

THE · BULLETIN · OF
THE · NEEDLE · AND · BOBBIN
CLUB

VOLUME · 27 · NUMBERS · 1 & 2

1943

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Vol. 2, No. 2	Vol. 6, No. 1
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FRONTISPIECE: THE ARMS OF MARSHAL GIAN GIACOMO TRIVULZIO.



PORTRAIT MEDALLION OF MARSHAL TRIVULZIO.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE TRIVULZIO TAPESTRIES

By WILLIAM E. SUIDA

THE series of tapestries representing the Twelve Months, which was transferred in 1935 from the Trivulzio Palace to the Castello Sforzesco in Milan, are famous, and rightfully so, as the most imposing examples of the early art of tapestry weaving in Italy. Long and widespread search on the part of the author regarding these tapestries led a few years ago to the discovery of certain documentary notes which throw light in an interesting manner upon the origin of this celebrated series.

In connection with these notes a renewed discussion of the tapestries themselves may be justified because nothing, if we except a brief allusion, has been published about them in English and because the author's interpretation of the pieces presents certain new aspects.

These tapestries were ordered early in the sixteenth century by Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, a famous soldier, whose name and titles appear on each piece in the series. This eminent warrior, the son of Antonio Trivulzio and Francesca Visconti, was born in 1436. He left Milan in 1483 when Lodovico Sforza, called Il Moro, while acting as Regent of Milan during the minority of his nephew,¹ appointed as Captain-General of the Milanese armies the brilliant and courtly Galeazzo Sanseverino, thereby wounding the pride of Gian Giacomo Trivulzio. In 1495 he entered the service of the French king, and in 1499, as commander of the French army,

¹Lodovico, who was the husband of Beatrice d'Este, reigned after the death of his nephew in 1494 as Duke of Milan.



PLATE 1a (LEFT). THE CASTLE AT VIGEVANO PRESENTED TO MARSHAL TRIVULZIO BY LOUIS XII.

PLATE 1b (BELOW). INNER COURT OF THE CASTLE AT VIGEVANO.



he overthrew his old enemy, Duke Lodovico. By this act he delivered his country over to French supremacy. As a reward for this great service, Louis XII created him Marshal of France and presented him with the splendid old castle of the Sforzas in Vigevano (Plates Ia and Ib). As long as Louis XII lived the Marshal continued to be showered with honors, but in 1512 luck turned against the French and Massimiliano Sforza, the son of Lodovico, with the help of the Emperor Maximilian¹ and the Swiss soldiers, reconquered the dukedom. Three years later, in 1515, Massimiliano in his turn was overthrown by the victory at Marignano of Francis I over the Swiss. But the old Trivulzio, now almost eighty, was no longer in the confidence of the French king. In 1518, despite his years, he traveled to France to justify himself against accusations made regarding his loyalty. He died at Chartres in the same year without having achieved his end.

From these dates which cover his rise and fall we may infer that the Marshal's period of magnificence, one in which he would have been an important figure in the art world of Milan, was of short duration; it could only have been the twelve years from 1500 to 1512.

The strongly marked features of this remarkable man are best known from the medallion bearing his portrait which has been attributed to Caradosso (page 3). His motto, NE TES SMA (*Non ti smarrire*), Never Lose Self-Control, appears in all the tapestries above the large coat of arms.

In this series, there are on each piece a number of crests which familiarize us not only with the man who ordered the set but with the members of his family as well. At the top of each piece in every instance is a large medallion showing within a wreath of oak leaves a shield with six stripes, alternately green and gold, the crest of Marshal Trivulzio, and the inscription, IO IA TRIVS MAR VIGLI FRANCIE MARES (*Joannes Jacobus Trivultius Marchio Viglevani Franciae Marescalcus*), Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, Marquis of Vigevano, Marshal of France (Frontispiece).

These family crests make up the borders of the tapestries²; there are five of them alternately repeated, and numbering in all about forty. The first, with the stripes, is that of the Marshal himself. The second one, with the cross of St. Andrew and the initials JO NI, Joannes Nicolaus, refers to Gian Nicolo Trivulzio, the only son of the Marshal (Plate III).

¹ Maximilian I, King of the Romans, later Emperor, married Bianca Maria Sforza, niece of Lodovico, in 1493.

² The size of the tapestries varies somewhat: from 485 to 520 cm. in height, and from 455 to 485 cm. in width. The border is about 30 cm. wide.



PLATE III. PORTRAIT OF GIAN NICOLO TRIVULZIO BY BERNARDINO DEI CONTI.

This young man bore the title of Count of Mesocco, the *contea* of Mesocco having been acquired by Gian Giacomo Trivulzio in 1480. He died before his father, in 1512, at Turin, at the age of thirty-three.¹

The third crest, that of the Colleoni of Bergamo, bears the letters MRGR, by which clearly is meant Margherita Colleoni, the first wife of Gian Giacomo Trivulzio.

Margherita Colleoni was born in 1455, the daughter of Nicolino Colleoni (a relative of the well-known Condottiere Bartolommeo Colleoni), and Cia Visconti. She married, in 1467, Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, and died in 1483. She was the mother of Gian Nicolo Trivulzio.²

The crest of the d'Avalos family follows with the inscription BEATR, signifying Beatrice d'Inigo d'Avalos, the second wife of the Marshal. The wedding took place in the year 1488, and was celebrated with great festivities amid circumstances of extreme luxury. The chronicler Rebucco mentions this as also does the humanist and philosopher, Ermolao Barbaro, then the ambassador of the Venetian Signoria in Milan, who gives us an eloquent description of the festivities.³

More than a hundred years later, the historian, Padre Paolo Morigia, found it worthwhile to preserve for posterity the incredibly rich menu of the wedding dinner with its fifteen courses.⁴ Beatrice d'Avalos survived her husband by many years and died on the twentieth of January, 1547, at the age of ninety. She lived to supervise, as the only surviving member of the older generation, the education of her stepgrandchild, Gian Francesco Trivulzio, the last Count of Mesocco, until he had come

¹ The author knows of two portraits of Gian Nicolo Trivulzio. One of them, a wall painting of about 1509 in the Church of the Incoronata at Lodi, represents him as a donor. The other, here illustrated, is a profile portrait by Bernardino dei Conti which several years ago was in the hands of a Milanese dealer and before that in Paris. Originally this portrait was inscribed elaborately with the name of the subject; this at some time was removed through the vandalism of an ignorant art dealer. While his father was beardless, Gian Nicolo wore a short, full beard in accordance with a later style. Like his father, he, too, had received the order of St. Michael from the King of France.

² In the Berlin Museum is a painting by Bernardino dei Conti which by a contemporary inscription is identified as a portrait of Margherita Colleoni. But evidently this portrait was not done until decades after her death. It is impossible to say to what extent it represents her features. The hands are arranged after the model of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, a painting which the Milanese painter could have seen not earlier than 1507. It is the author's impression that the Berlin portrait is a kind of reconstruction of the features of the mother after those of the son who had been portrayed by Bernardino dei Conti from life.

³ The two accounts mentioned are contained in a publication, privately printed, by Emilio Motta, archivist of the Trivulzio library, upon the occasion of a later wedding in the family.

Nozze Principesche nel Quattrocento: Per le nozze fra il Marchese Luigi Alberico Trivulzio e la Contessina Maddalena Cavazzi della Somaglia, che si celebrano alla Villa del Cernotto il di IV Giuono MDCCCXCIV. Emilio Motta felicitando pubblica. Milano, 1894, Tipografia Fratelli Rivara.

⁴ Morigia, Paolo: *Della Nobiltà di Milano*, lib. IV, 2nda Edizione, 1619.

of age. Beatrice, until her death, did everything possible to preserve the memory of her husband and the reputation of her family. We know from documentary evidence of the care that she exercised in the matter of the erection of the family mausoleum at San Nazzaro in Milan.¹

The fifth and last crest in this border series is that of the Gonzaga family with the inscription PAVLA. This refers to Paola Gonzaga, the daughter of Rodolfo, Lord of Castiglione (1451-1495). Paola, almost a child, was married July, 1501, to Gian Nicolo, the son of the Marshal. She died May 31, 1518, at the early age of thirty, leaving one son, Gian Francesco, born October 5, 1509, who died in Venice in 1573 after a life of political adventure.

In the pictorial compositions that make up the designs of these tapestries, the personification of the month occupies the central part. At each side are depicted, by groups of figures, the occupations of the farmer characteristic of the month concerned. In the upper corners of the pictures are, on one side, the sun or the moon, and on the other, the month as represented by the sign of the zodiac. An inscription in awkward Latin verse completes in a few words the meaning of the composition.

In this set of tapestries, the year begins with the month of March. This is the old Roman style, but it would have been completely in order for Tuscany and also for Venice. In Lombardy, however, and therefore in Milan, this division of the year is unusual. That it was chosen for these tapestries may be inferred not only from the Latin inscription but also from the fact that it is only in this one piece that the crest of the person who ordered the set is held up prominently to view by two Roman warriors. Again, as an indication of the sequence of the pieces, February, as the last of the series, bears an inscription with the name of the tapestry maker, master Benedetto da Milano.²

In this first piece, therefore, March holds in his right hand a staff, and in his left a little bird. Small heads which peer out from within his dark red tunic may be interpreted as symbols of fecundity. At his feet are the heads of four putti, typifying, in all probability, the winds. The pedestal bears the inscription:

¹Baroni, Costantino: Leonardo, Bramantino ed il Mausoleo di G. Giacomo Trivulzio. Raccolta Vinciana, XV-XVI, Milano, 1939.

²It is quite possible that the great condottiere, Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, preferred this division of the year because it began with the month that was named after the ancient God of War.



PLATE IV. MARCH.

ANNVM INCOHAT RESONITVR
TERRA. OMNIA VNDE GERMINAVIT
HOMINES PECORA PISCES AVES
AGITQVE AMORE MARTIVS

(The year begins, the earth shakes. Everything starts to germinate; mankind, animals, fish and birds, March moves through love's power.)

At either side of the main figure are groups of farmers, some assembled near March, others farther away occupied with their work. Some cut withered twigs from trees, some graft selected trees, some dig with spades, others prepare larger tools for work. In the foreground a harrow lies next to a pumpkin flask,¹ beyond it a hatchet. In the background is a fortress, behind it may be seen distant mountains. At the left is the sun, at the right the sign of the zodiac, Aries (The Ram) (Plate IV).

April is an enchanting personification of spring. Clad in a garment rich with color, a floral wreath on his head and a bouquet of flowers in his hand, he points to the sun whose hot rays revive the life of the earth. He is surrounded by gay young people who, forgetting work, enjoy life. Presenting flowers, they pay homage to their patron. Rejuvenated nature is forced to submit to the frolics of the joyous crowd. Trees and bushes cut to the shape of human bodies are surmounted by artificial heads.² Behind April rises a pavilion-like building whose roof is supported by four-cornered piers. The inscription reads:

SOLUM VIRERE DAT. NOVO
FLOREMQUE FLORI SVFFICIT
CIT GAVDIA APPARAT IOCOS
APRILIS VNDIQVE ET NITET

(He makes the earth to become green again and lets flowers continuously bloom. He spreads joy and fun everywhere, radiant April.)

Above is the sign of Taurus (The Bull) (Plate V).

May is enthroned in front of an octagonal-shaped pavilion. Between the columns and at both sides may be seen well-kept land. Young men busy themselves with trees against which are ladders. But the greater

¹ Flasks made from pumpkins and elaborately cut into patterns. These flasks sometimes are of considerable artistic value.

² The author was told many years ago by the old Prince Gian Giacomo Trivulzio that this type of gardening was still practiced in his childhood.



PLATE V. APRIL.



PLATE VI. MAY.

number of the vigorous country people are gathered around May. They carry scythes, spades and pitchforks; two of them have even brought with them young trees. Two youths seem to be idle, resting at the feet of the god to whom they have offered gifts of flowers. Spades, rakes, pitchforks are scattered on the floor with the effect almost of ornament. The inscription:

SPE REPLET ANNVM FLORIBVS
CADENTIBVS QVE SVGGERIT
FRVCTVS DECORVM ET VTILE
MAIVS FOVET VERIS BONI

(May inspires the year with hope. With the falling of the flowers he brings fruits.)

Above are the moon and Gemini (The Twins) (Plate VI).

June, wreathed with oak leaves and clad in golden yellow robes, is enthroned in front of a purple curtain whence he watches contentedly the work of the farmers. These latter gather the fruits of the fields, bind the corn into sheaves and load the cattle-drawn carts. In the background is a castle with crenelated walls and two round towers. In front of June are baskets and buckets, dishes, a loaf of bread, forks, a spoon and one of the pumpkin-shaped flasks. It is quite possible that the artist in this design wished to indicate the tithe of the products of nature already delivered to the master.¹ The field implements are primarily the same which have remained in use throughout the centuries. Not even the horn filled with water for the whetstone has been forgotten. The inscription here is:

TONDERE PRATA MESSIBVS
FALCEM ARIDIS SVPPONERE
SPE AEQVA LABORI AGRESTIBVS
DAT IVNIVS CVRA ANNVA

(June brings every year work to the farmer; to mow the meadows, to cut the ripe grain with the sickle, to hope right-fully for the reward of his work.)

The sign of the zodiac is Cancer (The Crab) (Plate VII).

July stands in the spacious farmyard; he wears a short tunic like his country people. With his right hand he points to the moon, in his left, he carries a cornucopia. His farmers are busy with the threshing of the grain. The two groups appear at right angles, at the left in profile and

¹ A tax of one-tenth on the harvest.

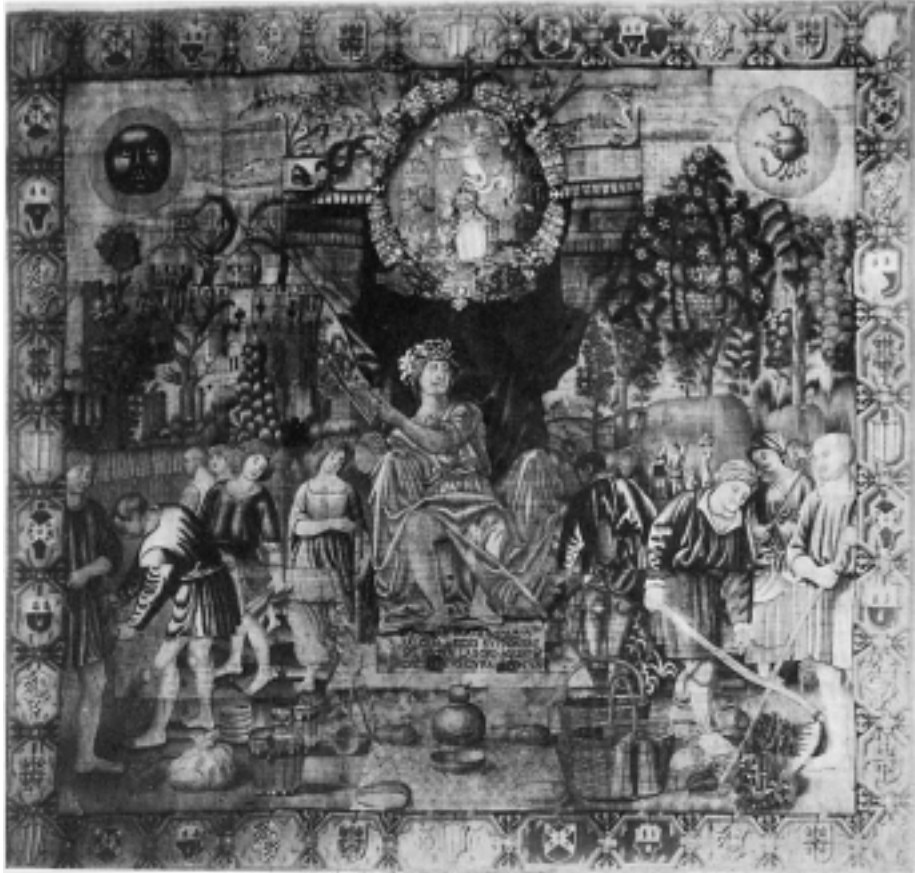


PLATE VII. JUNE.

at the right full-face and in reverse. Their flails operate in rhythm in finishing their work. In the background, there is on one side a row of houses; on the other, a building crowned by a dome and surrounded by four towers. The verse is:

MESSEM AREIS CREPANTIBVS
SVDORE SVAVE RVSTICIS
TERIT DAT AVRE SEGREGAT
AC HORREA IMPLET IVLIVS

(July has the harvest threshed out on the creaking threshing floor by the joyfully toiling farmers, sees that they sift the chaff from the wheat, and fills the barn.)

The sign of the zodiac is Leo (The Lion) (Plate VIII).

August signifies the happy time of the wine and fruit harvest. At the feet of the god of this month, crowned with vine leaves, are spread melons, pumpkins, dishes with grapes, figs and other fruits. At the right, in the background, cattle are being driven forward, and farmers busy themselves making barrels. The left side is dedicated to the joys of the table. Overindulgence in the newly pressed grape-juice has resulted already in disastrous consequences. Fruits in great variety are on the table. The inscription:

BACCHI SACRIS VINDEMIAM
AVGVSTVS AVGV RAT TERIT
MILIVM NOVISQVE FRVCTIBVS
MERO ET CALOREM TEMPERAT

(To the feast of Bacchus, August brings the harvest. He grinds the millet and cools the hot summer with new fruits and wine.)

Above is the moon and Virgo (The Virgin) (Plate IX).

September is represented as the god of wine, Bacchus himself, nude, wreathed only with vine branches and grapes and with light sandals bound to his feet. The heavy wine press is moved by crossed poles by four servants. At the left is the ox team that has brought the grapes; at the right, the full wine kegs being moved to the cellar of the lord of the manor. He, himself, and his lady, are shown in the foreground at the very edge of the picture. These two figures at some time were badly damaged and, as is quite apparent, awkwardly restored in the nineteenth century. Due, again, to faulty restorations, the zodiacal signs Scorpio

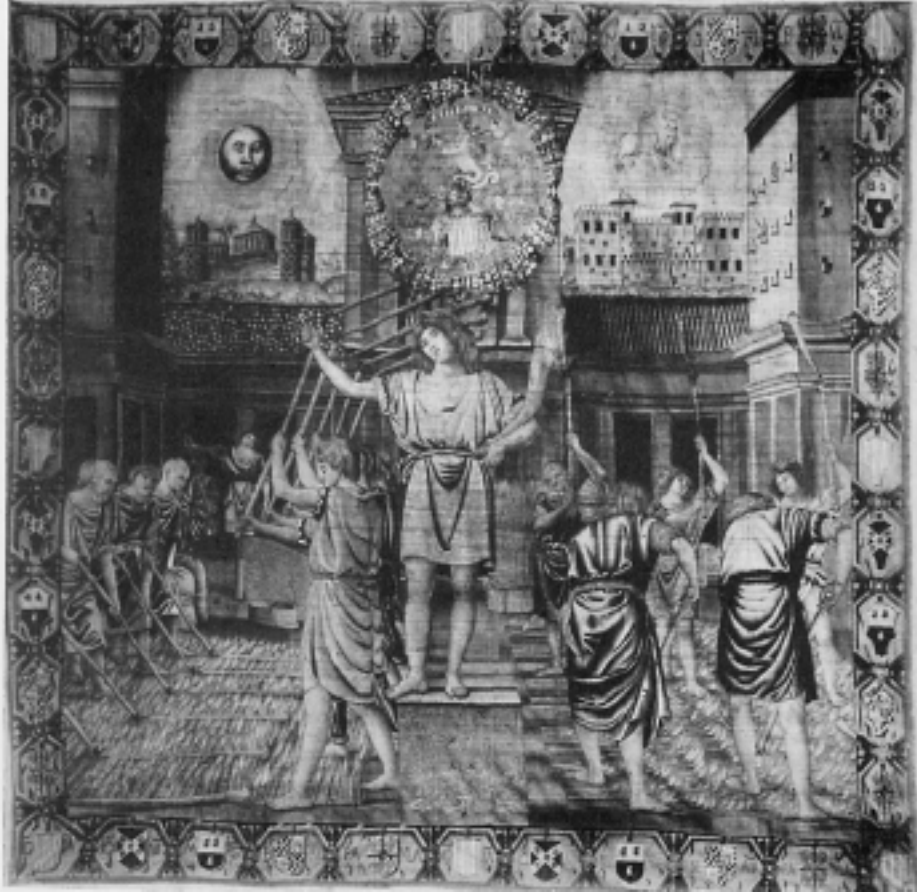


PLATE VIII. JULY.



PLATE IX. AUGUST.



PLATE X. SEPTEMBER.

(The Scorpion) and Libra (The Scales) appear together in this September tapestry. In reality, Libra should appear alone as the sign for September; Scorpio is the sign for October. The verse:

SEPTEMBER VVAS VT COQVIT
VINA ET PARAT DAT AVCVPI
GRATAS VOLVPTATES BONA
ET MENSIVM RECOLLGIT

(September makes the grape-juice ferment and prepares the wine. He brings to the bird-trappers their longed-for pastime, and personifies within himself the most desirable of all the months.)

Above with the doubled zodiacal signs is the moon (Plate X).

October is represented as the supervisor of the estates of the Marshal. Settled in a spacious hall, he gathers in the fruits that have been delivered as tithe by the farmers. There are baskets filled with turnips, carrots and other fruits of the fields; a woman carries on her head a loaded basket; a man brings a large loaf of cheese. Pointing with his left hand to the moon, October holds in his right a book on which is written VANOTO CAMONCA DE DARE SEME DE FROMETO PSTATO ADI IO DE OT BRE III. Vanoto da Monza is ordered to deliver grain in return for that which was advanced to him the tenth of October.¹ The inscription reads:

FRVMENTA TERRAE REDDERE
STABVLIS APIBVS ET VINEIS
CAVERE POMISQVE INSERI
OCTOBER ARBOREM ET MONET

(October teaches us to return the grain to the earth, to care for the stables, the bees and the vineyards and to graft the wild-apple tree.)

At the top is the moon and the sign Scorpio (Plate XI).

¹From the Marshal's account books it is evident that this Vanoto da Monza was by no means a fictitious character. On the contrary, he was one of the Marshal's tenants at Inzago, and the facetious mention made of him in the inscription, which immortalizes his name in so imperishable a manner, leads one to infer that the Marshal had for him a certain affection. From these same books it is apparent that Vanoto da Monza received the "investiture" for the estate at Inzago on November 6, 1506, for six years. This would lead to the assumption that the completion of the cartoon for the October tapestry did not antedate this year; furthermore it means that the Roman number III following the date October 10th cannot be interpreted as the year 1503. Nevertheless, it is not impossible that Vanoto had been a tenant of the Marshal prior to this time and that his investiture in the year 1506 was only a renewal. No traces of this name appear, however, in any earlier account books, although, it must be remembered, the series has not been preserved complete.



PLATE XI. OCTOBER.

November is dedicated to useful work indoors. In a spacious hall, farming implements are made ready for future use. Wooden shoes are being carved and given to children. Flax has been spun and linen woven by women. Here is seen a pot with milk, there a dish with cooked chestnuts. The inscription tells of the other occupations that play an important part in the life of the country people.

PRATA INNOVAT OLEAE CAVET
CAPRIS COIRE DAT LEGIT
GLANDEM ARBORIS LINA APPARAT
NOVEMBER ARMA ET RVSTICA

(November rejuvenates the fields and cares for the olive trees; mates the goats, gathers acorns, prepares the farm implements and the flax.)

In the right-hand corner is the sign Sagittarius (The Archer) (Plate XII).

Bearded December wears a wide-brimmed hat and holds a sickle. At his feet, over an open fire, is a giant cauldron in which sausages are being boiled. Two men bring a slaughtered pig, another blows up the bladder to make the children laugh. A young man at the right offers to the god of the month a taste of the new wine. At the right, in front, the pigs crowd near the trough filled with acorns; turnips and carrots lie scattered on the floor. The inscription:

GAVDERE PARTO CVM GREGE
CASA FRVI AVCVPE ET AVES
SALIRE PROLIS INGERIT
DECEMBER OPERAM INERTIBVS

(December gives work to even the idle; to rejoice over the newborn lambs in the stable, to enjoy life indoors, to go hunting after birds, to salt the meat.)

In the right-hand corner is Capricornus (The Goat) (Plate XIII).

January¹ is depicted as a man with a double face. In his right hand he holds a staff with which he points to the moon, in his left a gigantic blue key. At his feet is a bottle enclosed in a braided straw cover. The scene represents the main square of a small town. Groups of people

¹ January and February, despite their zodiacal signs, have been mistaken for each other by nearly every critic, chiefly because the inscription with the maker's name was supposed to appear on the first month of the year. This is also the reason why the correct interpretation has never been given to the figures of the Three Magi.



PLATE XII. NOVEMBER.



PLATE XIII. DECEMBER.

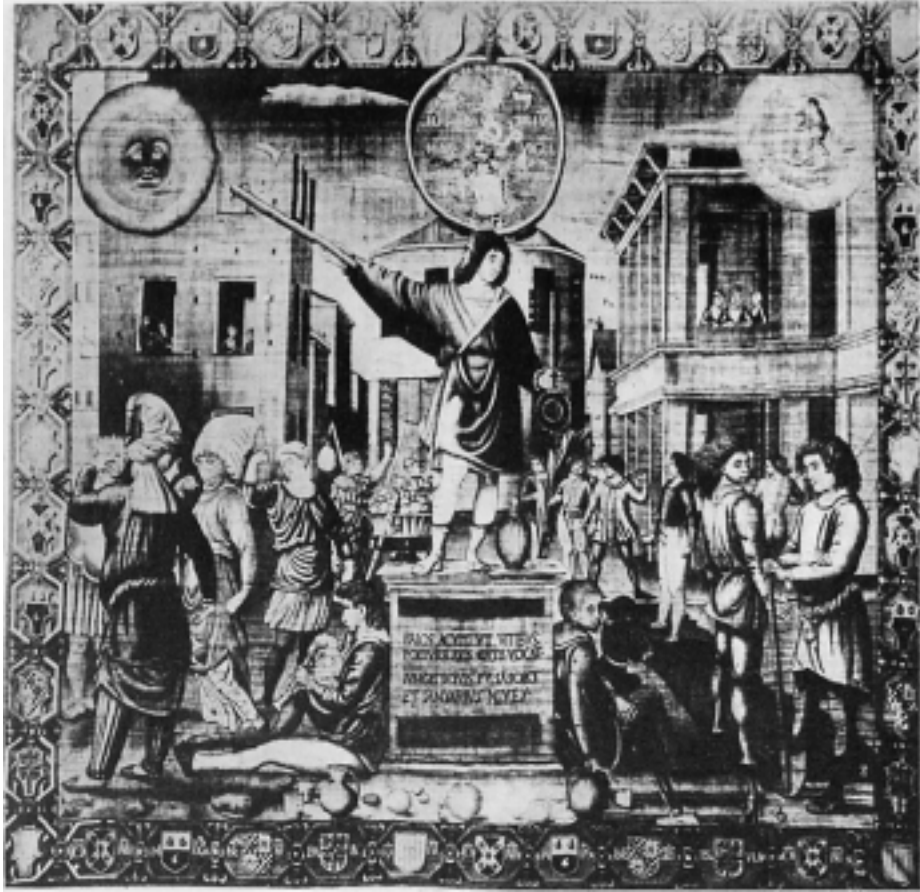


PLATE XIV. JANUARY.

stand about; women and girls gazing from windows indicate that something of interest is to be seen. At the left, in front, are three figures clad in strange costumes, one of them wearing a crown. These undoubtedly are the Three Magi. In addition, there is a bagpiper who supplies music for the scene, and some oddly clad figures carrying colored lanterns. The whole picture represents one of those popular amusements which have long disappeared in Lombardy, and which can be imagined only from representations such as these. The inscription reads:

PALOS ACVIT VT VITIBVS
FOETVRA AVES CORTIS VOCAT
IVNGIT BOVES PVLSA SOLO
ET IANVARIVS NIVE

(January sharpens the poles for the vines, he orders the hens in the court to lay eggs, he mates the cattle and drives the snow from the ground.)

In the right-hand corner is the sign Aquarius (The Water Bearer) (Plate XIV).

February is portrayed as an old man clad in a tucked-up tunic. Pointing with his right hand to the moon, in his left he holds an overturned urn from which water pours. Figures, for the most part in strange disarray, surround him. One man only, conventionally clad, is occupied cutting a tree trunk. The figure at the right, his face covered by a perforated mask, is in all probability practicing apiculture and protects himself thus against the stings of the bees. The inscription, mistakenly attributed to January, is:

PER PRATA PINGVE DISTRHIT
IGNI PABVLVM DAT
HORTOS SPERCORATVR
CHOREAS DVCIT IANVARIVS¹

(February [as the word should appear] spreads the manure over the fields; he burns the stubbles, fertilizes the orchards and leads the round dances.)

In the upper right hand corner is the zodiacal sign, Pisces (The Fish) (Plate XV).

¹ The word January in the last line appears also in the verse of the month preceding. It is possible that in this case it is due to a faulty restoration.

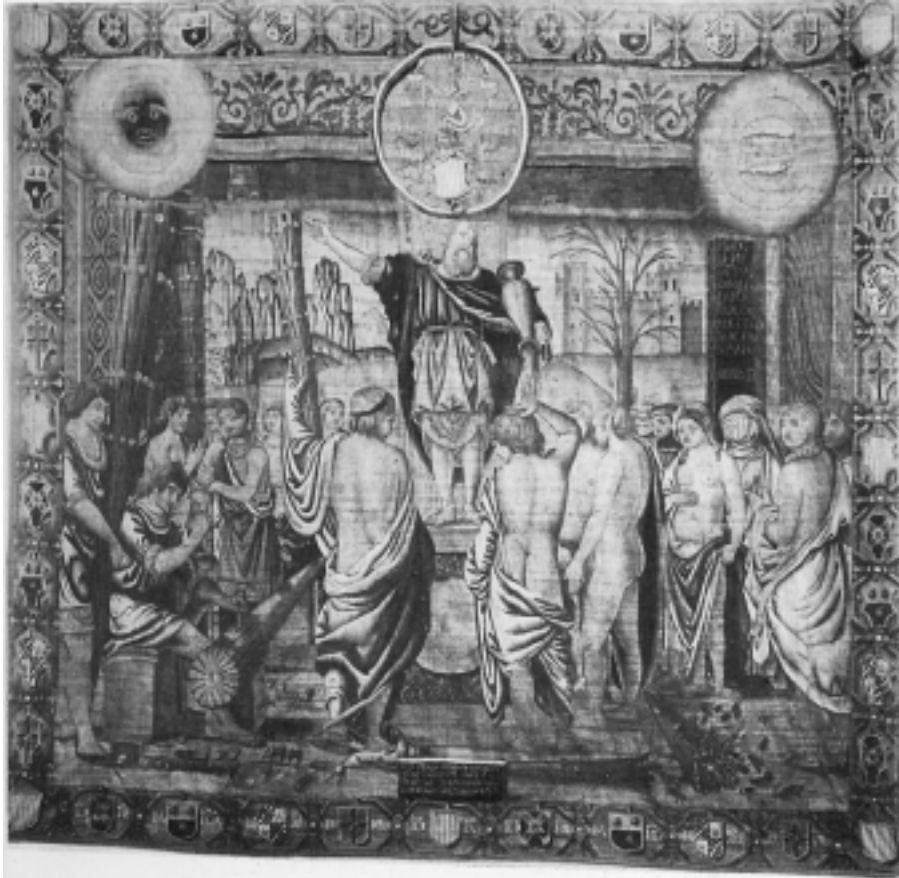


PLATE XV. FEBRUARY.



PLATE XVI. DETAIL OF INSCRIPTION.

This piece, which can be none other than the last of the series, bears an inscription with the full name of the tapestry maker: EGO BENE DITVS D. MEDIO LANNI HOCOPVS FE CITCO SOCIIS SVVIS INVIGLI. (I, Benedetto da Milano, executed this work in Vigevano, together with my assistants.) (Plate XVI.)

The historical as well as the cultural value of this series of months is almost inexhaustible. Although the months are drawn as allegorical figures, the scenes depict with amazing freshness and fidelity the native life of the time. No other work of the Italian Renaissance is known to the author in which the life and occupations of the country people and the *petite bourgeoisie* are portrayed as truthfully and extensively as in the present series. No little knowledge of cultural as well as social conditions and also of folklore may be derived from these tapestries. This applies as well to the shapes of implements and vessels.

The tapestries themselves are of the utmost importance as regards the history of tapestry weaving during the Renaissance in Italy. While from other Italian manufactories which are known to have existed, single pieces at best have survived, this chef d'oeuvre of Vigevano through favorable circumstances has been preserved complete up to our day. For decades futile researches have been made to find documents relating to this series. The greater, therefore, was the joy of the author to find in the archives of the Luogo Pio Trivulzio in Milan the Account Book of the Magnificent Trivulzio with the following notes (Plate XVII):

LIBRO DELLE VENDITE DEL MAGNO TRIVULZIO
DELL' ANNO 1509

(*Original Text*)

Fol. 24:

Benedecto Tapezero de dare ady 3 febraro L 18 contanti a luy sopra sua mercede del pezo de raza del mese de novembre a Hieronimo Bischossa in credito/in fol 4.

E a di 3 agosto L 70 a luy contanti sopra sua mercede deli pezi de raza vigore de uno mandato deli Magnifici Auditori a Hieronimo suprascripto in credito/in fol 130.

E a di 18 settembre L 18/8/a luy contanti sopra sua mercede del pezo de raza del mexe de zenaro/vigore de uno mandato de li suprascripti Auditori a Hieronimo suprascripto in credito/in fol 137.

60514

Bencadito La paxa de Dize ady 3 febrero 15 granos almy supra sua paxa
 del pax de mayo del mes de junio a Hicommio 1500 m = 100 / 4 1/2
 E ady 3 agosto 70.0 almy granos de pax sua mercede del pax de mayo
 de mayo de mayo mandado del Mag. Alvarado a Hicommio 1500 m = 100 / 130 1/2
 E ady 16 febrero 1500 almy granos del pax de mayo de mayo
 mercede de mayo / mayo de mayo mandado del Mag. Alvarado a Hicommio 1500 m = 100 / 137 1/2
 E ady 14 febrero 1410 almy granos del pax de mayo de mayo
 de mayo mandado del Mag. Alvarado a Hicommio 1500 m = 100 / 131 1/2
 E ady dicho 1500 almy granos del pax de mayo de mayo
 de mayo mandado del Mag. Alvarado a Hicommio 1500 m = 100 / 131 1/2
 E ady dicho 1500 almy granos del pax de mayo de mayo
 de mayo mandado del Mag. Alvarado a Hicommio 1500 m = 100 / 131 1/2
 E ady dicho 1500 almy granos del pax de mayo de mayo
 de mayo mandado del Mag. Alvarado a Hicommio 1500 m = 100 / 131 1/2

PLATE XVII. PAGE FROM THE ACCOUNT BOOK OF THE MAGNIFICENT TRIVULZIO.

E a di 14 novembre L 54 a luy contanti sopra sua mercede del suprascripto mexe de zenaro/vigore de uno mandato deli suprascripti a Hieronimo suprascripto in credito/in fol 231.

E a di ditto L 59 a luy contanti per Jacomo da Cremona videlicet a di 22 mazo once 10 doro l'una/L 47/et a di 3 luyo L 12/0 quali sono sopra sua manufactura de li pezy de raza/como in contorelle in fol 66 a luy in credito/in fol 225.

E a di ultimo dicembre como al contorelle in fol 87 L 16 contati sopra sua mercede de li suprascripti pezi de raza a Hieronimo suprascripto in credito/in fol 265.

Fol. 25:

Spexa de Tapezaria deno dare ady 3 febraro L 16/0/videlicet L 15/10/ per lo costo de L 8 once 6 de firixello de diversi colori mandato a maestro Benedeto Tapezero per Rodrico Bertono a Viglevano et sol/10 per la cimatura del mese de Novembre a Hieronimo Biscossa in credito/in fol 4.

E a di 7 febraro L 56.12.0 e sono per once 6 de oro filato a L 3.14 per oncia et per once 6 de arzento filato a L 3.4 per oncia/et sol 8 per duy quaterni de palpero per fare uno dissegno quali sono per fare lo fornimento de raza per la lectera del Signore da campo in somma a Hieronimo biscossa in credito/in fol 4.

E a di 16 dicto L 15.15.0 contanti a maestro Ambroxio da Busto frixaro e sono per lo costo de Libbre 3 once 6 de firixello fino de 3 colori a L 4.10 la libra mandato ad Viglevano per fare lo fornimento/de la lectera da campo del nostro Illustrissimo Signore a Hieronimo Bescossa in credito/ in fol 5.

E adì 22 marzo L 22/0/contanti a maestro Christoforo da Volpe depintore sono per saldo del disegno facto per la lectera da campo per lo Illustrissimo Signore nostro a Hieronimo suprascripto credito/in fol 6.

E a di 4 aprile L 0/14/contanti a maestro Benedeto Tapezero videlicet sol 6 per paro uno scarpe per Paulino de Madama/et sol 8 per uno disegno de papiro facto per lo frixo a torno a la lectera da campo per lo Illustrissimo Signore nostro a Hieronimo suprascripto in credito/in fol 6.

E a di 23 ditto L 22/10 contanti a maestro Benedeto Tapezero per uno mandato deli Magnifici Auditori e sono per lo companadico de mesi 3 aprile/magio/zugno/per luy et altre quatro boche a Hieronimo suprascripto in credito/in fol 7.

E adì 8 magio L 9/7/6 contanti a maestro Ambroxio da Busto frixaro e sono per Libbre 2 once 1 de seta verda mandata a maestro Benedeto a Viglevano a L 4/10 per libra a Hieronimo suprascripto in credito/in fol 7.

E adì 30 luyo L 54/14/6 contanti cioè L 49/15/per lo costo de L 49 $\frac{3}{4}$ de stanne de provenza a sol 20 per libra. Et L 4/19/6 contanti per la torzadura et bianchitura del ditto stanne et lanna consegnata a maestro Benedeto Tapezero a Hieronimo suprascripto in credito/in fol 130.

E adì 27 agosto L 1/7/ contanti a maestro Benedeto per comprare borra rossa/lume de fecia/vidriolo et galetto (1) per tenzere lanna a Hieronimo suprascripto in credito/in fol 131.

E adì 14 settembre L 6/15 contanti per once 17 de firixello zalda et verda pagata ad Ambrosio da Busti sino a dì 13 aprile/a Hieronimo Biscossa in credito/in fol 132.

E adì ditto L 14/10 e sono per il pretio de libre 4 once 10 de firixello de diversi colori mandato a maestro Benedeto Tapezere fino a dì 4 agosto a Hieronimo suprascripto in credito/in fol 133.

E adì 18 ottobre L 1/10 contanti a maestro Benedeto Tapeziere e sono per le candele per uno mexe le quali consuma la nocte nel lavorare le tapezarie a Hieronimo suprascripto in credito/in fol 230.

E adì 2 novembre L 16 contanti ad Ambroxio da Busti Frixaro quali sono per il pretio de Libre 5 once 4 de Ferixello de diversi colori/mandato a maestro Benedeto Tapezero como in conterello a Hieronimo suprascripto in credito/in fol 230.

E adì 14 ditto L 18 contanti a maestro Benedeto tapezere quali sono per il companadigho de boche 4 per il mexe de luyo/agosto/settembre a L 6 per bocha cosy de acordo con luy como in contorello in fol 66 a Jacomo da Cremona in credito/in fol 225.

E adì 17 dicembre L 3 contanti a maestro Benedeto tapezero quali sono per tante candele consumate in lavorare de nocte per duy mexy finiti adì 21 dicembre/a Hieronimo Biscocca in credito/in fol 235.

Fol. 268:

Spexa de Tapezeria. E adì ultimo dicembre tamen adì 30 zenaro lb 17/9 computati a maestro Benedeto tapezero sono . . . per comprar oro filato per fornire Parma del Signore nel suo appartamento da campo et sol 6/9 per uno par de scarpe per Paulo de Madama a Hieronimo Biscossa in credito.

Fol. 44:

Christoforo dele Volpi depinctore in Milano de dare ady 2 Luyo L. 13/12/0 aluy contanti per parte de pagamento de certi disegni facti per uno paramento da lecto per lo Illustrissimo domino nostro sino ady 25 marzo a Giorgio da Chiavenna in credito.

1510 *Fol. 20:*

Vanoto da Monza fictabile a Inzago, Investitura rogata per Lazarino Biffo notario in Milano 6 novembre 1506 per anni 6.

Fol. 330:

Spexa de Tapezarie de dare adi ultimo dicembre come in giornale a fol 92 L. 7 s. 18 pagati . . . adi 9 zenaro 1511 per disegno et altre cosse per fare una antiporta et per lo costo di L 6¼ di scanno per fare ditta antiporta a Roderico Bertono per conto de dinari scossi in credito.

Archivio del Luogo Pio Trivulzio, Milano

THE ACCOUNT BOOK OF THE MAGNIFICENT TRIVULZIO
FOR THE YEAR 1509
(*English Version*)

Fol. 24:

Benedecto the Tapestry-maker, has been given the 3rd of February L. 18 ¹ in cash on account of his fee for the tapestry representing the month of November. Credit of Hieronimo Bischossa/in fol. 4.¹

And the 3rd of August L. 70, paid to Benedecto in cash for his fee for tapestries, according to an order of the Magnificent Auditors. Credit of the above-mentioned Hieronimo. Credit/fol. 130.

And the 18th of September L. 18/8 paid to Benedecto in cash for the fee for his tapestry representing the month of January according to a mandate of the above-mentioned Auditors. Credit of the above-mentioned Hieronimo. Credit/fol. 137.

And the 14th of November L. 54 paid to Benedecto in cash for the fee for his above-mentioned tapestry representing the month of January according to a mandate of the above-mentioned Auditors. Credit of the above-mentioned Hieronimo on fol. 231.

And on the same date L. 59 paid to him in cash through Jacomo da Cremona namely on the 22nd of May ten ounces of gold at L. 47 and 3rd of July L. 12/0 which are for the manufacture of the tapestries as in the account in fol. 66. Credit of the same on fol. 225.

¹ The Libra (Lira) represents 20 soldi, each soldo 12 denari. The same ratio is found today in the English monetary system. As a unit of weight the Libra represents 12 *oncie* or ounces.

And on the last of December as in the account on fol. 87 L. 16 paid in cash to Benedecto for his fee for the above-mentioned tapestries. Credit of the above-mentioned Hieronimo/fol. 265.

Fol. 25:

Cost of tapestries, due on the 3rd of February L. 16/0/ namely L. 15/10 for the cost of 8 pounds, 6 ounces of thread of various colors sent to Master Benedecto, tapestry maker, through Rodrico Bertono of Vigevano and 10 soldi for the shearing of the month of November to Hieronimo Bischossa credit/fol. 4.

And on the 7th of February L. 56/12/0 for 6 ounces of gold thread at L. 3.14 per ounce and for 6 ounces of silver thread at L. 3.4 per ounce and 8 soldi for 2 sheets of paper to make a design, for the execution of the tapestry of the Field Bed of the Patron. Altogether to Hieronimo Bischossa credit/fol. 4.

And on the 16th of the same month L. 15.15.0 in cash to Master Ambroxio of Busto, spinner, for the cost of 3 pounds and 6 ounces of fine yarn of three colors, at L. 4.10 per pound sent to Vigevano for the execution of the Field Bed of our illustrious Patron. To Hieronimo Bischossa credit/fol. 5.

And on the 22nd of March, L. 22/0/ in cash to Master Christoforo da Volpe, painter, as final payment for the design made for the Field Bed of our illustrious Patron. To the above-mentioned Hieronimo, credit/fol. 6.

And on the 4th of April, L. 0/14/ in cash to Master Benedeto, tapestry maker; namely, 6 soldi for a pair of shoes for Paolino, page of our mistress, and 8 soldi for a paper design made for the fringe around the Field Bed of our illustrious Patron. To the above-mentioned Hieronimo, credit/fol. 6.

And on the 23rd of same month, L. 22/10 in cash to Master Benedeto, tapestry maker, according to an order of the Magnificent Auditors, for the keep regarding the three months, April, May, and June, for himself and four mouths (assistants). To the above-mentioned Hieronimo, credit/fol. 7.

And on the 8th of May, L. 9/7/6 in cash to Master Ambrosio of Busto, spinner, for two pounds and one ounce of green silk sent to Master Benedecto to Vigevano, at L. 4/10 a pound. To the above-mentioned Hieronimo, credit/fol. 7.

And on the 30th of July, L. 54/14/6 in cash; namely, L. 49/15 for the cost of 49 $\frac{3}{4}$ pounds of linen of Provence, at 20 soldi a pound; and L.

4/19/6 in cash for the twisting and bleaching of the said linen and for wool sent to Master Benedeto, tapestry maker. To the above-mentioned Hieronimo, credit/fol. 130.

And on the 27th of August, L. 1/7 in cash to Master Benedeto to purchase *borra rossa*, *lume de fecia*,¹ vitriol, and yellow for dyeing wool. To the above-mentioned Hieronimo, credit/fol. 131.

And on the 14th of September, L. 6/15 in cash for seventeen ounces of yarn, yellow and green, paid to Ambrosio of Busti, on the 13th of April. To Hieronimo Biscossa, credit/fol. 132.

And on the same day, L. 14/10 for the price of four pounds and ten ounces of yarn of various colors sent to Master Benedeto, tapestry maker, on the 4th of August. To the above-mentioned Hieronimo, credit/fol. 133.

And on the 18th of October, L. 1/10 in cash to Master Benedeto, tapestry maker, for the candles for one month which he consumes at night to work on the tapestries. To the above-mentioned Hieronimo, credit/fol. 230.

And on the second of November, L. 16 in cash to Ambroxio da Busti, spinner, for the price of five pounds and four ounces of yarn of various colors sent to Master Benedeto, tapestry maker. To the above-mentioned Hieronimo, credit/fol. 230.

And on the 14th of the same month, L. 18 in cash to Master Benedeto, tapestry maker, for the keep of four mouths for the months of July, August, and September, at L. 6 each person, as agreed with him as in the account on fol. 66. To Jacomo da Cremona, credit/fol. 225.

And on the 17th of December, L. 3 in cash to Master Benedeto, tapestry maker, for candles consumed in working at night during two months ending the 21st of December. To Hieronimo Biscocca, credit/fol. 235.

¹The writer is indebted to Professor George La Piana through the courtesy of Professor Edward W. Forbes of Harvard University for the following explanation of these materials: "(1) *Borra* was used to mean 'wool shavings and clippings' mixed to regular wool in weaving cloth of a cheaper quality. Since, however, the term used in the manuscript is *borra rossa*, it is more likely that it means a pigment. There is a large family of plants called by the Latin term *borraginaceae* and in Italian *borraginacee*. A member of this family is the *alkanna tinctoria* (from the Arabic *al-hinna*), the roots of which contain a red-violet dye which, dissolved in alcohol and acetic acid, gives to resinous substances a red color, usually called henna or *henné*. In my opinion, *borra rossa* means precisely this red-henna dye.

"(2) *Lume de fecia*. *Lume* is an abbreviation of *allume alum*, widely used in dyeing cloth. There were two kinds of it; the *allume de pluma*, the finest and more expensive which was used for more delicate, especially medicinal, purposes, and the more coarse which was used for dyeing. The term *fecia*, which in Italian means sediment, with a disparaging sense, may mean this coarsest kind of alum."

Fol. 268:

Cost of Tapestries on the last of December up to 30th of January, L. 17/9; computed by Master Benedeto, tapestry maker, to purchase gold thread for the coat of arms of the Patron in his Field Quarters. And 6/9 soldi for a pair of shoes for Paulo of our mistress.

Fol. 44:

Christoforo dele Volpi, painter of Milan, the 2nd of July, L. 13/12/0 in cash for part payment of certain designs made for a bed hanging for our illustrious Patron; paid already in March 25 to Giorgio da Chiavena, credit.

1510 Fol. 20:

Vanoto of Monza, tenant in Inzago, investiture notarized by Lazarino Biffo, notary in Milan, 6th of November, 1506, for six years.

Fol. 330:

Cost of Tapestries due the last day of December as in the Day Book on fol. 92, L. 7 and 18 soldi paid . . . the 9th of January, 1511, for a design and other things to make a door hanging and for the cost of six and one-quarter pounds of *scanno* to make the said door hanging. Credit to Roderico Bertono for money already received.

Judging by the accounts, it would seem that maestro Benedetto received a fee for each tapestry separately. According to the notes in the Account Book for September 18 and November 14, 1509, he was paid for the January tapestry at one time 18 lire 8 soldi and at another 54 lire. This makes 72 lire 8 soldi for a single month.

On the other hand, the materials used by the tapestry weaver are accounted for separately. For one ounce of gold thread, 3 lire 14 soldi is paid; for one ounce of silver thread, 3 lire 4 soldi. Maestro Ambrogio da Busto, the spinner, receives 4 lire 10 soldi per pound for fine yarn in various colors. The same price is paid for green silk. Linen thread from Provence costs 1 lira per pound. For dyeing the wool in various colors, different pigments are bought. In order to speed up the work, presumably to finish the whole series by Christmas 1509, weaving was done at night during the last three months of that year and considerable amounts are noted for candles used up to December 21, 1509.

These notes throw an amazing light upon the origin of these tapestries of the Twelve Months. Although they represent only a small fraction of

the accounts, as a whole they permit a fascinating insight into their history. Maestro Benedetto, the subject of the inscription on the February piece, was the head of the manufactory. Aiding him were four assistants whose names are not mentioned. It is doubtful whether they can be identified with any other of the tapestry workers—Lorenzo dei Cavalieri, Antonio e fratelli da Po, Francesco Ferraro—who received a fee at approximately the same time from the Trivulzio administration. As our document mentions simply four “mouths” for whom Maestro Benedetto received “keep,” it may be assumed that they were simple assistants, not independent artists.

The maestro, as well as each of the assistants, received for his subsistence 1 lira 10 soldi per month, or 4 lire 10 soldi per quarter year. No mention is made in the account for 1509 of payment to the artist who designed the cartoons, a sign that these cartoons had already been paid for before this time. Up to the present day, unfortunately, no trace has been found of these earlier accounts. In the accounts for 1509 and 1510, on the other hand, there is mention of other work of the kind done at the same time for the Marshal. On March 22, 1509, for example, the painter Cristoforo da Volpe received the considerable amount of 22 lire for a design for a field bed for the Marshal. Two layers of paper had already been bought for the drawing of the cartoons. Later, on April 4, there is mentioned a plan for a continuous frieze on the field bed. On July 2 of the same year, 13 lire 12 soldi are paid to the painter for certain sketches that he had delivered for the ornamentation of a bed. Except for this one allusion, this Cristoforo da Volpe is a completely unknown Milanese painter. Maestro Benedetto, tapestry maker, is commissioned to weave as well a coat of arms for the field quarters of the Marshal, and received for its execution a large amount of gold thread. On January 9, 1511, mention is made of the making of door hangings.

It is entirely probable that the workshop itself was situated within the spacious confines of the castle of Vigevano. This ancient castle of the Visconti¹ had been considerably added to by the Sforza dukes, and especially by Lodovico II Moro before it was given to Gian Giacomo Trivulzio. Although nothing of its interior decoration has been preserved, the whole edifice dominates completely the town of Vigevano, and is to this day one of the most impressive constructions of its kind in Lombardy.

These tapestries of the Twelve Months were first discussed by Giuseppe Mongeri in 1871, in which year they were shown publicly at the Salone

¹ A famous family of Lombardy who ruled Milan from 1277 to 1447.

dei Giardini Pubblici in Milan.¹ At even this early date, Mongeri had come to the conclusion that the cartoons had been designed by the Milanese painter and architect, Bartolommeo Suardi, called Bramantino after his teacher, Bramante, who was the celebrated architect and painter of Urbino. While the inscription on the tapestries proves that they were made in Vigevano in the workshop established by Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, no mention is made of the brilliant artist whom we have to thank for the cartoons. Nevertheless, it is beyond doubt that it was Bartolommeo Suardi.

It is by means of these tapestries that we arrive at a knowledge of the variety and wealth of inventive genius of Bramantino in a greater measure than in any other of his works. Indeed, the stylistic peculiarities of these compositions prove the soundness of this attribution. Extremely characteristic of Bramantino is the idea of an arrangement of symmetrical groups at either side of a central figure. It is only necessary to recall the peculiar mythological painting by Bramantino of *The Gods Visiting Philemon and Baucis* at the Wallraf-Richartz Museum at Cologne. A still more obvious relation to the *Twelve Months* is offered by the small painting, the *Adoration of the Magi*, at the National Gallery in London, rightfully admired as one of the happiest creations of the eminent master. The similarity in this case extends still further as the side figures offering gifts turn from either side toward the central figure in the same way as may be observed in some of the representations of the *Twelve Months*.² A similar composition by Bramantino is the lovely wall painting of the *Madonna between two angels* in the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan. Since the legend "Soli Deo" inscribed on this painting was one of the family mottos of Marshal Trivulzio, the assumption is that this mural was painted

¹ Perseveranza, April 17, 1871. The author took up this subject extensively in his treatise, *Early Works of Bartolommeo Suardi*, in the *Jahrbuch der Kunstsammlungen des A. H. Kaiserhauses*, Vol. 25, Vienna 1904-5. The tapestries are discussed also by F. Valeri Malaguzzi in *La Corte di Lodovico il Moro*, vol. IV, U. Hoepli, Milano, 1923. Another article is by Carlo Vicenzi in *Dedalo*, Vol. X, 1929. Giorgio Nicodemi in *Emporium*, Vol. XLI, 1935 gave an extensive report upon the occasion of the acquisition of the tapestries for the Castello Sforzesco. While Vicenzi expresses doubt concerning the attribution of the cartoons to Bramantino, Nicodemi on the other hand accepts the theory of Mongeri and all other critics.

² Even though the originality of the delineation in these tapestries is beyond question, it must be added that the idea of personifying the months as enthroned, though single figures was also made use of in a series of engravings by an anonymous artist, of which two numbers only are known, preserved in the Albertina in Vienna; they represent March and October. It is the former especially that suggests that it may be based on a design of Bramante. It represents the powerful figure of a bearded man sitting on a throne hung with a variety of vegetables, whose appearance as well as the verse that accompanies it, borders on the burlesque. Hind, Arthur Mayger: *Catalogue of Early Italian Engravings*, British Museum, London, p. 282, 1909-1910.

for the old City Hall of Milan, the Palazzo del Broletto on the Piazza Mercanti, by order of the Marshal.

Characteristic still further of Bramantino's technique are certain details found in the tapestries. July, for example, depicts the thrashers at work, a procedure that presupposes movement and exercise of power. But Bramantino treats these figures, lifting and letting drop their flails upon the corn, in the manner of architectural details of a building. The rhythm of the work and the architectural character of the composition both are indicated in an impressive manner. The same is true of September with the servants rotating the wine press. As to Bramantino, the architect, the variety of buildings in the series offers proof. Houses of different types, halls, garden pavilions, all bear witness to the inventive power of an architect who imprints on all that he does the stamp of original personality. To anyone who has seen the mausoleum of the Trivulzio family near San Nazzaro in Milan, the only monument by Bramantino completely preserved, the building will remain unforgettable.

The predilection in these tapestry designs for the use of foreshortening, as applied to human figures, is not surprising in the case of Bramantino whose Christ above the main entrance of San Sepolero in Milan has been for centuries the object of deep admiration. This wall painting, which today is in a fragmentary state of preservation in the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana in Milan,¹ shows the dead Christ amidst the circle of his mourning followers. The body, the upper part supported by the Virgin, is represented half seated; but the legs, as seen in the copy which alone shows the whole composition, are foreshortened so that the person approaching the main entrance of the church would have received the impression that they were extended in his direction. In the pictures of the Twelve Months, the same type of linear foreshortening appears in the seated figures in the foreground of the April and August pieces.

The date of the origin of these tapestries can be given almost exactly. The fact that underneath the Gonzaga crest is found the name of Paola, whose marriage to Gian Nicolo Trivulzio took place in 1501, sets a *terminus post quem*. The execution of the series seems to have been completed in December, 1509. In this year there are only two pieces mentioned in the account book, January and November. If this be taken as an indication that it took six months to finish one piece and six years for the entire series, the beginning of the work would have to be set back to

¹ The complete composition is preserved in a fresco copy in Sonvico near Lugano (Cantone Ticino, Switzerland).

the year 1504. But it may be safely assumed that the cartoons were ready before the weaving of the tapestries had begun. Bramantino's part of the work thus would fall directly between the years 1501 and 1503, which is precisely what the author indicated many years ago when he first tried to reconstruct the growth of Bramantino's artistic development. The first certain mention made of the tapestries, as far as is known, is in the inventory handed over to the grandchild of the Marshal, Gian Francesco Trivulzio (1509-1573) in 1535. The twelve pieces of the Twelve Months are explicitly mentioned among the other textiles owned by the family at this time.

Among the small group of Italian tapestries of this period which still have been preserved, at least one can be attributed with great probability to this same manufactory at Vigevano. This is the piece in the Musée des Arts Decoratifs in the Louvre, which shows the enthroned Cæsar, to whom is delivered the severed head of Pompey. This tapestry was exhibited in 1874 at the Esposizione d'Arte Industriale in Milan from the collection of the Marquis Giacomo Raimondi; later it came into the possession of the antique dealer, Bauer, in Florence. The rich border design of small-figured scenes showing the Triumph of Cæsar had been cut from the central portion before it came into the possession of the Louvre.

Judging by the coat of arms in the four corners, the piece was made for the Rusca family who lived at Como and Locarno. The inscription at the feet of Cæsar, partly illegible because of restorations, contains what seems to be a date, MDX . . . which may be read as approximately 1512. The name of the artist who executed the cartoon for this piece of probable Vigevano origin has been established beyond any doubt. Both Mario Salmi and the author arrived independently at the name of Bernardino Luini, whose Madonna of 1512 at Chiaravalle shows almost precisely the same construction of throne. The halberdier of the Cæsar tapestry, moreover, is very similar to an Apostle on Luini's altarpiece of the Busti family at the Brera. The border also shows characteristic features of Luini's art.¹

The author wishes to express his gratitude to Prof. Giorgio Nicodemi, Dott. Costantino Baroni, Cav. Buzzetto, Direttore del Luogo Pio Trivulzio, and Prof. Benzi, Direttore d'Archivio del Luogo Pio Trivulzio, for the kind assistance given him during his research work in Milan.

¹ For illustrations see Malaguzzi Valeri, Francesco, *La Corte de Lodovico Il Moro*, vol. IV, 1923.

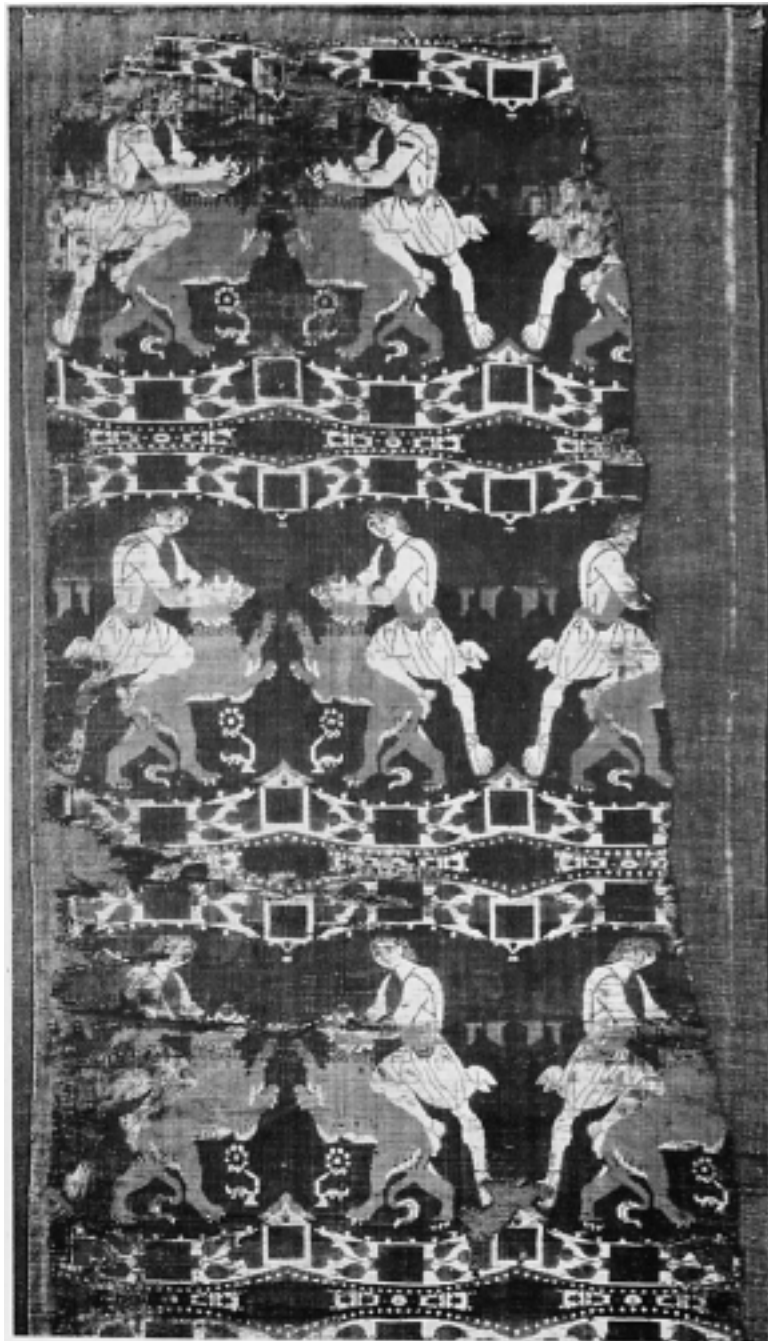


PLATE I. SILK WEAVE, EGYPT, ALEXANDRIA(?) VI-VIII CENTURY.
HARVARD UNIVERSITY, DUMBARTON OAKS LIBRARY AND COLLECTION,
GEORGETOWN, WASHINGTON, D. C.

NOTES ON AN EARLY SILK WEAVE

This patterned silk from the Dumbarton Oaks Collection¹ at Georgetown, Washington, D. C., has for its principal motive the heroic figure of a Graeco-Roman youth wrestling with a lion; a subject that might represent either Samson, David, or Hercules, each of whom is credited with having killed a lion in his early youth (Plate I). It is a rare textile, of which no finer example exists, and it dates from the VI-VIII Century of the Christian Era; a period when beautiful fabrics woven by skilled artisans were highly treasured and favored as gifts by reigning emperors.

Whether this silk, from the Cathedral of Coire in Switzerland, comes from the imperial workshops of Constantinople or from the looms of Alexandria is a point still to be determined. Neither weave nor pattern furnishes a definite clue as either one of these cities might have produced a pattern of Hellenistic type woven in a similar technique.

Alexandria was for centuries an Egyptian center of Graeco-Roman culture, and its merchants carried on an extensive trade with foreign markets from Rome to the Orient. This trade handled the output of the great textile industry of this world metropolis whose designers reproduced foreign patterns to meet the demand of a market that might require for Rome a silk designed in the Hellenistic manner or for the Near East one that depicted the chase. In a similar way the merchants of China dealt in oriental copies of Sassanian silks and, later, in Italian patterned weaves for the western market.²

Silk weaving was established at the court of Byzantium in the fourth century shortly after Constantine had chosen this city as his new capital. In the early years of the imperial workshops Constantinople with its Roman heritage might naturally have favored silks designed from classical models; but Justinian art of the sixth century shows a closer affinity with the East. Silks that are credited to this later period show no adherence to Hellenistic inspiration. Byzantine art which exerted a great influence upon Italy, borrowed from the East its love of color and flat patterns, so

¹ The Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection was presented to Harvard University by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss in 1940.

² Falke, von: *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, Berlin, 1921, Nos. 75-76.

clearly exemplified in the San Vitale mosaics of Justinian and Theodora at Ravenna. This is again evidenced in the rich habiliments of a mounted emperor portrayed in a Byzantine silk preserved in the Textile Museum of Lyons. This piece was found in 1882 in the sacristy of the Roman Church at Mozac, southern France, where it served to wrap the relics of a saint. In this rare fragment an imperial figure on a richly caparisoned mount is shown clad in a robe patterned with small geometric figures in yellow on a deep red ground. A very similar design is found on a silk tapestry of later date preserved in the cathedral of Bamberg, Germany, that served as a shroud for Bishop Gunther who died in 1064 on his way home from a mission to the court at Byzantium. It is not improbable that this hanging had been acquired by the bishop during his sojourn in the Roman capital.

The subject portrayed in this silk from Dumbarton Oaks, as well as in a silk fragment in Aix-la-Chapelle (Plate II), and in other weaves of the early Christian Era, undoubtedly owes its inspiration to the popularity of the sports of the arena.¹ Fights between gladiators long had been a prominent feature of the games which played so important a part in Roman life. Gladiators were trained for their profession in schools, and bands of these fighters are said to have been owned by the government as well as by private individuals.

A spectacle that gained great renown was the fight between men and animals, and for this men likewise were trained. Another popular diversion that dates back to 186 B.C. were fights arranged between the animals themselves, and for these contests, which were held in the circus or amphitheatre, rarest animals from distant regions were brought to Rome. It is said that in the day of Pompey a fight was arranged for which five hundred lions, eighteen elephants and over four hundred other ferocious animals were imported from Africa.²

In the early centuries of the Christian Era this theme of combat appears as the accepted model for votive offerings to Mithras, one of the great gods of the Persian Pantheon. This cult, which in the first century had spread from Asia Minor to Rome, had made great headway among the soldiers of the Roman army. It was one of the strongest religions struggling at that time for supremacy in the Roman Empire, and it was a dangerous competitor of the Christian religion. As a warrior god—the champion of civilization against barbarism, always victorious and conferring immor-

¹ Events that are portrayed in some second century *graffiti* (scratchings on marble) that are still visible on the walls of the Colosseum.

² Guhl and Koner: *The Life of the Greeks and Romans*. London, 1889, p. 562.

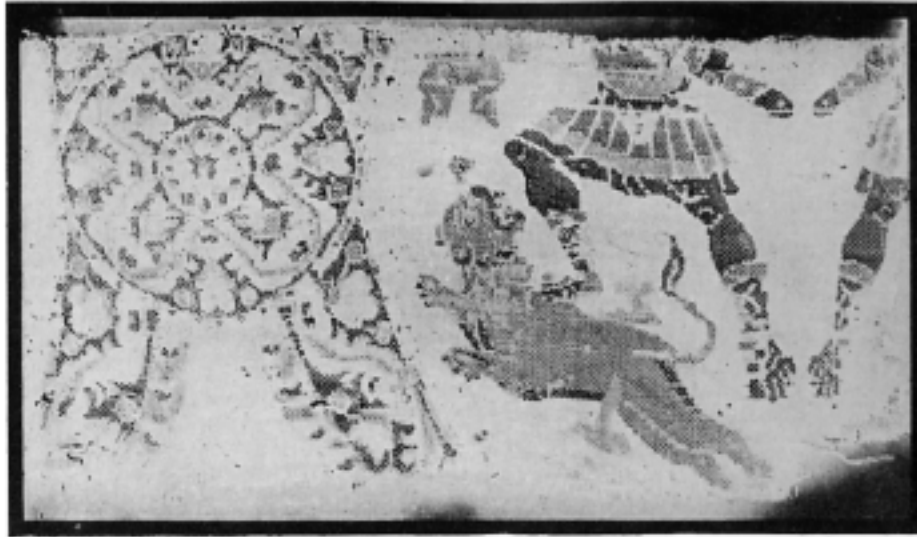


PLATE II. SILK FROM THE CATHEDRAL IN AIX-LA-CHAPELLE.



PLATE III. MITHRAIC RELIEF FROM HEDDERNHEIM.



PLATE IV. STONE SLAB WITH MITHRAIC SACRIFICE, FOUND IN LONDON.



PLATE V. SILVER PLATE WITH FIGURE OF DAVID.
MORGAN COLLECTION, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART.

tality upon its initiates—Mithras became the divine patron of soldiers; and this worship was especially strong in the military camps of the Rhine, the Danube and Britain, the important frontiers of the Roman Empire. Sanctuaries were established in Gaul, Italy and Spain, built in the form of small caves where worship was carried on by Mithraic communities. In the ritual of this cult the supreme moment of the ceremony was the killing of the bull by the god, a mystic sacrifice which symbolized the creation of civilized life and the promise of immortality.

The many bas-reliefs of this Mithraic subject which have been discovered in far distant areas occupied by Rome's armies show in each instance a single Graeco-Roman model (Plate III), a model which, with slight variation, appears in this later silk pattern. A few years ago one of these slabs, probably the votive offering of a Roman soldier of the second century A.D., was found in England (Plate IV),¹ and a like representation of the god was discovered in the Mithraeum or shrine, unearthed during the excavations carried on by Yale University, in the important military stronghold of Dura-Europos on the Euphrates. The most important part of this edifice was the naos or cult shrine, where, against the wall, was a bas-relief representing the god at the moment of the killing of the bull with the help of the raven, the snake and the dog, which were the sacred animals of Mithras. It is this part of the shrine that is preserved at Yale, where there are two of these bas-reliefs dedicated severally by two commanders of the Palmyrian archers, one in 160 and the other in 168 A.D.

From the fourth century with the increasing interest in biblical subjects another influence becomes apparent. This is shown in the portrayal of saints and prophets in contemporary manuscripts and wall paintings. In 1902 an excavation near Kyrenia on the northern coast of Syria uncovered a collection of plates and jewelry dating from the sixth or seventh century. The greater part of this collection is in the Morgan Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. On these plates, depicted in low relief, is the story of David, and in the piece that displays the figure of the hero wrestling with a lion, the competition, except for a few minor details, follows closely the Mithraic design (Plate V). Here the chief figure takes the identical pose of the god, and the rising form of the serpent in the older pattern is suggested in the slender branch at the side of the plate. In the later silk design this branch becomes an accepted stylistic motive that recurs frequently in contemporary Coptic weaves, and appears again,

¹ *Archaeologia* (Society of Antiquaries of London), Volume LX, Plate X, 1906.

in a different medium, on a sculptured cross in the collection of the Mistra Museum in Greece.¹

In the full design of the Dumbarton Oaks silk, which, technically, is a compound weft twill with a red warp and dark blue, green, yellow, red and white wefts, the principal figure groups, faced alternately, are arranged in parallel zones separated by a slightly festooned banding with rose sprays that are interrupted at set intervals by square cabochons. This unusual type of curved border, which reappears in some of the eagle silks of the eleventh century, is a form that may have been evolved from the Hellenistic arcade motive that in earlier Egyptian weaves preceded the fully developed roundel scheme of pattern; or it may have been devised as a means of introducing more figures in a breadth of silk by removing the side borders of a medallion pattern. The figure, like that of Joseph in the Sens textile,² is garbed in the loose, sleeveless tunic of Classic Greece. The Syrian tunic, such as appears in medallion silks with mounted archers, has a closely fitted bodice with long sleeves, usually worn over short or full length breeches.

This history of Egypt and Syria records that there was close intercourse between these two countries from earliest days. Berytus on the Syrian coast, which was noted for its wines, its linen manufactories, and its purple dye, traded with the great market at Antioch. It was associated as well with Heliopolis and was an important commercial center before the reign of Justinian. The looms of Berytus, along with those of Tyre, wove silk that was imported from China through Persia, with dye works established at Sarepta, Caesarea, Neapolis, Lydda and Dora. When, however, Justinian in 529 seized control of the silk market and turned over the monopoly to the Imperial Treasury, these cities were deprived of their economic reason for existence, and the situation thus created resulted in the migration of artisans to districts that might better utilize their services. This circumstance could easily account for the Syrian influence that is found in many of the medallion silks of uncertain provenance that formerly were ascribed to Alexandria which, by many, are now considered to be of Syrian origin.

Church treasuries throughout Europe possess in their treasuries many fragments of early silk weaves among which are a few pieces of this pattern. These fabrics reached Europe through various channels: they could have been the gifts of Byzantine emperors to church or monastery,

¹ Pierce and Tyler: *L'Art Byzantin*. Vol. II, No. 175b. Paris, 1937.

² Falke, von: *Op. cit.*, No. 26, No. 55, p. 11.

or the treasured possession of some visiting prelate to Constantinople. They might also have been part of the great trade of Venice and its neighboring seaports, or brought by Jewish merchants on the Syrian coast who traded far beyond their native shore and visited the many fairs of Europe and Western Asia in quest of fine materials. Or in some instances they may have been the spoils of war, a possibility that in these chaotic days of world upheaval seems far from remote.

Other examples of this weave are published in the following:

The Victoria and Albert Museum: Hither Asia or Alexandria, VI-VII Century.

cf. Kendrick, *Early Mediaeval Woven Fabrics*, Pl. II, 1001.

von Falke: *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, No. 42, Alexandria, VI-VII Century.

Pierce and Tyler: *L'Art Byzantin*: vol. II, 180 a.

Dalton: *Byzantine Art and Archaeology*: p. 591, about the VI Century.

Musée Historique: Lyons: Byzantine, about the X Century.

cf. Cox, Pl. 21, also D'Hennesel, p. 25; Pariset: *Les Industries de la Soie*, Fig. 147.

Musée de Cluny: VI-VIII Century.

cf. Diehl: *Manuel d'Art byzantin*, vol. I, p. 267.

Capella Sancta Sanctorum:

cf. Grisar, p. 182, No. 5; Lauer, Pl. 18.

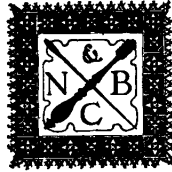
Kunstgewerbe Museum: Byzantine, VI-VIII Century.

cf. Lessing, vol. VII, Pl. 7c (86.673).

Treasury at Aachen:

cf. Lessing, Pl. 7a.

There is also a piece in a bookbinding in the *Library at Trentino*.



CLUB NOTES, 1943-1944

The Annual Meeting of 1943 was held at the house of Miss E. Mabel Clark, 831 Madison Avenue, on Thursday afternoon, February twenty-fifth, at three o'clock. After the reading of reports by the Directors, Miss Marian Hague, in the absence of Mrs. Franklin Chace, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, announced the election of Mrs. Frank B. Rowell as President, succeeding Miss Frances Morris, whose term of office had expired and who now is an Honorary President. At four o'clock, Mrs. H. Dunscombe Colt, whose home was in Malta and who now is at the head of the Malta Division of the British War Relief, gave a stimulating talk on life in that heroic little island that for months withstood the incessant bombing of the Germans during the early days of the war. The talk was illustrated with lantern slides, many loaned by Mr. Burton Holmes. Later, a demonstration of Maltese lace-making was given by Mrs. Melita Bartolo, and tea was served.

On the afternoon of March eighteenth a large gathering of Club members enjoyed the hospitality of the Misses Wing in their apartment at 770 Park Avenue. The speaker, Dr. Herbert J. Spinden, Curator of American Indian Art and Primitive Culture of the Brooklyn Museum, took for his topic the ancient weaves of South America, a subject on which he is an outstanding authority. Dr. Spinden's thorough knowledge of this particular group of textile fabrics and his delightful presentation of the matter held the interested attention of his audience. The lecture was illustrated with lantern slides, after which tea was served.

On Wednesday afternoon, April fourteenth, Mrs. Franklin Chace entertained the members of the Club at her interesting apartment at 125

East 57th Street, when Miss Maud Esther Dilliard spoke on "Home Life in Dutch New York," with lantern slide illustrations. The meeting was well attended, and the members welcomed Mrs. Colt when she came in to express her thanks to them for their gift of \$204 toward the Malta Relief, the spontaneous response to her graphic description of conditions in that war-ridden island.

At a meeting of the Board of Directors held in October, 1943, at the apartment of Miss Grace O. Clarke, 157 East 72nd Street, it was decided that the subject for the coming season would be the textile arts of America, the topics ranging from early spinning and weaving to fabrics used in modern warfare.

The first meeting of the autumn was held on Wednesday afternoon, November seventeenth, at the Folk Arts Center, 670 Fifth Avenue, where an exhibition of Early American quilts had been arranged through the courtesy of the Director, Dr. Elizabeth Burchenal. The Misses Burchenal, to whose untiring efforts the Folk Arts Center owes its success, accompanied the members through the galleries and spoke informally on the relation between American quilts and those produced in the Hawaiian Islands. Two examples of Hawaiian quilts were shown in which the derivation of the native style from American models was clearly indicated. An interesting feature of the afternoon was a group of hymns associated with the early American missionaries in Hawaii, played by Mr. Frank A. McConnell, a friend of the Misses Burchenal, Carillonneur of St. Thomas's Church, opposite the Folk Arts Center.

On December ninth the Club held a *Bring and Buy Sale* for the benefit of the Red Cross. The sale was held in the apartment of Miss Morris, 39 East 79th Street, where various articles donated by members and friends were offered at reasonable prices. The rooms were crowded from four until six o'clock, and the afternoon's sales cleared \$1,050 for this cause.

One of the most interesting meetings of the winter was held at the house of Mrs. Gerrish Milliken, 723 Park Avenue, who entertained the Club on the afternoon of Wednesday, January twenty-sixth. The program was taken over by two members, Mrs. Theodore F. Humphrey, who demonstrated weaving, and Mrs. Lloyd Richards, an enthusiastic spinner, who raises sheep at her home in Connecticut and spins the wool. Mrs. Milliken responded with great kindness to the spirit of the occasion and allowed Mrs. Humphrey to set up in her beautiful drawing room a small portable loom, while various types of spinning wheels replaced some of

the furniture. There was a large attendance, and a number of members became enthusiastic over spinning. Mrs. Humphrey showed material in the process of weaving, as well as a number of finished lengths. Miss Hague also showed a small group of early American weaves, as well as patterns. The program was very successful, and the Club is indebted to the members who so ably assisted the Committee and to Mrs. Milliken, whose delightful hospitality made it an afternoon long to be remembered.

MRS. HENRY ALSOP RILEY, whose sudden death in the early summer came as a shock to her many friends, was a valued member of the Board of Directors. The daughter of Mrs. William S. Edgar, Mrs. Riley, like her mother, had been associated with the Club from the early days of its organization and was always interested in its activities. A person of great executive ability, she was officially connected with a number of philanthropic activities, where her able cooperation helped to solve many difficulties, as was the case when, shortly before her death, she was instrumental in raising sufficient funds to care for twenty or more street waifs through the summer months. So vital a personality can ill be spared.

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1943-1944

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* Mrs. Robert Coleman Taylor, 16 E. 93rd Street, has since been appointed Treasurer.

** Deceased.

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