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FINGER-RING LORE

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FINGER-RING LORE

HISTORICAL, LEGENDARY, ANECDOTAL

BY
WILLIAM JONES, F.S.A.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

London
CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY
1877

TO
MY WIFE:

Bon Cœur: Sans Peur.

PREFACE.

[Pg vii]

I had intended to confine my observations exclusively to the subject of ‘ring superstitions,’ but in going through a wide field of olden literature I found so much of interest in connection with rings generally, that I have ventured to give the present work a more varied, and, I trust, a more attractive character.

The importance of this branch of archæology cannot be too highly appreciated, embracing incidents, historic and social, from the earliest times, brought to our notice by invaluable specimens of glyptic art, many of them of the purest taste, beauty, and excellency; elucidating obscure points in the creeds and general usages of the past, types for artistic imitation, besides supplying links to fix particular times and events.

In thus contributing to the extension of knowledge, the subject of ring-lore has a close affinity to that of numismatics, but it possesses the supreme advantage of appealing to our sympathies and affections. So Herrick sings of the wedding-ring:

[Pg viii]

> And as this round
> Is nowhere found
> To flaw, or else to sever,
> So let our love
> As endless prove,
> And pure as gold for ever!

It must be admitted that in many cases of particular rings it is sometimes difficult to arrive

at concurrent conclusions respecting their date and authenticity: much has to be left to conjecture, but the pursuit of enquiry into the past is always pleasant and instructive, however unsuccessful in its results. One of our most eminent antiquarians writes to me thus: 'We must not take for granted that everything in print is correct, for fresh information is from time to time obtained which shows to be incorrect that which was previously written.'

My acknowledgments are due to friends at home and abroad, whose collections of rings have been opened for my inspection with true masonic cordiality.

I have also to thank the publishers of this work for the liberal manner in which they have illustrated the text. Many of the engravings are from drawings taken from the gem-room of the British, and from other museums, and from rare and costly works on the Fine Arts, not easily accessible to the general reader. Descriptions of rings without pictorial representations would (as in the case of coins) materially lessen their attraction, and would render the book what might be termed 'a garden without flowers.' [Pg ix]

In conclusion I will adopt the valedictory lines of an old author, who writes in homely and deprecatory verse:

FOR HERDE IT IS, A MAN TO ATTAYNE
TO MAKE A THING PERFYTE, AT FIRST SIGHT,
BUT WAN IT IS RED, AND WELL OVER SEYNE
FAUTES MAY BE FOUNDE, THAT NEVER CAME TO LYGHT,
THOUGH THE MAKER DO HIS DILIGENCE AND MIGHT.
PRAYEING THEM TO TAKE IT, AS I HAVE ENTENDED,
AND TO FORGYVE ME, YF THAT I HAVE OFFENDED.

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CHAPTER I.

RINGS FROM THE EARLIEST PERIOD.

The use of signet-rings as symbols of great respect and authority is mentioned in several parts of the Holy Scriptures, from which it would seem that they were then common among persons of rank. They were sometimes wholly of metal, but frequently the inscription was borne on a stone, set in gold or silver. The impression from the signet-ring of a monarch gave the force of a royal decree to any instrument to which it was attached. Hence the delivery or transfer of it gave the power of using the royal name, and created the highest office in the State. In Genesis (xli. 42) we find that Joseph had conferred upon him the royal signet as an insignia of authority.[1] Thus Ahasuerus transferred his authority to Haman [Pg 2] (Esther iii. 12). The ring was also used as a pledge for the performance of a promise: Judah [Pg 3] promised to send Tamar, his daughter-in-law, a kid from his flock, and for fulfilment left with her (at her desire) his signet, his bracelet, and his staff (Genesis xxxviii. 17, 18).

Darius sealed with his ring the mouth of the den of lions (Daniel vi. 17). Queen Jezebel, to destroy Naboth, made use of the ring of Ahab, King of the Israelites, her husband, to seal the counterfeit letters ordering the death of that unfortunate man.

The Scriptures tell us that, when Judith arrayed herself to meet Holofernes, among other rich decorations she wore bracelets, ear-rings, and rings.

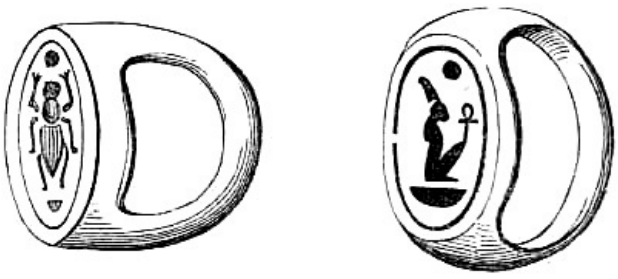
The earliest materials of which rings were made was of pure gold, and the metal usually very thin. The Israelitish people wore not only rings on their fingers, but also in their nostrils[2] and ears. Josephus, in the third book of his ‘Antiquities,’ states that they had the use of them after passing the Red Sea, because Moses, on his return from Sinai, found that the men had made the golden calf from their wives’ rings and other ornaments.

Moses permitted the use of gold rings to the priests whom he had established. The nomad people called Midianites, who were conquered by Moses, and eventually overthrown by [Pg 4] Gideon (Numbers xxxi.), possessed large numbers of rings among their personal ornaments.

The Jews wore the signet-ring on the right hand, as appears from a passage in Jeremiah (xxii. 24). The words of the Lord are uttered against Zedekiah: ‘though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, King of Judah, were the signet on my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence.’

We are not to assume, however, that all ancient seals, being signets, were rings intended to be worn on the hand. ‘One of the largest Egyptian signets I have seen,’ remarks Sir J. G. Wilkinson, ‘was in possession of a French gentleman of Cairo, which contained twenty pounds’ worth of gold. It consisted of a massive ring, half an inch in its largest diameter, bearing an oblong plinth, on which the devices were engraved, 1 inch long, ⅘ths in its greatest, and ⅘ths in its smallest, breadth. On one side was the name of a king, the successor of Amunoph III., who lived about fourteen hundred years before Christ; on the other a lion, with the legend “Lord of Strength,” referring to the monarch. On one side a scorpion, and on the other a crocodile.’

This ring passed into the Waterton Dactyliotheca, and is now the property of the South Kensington Museum.



Egyptian Bronze Rings.

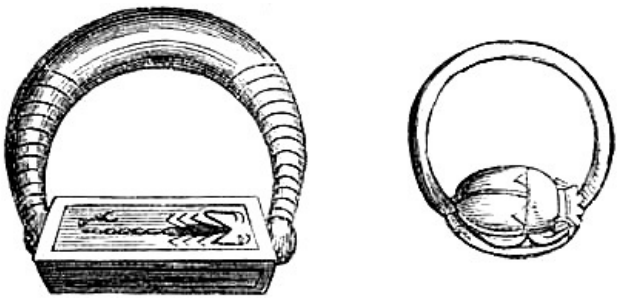
Rings of inferior metal, engraved with the king’s name, may, probably, have been worn by officials of the court. In the Londesborough collection is a bronze ring, bearing on the oval [Pg 5] face the name of Amunoph III., the same monarch known to the Greeks as ‘Memnon.’ The other ring, also of bronze, has engraved on the face a scarabæus. Such rings were worn by the Egyptian soldiers.

In the British Museum are some interesting specimens of Egyptian rings with representations of the scarabæus,[3] or beetle. These rings generally bear the name of the wearer, the name of the monarch in whose reign he lived, and also the emblems of certain [Pg 6]

deities; they were so set in the gold ring as to allow the scarabæus to revolve on its centre, it being pierced for that purpose.

Colonel Barnet possesses an Egyptian signet-ring formed by a scarabæus set in gold. It was found on the little finger of a splendid gilded mummy at Thebes. In all probability the wearer of the ring had been a royal scribe, as by his side was found a writing-tablet of stone. On the breast was a large scarabæus of green porphyry, set in gold.

The Rev. Henry Mackenzie, of Yarmouth, possesses an Egyptian scarabæus, a signet-ring, set with an intaglio, on cornelian, found in the bed of a deserted branch of the Euphrates, in the district of Hamadân in Persia. The engraving is unfinished, the work is polished in the intaglio, and the date has therefore been supposed not later than the time of the Greeks in Persia, *circa* 325 B.C.



Egyptian Signet-rings.

The representations here given illustrate the large and massive Egyptian signet-ring, and also a lighter kind of hooped signet, 'as generally worn at a somewhat more recent period in Egypt. The gold loop passes through a small figure of the sacred beetle, the flat under-side being engraved with the device of a crab.'

In the British Museum, in the first Egyptian Room, is the signet-ring of Queen Sebek-nefru (Sciemiophris). 'Sebek' was a popular component of proper names after the twelfth dynasty, probably because this queen was beloved by the people. On Assyrian sculptures are found armlets and bracelets; rings do not appear to have been generally worn. [Pg 7]

At a meeting of the Society of Biblical Archæology, in June 1873, Dr. H. F. Talbot, F.R.S., read an interesting paper on the legend of 'Ishtar descending to Hades,' in which he translated from the tablets the goddess's voluntary descent into the Assyrian *Inferno*. In the cuneiform it is called 'the land of no return.' Ishtar passes successively through the seven gates, compelled to surrender her jewels, viz. her crown, ear-rings, head-jewels, frontlets, girdle, *finger-* and toe-*rings*, and necklace. A cup full of the Waters of Life is given to her, whereby she returns to the upper world, receiving at each gate of Hades the jewels she had been deprived of in her descent.

Mr. Greene, F.S.A., has an Egyptian gold ring, formerly in the possession of the late Mr. Salt, belonging to the nineteenth dynasty, probably from the Lower Country, below Memphis. It is engraved with a representation of the goddess Nephthis, or Neith. Another gold ring of a later period, from the Upper Country, dates, probably, from the time of Psammitichus, B.C. 671 to 617.

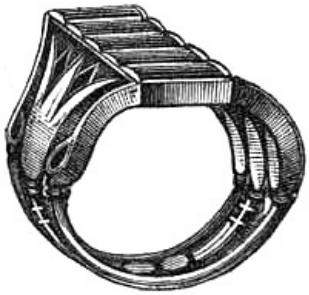
In the collection of Egyptian antiquities formed by the late R. Hay, Esq., of Limplum, N.B., were two Græco-Egyptian gold rings, found, it is conjectured, in the Aasa-seef, near Thebes. One of these is of the usual signet form, but without an inscription; the other is of an Etruscan pattern, and is composed of a spiral wire, whose extremities end in a twisted loop, with knob-like intersections. Both these objects are of fine workmanship, and are wrought in very pure gold. Sir J. G. Wilkinson, in 'Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians,' remarks: 'The rings were mostly of gold, and this metal seems always to have been preferred to silver for rings and other articles of jewellery. Silver rings are, however, occasionally to be met with, and two in my possession, which were accidentally found in a temple at Thebes, are engraved with hieroglyphics, containing the name of the royal city. Bronze was seldom used for rings; some have been discovered of brass and iron (of a Roman time), but ivory and blue porcelain were the materials of which those worn by the lower classes were usually made.' [Pg 8]

The Rev. C. W. King observes: 'I have seen finger-rings of ivory of the Egyptian period, their heads engraved with sphinxes and figures of eyes cut in low relief as camei, and originally coloured.'

The porcelain finger-rings of ancient Egypt are extremely beautiful, the band of the ring being seldom above one eighth of an inch in thickness. Some have a plate in which in bas-relief is the god Baal, full-faced, playing on the tambourine, as the inventor of music; others have their plates in the shape of the right symbolical eye, the emblem of the sun, of a fish of the perch species, or of a scarabæus. Some few represent flowers. Those which have elliptical plates with hieroglyphical inscriptions bear the names of Amen-Ra, and of other gods and monarchs, as Amenophis III., Amenophis IV., and Amenmest of the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties. One of these rings has a little bugle on each side, as if it had been

strung on the beaded work of a mummy, instead of being placed on the finger. Blue is the prevalent colour, but a few white and yellow rings, and some even ornamented with red and purple colours, have been discovered. It is scarcely credible that these rings, of a substance finer and more fragile than glass, were worn during life, and it seems hardly likely that they were worn by the poorer classes, for the use of the king's name on sepulchral objects seems to have been restricted to functionaries of state. Some larger rings of porcelain of about an inch in diameter, seven-eighths of an inch broad, and one-sixteenth of an inch thick, made in open work, represents the constantly-repeated lotus-flowers, and the god Ra, or the sun, seated and floating through the heavens in his boat. [Pg 9]

At the Winchester meeting of the Archæological Institute in 1845 a curious swivel-ring of blue porcelain was exhibited, found at Abydus in Upper Egypt; setting modern. It has a double impression: on the one side is the king making an offering to the gods, with the emblems of life and purity; on the other side the name of the monarch in the usual 'cartouche,' one that is well known, being that of Thothmes III., whom Wilkinson supposes to have been the Pharaoh of Exodus. It is worthy of remark that this cartouche is 'supported' by asps, which are usually considered to be the attributes of royalty.

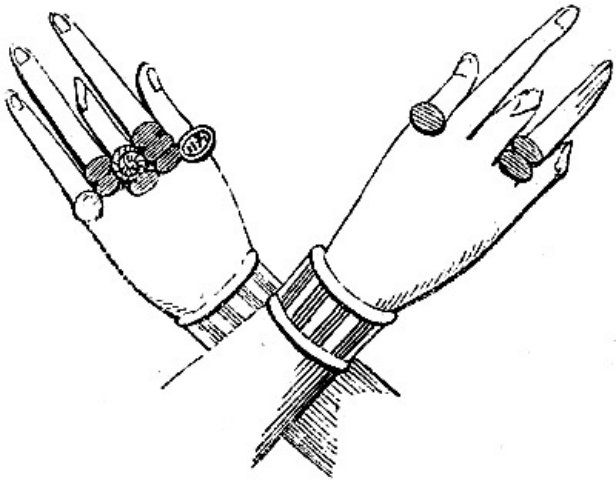


Egyptian Porcelain Ring.

