Le Lievre, Jacques, Fl. 1495-1550

M 147

Poème sur la Passion de M. S. J. C. (in French verse.)

Manuscript on vellum, written and illuminated in France (Rouen), in the first half of the 16th century, ca. 1530.

Decoration: The text of the poem is preceded by three illuminated leaves which relate the MS. to François I, king of France, and to his mother, Louise of Savoy. Fol. 1 has a full-page illumination of the arms of France, supported by two stags. The shield is repainted, indicating that the person for whom the book was originally intended (Louise of Savoy) was not the king. Fol. 2, (full length,) depicts the king accepting the book from the author. He stands full length before the entrance to his palace, which occupies the entire background, and is flanked on either side by groups of courtiers. In the foreground are allegorical representations of the 7 Planets; they are (left to right): (1) The Moon, (2) Mars, (3) The Sun, (4) Mercury, (5) Jupiter (with arrow, a man with cup kneeling before him), (6) Venus (with arrow, led by Cupid with bow and arrow), (7) Saturn (with naked child he eats about his neck). This probably depicts the dream of the author, invoking the aid of the Planets. Below the picture are 2 lines (in 2 columns) of the text of the Introduction, dedicated to the king.

Fol. 5 is probably out of order, having doubtless followed the first leaf in the original arrangement. It is headed by a half-page miniature representing Louise of Savoy presenting a figure personifying Poetry (?) to François I. He is mounted upon a horse, whose blanket carries his motto and emblems. Victory and three of her attendants in the form of angels hover over him. The text below this picture is in another hand. It consists of an address of Louise of Savoy to her son, Francis I, and, in the right column, a Latin panegyric. The trimmed sides of this leaf probably contained further indications connecting the MS. with Louise of Savoy. ("Bien qu'il y ait en tête une sorte de dédicace à François Ier, je crois que ce beau manuscrit a été fait pour Louise de Savoie". - Delisle, Histoire générale de Paris, p. 184.)
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Following these three illuminations there are 20 leaves containing 40 miniatures surrounding a square placard of text, which illustrate a pilgrimage through a forest, during which the travellers see visions of the Passion. The scenes on the rectos of the leaves are: fol. 6, The author, Jacques Le Lièvre; 7, The travellers pray to the Virgin; 8, Entry into Jerusalem; 9, Last Supper; 10, Agony in the Garden; 11, The Betrayal; 12, Christ before the high priest; 13, Denial of Peter; 14, The high priest rends his clothes; 15, Christ before Pilate; 16, The Flagellation; 17, The Scourging; 18, Ecce Homo; 19, Pilate washes his hands; 19v, The Virgin intercedes with God the Father; 21, Judas hanging; 22, The Way of the Cross; 23, The Crucifixion; 24, The Pietà; 25, The Entombment; 26, The Resurrection. The illuminations are by an artist of the Rouen school.

Text: The author introduces his poem on fol. 6, with 13 verses whose initial letters, when read downward, spell his name. The script is a beautiful, even Gothic book-hand. Gold initials on rose or blue fields.

26 leaves of vellum (interleaved with paper) (11 1/4 x 15 3/4 inches) 15-46 lines. Folio.

Binding: French, 17th century red levant morocco, tooled in gold, probably by Du Seuil. In the centre the arms of France. The outer borders and back are filled with fleurs-de-lis. Two silver clasps. In box case.

History: The author, Jacques Le Lièvre, seigneur de Bremetot, du Bosc-Bénard, was a Rouen poet and patron of the arts, "conseiller-échevin de la ville de Rouen et notaire du roi" known to have employed the miniaturist Jean Perréal. The present work "Poème sur la Passion," was probably composed by him for Louise de Savoie, shortly before her death in 1531. The arms which were originally painted on fol. 1 were probably those of Louise de Savoie, who was a discriminating book collector. On her death it passed into the possession of her son, King Francis I. Later belonged
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to Joseph Barrois (vol. II, no. oxxiv); bought in 1849 by Lord Ashburnham; his sale (London, 1901, no. 4567).

(For description of pictures see folder for MS. 147)

Add. Codex

MSS. - Illum. - French - XVI cent.

Jesus Christ - Duchesse d'Angoulême.
Louise de Savoie, 1476-1531. - Portraits.
Francis I, king of France, 1494-1547 - Portraits.
Provenance - Louise de Savoie, queen of France, 1476-1531.

Barbès, Joseph Jean Baptiste, 1780-1855.
Louise de Savoie, 1476-1531. - Duchesse d'Angoulême.
Address to her son, Francis I.

(red) Allegories
Judases - hanging from a tree

(binding) - French - XVII cent.

(blue) Poetry - French - XVI cent.
Portraits - Louise de Savoie, queen of France.

Mottoes - (Francis I or the motto) -
Armes - Francis I, king of France.

History card: Jacques Le Lieur, seigneur de Bremerot, du Boss-Bénard, bourgeois de Rouen, poet and orator, fl. 1495-1555

MPH: 1933

MSS. Illum. Planets

Le Seigneur Jacques

Le Seigneur Jacques

blue - Planets
For printed text or notices of this MS. see:
