

## Alfred Klemm, Connoisseur and Collector of Books and Fine Arts

It was on the occasion of my ‘Habilitation’, 1988 in Darmstadt, that Alfred Klemm gave me (P.A.B.) a small inconspicuous book entitled ‘Bashō, Auf schmalen Pfaden durchs Hinterland, Handbibliothek Dieterich’ [1]. ‘Have a look at this,’ he said, ‘it’s a new translation, just published by a publisher with whom I am connected’. I was (to put it mildly) fairly clueless what it was, but I read it. The book is now part of my (now a little more substantial) collection of translations from the Japanese classics, which has become since one of my great addictions in the arts. Indeed, Alfred Klemm was to his students an inspiration not only in the ‘hard’ sciences, but also in more lighthearted (but not less serious) activities, in this particular case certainly with the help of his wife, like him also a member of an illustrious family of publishers, and a longtime admirer of Japanese art.

However, Alfred Klemm deepest artistic love probably belongs to painting, in particular French painting of the 17th century, which he studied deeply and of which he owns a rare specimen that he identified [2], see Figure 1. Even Le Louvre was interested, and the painting has been on display on several occasions. He has published on other artists from this period (e. g. on Nicolas



Fig. 1. Charles Mellin's 'Divine Love and Faith' (private photo).

Poussin [3]) and also in the famous 'Burlington Magazine'. He is probably as proud of these contributions as he is of his best scientific work.

Alfred Klemm is not only a lover and scholar of the arts, but also a discoverer. One of us (P.C.V.) well remembers going in the 70ies to several of the numerous construction sites in Mainz to look out for archeological artefacts, from Roman coins to remnants of baroque tiled stoves and 18th century pottery. I recall quite well when he showed me the shards he had taken from Eisgrubweg. When they cut the street down to the future parking garage, it was like a history lesson: The area had been a garbage dump, 19th century on top, and Roman on the bottom. During my time in Mainz they were cutting through the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. There were layers of snail shells from the French and layers of clay pipes from the Swedes, etc. My son and I



Fig. 2 (colour online). Finds from Eisgrubweg (photo by P. C. Vogel).

would go on Saturday or Sunday afternoon and ‘dig’. I still have the small mason’s trowel that we used somewhere in the basement. Before I returned to the States, Alfred and I put all our shards together and divided things up so that there were a few nearly complete objects. Figure 2 shows a photo of several of those hanging on my office wall. The whole thing was great fun.

Alfred Klemm is an eclectic collector of all kind of things, among which not least Roman coins, of which he owns a large number. P.A.B. well remembers going, a long time ago, with a colleague (Wolfgang Dietz) to an antiquarian in Frankfurt to try to find such a coin as a birthday present from the group. We had no idea and our means were limited. I do not remember what we finally got, and up to this day, I do not know whether it was of any value or added anything to the collection. But we tried hard and still hope that we did not fail entirely to live up to his expectations.

A 100th birthday is a rare event indeed, it should be celebrated accordingly. Yet Alfred Klemm is not known as a friend of pompous ceremonies. Let

Sora’s [4] terse but intense words, when crossing another famous barrier,

*Unohana-wo  
kazashi-ni seki-no  
haregi kana*

Passing the barrier of Shirakawa

*Springs of verbena  
Thrust in my cap – such will be  
my fancy attire*

Beim Überschreiten der Grenzschanke von Shirakawa

*Deutzienblüten  
als Kopfschmuck – Gibt es denn hier  
etwas Feierlicheres...?*

reflect our feelings on this auspicious day.

Ph. Christian Vogel  
Philippe A. Bopp

- [1] Bashô Matsuo (1643(4)–1694), *Oku no hosomichi*, aus dem Japanischen übertragen sowie mit einer Einführung versehen von G. S. Dombrady, Dieterich’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Mainz 1985.
- [2] Mellin’s ‘Divine Love and Faith’ by Alfred Klemm, *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. CXIX, No. 891, 441 (1977).

- [3] Poussin’s ‘Holy Family on the Steps’ by Alfred Klemm, *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. CXXVI, No. 970, 40 (1984).
- [4] Kawai Sora, a companion of Bashô on his trip to the north-east, cited by Bashô, German transl. by G. S. Dombrady, cf. n. [1] p. 93, Engl. transl. by Donald Keene.