The annexed engraving represents an Egyptian ring, *en pâte céramique*, from M. Dieulafait's 'Diamants et Pierres Précieuses.'

The signet of Sennacherib in the British Museum is made of Amazon stone, one of the hardest stones known to the lapidary, and bears an intaglio 'which,' observes the Rev. C. W. King, 'by its extreme minuteness, and the precision of the drawing, displays the excellence to which the art had already attained.' [Pg 10]

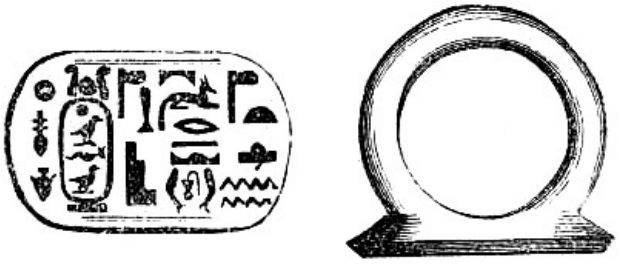
On a mummy-case in the British Museum is a representation of a woman with crossed hands, covered with rings; the left hand is most loaded. Upon the thumb is a signet with hieroglyphics on the surface, three rings on the forefinger, two on the second, one formed like a snail shell, the same number on the next, and one on the little finger. The right hand carries only a thumb ring, and two upon the third finger.



Rings on the fingers of a Mummy.

Sir J. G. Wilkinson observes: 'The left was considered the hand peculiarly privileged to bear these ornaments; and it is remarkable that its third finger was decorated with a greater number than any other, and was considered by them, as by us, *par excellence*, the ring-finger, though there is no evidence of its having been so honoured at the marriage ceremony.'

The same author mentions that rings were a favourite decoration among the Egyptians; women wore sometimes two or three on the same finger. They were frequently worn on the thumb. Some were simple, others had an engraved stone, and frequently bore the name of the owner; others the monarch in whose time he lived, and they were occasionally in the form of a snail, a knot, a snake, or some fancy device. A cat—emblem of the goddess Bast, or Pasht, the Egyptian Diana—was a favourite subject for ladies' rings. [Pg 11]



Egyptian Gold Ring, from Ghizeh.

One of the oldest, if not the most ancient ring known, is supposed to be that in the collection of Dr. Abbot, of Cairo, now preserved with his other Egyptian antiquities at New York. It is thus described by him:—'This remarkable piece of antiquity is in the highest state of preservation, and was found at Ghizeh, in a tomb near the excavation of Colonel Vyse, called Campbell's tomb. It is of fine gold, and weighs nearly three sovereigns. The style of the hieroglyphics within the oval make the name of that Pharaoh (Cheops, Shofo) of whom the pyramid was the tomb. The details are minutely accurate and beautifully executed. The heaven is engraved with stars; the fox or jackal has significant lines within its contour; the hatchets have their handles bound with thongs, as is usual in the sculptures; the volumes have the strings which bind them hanging below the roll—differing in this respect from any [Pg 12] example in sculptured or painted hieroglyphics. The determinative for country is studded with dots, representing the land of the mountains at the margin of the valley of Egypt. The instrument, as in the larger hieroglyphics, has the tongue and semi-lunar mark of the sculptured examples; as is the case also with the heart-shaped vase. The name is surmounted with the globe and feathers, decorated in the usual manner; and the ring of the cartouche is engraved with marks representing a rope, never seen in the sculptures; and the only instance of a royal name similarly encircled is a porcelain example in this collection, inclosing the name of the father of Sesostris. The O in the name is placed as in the examples sculptured in the tombs, not in the axis of the cartouche; the chickens have their unfledged wings; the cerastes its horns, now only to be seen with a magnifying glass.'

In a lecture to the deaf and dumb in St. Saviour's Hall, Oxford Street, London (October 1875), on 'Eastern Manners and Customs,' amongst various relics exhibited was the hand of a female mummy, on one finger of which was a gold ring, with the signet of one of the Pharaohs.

A gold ring exhibited at the exhibition of antiquities at the Ironmongers' Hall, in 1861, had hieroglyphics meaning 'protected by the living goddess Mu.'

Among some interesting specimens of Egyptian rings exhibited at the South Kensington Loan Exhibition of 1872 I may mention an antique ring of pale gold, with a long oval bezel chased in intaglio, with representation of a *sistrum* (timbrel, used by the Egyptians in their religious ceremonies), the property of Viscount Hawarden; an antique ring of pale gold (belonging to Lady Ashburton), formed of a slender wire, the ends twisted round the [Pg 13] shoulders, upon which is strung a signet, in form of a cat, made of greenish-blue glazed earthenware.

From the collection of R. H. Soden Smith, Esq. F.S.A., an ancient pale gold ring, with revolving cylinders of lapis-lazuli, engraved with hieroglyphics; the shoulders of the hoop wrapped round with wire ornament.

The Waterton Collection contains Egyptian rings of various descriptions: one of silver, with revolving bezel of cornelian representing the symbolical right eye. Several rings of glazed earthenware; one of gold, very massive, with revolving scarab of glazed earthenware, partially encased in gold. A gold ring, the hoop of close-corded work, revolving bezel with blood-stone scarab, engraved with Hathor and child. The same engraving is on a gold signet-ring, with vesica-shaped bezel, and upon a white-metal ring, where the figures are surrounded by lotus-flowers. Another gold signet-ring is engraved with the figure of Amen-ra; a probably Egyptian white-metal ring, with narrow oblong bezel, engraved with a frieze of figures, and winged Genii, divided by candelabra.

Several of the Egyptian rings in the Museum of the Louvre at Paris date from the reign of King Mœris. One of the oldest rings extant is that of Cheops, the founder of the Great Pyramid, which was found in a tomb there. It is of gold, with hieroglyphics.

The Egyptian glass-workers produced small mosaics of the most minute and delicate finish, and sufficiently small to be worn on rings.

Dr. Birch, in a very interesting paper communicated to the Society of Antiquaries, at the meeting of November 17, 1870, observes, with regard to the scarabæi and signet-rings of the ancient Egyptians, that the use of these curious objects (the exhibition comprising [Pg 14] upwards of five hundred scarabs from the collection of Egyptian antiquities formed by the late R. Hay, Esq., of Sinplum, N.B., to which I have alluded) dates back from a remote period of Egyptian history. 'As it is well known, they were not merely made in porcelain, but also in steatite, or stea-schist, and the various semi-precious stones suitable for engraving, such as cornelian, sard, and such-like.' In the time of the twelfth dynasty the cylindrical ring, also

found in use among the Assyrians and Babylonians, came into vogue. The hard stones and gems were of later introduction, probably under the influence of Greek art, for the ancient Egyptians themselves do not appear to have possessed the method of cutting such hard substances. A few, however, exist, which are clearly of great antiquity—as, for example, a specimen in yellow jasper now in the British Museum.

The principal purpose to which these scarabs were applied was to form the revolving bezel of a signet-ring, the substance in which the impression was taken being a soft clay, with which a letter was sealed.

It is singular that some of these objects have been found in rings fixed with the plane engraved side inwards, rendering them unfit for the purposes of sealing. It is well known that the use of these scarabs was so extensive as to have prevailed beyond Egypt, being adopted by the Phœnicians and the Etruscans.

On this subject the Rev. C. W. King remarks that gold rings, even of the Etruscan period, are very rare, the signets of that nation still retaining the form of scarabæi. 'The most magnificent Etruscan ring known, belonging once to the Prince de Canino, and now in the matchless collection of antique gems in the British Museum, is formed of the fore-parts of two lions, whose bodies compose the shank, whilst their heads and fore-paws support the signet—a small sand scarab, engraved with a *lion regardant*, and set in an elegant bezel of filagree-work. The two lions are beaten up in full relief of thin gold plate, in a stiff archaic style, but very carefully finished.' [Pg 15]

The Waterton Collection contains a gold ring of Etruscan workmanship, of singular beauty. It is described by Padre Geruchi, of the Sacred College, as a betrothal or nuptial ring. It has figures of Hercules and Juno placed back to back on the hoop, having their arms raised above their heads. Hercules is covered with the skin of a lion, Juno with that of a goat.

Etruscan, with Chimeræ.

Roman-Egyptian.

Fairholt, in 'Rambles of an Archæologist,' describes an ancient Etruscan ring in the British Museum, with chimeræ on it opposing each other. The style and treatment partake largely of ancient Eastern art. There is also in the same collection a remarkable ring having the convolutions of a serpent, the head of Serapis at one extremity and of Isis at the other; by this arrangement one or other of them would always be correctly posited; it has, also, the further advantage of being flexible, owing to the great sweep of its curve. Silver rings are rarer than those of gold in the tombs of Etruria, and iron and bronze examples are gilt. [Pg 16]

All the Hindoo Mogul divinities of antiquity had rings; the statues of the gods at Elephanta, supposed to be of the highest antiquity, had finger-rings.

The Rev. C. W. King describes a ring in the Waterton collection, of remarkable interest—apparently dating from the Lower Empire, for the head is much thrown up, and has the sides pierced into a pattern, the '*interrasile opus*, so much in fashion during those times. It is set with two diamonds of (probably) a carat each: one a perfect octahedron of considerable lustre, the other duller and irregularly crystallised. Another such example might be sought for in vain throughout the largest cabinets of Europe.'

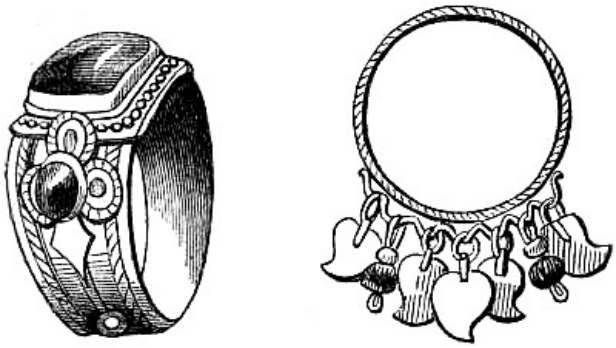
After the conquest of Asia Alexander the Great used the signet-ring of Darius to seal his edicts to the Persians; his own signet he used for those addressed to the Greeks.

Xerxes, King of Persia, was a great gem-fancier, but his chief signet was a portrait, either of himself, or of Cyrus, the founder of the monarchy. He also wore a ring with the figure of Anaitis, the Babylonian Venus, upon it. Thucydides says that the Persian kings honoured their subjects by giving them rings with the likenesses of Darius and Cyrus.

The late Mr. Fairholt purchased in Cairo a ring worn by an Egyptian lady of the higher class. It is a simple hoop of twisted gold, to which hangs a series of pendant ornaments, consisting of small beads of coral, and thin plates of gold, cut to represent the leaves of a plant. As the hands move, these ornaments play about the finger, and a very brilliant effect might be produced if diamonds were used in the pendants.

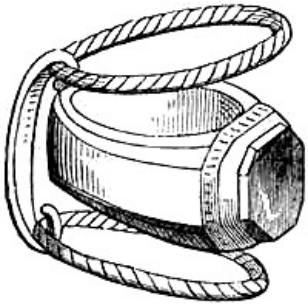
The rings worn by the middle class of Egyptian men are usually of silver, set with mineral [Pg 17]

stones, and are valued as the work of the silversmiths of Mecca, that sacred city being supposed to exert a holy influence on all the works it originates.



Modern Egyptian Rings.

A curious ring with a double keeper is worn by Egyptian men. It is composed entirely of common cast silver, set with mineral stone. The lowermost keeper, of twisted wire, is first put on the finger, then follows the ring. The second keeper is then brought down upon it: the two being held by a brace which passes at the back of the ring, and gives security to the whole.



Modern Egyptian Ring,
with Double Keepers.

Tavernier states in his ‘Travels’ that the Persians did not make gold rings, their religion forbidding the wearing of any article of that metal during prayers, it would have been too troublesome to take them off every time they performed their devotions. The gems mounted in gold rings, sold by Tavernier to the King, were reset in silver by native workmen.

The custom of wearing rings may have been introduced into Greece from Asia, and into Italy from Greece. They served the twofold purpose, ornamental and useful, being employed as a seal, which was called *sphragis*, a name given to the gem or stone on which figures were engraved. The Homeric poems make mention of ear-rings only, but in the later Greek legends the ancient heroes are represented as wearing finger-rings. Counterfeit stones in rings are mentioned in the time of Solon. Transparent stones when extracted from the remains of the original iron-rings of the ancients are sometimes found backed by a leaf of red gold as a foil.[4] The use of coloured foils was merely to deceive and impose upon the unwary, by giving to a very inferior jewel the finest colour. Solon made a law prohibiting sellers of rings from keeping the model of a ring they had sold. [Pg 18]

The Lacedæmonians, according to the laws of Lycurgus, had only iron rings, despising those of gold; either that the King devised thereby to retrench luxury, or not to permit the use of them.

The Etruscans and the Sabines wore rings at the period of the foundation of Rome, 753 B.C.

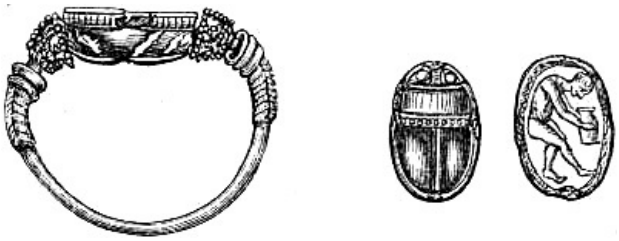
The Etruscans made rings of great value. They have been found of every variety—with precious stones, of massive gold, very solid, with engraved stones of remarkable beauty. Among Etruscan rings in the Musée Nap. III. the table of one offers a representation, enlarged, of the story of Admētus, the King of Pheræ in Thessaly. He took part in the expedition of the Argonauts, and sued for the hand of Alcestis, the daughter of Pelias, who promised him to her on condition that he should come to her in a chariot drawn by lions and boars. This feat Admētus performed by the assistance of Apollo, who served him, according to some accounts, out of attachment to him, or, according to others, because he was obliged to serve a mortal for one year, for having slain the Cyclops. [Pg 19]

Etruscan (Admētus).

