

**Important Silver Mug**  
**Designed by artist Richard Redgrave, CB, RA (1804-1888)**  
**for Henry Cole's Summerly's Art Manufactures**  
**Chasing almost certainly by Aimé Chesneau**  
**with marks for Benjamin Preston, London, 1864**

**Height: 5 inches (12.7 cm); Weight 13.1 ounces (408 g)**



## Description:

This piece is one of two recorded surviving examples. The other, made a year later, is in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (VAM 371-1865). The notes accompanying the V&A's example state that theirs was ordered from London retailer Harry Emanuel. That mug, (which varies slightly in decoration from the example presented here) bears engraving on the foot which states that the mug was chased for Emanuel by the French Master sculptor, Aimé Chesnau. The V&A mug bears the sponsor's mark for Thomas Henry Francis and Frederick Francis and varies in design from the presented piece in that the angels have no halos, their hair is long, the children are in slightly different poses and the handle design is altered. Had the silversmith Benjamin Preston not retired in early 1865, it is possible that the V&A mug would bear the same sponsor's mark as the example presented here.



Redgrave Mug in the Victoria and Albert Museum (VAM 371-1865)

Both the V&A mug and the current example were created after an original design by artist Richard Redgrave first published in the Summerly's Art Manufactures catalogue (*Art Manufactures Collected by Felix Summerly*) in 1847. The design, one of the most referenced of its period, was inspired by an excerpt from the Ninety-First Psalm, "He shall defend you under his wings, and thou shalt be safe under his feathers," and consists of three angels with hands joined keeping watch over two children. A sketch of the design appears in the *Journal of Design and Manufactures*, vol. II p.135, of 1850 (below).

THE CHRISTENING CUP, designed by R. Redgrave, A.R.A.; manufactured by W. & D. Gass, Regent Street.

The personation of protecting power and the holy bond of union that forms the ornament around this cup has, in the first place, the charm of perfect propriety; and, secondly, produces a novel form, but rather too massive for metal treatment. Still we may hope that the idea it embodies and the feeling with which it has been carried out, will claim for it an extended approbation. We should suggest, however, that the palm-branches which form the handle be somewhat lengthened, and waved beneath their upper junction with the cup, so as to balance in profile the prominence produced by the opposite angel's head and figure; and also that the profile line of the cup be carried up a little, so that the lip become slightly higher and wider, giving more sweep to the form and affording a better rim to drink from. It is finished in various styles, parcel gilt, &c.



The first recorded realisation of Redgrave's design for this mug was a gilded version shown at the Great Exhibition of 1851. This example is illustrated on page 159 of the *Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue* which accompanied the 1851 Exhibition at Crystal Palace (below). The fate of this example is unknown.



CHRISTENING CUP, embellished with angels keeping watch over a kneeling child, designed by R. Redgrave, R.A., completes our illustrations of the contributions of Messrs. Gass; but we may hereafter find occasion to pay their stand another visit, as we observed among their pro-

Like the similar examples cited, what makes the current piece so compelling as an object is the confluence of influential tastemakers whose collaboration brought about its creation.

