portation was more successful than we had dared to hope.

On arrival here it was necessary to join the two fragments, which fitted exactly; the cut was filled in as well as the different places where the original plaster had dropped off, and the irregular shape was straightened out to a perfect square. Instead of covering the restored parts with a neutral tint, it was considered an advantage to retrace the lines where missing, and to fill them in with color in order to get as much as possible the effect of the original painting. The restoration was done, however, in a line technique entirely different from the original painting, in consequence easily distinguished, and in water colors which a sponge can remove at any time.

The style of the ornament on the stones is of the Wei period, that is, about the sixth century; it is very interesting and unusual, free and flowing as the decorations of the period of the Six Dynasties are, evidently the product of a high civilization the origin of which is as yet not clear. The stone dates the Buddhistic fresco, it is very different from the paintings of Ajunta, is nearer to those found by Sir Aurel Stein in Kotan, and still more like the frescoes found near Turfan in the north of the Province of Sinkiang by A. von Lecoq. This style of Buddhistic and Manichaean painting seems to have been general all over northern China and is closely connected with the frescoes on the walls of the Corean tombs near Chinampo and the frescoes of Horiuji in Nara, Japan. While in all these places the later Buddhistic painting developed in a very different style, the Coreans in their hermit kingdom seem to have stuck in most conservative fashion to the early style; paintings of the end of the Korai period, fourteenth century, and even later Corean paintings show intimate relation with our sixth-century Chinese fresco.

S. C. B. R.

A RELIQUARY OF SAINT THOMAS BECKET MADE FOR JOHN OF SALISBURY

WILL no man free me from this pestilent priest?” cried Henry II of England—so, at least, runs the story—in hot anger at Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury. Perhaps rhetorical questions were not common at Henry’s court. In any case, four knights sped off to Canterbury, and there, in his own cathedral, murdered the Primate of England. This was in 1170. Three years later, the martyred archbishop was canonized.

Saint Thomas Becket was born at London, about the year 1118. His stormy career commenced peacefully enough, when as a well-educated youth of some twenty-three years he entered the service of Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury. The archbishop recognized Becket’s ability by employing him in many delicate negotiations and by bestowing upon him several preferments, the most important of which
was the archdeaconship of Canterbury. Greater honors soon followed. In 1155, King Henry II appointed Becket High Chancellor of England, in which capacity he showed himself both capable and loyal—a combination duly appreciated by his sovereign. Archbishop Theobald died in 1161. The following year, through the influence of the King, Becket was elected Archbishop of Canterbury.

Becket, now primate of England as well as chancellor, had not sought his new office, but had yielded only to the King's insistence. Henry did not look with favor upon the growing independence of the church. Yet a conflict between church and state was a serious matter, and Henry may well have wished a friend at church as well as "at court." He thought to secure this, it would seem, by the election of his chancellor to the archbishopric of Canterbury, the highest position in the English church. But if Henry counted upon Thomas Becket to be his partisan in matters ecclesiastic, he was speedily disappointed.

Becket resigned the chancellorship, and gave himself whole-heartedly to his new responsibilities. In Tennyson's drama Becket says:

"I served our Theobald well when I was with him;
I served King Henry well as Chancellor;
I am his no more, and I must serve the Church."

Asceticism replaced the magnificence of his former life at court. The King's hostility he soon incurred by his zealous defense of the prerogatives of the Church. Matters came to a head when Henry required the assent of the bishops to the "Constitutions of Clarendon," a compilation of certain ancient laws and customs, according to the King's assertion, which restricted the authority of the Church. The Constitutions forced the issue between crown and mitre. After some vacillation, Becket determined upon an attitude of uncompromising resistance, and refused to sign. Bitterly persecuted by the King, Becket was compelled to flee secretly from England in 1164.

Saint Thomas took refuge in France, where he was received both by King Louis VII and by Pope Alexander III, who was then at Sens. For several years, negotiations went on between king, pope, and archbishop, but it was not until 1170 that some kind of a reconciliation was patched up, and Saint Thomas returned to England. During Becket's absence in France, Henry had had his son crowned by the Archbishop of York. According to custom and law, the ceremony should have been performed by the Archbishop of Canterbury as primate. Becket obtained from the Pope the excommunication of the Bishops of London and of Salisbury, who had taken part in the coronation, and the suspension of the Archbishop of York. Upon his landing in England, Becket refused to absolve the bishops, even at the request of the King. It is supposed this refusal was the immediate cause of his murder. How far Henry was directly responsible for the tragedy, which occurred on December 29, 1170, has never been determined, but he at least did penance at the martyr's tomb. In 1220 the bones of Saint Thomas Becket were raised from the crypt where they had been buried the day after his murder, and by order of King Henry III were deposited in a splendid shrine which became one of the most popular objects of pilgrimages during the Middle Ages.

Saint Thomas was attended at the time of his assassination by his cross-bearer, Edward Grim, and by his secretary, John of Salisbury. The latter stood so close to his friend and master that he was spattered with the martyr's blood. Some drops of this he collected in two vials which, later on, he gave to the cathedral of Chartres.¹ John of Salisbury had been Archbishop Theobald's secretary as well as Becket's. He was one of the most cultured scholars of his day, distinguished both as a scholastic writer and as a diplomatist. After Becket's death, he remained at Canterbury until 1174, when he was appointed treasurer of Exeter Cathe-

Two years later, in 1176, he was made Bishop of Chartres. He died in 1180, having been active during his episcopate in spreading the cult of the sainted martyr, whose blood, through John's gift, was treasured at Chartres. Evidence of the esteem in which the relic was held is afforded by one of the large stained glass windows in the cathedral. This important window, with scenes from the life of Saint Thomas Becket, was given to the church in the early part of the thirteenth century by the Tanners, but as Saint Thomas Becket was not the patron saint of tanners, the choice of subject was evidently due to a desire to honor the precious relic which the church possessed.

In the Pierpont Morgan Collection there is a small reliquary of silver gilt with niello decoration, which, to judge from an inscription on the box, once contained some of the blood of Saint Thomas Becket. I hope to show that this reliquary was made for John of Salisbury, sometime between 1174 and 1176, when he was treasurer of Exeter, presumably to hold the two vials of the blood of Saint Thomas. Whether this was the reliquary presented to Chartres, I can not say. Very possibly it was, although a new reliquary may have been made later to receive the relic. Today there is no reliquary of Saint Thomas Becket at Chartres. During the French Revolution, the treasury of Chartres was pillaged, and the reliquary may have disappeared then, or even earlier, since the church had suffered previous depredations. It would be interesting to be able to prove that the Morgan reliquary once formed part of the famous treasure of Chartres, but it is perhaps sufficient honor to have in our collections so beautiful an example of twelfth-century craftsmanship and one which through its associations and closely approximated date is of such exceptional interest.

The Morgan reliquary is a small oblong box with a pyramidal cover surmounted by a large ruby. The cover is hinged, and, although there is no lock, can be fastened by a cord passing through the tongue and staples on the front of the box and the two "ears" on either side of the ruby. The entire height of the cofier is 2 1/4 inches; the height of the box alone, 1 1/4 inches; the length, 2 1/2 inches; and the width, 1 3/4 inches. It is important to note that inside the box there was originally a thin partition, of which only traces now remain, dividing it into two equal parts. This contributes to our belief that the box was designed to hold the two vials of John of Salisbury.

The reliquary is made of silver, parcel gilt, and decorated with designs in niello. The designs are engraved on the silver and the incisions filled in with a black "enamel" or composition of silver, lead, copper, and sulphur. Benvenuto Cellini's treatise on the goldsmith's art may be consulted for an extended description of the technique of niello.

The front panel of the box shows the assassination of the saint. At the right are three knights, wearing hauberks of mail or scale armor; two of them carry swords. These knights are Reginald Fitzurse, William de Tracy, and Richard le Bret. The fourth knight, Hugh de Moreville, held the entrance to the transept of the cathedral during the murder, and for this reason is not represented with the others. One of the knights has just struck Saint Thomas on the head with his sword. The inscription reads, S. TOMAS. OCCIDIT (Saint Thomas dies). On the front of the cover, above this scene, an angel is represented holding a cross and bending over with hand raised in blessing as if to encourage Saint Thomas.

The burial of the saint is pictured on

The reliquary is exhibited in a floor case, Gallery 3, the Pierpont Morgan Wing.
the back of the box. Two monks support the body of the martyr. The principal inscription reads, **SANGUIS. E. S. TOM** (Blood from St. Thomas).

Above the monk at the right, and separated from the main inscription by the head of Saint Thomas, is a small letter E. This I take to be the initial letter of the name of Edward Grim, one of the witnesses, it will be remembered, of the saint’s martyrdom. If this is correct, the bearer supporting the head of Saint Thomas may thus be identified as Edward Grim.

Continuing the description, we may note on the cover, above the scene just described, an angel who carries in his arms the soul of the martyr figured as a nude child. On each short side of the box an angel is represented. The corresponding sides of the cover are decorated with balanced designs of leaves and flowers.

What was the nationality of the artist?

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RELIQUARY OF ST. THOMAS BECKET
SILVER WITH NIELLO DECORATION

The other bearer I wish to identify as John of Salisbury on the evidence of an inscription placed to the left of the figure and separate from the main lettering. The inscription, unfortunately somewhat injured, is composed of the letter I followed by a sign of contraction and a small letter T. This, I believe, is an abbreviation for *Iohannes Tesserarius*, or John (of Salisbury), Treasurer (of Exeter). It is reasonable to assume, since the artist has given prominence to the two clerics and taken pains to identify them, that the reliquary was made either for Edward Grim or for John of Salisbury. Since the reliquary appears to have been designed to contain the two vials which we know John of Salisbury possessed and later gave to Chartres, the probability is that the reliquary was made to his order, and when he was treasurer of Exeter, between 1174 and 1176.

Surviving examples of the orfèvrerie of the twelfth century are not plentiful at best, and the niello work of this period is extremely rare, so that a lack of material for comparison makes the question most difficult to answer. But the vigorous quality of the drawing, the fine sense of form and decoration which this reliquary exhibits, warrant at least a tentative assignment to the French school.

To those interested in the life of the martyred archbishop of Canterbury, this little reliquary will not fail to appeal through its historical and religious associations. But there are many who know nothing of Saint Thomas Becket, and to whom these associations are consequently meaningless. This is no hindrance, how-
ever, to the full enjoyment of the beauty of form and decoration which this reliquary to an unusual degree exhibits. The appreciation of so remarkable a masterpiece of decorative art does not depend on one's knowledge, or lack of knowledge, of mediaeval history; it is a matter of sensitivity to aesthetic values.

If we examine the reliquary from this point of view, our first delight, perhaps, will be in its simple and well-proportioned form. The pyramidal cover, with gently sloping lines, gives variety to the severe, rectangular mass of the box. Its shape, moreover, is admirably chosen for the effective display of the large ruby which crests the cover and receives this prominence not only because its glowing color offers a brilliant contrast to the black and silver of the niello, but also because it is an obvious symbol of the precious relic of Saint Thomas. The form of the reliquary is emphasized and its surfaces enriched by the narrow beading which outlines the different parts.

Niello decoration appears to good effect on such small objects as this coffer. Enamelled in black on silver, the designs are clearly seen, yet do not appear fixed and monotonous because of the “liveliness” due to the play of light. The artist to whom we owe the Becket reliquary shows himself a master of the technique of niello, using a firm line and bold contrasts, without fussiness or unnecessary elaborations.

As to the designs themselves, the figures and inscriptions are skilfully placed within the fields at the artist’s disposal, and the scale is well suited to the proportions of the box. The two cover designs with floral and foliage motives are particularly beautiful. The drawing of the figures is abstract, but informed with life. These simplifications of form and movement, while they represent a wide departure from the photographic accuracy so often mistaken by the ignorant for good drawing, have enabled the artist to tell the story of Saint Thomas with forcible directness. No time is wasted over unessentials. Three armored knights do to death a venerable bishop; two monks carry off the body; angels attend and receive the martyr’s soul. If for nothing else, this reliquary would be interesting as an example of economy of means in narration. But in addition to this quality of vivid illustration, the artist has achieved beauties of form and line quite independent of representation, which amply reward our inspection.

J. B.