Representation of Admētus.

Etrusca.

Among rings taken out of the tombs there are some in the form of a knot or of a serpent. They are frequently found with shields of gold, and of that form which we call Gothic, that is elliptical and pointed, called by foreigners *ogive*, with raised subjects chiselled on the gold, or with onyxs of the same form, but polished and surrounded with gold. There are some particular rings which appear more adapted to be used as seals than rings, and they have on the shields, relievos of much more arched, and almost Egyptian, form.[5] [Pg 20]



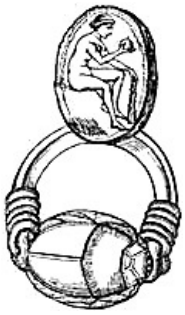
Etruscan.

Etruscan.

Among the antique jewels at the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris are two fine specimens of Etruscan rings. One is of gold, on which is a scarabæus in cornelian; the stomach of the scarabæus is engraved hollow and represents a naked man holding a vase. The other is a

gold ring found in a tomb at Etruria, of which the bezel, sculptured in relief, could not serve as a seal. The subject is a divinity combating with two spirits, a representation of the eastern idea of the struggles between the two principles of good and evil, such as are found on numerous cylinders that come from the borders of the Euphrates and the Tigris. This analogy between the religious ideas of the Etruscans and those of the most ancient monuments of the East is not astonishing when it is shown that the Etruscans, the ancient [Pg 21] inhabitants of Italy, were originally from Asia. The following engraving represents an intaglio on a scarabæus ring, of fine workmanship, preserved in Vienna.

At a meeting of the Archæological Institute (May 3, 1850) the Dowager Duchess of Cleveland exhibited a curious Roman ring of pure gold (weight 182 grains), of which an illustration is given in the Journal of the Institute (vol. vii. p. 190). 'It was found, with other remains, at Pierse Bridge (Ad Tisam), county of Durham, where the vestiges of a rectangular encampment may be distinctly traced. The hoop, wrought by the hammer, is joined by welding the extremities together; to this is attached an oval facet, the metal engraved in intaglio, the impress being two human heads *respectant*, probably male and female—the prototype of the numerous "love seals" of a later period. The device on the ring is somewhat effaced, but evidently represented two persons gazing at each other. This is not the first Roman example of the kind found in England. The device appears on a ring, apparently of that period, found on Stanmore Common in 1781. On the mediæval seals alluded to, the heads are usually accompanied by the motto "Love me, and I thee," to which, also, a counterpart is found among relics of a more remote age. Galeotti, in his curious illustrations of the "Gemmæ Antiquæ Litteratæ," in the collection of Ficoroni, gives an intaglio engraved with the words "Amo te, ama me."'

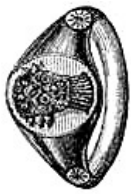


Etruscan.

The following engravings represent: A ring in the Musée du Louvre, with a lion sculptured [Pg 22] by a Greek artist, in an oriental cornelian; the reverse has an intaglio of a lion *couchant*. The second, from the Webb Collection, is that of an ancient Greek ring, of solid gold, with the representation of a comic mask in high relief. The other, a gold ring with a bearded mask, Roman, in the Waterton Collection at the South Kensington Museum—also in high relief—has the shoulders thickened with fillets, engraved with stars.

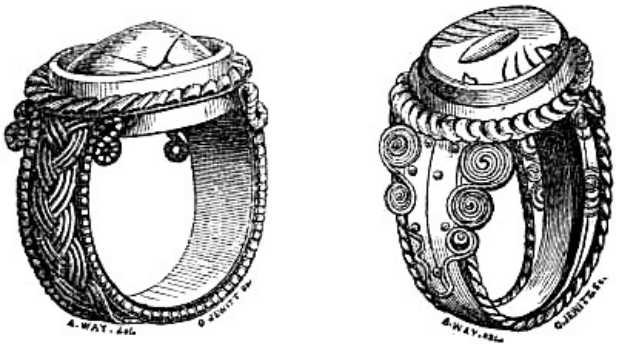
Greek.

Greek.



Roman.

A singular discovery of Roman relics was made in 1824 at Terling Place, near Witham, Essex, by some workmen forming a new road; the earth being soaked by heavy rains the cart-wheels sank up to their naves. The driver of the cart saw some white spots upon the mud adhering to the wheels, which proved to be coins. On further search a small vase was discovered in which had been deposited with some coins, two gold rings, which are interesting examples of late Roman work; and representations of these, by Lord Rayleigh's permission, were given in the 'Journal of the Archæological Institute' (vol. iii. p. 163) and are here shown. One of the rings is set with a colourless crackly crystal, or *pasta*, uncut and *en cabochon*; the other with a paste formed of two layers, the upper being of a dull smalt colour, the lower dark brown. The device is apparently an ear of corn. [Pg 23]



Late Roman.

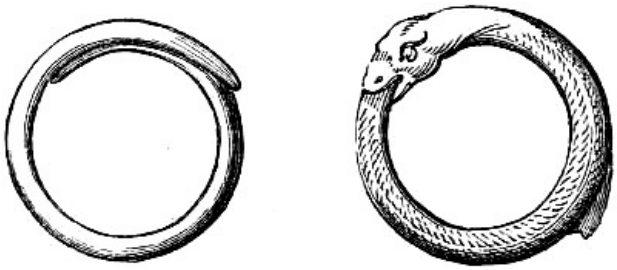
The Hertz Collection contained a well-formed octahedral diamond, about a carat in weight, set open in a Roman ring of unquestionable authenticity.

At the Loan Exhibition of Ancient and Modern Jewellery at the South Kensington Museum, in 1872, John Evans Esq., F.S.A., contributed a series of seven rings, gold and silver, Roman, set with antique stones; one very massive, of silver and gold, set with intaglio on nicolo onyx; one with an angular hoop, and another with beaded ornaments.

'Though,' remarks Mr. Fairholt, 'a great variety of form and detail was adopted by Greek and Roman goldsmiths for the rings they so largely manufactured, the most general and lasting resembled a Roman ring, probably of the time of Hadrian, which is said to have been found in the Roman camp at Silchester, Berkshire. The gold of the ring is massive at the face, making a strong setting for the cornelian, which is engraved with the figure of a female bearing corn and fruit. By far the greater majority of Roman rings exhumed at home and abroad are of this fashion, which recommends itself by a dignified simplicity, telling by quantity and quality of metal and stone its true value, without any obtrusive aid.' Sometimes [Pg 24] a single ring was constructed to appear like a group of two or three upon the finger. Mr. Charles Edwards, of New York, in his 'History and Poetry of Finger Rings,' has given an example of this kind of ring. Upon the wide part of each are two letters, the whole forming 'ZHCAIC,' *mayst thou live!*

Ring found at Silchester. Group Pattern.

'The simplest and most useful form of rings, and that by consequence adopted by people of all early nations, was the plain elastic hoop. Cheap in construction and convenient in wear, it may be safely said to have been generally patronised from the most ancient to the most modern times.' An engraving by Mr. Fairholt represents 'the old form of a ring made in the shape of a coiled serpent, equally ancient, equally far-spread in the old world, and which has had a very large sale among ourselves as a decided novelty. In fact, it has been the most successful design our ring-makers have produced of late years.'



Ancient Plain Rings.

The statues of Numa and Servius Tullius were represented with rings, while those of the other Kings had none; which would induce the belief that the use of rings was little known in [Pg 25] the early days of Rome. Pliny[6] states that the first date in Roman history in which he could trace any general use of rings was in A.U.C. 449, in the time of Cneius Flavius, the son of Annius. Less than a century before Christ, Mithridates, the famous King of Pontus, possessed a museum of signet-rings; later, Scaurus, the stepson of the Dictator, Sylla, had a collection of signet-rings, but inferior to that of Mithridates, which, having become the spoil of Pompey, was presented by him to the Capitol.

In Rome every freeman had the right to use the iron ring, which was worn to the last period of the Republic, by such men as loved the simplicity of the good old times. Among these was Marius, who, as Pliny tells us, wore an iron ring in his triumph after the subjugation of Jugurtha. In the early days of the Empire the *jus annuli* seems to have elevated the wearer to the equestrian order. Those who committed any crime forfeited the distinction, and this

shows us the estimation in which the ring, as an emblem of honour, was regarded.

Iron Ring of a
Roman Knight.

We are told of Cæsar that when addressing his soldiers after the passage of the Rubicon he often held up the little finger of his left hand, protesting that he would pledge even to his ring to satisfy the claims of those who defended his cause. The soldiers of the furthest ranks, who could see but not hear him, mistaking the gesture, imagined that he was promising to each man the dignity of a Roman Knight.

Gold rings appear to have been first worn by ambassadors to a foreign State, but only during a diplomatic mission; in private they wore their iron ones. [Pg 26]

In the course of time it became customary for all the senators, chief magistrates, and the *equites* to wear a gold seal-ring. This practice, which was subsequently termed the *jus annuli aurei*, or the *jus annulorum*, remained for several centuries at Rome their exclusive privilege, while others continued to wear the iron ring. In Plutarch's Life of Caius Marius he mentions that the slaves of Cornutus concealed their master at home, and hanging up by the neck the body of some obscure person, and putting a gold ring on his finger, they showed him to the guards of Marius, and then wrapping up the body as if it were their master's, they interred it.

Magistrates and governors of provinces seem to have possessed the privilege of conferring upon inferior officers, or such persons as had distinguished themselves, the right of wearing a gold ring. Verres thus presented his secretary with a gold ring in the assembly at Syracuse.

Roman.

Montfaucon mentions in his 'Antiquity Explained' (English Edition, 1722, vol. iii. p. 146), a Greek seal-ring, which has the shape of a crescent. An illustration is here given of a similarly-formed Roman ring, with the letters Q. S. P. Q., Quintanus Senatus Populusque, from the 'Gemmæ Antiquæ Litteratæ.'

Some wore rings of gold, covered with a plate of iron. Trimalchion wore two rings, one upon the little finger of his left hand, which was a large gilt one, and the other of gold, set with stars of iron upon the middle of the ring-finger. Some rings were hollow, and others solid. The *Flamines Diales* could only wear the former. [Pg 27]

During the Empire the right of granting the privilege of a gold ring belonged to the emperors, and some were not very scrupulous in conferring this distinction.

Severus and Aurelian granted this privilege to all Roman soldiers; Justinian allowed all citizens of the empire to wear such rings.

But there always seems to have been a difficulty in restricting the use of the gold ring. Tiberius (A.D. 22) allowed its use to all whose fathers and grandfathers had property of the value of 400,000 sestertia (3,230*l.*). The restriction, however, was of little avail, and the ambition for the *annulus aureus* became greater than it had ever been before.

Juvenal, in his eleventh 'Satire,' alludes to a spendthrift who, after consuming his estate, has nothing but his ring:—

> At length, when nought remains a meal to bring,
> The last poor shift, off comes the Knightly ring,
> And sad Sir Pollio begs his daily fare,

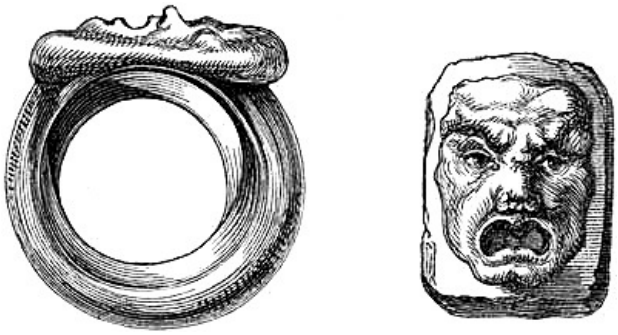
With undistinguished hands, and fingers bare.

Martial attacks a person under the name of Zoilus, who had been raised from a state of servitude to Knighthood, and was determined to make the ring, the badge of his new honour, sufficiently conspicuous:—

Zoile, quid tota gemmam præcingere libra
Te juvat, et miserum perdire sardonycha?
Annulus iste tuus fuerat modo cruribus aptus;
Non eadem digitis pondera conveniunt.

The keeping of the imperial ring (*cura annuli*) was confided to a state keeper, as the Great Seal with us is placed in custody of the Lord Chancellor.

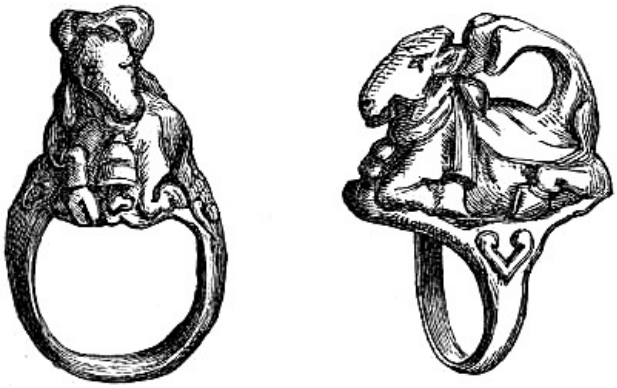
With the increasing love of luxury and show, the Romans, as well as the Greeks, covered their fingers with rings, and some wore different ones for summer and winter, immoderate both in number and size.[7] The accompanying illustrations represent a huge ring of coloured paste, all of one piece, blue colour—one of the rings of inexpensive manufacture in popular use among the lower classes. It is smaller on one side, to occupy less space on the index or little finger. [Pg 28]



Roman.

The following illustrates a supposed Gallo-Roman ring of outrageous proportions, similar to those complained of by Livy (xxxiii., see Appendix), for their extravagant size. It is of bronze, and supposed to represent a cow or bull seated, with a bell round the neck.

Heavy rings of gold of a sharp triangular outline were worn on the little finger in the later time of the Empire. A thumb-ring of unusual magnitude and of costly material is represented in Montfaucon. It bears the bust in high relief of the Empress Plotina, the consort of Trajan: she is represented with the imperial diadem. It is supposed to have decorated the hand of some member of the imperial family. The Rev. C. W. King mentions a ring in the Fould Collection (dispersed by auction in 1860), the weight of which, although intended for the little finger, was three ounces. It was set with a large Oriental onyx, not engraved. [Pg 29] [Pg 30]



Supposed Gallo-Roman.

Roman Thumb-ring.

Juvenal alludes to the ‘season’ rings:—

> Charged with light summer rings his fingers sweat,
> Unable to support a gem of weight.

The custom of wearing numerous rings must have been at a comparatively early period: it is alluded to both by Plato and Aristophanes. According to Martial, one Clarinus wore daily no less than sixty rings: ‘Senos Clarinus omnibus digitis gerit,’ and, what is more remarkable, he loved to sleep wearing them, ‘nec nocte ponit annulos.’ Quintilian notices the custom of wearing numerous rings: ‘The hand must not be overloaded with rings, especially with such as do not pass over the middle joints of the finger.’ Demosthenes wore many rings and he was stigmatised as unbecomingly vain for doing so in the troubled times of the State.

Seneca, describing the luxury and ostentation of the time, says: ‘We adorn our fingers with rings, and a jewel is displayed on every joint.’

As a proof of the universality of gold rings as ornaments in ancient times, we are told that three bushels of them were gathered out of the spoils after Hannibal’s victory at Cannæ. This was after the second Punic war.

According to Mr. Waterton it is believed that gems were not mounted in rings prior to the LXII. Olympiad.

Nero, we are informed, during his choral exhibitions in the circus, was attended by children, each of whom wore a gold ring. Galba’s guard, of the *Equites*, had gold rings as a distinguishing badge. [Pg 31]

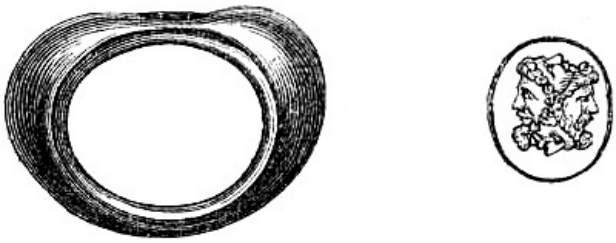
Rock crystal appears to have been much in use among the Romans for making solid finger-rings carved out of one single piece, the face engraved with some intaglio serving for a signet.

‘All those known to me,’ remarks the Rev. C. W. King in ‘Precious Stones,’ &c., ‘have the shank moulded into a twisted cable; one example bore for device the Christian monogram, which indicates the date of the fashion. It would seem that these rings superseded and answered the same purpose as the balls of crystal carried at an earlier period by ladies in their hands for the sake of the delicious coolness during the summer heat.’

Stone rings were in common use, formed chiefly of chalcedony. ‘It is most probable,’ remarks the Rev. C. W. King, ‘that the first ideas of these stone rings were borrowed by the Romans from the Persian conical and hemispherical seals in the same material. Some of these latter have their sides flattened, and ornamented with divers patterns, and thus assume the form of a finger-ring, with an enormously massy shank and very small opening, sufficient, however, to admit the little finger. And this theory of their origin is corroborated by the circumstance that all these Lower Roman examples belong to the times of the Empire, none being ever met with of an early date.’

Silver rings were common: Pliny relates that Arellius Fuscus, when expelled from the equestrian order, and thus deprived of the right of wearing a gold ring, appeared in public with silver rings on his fingers.

Among the ancient jewels in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris is a fine Roman ring, of which the bezel, a cornelian graved hollow, represents a Janus with four faces. [Pg 32]



Roman.

Another Roman ring, also of gold, is attributed to the epoch of the Emperor Hadrian. The three golden figures represented on it are those of Egyptian deities, which have suffered under the hands of a Roman jeweller. It is, however, possible to distinguish them as one of the most important of the Egyptian Pantheon; that is to say, Horus, Isis, and Nephtys. Isis-Hathor is shown with cow's ears; she has near her Horus-Harpocrates, her son, who is crowned with the *schent*; the mother and child rise from a lotus flower: on the left is Nephtys, crowned with a hieroglyphic emblem, accidentally incomplete, but the signification of which is the name even of this divinity, 'the lady of this house.'

Roman.

Montfaucon, in his 'L'Antiquité Expliquée,' describes a ring with a gem engraved representing Bellerophon, Pegasus, and the Chimæra. The hero, riding on his famous horse, in the air, throws a dart at the monster below, whose first head is that of a lion, the goat's head appears on her back, and her tail terminates in a large head of a serpent. This ring was found on the road to Tivoli, among some ashes of a dead body.

[Pg 33]

Representation of a ring ornamented with busts of divinities. From the Musée du Louvre.

Montfaucon gives the contents of a Roman lady's jewel box cut upon the pedestal supporting a statue of Isis, and amongst other rich articles for female decoration are, for her little finger, two rings with *diamonds*; on the next finger a ring with many gems (*polypsephus*), emeralds, and one pearl. On the *top joint* of the same finger, a ring with an emerald. The Roman ladies were prodigal in their display of rings: we read that Faustina spent 40,000*l.* of our money, and Domitia 60,000*l.* for single rings. Greek women wore chiefly ivory and amber rings, and these were less costly and numerous than those used by men.

The Rev. C. W. King remarks of Roman rings that if of early date, and set with good intagli, they are almost invariably hollow and light, and consequently are easily crushed. Cicero relates of L. Piso, that 'while prætor in Spain he was going through the military exercises, when the gold ring which he wore was, by some accident, broken and crushed. Wishing to have another ring made for himself, he ordered a goldsmith to be summoned to the forum at Cordova, in front of his own judgment-seat, and weighed out the gold to him in public. He ordered the man to set down his bench in the forum, and make the ring for him in the presence of all, to prove that he had not employed the gold of the public treasury, but had made use only of his broken ring.'

The signs engraved on rings were very various, including portraits of friends and ancestors, and subjects connected with mythology and religion. In the reign of Claudius no ring was to bear the portrait of the emperor without a special licence, but Vespasian, some time after, issued an edict, permitting the imperial image to be engraven on rings and brooches.

[Pg 34]

Besides the figures of great personages, there were also representations of popular events: thus, on Pompey's ring, like that of Sylla, were three trophies, emblems of his three victories in Europe, Asia, and Africa. After the murder of this great general, his seal-ring, as Plutarch tells us, was brought to Cæsar, who shed tears on receiving it. The Roman senate refused to credit the news of the death of Pompey, until Cæsar produced before them his seal-ring.

Head of Regulus,
between cornucopiæ.

On the ring of Julius Cæsar was a representation of an armed Venus, as he claimed to be a descendant of the goddess. This device was adopted by his partisans; on that of Augustus, first a sphinx; afterwards the image of Alexander the Great, and at last, his own portrait, which succeeding emperors continued to use.[8]

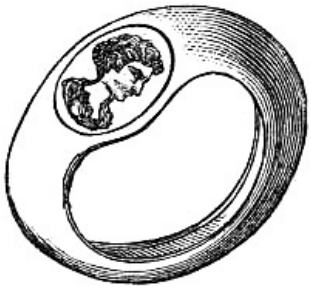
Among the ancients the figures engraved on rings were not hereditary, and each assumed that which pleased him. Numa had made a law prohibiting representations of the gods, but [Pg 35] custom abrogated the ordinance, and the Romans had engraved in their rings not only figures of their own deities, but those of other countries, especially of the Egyptians. The physician Asclepiades had a ring with Urania represented upon it. Scipio the African had a sphinx; Cornelius Scipio Africanus, younger son of the great Africanus, wore the portrait of his father, but as his conduct was unworthy of the character of his illustrious sire the people expressed their disgust by depriving him of the ring. Sylla had a Jugurtha; the Epicureans, a head of Epicurus; Commodus, an Amazon, the portrait of his mistress Martia; Aristomenes, an Agathocles, King of Sicily; Callicrates, a Ulysses; the Greeks, Helen; the Trojans, Pergamus; the inhabitants of Heraclia, a Hercules; the Athenians, Solon; the Lacedæmonians, Lycurgus; the Alexandrians, an Alexander; the Seleucians, Seleucus; Mæcenas, a frog; Pompey, a dog on the prow of a ship; the Kings of Sparta, an eagle holding a serpent in its claws; Darius, the son of Hystaspes, a horse; the infamous Sperus, the rape of Proserpine; the Locrians, Hesperus, or the evening star; Polycrates, a lyre; Seleucus, an anchor.

The Rev. C. W. King, in 'Antique Gems,' informs us that 'the earliest mention of a ring-stone in relief occurs in Seneca, who, in a curious anecdote which he tells ("De Beneficiis," iii. 26) concerning the informer Maro and a certain Paulus, speaks of the latter as having had on his finger on that occasion a portrait of Tiberius in relief upon a projecting gem, "Tiberii Cæsaris imaginem ectypam atque eminente gemma." This periphrasis would seem to prove that such a representation was not very common at the time, or else a technical term would have been used to express that particular kind of gem-engraving.'

Among the discoveries made during some excavations at Canterbury in 1868 was a Roman [Pg 36] ring of exceedingly pure gold, the stone being a very fine and highly-polished onyx, engraved with a Ganymede.

At a meeting of the Archæological Institute at Norwich in 1847 a fine gold Roman ring found at Caistor was exhibited, set with an intaglio on onyx, the subject being the Genius of Victory. The following illustrations of engraved Roman rings are taken from Montfaucon's 'L'Antiquité Expliquée':—

Gold ring, with head of
Trajan, radiated.



Silver ring, with head of
the Empress Crispina.

Head of the Emperor Gordian III.

Iron ring, with head of Socrates.

Gold ring, with name, Vibianæ.

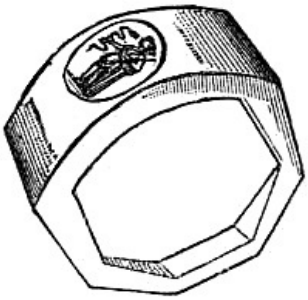
Iron ring, representing a shepherd and goat.

[Pg 37]

Jupiter Serapis.

Galba.

Pan and Goat.



Hygeia.

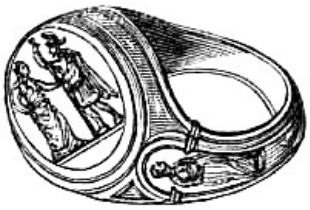
Mercury.

Bust, with inscription ‘Lucilla Acv. Sta. Virgo,’ formerly in the collection of St. Geneviève; added to the splendid Cabinet of Antiquities at Paris in 1796.

The following engraving (from Gorlæus) refers to the story of Masinissa and Sophonisba, well known to classical readers. She was betrothed at a very early age to the Numidian prince, but was afterwards married to Syphax, B.C. 206. This warrior, in a battle with Masinissa, was conquered, and Sophonisba became a prisoner to the Numidian prince, who, won by her charms, married her. Scipio, fearing her influence, persisted in his immediate surrender of the princess, and Masinissa, to spare her the humility of captivity, sent her a

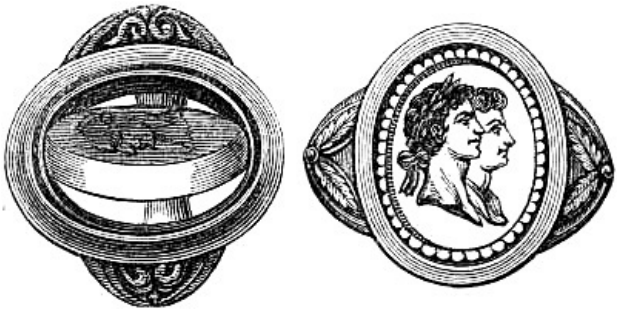
[Pg 38]

bowl of poison, which she drank without hesitation, and thus perished.



Ring with figures of
Masinissa and Sophonisba.

The portraits of Caligula and Drusilla, in an iron ring, made to turn from one side to the other (Gorlæus):—

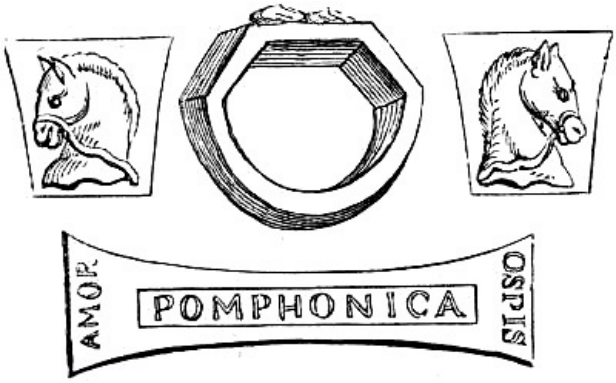


Caligula and Drusilla.

A representation of Victory, suspending a shield to a palm-tree (Gorlæus):—

Roman ring of ‘Victory.’

With regard to the engraved representations on rings, Clemens Alexandrinus gives some advice to the Christians of the second century: ‘Let the engraving upon the stone be either a pigeon, or a fish, or a ship running before the wind, or a musical lyre, which was the device used by Polycrates; or a ship’s anchor, which Seleucus had cut upon his signet; and if it represents a man fishing, the wearer will be put in mind of the Apostle, and of the little children drawn up out of the water. For we must not engrave on them images of idols, which we are forbidden even to look at; nor a sword, nor a bow, being the followers of peace, nor drinking goblets, being sober men.’ (See Chapter IV., ‘Rings in connexion with ecclesiastical usages,’ *religious rings*.) The Rev. C. W. King remarks that ‘the practice of engraving licentious subjects on rings was very prevalent in Ancient Rome. Ateius Capito, a famous lawyer of the Republic, highly censured the practice of wearing figures of deities on rings, on account of the profanation to which they were exposed.’ [Pg 39]



Roman.

The same distinguished writer mentions an antique gold ring now in the Florentine Cabinet, set with a cameo, which evidently shows that it belonged to some Roman sporting gentleman, who, as the poet says, ‘held his wife a little higher than his horse,’ for it is set with a cameo-head of a lady, of tolerable work in garnet, and on the shoulders of the ring are intaglio busts of his two favourite steeds; also a garnet with their names cut in the gold on each side—*Amor* and *Ospis*. On the outside of the shank is the legend *Pomphonica*, [Pg 40]

‘success to thee, Pomphius,’ very neatly engraved on the gold.

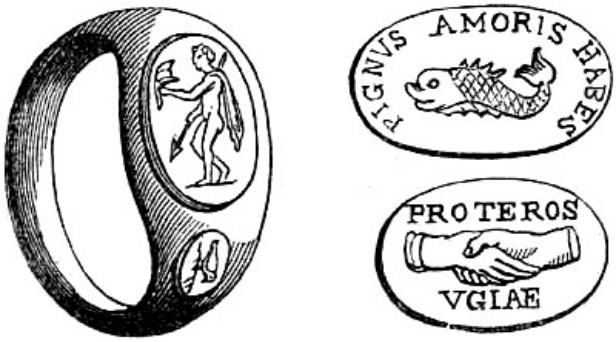
In the possession of Captain Spratt is a remarkably fine specimen of early Greek work, a large ring of thin gold, set with an intaglio on very fine red sard, oval, of most unusual size, representing a figure of Abundantia beside an altar; the edge of the setting slightly bended; the stone held in its position by thin points of gold. This most important gem is in its original gold setting, and was purchased in June 1845 at Milo, where it had been found the previous year, within a short distance of the theatre, near the position in which the Venus of Milo had been discovered about thirty years previously.

Such was the value attached by the Romans to the setting of gems in rings, that Nonius, a senator, is said to have been proscribed by Antony, for the sake of a precious opal, valued at 20,000*l.* of our money, which he would not relinquish.

The taste for engraved gems, ‘grew,’ observes the Rev. C. W. King, ‘into an ungovernable passion, and was pushed by its noble votaries to the last degree of extravagance. Pliny seriously attributes to nothing else the ultimate downfall of the Republic; for it was in a quarrel about a ring at a certain auction that the feud originated between the famous demagogue Drusus, and the chief senator Cæpio, which led to the breaking out of the Social War, and to all its fatal consequences.’

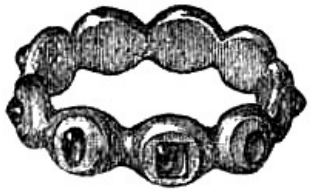
In the Braybrooke Collection is a gold Roman finger-ring, with two hands clasping a turquoise in token of concord: this device, a favourite one in mediæval times, has thus an early origin. In the same collection is a beautiful Romano-British gold ring, chased to imitate the scales of a serpent, which it resembles in form: the eyelet-holes have been set with some coloured gem, or paste, now lost. [Pg 41]

Sometimes the decoration of a ring was not confined to a single gem. Valerian speaks of the *annulus bigemmis*, and Gorlæus gives specimens; one, the larger gem of which has cut upon it the figure of Mars, holding a spear and helmet, but wearing only the chlamys; the smaller gem is incised with a dove and myrtle-branch. Engraved are two examples of the emblematic devices and inscriptions adopted for classic rings when used as memorial gifts. The first is inscribed,—‘You have a love-pledge,’ the second,—‘Proteros (to) Ugiæ,’ between conjoined hands.



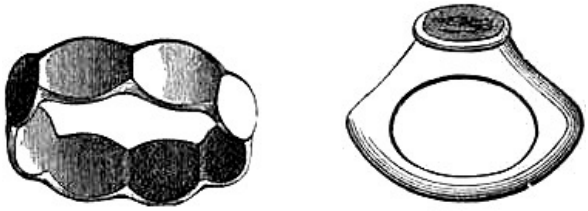
Roman ‘memorial’ gift-rings.

The annexed illustration represents a jewelled ring of gold, considered to be of Roman work. It is formed with nine little bosses, set with uncut gems, emeralds, garnets, and a sapphire: one only, supposed to be a blue spinel, is cut in pyramidal fashion. [Pg 42]



Anglo-Roman.

A similar ring, of gold, found in Barton, Oxfordshire, may, probably, be ascribed to the same period of the Roman rule in Britain. Weight 3 dwts. 16 grains. (‘Archæological Journal,’ vol. vi. p. 290.)

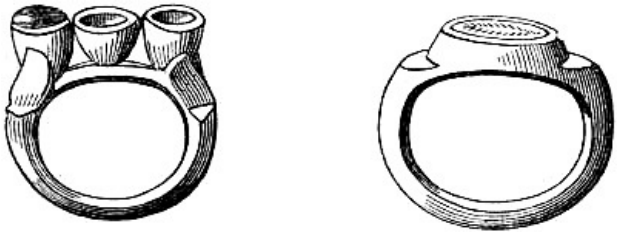


Anglo-Roman. Roman.

The Roman ring here given must have been inconvenient to the wearer from its form, but

may have been used as a signet. Rings were chiefly used by the Romans for sealing letters and papers; also cellars, chests, casks, &c.[9] They were affixed to certain signs, or symbols, used for tokens, like what we call tallies, or tally-sticks, and given in contracts instead of a bill, or bond, or for any sign. Rings were also given by those who agreed to club for an entertainment, to the person commissioned to bespeak it, from *symbola*, a reckoning; hence, *symbolam dare*, to pay his reckoning. Rings were also given as votive offerings to the gods.

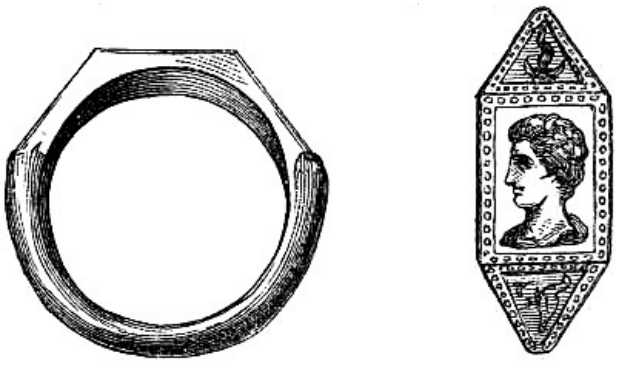
In 1841 a curious discovery was made at Lyons of the jewel-case of a Roman lady containing [Pg 43] a complete *trousseau*, including rings: one is of gold, the hoop slightly ovular, and curving upward to a double leaf, supporting three cup-shaped settings, one still retaining its stone, an Arabian emerald. Another is also remarkable for its general form, and still more so for its inscription, 'Veneri et Tvtele Votvm,' explained by M. Comarmond as a dedication to Venus, and the local goddess Tutela, who was believed to be the protector of the navigators of the Rhine; hence he infers these jewels to have belonged to the wife of one of those rich traders in the reign of Severus.



Roman rings, found at Lyons.

Boeckh's Inscriptions (dating from the Peloponnesian War) enumerate in the Treasury of the Parthenon, among other sacred jewels, the following rings: an onyx set in a gold ring; ditto in a silver ring; a jasper set in a gold ring; a jasper *seal*, enclosed in gold, seemingly a mounted scarabæus; a signet in a gold ring, dedicated by Dexilla (the two last were evidently cut in the gold itself); two gem signets set in one gold ring; two signets in silver rings, one plated with gold; seven signets of *coloured glass* plated with gold (*i.e.* their settings); eight silver rings, and one gold piece, fine (probably a Daric), a gold ring of 1½ drs. offered by Axiothea, wife of Socles; a gold ring with one gold piece, fine, *tied* to it, offered by Phryniscus, the Thessalian; a plain gold ring weighing ½ dr. offered by Pletho of [Pg 44] Ægina (a widow's mite).

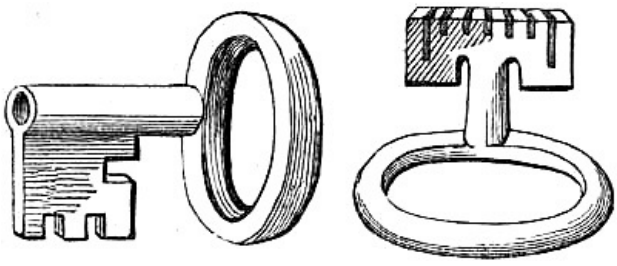
Fabia Fabiana, a Roman lady, offered in honour of her granddaughter Avita, amongst other costly gifts, two rings on her little finger with diamonds, on the next finger a ring with many gems, emeralds and one pearl; on the top joint of the same ring, a ring with an emerald. 'The notice of the two diamond-rings and the emerald-ring on the top joint of the ring-finger are,' remarks the Rev. C. W. King, 'very curious. The pious old lady had evidently offered the entire set of jewels belonging to her deceased grandchild for the repose of her soul.'



Roman.

The annexed engraving represents a remarkably fine Roman bronze ring of a curious shape. The parts nearest the collet are flat and resemble a triangle from which the summit has been cut. The peculiarity of the ring is an intaglio, here represented, cut out of the material itself, representing a youthful head. The two triangular portions which start from the table of the ring are filled with ornaments, also engraved hollow. Upon it is the word VIVAS, or *Mayest thou live*; probably a gift of affection, or votive offering.

In many of the Roman keys that have been discovered the ring was actually worn on the [Pg 45] finger. The shank disappears, and the wards are at right angles to the ring, or in the direction of the length of the finger.



Roman ‘Key-rings.’

When a person, at the point of death, delivered his ring to anyone, it was esteemed a mark of particular affection. The Romans not only took off the rings from the fingers of the dead, but also from such as fell into a very deep sleep or lethargy. Pliny observes: ‘Gravatis somno aut morientibus religione quadam annuli detrahuntur.’ Some have conjectured that Spartian alludes to this custom where, taking notice in the Life of the Emperor Hadrian of the tokens of his approaching death, he says: ‘Signa mortis hæc habuit: annulus in quo Imago ejus sculpta erat, sponte de digito lapsus est.’ The ring, with his own image on it, fell of itself from his finger. Morestellus thinks they took the rings from the fingers for fear the Pollinctores, or they who prepared the body for the funeral, should take them for themselves, because when the dead body was laid on the pile they put the rings on the fingers again, and burnt them with the corpse.

The custom of burning the dead lasted to the time of Theodosius the Great, as Gothofredus states. Macrobius, who lived under Theodosius the Younger, says the custom of burning the dead had quite ceased in his time.

The Romans commonly wore the rings on the *digitus annularis*, the fourth finger, and upon the left hand, but this custom was not always observed. Clemens Alexandrinus remarks that men ought to wear the ring at the bottom of the little finger, that they might have their hand more at liberty. For Pliny’s account of this, and other ring customs, I refer the reader to the Appendix at the end of this volume. [Pg 46]

The clients of a Roman lawyer (remarks Fosbroke), usually presented him, as a birthday present, with a ring, which was only used on that occasion.

Rings were given among the Romans on birthdays—generally the most solemn festival among them, when they dressed and ornamented themselves, with as much grandeur as they could afford, to receive their guests. Persius alludes to the natal ring in his first Satire, in which a ring, richly set with precious stones, figures as a part of the ceremonial.

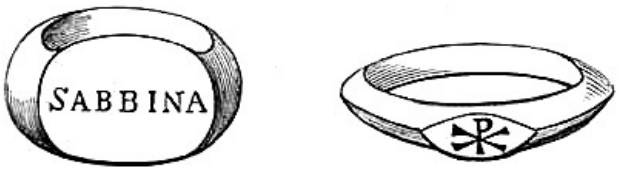
The gladiators often wore heavy rings, a blow from which was sometimes fatal. The ring of the first barbarian chief who entered and sacked Rome was a curious cornelian inscribed ‘Alaricus rex Gothorum.’

In the famous Castellani Collection of Antiques, now in the British Museum, are some splendid specimens of Roman rings: one with an uncut crystal of diamond, a stone of great rarity, and highly prized; also a minute votive ring set with a cameo, which probably adorned the finger of a statuette; a curious double ring for two fingers. The early Christian rings are very remarkable; one has a crossed ‘P’ in gold, formerly filled with stones or enamel; another has an anchor for device, and one a ship, emblematic of the Church.

Amongst the Greek rings in this superb collection is the most splendid intaglio, *on gold*, ever discovered; the bust of some Berenice or Arsinoe side by side with that of Serapis; the ring itself, plain and very massive, is, as the Rev. C. W. King observes, ‘a truly royal signet.’ [Pg 47]

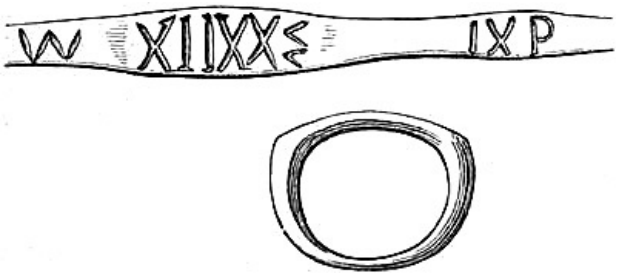
A ring in the Londesborough Collection bears the *Labarum*, the oldest monogram of Christianity, derived from the vision in which Constantine believed he saw the sacred emblem, and placed it on his standard with the motto, ‘In hoc signo vinces.’ This ring came from the Roman sepulchre of an early Christian.

An engraving of another ring in the same collection of massive silver is inscribed Sabbina, most probably a love-gift.



Roman.

The following represents a bronze ‘legionary’ ring, of oval form, with flattened bezel, supposed to be Early Christian; obtained from Rome (‘Arch. Journal,’ vol. xxvi. p. 146):—



Roman ‘Legionary’ ring.

Another, of the same description, is more elaborate:— [Pg 48]

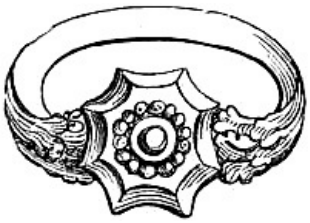
Roman ‘Legionary’ ring. Roman.

The collections of our English antiquaries contain numerous specimens of Roman rings. At Uriconium several have been found of very varied materials. Rings formed of bone, amber, [10] and glass were provided for the poorer people, as was the case in ancient Egypt.

Roman amber and glass rings.

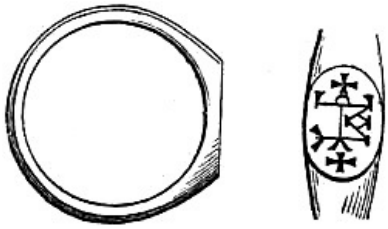
In the later period of the Roman empire a more ostentatious decoration of rings, derived from Byzantium, became common. In Montfaucon we find illustrations of this change from the classical simplicity of earlier times.

A specimen of this character is given by Montfaucon:— [Pg 49]



Byzantine.

The annexed represents a gold ring, probably of the fifth or sixth century, found at Constantinople (‘Arch. Journal,’ vol. xxvi. p. 146):—

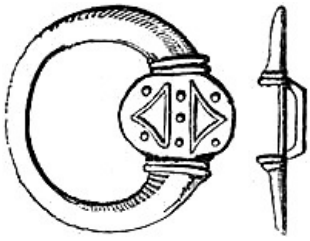


Byzantine.

In the Museum at Naples are two fine specimens of rings discovered at Herculaneum and Pompeii, illustrations of which are here given from the work of M. Louis Barré, ‘Herculaneum et Pompeii’ (Paris, 1839-40):—

Rings from Herculaneum and Pompeii.

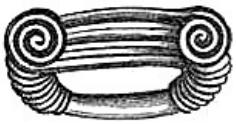
A bronze ring is curious from having similar ornaments to those of the horse-furniture discovered some years ago at Stanwick, on the estates of the Duke of Northumberland in Yorkshire, and which are analogous in the character of their design to those found in Roman places of sepulture in Rhenish Germany. [Pg 50]



Roman.

Representation of a ‘trophy’ ring in the Museum of the Hermitage, St. Petersburg; the figure of a lion on the convex; on the reverse a trophy:—

‘Trophy’ ring.

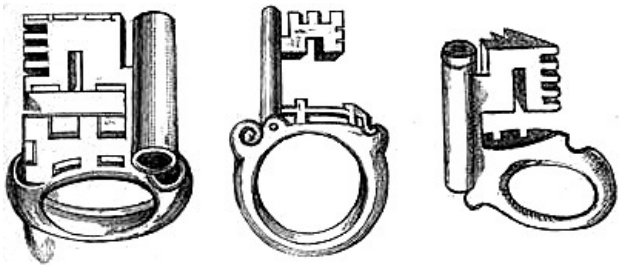


Roman ring (from the Museum at Mayence).

In the Waterton Collection are some valuable and curious specimens of Greek and Roman art in ring-manufacture. These are composed of gold, silver, bronze, iron, lead, earthenware, amber, vitreous paste, jet, white cornelian, lapis-lazuli, chrysoprase, &c. Amongst these will be seen some interesting Roman rings for children; one engraved with a rude figure of Victory, found at Rietri, in 1856, diam. 9/16 in. In the same collection are bronze ‘legionary’ rings—perhaps the number of a ‘centuria,’ some corps employed about Rome, where all the rings of this character connected with the collection have been found.

Among the ‘votive’ rings in this collection, is one in the form of a shoe, inscribed FELIX, of bronze. [Pg 51]

There are also specimens of rings with the key on the hoop, to which I have alluded in the chapter on ‘Betrothal and Wedding Rings.’ One has a fluted pipe; another has a key with two wards; in another the key is riveted on the hoop.



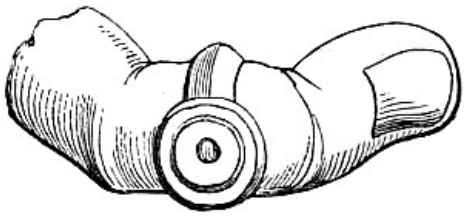
Roman Key-rings.

The earthenware rings are of brown or red. The amber rings are of mottled deep red, set with green paste. Those in vitreous paste are of pale blue, transparent yellowish and transparent brown. A ‘jet’ ring belongs to the late Roman period. A white cornelian ring has a smaller part of the hoop cut down, so as to form an oval bezel, on which is engraved a standing figure of Æsculapius. A gold ring, Roman, set with oval intaglio, on cornelian, of a trophy consisting of a horse’s head bridled, and two Gallic shields crossed, with the name of Q. Cornel Lupi, is the seal of Quintus Cornelius Lupus, commemorating a victory over the Gauls: the setting is modern. Another gold ring, with oval bezel, set with an intaglio on yellow sard, has a youthful bust, full-faced; on one side a spear, on the other side, in Greek [Pg 52]

letters, ‘Hermai.’ A gold ring with nicoli onyx is inscribed ‘Vibas Luxuri Homo Bone.’

Some of the ‘Early Christian’ rings in the same collection are very interesting. These are of silver, bronze, and lead. One of silver has an octagonal bezel engraved with the Agnus Dei; another, of bronze, has a square bezel inscribed ‘Vivas in Deo’; a bronze ring with oval bezel is chased with a lamb, the shoulders and hoop chased so as to represent a wreath of palms; another, of bronze, has a projecting octagonal bezel, engraved with a dove and a star, the hoop formed so as to resemble a wreath. A massive bronze ring has the bezel engraved with the figure of an *orante*; on the hoop is also a *sigillum* engraved with a cross. One ring, of lead, has a flattened bezel rudely incised with a cross.

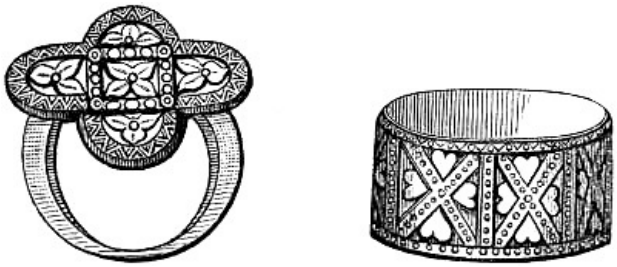
The following engraving represents the fore-finger, from a bronze statue, of late Roman workmanship, on which a large ring is seen on the second joint. A similar custom prevails in Germany.



Late Roman (from the Waterton Collection).

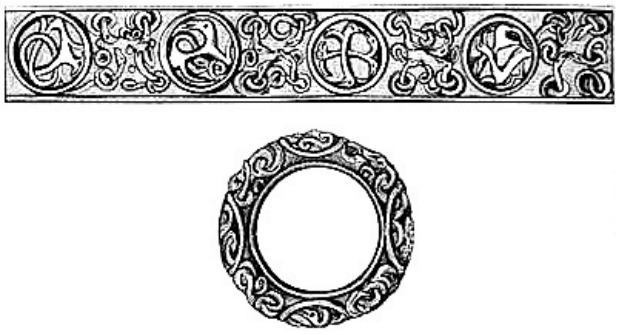
The latest ‘surprise’ in regard to rings is that in connection with Dr. Schliemann’s discovery of antiquities upon the presumed site of Troy. The Doctor, in June 1873, after indefatigable exertions in excavating, came upon a *trouvaille* consisting of ancient relics of great rarity, value, and importance, including finger-rings, of which, as I have mentioned, the Homeric writings make no mention. These were found among a marvellous assemblage of bronze, silver, and gold objects, which lay together in a heap within a small space. This seemed to indicate that they had originally been packed in a chest which had perished in a conflagration (most of the articles having been exposed to the action of fire), a bronze key being found near them. The period to which these objects belong is the subject of much controversy, but their origin must date from a very remote period. [Pg 53]

Among our British, Saxon, and Mediæval ancestors, rings were in common use. Pliny (‘Hist. Nat.’ lib. xxxiii. c. 6) mentions, that the Britons wore the ring on the middle finger. In the account of the gold, silver, and jewellery belonging to Edward the First is mentioned ‘a gold ring with a sapphire, the workmanship of St. Dunstan.’ Aldhelm, ‘*De Laud. Virg.*’, describes a lady with bracelets, necklaces, and rings set with gems on her fingers. Rings are frequently mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon annals. They appear to have been worn then on the finger next to the little finger, and on the right hand—for a Saxon bard calls that the golden finger—and we find recorded that a right hand was once cut off on account of this ornament.



Anglo-Saxon.

[Pg 54]



Early British (?) ring, found at Malton.

It was not uncommon for Saxon gold rings to have the name of the owner for a legend. Some of the rings of the Anglo-Saxon period which have been discovered would not discredit the

workmanship of a modern artificer. One of the most interesting relics of enamelled art which is exhibited in the medal room of the British Museum is the gold ring of Ethelwulf, King of Wessex (A.D. 837-857), the father of Alfred the Great. It was found in the parish of Laverstock, Hampshire, in a cart-rut, where it had become much crushed and defaced. Its weight is 11 dwts. 14 grains. This ring was presented to the British Museum by Lord Radnor, in 1829. Ethelwulf became later in life a monk at Winchester, where he had been educated, and he died there. No reasonable ground can be alleged for doubting the authenticity of this ring.[11] [Pg 55]

Ring of Ethelwulf.

M. de Laborde, in his 'Notice des Émaux, &c., du Louvre,' considers the character of the design and ornament to be Saxon; and there is every reason to suppose it was the work of a Saxon artist.

In connexion with this valuable relic is the gold ring of Æthelswith, Queen of Mercia, the property of the Rev. W. Greenwell, F.S.A., by whom it was exhibited at a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries in January 1875. On this occasion, A. W. Franks, Esq., Director of the Society, made the following observations:—'This ring is one of the most remarkable relics of antiquity that has appeared in our rooms for many years past.

'It was ploughed up in Yorkshire, between Aberford and Sherburn in the West Riding, and it is said that the fortunate finder attached it to the collar of his dog as an ornament. It is of gold, weighing 312 grains; the outer surface is engraved, and partly filled up with niello. In the centre of the bezel is the Agnus Dei, accompanied by the letters A.D. The second letter has a stroke passing through it, so as to resemble the Saxon *th*. If this stroke is not to be considered a simple contraction, it may be intended for ἀρνὸς or ἀρνίον Φεοῦ. In the half circle on each side are conventional animals or monsters; the whole is surrounded by a border of dots, much worn in places. The most remarkable part of the ring, however, is the inscription within, which is in letters large in proportion to the surface they occupy, and which read EATHELSVITH REGNA. These letters, excepting the two last, are in double outline. The engraver seems to have miscalculated the space necessary, and has left out one letter towards the end and given the NA in single lines; or, perhaps, the I and the N are combined in a monogram. [Pg 56]

'The inscription is perfectly genuine, and we have, therefore, before us the ring of Queen Æthelswith. The only person to whom, with any probability, this inscription can be applied is Æthelswith, daughter of Ethelwulf, and wife of Burgred or Burhred, King of Mercia. She was thus sister to Alfred the Great. According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, under the year 853 (854), Burhred, King of the Mercians, prayed in that year King Ethelwulf to aid him in reducing the North Welsh to obedience, which he did; the Easter after which King Ethelwulf gave his daughter in marriage to Burhred. She appears as witness to the charter of Burhred in 855 and 857, and 866 and 869 (Kemble's Codex, cclxxvii., cclxxviii., cclxxx., ccxci., ccxii., ccxcix.). In 868 we have a charter giving to her faithful servant Cuthwulf land in Lacinge. About 872-4 she is witness to a charter of Æthelred, Duke of Mercia. In 888 (889) we learn from the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle" that she died:—"And Queen Æthelswith, who was King Alfred's sister, died on the way to Rome, and her body lies at Pavia."

'She was daughter of Ethelwulf by Osburh, daughter of Oslac, the King's cup-bearer, and must have been many years older than her brother Alfred, as he was only five years old at the time of her marriage.

'With regard to the inscription within the ring, it may be noticed that it exhibits scarcely any traces of wear, while the edges of the ring show marks of having been long worn. The engraving (which illustrates this explanation in the "Proceedings of the Society") moreover, scarcely looks like the work of a goldsmith. I would, therefore, suggest that the Queen had probably offered this ring at some shrine, and the priests connected with the shrine had engraved her name within the ring, to record the royal giver. It could scarcely have been deposited in her tomb, as she is recorded to have been buried at Pavia.' [Pg 57]

In the rings of King Ethelwulf and his daughter, certain symmetrically-placed portions of the design are not filled with niello. These may (observes Mr. Franks) have been enriched with some coloured mastic now perished. It has been habitual to describe the inlaying of Ethelwulf's ring as blue enamel, which is certainly an error. Enamel was very seldom employed by the Anglo-Saxon jeweller, and enamel and niello could with difficulty be applied to the same object, on account of the different heat at which these two substances melt.

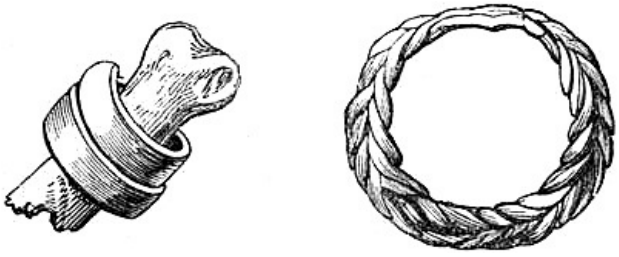
An illustration of the remarkable ring of the Queen of Mercia is displayed on the cover of this work.

Rings were given in Anglo-Saxon times to propitiate royal favours. Thus, towards the end of the tenth century, Beorhtric, a wealthy noble in Kent, left in his will a ring worth thirty mancuses of gold that the queen might be his advocate that the will should stand. In the Braybrooke Collection is a plain silver ring, inscribed on the top of the exterior of the hoop, with the Anglo-Saxon word 'Dolȝbot,' the meaning of which is, compensation made for giving a man a wound, either by a stab or blow. This ring is ornamented by a simple wavy line, and dots, as if to represent a branch, and was found in Essex. From its size, probably a woman's ring—perhaps for injury, or the death of her husband.

There are various nielloed rings of the Saxon period; notably a gold ring with an inscription, and partly in runes, meaning 'Alhreds owns me, Eanred engraved (or wrought) me,' now in the British Museum, which also has a gold ring with two facets, found in the river Nene, near Peterborough, engraved in the Archæological Institute Proceedings for 1856. [Pg 58]

Anglo-Saxon.

Plain wire rings were used by the South Saxons; specimens have been obtained in Anglo-Saxon grave-mounds in England, and others, identical in form, in the old Saxon cemeteries in Germany. Mr. Fairholt says: 'In the museum at Augsburg are several, which were found in cutting for the railway near that city. One of the plain wire rings' (the first of our illustrations) 'was exhumed from a tumulus on Chartham Downs, a few miles from Canterbury, in 1773, by the Rev. Bryan Faussett, who says: "The bones were those of a very young person. Upon the neck was a cross of silver, a few coloured earthen beads, and two silver rings with sliding knots." The second illustration—a wire ring, twisted so as to resemble a seal ring—was discovered in a Saxon cemetery on Kingston Downs, Canterbury.' [Pg 59]



Early Saxon rings, found near Salisbury.

The simplest form of finger-ring worn by our ancestors, consisted of a band of metal, merely twisted round to embrace the finger, and open at either end. One of these rings found upon the finger-bone of an early Saxon, in excavating at Harnham Hill, near Salisbury, was found on the middle finger of the right hand of a person of advanced age. Sometimes several rings were found on one hand. Among the bones of the fingers of the left hand of an adult skeleton was found a silver ring of solid form, another of spiral form, and a plain gold ring. Mr. Akerman, who superintended these researches, says: 'Similar rings have been found at Little Wilbraham, at Linton Heath, at Fairford, and other localities. They are, for the most part, of a uniform construction, being so contrived that they could be expanded or contracted, and adapted to the size of the finger of the wearer.' [Pg 60]

South Saxon ring,
found in the Thames.

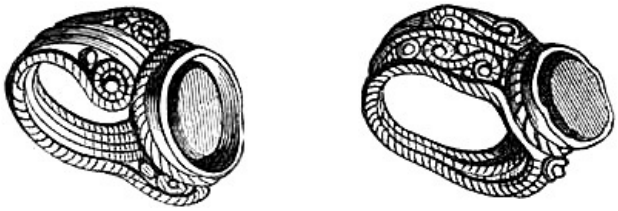
In the Waterton Collection is a very curious South Saxon ring, described as ‘an elongated oval with a circular centre; within the circle is the conventional figure of a dragon, surrounded by four convoluted ornaments, reminding one of the prevailing enrichments so lavishly bestowed on old Runic ornaments, at home and abroad. Four quaintly-formed heads of dragons occupy the triangular spaces above and below this centre. The ground between the ornaments has been cut down, probably for the insertion of niello or enamel colour.’ It was found in the Thames at Chelsea in 1856.

At a meeting of the Royal Archæological Institute in June 1873 Mr. J. J. Rogers exhibited some Anglo-Saxon bronze rings which were found in a cave, in the parish of St. Keverne, Cornwall.

The Duke of Northumberland possesses a beautiful ring of pale-coloured gold (weight 157 grains), set with a ruby-coloured gem, surrounded with filagree work, the hoop beaded with small circles, punched, as on work of the Saxon age. It was discovered, about 1812, by a boy who was ploughing, near Watershaugh, Northumberland, and found the ring fixed on the point of his ploughshare.

In the collection of R. H. Soden Smith, Esq., F.S.A., is a curious Anglo-Saxon ring, found about ten feet below the surface of the ground, in making Garrick Street, Covent Garden. It [Pg 61] is of gold, the hoop nearly half an inch wide, with a broad oval bezel, expanding to 1 3/16 inches; the gold pale, alloyed with silver. The whole is overlaid with funiform wire ornaments and granulated work; on the bezel are four curves of beaded filagree radiating from the centre ornament, and having smaller bosses of similar work between.[12]

Spiral elastic band rings of Anglo-Saxon work have been found in considerable numbers in excavations. Douglas, in his ‘Nenia Britannica,’ describes many specimens under this term, found by him in the graves of Anglo-Saxon tribes.



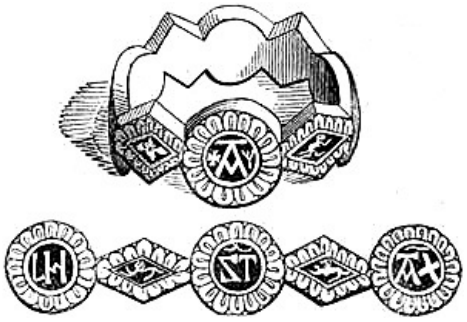
Ancient Irish rings, found near Drogheda.

In the earlier history of Ireland we find instances of a wonderful development of artistic skill in goldsmith work. The Royal Irish Academy possesses some beautiful specimens of rings. The Londesborough Collection includes two remarkable rings which were found with other gold ornaments near the remarkable tumulus, known as ‘New Grange,’ a few miles from Drogheda. They were accidentally discovered in 1842 by a labouring man, within a few yards to the entrance of the tumulus, at the depth of two feet from the surface of the ground, and without any covering or protection from the earth about them. Another labouring man, hearing of this discovery, carefully searched the spot whence they were [Pg 62] taken, and found a denarius of Geta. The stone set in both rings is a cut agate.

Aildergoidhe, son of Muinheamhoin, monarch of Ireland, who reigned 3070 A.M., is traditionally said to have been the first prince who introduced the wearing of gold rings into Ireland, which he bestowed on persons of merit who excelled in knowledge of the arts and sciences.

Early Irish gold ring.

The engraving (from the ‘Archæological Journal,’ June 1848), represents a gold ring twisted, or plaited, of early Irish work, in the fine collection of antiquities of Edwin Hoare, Esq., of Cork.



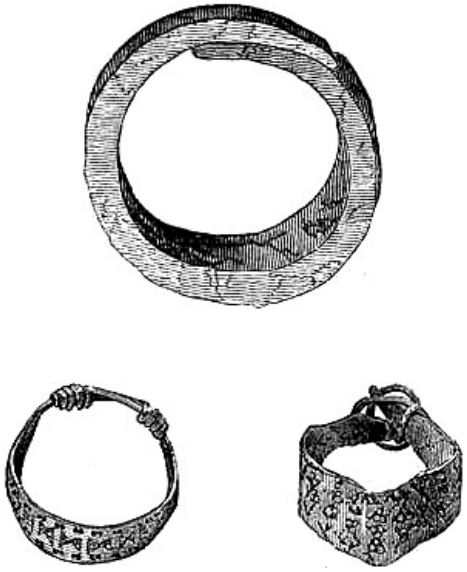
The ‘Alhstan’ ring.

The Alhstan ring, engraved and described in the ‘Archæologia’ (vol. iv. p. 47), is in the Waterton Collection. Some observations on this very remarkable ring are given by that learned antiquary, the Rev. Mr. Pegge. It was found by a labourer on the surface of the ground at Llysfaen in Caernarvonshire. It is of good workmanship, and weighs about an ounce. It bears the inscription of Alhstan, which was a common Saxon name. Mr. Pegge appropriates the ring to the Bishop of Sherborne of that name, because the dragon of [Pg 63]
Wessex, apparent in the first lozenge, was not only the device on the royal standard of Wessex, but the Bishop of Sherborne had often conducted armies under it, having been much engaged in affairs of war. The prelate died in 867, in the beginning of the reign of Ethelred I.

Anglo-Saxon ring, found near Bosington.

In the Journal of the British Archæological Association (vol. i.) is a cut of an Anglo-Saxon gold-ring, discovered at Bosington, near Stockbridge; it is of considerable thickness, ornamented with rich chain-work, and has in its centre a male head, round which is inscribed ‘Nomen Ehlla Fid in xpo,’—my name is Ella; my faith is in Christ. It is now in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford.

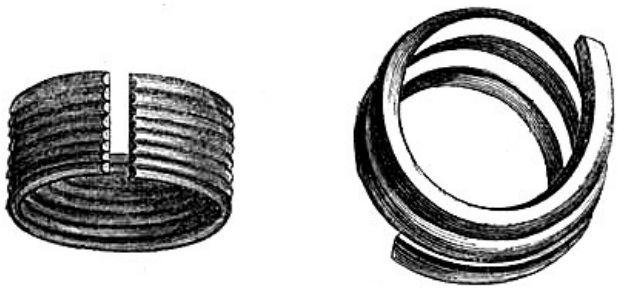
[Pg 64]



In 1840 at Cuerdale, near Preston, some curious discoveries of coins and treasure were made, considered to have been deposited about the year 910, and the ornaments such as were worn about the time of Alfred, or somewhat earlier. These included several rings, representations of which are given in the 'Archæological Journal' (vol. iv. p. 127). One is merely a piece of metal hammered flat, thinner and narrower at the ends, and formed into a circle; the ends lapping over, but without any fastening. It is entirely without ornament. In some specimens the metal is hammered and bent into the form of a ring, in the same manner as the flat one. Two rings are formed exactly like some armlets, found at the same time; the punch has had a triangular point, and triangles conjoined at their bases having been struck side by side, parallel rows of sunk lozenges have been produced. Another ring has been hammered into a small four-sided bar, then twisted, and ultimately formed into a ring, the ends of which meet, but have not been united. In another ring two wires have been hammered into a roundish form, tapering towards the ends, which have been tied together. Each wire has been ornamented by transverse blows of a blunt chisel, and has the appearance of being also twisted; these two have been twined together to form one ring. [Pg 65]

In a communication from Mr. Worsaae, of Copenhagen, to the 'Archæological Journal,' he observes that the triangular pattern with three or four points on the Cuerdale rings differs totally from the designs on Celtic, Roman, or Saxon remains, and which never seems to occur on any objects found in the interior or southern parts of Europe. 'To the instances which Mr. Hawkins has already cited of similar patterns on silver objects found in Denmark and in Finland, I can only add that I have seen precisely similar objects with the same pattern in Ireland, Prussia, and Sweden, and that in the interior of Russia, in *tumuli* in the neighbourhood of Moscow, the same patterns have been found on rings. In nearly every instance these ornaments have been found along with oriental or Cufic coins, as in the case at Cuerdale.' Mr. Worsaae is of opinion that they are of eastern origin, and were brought to the north in the same way as the oriental coins.

In the collection of antiquities of the Royal Irish Academy there are two curious specimens of rings; one, like a ferule, fluted both externally and internally, so as to resemble seven plain rings, attached to one another; and their weight is 9 dwts.



Rings in the Royal Irish Academy.

The other is a five-sided bar of gold, flat on the inside near the finger, and angular externally; weight 1 oz. 12 dwts. 6 grs. This might be denominated a torque ring. [Pg 66]

The following illustration represents a spiral silver ring, found at Largo, weighing 120 grs. It is shaped, apparently, by the hammer. The edges are serrated. A spiral ring found with Saxon remains in Kent, engraved by Douglas in his 'Nenia,' and another found in the Isle of Wight, represented in the 'Winchester' volume of the Archæological Association, may be compared with the present example.

Spiral silver ring.

Dr. Mantell has a massive gold ring, supposed to have been worn on the finger, formed of two square bars rudely twisted together, and gradually diminishing in size towards the

extremities, where they are united together. It was ploughed up at Bormer, in Sussex, and was presented to Dr. Mantell by the Earl of Chichester. It is represented in Horsfield's 'History of Lewes,' plate iv. Similar rings of this description, but differing in the fashion of the twist, have been noticed as found in Britain. The resemblance between these ornaments and the gold 'ring-money' of the interior of Africa is exceedingly curious.

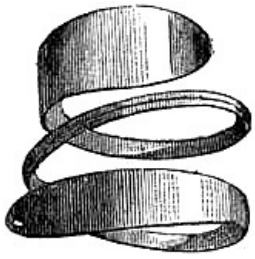
Ring: Flodden Field.

The annexed engraving (from the 'Archæological Journal,' vol. iii. p. 269) represents a gold ring, belonging to Sir Noel Paton, F.S.A., Scotland, reported to have been found on the field of Flodden: weight 8 dwts. 17 grs. Other rings of a similar form have been discovered, and 'they appear to offer some analogy with the torc of the Celtic age.' [Pg 67]

The annexed illustration represents a remarkably fine ring engraved in Chifflet's 'Anastasis Childerici' (1655), on the same page as that of the Childeric ring (described in the chapter on 'Memorial and Mortuary Rings'), for purposes of comparison, in carrying out his original theory, that the supposed bees of Childeric were, by gradual transition, converted into the figure known as the *fleur de lys* of a later monarchy, as he endeavours to illustrate by numerous diagrams, but he omits to say where this ring marked 'sapphirus' was originally found. It is a mere supposition that the figure represents St. Louis, but in Montfaucon's 'Monuments de la Monarchie Française' (Paris, 1729), in a long disquisition on the origin, &c., of the *fleur de lys*, on referring to plate xxiii. tom. ii. p. 158, where St. Louis 'instruit ses enfans,' his shield is noticed as bearing for the *first time three fleurs de lys*.

Sandford, in his 'Genealogical History' (pp. 270, 289), says that Henry the Fifth, being Prince of Wales, 'did bear azure, 3 *flowers de lys or*, for the Kingdom of France, reducing them from *semée* to the number 3, as did Charles VI., the present King.'

Among the old Northmen rings were generally worn by rich people and persons of rank. Such rings are frequently found in barrows of pagan date, and from their nature and quality it is easy to determine that they were generally of very simple workmanship; the reason of which, undoubtedly, was that they were used instead of money in commercial transactions, and had, therefore, not unfrequently to be cut asunder. Still, rings of more artistic workmanship are sometimes found in pagan graves. [Pg 68]

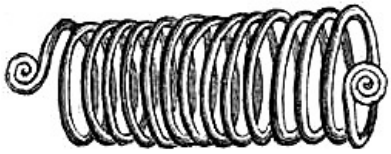


Gold.

