articles 'Regna' and 'Cruces pensiles' in Rohault de Fleury, *La Messe*, v, 1887, pp. 101, 117. See also Beissel in *Zeitschrift fur christliche Kunst*, ix, 335; and Labarte, *Histoire des arts industriels*, ii, p. 132; iv, p. 635.

[5] Bock, col. pl. xx.

mortuary crosses, on the other hand, found in Italy in Gothic or Lombard graves are of precisely the same form as the cross in the present object, with equal and slightly spreading limbs.[1] Of these the most important is from the grave already referred to, popularly known as that of duke Gisulf (d. 611).[2] The jewelled gold cross of the Sancta Sanctorum at Rome, a work of the Carolingian period, is also of the Greek type, with equal limbs spreading at the ends.[3] The votive cross assigned to king Berengar I (d. 924) at Monza, is of the Greek type with straight limbs.[4] The forms and dates are not without significance.

As regards its design, it seems possible that the object represents in outline the orb surmounted by a cross, the emblem of royal authority, hung up like a votive crown in token of submission to the king of kings. Or it may be regarded merely as a combination of the cross with the circle as an emblem of immortality or eternity. But for the loop at the top, showing the cross to stand on the ring, it would have been tempting to regard it as a *crux ansata* or ring-handled cross, a symbol of which the origin and meaning are lost in a remote antiquity far beyond the Christian era.

To sum up, it seems probable that the object described is a votive offering for suspension before the altar of a church, Lombard work of about the ninth century, and an interesting example of Carolingian cloisonné enamelling.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE ON MEDIEVAL CLOISONNE ENAMELS ON COPPER.

Examples of cloisonne enamelling on copper instead of gold are by no means so uncommon as has been thought, either in Byzantine or early Western work. In view of their supposed rarity it may be of interest to mention a few. Among Byzantine examples, a medallion with busts of saints on both sides, in the British Museum, is assigned to the eleventh century (O. M. Dalton in *Proc. Soc. Ant.* 2nd series, xxi, p. 195, fig. 6). Another medallion, possibly of earlier date, is in the Victor Gay collection in the Louvre (fig. in *Les Arts*, January 1910, p. 12). Two examples on a larger scale, the St. Theodore plaque of the Basilewsky collection in the Hermitage museum, Petrograd (Labarte, *Histoire des arts industriels*, album, ii, col. pl. cv; Molinier, *l'Emaillerie*, p. 52; Kondakoff, p. 151; Darcel and Basilewsky, *Collection Basilewsky*, col. pl. 14), and a panel with a figure of Christ, in the Museo Kircheriano at Rome, are probably provincial Byzantine work of the twelfth or thirteenth century. Both of these are executed by a mixed process. (Photogr. of the Christ plaque in V. and A. M. library. For description see Labarte, iii, pp. 436–8; Franks, *Vitreous Art*, p. 18 [in J. B. Waring's Art Treasures of the U.K., 1858]; Dalton, *Byzantine Art*,

[1] A. Venturi, *Storia dell' arte Italiana*, ii, 1902, figs. 47–50.
[2] Fogolari, *Cividale*, p. 33, fig.
[3] P. Lauer, *Le tresor du Sancta Sanctorum*, 1906, pl. viii.
[4] Bock, col. pl. xxxiii.

pp. 510, 528. They take different views of the method.) A reliquary-casket from Agram cathedral, in the Figdor collection at Vienna, is also perhaps provincial Byzantine of the twelfth century (O. v. Falke, in *Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft*, ii, 1909, pp. 238–9).

Among Western examples, a circular brooch in the British Museum decorated with a cross with a rosette in the centre, in copper cloisonne enamel on a bronze base, acquired with the Morel collection of Gaulish antiquities, is regarded as Frankish work perhaps as early as the seventh or eighth century. In this the colours are blue, yellow, pale green, bluish white, and red (Dalton in *Proc. Soc. Ant.* 2nd series, xxi, p. 193, fig. 5). A medallion in the Guelph treasure, now at Hanover, with a half-figure of Christ, perhaps of Rhenish origin, may be of the eighth or ninth century (de Linas, *Les expositions retrospectives en* 1880, pp. 118–120, pl. i, fig. 5), but Molinier considers it eleventh century (*L'Émaillerie*, p. 93). Bock discusses an Irish, Anglo-Saxon, or Northern Slavonic origin (*Die byzantinischen Zellenschmelze*, p. 367, pl. xxiv. fig. 2). A plaque of the Dzyalinska collection with a half-length figure of St. John (?), is assigned to the eleventh century (de Linas, pp. 189, 190; Molinier, p. 94). Among the colours employed in these two pieces are blue, green, and purple translucent enamels. A portable altar of the treasure of Conques, executed apparently before 1107, is decorated with a series of plaques of enamelled copper, in which cloisonne is combined with applied cut-out work (Rupin, *l'Œuvre de Limoges*, pl. xi, p. 73; Molinier, *l'Émaillerie*, pp. 127–8; photogravure in Molinier et Marcou, *l'Exposition retrospective* [1900]). Two small plaques with symbols of evangelists in the British Museum, in copper with very coarse cloisonné decoration (mentioned by Franks, *Vitreous Art*, p. 18), are interesting as showing the enamelled area sunk in the sheet metal by hammering, in the manner often found in Byzantine work in gold. The enamels are semi-translucent, including a dark blue ground. These may be Italian work of the twelfth century. In France certain specimens of cloisonné enamel coarsely executed in copper on a backing of iron appear to date from the eleventh century. In these the enamels, though of a crude quality, are again here and there translucent (Rupin, figs. 127, 132, 133; Molinier, pp. 122–124, 132). Another small piece, apparently of similar date, is champlevé and cloisonne on copper (Rupin, fig. 128; Molinier, p. 125). The designs of these are of rudimentary floral, human, and bird forms. In the twelfth century cloisonne enamelling on copper becomes quite common in combination with champlevé, especially in Mosan and Rhenish work.

A composite example, in which the enamel in gold cloisons is executed apparently on a copper base, in a design of peacocks, a panther, etc., is mentioned by Bock as probably German work of the twelfth century (*Die byzantinischen Zellenschmelze*, pl. xxvi, fig. 2. Collection of Prince F. L. of Prussia in Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin).