

The Museum of National Antiquities.

(Statens Historiska Museum.)

In 1630 King Gustavus Adolphus appointed an official, called r i k s a n t i k v a r i e (antiquarius regni), to take charge of the preservation of ancient monuments, runic inscriptions, folk-lore-traditions, treasure-trove and similar matters in Sweden. This was the first official appointment known anywhere to further the aims of antiquarian research. This office has continued without a break until the present day, and gradually the duties have also comprised the collecting of prehistoric and medieval objects of scientific interest. These collections form the Museum of National Antiquities, which was opened to the public in 1847; since 1943 the collections have been exhibited in the present buildings, specially erected for this purpose. The Director General (riksantikvarien) is not only the head of the museum but also of the Central Office for the preservation of ancient monuments in the kingdom - church restorations, excavations, etc. The institution is divided into eleven departments with a staff of more than one hundred, not counting the many provincial officials attached to the organisation.

The Museum of National Antiquities comprises four departments: one for the Stone and Bronze Age, one for the Iron Age, one for the Middle Ages (including ecclesiastical art of later times), and one for Coins and Medals.

Her Majesty will only visit two of these departments.

We start by showing the finds from Vendel with helmets, shields and swords of the same type as those found in the famous ship-burial at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk (not far from Ipswich). The equipment indicates that the Sutton Hoo chieftain must have had close connections with Swedish chief-

tains, and was perhaps even of Swedish origin.

Then will be shown one of the Swedish hoards of Anglo-Saxon coins. Such finds are very common from the Viking Age (A.D. 800-1050), and they prove that the Anglo-Saxon civilisation played a part that was equally important for the Swedish culture in this early period as for the Danish and Norwegian.

We shall also have an opportunity of looking at the unique golden neck-collars and other gold treasures from the Migration period, Swedish masterpieces of goldsmith's work, crowded with almost microscopic human and animal figures in gold filigree and handling an exquisite Viking sword with an elaborate silver hilt of South English type.

We mount the stairs to the Medieval department. In the Romanesque Hall we pass the front of the Hemse stave church with its ornamental carvings, which still carry on the tradition linking the art of prehistoric pagan times with that of the Christian Middle Ages. We notice the 14th century paintings from the stave church of Björsäter with a picture frieze illustrating the legend of St. Thomas Becket; they form the most comprehensive cycle known of wall-paintings with this subject and show some iconographical details otherwise unknown.

In the next gallery the 12th century Viklau madonna with its extraordinarily well-preserved original colours bears witness to the relations of the Scandinavian Church with French cultural centers. The English connections, on the other hand, are manifest in the remarkable tomb-monument in the shape of a church, commemorating Björn, brother of St. Botvid, the martyr who had been converted and baptized in England about 1100. Connections even with 13th century England are evident in the bishop's statue from Visnum-Kil, a noble and refined wooden sculpture, which has no counterpart in England today owing to the destruction of holy images following in the wake of the Reformation.

In the Goldsmiths' Gallery, which comes next, we draw particular attention to the precious reliquary, part-

ly from the 10th century and partly from 13th. This was taken as booty by the Swedes when they stormed the fortress of Marienberg near Würzburg in 1631. The crown, from the mid-13th century, has recently been identified by a German scholar as a gift from the Emperor Frederick II and as a crown for a Royal Lady; this identification however has been disputed by Swedish experts. - We also wish to point out the splendid collection of processional crucifixes of French enamel work from Limoges.

Passing through the 14th century Gallery we notice the impressive statue of the martyr saint King Olaf of Norway. This statue reminds us of the French artists, summoned to Sweden to build the Cathedral of Upsala.

In the lofty Gothic Hall, suggesting the space and colourful fittings of the Gothic cathedrals, we stop in front of the imposing wooden statue of St. Thomas Becket executed in the Stockholm workshop of the Lübeck master Bernt Notke at the end of the 15th century. The cult of St. Thomas Becket was thus living in Sweden all through the Middle Ages. - In Canterbury Cathedral there is a copy of this statue, a gift to the English Church from the Swedish Church. The small altar-piece from Salem close by is entirely devoted to Swedish saints: St. Eric, the Swedish patron saint from the 12th century, St. Bridget of Vadstena, who died in Rome in 1373 after having founded a holy order, which still survives in England, and St. Botvid, who was baptized in England, and the English born Bishop Henrik, who went from Sweden to Finland and became the patron saint of that country.

On our way from the Gothic Hall we pass through the Textile Gallery with its treasures of Medieval liturgical vestments and finally reach the Baroque Hall.

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The visit will be guided by the Director General Bengt Thordeman, Ph.D., Hon. F.S.A., Hon. F.S.A. Scot.,

and the Keepers of the Iron Age department Wilhelm Holmqvist, Ph.D., of the Medieval department Monica Rydbeck, Ph.D., and of the Royal Coin Cabinet Nils Ludvig Rasmussen, Ph.L.

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