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Author: Bernard Rackham

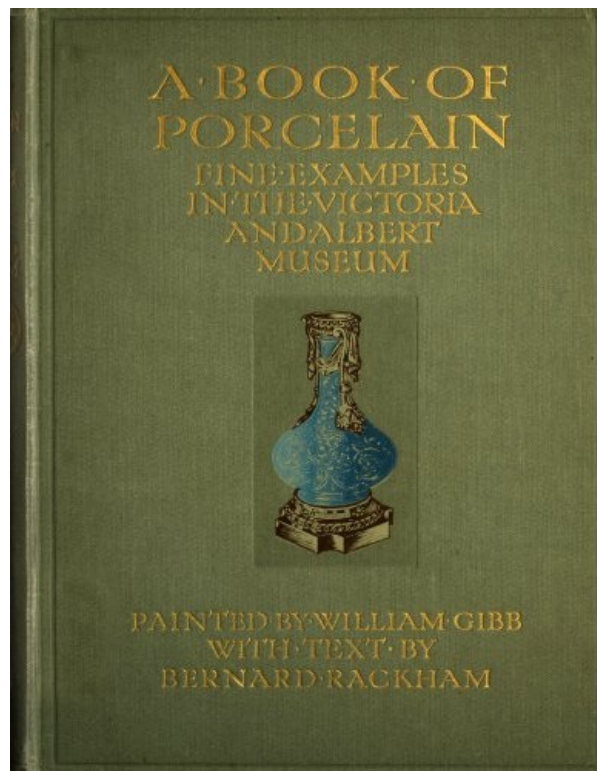
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A BOOK OF PORCELAIN: FINE EXAMPLES IN THE VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM ***



A BOOK OF PORCELAIN

**FINE EXAMPLES IN THE
VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM**

AGENTS

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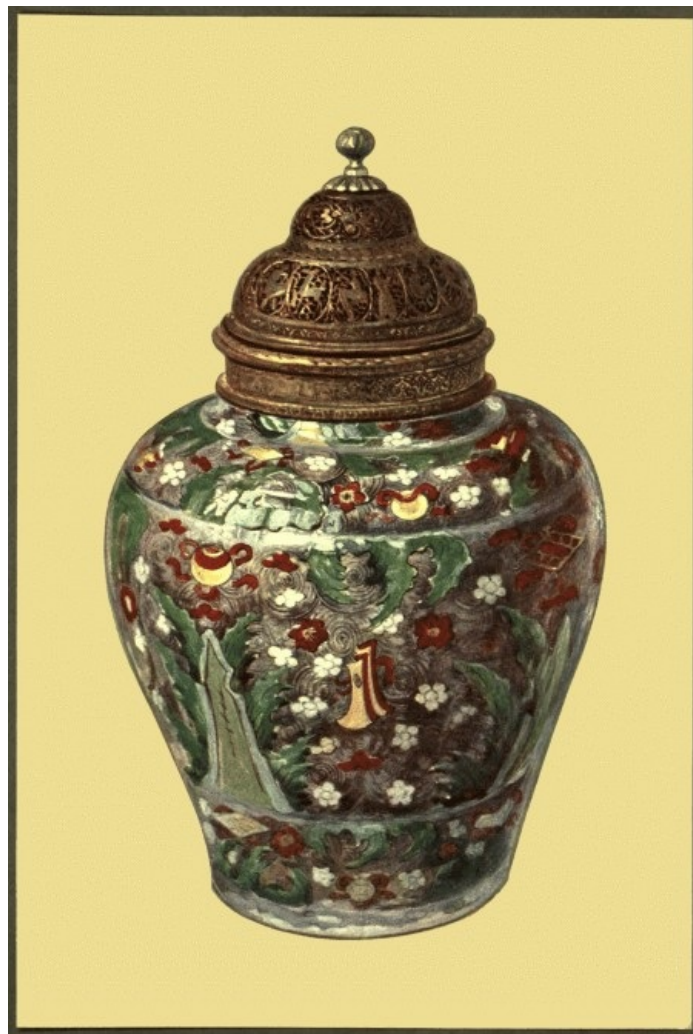


PLATE 1

Jar, Chinese, period of the Ming dynasty, decorated in colours of the *demi-grand feu*, with chased brass cover of Persian workmanship. Height. 15¼ in.

No. 1730-1876. See p. [14](#).

Unmarked.

**A · BOOK · OF
PORCELAIN**

*FINE EXAMPLES IN THE
VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM*

PAINTED BY WILLIAM GIBB
WITH TEXT BY
BERNARD RACKHAM, M.A.

ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK
SOHO SQUARE · LONDON · MCMX

DEDICATED
BY PERMISSION
TO
H.M. QUEEN ALEXANDRA

PREFACE

The twenty-eight water-colour drawings reproduced in this volume have been made from specimens of porcelain in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, many of which have never been published before, while others have not hitherto been reproduced in colours. The selection has been made not merely of those pieces in their several classes which have a high sale-room value; due consideration has been given to those which by their aesthetic qualities appealed to the sympathies of the artist, while at the same time an effort has been made to include objects having some particular historical or personal interest, or important as documents in the history of ceramics. In this connection it should be explained that the drawings were made before Mr. George Salting's unrivalled collection of Oriental porcelain passed by his death into the hands of the nation.

The text does not pretend to be a general treatise on porcelain, or even an exhaustive summary of its history. The aim of the writer has been to record everything that is noteworthy with regard to the several pieces represented in the drawings, and at the same time to lay stress on the particular aspects of the subject which these examples serve to elucidate, taking them as the theme for a discussion of various phases in the evolution of the art.

*Anything in the nature of a bibliography of works consulted by the author would be out of place in a publication of this kind, but acknowledgment must be made of his indebtedness, in the sphere of Oriental ceramics, to the writings of Dr. Bushell, Captain Brinkley, Dr. Otto Kümmel (in *Geschichte des Kunstgewerbes*), and Mr. R. L. Hobson. For English porcelain reference has been made, in addition to older authorities, to the works of Mr. William Burton; while the chief authorities consulted on the subject of Continental factories are Dr. Brinckmann, Dr. Berling, Dr. Bertold Pfeiffer, Signor Corona, M. le Baron Davillier, M. le Comte X. de Chavagnac, and M. Lechevallier-Chevignard. The author desires to express his gratefulness for various information and personal assistance afforded him by Mr. M. Yeats Brown, Mr. H. P. Mitchell, M. le Comte X. de Chavagnac, M. Émile Auscher, and the Friherrinna Julia Marks von Württemberg. Thanks are also due to Mr. J. H. Fitzhenry for kind permission to reproduce a Ludwigsburg coffee-pot in his collection.*

BERNARD RACKHAM.

LONDON, *October 1910.*

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INTRODUCTORY

It is the experience probably of most Western amateurs of porcelain to pass through three successive stages of development in their appreciation of an art which, even for the uninitiated,—for those who have no knowledge of its history and little understanding of its technical aspects,—is not lacking in charm and fascination. For, indeed, there is about most porcelain, of whatever kind, some quality of alluring grace, a daintiness of material, or a pleasing play of colour, which makes an appeal at first sight to the eye of all lovers of things beautiful. Mere casual pleasure in its superficial attractiveness will not fail to give place to an ever-deepening interest for those who will take the pains to learn its inner secrets, to discover in it, expressed in enduring form, the creative power of a craftsman's soul, nay more, a reflection of the very spirit of humanity in its changing moods, varying in conformity with racial differences or environment of time and place. This wondrous product of human skill,—as it were a new stone of rare value added to those which nature has given us,—will assuredly kindle in the hearts of its admirers a desire to learn something of its story. They will find, in their endeavours to understand its mysteries, that their interest is aroused in the first place by the porcelain of their own country, reflecting as it does a culture in the midst of which they have themselves been born and bred. xiv

The English amateur will naturally seek a field for his first studies in English porcelain. It wears a certain air of homeliness which endears it to his heart; its uses and forms are those which are familiar in the daily life of his countrymen; its decoration as a rule makes no exacting demands on his erudition in order to be fully understood. After English porcelain, the collector's attention will most readily be turned to that of the continent of Europe.

His apprenticeship, the first of the three stages to which allusion has been made above, is thus spent in the study of the Western manifestations of the art. As yet he does not understand, and cannot appreciate at their true value, the Eastern wares from which the European trace their descent. In the course of his researches a curiosity can scarcely fail to be stirred in him to know more of these Oriental precursors. His curiosity deepens; his desire to satisfy it brings him at last under a new spell, and the second stage is reached. His enthusiasm is now all for the Chinese; its perfection of material and form, its dazzling beauty of colour, the artistic fitness of its decoration, engage his admiration more and more. Alien to his imagination as it is in conception, it nevertheless fascinates him ever more surely as he grows more familiar with it. The European china of his early collecting days pleases him no longer.

But there will follow a third stage, in which a more catholic taste is developed. The student of the Oriental can understand much in the Western wares that was meaningless so long as he was ignorant of the sources from which they were derived. His appreciation of the high artistic worth of the Chinese is undiminished, but his sympathy is now again awakened by the more humane qualities of the European, appealing as they do to kindred instincts in his own Western nature. He has now reached the point at which he is able to give its true value to all good work, whatever its origin may be. The excellences of the Eastern do not blind him to the merits of the Western; all alike in their several types of beauty are a joy to his soul. xv

PLATE 9

Vase, Chinese, period of Yung Chêng (1723-1735), with "five colour"
design of archaistic style. Height, 18 in.

No. 3022-1853. See p. [26](#).

Unmarked.



CHINESE PORCELAIN

PLATE 5

Vase, Chinese celadon porcelain, decorated in slip under the glaze, with French ormolu mount of the period of Louis XVI. Height, 17 in. Jones Collection.

No. 817-1882. See p. [16](#).

Unmarked.



The very name by which porcelain is commonly known suggests, to those in whom it arouses an interest beyond the mere aesthetic pleasure to be got from its outward beauty of appearance, that if they would understand it rightly, they must turn their attention first to the land of its origin. To the Chinese the world owes a material as lovely as any ever fashioned by the hand of man, and some account of the growth of this art in Chinese hands is a necessary prelude to any study alike of the Chinese ware itself and of the European imitations of it.

The first beginnings of this wonderful art must be sought in pottery of humble material. The rough but dignified earthenware of the HAN DYNASTY, contemporaneous approximately with the opening of the Christian era, signals the first appearance in China of pottery of an artistic nature. The green-glazed vessels of this period, imitating the shapes and outward texture of bronze, have become only in recent times familiar objects on the shelves of our museums. From them we can trace the porcelain of later times, by which the Chinese have proved themselves the master-potters of the world, excelling and giving the lead to the ceramists of every other race. Yet it is strange to reflect how late in history their skill has been learned, and to remember that Persians, Egyptians, Greeks and other Western races were masters of the potter's craft many centuries before the Chinese achieved their earliest artistic wares. Coming late into the field, they evolved in a comparatively short span of time a material which placed them ahead of every rival.

* * * * *

The SUNG DYNASTY, which occupied the throne of China for more than three hundred years beginning towards the end of the tenth century, witnessed the first emergence of a true ceramic style. The potters of earlier times had been content to follow the forms set by the bronze-founder, but their successors of the Sung period set forth on purely ceramic lines and arrived at a great variety of wares which are recorded in Chinese literature. To identify these among surviving specimens that may be attributed to this period is a formidable task for the antiquarian. The problem need not be discussed here, as most of these wares cannot be classed as porcelain in the ordinary sense of the word; but it is interesting to note briefly those types which foreshadow the developments of later times.

The emancipation of the potter to a position of independence is well shown by a small vase in the Victoria and Albert Museum of the type known as "*Chün yao*," made from the earliest years of the Sung period at Chün-chou, in the province of Honan. The vase is of ovoid form with a lizard-like dragon coiled round it in relief; the surface is covered with a thick lavender-blue glaze on which is a splash of strong crimson. Though the body is porcellanous, the freedom of the modelling marks a distinct advance from the imitative bronze vessels of earlier times, while the brilliancy of the colouring anticipates the pure and gorgeous hues which were among the triumphs of the golden age of porcelain.

The discovery during this period of the properties of kaolin and the effort to imitate by artificial means the luminous beauties of jade, pointed the way to the evolution of a white translucent porcelain body. The cream-coloured Ting ware, made at Ting-chou in the province of Chihli, stand, among the relics of these far-off times which have escaped destruction, as the first achievements in this direction. The beauty and dignity of this ware is well exemplified by the two quadrangular vases at South Kensington, formerly in Dr. Bushell's collection. The delicate floral or diaper ornament incised under the soft ivory-toned glaze gives promise of the skilful handiwork of the golden age of the art. One distinctive characteristic of porcelain, the quality of translucency, is still absent in most wares of this order, but pieces of smaller size, such as an exquisitely fashioned little box and cover at Kensington, show a warm glow through their thinner parts when held to the light.

Another class of ware to which reference must here be made is the celebrated celadon ware of Lung-ch'üan, in the province of Chekiang, which was first produced during this dynasty in the effort to imitate green jade. This ware was widely exported over land and sea, and is met with in remote and unexpected corners of the Old World. A well-known specimen of it, Archbishop Warham's cup, preserved at New College, Oxford, is the first piece of Chinese ware recorded to have reached this country. Though it has the nature rather of fine stoneware than of porcelain, it is to be noted as the forerunner of a large class of porcelain of later times.

* * * * *

It was not until the period of the MING DYNASTY that the ware usually associated in Europe with the term "porcelain" first began to be made, that is, a ware with a hard, pure white body, more or less translucent. The beginning of the same period witnessed the emergence to a position of ascendancy of the imperial factory at Ching-tê-chên, in the province of Kiangsi. The factory was rebuilt in 1869 by Hung Wu, the first of the Ming emperors, and remained henceforward the chief centre of the porcelain industry in China. The subsequent achievements of Ching-tê-chên have never been surpassed in the whole history of ceramic art.

The Ming dynasty productions have a certain well-marked *cachet*, which distinguishes them clearly in their several classes alike from the wares of earlier times and from the porcelain made under the later Ch'ing emperors. There is a notable predominance of vessels of large size, formed of heavy material, displaying a massiveness and bold simplicity in their contours and decorated with designs, whether modelled or painted, of vigorous conception and of free, even rough execution. The potter addresses himself with energy to his task, and is no longer limited either to the imitative work of the Han dynasty, or to the more restrained, often delicate performances of the intervening age. At the same time, he has not yet gained the mastery of hand or the familiarity with the powers of the kiln which made possible the artistic and technical refinements of his successors.

PLATE 8

Vase, Chinese, period of K'ang Hsi (1662-1722), with enamel painting of the *famille verte*. Height, 18 in.

No. 276-1864. See p. [21](#).

Unmarked.



We are probably right in recognising as the earliest productions in pure white-bodied porcelain that have come down to us, a group, of which there are several fine examples in the Victoria and Albert Museum; one of these has been chosen for illustration in [Plate 2](#). The class is characterised by a dense heavy body, massive form, and decoration, executed by means of coloured glazes, which are applied and fixed at a lower temperature after the first firing of the ware. The colours are confined to a full dark blue, turquoise-blue, straw-yellow, and a pale manganese-violet, to which sometimes an opaque white is added. In the greater number of cases the outline stands out in slight relief from the surface of the object, and is filled in with the coloured glazes in the same manner as the hollows in the copper base of a *champlevé* enamel. A similar technique is met with again in the so-called *cuenca* tiles made in Southern Spain in the sixteenth century. In some rare instances the vase is made with double sides, and the design is reserved in openwork by cutting through the outer casing. This type is represented at South Kensington by a large jar¹ decorated with a procession of soldiers, which stands out with bold effectiveness against the dark hollows of the pierced background.

¹ Illustrated in Dr. Bushell's *Chinese Art*, vol. ii. fig. 12.

A fine example of the more usual method of decoration is the piece reproduced in [Plate 2](#). It is a jar of large dimensions which has reached this country by way of Persia, and has been embellished there with a mounting of brass chased with inscriptions and medallions. The high esteem in which Chinese porcelain has been held for centuries in the Nearer East is evident from the pronounced Chinese influence manifested in Persian and Syrian art from an early period, while during the course of the Ming dynasty the export of porcelain from China to Western Asia grew enormously, and the imitation of Chinese motives became the predominant element of design in the indigenous wares of Persia. That country was the source which supplied a large part of the collection of Ming porcelain now exhibited at South Kensington.

The jar here illustrated is of characteristically solid material, only slightly translucent. Groups of crested wading birds among rocks and bushes of peony in blossom, the flower symbolical of spring in Chinese lore, form the main feature of the decoration. On the shoulder are lobed compartments enclosing the eight Buddhist "Emblems of Happy Augury." Round the lower part are floral designs in shaped panels. The outlines, being slightly raised from the surface of the jar, form barriers by which the coloured glazes were kept from mingling one with another in the kiln. The harmonious hues serve to emphasise the bold and simple forms of the ornament, which seem thoroughly in keeping with the strong curves of the profile of the vase itself.

Other fine examples of this class exhibiting the same technique may be seen at South Kensington. Besides two large jars with processions of mounted soldiers, there are two smaller vases of the elongated pear shape which is also characteristic of this period. One of these, decorated with chrysanthemums and peonies, is remarkable for the full and rich colours of the glazes, while the other is of interest from the quaint figures on it with their primitive garb of sewn leaves. In a pair of square vases, probably early exponents of the style, an effect of solemn beauty has been obtained by the use of white and turquoise only on a manganese ground of dense purple.

PLATE 10

Bottle, "Medici porcelain," made in Florence about 1580, with design of Oriental character in blue, outlined in manganese-purple. Height, 6-7/8 in.

No. 229-1890. See p. [41](#).

Unmarked.



In the classes of porcelain which have hitherto been dealt with, the decoration has been effected either by cutting into the surface with a pointed instrument or moulding it in relief, or by the addition of colouring materials to the glaze. We must now consider the method most widely prevalent in recent times, namely, that of painting on the surface either before or after glazing. In China this method came into use at a comparatively late period. Elsewhere it had been known for many centuries as a means of ceramic decoration. In Persia, for example, painted designs are met with on the pottery found by French excavators in the lowest stratum on the site of the city of Susa, dating possibly from 5000 years before Christ, while on the semi-porcellanous ware of ancient Egypt painting is of common occurrence. It was widespread as a ceramic process in the Near East and the countries round the Mediterranean long before it was practised by the Chinese. The earliest painted wares of China certainly do not date back before the Sung dynasty, and it is doubtful whether even so great an age as this can be ascribed to them.

There is a class of vases painted in a strong dark brown with roughly-drawn ornament of Buddhistic character, which are probably not more recent than the earliest years of the Ming dynasty, and may date from the latter part of the Sung period. They were made at Tzū-chou, in the province of Honan. Several examples of this kind are in the Victoria and Albert Museum, most of them painted with spirited designs of lotus-flowers and leafy scrollwork, sometimes with birds introduced amongst the foliage. One vase is decorated with four shaped panels, three enclosing lotus-flowers, while in the fourth is a crude figure of a Buddhist monk. These vases are worthy of special attention, as they appear to mark the point at which a step forward was taken of far-reaching significance in its effect on Chinese ceramics. The introduction of the painter's brush among the implements of the Chinese potter led the way to developments which placed him above his fellow-craftsmen in other lands, amongst whom this branch of the art had been familiar in much earlier ages. 10

Of all the materials employed as pigments in the decoration of porcelain, the most important and the most widespread in use is cobalt-blue. It is said that this colour was first introduced into China from the west of Asia as early as the tenth century, but it does not appear to have been used for painting before the thirteenth century. In this connection mention may be made of a miniature vase at South Kensington of the cream-coloured Ting ware already alluded to, which is painted with indistinct markings in cobalt-blue. It may be that such pieces as this can rightly be referred back to the end of the Sung dynasty, and that we have in them the first manifestations of the great family of "blue and white" china, which in the eyes of the world at large represents Chinese porcelain *par excellence*.

Be that as it may, it was not till the time of the Ming emperors that there was any extensive production of painted "blue and white" porcelain. The earliest extant pieces that can be dated with any degree of certainty are ascribable to the reign of the emperor Hsüan Tê (1426-1435). There is a small bowl of this period in the Salting Collection. It is remarkable as well for the quality of the glaze, resembling vellum in its texture, as for the soft greyish tones of the cobalt used in the delicate painting of chrysanthemums and other flowering plants.

Two other pieces bearing the mark of Hsüan Tê are to be seen at South Kensington, but although they belong undoubtedly to the Ming dynasty, it cannot be regarded as certain that the mark upon them indicates their actual age. One of these is a bowl painted with a design of trees, the pine, peach, and bamboo, symbolising long life, and the pomegranate, which is the emblem of fecundity; by a quaint conceit the trunks of the trees are distorted into the form of the characters *fu* ("happiness") and *shou* ("longevity"). The other specimen is a tall cylindrical vase, bearing the mark in a *cartouche* on the border, as it is sometimes found on porcelain of the later Wan Li period. It is decorated with conventional lotus-flowers in three horizontal bands, painted in dark cobalt-blue and the underglaze crimson obtained from copper, which ranks with cobalt as one of the earliest pigments used in Chinese ceramics. A noticeable feature of the painting is the way in which the leaves and petals are darkened by a stippling of dots over a lighter wash of colour. 11

Another interesting jar, of six-sided form and undoubtedly early in date, has floral ornament executed in dark blue, approaching to black where heavily laid on, which recalls the designs occurring on the hexagonal tiles from the Great Mosque at Damascus. The Persian chased brass rim with which the jar is mounted indicates the channel through which it has come to the West. The Damascus tiles are believed to date from the fifteenth century, and the resemblance between them and the jar in question is so striking as to suggest that they were painted under direct Chinese influence. This view is confirmed by the occurrence among the motives upon them of the Far Eastern chrysanthemum.

Advancing to the sixteenth century and the reigns of Chêng Tê, Chia Ching, and Wan Li, we find surviving "blue and white" specimens by no means rare. To the first reign are attributed certain objects made for Mohammedan use, as shown by the occurrence upon them of Arabic inscriptions, and some large globular jars with conventional lotus designs under a glaze usually of pronounced bluish tone. The Chia Ching period is characterised particularly by a blue of great intensity, sometimes verging upon violet; it is seen in several large jars at South Kensington in which the strong painting harmonises with the massiveness of the form. 12

The bowl figuring in [Plate 3](#) shows that a more refined style was also in vogue at the same time. It is fashioned with the utmost delicacy and painted in a free manner, but with unerring sureness of hand. On the outside are seen the mythical *fêng huang*, or phoenix, of Buddhist lore, and other smaller birds flying amid bamboos; on the bamboo stems grows the sacred fungus or *ling-chih*, like the bamboo itself an emblem of longevity. In the medallion at the bottom inside is an exquisite drawing of a song-bird perched on the branch of a blossoming tree. The bowl is marked underneath with the words *Ta Ming Chia Ching nien chih* ("Made in the Chia Ching period of the great Ming dynasty"). The soft grey-blue recalls the bowl of the Hsüan Tê period to which reference has already been made. Form and painting alike are executed with spontaneity and directness, qualities as attractive as the technical finish of later periods, when a loss of sincerity was the inevitable price paid for exactness of workmanship. This difference of quality may be well appreciated by a comparison of the bowl with the "egg-shell" plate of the Yung Chêng period reproduced in the same drawing, to which reference will again be made. 13

Another drawing ([Plate 4](#)) shows a typical example, formerly in Sir Charles Robinson's collection, of the better kind of "blue and white" produced during the reign of Wan Li, who was contemporary with our own

Queen Elizabeth. That this elegant wine-pot found its way to Europe at no long interval after it was made is proved by the bronze mounting, which happily accentuates its gracefulness of contour. The domed cover of ogee outline and the crested borders indicate that the mounting is of German origin, and was done probably at Augsburg in the early years of the seventeenth century. The six sides of the body form panels filled in with a variety of flowers, among which may be distinguished such oft-recurring emblems of longevity as the lotus and the *ling-chih* or miraculous fungus; the slender neck is painted with conventional flames. In the hollow beneath the foot is the word *fu* ("longevity"), written in seal character.

This piece belongs to the same class of finer porcelain made under Wan Li as a melon-shaped wine-pot, mounted in silver-gilt, bearing the London hall-mark for 1585-86, and the well-known set of bowls, also with Elizabethan silver-gilt mounting, which were formerly in the possession of the Cecil family at Burghley House. In addition to this finer porcelain, vast quantities of "blue and white" ware of inferior quality were made for export. It went eastwards to Japan, where it provided patterns for some of the porcelain turned out from the kilns of the province of Hizen, and westwards to Persia, to be imitated in earthenware by the native potters of the time of the great Shah Abbas II. The decoration, rough and careless as it often is, has generally a certain attractiveness on account of its freedom from the fault of over-refinement. Roughly-sketched landscapes with deer, hares or birds in shaped panels are frequent motives. 14

A dish at South Kensington, probably of the Wan Li period, is doubly interesting. Its decoration of floral ornament on scrolled stems is identical with a design not uncommon on Damascus earthenware of the sixteenth century. The back exhibits an unglazed surface of deep reddish-yellow, and bears, sharply cut into the paste, the Persian word *naranji* ("orange-coloured") and a Persian name, probably that of a former owner.

The next illustration ([Plate 1](#)) stands for another process of decoration invented in the Ming period, which opened the way to wonderful developments in later times. This new method consisted in painting over the glaze in enamel colours, necessitating a second firing at a lower temperature than that required for fusing the glaze. The colours employed are a dry scarlet obtained from oxide of iron, green, yellow of straw-coloured tone, and manganese-violet, which, together with underglaze cobalt, constitute the scheme known as the "five colour" decoration. In some cases only two or three of these colours are used, but generally the predominant notes are given by red and green. This style anticipates the *famille verte* order of the time of K'ang Hsi; it is specially associated with the Wan Li period, when it came into general vogue, but instances of it occur dating from the reign of Chia Ching, and in these the red is of a more neutral tone sometimes verging on orange.

The jar figuring in [Plate 1](#) is altogether exceptional by reason of the manganese-purple ground on which the ornament is painted. The predominance of this colour gives a splendour of effect which is accentuated by the points of bright red and green distributed with such sureness of judgment over the surface. The powers of the Ming dynasty potter are here displayed at their best. Scattered flowers of the winter plum, one of the numerous emblems of long life, are interspersed among the "Eight Precious Things" (*Pa Pao*), tokens to the Buddhist of all that goes to make up mortal felicity. Visible in the drawing are the pair of books strung together, standing for literary accomplishments; the open lozenge, a symbol of victory or success; and the pearl or jewel of the law. The remaining five objects, not appearing in the view of the vase shown in the illustration, are the "cash," figuring as a square enclosed by a circle, for pecuniary wealth; the painting, representative of the arts; the *ch'ing* or musical stone, a kind of gong considered lucky on account of the identity of its name with the word for "prosperity"; the pair of rhinoceros-horn cups paralleled by the classical "horn of plenty"; and the leaf of the artemisia, a fragrant plant believed to be efficacious as an antidote against harmful influences. Below these symbols are waves of the sea, tossing in green foam against jagged rocks; spiral eddies painted in black outline under a wash of transparent purple form the background to the composition. The jar was bought in Persia, and is mounted with a brass neck and domed cover of Persian workmanship, chased with arabesques and pierced with grotesque figures in a row of medallions. 15

Mention has already been made of the celadon-glazed wares made from the Sung period onwards in imitation of green jade, which are perhaps the most widely distributed of all the wares produced in China for export. To this category belong the great rice-dishes and jars for storing grain, often of extraordinary weight in proportion to their size, frequently met with in India and Persia, and everywhere along the shores and islands of the Indian Ocean. This class of porcelain was known to the Arab traders of the Middle Ages as "Martabani," from the name of the Burmese port which was one of the centres for its distribution. This nomenclature finds its parallel in the name "Gombroon ware," by which it was called in England in the seventeenth century; the establishment of the East India Company's factory at Gombroon on the Straits of Ormuz first opened the way for its importation in any considerable quantity into this country. 16

PLATE 11

Bowl, Italian, dated 1638, probably made at Pisa, the design on the exterior borrowed from Turkish earthenware. Height, 2½ in. Willett Collection.

No. 341-1905. See p. [42](#).

The mark and the medallion inside are reproduced below the elevation of the bowl.



The long-necked vase of celadon ware from the Jones Collection in [Plate 5](#) may fitly be described here, as it probably dates from the latter part of the Ming dynasty, though the refinement of the form suggests that it may have been made in the earlier years of K'ang Hsi. The surface of the vase is entirely coated with a crackled glaze of bluish-celadon tone, running down in thick waves round the edge of the foot. On this glaze is a design delicately traced in white slip, thick enough to stand out in sensible relief, with details incised by means of a pointed instrument. This decoration, spread over the whole of the vase, is composed of archaic dragons, from the mouths of which issue scrolled stems with leafy terminations having in some cases the outline of the sacred *ling-chih* fungus. The rich ormolu mounting is characteristic French work of the period of Louis XVI. Below the mouth of the vase hang festoons of drapery, passing through handles which are finished downwards with a bunch of grapes and vine-leaves; the foot is chased with a band of guilloche pattern above a square plinth with incurved corners. This is probably the workmanship of Levasseur, one of the host of artist-craftsmen to whose talent the furniture of eighteenth-century France owes its dignity and refinement. Their taste and judgment was never better displayed than when objects of beauty or rarity were handed to them to be enriched by their skill. The vase before us is a typical case; the porcelain loses nothing of its own loveliness in becoming the medium for displaying the beauty of the metalwork.

17

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The numerous minor factories existing in China before the Ming dynasty were unable to hold their own against the great imperial factory at Ching-tê-chên. Since the time of its establishment there has been only one other factory of artistic standing, that of Têhua in the province of FUCHIEN. It is devoted to the production of plain white porcelain with a creamy surface, resembling ivory in texture, but varying considerably in shades of colour. Quantities of Fuchien china were brought to Europe during the seventeenth century by the various India Companies. In France, where it received the name of "*blanc de Chine*," it provided models for the porcelain makers of St. Cloud, and among the earliest output of many other European works will be found plain white cups and teapots with applied sprays of Chinese plum-blossom in relief, faithfully copying the models of the Têhua factory. Statuettes and groups of divinities always formed a large proportion of its productions; the royal collection at Dresden contains a fine series of such figures, many of them nearly two feet in height, which were among the porcelain collected by Augustus the Strong of Saxony, through the agency of the Dutch East India merchants.

18

The smaller objects made at Têhua are delightful by virtue of their very simplicity. In the absence of coloured decoration of any kind, the full charm of the soft white surface can be appreciated. The specimen illustrated in [Plate 6](#) affords proof that this ware was highly esteemed by early European collectors. This piece, one of a pair in the Jones Bequest, was doubtless originally a bottle or rosewater-sprinkler with bulbous body and narrow tapering neck, but it has been cut down and fitted with silver-gilt mounts to adapt it to the purpose of a pastille-burner. The neck has been removed and replaced by a silver-gilt knob of finely-chased foliage. The shoulder has been drilled with holes; lower down the porcelain has been cut away for the insertion of a band engraved with delicate cartouches and rosettes. The foot of the bottle is raised on a tripod silver-gilt base, ornamented with three lions' heads and three grotesque *mascarons* exquisitely chased. When the piece is turned up, further enrichment is disclosed underneath it in the form of an engraved design of a type much in favour about 1700, representing, in a half-grotesque manner, a squirrel, birds and a hound among trees. The hall-marks with which the mounts are stamped in several places are unfortunately very indistinct, but from their form it is clear that they are Parisian marks of the early years of the eighteenth century. The initials of an unknown silversmith "P. B." can easily be made out, while another mark appears to be that of Étienne Baligny, *fermier général* from 1703 till 1713; but no marks are necessary to show that we have here French work in the finest style of the age of Louis XIV. The care bestowed upon the mounting is sufficient evidence of the value set upon Fuchien porcelain by European collectors of the time. Further testimony of this is afforded by the fact already noticed, that the designs and methods of decoration in vogue at the Têhua potteries were extensively imitated in the earlier stages of several Western factories. In the blossoming sprays of plum applied to the body of the piece in our illustration we recognise the favourite emblem of longevity which is of such constant occurrence on Chinese objects, lending them a felicitous significance appropriate to things destined to be given as presents or tokens of congratulation. The same motive is familiar in the early white china of Meissen, Bow, and Chelsea, and of St. Cloud, Vincennes, and Sèvres.

19

PLATE 6

Vase of white porcelain of Têhua in the province of Fuchien, mounted in silver-gilt of the period of Louis XIV. as a pastille-burner. Height, 7½ in. Jones Collection.

No. 816-1882. See p. [18](#).

Unmarked.



In addition to applied reliefs the Fuchien potters decorated their porcelain with delicate incised designs, sometimes scarcely perceptible until closely examined, or with ornaments impressed by means of small stamps. An instance of the latter method is seen on the foot of the piece under consideration, which has a repeating border of fret-pattern lightly impressed in the paste.

* * * * *

The reign of Wan Li was followed by an epoch extending over nearly half a century which is almost devoid of significance in the history of porcelain. The invasions of the Manchu Tartars brought to an end the native Ming dynasty, and gave its last two emperors little leisure for the patronage of art. The establishment on the throne of the still-ruling Ch'ing dynasty of Tartar emperors was the opening of a new era, and the accession of its second monarch, K'ANG HSI, was the signal for a brilliant artistic renaissance, nowhere more apparent in its effects than in the wonderful achievements of the imperial porcelain works at Ching-tê-chên. K'ang Hsi's reign of sixty years' duration covered roughly the same space of time as that of his illustrious French contemporary, the *Grand Monarque*, who gave the impetus for a similar revival in the arts of his own kingdom. It was an age of peace and order following after years of strife and confusion. Energies no longer required to be spent in warfare were free to be diverted to the pursuance of the arts of peace.

20

In the domain of porcelain the outcome of these favourable conditions is seen in an extraordinary advance along technical lines unparalleled in the history of ceramics. A white body of the utmost purity, a glaze fusing so perfectly on to the surface of the paste as to give an appearance of deep luminosity, underglaze colours and overglaze enamels unsurpassed in brilliance and liveliness, brought within the reach of the potter a wonderful variety of effects far beyond anything that had been attained before. Yet the very technical skill which made the triumphs of the K'ang Hsi period possible, opened the way for the artistic decline of the following half century. Virtuosity took the place of aesthetic spontaneity; while there is undeniable beauty in the new achievements, they generally lack the vigour and sincerity of earlier periods when the principles of technique were less well understood.

The characteristic qualities of K'ang Hsi porcelain are well illustrated by the vases chosen for the drawings reproduced in Plates 7 and 8. The first of these is a "blue and white" covered vase, formerly in the collection of Mr. James Orrock, with decoration in shaped panels reserved on a "powdered blue" ground. Of the four large panels, two are filled with sprays of flowers, and a third with a selection from the curious assemblage of objects known as the "Hundred Antiques" (*Po Ku*), symbolising the elegant arts and accomplishments. In the remaining panel is a mountainous landscape rendered in the conventional manner customary in Chinese paintings; the conventions are not such as we are familiar with in Western art, but once accepted, they will be found to suggest nature and to perform a decorative function no less effectively than those of the European designer.

21

The cobalt-blue is typical of the finest quality of the period; it has a depth of tone and a limpid brilliancy found only in the reign of K'ang Hsi, compared with which all but the best blue of other periods seems dingy and lustreless. The ground colour is carefully sprayed or splashed on to the vase, and has in consequence on a close inspection a minutely speckled appearance; to this is owing the intense throbbing effect which has often been noticed as the peculiar quality of the blue of this class. This beauty of colour, combined with the faultless spacing of the decoration, compensates for a certain prim formality noticeable when comparison is made with the less orderly designs of the Ming dynasty.

Passing on to [Plate 8](#), we come to a representative of the class of decoration above all others associated with the K'ang Hsi period. This class is derived from the "five colour" group, already discussed, of the later Ming emperors, characterised by painting in enamel colours fired over the glaze at a comparatively low temperature, and hence known to French collectors as enamels of the *demi-grand feu*. From the predominance of green the class is generally termed the "*famille verte*." The blue comprised among the five colours of the Ming dynasty is always an underglaze cobalt painted on the biscuit before the application of the glaze; but in the majority of pieces of later date, whether strictly of the "five colour" order or of the derivative *famille verte*, the blue, like the rest of the pigments, is an overglaze enamel.

22

The vase here illustrated is of special interest as exemplifying the use of both kinds of blue; while in the main decoration an enamel blue of greyish tone has been employed, there are also two bands, round the shoulder and base respectively, filled with a diaper pattern in underglaze blue enclosed between ridges in slight relief. The form of the vase is that known as "club-shaped." The scheme of decoration is of a type which became increasingly prevalent as the eighteenth century advanced, and departs entirely from the traditions of earlier times. Instead of a broadly-treated design proportionate to the dimensions of the vase, the surface is divided into a number of panels of diverse size and outline, set against a figured groundwork and filled in with delicate miniature paintings. Two large rectangular panels contain rocky lake-scenes with figures. Smaller panels enclose some of the "Hundred Antiques" already alluded to, while in two circular medallions we see a carp rising from a cataract, beneath a full moon partly hidden among clouds. This latter subject is an allegory of literary success attained by perseverance and industry. The allusion is to the legend according to which the sturgeon of the Hoang Ho river, when they ascend the stream in the third month of the year, are transformed into dragons if they succeed in climbing the rapids of the Lung Mên or Dragon Gate. The green ground of the vase is figured with a close pattern of conventional lotus-flowers amid small scrolled foliage. The whole is exquisitely rendered, and composes such a beautiful harmony of colour as to compel admiration, in spite of the comparative lack of breadth in the treatment of the design.

23

PLATE 7

Jar, with Cover, Chinese, period of K'ang Hsi (1662-1722), with decoration in panels reserved on a powdered blue ground. Height, 18 in. Orrock Collection.

No. 67-1887. See p. [20](#).

Unmarked.



To detail all the methods of decoration in vogue in the K'ang Hsi period, many of them then for the first time introduced, would be beyond the scope of such a work as this; it must suffice to mention briefly a few of the most remarkable. Firstly, there are many varieties of the *famille verte*, the most notable being that in which naturalistic flowers are relieved against a ground of enamel, either straw-yellow, green, or lustrous black. The pieces on which the last-named ground colour occurs form the subdivision known to connoisseurs as the "*famille noire*"; the Salting Collection includes a splendid series of vases of this category. Dignity of form is combined in them with masterly composition in the painting, while the measure of conventionalism necessitated by the limited palette frees this type from the imputation of excessive naturalism.

The "blue and white" of the time of K'ang Hsi has already been noticed. Beautiful effects were obtained where the cobalt was used in harmonious combination with the other high temperature underglaze pigments, a greyish celadon-green and the soft crimson obtained from copper. Another new type of painted ware dating from this time is that in which the design is entirely carried out in the overglaze iron-red, first seen amongst the pigments of the "five colour" order. The red of the K'ang Hsi period, a pure coral-red of the utmost brilliancy, is generally employed in conventional designs, such as dragons and symbols or lotus-flowers, symmetrically disposed over the whole surface of a vase.

Perhaps the greatest glory of the reign are the single-colour and variegated glazes, reviving and excelling the achievements in this direction of the Sung dynasty. Chief among these are the crimson, or "*sang de bœuf*," and the apple-green associated with the name of Lang T'ing-tso, viceroy during the beginning of the reign of the province of Kiangsi, in which the imperial kilns of Ching-tê-chên are situated; further developments were attained, such as the "peach-bloom," the "kingfisher" turquoise-blue, and the revived "*clair de lune*," when in 1683 Ts'ang Ying-hsüan was appointed director of the factories. These wares rank among the most splendid achievements of the potter's art; in beauty of form and gorgeousness of colour they have never been surpassed, while by their nature they are free from the defect of over-refinement incident to the productions of an age of great technical discoveries, which has been noticed in speaking of the painted porcelain. 24

Lastly, before passing on to the next reign, a word must be said of the statuettes of divinities and the objects fashioned in the shape of fruit or living creatures, which are another feature of the K'ang Hsi renaissance. Painted generally in the enamel colours of the *famille verte*, these figures are often masterpieces of modelling, instinct with vivacity and expression.

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The short reign of YUNG CHÊNG, who succeeded K'ang Hsi in 1723, witnessed still further advances in the direction of technical perfection, accompanied on the artistic side by a corresponding growth of the tendency to over-refinement. The discovery during the latter years of K'ang Hsi of a rose-coloured enamel derived from gold, varying in shade from pink to crimson, opened the way for a revolution in the colour-scheme which is the chief characteristic of the painted porcelain of Yung Chêng and his successor Ch'ien Lung. From the prevalence of this colour, the type of porcelain on which it occurs received the name of "*famille rose*" among French connoisseurs. The widened range of the enamel-painter's palette made possible a completely naturalistic manner, in which all conventionalism of treatment was abandoned. No album of flora can show more faithful botanical drawings than are to be seen in such exquisite subjects after nature as that in the piece reproduced in [Plate 2](#); in no work on ornithology could be found truer renderings of bird life. The plate, painted with a bird of the kingfisher family perched on the branch of a gnarled plum-tree in flower, belongs to the collection bequeathed by Mr. W. H. Cope. The spray of blossoming pomegranate which completes the composition is naturally rendered by means of the newly-invented carmine enamel. While we may question the fitness of a subject thus treated for the decoration of a porcelain plate, we cannot but admire the exquisite delicacy of the painting and the skilful arrangement of the composition. 25

PLATE 12

Toilette-pot and Cover, St. Cloud, about 1700, with ormolu mount of the period. Height, $8\frac{3}{4}$ in. Given by Mr. J. H. Fitzhenry.

No. C 457-1909. See p. [50](#).

Mark concealed by the mounting.



Perhaps the most famous of the productions of the Yung Chêng period are the plates and cups and saucers of thin "egg-shell" china with enamel decoration of figure-subjects or birds and flowers enclosed within elaborate borders of complex diaper. The same fine porcelain was employed as a material for lanterns; fine examples of these are exhibited in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Concurrently with such technical refinements as these, there came about under Yung Chêng an archaistic revival of ancient wares, resulting from the commission given by the emperor for the reproduction of the ceramic treasures of past centuries preserved in his palaces. Imitations were made both of the shapes and of the numerous varieties of glaze of the factories of the Sung dynasty, while in the "blue and white" category the spotted manner of painting already noticed as characteristic of the reign of Hsüan Tê was specially in favour. Another ancient type extensively reproduced was the "five colour" class of the later Ming emperors. Where there cannot be traced a refinement in the handling of the design foreign to the earlier painters, the copies are readily distinguished from their prototypes by a difference in the quality of the colours employed. The underglaze cobalt-blue has a decidedly violet *nuance*, a delicate lilac replaces the earlier purple, and the green is of a lighter grass-coloured hue; furthermore, the enamel colours often display a faint iridescence where the light glances on them. The vase represented in [Plate 9](#) is a fine example of this archaistic school of the time of Yung Chêng. The shape, of noble simplicity, dates back to the earliest period of the Ming dynasty, but the decoration belongs to the "five colour" type of Wan Li. The design is composed of a dragon and a mythical phoenix (*fêng huang*), emblems of the emperor, amid flowers and foliage of the tree-peony on wavy stems. The breadth of treatment, the vigorous drawing, the masterly balance of the colouring, entitle this vase to a place among the best performances of the Chinese potter.

By the time of the Emperor CH'ÏEN LUNG, whose reign of sixty years ended in 1795, deteriorating influences made themselves felt with ever-increasing insistence, and the story of Chinese porcelain from this time forward is a record of steady decline. The seeds of decay may be considered to have been planted about the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the establishment of the European trading companies brought China into close and constant touch with the Western world. The new markets thus opened for Chinese products inevitably brought about the creation of a new style in Chinese art to suit the taste of European buyers. Traces of Western influence may be discerned, if not in the decoration, at all events in the forms of Chinese porcelain all through the seventeenth century, and in K'ang Hsi's reign its effect is fully apparent. The splendid rebirth of art and culture consequent upon the restoration of peace in the empire under his rule availed for a time to check the sinister effect of these changes; but as the eighteenth century advanced, a new class of wares affecting shapes unknown to Oriental customs and designed to meet Western requirements, was produced in ever-increasing quantities, and did not fail to influence the whole output of the Chinese kilns. The commercial spirit thus engendered, hastened the decline already originated by too close attention to the technical side of ceramic craftsmanship. The result is seen in the shapeless extravagances, wonderful in technique, but devoid of grace and beauty, produced in the latter years of Ch'ien Lung, and in the dreary "India china" made for export through the various India companies of Europe. There was a momentary gleam of revival in the nineteenth century under Taou Kuang, when creditable copies were made of some of the Yung Chêng designs, but such imitative efforts do not avail to arouse the interest of those to whom the art of a country ceases to appeal, when it reflects the genius of a people no longer in the full vigour of manhood.

JAPANESE PORCELAIN

The subject of Japanese porcelain can only be briefly discussed here, on the one hand in its relation to the Chinese porcelain of which it may be considered an offshoot, and on the other, from the point of view of its influence on European factories. Though the origin of the art in Japan is obscure, it is certain that the Japanese learned the making of porcelain from their neighbours across the sea. Tradition asserts that one Gorodayiu Go Shonsui visited the Chinese factories in 1510 with this purpose, and on his return established a kiln of short-lived duration for the manufacture in his own country. It is not, however, until the beginning of the following century that sure ground is reached; about that time the necessary materials were discovered in the province of Hizen, in the extreme south-west of the island empire, by a Corean potter named Risanpei, and porcelain kilns were set up by him at ARITA, which remains to the present day one of the chief Japanese centres of the industry. 31

At first only blue and white wares were made, but about 1645 the method of painting in enamel colours over the glaze was learned from a Chinaman by a potter of the Arita factory named Kakiyemon, and the style of decoration associated with him was inaugurated. This style was maintained by more than one generation of the Kakiyemon family, and characterises a quantity of the porcelain exported to Europe through the Dutch merchants established at Deshima, in the outskirts of Nagasaki. As will be seen later, it provided patterns for imitation in many of the earlier European porcelain works; most of the pieces so imitated, as, for instance, the prototype of the Chelsea jar figuring in [Plate 23](#), bear designs of a formal character, showing that they probably do not belong to the earliest work of the Kakiyemon school. A typical example of this later manner is a large jar at South Kensington, painted with a group of figures and trees repeated in three panels, reserved on a close pattern of peony-flowers and foliage; a dish in the Brighton Museum, bearing on the back the name "*Kaki*" in seal characters, shows formal designs painted with extraordinary neatness with a full palette of enamel colours, betokening a still later stage in the development of the style. Charming as these more familiar designs are by reason of their clean drawing and the purity of their colours, they must be regarded as somewhat foreign to the Japanese genius, being the outcome of the effort to please the taste of Western buyers. The purely Japanese manner which may be attributed to the first Kakiyemon is illustrated by some small plates at Kensington from the Bowes Collection; the design is limited to slight floral sprays or a few detached blossoms in three colours only, red, green, and light blue, so as to allow the qualities of the soft white glaze to be fully appreciated. 32

PLATE 13

Toilette-pot and Cover, Chantilly, about 1735, painted in the style of the Japanese Kakiyemon ware. Silver-gilt mount of the period. Height, 7 in. Given by Mr. J. H. Fitzhenry.

No. C 424-1909. See p. [53](#).

Mark: a hunting-horn in red.





The baneful influence of contact with the West, already noticed in dealing with Chinese porcelain, did not fail to make itself felt in the work of the Arita potters. From the last quarter of the seventeenth century may be dated the appearance of the ware generally considered in Europe as peculiarly characteristic of Japanese ceramics, but in reality of a type entirely alien from native ideas. Though made at Arita, it is usually called by the name of the neighbouring port of Imari, from which it was exported. The style is embodied in jars and dishes generally of large dimensions, decorated in underglaze blue of muddy tone, with dull red, green, purple and yellow enamels and gilding added at a subsequent firing over the glaze. Their effect is occasionally pleasing and handsome, but in general these objects have a dull and lifeless air that places them among the least interesting of all Oriental wares. This style was sometimes copied both at Meissen and at Chelsea during their earlier stages, and suggested some of the designs of the Worcester factory, but it was not till the first decades of the nineteenth century that it was extensively imitated, when the "Japan patterns" of Derby and the Staffordshire works enjoyed a great popularity; it may fairly be said that in the reduced scale necessitated by their application to table wares, and in the livelier colouring obtainable in the English soft porcelain, these patterns gain an attractiveness wanting in their Oriental forerunners.

33

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Other kilns were founded in the neighbourhood of Arita under the protection of feudal lords, by whose patronage they were secured from the debasing effects of foreign trade. Porcelain began to be made about 1660 at the kilns of OKAWAJI, founded at an earlier date for making earthenware by a chief of the Nabeshima family. Here the methods of painting employed were those of the later Arita potters, but the colours are purer and the decoration, designed to please native tastes, is at once less florid and more spontaneous in character.

34

Fine porcelain was made in the second half of the eighteenth century at MIKAWAJI, also in the province of Hizen, under the munificent patronage of the feudal lord of Hirato. The wares are of two principal types. The first is painted in blue of a quiet grey tone with designs of exquisite delicacy, inspired by the Chinese "blue and white" of the time of Hsüan Tê; and it should be noted that this milder quality of blue was deliberately aimed at by the potters of the best Japanese schools, in preference to the deep sapphire blue attained by the Chinese at their highest period of development. The second class of Mikawaji ware is seen in the skilfully modelled figures of divinities, children, or mythical creatures such as the Korean lion; they are usually enlivened with coloured glazes of three harmonious tones, blue, russet-brown, and black.

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Two other Japanese factories remain to be noticed in their relation to Chinese ceramics, in the provinces of Kaga and Kishiu respectively. The kilns at KUTANI in Kaga were established in 1664 and made two distinct classes of ware. One of these is called "*Ao Kutani*," or green Kutani, from the predominance of green in the colouring, and is characterised by the use of transparent green, yellow, manganese-violet, and blue enamels of great intensity, washed over strong floral or landscape designs drawn in heavy black outline. This type is perfectly exemplified by a fine dish in the series at South Kensington brought together by the Japanese Government in 1876. While it appears to be reminiscent in its methods of the "three colour" class of the Chinese, its artistic character is free from extraneous elements and entirely Japanese in genius. The other type, known *par excellence* as "*Ko Kutani*," or old Kutani ware, includes a brilliant red among its colours, and is the ancestor of the red and gold Kaga porcelain of recent times.

35

PLATE 15

Ewer and Basin, Sèvres, dated 1763, painted with groups of children in the manner of Boucher on a *jaune jonquille* ground. Mark of the decorator Catrice. Ewer, height, 6-5/8 in.; basin, length, 10³/₄ in. Jones Collection.

No. 753-1882. See p. [56](#).

Mark:





The porcelain made in the Nishihama park, near Wakayama in the province of KISHIU, dates only from the earlier years of the nineteenth century, but is of interest as a revival of the early Ming ware with designs in coloured glazes separated by outlines moulded in slight relief; the enamels of the Kishiu kilns produce a wonderful richness of effect, notably where turquoise blue is used in combination with deep violet.

III

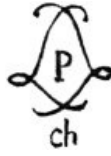
ITALIAN PORCELAIN

PLATE 16

Écuelle, with Cover and Stand, Sèvres, dated 1768, with pastoral subjects after Boucher, by Chabry, on a turquoise-blue ground. Écuelle, height, 4½ in.; stand, diameter, 4¾ in. Jones Collection.

No. 758-1882. See p. [57](#).

Mark:





The manufacture of porcelain in Europe has a history of very recent origin when compared with the long story of its invention and development in the land of its birth, but what it lacks in antiquity is atoned for by the interest and diversity of the vicissitudes through which it has passed. We can never know at what period and by whose agency the mysterious substance was first brought into Western lands. From the earliest records that can rightly be supposed to refer to it, we gather that the rare vessels of porcelain which found their way from China in the Middle Ages were regarded with superstitious wonder as the work of superhuman hands, to be treasured as jealously as gold or precious stones. How to rival this ware of pure white surface and translucent substance may well have been the problem that many a potter of those days attempted to solve, but it must have been the despair of the rudely-trained craftsmen whose hands shaped the rough stone-wares of the Rhineland, or the lead-glazed slip-wares, with their artless scratched or moulded designs, of mediæval France and Italy. The road to success was first opened by the potters of the last-named country. The Italian tinenamelled maiolica, which attained its full development at the end of the fifteenth century, marks the first pronounced step in the advance. It derived its inspiration in the first instance not immediately from Chinese porcelain, but indirectly through the painted earthenware of the Near East and of the Moors in Spain, which was itself evolved in emulation of the Chinese wares. By the early years of the sixteenth century, the latter must have been quite familiar to the Italian maiolica potters, who used the term "*alla porcellana*" to denote a certain type of design in which they sought to imitate the contemporary Oriental "blue and white."

40

The mere outward simulation that could be achieved by coating grey earthenware with pure white enamel did not satisfy the keen spirits of an age when every mind was pregnant with new ideas, and no task seemed too gigantic for the artist's hand. To produce a body which, in substance and surface as well, should equal the object of imitation, must have been the aim of many a pioneer in the art of whose efforts all record has been lost.

If contemporary documents are to be trusted, it would appear that something in the nature of porcelain was made in Italy as early as the first quarter of the sixteenth century; it is not surprising to learn that the scene of the first successful experiments was Venice, a city by that time famous all over Europe for its glass, a substance for the manufacture of which its seaboard situation gave it exceptional advantages. Though the literary evidences for the fabrication are too clear to be reasonably doubted, no piece of this early Venetian porcelain is known to exist at the present day. We reach sure ground towards the end of the century, when we come to the porcelain invented at FLORENCE about 1575 by Francesco de' Medici, the second Grand Duke of Tuscany. This, the earliest European porcelain of which specimens still survive, is an imperfect artificial porcelain largely compounded of glass. It is mentioned in a letter dated 1576 by the Venetian ambassador at the Tuscan Court. The only dated specimen known is a flask with the arms of Philip II. of Spain and the date 1581, now in the museum at Sèvres. The Grand Duke probably ceased after a short time to take interest in the factory, and it became a private enterprise; of its subsequent fortunes something will be said on a later page.

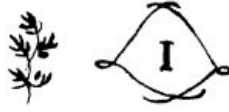
41

PLATE 14

Jardinière, Sèvres, dated 1761, painted with cupids on a *rose Pompadour* ground. Mark of the decorator Dubois. Height, 7½ in. Jones Collection.

No. 787-1882. See p. [56](#).

Mark:





While as regards material the object of emulation was Chinese porcelain, the forms affected by the Medici porcelain show little indication of extraneous influence. By their variety and by the gracefulness of many they bear witness to the taste and inventiveness of the ducal patron, who interested himself personally in the processes of fabrication and was doubtless in artistic matters the guiding spirit of the works. The decoration, painted in cobalt-blue usually of rather dull tone, either alone or outlined with pale manganese-violet, is of two distinct styles. One of these is made up of grotesques of the kind familiar in the later maiolica of the Urbino school. The other style is marked by Oriental motives, derived in some cases from Chinese, but more often from Near Eastern sources. The designs are never mere copies, but rather interpretations of their prototypes; often indeed they betray only slight traces of the inspiration to which they are due.

The last-named class of design is well exemplified by the bottle in [Plate 10](#), one of the four pieces of Medici porcelain belonging to the Victoria and Albert Museum. The subtle shapeliness of the modelling and the ably-distributed painted ornament, in which a slight suggestion of the contemporary Chinese "blue and white" of Wan Li is perceptible, betoken the work of an artist whose conceptions were superior to the material at his disposal for their embodiment.

42

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From the scanty documents that remain, it would appear that the venture of Francesco de' Medici was abandoned for a time, and that his successor Ferdinand I. summoned to Florence one Niccolò Sisti for the purpose of re-establishing there the manufacture of porcelain. The kilns were later removed to PISA, and a document exists to prove that in 1620 Sisti received monetary aid for his work from the then-reigning Grand Duke, Cosmo II. In the light of these records, meagre as they are, the greatest interest attaches to the little bowl figuring in [Plate 11](#), one of the most precious documentary pieces of porcelain in the South Kensington collections; it was formerly in the possession of Mr. Henry Griffith and later belonged to Mr. Henry Willett of Brighton, on whose death it was acquired for the Museum. This bowl is of remarkably thin material, light to handle, and shows a somewhat yellow tone in the paste by transmitted light. The design painted round the outside consists of four alternate sprays of hyacinth and lily, separated by flowers resembling scabious or cornflower branching from a curved serrated leaf; these motives are obviously borrowed from the Turkish earthenware of the period. In a medallion inside the bowl is a view of a city with a domed building; on the bottom are the initials "G. G. P. F." and the date 1638.

The only other piece hitherto identified as belonging to the same kind is another bowl, in the collection of Mr. Montague Yeats Brown. Like its companion, it is light in weight and thin in the walls. It is decorated round the sides externally and internally with a frieze of birds perched upon rocks; inside is a medallion with a group of ruins among trees, curiously anticipating the fanciful compositions seen on Worcester and Bow china of the eighteenth century. In the painting there appear in addition to cobalt-blue two colours of common occurrence in the maiolica of the Urbino school, a strong brownish-orange and a greenish-blue derived from copper, the latter much blurred in the firing. This bowl also bears a signature and date, "I. G. P. F. 1627", and it is of extreme interest to observe that both bowls are marked with the same devices, a cross potent and a curious aggregation of strokes, of which the significance is difficult to determine; evidently these signs are the distinctive mark of the factory. The meaning of the initials is also uncertain, but in view of the known existence of the Sisti factory at Pisa a few years before the date on the earlier bowl, it may be conjectured that the last letters "P. F.", occurring in both signatures alike, stand for "*Pisanus fecit*" or "*Pisano fece*"; if that be so, the preceding "G" may indicate the family name of the potters who took over from Sisti the secret of porcelain making, while the "I" and the first "G" respectively refer to the baptismal names of different members of the family. Be this as it may, these two bowls, unique in the nature of their paste and decoration and by reason of the dates they bear, are of the utmost interest as isolated landmarks in the history of European porcelain, standing midway between the production of Francesco de' Medici and the earliest French achievements.