## The Patron: Henry Cole



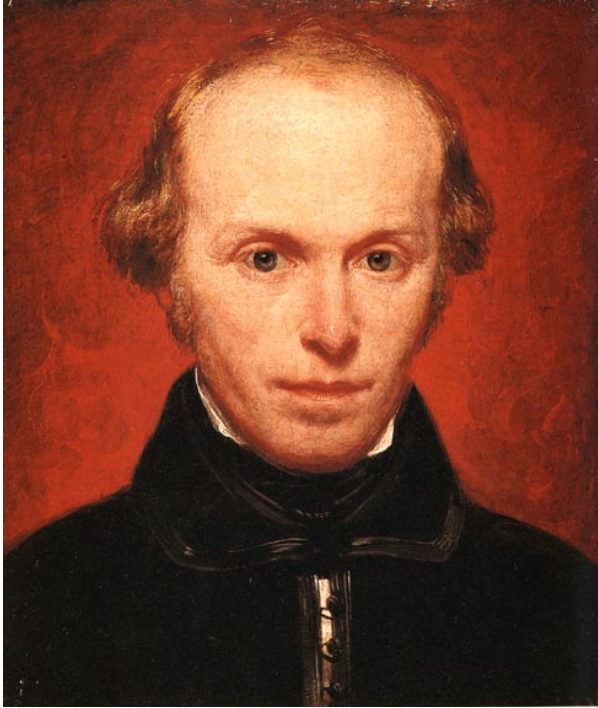
It was none other than Henry Cole, later to serve as the first Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, who commissioned a design for a mug from artist Richard Redgrave who was well known for his naturalistic yet sentimental style, a precursor of the Pre-Raphaelites. In 1840 Cole had been instrumental in developing the world's first adhesive postage stamp for use in a public postal system. **Three years later, he introduced the first commercial Christmas card.** But it was Cole's concern over the poor quality of books available to his own family which led him to adopt the pseudonym Felix Summerly and publish his own series of children's stories. Cole went on to establish the Felix Summerly Art Manufacturers, applying the same standards of quality to manufactured household goods as he had to children's books. Cole's aim with his new company was to offer the public everyday objects designed by the best artists and made by the best manufacturers at affordable prices. The design for the mug offered here was included in the first Summerly Art Manufactures Catalogue in 1847. (British Library General Reference: Mic.A 17301(13))

Cole's interest in raising the standards of industrial design did not end with his own commercial enterprises. Through his membership in the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, he lobbied government for support for his campaign to improve standards of manufactured goods. Prince Albert endorsed Cole's work, and in 1847 a Royal Charter was granted for the establishment of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce (RSA). Under the patronage of Prince Albert, Henry Cole organised a successful Exhibition of Art manufactures in 1847, with subsequent expanded exhibitions in 1848 and 1849.

While attending the XIth Quinquennial Paris Exhibition in 1849, Cole struck upon the idea of organising an exhibition that would welcome participants from around the globe. Realising the British exhibitions already planned could easily be adapted to a larger international format, Cole secured the support of Queen Victoria in establishing the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 to manage the enterprise under the Presidency of Prince Albert.

The Great exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations was held in the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, London, from 1<sup>st</sup> May to 15<sup>th</sup> October 1851 and was attended by over six million people. The £186,000 surplus generated by the Exhibition was used to establish a new cultural complex in South Kensington which later became the Victoria and Albert Museum.

## The Designer: Richard Redgrave CB, RA



The arrival of the Elgin Marbles at the British Museum sparked a fascination with Classical design, which permeated every aspect of British taste for the remainder of the nineteenth century. Among the thousands who were influenced by these great works was Richard Redgrave. As a young man, Redgrave made frequent sketching visits to the museum as well as to the countryside surrounding London where he discovered his love of nature and landscape. Redgrave first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1825, but it was not until 1837 that he came to the attention of a wider audience when he exhibited *Gulliver on the Farmer's Table* (part of a series Redgrave created to illustrate a contemporary edition of Swift's classic tale). *The Seamstress* of 1844, in which a girl is portrayed working late at night in a lowly bedsit, was his most popular painting. Redgrave became known for depicting scenes of contemporary social life, 'scenes of pathetic and sentimental subjects,' and was one

of the first artists to paint his subjects in contemporary clothing with hair flowing luxuriantly, anticipating the fallen women of the Pre-Raphaelites. Among his better-known paintings is *The Awakened Conscience* (below, right) featuring an angel very similar to those which adorn the mug presented here. In both works, the influence of the Elgin Marbles looms large.

In addition to his prolific work as an artist and illustrator, Richard Redgrave was instrumental in the organisation of the Government School of Design, where he served first as lecturer, then Head Master (1848) and finally Art Superintendent (1852), in which capacity he was largely responsible for organising the English system of art education. From 1856-1880 Redgrave served as Inspector General and Surveyor of the Royal Collections, during which he produced a 34-volume catalogue of the collection.



Richard Redgrave worked alongside Henry Cole in the establishment of the South Kensington Museum (later the Victoria and Albert). It was for Cole that Redgrave created a wide range of designs for household items which were produced by Cole's Summerly Art Manufactures. Redgrave's bold designs met with mixed success, mainly due to his inexperience with plastic materials. Nevertheless, Redgrave managed to produce some seminal examples of mid-nineteenth century design, many of which feature in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum (Henry Cole Wing!).

Redgrave was awarded the *Legion d'Honneur* by the French government in recognition of his service on the executive committee of the British section at the Paris Exhibition of 1855.

## The Chaser: Aimé Chesneau

Aimé Chesneau was born in Paris on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1822. He received his early training under the sculptors Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse (who employed Auguste Rodin as his assistant) and Jean Jules Bernard Salmson. Chesneau is first recorded arriving in England as a 'dessinateur' on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1846. Over the course of his many subsequent Channel crossings, he is variously described as 'artiste,' 'dessinateur,' and 'sculpteur.' He exhibited at the Royal Academy and the British Institution from 1863-1875. Although Chesneau appears in English census records (1851 and 1871) as living in London with his wife and children, his numerous return voyages across the Channel suggest he maintained close connections with artistic circles on the Continent.

During the mid-nineteenth century,

...the work of foreign designers in the employ of English firms began to assume the predominant position...at least as far as 'prestige' productions were concerned. Even before 1851 foreign designers and craftsmen had been much sought after, and many of the leading firms were even more anxious to secure their services after the superiority of foreign over English designs at the Great Exhibition had been stressed by so many critics. Thus Hunt and Roskell [...] continued to commission works from Antoine Vechte. [...] Hancocks, too, engaged a series of foreigners to produce designs, and [...] Harry Emanuel secured the services of A. Chesneau, a Frenchman who had originally come over to work for Elkingtons. (Patricia Wardle, *Victorian Silver and Silverplate*, p.100)

The elaborate international exhibitions which punctuated the decades following 1851 gave artists, designers, and manufacturers impetus to create ever more spectacular objects with which to impress the public. For the International Exhibition of 1862, sponsored by Henry Cole's Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures and Trade (and held on the site of what is now the Natural History Museum), London retailer Harry Emanuel displayed one of Chesneau's greatest achievements...

...A brown topaz, or cairngorm, of very large size, carved in the form of a cup of early date, and hollowed with great skill, [which] has here been mounted into a gold vase of the very highest pretensions as a work of art. It is made of pure gold, *repoussé* throughout, and partially enamelled...the novel design and execution are the work of Mr. Aimé Chesneau. (*The Official Illustrated Catalogue*, Class 33, 6622, p.24 and colour plate...see section on Harry Emanuel)

Aimé Chesneau's name grew to be associated with the finest quality objects produced in Victorian England. Like a nineteenth-century Philippe Starck, the name Chesneau was an automatic guarantee of quality characterised by great design and the finest workmanship. Contemporary reviews of his work compared it favourably to that of Cellini. An auction review in *The Times* of 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 1868, mentions

...A superb silver centrepiece, bearing six branches for lights, three for triple dishes, and a large centre dish, the base designed in figures, exquisitely modelled and chased by Chesneau; subject, "the Love letter;" and a pair of compoitiors to correspond, subjects "Courtship" and "Matrimony." These ornaments were also designed and chased by Chesneau. (*The Times*, Thursday, July 23, 1868; p. 10; Issue 26184; col F)

Aimé Chesneau's work was not limited to the extravagant tours de forces of the Great Exhibitions. In the latter part of the nineteenth century his designs found their way into modest homes when he

was commissioned by Copeland to produce moulds for Parian figures. Such dissemination of quality design was exactly what Henry Cole sought during his career.



