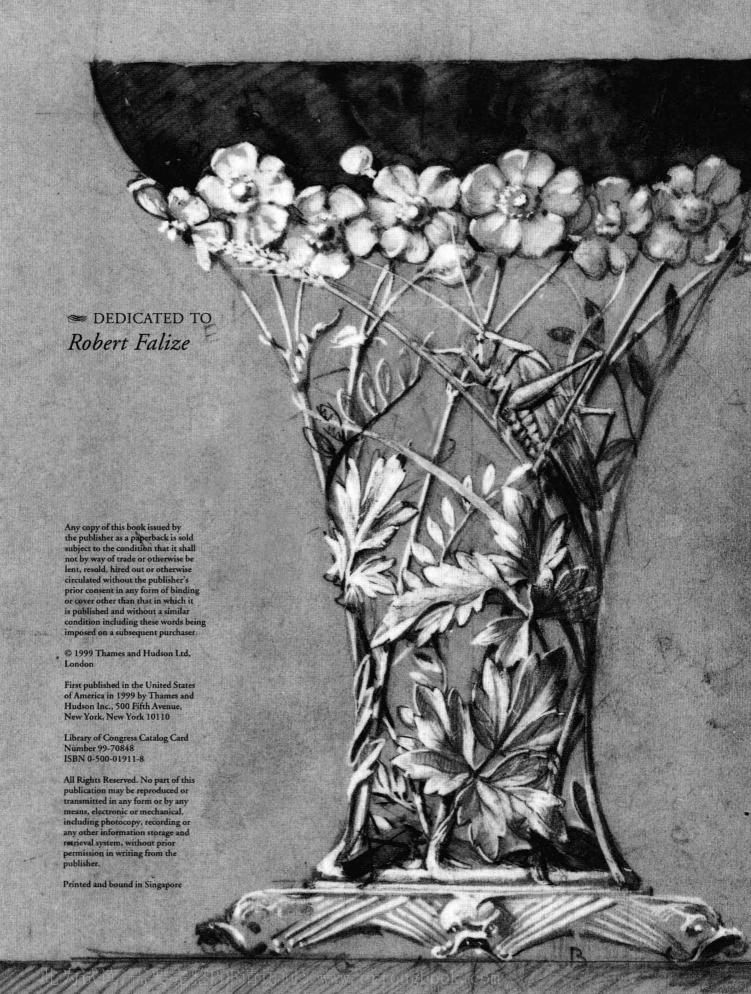


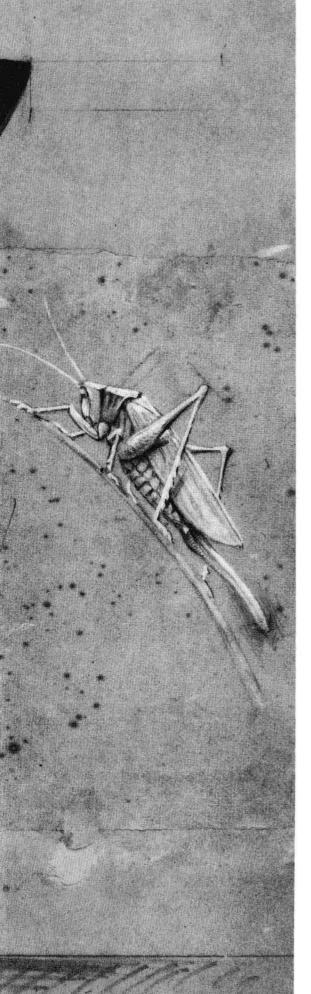


Katherine Purcell



Thames and Hudson





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≈ FOREWORD by ROBERT FALIZE

I have long believed that Katherine Purcell, with her combined English and French background, reflected the finest qualities of the two nations. Unfortunately, I was to discover that her considerable charm masked the stony resolution which has characterized the history of the British nation; and like so many of my more distinguished predecessors I too fell a victim to it. Miss Purcell insisted that I was qualified to write a few lines as the foreword to the book now in your hands. I pleaded that her choice was absurd since my inexperience of writing is combined with the handicaps of a nonagenarian. Nothing I could do would dissuade her; indeed, my protestations seemed to bolster her pitiless determination to bring my pen to paper.

Miss Purcell graciously maintains that I may have contributed to some extent in her researches. Perhaps I have provided a refreshing interlude in her work by drawing her away from the aridity of the museum collection and the reference library into a more domestic situation. Our own family is one in which the members are steeped in admiration and respect for their predecessors and she has shared in this.

Katherine Purcell's own sensitivity and family loyalties have enabled her to blend with remarkable ease into our own and this has been a great joy to us all. Seeing her in our house surrounded by the documents I had gathered together, speedily taking notes in that illegible hand which reveals true scholarship, my wife and I were pleased to imagine ourselves surrounded by the attentive and silent shadows of my ancestors.

My great-grandfather Alexis Falize with his black silk calotte, my grandfather Lucien Falize, my uncles André and Pierre, and of course my father would have been captivated by Katherine Purcell for her enthusiasm, her diligence, her remarkable knowledge and her tenacity in the face of whatever obstacles might be encountered. It is significant that she has chosen my family's work to love and illuminate when there were so many directions in which she might have chosen to go.

There is one aspect of the family business which is important since it illustrates a generosity of spirit rarely shown in such circumstances: namely, to give credit where credit is due. It therefore comes as no surprise to discover at the end of Lucien's description of his work a list of his principal craftsmen, which can only be interpreted as a token of respect and appreciation. I too was brought up to believe that those craftsmen who survived into my lifetime were both laudable and worthy of the greatest possible courtesy.

I was still very young when I first accompanied my father to the premises in the rue d'Antin. Many years have since elapsed, but the memory of that visit is absolutely vivid still. I was welcomed on the threshold by my uncle André with the consideration and affectionate gravity due to the heir to the firm, the heir I was, alas, never to be. I was taken straight to the inner sanctum – that is to say, the workshop – and my heart was racing. My father introduced me to the craftsmen at the bench, and according to family tradition strictly adhered to by my father, the employees were formally addressed on all occasions. I was therefore introduced to Monsieur Lancosme, Monsieur Tripier, Monsieur Bouchon, Madame Boyvin, indeed to all those whom Miss Purcell will surely refer to and who may be glimpsed in an old photograph precisely where and how I saw them. There you will see Monsieur Pye, perhaps the most remarkable of all the firm's craftsmen, whose skilful work is evident on the gold hanap in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs. Characteristically, my grandfather, who had created and designed this object, insisted that Pye should be represented next to him on the piece itself. I find it most moving to think that their enamelled portraits will remain together as long as the hanap survives. To my knowledge, this kind of tribute to a colleague's skill is unique.

Later, much later, I would often sit in the workshop of another remarkable chaser, Victor Seguin, which was situated in Place Dauphine in Paris. Having no wish to interrupt him, I would pull up a stool to the bench, and we would talk together there. The walls were covered with large signed and framed photographs which the Falize firm would present to him in gratitude whenever a piece he had chased was completed. There were none from other firms, despite the fact that Victor Seguin also worked for some of the most prestigious jewelers in Paris.

I hope that this book, devoted to five members of the same family, will also provide the acknowledgment due to all the firm's gifted craftsmen, who include the chasers, engravers and enamellers. None is more qualified to undertake this task than Miss Purcell, who, with her perfect knowledge of the subject, her taste and her talent, can successfully call attention to these little-known artists who, without hope of prizes or distinction, generously collaborated with the Falize family. With their meticulous craftsmanship they immeasurably enriched the numerous jewels and works of art which came from the Falize workshops.

Now I must finish and leave you with the text and illustrations which Miss Purcell has brought together for your enjoyment.

This book began when I wrote in November 1988 to the Mayor of Moretsur-Loing, a small village near Fontainebleau. I asked if he would let me know the names inscribed on the Falize tomb and tell me whether the grave was maintained. My request was not based on idle curiosity. I was anxious to verify the biographical information, frequently conflicting, concerning this family of jewelers whose work I admired.