43

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The Tuscan experiments above recorded were made at an unpropitious time, and were consequently destined to have no lasting effect in the development of European ceramics. Italy was then fast relapsing into the state of torpor which followed as a reaction from her restless activities in the age of the renaissance, and the time had not yet arrived when the influx of Chinese porcelain, resulting from the extension of trade relations with the East, was to spur on the potters and chemists of Europe, aided by royal patronage, to success in their efforts to produce a similar kind of ware. Porcelain is not heard of again in Italy till about 1720, when Francesco Vezzi, a Venetian goldsmith, in co-operation with a deserter from the Saxon royal factory, succeeded for a short time in producing hard porcelain of a type similar to that of Meissen. At a later date another Saxon workman named Hewelcke set up a short-lived factory in VENICE, but no porcelain of importance was produced there till the establishment of the works of Geminiano Cozzi in 1765.

44

The chief Italian factory was that at DOCCIA near Florence, founded by the Marchese Carlo Ginori in 1735 and still kept up by his descendants. His aim was to compete with the porcelain imported from Saxony, and he succeeded in his efforts without the princely support by which alone in most European countries the manufacture was saved from failure. He obtained the assistance of an expert from the factory at Vienna, Carl Wendelin Anreiter, of whose painted work on porcelain rare specimens are occasionally met with. The earliest Doccia productions showed distinct signs of Meissen influence, as may be seen from a soup-bowl in the Victoria and Albert Museum; this has a basket-work rim of the Meissen type, and is decorated with genre scenes from Italian peasant life in medallions, surrounded by tendrils in red and gold and small panels of lilac colour. Other pieces of the same service bear the mark of a Doccia painter, Pietro Fanciullacci. At a later stage the Ginori works became famous for their large reproductions in white porcelain of antique statues in the Florentine palaces, such as the Crouching Venus and the Apollo Belvedere.

45

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The celebrated royal factory at CAPODIMONTE, near Naples, is said to owe its origin to a present of Meissen porcelain made to Charles III., King of the Two Sicilies, in 1736, when he married the Saxon princess Maria Amelia. Its earliest productions were in white porcelain moulded with shells, coral, and other marine decorations, but its fame is more specially founded on the services with mythological subjects minutely picked out in enamel colours. As at Doccia, the inborn genius of the Italians for modelling was exhibited in figures and elaborate statuettes, in which drapery and flesh are usually tinted after nature. A characteristic example is a large allegorical composition at Kensington, supported on four figures copied from the crouching Turkish slaves ("*I quattro Mori*") by Pietro Tacca, which surround the monument of Ferdinand I. of Tuscany in the harbour at Leghorn; modelling and colouring alike display the tendency to exaggeration and sensationalism characteristic of Italian art in the period of decadence. When Charles III. succeeded in 1759 to the throne of Spain, he removed with him to the palace of BUEN RETIRO, near Madrid, the whole establishment of his Neapolitan factory; the Madrid porcelain is of a similar kind to that made before the transfer of the works.

The later factory carried on at NAPLES under Ferdinand IV. shows the influence of the excavations at Herculaneum in the severe classical style by which it is marked. Painted views of the district of Naples and of the local antiquities are a favourite feature. At the same time the works gained some renown by the cleverly modelled statuettes in biscuit china of greyish tone made under the direction of Filippo Tagliolini.

46

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IV

FRENCH PORCELAIN

PLATE 19

Vase, Sèvres, given in 1780 by Gustavus III. of Sweden to Catherine II. of Russia. Decorated by Morin, Fontaine, and Le Guay on a *bleu de roi* ground. Height, 19½ in. Jones Collection.

No. 781-1882. See p. [59](#).

Mark:





The Florentine experiments and the Pisa bowls remain as solitary relics in the story of European porcelain until the year 1673, when the scene is shifted to France. At this date a privilege was granted for making porcelain to Edme Poterat, of St. Sever, a suburb of Rouen, in the name of his son Louis. Since 1644 he had been working as a *faïencier* as lessee of the Sieur Poirel de Grandval, *huissier de cabinet* to Anne of Austria; the Sieur Poirel had been granted an exclusive licence for making faïence in the province of Normandy. The manufacture of porcelain at Rouen was not continued for long after the death of Poterat in 1694, in consequence of a dispute between his sons, which resulted in their privilege being withdrawn. The nature of this earliest French porcelain is established by a few pieces, which there are sufficient grounds for supposing to be authentic. One of these is at South Kensington, a tall cup finely fashioned in a paste of bluish tone and carefully painted in a strong underglaze blue; the design consists of small vases of flowers amid formal *lambrequin* ornament below a castellated border.

A point of special interest in connection with the earliest French experiments is that, while the efforts of their authors were consciously directed at the emulation of Oriental porcelain, the style of decoration adopted by them was thoroughly French, showing hardly any trace of Chinese influence. The surviving Rouen specimens are closely similar in their ornament to the faïence produced by the factory in which they were made. The same is true of the porcelain manufactured, for the first time in Europe on a commercial scale, at ST. CLOUD, near Paris. This factory was started by a Rouen potter named Pierre Chicaneau for the making of earthenware. As the result of experiments made shortly before his death, Chicaneau could boast of producing objects in porcelain "*presqu'aussi parfait que les porcelaines de la Chine et des Indes.*" His widow and family continued the work he had begun, and in 1702 were granted letters patent by Louis XIV.; the factory was subsequently carried on by Henri Trou, second husband of Chicaneau's widow. The jar reproduced in [Plate 12](#) illustrates admirably the style in vogue at the St. Cloud works. Formal devices adapted from Rouen faïence and inspired by the designs of Bérain, are symmetrically disposed as borders, leaving a large part of the surface free, so as to display to full advantage the soft tone of the glaze. The sense of fitness and proportion never absent from the best French work asserts itself as much in the painted ornament as in the rich ormolu mount with which the jar is embellished. The legs of console outline and the rayed masks between them are typical forms of the art of Louis XIV.'s reign; instinct as they are with sober dignity, they are saved from stiffness of effect by the contrast of the band of running foliage engraved on the collar round the top of the jar.

Painting in blue under the glaze was the predominant manner of decoration at St. Cloud. In other cases the porcelain is left white, and only moulded ornaments are used; these are either copied directly from the Chinese Fuchien porcelain,—here at last Oriental motives appear,—or they exhibit a hybrid mingling of classical and Chinese forms. The latter type is seen in a fine soup-tureen in the Fitzhenry gift at South Kensington; it is moulded with pseudo-Oriental cranes and foliage in relief above a gadrooned border, and has grotesque mask handles and a knob in the form of a cabbage. The tureen is of special interest because to the relief decoration has been added enamel colouring in primrose-yellow, green, and pale red; an examination of the piece discloses on the bottom, not only the incised mark of Henri Trou, but also a *fleur-de-lys* in overglaze blue, showing that the colouring was added at the Spanish royal factory of Buen Retiro. Another tureen in the same collection has polychrome painting executed at St. Cloud, a typical example of a rare class; in a strong orange-yellow, green, purple, red and blue are depicted Oriental figures and a motive of a bird singing among trees by a wattled hedge, borrowed from the Japanese Kakiyemon.

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The life of the St. Cloud works was a long one,—it lasted till 1766, having survived a disastrous fire in 1737,—and its output must have been considerable; yet it had little direct influence on the subsequent history of ceramics. It is indeed interesting to note here the existence at Kensington of a *seau* in Staffordshire salt-glazed stoneware with relief ornament copied from a St. Cloud model; but this is an isolated case, and imitations of St. Cloud are not common even among the productions of French factories. A different tale can be told of the next in importance of the early French china works. The factory founded in 1725 by Louis-Henri de Bourbon, prince de Condé, on his domain at CHANTILLY, was destined to hold a position of more than transient significance. Not only were styles of decoration devised there which became popular beyond the Channel as well as in France itself; Chantilly has a greater claim to recognition in that it was two Chantilly workmen who initiated the greatest of all European enterprises of this kind, the royal and national manufactory at Sèvres.

Before entering into details of this passage in the course of events, some account must be given of the productions of the parent factory. The prince de Condé chose for his director one Ciquaire Cirou, who appears to have been a faïence-maker, and obtained royal recognition by a grant of letters patent in 1735. The distinguishing element in the earlier Chantilly porcelain is the use as a surface-coating of the same tin-enamel which is the generic feature of faïence. For some ten years the Chantilly potters confined their artistic efforts as far as painting was concerned to adaptations or often close imitations of Oriental porcelain of the preceding decades, of which the princely patron had a rich collection. The Chinese *famille verte* supplied the motives in a few instances, but the wares which suggested to Cirou and his painters their daintiest designs were the work of Kakiyemon. Few things have been made to display more effectively the delicate freshness which is the crowning virtue of painted porcelain. The warm tone of the stanniferous glaze yields a softer ground for the flower-like hues of the enamel colours than the colder white of the Japanese prototypes, while the *esprit* of the French interpreter adds to the charming Eastern themes just that homeliness of touch which endears them to Western beholders. No better illustration could be furnished than by the little silver-mounted *pot de toilette* from Mr. Fitzhenry's gift to the nation, figured in [Plate 13](#). Little Japanese boys at play, houses perched among fir-trees on rocky crags, tiny birds and butterflies are scattered with an unimpeachable sense of fitness over the creamy white surface; all, down to the mark on the bottom, a *cour de chasse* in red enamel, is drawn with the greatest neatness.

A ground colour of pure primrose-yellow is sometimes seen in pieces of this early period, borrowed doubtless from Meissen, and foreshadowing the sumptuous coloured grounds of Vincennes and Sèvres. This is well exemplified by a large jardinière with rococo ormolu mounting, also in the Fitzhenry gift. At a later date

less distinctive manners were adopted, bouquets of flowers of the Meissen type, cupids in the style of Boucher, and rococo-panelled designs. The manufacture was commercialised and the quality of the wares rapidly deteriorated, but still a good word may be said for the blue festooned borders which are a common feature in Chantilly services, and are an admirable pattern of what designs in table ware should be. An instance is the service made for Louis Philippe, duc d'Orléans, for use at his château of Villers-Cotterets; a plate from this set is in the Kensington collection.

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Two other minor factories of soft-paste china call for a passing notice, those of MENNECY and Sceaux, both near Paris. The former appears to have been first established in Paris itself, and in 1748 transferred to a site at Mennecy on the estate of the duc de Villeroy, who supported it with his patronage. In 1773, on the expiration of their lease, the directors of the works removed their plant to Bourg-la-Reine, where they came under the protection of the comte d'Eu. The factory was in the main confined to the production of small articles for the boudoir, to which their simple decoration of bouquets or brightly-plumaged birds is well enough suited. Objects for purely ornamental purposes are seldom met with. In Mr. Fitzhenry's gift there is a pair of vases on high pedestals of the form known from its antique prototype as the "*vase Médicis*," finely painted with birds in landscapes. It may be remarked that the polychrome flower-painting of Mennecy often bears a close resemblance to that of early Chelsea. Figures were turned out in considerable quantities. The earlier ones are generally left white, and show not only a sense of the grotesque but also much artistic feeling in their breadth of modelling. The later figures with polychrome painting, somewhat childish conceptions, it is true, are yet not without a certain grace and daintiness; an important set of groups of children with musical instruments in the Fitzhenry Collection belongs to this class.

54

The works at SCEAUX, dating back apparently to 1749, are noteworthy for the skilfulness of their flower-paintings; the tints are brilliant yet harmonious, while the drawing is executed with remarkable care and sureness of touch.

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The royal manufactory of SÈVERES, destined to enjoy a fame greater than that of any other in Europe, had its origin in a combination of circumstances from which at first no great results might have been expected. Orry de Fulvy, *intendant des finances* to Louis XV., had long been interested in experiments for making porcelain, when at Vincennes in 1738 he came across two workmen from Chantilly, the brothers Dubois, to whom reference has already been made. They had been allowed secretly to set up a kiln in the precincts of the château. De Fulvy gave them his support, and their operations were continued at his expense. The Dubois were subsequently dismissed as incompetent, and the venture was in danger of abandonment; but after many vicissitudes De Fulvy's perseverance was crowned with success, and in 1745 he was able to form a company for the manufacture under royal privilege. For eleven years the works were carried on at Vincennes, but in 1756 they were transferred to new premises at Sèvres, on the other side of Paris, at a convenient distance from the royal palace of Versailles; three years previously the company had been reorganised under an exclusive privilege, the king himself holding a quarter of the shares, while the royal interest in the undertaking was signalled by the stipulation that its productions should be marked with the royal cipher of two interlaced "L"s.

55

From the outset the wares were given a high artistic quality. Duplessis, goldsmith to the king, was charged in 1747 with the control of the modellers; he kept the workshops under close personal supervision, and to his guiding influence is attributable the originality and unflinching taste of the shapes adopted. Hellot, director of the Academy of Sciences, was in charge of the chemical composition of the materials, while Bachelier was at the head of the painters and gilders. Drawings of figure-subjects were supplied by François Boucher for the painted decoration, as well as for translation into the round by the modellers; an instance of the latter process is the fine biscuit group of Leda modelled from Boucher's design by Fernex, a painted version of the same subject being in the National Museum at Stockholm.

56

The rare pieces surviving from the earliest stage of the factory's existence show clearly the aim which De Fulvy set himself of competing with the Saxon porcelain; the landscapes or river-scenes painted on them, with miniature groups of figures and buildings, are evidently inspired by the Meissen subjects of the period. The same is true of the coloured grounds with medallions in reserve which made their appearance shortly afterwards, but the colours used for the purpose were entirely new. The earliest of these was the deep blue ("*gros bleu*") from which was subsequently developed the famous "*bleu de roi*." The researches of Hellot bore fruit later in the discovery of the *rose Pompadour* pink and turquoise-blue. A feature of the earliest years of the factory before its removal from Vincennes were the artificial flowers modelled in porcelain, which amounted in value to over three-fourths of the total output.

None of the pieces in our illustrations are of the primitive period. They represent several of the Sèvres ground colours. [Plate 14](#) shows a jardinière with openwork socket painted with cupids and flowers in panels reserved on a *rose Pompadour* ground. It is marked with the royal cipher enclosing the date-letter I, for 1761, and with a branch of foliage, the mark of the painter Jean René Dubois.

PLATE 20

Vase, with Cover, Meissen, Marcolini period, about 1780. Height, 11-7/8 in.
Jones Collection.

No. 837-1882. See p. [68](#).

Mark





The ewer and basin in [Plate 15](#) are dated 1763 and have the mark of the decorator Catrice. On a ground of yellow (*jaune jonquille*) are rococo-bordered panels with charming miniatures of children painted, with the exception of the flesh tints, *en camaïeu* in blue. This manner of painting in a monochrome of blue or crimson is a survival from an earlier period, in which it is often found as the sole decoration on a plain white ground; the simple contours of the shapes also point back to an early style. 57

The *écuelle* or soup-bowl with cover and stand, shown in [Plate 16](#), selected like the last two pieces from the Jones Collection, is an example of the most sumptuous style of Sèvres applied to the decoration of porcelain for useful purposes. It bears the date-letter "P" for 1768. The panels with pastoral scenes in colours by Chabry fils follow closely the manner of Boucher, if he did not actually supply the designs for them; with the rich gilt scrollwork borders and the turquoise ground they blend in an ensemble of splendid but harmonious effect, admirably in keeping with the gracefully-modelled shapes. Another specimen of Sèvres table ware of a simpler class is the jug reproduced in [Plate 17](#), with lid attached by a silver hinge. On the bottom are the date-letter for 1770 and the mark of the flower-painter Bouillat fils.

The subject of the next drawing, a vase in the Jones Collection, with classical busts in medallions raised above an apple-green ground, brings us to the year 1772, with which by the death of the director Boileau the most prosperous epoch of the factory's career came to a close. When compared with the previous illustrations, a distinct change of style is noticeable; not a trace of the rococo of Louis XV. is to be seen, while the laurel-wreath round the foot and the classical ornament surrounding the cameo-like medallion betoken the adoption of the severer and simpler style associated with the following reign. The transition to antique forms and ornament came about in Sèvres china more gradually than in other branches of French applied art, partly on account of the fact that in many cases the artists and workmen in the factory were succeeded by their sons, who kept up the traditions they had learned from their parents. The change in the directorship and the succession of the new king two years later finally determined the abandonment of the old style. 58

PLATE 25

Teapot, Chelsea, from a service painted with pseudo-Chinese figures in the style of Watteau, on a claret-coloured ground. Height, 5-3/8 in. Bequest of Miss Emily H. Thomson, of Dover.

No. 517-1902. See p. [82](#).

Mark: an anchor in gold.





The vase represented in [Plate 19](#) is typical of the new tendencies. It embodies to perfection the graceful French interpretation of classical art associated with the name of Louis XVI. The vase is noteworthy not only as a splendid exponent of the powers of the royal manufacture, but also on account of its historical associations. It was made in 1780, and was given by Gustavus III., King of Sweden, as a present to the empress Catherine II. of Russia; the gift was the outcome of an unexpected turn of events, resulting from the war between England and her American colonies. The state of hostilities at sea was a grave menace to the commerce of the northern countries, and an alliance was formed on 1st August 1780, between Sweden, Denmark, and Russia, powers at that time usually at variance, to ensure the safety of their merchant fleets. Gustavus III., who himself played the rôle of Augustus in Swedish history, had a great admiration for the genius of the Russian empress. He was at the time absent from his kingdom on a long tour in the South, in the course of which he had doubtless had opportunities of forming a personal judgment of the merits of the French royal porcelain. It is not surprising therefore that he should have thought of a set of Sèvres china as a suitable present to mark the occasion of the treaty; he invoked to assist him in his choice a friend of earlier days, the writer Marmontel, to whom he communicated his desires through his ambassador at the French Court, the baron de Staël. The circumstances of the purchase are fully related in the letter dated 29th August 1780, by which Marmontel informed the director of the factory, Regnier, of the selection he had made at the works. Of five pieces chosen to make up a *garniture de cheminée*, one is the vase before us, and it is worth while to cite the words in which it is described: "*Un grand vase bleu de roi et or, avec un cartouche représentant une marine marchande. Dans ce petit tableau deux hommes sont occupés à lire dans un livre posé sur un tonneau. Je suis convenu avec le peintre que sur le livre il écrivoit ces mots que je vais tracer figurativement:*"

59

Neutra-
lite
armée

Catherine II.

Gustave III.

Il faut que ces caractères soient en émail et l'on m'a promis que cette petite besogne seroit faite aujourd'hui."

The remaining four pieces of the set were a pair of figures representing Pygmalion and Prometheus, and two small cornucopia vases. Instructions were given for the figures to be inscribed with verses of Marmontel's own composition, highly flattering to the imperial recipient of the present. The letter concludes with a request that the goods might be despatched without delay to the Swedish king, who was awaiting them at Spa. The price paid for the vase was 720 *livres*, and for the complete set 1896 *livres*.

The subsequent story of the vase is not fully known, but it may be surmised that it left Russia on the occasion of a great fire at the palace of Czarskoë Selo, when it is recorded that many pieces now scattered in various museums were stolen from the celebrated turquoise-blue service of Sèvres china ordered by Catherine II. in 1788. The vase was bought by Mr. Jones in 1880 at the sale of the San Donato Palace at Florence, and is now housed with the rest of his bequest to the nation. It remains only to mention that the marine subject in the style of Joseph Vernet is the work of Morin, the bouquet of flowers in the reverse medallion is by Fontaine, while the gilding was done by Le Guay, whose signature with the royal cipher is painted under the base.

60

A brief allusion has already been made to the sculpture in biscuit china, which was among the most remarkable work done at Sèvres during the time of its prosperity. The enamelled figures in the Meissen style, made in the earliest stages at Vincennes, were soon superseded in popularity by those in biscuit, a much better vehicle for reproducing delicate modelling. The high artistic merit attained by them was due to the guiding genius of the sculptor Falconet, who was in charge of the modellers from 1757 for nearly ten years; he himself provided the models for nearly all the figures made during that period, the traditions set by him being maintained by his successors. His nice sense of the capabilities of his material is manifest alike in graceful genre and pastoral subjects and in works of more elevated conception, such as the Pygmalion group already mentioned.

PLATE 27

Vase, with Cover, Worcester, about 1760, with design adapted from the Japanese. Height, 11 in. Schreiber Collection.

No. 480. See p. [85](#).

Unmarked.



PLATE 28

Vase, with Cover, Bristol, 1770-1781, painted with exotic birds in the Sèvres manner. Height, 15 in. Schreiber Collection.

No. 740. See p. [87](#).

Unmarked.



After the death of Bachelier the factory was hampered by mismanagement and financial difficulties; the consequent deterioration in its productions was precipitated by the French Revolution, which marks the close of its most glorious epoch. The artistic level reached in the last years of Louis XV. was never again attained until recent times; the success of the factory was the outcome of the peculiar excellence of the Sèvres soft-paste for the display of gilding and painting in enamel colours, and the abandonment of this class of body was inevitably followed by an artistic decline. At quite an early stage of the factory's career experiments were made with a view to discovering in France the materials for true hard porcelain like that of China and Germany. The success of those researches in 1765 was the prelude to the complete adoption of the new material, when the works were rescued by Napoleon from the state of adversity into which they had sunk in the revolutionary period. For some years before the fall of Louis XVI. both soft and hard-paste were made concurrently; an early example of the latter is a cup and saucer in the Jones Collection, painted with the shield of France supported by an eagle and a dolphin, made to commemorate the birth of the ill-fated Dauphin in 1781. Under the Empire and the restored monarchy everything was done that could be effected by rich gilding and highly-finished painting to bring back the magnificence of former years, and the new material made possible dimensions never attempted before; witness is borne by the huge vase in the Sèvres Museum representing the arrival in Paris of the artistic spoils of Napoleon's Italian conquests, and another with a frieze depicting the athletic sports of ancient Greece. France suffered perhaps less than other countries from the general debasement of art in that age, but the redeeming charm of the eighteenth century styles was gone, and with it the glory of the Sèvres factory; its artistic recovery with the return of French prosperity under the Third Republic belongs to recent history.

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Before leaving the subject of French porcelain, something must be said of the cluster of PARISIAN FACTORIES for making hard-paste china, which arose in many cases under Court patronage after the introduction of the new material at Sèvres. The exclusive privileges of the royal factory, designed to repress all attempts at competition within the borders of France, had been one by one abandoned, having become gradually of no effect. In 1787 complete liberty was accorded to all French manufacturers to pursue all the methods employed at Sèvres, including the jealously-protected use of gilding. As a rule only useful wares were made in the smaller factories, but these were often of considerable merit. The use of gold as the only decoration on a white ground became increasingly popular, and much charming ware is ornamented in this manner. A typical instance may be cited in the spirit-kettle made at the Clignancourt works, comprised in the series of Parisian hard-paste in the Fitzhenry gift. The affectation by these small factories of classical forms is exemplified in the same collection by a ewer with oblong basin decorated in gold and blue, made in the duc d'Angoulême's kilns in the rue Bondy, which are also famous for the pretty cornflower-sprig pattern afterwards popular in English china.

PLATE 26

Vase, Chelsea-Derby, 1770-1784, with handles in the form of female terminal figures in biscuit porcelain; on the front a medallion with the subject of Celadon and Amelia. Height, 15¼ in. Jones Collection.

No. 825-1882. See p. [84](#).

Mark: an anchor in gold.





GERMAN PORCELAIN

While the efforts to imitate Chinese porcelain first led to lasting results by the invention of soft-paste porcelain in France, the credit belongs to Germany of discovering and introducing into Europe the art of making true hard-paste porcelain of the Chinese type. The discovery was the outcome of researches not originally directed to this end. The romantic story of Johann Friedrich Böttger, the chemist to whom it was due, is well known: how he claimed to possess the secret of making gold, how he fled from Berlin across the Saxon border to avoid the covetous attentions of the King of Prussia, how he was promptly visited with the fate he wished to escape, at the hands of Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, and how he spent a great part of a short life in fruitless efforts to make gold by alchemistic means for replenishing the Elector's coffers. It was only when the needs of Augustus had become the more pressing, in consequence of the exhausting war with Sweden through which he lost the Polish Crown, that his optimistic credulity was in danger of being overtaxed. Böttger foresaw that the Elector could no longer be duped, and the happy idea was suggested to him, probably by the chemist Von Tschirnhausen, of drawing a blind over his failure by another plan for enriching his royal master. The latter was foremost among the sovereigns of Europe as an amateur of the porcelain at that time being imported by Dutch merchants from the Far East; he was therefore likely to view with favour Böttger's new scheme, which was no other than the restoration of Saxony's prosperity by the establishment in the country of ceramic industries, and particularly of porcelain factories on the Chinese lines. All Böttger's efforts were now turned in this direction. In 1708 a "*Steinbäckerei*" was started at Dresden for the manufacture of tiles, and shortly after Böttger's celebrated red stoneware was invented. In 1710 he obtained a royal patent for the foundation of a porcelain factory; the site chosen for it was the fortress of Albrechtsburg, near MEISSEN, and in the course of the year the first samples were submitted to the Elector, two small cups with enamel decoration, still in the royal collection at Dresden. So began the manufacture of hard-paste china in Europe. 65

The porcelain made at Meissen before Böttger's death derived its shape in part from contemporary metalwork of the baroque style, and partly from the Elector's Chinese collection; statuettes were also modelled, after the caricatures of the French etcher Callot. Varied methods of decoration were attempted. Lace-like borders inspired by French designs were executed in enamel colours, or in gold, silver, or lustre; we also find miniature hunting-scenes, such as are seen on Bohemian and Silesian drinking-glasses of the period, applied in gold leaf thickly laid on in slight relief. 66

PLATE 3

Bowl, Chinese, bearing the mark of the Emperor Chia Ching (1522-1566) of the Ming dynasty. Height, 2-7/8 in.

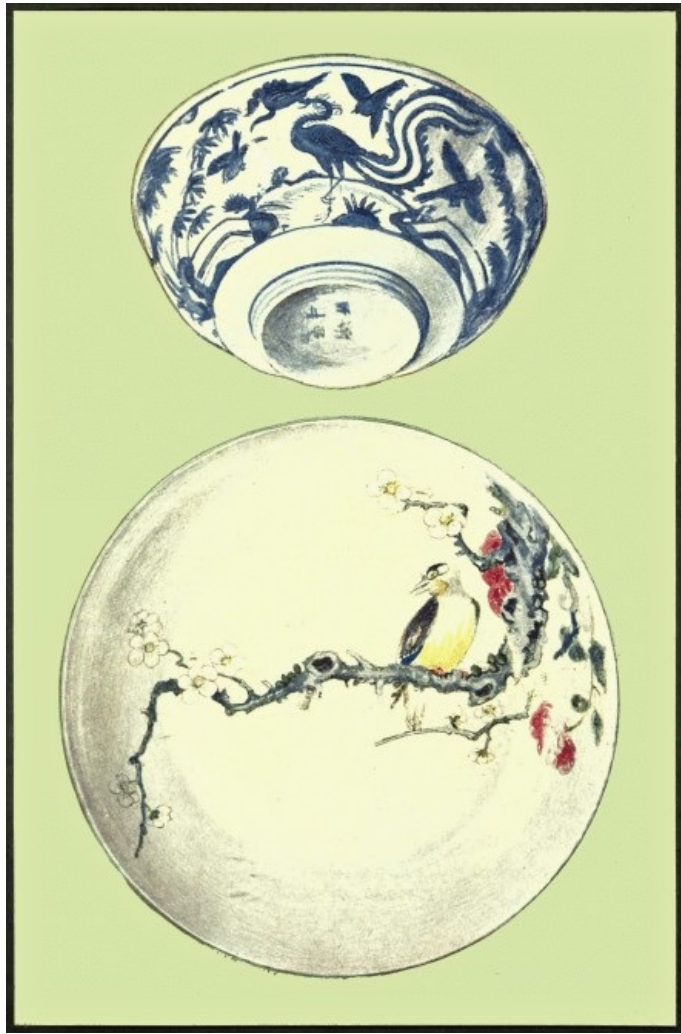
No. 1616-1876. See p. [12](#).

Mark:

Plate, Chinese, jointed in colours of the *famille rose*, with a bird perched on the branch of a plum-tree. Period of Yung Chêng (1723-1735). Diameter, 8-1/8 in. Cope Bequest.

No. 600-1903. See p. [25](#).

Unmarked.



