A PARADE SHIELD OF CHARLES V

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Many works of art that have come down to us from the time of the emperor Charles V have made his features and exploits familiar to us. Perhaps the best known are the portraits by Titian, showing Charles at various ages. A copy of the standing portrait is among the pictures from Vienna soon to be exhibited at the Museum. A detail of the equestrian portrait is illustrated here. Ruler of a broader realm than Charlemagne’s, at the height of his power Charles controlled the fleet and army of Spain and the wealth of the Netherlands and the New World. With the opposition of France, of the German Protestants, and often that of the Pope, he carried on a persistent fight to hold together in his Holy Roman Empire the people of Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and Spain. And he employed the most skillful artists and workmen of these countries—painters, sculptors, medalists, engravers, and armorers—to record his success.

Titian’s famous equestrian portrait was painted to commemorate the battle of Mühlberg in 1547, Charles’s decisive victory over the Protestants, in which he took prisoner his major opponent, the Elector of Saxony. This was the emperor’s favorite portrait, and he took it with him to San Yuste when he abdicated. Charles not only wished Titian to perpetuate him as he was at the moment of victory, but he also had the portrait of his prisoner painted as well (see p. 129). Both men are shown in the armor they actually wore at the battle, and the elector with the cheek wound he received there. The two harnesses still exist—Charles kept the elector’s as a trophy—in the Royal Armory in Madrid. (The left toe cap of the emperor’s armor and part of his horse’s headpiece are in the Metropolitan Museum.) Charles’s harness was the last worn by him in the field.

Among the souvenirs of Charles’s victory at Mühlberg is a parade shield in this Museum, a very fine piece of its kind, embossed with a scene of the battle, after a design by Marten van Heemskerck. It belongs to a pompous and boastful type of armor, worn for display rather than use. At the time it was made, almost ten years after the battle it portrays, Charles was preparing to abdicate and retire to a monastery. He was an old man, tired, very pious, averse to pomp and elegance. But the trappings of imperial magnificence were still important for the state, since he was preparing the way for his succession, and good horses and riders and enriched armor like this shield did marvels to attract the admiration of the people.

The battle of Mühlberg as shown on our shield is not historically accurate as the portraits by Titian are. Van Heemskerck did not keep strictly to the facts of the event, and the armorer did not follow the design in detail. We know of the discrepancies from the account of Luis de Avila, a Spanish historian who was present at the battle. Avila relates that the emperor rode upon a dark dun Spanish horse and wore “white armour gilt, having no other apparel but a broad band of taffeta crimson, and a Dutch morion, a demilune like a javelin in his hand.” The elector “came upon a grisell horse, in a great shirt of mail and thereupon a pair of black curates,” and the Duke of Alva, “clad in white armour, with long white plumes floating from his helmet, upon a bay horse.”
Detail of Titian’s equestrian portrait of the emperor Charles V in the armor he wore at the battle of Mühlberg. Painted in 1548, the year after the battle. The portrait is in the Prado and the armor in the Royal Armory in Madrid. Charles was an excellent horseman. The Spaniards said that by his becoming emperor they had lost their best cavalry officer.
A parade shield that belonged to Charles V. Milanese, about 1555. The central scene represents the surrender of the Elector of Saxony to Charles at the battle of Mühlberg. The border which encloses it is made up of trophies of arms and armor, allegorical figures of the four seasons, and heads of Roman emperors wearing golden laurel wreaths. The decoration on the shield is embossed, gilded, and silvered, with details in delicate damascene work. Wt. 9 pounds

The elector did not approach the emperor on foot, as he is shown by Van Heemskerck and in our shield. “The Duke of Alba came upon his right hand and presented him unto his Majesty.” The elector wished to “alight on foot, taking off his glove to have touched the Emperor by the hand, . . . but the Emperor would neither the one nor the other.” The painting by Luca Giordano (p. 128) shows the scene in accordance with Avila. There are several other accounts of the event but none inconsistent with this.

Charles did not deal leniently with his prisoner but took full advantage of this opportunity for humbling an arrogant enemy. He had been twenty-one hours in the saddle and was exasperated by the insolence of princes who addressed him as “Charles of Ghent, self-styled
Emperor.” He warned his prisoner, “I will treat you as you deserve.” This harsh reception contrasts unpleasantly with the words the emperor’s biographers have ascribed to him—Veni, vidi, vici deus—and with his earlier relations to the Protestants and his attempts to act as peacemaker and end the theological discord that had wasted the resources of Germany for a generation.

There is a painting by Lucas Cranach that represents a stag drive given by the Elector of Saxony for Charles after the Diet of Spires, at which the emperor was present with the seven electors. Less than two years after this picture was finished these princes were fighting each other in mortal strife and the chief guest had vanquished his host. Cranach, the court painter of Saxony, was so devoted to the elector that he followed him voluntarily into his five years’ captivity.

In our shield the armor represented is not that actually worn by the participants in the battle. The emperor wears an armor in the Roman style, the lion-headed pauldron on his right shoulder being visible, and a crown surmounts his helmet, as in the case of the emperor’s helmet in the Maximilians-Museum in Augsburg. (The armorer apparently had seen the magnificent pageant suit of pseudo-Roman armor in the Royal Armory in Madrid which Bartolommeo Campi of Pesaro made for Guidobaldo II of Urbino, who presented it to Charles in 1546.) He is mounted on an armored horse on whose peytrel is a double-headed eagle in a shield surmounted by the imperial crown, with an eagle on either side.

The elector wears an armor not unlike that of the emperor. This was apparently a matter of expediency; for the armorer, in this particular rendering, could not effectively represent mail and black and white armor, the type of defenses which the elector had actually worn. The Heemskerck drawing shows the elector in complete armor with a coat of mail over plate armor, the metal pauldrons and the right tasset being visible. This indicates that the artist was improvising, for it is impractical to wear a shirt of mail over plate armor—it was worn under plate armor. Also, the elector did not wear leg defenses of plate; he wore leather boots. One of these today forms part of the emperor’s
trophy in the Royal Armory at Madrid. The other boot was kept by the Duke of Alva, who played a prominent part in the elector's capture. In our shield and in the drawing Alva is on Charles's left: on his right is his brother, Ferdinand I, King of the Romans, who was present at the surrender (not shown in Gior- dano's painting). He is identified by the insigne on the peytrel, an eagle in a shield surmounted by a crown and surrounded by the collar of the Golden Fleece.

The embossed and damascened work by the artists of Milan, Mantua, and Augsburg in the time of Charles V has never been equaled. Our shield, whose russet surface emphasizes a rich color contrast of embossed, gilded, and silvered surfaces, illustrates the art of modeling iron by means of hammering which attained great perfection in Italy, especially in Milan.\(^1\) Its workmanship—at least the embossing and chasing—is that of one of the master armorers who emulated the sculptors and goldsmiths of the period by creating pictures in a most difficult medium. The boldness with which the figures are embossed and chiseled is characteristic of the work of an armorer rather than that of a painstaking goldsmith.

The multitude of figures and ornaments,

\(^1\) Cast-iron replicas of our shield were made about 1860 by the Gräfliche Faktorei, Ilsenberg.
wrought from one piece of iron, were first bossed up from the back, with no details at all, just the basic contours. The embossing varies in depth from five hundredths of an inch to thirty hundredths, as in the case of the head of the emperor, thus emphasizing the most important person in the scene. Then came the chasing, which was done from the front. The work of the chaser is closely related to that of the sculptor, the ornament on the face of a casting as well as on embossed work being finished with chisels and chasing tools. Finally, the minute and intricate damascene work—the wire inlay of one metal upon another—was executed. Vasari in his work on technique notes that damascening on metal “partakes of the nature of both sculpture and painting.” It is likely that our delicate damascening was done by a specialist. Artists of the first order applied themselves to embossing, chasing, and damascening, in gold, silver, and steel. Benvenuto Cellini did damascening in his youth; he tells us so in his Autobiography, adding that the Lombards, the Tuscans, and the Romans practiced damascening at that time (1524).

Our shield is Italian in workmanship, the combination of bold embossing and arabesque damascening being typical of such work in Italy. The Milanese especially developed the inlay technique, which they got from the Moors. Paolo Morighia in his book La Nobilità di Milano, published in 1592, gives notes on the various leading Milanese armorers and damasceners. Among them are Gio. Pietro Figino, Bartholomeo Piatti, Francesco Pillizzone (called il Basso), Filippo Negroli (and two brothers), Gio. Antonio Biancardi, Bernardo Ciucio, the Piccininos (Antonio, Federico, and Lucio), Martino Chinello, and Antonio Romero. But of these only the work of the Negroli and the Piccininos has been identified, both being represented in this Museum. Because of the high quality of the workmanship of our shield it is more than likely that it originated in the workshop of one of these distinguished Milanese armorers; and it must be recalled that Milan was the unchallenged territory of the Spanish Hapsburgs.

The emperor had many remarkable shields. In the abstract of the inventory of the Royal Armory in Madrid, published in 1793, is an entry which reads: “37 shields or bucklers, ten of which were the Emperor Charles V’s property; two of them belonged to the suits which he wore; the others formed part of the armor which was brought from Yuste, and it is not known if his Imperial Majesty actually used them.” Charles had a special partiality for enriched arms and armor. Not only did he patronize the most skillful artists of Italy, Germany, and Spain, but other princes had such armor made for him. His taste was well known, and armor was conspicuous among the rich presents which great nobles presented to him.

Mantuan workmanship is also represented in armor that belonged to Charles. The shield in the Royal Armory at Madrid known as “the shield of the conquest of America” and “the shield of the conquest of Africa” is believed to have been commissioned by the Marquis of

Detail showing the Elector of Saxony. The harness worn by him is also parade armor, not the armor he actually wore at Mühlberg.
Mantua and presented to the emperor, whose conquest of Tunis had earned the gratitude and admiration of Europe, and more especially of the Italian cities and states that had suffered so grievously from the depredations of Barbarossa. It was probably designed by Giulio Romano, the great pupil of Raphaël. In 1530 Giulio, then in the service of the Marquis of Mantua, also designed the arches of triumph and costly decorations on the occasion of Charles V's passing through Mantua on his way to his coronation at Bologna. Artists not only made designs for several mediums but they were often skilled in several crafts. Giorgio Ghisi of Mantua, who made the magnificent embossed shield in the Waddesdon Bequest in the British Museum, was a well-known engraver of prints as well as a worker at inlaying and damascening metal.

Accompanying our shield is a cabasset, a type of headpiece which reproduces the contemporary bonnet in steel. It is of the same workmanship as the shield and of equal richness. The scenes illustrate two heroic stories: Marcus Curtius leaping into the abyss and Horatius defending the Sublician Bridge. An embossed cabasset of this kind appears in Rembrandt's portrait The Man with the Golden Helmet, which was shown here last year with the paintings from the Berlin Museums.

The drawing from which the scene on our shield was taken is one of twelve designs by Marten van Heemskerck representing the chief victories of the emperor Charles V. It is signed and dated 1554. Heemskerck's designs were engraved by Dirck Volkertsz. Coornhert and first published by Hieronymus Cock of Antwerp in 1556. A set of the engravings is in the Print Department of the Metropolitan Museum. As some of them are dated 1555, it is possible that they may have been intended for publication in October 1555, the time when Charles abdicated the sovereignty of the Netherlands.

Marten van Heemskerck was born in 1498
Titian's portrait of John Frederick, Elector of Saxony, in the armor he wore at the battle of Mühlberg. In the Prado. The armor is in the Royal Armory in Madrid.
at Heemskerck, near Haarlem. After studying with various painters in Haarlem and Delft he went to Italy in 1532, where he remained for several years. He was a man of a peculiarly nervous temperament, very penurious and very timid. When the shooting guilds held their festivals and marched through Haarlem, he would climb to the church tower in order, as his biographer alleges, to see the show without risk. Van Heemskerck was very active as a draughtsman and designer, making drawings of biblical, mythological, and historical scenes which others engraved and published. Over six hundred engraved subjects after drawings by him have been preserved. Van Heemskerck’s work in painting also includes a variety of subjects. The Metropolitan Museum owns his portrait of his father, Jacob Willemz van Veen, painted before he went to Italy in 1532. In Rome his time “was not spent in idleness,” says Van Mander, “nor in drinking with the Netherlanders, but in copying the works of Michael Angelo and the ancient masters.”

It was in Rome that his pencil seems first to have been employed in celebrating the achievements of Charles V. Van Heemskerck is said to have been in the papal capital in the spring of 1536, when the emperor was making his triumphal progress through Italy after the conquest of Tunis, and to have decorated the great arch erected in the Piazza di San Marco. The arch was adorned with ten pictures, representing the chief events of the African expedition, including the taking of Tunis.

Van Heemskerck’s designs for the chief victories of Charles V had wide circulation through the engravings published by Cock and were used on other objects besides our shield. A pageant shield in the Wallace Collection, signed by Geronimo Spacini of Milan, includes in its engraved ornament all twelve of the victories (see detail, p. 132). An illuminated volume of the victories, after these designs, was made by Giulio Clovio for Philip II. In the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna there is a series of eight reliefs carved in lime wood

Drawing by Marten van Heemskerck of the surrender of the Elector of Saxony. One of twelve drawings representing the chief victories of the emperor Charles V. In the British Museum
Engraving by Dirck Volkertsz. Coornhert after Heemskerck's drawing. The engraving shows the scene in reverse. The armorer who made our shield used the engraving but made many changes.

after Van Heemskerck (nos. 1, 3, 4, and 8 of the series are lacking). The relief after design number 10, the same scene that appears on our shield, is illustrated here.

One may naturally wonder how this shield, with its imperial associations, came into the possession of the Museum. It was acquired from the estate of Clarence H. Mackay. In 1930 Mr. Mackay purchased the shield, together with its cabasset, from Prince George Fugger of Augsburg. Here it is tempting to repeat the account of Charles’s loans from the Fuggers and to conclude that the shield was given by the emperor to the Fuggers in recognition of financial aid. But the shield had been in the possession of the Fugger family only since 1885, when Leopold Fürst Fugger acquired it, with the cabasset, from Eberhard Graf Waldburg-Wurzack of Württemberg. Here the link with the past is broken, except that the shield was traditionally a family treasure, and forebears of the Waldburg family were close to the Hapsburg rulers. Count Andreas von Sonnenberg, Truchsess von Waldburg, whose armor is in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, was a captain in the army of Emperor Maximilian I in 1490, and he engaged in a joust with Maximilian, an event which is recorded in “Freydal.”

Our shield could have been given to one of the following Waldburgs: Georg IV (1523-1556/57), Heinrich (1527-1562), or Wilhelm II, the Younger (1518-1566). The emperor summoned Georg to the Diets of Augsburg in 1550, 1554, and 1555. Heinrich, Truchsess von Waldburg, was early attached to the court of King Ferdinand I, Charles’s brother. He attended the Diet of Worms in 1545, commanded a regiment in the Schmalkalden War, and after the war, in 1548, accompanied Ferdinand’s son, Archduke Maximilian, to Spain. At the solemn funeral procession of Charles V, the emperor’s “mourning” horse was led by Heinrich, Erbtruchsess von Waldburg (Imperial Hereditary Steward). Before and after the funeral Ferdinand bestowed various properties on
Heinrich, and in August, 1559, Heinrich received from Frederick Count Palatine the expectancy of the Reichsertruchessensamts (Archstewardship of the Holy Roman Empire), which must be received anew on the election of a new emperor. Wilhelm II, brother of Cardinal Otto von Truchsess, was appointed ambassador to the court of Francis II of France by Ferdinand. Thus it is clear that several members of the Truchsess von Waldburg family were close to the Hapsburg rulers and that the shield and the cabasset could easily have come into the Waldburg family directly from the Hapsburgs.

In preparing this article the author consulted with profit the splendid volume by Sir William Sterling-Maxwell, The Chief Victories of the Emperor Charles the Fifth, designed by Martin Heemskerck in M.D.LV. and now illustrated with portraits, prints, and notes, London and Edinburgh, 1870.