“The Flower Girl” Copeland Figurine after Chesneau

### **The Sponsor: Harry Emanuel**

During the 1860s and early '70s, London could boast no more opulent an emporium for the finest in jewellery and objets d'art than the glittering establishment that bore Harry Emanuel's name. Emanuel inherited his family's substantial jewellery, diamond, and coloured stone business in 1855, when he was in his mid-twenties. He married Rosalie Coster, heiress to the Amsterdam-based Coster diamond cutting fortune (Coster's were responsible for re-cutting the Koh-i-Nor diamond for Queen Victoria and are still operating today), and, in 1860, using their combined wealth, proceeded to hire C. O. Parnell, architect of the Great Hall in Liverpool to design:

...one of [London's] most unique and commodious buildings for business (on the site of the Marquess of Downshire's house in Hanover Square). The frontage is about eighty feet in length [...] most elaborately ornamented with stucco facings and large windows[...] On the ground floor is the showroom [...] fifty feet in length, thirty in width, and nineteen in height. In the centre is a large stove, ornamental in its character, so as to resemble a gigantic flower vase, and which, in all this seasons of the year is filled with full blooming plants. All the cabinets are made of ebony[...] The ceiling is decorated after the most elaborate Elizabethan order, the cornices representing, in colours of green, crimson, and purple, emeralds, rubies and amethysts [...] On the first floor is a whole suite of elegant rooms [...] for a more extensive display of the costly trade in which Mr. Harry Emanuel is engaged. (*The Illustrated London News*, 17th November 1860 pp.455 illustration (below) and 472)

Harry Emanuel's Shop *Illustrated London News* 17 November 1860

Harry Emanuel made a point of hiring only the most skilled craftsmen and artisans, among them many foreigners, to produce the *divertissements* he offered his customers, a group which naturally included members of the royal houses of Europe as well as the Near and Far East. There is much documentary evidence of Harry Emanuel's business relationship with Aimé Chesneau, including one significant item dated 1862, wherein Emanuel is recorded as exhibiting a jewelled ivory figure of a slave girl two feet in height and a set of four silver dessert stands with infant figures representing the seasons, both designed by Chesneau.



Also on show in 1862 was the monumental cup (known as the Perseus and Andromeda Cup - *left*) hewn from a single enormous topaz mentioned earlier.

It was common practice for large businesses like Emanuel's to retail items from reputable specialist makers which would be embellished and finished in the retailer's own workshop. Such a piece was the Chesterfield Cup, presented at the Goodwood races of 1864 – the same year as the mug presented here - which was made by Benjamin Preston and retailed by Harry Emanuel. In the same manner both of the angel mugs from Redgrave's design were made by a specialist maker, chased by another artisan (in this case Aimé Chesneau), and retailed by yet another entity. The Chesterfield Cup provides documentary evidence of the business relationship between Harry Emanuel and Benjamin Preston just prior to Preston's retirement in 1865.

In 1865 Harry Emanuel published *Diamonds and Precious Stones: Their History, Value, and Distinguishing Characteristics*, a benchmark work that was requisite reading in the industry for a century.

Harry Emanuel retired from his business in 1873 and moved to Paris, where he was created Baron d' Almeda, a title with origins in Portugal. On the 16<sup>th</sup> October 1880, Emanuel was appointed the Minister Plenipotentiary of the Dominican Republic in France, a post he maintained at his own expense. He died at the Hotel de la Paix in Nice in January 1898 and was buried with all the military honours due to a representative of a foreign state who dies in office.

## The Maker: Benjamin Preston

Born in 1796, the son of the weigher at London's Assay Office, Benjamin Preston was apprenticed in 1810 to Rebecca Emes and Edward Barnard (later Barnard Brothers), one of the largest and most commercially successful silver manufacturers in England. Preston gained his freedom in 1817. By 1826, he was established as an independent silversmith and is recorded supplying pieces to order to leading London retailer Kensington Lewis from his home and workshop at 41 Coppice Row in Clerkenwell, where he remained until his retirement to Surrey in 1865. Just prior, Preston filled the order from Harry Emanuel for the Chesterfield Gold Cup. Comprising an equestrian group, the subject of which was taken from Spencer's *Faeire Queen*, the cup was made from models by sculptor H.H. Armstead. Had Preston not ceased work in early 1865, he would probably have made the second example of the current christening mug.



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**Additional photos of the mug (below)**