After Böttger's death in 1719 the painter Herold became the leading spirit of the factory, and painting began to play the chief rôle in the decoration of the wares. The earlier French borders gave place for a time to faithful copies of Oriental patterns selected from the royal collection, those of the Japanese Kakiyemon being specially in favour. By 1730 a distinctive Meissen style had arisen, characterised by simple baroque forms and a decoration of panels enclosed with borders of delicate symmetrical scrollwork in gold and colours, often reserved on a monochrome ground; the panels are filled either with groups of pseudo-Chinese figures, or with landscape subjects depicting wide open country with broad rivers, reminiscent of the lowland scenery to the north of Dresden.

67

The appointment of the sculptor Johann Joachim Kändler, in 1731, to be superintendent of the modellers, led to a revolution in the character of the wares. If painted figure-subjects were introduced, the favourite themes were gallant parties of ladies and gentlemen in the manner of Watteau, but relief ornament and not painting now became the leading feature; the style adopted in the modelling was a modified form of the French rococo, and impressed itself on the productions of most of the German factories which sprang up in rivalry with Meissen. The very spirit of the German rococo is embodied in the countless figures and groups, destined among other purposes to form part of table-services as decorative "*Tafelaufsätze*," which were modelled during this period by Kändler and his associates; as we shall see later, they were extensively copied in the earliest English china works. The development of sculpture in porcelain inaugurated at Meissen is a branch of the art in which Europe attained a proficiency absolutely unknown in China; the German factories in particular excelled in their skill in this class of work.

The state of warfare in which Germany was plunged about the middle of the century was a serious check to the progress of the works. When peace was restored in 1763, a new spirit began to manifest itself, contemporaneously with the addition to the staff of the French modeller Acier. The change was completed under the directorship of Count Camillo Marcolini, which lasted from 1774 to 1814. Just as in music, an art in which Germany enjoyed at that time an unquestioned supremacy, the sprightly melodies of Haydn gave place to the graver harmonies of Beethoven, so in porcelain too the altered mood of the age was reflected. Florid rococo forms were abandoned and replaced by the severer contours and simpler decoration of the classic style of Louis XVI. The philosophic sentimentalism of the day was not interested in the pretty but aimless frivolities of the Watteau school, and subjects of an entirely different order were chosen to fill panels and medallions. A service at South Kensington is painted with a series of careful miniatures in illustration of Goethe's *Sorrows of Werther*, a work in which the spirit of the age is characteristically expressed. Other favourite themes were Angelica Kauffmann's renderings of the more sentimental stories of classical mythology.

68

The Meissen vase chosen for illustration in [Plate 20](#), one of a set of three in the Jones Bequest, dates from the earlier years of Count Marcolini's management. The slight decoration of dainty and pleasing effect allows the fine qualities of the paste to be fully appreciated. The various ornamental features embody in characteristic manner the ideas of the age. The symmetrical amphora form, the square architectural plinth, the wreaths of oak on the cover and foot, point to the new interest awakened in ancient, more particularly Roman, art by the publication of the antiquities of Herculaneum; the garlands and festoons of forget-me-nots recall the sentiment of an age that amused itself with the study of the "language of flowers."

69

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The Meissen factory had not long been working before its success suggested the introduction of the manufacture of porcelain in other German states, and in less than fifty years from the date of the royal patent of Augustus the Strong, a porcelain factory was considered a necessary adjunct to the Court of even the minor German rulers. The influence of Meissen is everywhere apparent, but individuality shown in various directions by a few of the rivals entitles them to special mention. The seniority amongst these belongs to VIENNA, where a factory was set up as early as 1718 by a Dutchman with the help of workmen who had escaped from Meissen; in 1744 it became an imperial institution. The style of the wares followed closely on that of the parent works, until financial embarrassments led to a complete reorganisation under Baron von Sorgenthal in 1784. The change was heralded by the adoption of severely angular shapes, and of romantic or mythological subjects pictorially rendered, within elaborate borders composed of classical motives carried out in rich highly-burnished gilding on panels of gorgeous colouring; the true qualities of porcelain were forgotten in the effort to arrive at the highest pitch of sumptuous richness.

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The factory of HÖCHST, under the patronage of the Elector of Mainz, famous for its figures of children modelled by Johann Peter Melchior, was also founded with the help of a Meissen artist. Again, it was his marriage with a Saxon princess that awakened in the Elector of Bavaria, Max Josef III., the desire to possess his own porcelain kilns. These were erected at first at Neudeck, near Munich, and were removed in 1758 to NYMPHENBURG. Thanks to an Italian sculptor, Franz Bastelli, the Bavarian factory takes foremost rank in Germany for its statuettes; whether characters from the Italian comedy, or dancing cavaliers and ladies, they display in their crisp, nervous lines, a spontaneity tempered by masterly restraint which is best appreciated when the white porcelain is left to speak for itself, unobscured by the application of enamel colouring.

70

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The Duke of Württemberg's factory at the *Residenzstadt* of LUDWIGSBURG, near Stuttgart, was founded in 1758, a propitious moment for starting a new enterprise of the kind, as Meissen and other factories in northern Germany were suffering from the effects of a long-protracted war. Under the directorship of Ringle, who had previously gained experience at Vienna and Neudeck, the works speedily reached a high pitch of efficiency. In figures they were stamped at an earlier date than other German works with the new ideas of classicism, through the influence of the sculptor who was appointed in 1759 to superintend the modelling, Wilhelm Beyer of Gotha. As the result of prolonged residence in Rome and Naples he was deeply imbued with the spirit of

antique sculpture. He understood well how to temper the cold serenity of the antique so as to suit the taste of an emotional age; at the same time he knew how to modify classical forms in compliance with the exigencies of his material, nor did he, like later porcelain-modellers of the classical school, renounce the charms of glaze and colour. The classical feeling makes itself felt as much in his pastoral groups as in his renderings of mythological subjects.

PLATE 4

Ewer, Chinese, period of Wan Li (1573-1619), with contemporary brass mount of Augsburg workmanship. Height, 12¼ in.

No. 174-1879. See p. [13](#).

Mark: *Fu* ("Happiness") in seal character.





Whilst Beyer was the pioneer of the classical in porcelain figures, the Ludwigsburg factory was slow to abandon the rococo style in its table wares. The exceptionally graceful forms which they assume are typified by the coffee-pot in Mr. Fitzhenry's collection, represented in [Plate 21](#). The gilt scrollwork under the lip shows the rococo at its best. The mark on the bottom is the cipher of Duke Carl Eugen, a double "C" under a ducal crown.

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Excellent work was done in their best periods by several other German factories. BERLIN under the patronage of Frederick the Great was successful in combining gracefulness of form with rich painted and gilt decoration, as for instance in the beautiful rococo service with openwork borders made for the Neue Palais at Potsdam. The works of the Elector Palatine at FRANKENTHAL rivalled Meissen in the rich diversity of its figure-modelling, while at ANSBACH the factory established by the Margrave Christian in 1758 excelled in landscape work in the manner of Claude, painted *en camaïeu* in crimson within elaborate gilt borders of feathery rococo scrollwork.

The royal Danish factory at COPENHAGEN may be mentioned as another instance in which the help of Meissen workmen was secured for setting the enterprise on foot. The manufacture is represented at South Kensington among other pieces by an important vase with a portrait of the Crown Prince, afterwards Frederick VI. of Denmark.

PLATE 21

Coffee-pot, Ludwigsburg, about 1760. Height, 8½ in. Collection of Mr. J. H. Fitzhenry.

No. 1990. See p. [71](#).

Mark: the cipher of Carl Eugen of Württemberg under a ducal crown.





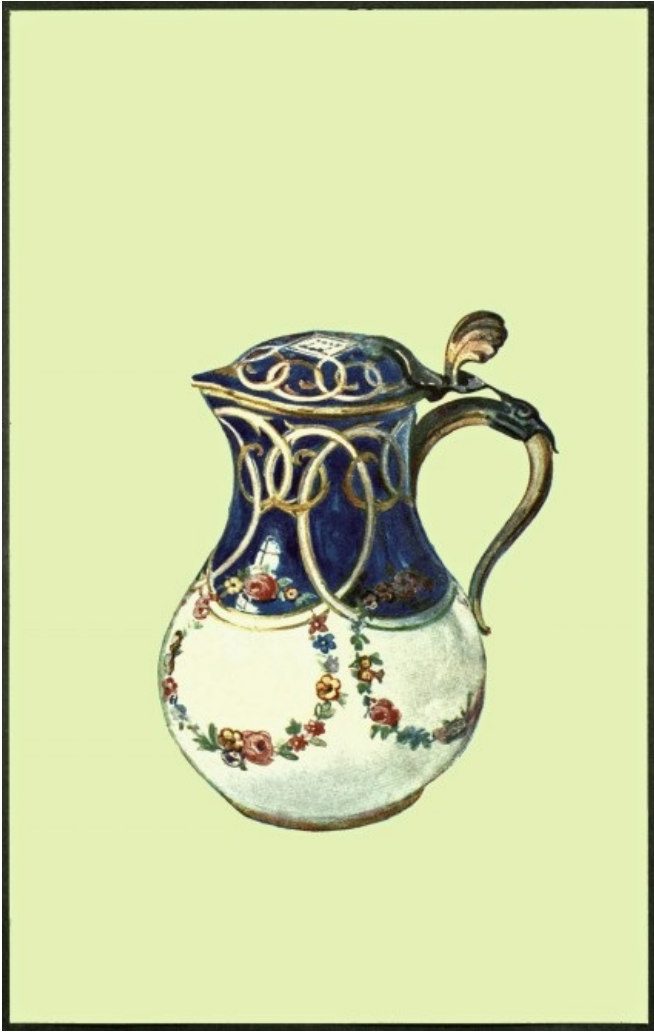
PLATE 17

Jug, with hinged Cover, Sèvres, dated 1770, with the mark of the flower-painter Bouillat fils. Height, 5 in.

No. 2019-1855. See p. [57](#).

Mark:





The obscurity which enshrouds the history of the earliest English porcelain works may be accounted for by the fact that these factories were private ventures, started for commercial purposes; they were not, as at the outset were many of their Continental rivals, experimental undertakings conducted under the protection, or subsidised out of the funds, of a royal or princely patron. It is true that the Chelsea works received some measure of support from King George II. and his son, the Duke of Cumberland, but it was probably to private enterprise that they owed their beginning and continuance alike.

While the earliest known piece of English china, bearing the date 1745, belongs to Chelsea, the other great London factory, Bow, has the honour of the earliest documentary record of the manufacture in this country. This priority, by one year only, based on a patent applied for in 1744, entitles the Bow works to be noticed first.

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Except in the direction of figures, the productions of Bow were of an unambitious character. "Useful" wares showing many varied types of decoration were made during the thirty odd years of the factory's existence. The earlier of these were interpretations, not as a rule slavish copies, of the Chinese *famille rose* and of the works of the Japanese potter, Kakiyemon; their colours are often harmonious, and their gilding of peculiar richness. Such praise cannot be bestowed on the later productions, which have too often a garish and clumsy air; the charm of simplicity is sacrificed in the effort to be splendid, and the results are crude and ungainly. It is interesting to note some pieces with landscapes so closely resembling the type which is commonly found on the German porcelain made at Fulda as to point to the suggestion that they must have been derived from that source.

76

Some of the figures made at Bow show considerable spirit and breadth of modelling, which is best appreciated when the china has been left white, without the addition of coloured enamels. The statuettes of the actors Woodward and Kitty Clive in character, King Lear, and some dignified figures of nuns, are almost as effective as the white figures of Nymphenburg, of which mention has already been made. These white pieces date mostly from the earlier stages of the works. At a later time the clever modelling is usually obscured by enamelling of unpleasing tones. A great number of the later figures are copied directly from the Meissen models of Kändler. Instances in the Schreiber Collection at Kensington are a spirited pair of prancing horses held in respectively by a Turk and a negro, Augustus the Strong of Saxony kissing his hand to a lady, and a pair of tureens in the form of partridges on their nests.

Perhaps the most pretentious figures ever made at Bow were the pair of General Wolfe and the Marquis of Granby, of which there is an example in the same collection. These were modelled by Tebo, who is also mentioned as having worked at Worcester and Bristol. The name has a curiously unfamiliar form, and is probably an English phonetic spelling of the French Thibaut. It is by no means improbable that he was one of the many French potters who migrated to this country in search of fortune, or to escape the tyrannical pretensions of the French royal manufacture. The pair of figures was doubtless made in 1760, to commemorate the events of the previous year, so glorious in the annals of British warfare. In the victories of Quebec and Minden, Wolfe had met his death and Lord Granby had won his first distinction by saving the British cavalry from disgrace. These two soldiers were the popular heroes of the day, and their figures in porcelain would be sure to command a ready sale. The portrait of Wolfe is copied from a sketch by Captain Smith, which was engraved by Richard Houston. Granby appears to be taken from a print by the same engraver after a painting by Reynolds, which was published in 1760; he is represented in the uniform of Colonel of the Horse Guards.

77

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Passing on to CHELSEA we have to deal with perhaps the most famous of English china works, one that takes its place worthily beside the great factories of the Continent. The history of Chelsea is in one respect parallel to that of Bow; its earlier productions, with all their technical imperfections, are possessed of a charm that is wanting in the gorgeous and ambitious achievements of its later years. This is notably the case with the statuettes for which most of all the name of Chelsea is famous. Neither the figures of the cream-coloured glassy paste marked with a triangle, nor those in the heavy cold-looking material on which a raised anchor often occurs, are devoid of spirit and vigour; nor are these qualities concealed by the excessive use of gold and enamel colours common at a later period. While they are not for the most part original conceptions, good judgment was exercised in the choice of models to be copied. Barthélemy de Blémont's *Nourrice*, for example, is no less charming in white Chelsea porcelain than in the colour-glazed earthenware in which it first made its appearance.

78

After the works passed from the management of Charles Gouyn into the hands of Nicholas Sprimont, distinct changes are noticeable alike in the composition of the paste and in the nature of the decoration, but still for some time the colouring of the figures was subdued and limited in range. New models appear, copied in many cases directly from the Meissen figures of Kändler and Acier; the masked man dancing with a peasant girl, and the "Monkey Musicians," may be cited as instances. Chelsea seems, however, to have been less dependent than Bow on extraneous inspiration. During the last years of the factory's independent existence a great variety of fresh models make their appearance, coming from the hand of sculptors such as Roubiliac. Here at last original compositions are more in evidence; where inspiration has been sought elsewhere it has been derived not from porcelain prototypes, but from painted works by French or English masters, made accessible by contemporary engravings.

PLATE 18

Vase, Sèvres, dated 1772, with classical medallions on an apple-green ground. Height, 10-7/8 in. Jones Collection.