The Mayor's reply was helpful: the grave was well cared for and if I wanted more information, I could obtain it from Robert Falize, the son of Jean and the grandson of Lucien.

Initially Monsieur Falize was surprised that anyone should be interested in his family history and delighted to know of the considerable number of works in private collections and museums throughout the world. He and his wife invited me to their home and put the family archives at my disposal. There was a wealth of material, including unique photographs of members of the family, of the firm's premises in Paris and of work by Falize; diaries, journals and letters; and, perhaps most valuable of all, watercolour designs by Alexis Falize. A contemporary had written of these: "A. Falize, whose drawing skills were truly remarkable, was in addition a tireless worker. It would be fascinating to attempt the publication of his many designs if one could reproduce watercolours as exquisitely carried out as his own, in which metal, enamel and gemstones are depicted with rare felicity."

Alexis Falize had a remarkable talent for designing jewelry in watercolour. These designs are works of art in their own right. Perhaps the most fascinating album of designs was one which Alexis dated 1838 to 1846. If the dating is correct, it means that Alexis was working on archaeological and Egyptian motifs at least fifteen years before the Campana collection was exhibited at the Louvre and thirteen years before work had begun on the excavation of the Suez Canal.

Much of the biographical information that has previously been available was contained in Henri Vever's invaluable work, *La Bijouterie française au XIXe siècle*. This also included illustrations of a number of designs and jewels

by Falize which helped in the attribution of jewelry to the firm. However, many pieces which are unsigned remain to this day unidentified.

The dating of jewelry illustrated by Vever should be treated with caution. Many of the cloisonné enamelled jewels are dated to 1876, because they were displayed at the Union Centrale exhibition in that year; however, most were included in an earlier exhibition held at the Union Centrale, in 1869. The dates given by Vever may be safely assumed to be 'end-dates', since in my researches I have not found any completed jewels made *after* the date Vever attributes to them.

Henri Vever's work is a unique document for many reasons. It is based on interviews with the jewelers themselves or their descendants. It names craftsmen and collaborators working for many nineteenth-century firms and describes their movements from one firm to another. It sets the political and economic background of the period, and demonstrates how changes in fashion were reflected in jewelry. The troubled times of revolution and war are recounted and their repercussions on luxury trades discussed. These details enable the reader to understand the social context of the period, and to appreciate the tenacity it took to survive, in the case of Falize, the Revolution of 1848, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, and the siege of Paris and the outbreak of civil war in the following year.

Another valuable source of information are the nineteenth-century periodicals which offer critical surveys of exhibition and salon displays, and often include illustrations of Falize's work. These are helpful in showing contemporary opinion of Falize pieces in comparison with those of their contemporaries. International exhibitions were, of course, new to the second half of the nineteenth century, and provided not only an opportunity to show a firm's creations, but an occasion to view the work of its contemporaries at home and abroad. Loan exhibitions, of Oriental art for example, were important in making exotic sources known to a wider public.

Lucien Falize was a respected author of a number of critical essays and exhibition reports. These offer a fascinating insight into the man himself, as well as his work and the opinions on both his colleagues and on contemporary trends in the arts. Lucien Falize was regarded as an authority on a number of specialist subjects and his written work, which is still frequently quoted, forms a substantial chapter in this book. Another chapter is devoted to the people with whom Lucien worked and whom he held in high esteem.

I have drawn heavily on the family archives, to supplement the research which I have carried out in libraries and museums, and among dealers and collectors in England, France and elsewhere. Many of the illustrations in the book came from these archives and have never been published before. They demonstrate the achievements of these master jewelers and goldsmiths more eloquently than any words of mine.

Finally, I wish to express my sincere thanks and lasting gratitude to Robert Falize for his generosity and encouragement; and for the patience and courtesy he, his wife and his family have shown in answering my many questions. It is to Robert Falize that I wish to dedicate this book, since without his help it could not have been written.

FAMILY BIOGRAPHIES

1. Alexis Falize





1. Photograph of a miniature of Jean-Godefroy Mignon Falize, possibly by Piet.

- 2. Framed miniature of Catherine Libert, Alexis's mother, possibly by Piet.
- 3. Alexis Falize, aged c. 53. From L. Falize, L'Ami. Souvenirs, Confessions et Pensées (Devenir meilleur), 1864.

Alexis Guillaume Joseph Mignon Falize,¹ the founder of the family firm, was born in Liège on 23 September 1811. His father Jean-Godefroy (1784-1822), who had been orphaned in his early youth, had left the small town of Huy² in Belgium where he was born,³ and established himself as a shoemaker in the neighbouring city of Liège. He had two brothers, François,⁴ a carpenter who remained in Huy, and Joseph.

In 1811, Jean-Godefroy married Catherine Libert (1786-1864). She had been brought up in an intensely religious and authoritarian household governed by her father Simon, and was the sixth of twelve children. Her first-born was Alexis; four more children followed: Eugénie, born in 1813, who died from an injury to her foot at the age of twelve; Augustine, who was born in 1815; Guillaume, in 1817; and the last, Hyacinthe, in 1820.

As Jean-Godefroy's shoemaking business prospered, he soon counted Liège's nobility among his clientele. During the summer months he followed his customers to Spa, a fashionable resort where people took the waters, visited the casino and attended the theatre. It was there that Jean-Godefroy met his most distinguished customer; as Alexis recalled, "I saw the Emperor of Russia Alexander I, and several other monarchs who stayed at the Hôtel de Bellevue. My father worked for them and they were so pleased with him that he kept this distinguished clientele for several years. He was allowed to call himself their official supplier and to place their gold warrants over the door." Jean-Godefroy's success enabled the family to move from the rue St Ursule, near the Palace, to a larger building in a busier part of Liège, on the corner of rue du Pont de l'Isle and rue Lusay.

Alexis, self-confessed "stubborn and temperamental",⁶ was a difficult and turbulent boy, forever committing naughty pranks. In order to concentrate his mind on more creative activities, Jean-Godefroy decided that his son should learn to draw; he placed him under the talented M. Piet,⁷ who discovered in Alexis a natural aptitude for draughtsmanship.

The boy's carefree activities were soon to end; his uncle Joseph was struck

BIOGRAPHY ALEXIS FALIZE







4. Guillaume Falize, aged c. 44. From L. Falize, Lettres 1859 à 1862 ou Suite à mon premier voyage.

5. Hyacinthe Falize in the garden of his house at Moret-sur-Loing.

by mental illness and died in 1822. Jean-Godefroy was so affected by this loss that he fell ill and never recovered, dying soon afterwards, on 23 November of the same year. Two months later, his wife gave birth to a child, who only survived for a matter of days. Widowed at the age of thirty-six, and with her financial circumstances severely reduced, Catherine was faced with educating her four children single-handed. She was therefore naturally grateful to Jean-Pierre Favard, Jean-Godefroy's uncle by marriage, when he offered to take care of the schooling of her eldest son, Alexis.

Jean-Godefroy's aunt, Marie Mignon-Falize, lived in Paris, where she worked as a music teacher and organist in a nuns' convent. She had married Jean-Pierre Favard, who ran a bookshop in the Cloître St Honoré, and given birth to a son, also called Jean-Pierre. Favard eventually sold his bookshop and opened a school, the Ecole des Amandiers; this was so successful that he was able to buy a much larger building, the imposing Hôtel de Mayenne et d'Ormesson. Situated at 21, rue St Antoine, this splendid edifice was constructed as early as 1053, although it was radically altered in 1613 and again by Favard. Pupils attending the famous Collège Charlemagne were able to lodge at the Hôtel de Mayenne, and over the door one read 'Favard, Institution de l'Université Royale' in gold lettering. Alexis remained there for the next five years.

Leaving his mother so soon after his father's death was bound to be profoundly distressing for the young boy of twelve, who did not return to Liège for eleven years. The journey to Paris took two and a half days, and the unfamiliar environment in which he found himself increased his melancholy.

Jean-Pierre Favard had retired to Conflancs outside Paris. His son, who had assumed the running of the establishment,⁸ knew that Alexis had taken drawing lessons in Liège and arranged for him to take similar classes, confident that this would distract the boy. These were a source of great pleasure for Alexis, who developed his skills by copying maps from an atlas and taking calligraphy lessons.

By the end of his first academic year, Alexis had won a prize for Latin and distinguished himself in drawing and geography. His success partly compensated for the loneliness he experienced at the Pension. He spent his entire winter and summer holidays there, with only occasional outings to visit his great-uncle in Conflancs, a journey necessitating a 30-kilometre walk there and back in one day. Throughout these years, Alexis made only a handful of friends, possibly because of his different social background and of the special circumstances which made it possible for him to attend the College.

Although he excelled in drawing and Latin, he was told by his cousin Favard in 1827 that he must abandon these subjects to concentrate on French, bookkeeping, mathematics and geography, in order to be ready to leave the following year and begin to work. Alexis was nevertheless determined to devote time to drawing, carrying out intricate copies of engravings.⁹

Alexis left the Pension in 1828; during the five years he had spent there, his mother had been able to visit him only once. The only other family member he had seen was his uncle François, who brought his son Arsène to Paris to place him as an apprentice to a manufacturing jeweler named

Yong with premises in the rue St Honoré. Alexis records Arsène's partiality for this work but he was not fond of his cousin and they do not appear to have made contact during this period.

An ex-pupil of the Collège, who was a wholesale paper seller in the rue de Buci, was approached by Favard concerning Alexis's employment prospects. He in turn recommended M. Brasseur, a stationer at No.13 rue des Fossés-Montmartre (which now forms part of the rue d'Aboukir). Alexis was taken on for a two-year apprenticeship which began on 1 October 1828; with food and lodging, this cost Favard 600 francs. Alexis records how he slept at night between the shop counters, on reams of paper overlaid with straw. He was responsible for keeping the shop clean and the pavement washed in all weathers; he also fetched the workers' lunches, although he had little to eat himself. As he slowly learnt about the business, he was granted more responsibility; M. Brasseur noticed his drawing skills and entrusted him with making decorative window display cards. The business prospered and in the winter of 1829 it was acquired by a M. Picquenot, who promptly took on two extra employees.

Growing political unrest resulting from Charles X's increasingly reactionary edicts had persuaded Alexis's great-uncle to move deeper into the countryside to Egly, near Arpajon. The lengthier journey from Paris meant that Alexis saw his relatives even less frequently. News from home was also worrying; his late father's business was doing badly as a result of employees stealing from the firm. His mother was forced to close the shoe-shop and decided to come to Paris and find employment as a maid. She arrived in June 1830, just before the uprising which overthrew Charles X.

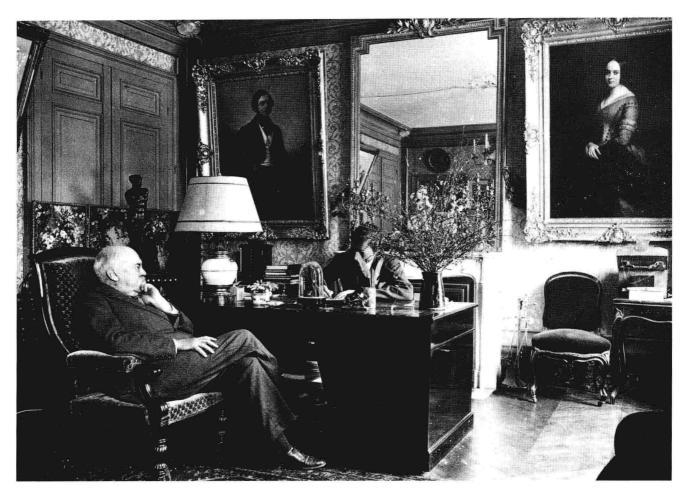
Over the next few years, Alexis's sister and two brothers followed their mother to Paris. Hyacinthe, the youngest, arrived first. Augustine, who had attended the Conservatoire in Liège, was not able to pursue a musical career in Paris, and so a position was found for her in 1831 in a milliner's shop. In 1836 she married M. Jacout, who worked as an assistant in a bookshop. Finally Guillaume, who had also taken musical studies, arrived in Paris in 1833. He had been apprenticed for some months to a jeweler in Liège, and a similar position was sought for him in Paris. Alexis asked Paul Meurice, a pupil at the Pension whose father was a manufacturing goldsmith, for advice concerning Guillaume's employment. He was recommended to M. Maudoux, a manufacturing jeweler in the rue St Martin. Much against his will, Guillaume was taken on for a two-year apprenticeship, and was obliged to sell his cherished oboe.

Alexis's uncle François decided to follow his sister-in-law's initiative. His two daughters Clémentine and Eugénie were summoned to Paris, and apprenticeships as jewelry polishers were found for them through their brother Arsène, who was now a successful craftsman in Geneva.

The end of Alexis's apprenticeship was hastened by the bankruptcy of the paper firm. In October 1830 he found himself back at the Pension Favard in the role of bookkeeper and teacher. He also helped the drawing master M. Quesnet, and taught calligraphy.

It was during this period that Alexis recaptured the happiness of his early youth: he could see his mother every day since she still resided at the

A DYNASTY OF JEWELERS



6. Photograph showing the portraits of Alexis Falize aged 30 (left) and Elisa Falize aged 40 (right) by Eugène Quesnet, that hung in their home in Moret-sur-Loing. Jean Falize, Alexis's grandson, and Robert Falize, his greatgrandson and author of the Foreword of this book, are seated on each side of the desk. The portraits of Alexis and Elisa were exhibited by Quesnet at the Salons of 1841 and 1857 respectively.

Pension, where she carried out housekeeping tasks to pay for her keep. He was freed from worries concerning her financial security, and the futures of his brothers and sister. Furthermore, the extra time he now enjoyed could be entirely devoted to drawing: "First I carried out an etching copied from a pretty engraving such as Prudhon's 'Zephyr [se balançant sur les eaux]', which my cousin told me to place in his office; then, wanting to try out watercolour, I rented some small works of art from Susses and managed to produce quite good copies of them..." The engineer Gavard had recently invented the diagraph and Favard encouraged Alexis to attend the classes he ran twice a week, which were frequented by many artists.

It was around this time that the drawing teacher retired; his post was taken over by his son, Eugène Quesnet, and he and Alexis became good friends. Quesnet¹² later painted admirable portraits of Alexis and of his wife Elisa. Alexis had also formed a close friendship with Favard, and together they planned a holiday in Liège and Huy. Tragically they were prevented from undertaking this journey by Favard's untimely death in 1833. Cholera had broken out in Paris and Favard had selflessly nursed all his sick pupils throughout the epidemic, before finally succumbing himself. Alexis, who was indebted to his cousin for his kindness and generosity, was overcome with grief; since no portrait had ever been painted of him, Alexis decided to record

BIOGRAPHY ALEXIS FALIZE 15 ≥



M. F. M. A. Mormale. Oncien Clève de l'Ecole Mormale. Lethographie de souvenir par Malize



7. Photograph of the lithograph portrait of Jean-Pierre Favard, drawn from memory by Alexis Falize in 1833.

8. Elisa Thomas, wearing a framed miniature portrait of her son Lucien, by Maxime David.

his friend's features from memory. The likeness was deemed admirable. 13

The change of circumstances brought about by Favard's death convinced

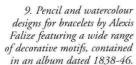
The change of circumstances brought about by Favard's death convinced Alexis that it was time to leave the Pension. He sought advice from the jeweler Maudoux, who had taken on his brother Guillaume. Maudoux offered to employ Hyacinthe as an apprentice, and suggested that Alexis should try the jewelers Mellerio Frères, who were looking for an assistant.

Alexis took up employment with 'Messieurs Mellerio dits Meller', the oldest established firm of its kind in Paris, ¹⁴ on 1 October 1833. Their premises were situated at 22 rue de la Paix. The firm had benefited from changes in the French monarchy and had received the Royal Warrant in 1830. Its clientele included "Queen Marie-Amélie, Princess Adelaide, all the old aristocracy, and a large part of the nobility created by Napoleon I." ¹⁵

Alexis was given board, lodging, and a salary of 75 francs per month, exactly three times as much as he earned at the Pension. The young man was delighted and his first thought was the immediate benefit which his improved financial situation would bring to his family.¹⁶

Although Alexis's duties were confined to the administrative side of the business, he could not fail to be dazzled by the beautiful jewels which surrounded him. He was soon allowed to handle them: "...Amongst a profusion of jewels which were so different and so varied in price, it was the gem-set pieces I admired above all: pearl necklaces, diamond-set rivières and aigrettes, and so many more charming confections in which rubies, sapphires, emeralds, opals and turquoise glistened...I tried to learn everything, either by handling every jewel in the shop, or by helping customers....At last, thanks to MM. Mellerio's explanations, I soon possessed all the knowledge I needed." 17





10. Pencil and watercolour designs for tie pins by Alexis Falize, contained in an album dated 1838-46. Various pencilled annotations read 'la pomme de William Tell' (in centre), 'un génie soutenant un globe' and 'Le Rat qui s'est retiré du monde' (La Fontaine, right). The initials 'LF' next to one of the designs and accompanying a few of the pencil sketches in this album suggest that Lucien Falize may have been sufficiently inspired by some of his father's early designs to create pieces from them.





Alexis's appetite for learning was rewarded by his employers. Discovering his talent as a draughtsman, they encouraged him to improve upon designs and he was soon conceiving entire parures himself: "I ventured to suggest that many pieces were poorly designed; in addition, the jewels themselves would be far more attractive if the chasing, engraving and enamel work were used in a more artistic and discriminating fashion. The drawings I sketched for the Mellerios were often approved, and I was soon taking commissions from customers and designing parures; these were carried out in the workshops where I gradually learnt every manufacturing technique." 18

At the end of his first year with Mellerio, Alexis visited Liège after an absence of eleven years. During his stay there he became engaged to Jeanette Louise Elisabeth Thomas (1817-76), known as Elisa, whose father ran a shop selling goldsmith's work, including pieces by Christofle. The couple were given permission to marry only when Alexis had acquired his own premises and was established as a patron.

It was the manufacturing jeweler Marchand ainé who suggested, upon Alexis's return to Paris, that he should leave Mellerio, with whom he had no future prospects (as there were several sons in the family) and join the firm of Janisset, who were looking for an employee with Alexis's credentials. Since the Janissets had no children, Alexis could hope to run their business one day.

MM. Mellerio approved Alexis's decision and he started working for Janisset (situated in the Passage des Panoramas), at the close of 1835. Here he found a very different clientele indeed, for whose particular tastes jewelry had to be adapted: "apart from the young nobility, there is the financial, diplomatic, artistic, literary and music world. New and elegant pieces are constantly required for these customers who seem to live only for pleasure. Jewels must be made to order, and they are frequently decorated with monograms, coats of arms and amatory devices.

"The enormous trust placed in me further motivated my desire to succeed: I obtained engravings of ornaments of every conceivable style; I studied wallpapers, tapestries, any kind of decoration, and was lucky enough to make attractive pieces from the very beginning".²⁰

The jewelry designed by Alexis was manufactured in various workshops, such as those run by Edouard Marchand, Jules Chaise²¹ and the Frères Marrel,²² as well as Aristide Joureau-Robin,²³ who worked exclusively for Janisset, and whom Alexis visited daily.

Madame Janisset's business²⁴ flourished to such an extent that she decided to move to a much grander, newly constructed building on the corner of the rue de Richelieu and the boulevard Montmartre. Alexis was given the responsibility of organizing the layout of the premises and designing the interior.