No. 805-1882. See p. [58](#).

Mark:





The masterpiece of Chelsea is the group of the "Music Lesson," with its two accompanying pairs of figures symbolising the Four Seasons, made to form a *garniture* for the chimney-piece; a complete set is in the Schreiber Collection, where it stands as a veritable *tour de force* in porcelain. This set is the work of Roubiliac, whose initial "R" is stamped on all three pieces, the subject of the centre-piece being borrowed from *L'Agréable Leçon* by Boucher. Other examples of translation in the round from a painting or engraving are the dancing figures taken from Watteau's *Fêtes vénétiennes*. Historical interest attaches to the pair of figures of the democratic hero John Wilkes and his champion, General Conway; they were doubtless modelled in 1764, when Conway sprang into popularity in consequence of the degradation with which he was punished for having spoken in Parliament on Wilkes's behalf. 79

The later Chelsea figures of this class are usually so much decorated that their attractiveness is gone, but an example has been chosen for illustration in [Plate 22](#), which has suffered less than others in this respect, and is thoroughly characteristic of the style. The graceful *allure* of the shepherdess with her basket of flowers and kilted skirts will suffice as an excuse for the painter's extravagance in the decoration of her raiment.

In its earlier stages the Chelsea firm depended for its vases and "useful" wares, as far as form was concerned, on the models offered by Oriental china, and by the work of contemporary London silversmiths. In decoration also, Oriental, particularly Japanese, patterns were closely followed. This lack of originality is atoned for in some measure by the added charm derived from the mellow surface of the soft Chelsea glazes, while the very defects in the painting due to the touch of a Western hand give a certain homeliness which endears the imitations to an English amateur. A beautiful example of this style is the hexagonal covered vase in the Schreiber Collection depicted in [Plate 23](#). Both shape and decoration are copied with fidelity from an original of the school of the great Japanese, Kakiyemon. The perfect balance of the design and the harmony of the colouring are his, but the interpretation and the material in which it is embodied belong wholly to the Western potter; "Western" must be said advisedly, for it must be doubted whether English workmen had any but a minor part at Chelsea in its early days. Whether the "Japan patterns" were copied directly from Oriental wares (the designs in a few instances are Chinese, of the *famille verte*), or whether they were obtained through the medium of Meissen imitations of the Oriental, it would be difficult to decide; the latter would certainly be more easily obtainable in England. It is, however, interesting to observe that the vase here illustrated is an almost exact replica of a pair of Japanese vases at Hampton Court Palace, belonging to the collection formed probably by Queen Mary II. through the agency of the Dutch East India merchants; it is tempting to conjecture that the Chelsea artists may have been allowed access to the royal apartments for the purpose of making drawings for use at the works. 80

PLATE 22

Figure of a Shepherdess, Chelsea, about 1765. Height, 12½ in. Schreiber Collection.

No. 237. See p. [79](#).

Mark: an anchor in gold.





Oriental patterns were gradually superseded by motives inspired by rivalry with Saxon porcelain—sprays of naturalistic flowers with insects, landscapes, or animal subjects, such as the series in illustration of Æsop's Fables. A further advance is seen in the use of ground colours betokening emulation of Sèvres, which lasted in vogue till the independent existence of Chelsea came to an end. The earliest of these colours, an attempt at reproducing the French *bleu de roi*, is probably that occurring on the vases with a ground of uneven streaky blue of rather dull tone which have often been ascribed, without evidence to justify the attribution, to the Longton Hall factory in Staffordshire. Later a more satisfactory colour was arrived at in a dense and splendid "mazarine blue," while in the effort to equal the *rose Pompadour* of Sèvres, the claret-colour was evolved of which the glory belongs to the Chelsea works alone. On such splendid grounds as these were reserved panels for miniature paintings taken, as the contemporary sale catalogues inform us, from "Busha," "Burgam," "Tenier," and other foreign masters.

81

This style is exemplified by the sumptuous vases in the Jones Bequest at South Kensington. One pair with mazarine ground bears subjects from the set of the "Four Seasons" painted by Boucher for Madame de Pompadour in 1755. Other vases are painted with a domestic scene in peasant life, and *La Cueillette de Cerises* after the same artist. A pair of vases with a claret-coloured ground have mountain landscapes with cattle in the manner of Berghem. Wonderful as such pieces are in the richness of their glaze and gilding and in the careful finish of the paintings, the same defects are generally observable as in the later Chelsea figures. In the desire to cater for luxurious tastes, richness of ornament has been carried to excess, nor do the ungainly forms with their twisted rococo handles compare in attractiveness with the modest shapes of earlier times. The vase figuring in [Plate 24](#), the middle one of a set of three in the Schreiber Collection, suffers less than most from the defects of the period, and well shows the richness of colour and gilding that were then attained. The slightly uneven tone of the deep blue ground was doubtless regarded by the makers as a defect, which they would gladly have overcome if they could; but it is just this quality of variety which gives life to the surface, and makes these Chelsea glazes compare favourably with the almost too perfect ground colours of Sèvres.

82

The late Chelsea style is most pleasing in the wares made for less pretentious purposes. No better illustration could be found than the tea- and coffee-service with claret-coloured ground bequeathed to the Victoria and Albert Museum by Miss Emily Thomson of Dover. The teapot is figured in [Plate 25](#). Every piece in the service is differently painted with a figure in the quaint dress which passed at the time for Oriental. These charming miniatures are evidently inspired by the *chinoiseries* of Watteau, which reflected the growing trade with the East under the auspices of the *Compagnie des Indes*; a previous writer² has plausibly suggested that this may be the actual "equipage most inimitably enamelled in figures from the designs of Watteau" which was offered for sale at the last auction of Sprimont's china held in Christie's Sale-room in February 1770. The sumptuous decoration of such a service need not be condemned when the surroundings in which it was intended to take its place are borne in mind; its display would greatly enhance the elegance of a tea-party in an eighteenth-century drawing-room.

² Mr. William Burton, in *English Porcelain*.

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It seems, however, that Sprimont's costly porcelain was appreciated by too small a circle of patrons to ensure its success as a commercial venture. After his works had passed in 1770 into the hands of William Duesbury of DERBY, the style to which most of all Chelsea owes its renown was soon abandoned. In the china made during the ensuing period, in which the Chelsea and Derby works were carried on conjointly under the same proprietor, the Chelsea element in the decoration is small, and it may be inferred that the new manner which appears had already been in vogue at Derby. At what date the Derby factory was founded, and the nature of its earliest productions, is obscure, but to it belongs the credit for a style of decoration unsurpassed among "useful" wares for its suitability to the purpose for which the china was made. Many and varied are the dainty borders, executed sometimes in gold alone, sometimes in bright enamel colours laid on with a sparing and discriminating hand. The scrollwork and contorted forms of the rococo period entirely disappear, to be revived only in imitative work of a later time, when they had lost all vitality and meaning, and were no longer in keeping with the spirit of the age. Restraint verging at times on over-formality is the keynote of the new era, in which for people of culture in all parts of Europe the newly-found vases and sculptures of ancient Greece and Rome were the admired models.

83

PLATE 23

Jar, with Cover, Chelsea, about 1755, copied from Japanese Kakiyemon ware. Height, 12½ in. Schreiber Collection.

No. 237. See p. [80](#).

Mark inside the neck and on the cover: an anchor in red.





The effect of the change was decidedly in favour of porcelain as a material; the chastened decoration which it brought with it allowed the charming qualities of paste and glaze to be seen once more to full advantage, and nowhere in European porcelain is the result more happily shown than in the best work of Derby. The ornamental vases of this period fell into the danger as time went on of losing originality and liveliness, as conformity with classical models became more rigorous, but those dating from its earliest days offer a welcome contrast to their Chelsea predecessors.

One of the finest forms made by Duesbury is exemplified by the vase in the Jones Bequest shown in [Plate 26](#). On either side of the body is an oval medallion with a miniature painting. One of these panels represents the incident of Celadon and Amelia overtaken by the storm, from Thomson's poem *The Seasons*, the source of many a subject in the somewhat theatrical figure-paintings of the time. On the reverse side is a river-scene with a rider watering his horse in the foreground, and a castle-keep on a hill in the distance. The terminal female figures forming the handles are in unglazed biscuit porcelain, offering a pleasant contrast to the glancing surface of the body. The gadroons on the neck, the frieze with a grotesque mask between two lions, and the flowers in natural colours on a gold groundwork, seem when analysed rather incongruous elements, but the effect of the whole though brilliant is yet harmonious. The *bleu de roi*, which is the ground colour on the neck and foot, is of a lighter tone than the Sèvres colour which it was intended to imitate. It is possible that this vase may be the actual one advertised in the sale-catalogue for 9th May 1773, as "*A most capital large therm vase, richly painted in compartments with figures of Celadon and Armelia [sic], ornamented with fine blue and richly finished with chased and burnished gold.*"

The style of Derby porcelain was not greatly modified while the works were in the hands of the Duesbury family, but after they were leased in 1811 to Robert Bloor a change came about. Little can be said from an artistic point of view in praise of the output of later years. Effective "Japan patterns" based on Imari originals were adopted for tea- and dinner-services, but generally over-decoration and vulgarity of form and colour were faults for which technical improvements do not avail to compensate.

* * * * *

The porcelain made during the eighteenth century at the "Worcester Tonquin Manufacture," founded by Dr. John Wall and others in 1751, has a more English character than that of the other leading china works in this country. Unambitious in its aims and businesslike in its methods, it contented itself for a long time with producing little but wares for useful purposes. These are characterised by a certain homeliness in the decoration and pleasing simplicity of form. The thoroughly practical nature of the undertaking is borne out by the somewhat doubtful distinction it enjoys of being the pioneer in the use of printing for the decoration of porcelain, or at all events the first factory to make extensive use of this process. While in its early days Worcester drew its inspiration from Oriental china, the Eastern designs were taken rather as suggestions for patterns than as models to be closely copied, as was frequently the case at Chelsea. The same practice held good even in later years, when after the engagement of workmen from Chelsea in 1768, more pretentious wares were attempted. The celebrated "scale-blue" and "powder-blue" vases, with birds or flowers of brilliant hues in reserved panels, were doubtless suggested by the *bleu de roi* of Sèvres, but they bear little resemblance to their prototype, and, even in their most splendid form they seldom err beyond the limits of sobriety and good taste.

This character of the Worcester wares is well illustrated by the little vase from the Schreiber Collection chosen as the subject of the drawing reproduced in [Plate 27](#). The pattern is a very free adaptation of a Japanese design, in which the chrysanthemum and the wattled fence motive, appearing here as a wheat-sheaf, can be recognised; combined with this is a turquoise border, edged with gilt rococo scrolls, betraying some trace of French suggestion, but the whole is so informally treated that no incongruity is felt, and the general impression received is one of delightful freshness and simplicity. The vase is typical of Worcester at its best.

PLATE 24

Vase from a set of three, Chelsea, about 1760, with gilt relief decoration on a mazarine-blue ground. Height, 11½ in. Schreiber Collection.

No. 241. See p. [81](#).

Unmarked.



The change in management in 1783, when Thomas Flight and his sons took over the control of the works, did not at first bring with it a serious deterioration in the quality of the china. A new decorative style was adopted in compliance with the fashion of the day, but the same quiet tastefulness was the keynote of the decoration. The sober designs in dark blue and gold almost equal those of Derby in their suitability for the embellishment of table wares. It is not till the beginning of the nineteenth century that a noticeable decline sets in, but from that time forward the Worcester wares, whether made in the original factory or by the rival firm of Chamberlains, become increasingly lacking in interest. All artistic qualities are smothered in overloaded decoration, ungainly shapes, and unrestrained lavishness of gilding.

* * * * *

It was a Quaker apothecary of PLYMOUTH, William Cookworthy by name, whose discovery of deposits of kaolin and china clay in the neighbouring Duchy enabled him in 1768 to obtain a patent for the first English factory of true porcelain of the Chinese type. The serious difficulties with which he had to contend led to the removal of the establishment two years later to BRISTOL, where it was placed under the management of Richard Champion. In 1773 the patent rights were transferred entirely to the latter, and for eight years he continued in the face of many discouragements to carry on the manufacture; special interest attaches to it on account of Champion's personal relations with Edmund Burke, at that time Member of Parliament for Bristol. Forms and decoration were borrowed more from Meissen and Sèvres than from Oriental types, nor were they as a rule literal copies, but rather adaptations from the originals. While the harmonious blending of the enamels with the glaze, which is so pleasing a feature of soft-paste china, was necessarily absent from the Bristol productions, great brilliancy of colouring was obtained without involving garishness of effect, as may be seen from [Plate 28](#), drawn from a vase in the Schreiber Collection. The fanciful birds are not original creations of the Bristol painter, but reflect the type commonly seen on early pieces of Vincennes and Sèvres; the quiet dignity of the shape, on the other hand, is thoroughly characteristic of the best English work.

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* * * * *

The minor English factories of the eighteenth century, such as those of LONGTON HALL, in Staffordshire, LOWESTOFT, and CAUGHLEY, were either of too short a duration to arrive at any high level of technical attainment, or were devoted almost entirely to the manufacture of commonplace wares for ordinary domestic uses. The great extension of the porcelain industry in this country, which signalled the opening of the nineteenth century, was not productive of any noteworthy results from an artistic point of view. At the short-lived Welsh factories of NANTGARW and SWANSEA, it is true, a glassy paste was invented which was shown to be capable of beautiful effects, but the numerous STAFFORDSHIRE firms and the famous ROCKINGHAM works at Swinton in Yorkshire fell under the ban of the same artistic decadence that has been noticed in speaking of Derby and Worcester; they saved themselves from financial disasters by following the demands instead of guiding the taste of a severely commercial age. Those who are in search of what is beautiful or vital in English porcelain will be content to confine their attentions to the eighteenth century.

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PLATE 2

Jar, Chinese, early Ming dynasty, with decoration in slightly raised outline filled in with coloured glazes, the rim fitted in Persia with a chased brass mount. Height, 12½ in.

No. 1748-1892. See p. [7](#).

Unmarked.



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THE END

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The spelling and accent marks of non-English words have not been changed.

Simple typographical errors were corrected; ambiguous hyphens at the ends of lines were retained.

Although the “List of Plates in Colour” on page [xi](#) is in numerical sequence, the images themselves are not in sequence in the original book; both sequences have been kept in this eBook.

The descriptions of some plates include illustrations of the marks found on them, followed by the illustrations of the porcelain. In the Plain Text version of this eBook, such plates are represented by two “Illustration” tags, and the very first “Illustration” tag represents the book’s cover.

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