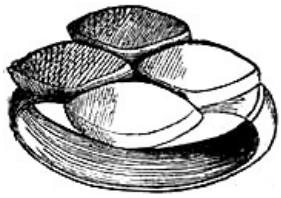
Bronze.

Gold, enamelled and inlaid.

Gold.



Gold.



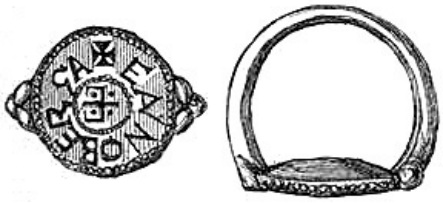
Gold.

The preceding cuts are taken from examples in the Royal Museum, Copenhagen, of the curious twisted spiral rings alluded to, found in the graves of the old Northmen. [Pg 69]

Charlemagne sealed all his acts with his ring. That of his son Louis le Débonnaire had for inscription XPE. PROTÈGE HELLDOVICUNI. IMPERATOREM.

From the reign of Hugh Capet each King had his particular seal-ring. St. Louis had for device a ring interlaced with a garland of lilies and daisies, in allusion to his name and that of his queen.

Two curious rings of early date are here represented: one a seal-ring of the Frankish period, found near Allonnes (Sarthe) bearing the monogram Lanoberga; the other, of gold, Merovingian, found in Vitry-le-Français, supposed to be a conjugal ring, with inscription.



Frankish period.

Merovingian.

The annexed illustration represents a gold ring, in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris, with the initials S. R., and supposed by the Abbé Cochet (‘La Normandie Souterraine’) to mean ‘Sigebertus Rex,’ but which of the three Sigeberts, Kings of Austrasia (the name given, under the Merovingians, to the eastern possessions of the Franks), cannot be conjectured. [Pg 70]

Merovingian.

To a similar period may, perhaps, be ascribed the ring found near Blois, represented in the following engraving:—

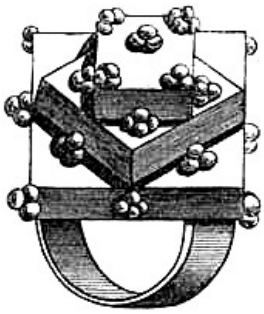
Merovingian.

The annexed cuts represent a gold signet-ring, inscribed ‘Heva,’ and a seal-ring, both of the Merovingian period.

Merovingian.

A remarkable ring of the Merovingian period, now in the collection of R. H. Soden Smith, Esq., F.S.A., was exhibited at the Archæological Institute in 1874. It is a massive gold ring, with oval bezel 1¼ inches long, by 1 inch in width, set with an antique polished chalcedony of two layers, the edges bevelled. The setting is rather more than a quarter of an inch deep, and is formed of a band of gold, supported by perpendicular ridges, made by folding another thick band, or ribbon, of gold; a double row of pellets of gold, and others on the shoulder of the hoop, add to the rich effect of the whole. The hoop is a somewhat rude angular band, [Pg 71] with a zigzag punched ornament round it. This ring was found in the neighbourhood of Bristol.

It was in the Middle Ages, however, after a period of comparative mediocrity, that the greatest degree of perfection in goldsmiths' work, and especially in rings, began to display itself. In the reign of Edward III. (1363), so great was the extravagance in dress and decoration that an Act was passed to repress the evil. All persons under the rank of Knighthood, or of less property than two hundred pounds in land and tenements, were forbidden to wear rings, and other articles of jewellery.



Gold 'Middle Age' ring,
from the Louvre.

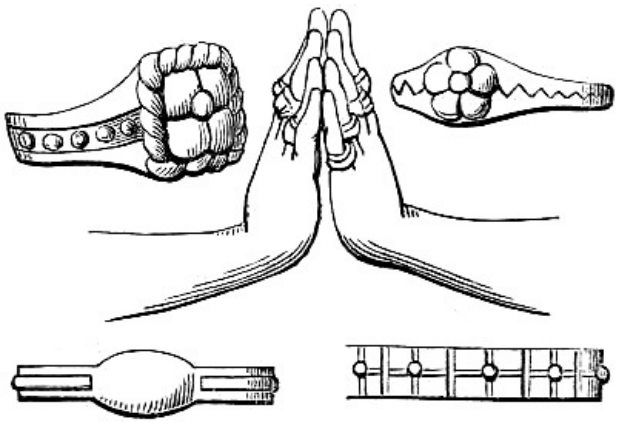
In the 'Vision of Pierce Ploughman,' written, it is supposed, about this date, the poet speaks of a richly-adorned lady, whose fingers were all embellished with rings of gold, set with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires.

In a parchment roll of Prayers to the Virgin in the Library of Jesus College, Oxford, which formerly belonged to Margaret of Anjou, there is a portrait of that queen who is represented wearing two rings on each finger except the least, placed on the middle as well as the third joint of the fingers—a fashion probably introduced by her, and shown in the curious portrait [Pg 72] of this queen on the tapestry at Coventry.

In later ages we find the same practice of ornamenting the fingers with several rings. In the description of a Scottish woman of the middle of the sixteenth century, attributed to Dunbar, we find:—

> On ilkune fyngar scho weirit ringis tuo
> Scho was als proud an ony papingo.

Queen Elizabeth had an immoderate love for jewellery; and the description given of her dresses covered with gems of the greatest rarity and beauty reads like a romance. For finger-rings she had a remarkable fondness. Paul Hentzner, in his 'Journey into England,' 1598, relates that a Bohemian baron having letters to present to her at the palace of Greenwich, the queen, after pulling off her glove, 'gave him her right hand to kiss, sparkling with rings and jewels—a mark of particular favour.'



Rings on the effigy of Lady Stafford.

In Bromsgrove Church, Staffordshire, are the fine monumental effigies of Sir Humphrey Stafford and his lady (1450)—remarkable alike for the rich armour of the knight and the [Pg 73] courtly costume of the lady. She wears a profusion of rings; every finger, except the little

finger of the right hand, being furnished with one. They exhibit great variety of design. The two hands are lifted in prayer.

'In the Duke of Newcastle's comedy,' observes Mr. Fairholt, 'the "Country Captain" (1649), a lady of title is told that when she resides in the country a great show of finger rings will not be necessary: "Show your white hand, with but one diamond, when you carve, and be not ashamed to wear your own ringe with the old posie." That many rings were worn by persons of both sexes is clear from another passage in the same play, where a fop is described, 'who makes his fingers like jewellers' cards to set rings upon.'

The same custom prevailed in France. Mercier, in his 'Tableau de France,' mentions that at the close of the eighteenth century enormous rings were worn. The hand of a woman presented a collection of rings, 'et si ces bagues étaient des antiques, elles offriraient un échantillon d'un cabinet des pierres gravées.' He adds that 'the nuptial ring is now unnoticed on the fingers of women; wide and profane rings altogether conceal this warrant of their faith.'

So important a business was the making of rings that it was separated from the ordinary work of the goldsmith, and became a distinct trade.

In the sixteenth century, among the various articles carried by the pedlar rings were reckoned. In Heywood's 'Four PP (A Newe and a very mery Enterlude of a Palmer, a Pardoner, a Potycary, and a Pedler),' the Potycary addresses the Pedler:—

> What the devyll hast thou there at thy backe?—

to which he replies:— [Pg 74]

> What dost thou not knowe that every pedler
> In all kinde of trifles must be a medler?
> Gloves, pinnes, combes, glasses unspotty'd,
> Pomanders, hookes, and lases knottyed;
> Broches, *rynges*, and all maner of bedes.

The instances in which brooches and rings are mentioned together are numerous. In Scott's edition of Sir Tristrem (pages 23, 28) we find:—

> Who gaf broche and beighe (ring)?
> Who but Douk Morgan?
>
> A loud thai sett that sleigh
> With all his winning yare
> With broche and riche beighe.

In the Chester Mystery Plays the shepherds do not know what to present to the Babe of Bethlehem, and Secundus Pastor says:—

> Goe we nere anon, with such as we have broughte,
> Ringe, broche, ner precious stoune,
> Let us see yf we have oughte to proffer.

And the 'first boye' adds:—

> Nowe Lorde for to geve thee have I no thinge,
> Neither goulde, silver, broche, ner ringe.

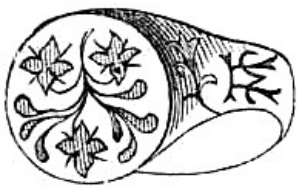
In the old ballad of Redisdale and Wise William the lady is enticed with rich presents:—

> Come down, come down, my lady fair,
> A sight of you i'll see,
> And bonny jewels, broaches, rings,
> I will give unto thee.

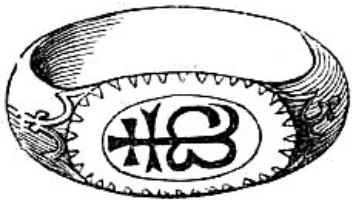
to which she replies:—

> If you have bonny broaches, rings,
> Oh, mine are bonny tee,
> Go from my yettes, now, Reedisdale, [Pg 75]
> For me ye shall not see.

Of the later period of ring decoration there are some splendid specimens in various collections. Mr. Fairholt, in his 'Facts about Finger-rings,' has given illustrations and descriptions of two rings of this character in the Londesborough Collection. One is decorated with floral ornament, engraved and filled with green and red enamel colours. The effect on the gold is extremely pleasing, having a certain quaint sumptuousness peculiarly its own. The other specimen, a signet-ring, bears a 'merchants' mark' (see notice of 'Merchants' marks' at the end of this chapter) upon its face.



Enamelled floral ring.



‘Merchant’s’ ring.

In the same collection is a ring, doubtless a *gage d’amour*, the hoop of which is richly decorated with quaint floriated ornaments, cut upon its surface, and filled in with the black composition termed *niello*, once extensively used by goldsmiths in enriching their works. This beautiful ring is inscribed within the hoop, ‘**Mon Cor Plesor**,’—‘my heart’s delight.’

There are two very beautiful examples of sixteenth century rings, one in the Londesborough Collection, which has a ruby in a very tall setting, enriched by enamel. The sides of the hoop are highly decorated with flowers and scroll ornament, also richly enamelled. The other ring is in the Waterton Collection, gold, enamelled, set with a large turquoise in the centre, and surrounded by six raised garnets. This ring is said to have subsequently belonged to Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, whose cipher is upon it. [Pg 76]

Ring: Sixteenth Century.

Ring of Frederick the Great.

Rings of Italian workmanship of a late period are remarkably beautiful. Venice particularly excelled in this art. In the Londesborough Collection is a fine specimen. The four claws of the other ring in open-work, support the setting of a sharply-pointed pyramidal diamond, such as was then coveted for writing on glass. The shank bears a fanciful resemblance to a serpent swallowing a bird, of which only the claws connecting the face remain on view.

Venetian.

Italian diamond ring.

‘It was,’ remarks Mr. Fairholt, ‘with a similar ring Raleigh wrote the words on a window-pane: “Fain would I rise, but that I fear to fall,” to which Queen Elizabeth added: “If thy heart fail thee, do not rise at all”—an implied encouragement which led him on to fortune.’[13] [Pg 77]

The annexed engraving represents a gold symbolical ring of the sixteenth century, enamelled, of various colours.

Italian.

Two rings are described by Mr. Fairholt of a peculiar construction. One, of Venice work, is set with three stones in raised bezels; to their bases are affixed, by a swivel, gold pendant

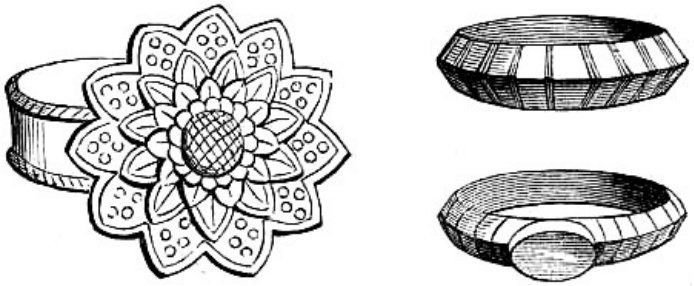
ornaments, each set with a garnet. As the hand moves, these pendants fall about the finger, the stones glittering in the movement. This fashion was evidently borrowed from the East, where people delight in pendant ornaments, and even affix them to articles of utility.

The other ring, of silver, is of East Indian workmanship, discovered in the ruins of one of the most ancient temples: to its centre are affixed bunches of pear-shaped, hollow drops of silver, which jingle with a soft, low note as the hand moves.[14] [Pg 78]

Venetian.

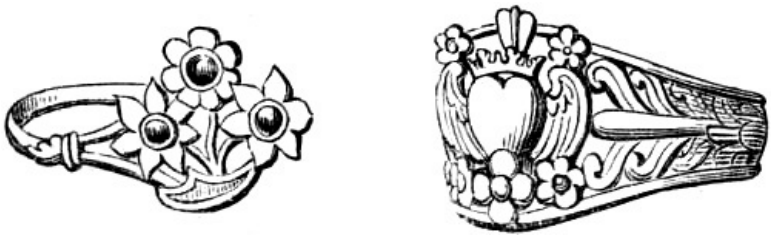
East Indian.

The Indians prefer rings with large floriated faces spreading over three fingers like a shield. When made for the wealthy, in massive gold, the flower leaves are of cut jewels, but the humbler classes are content with them in cast silver. Representations are here given of these rings.



Indian.

In Southern Europe, where jewellery is deemed almost an essential of life and the poorest will wear it in profusion, though only made of copper, the rings are curious and elaborate. A Spanish ring, of the early part of the last century, has a heart, winged and crowned, in its centre: the heart is transfixed by an arrow, but surrounded by flowers. It may possibly be a religious emblem. Another Spanish ring, of more modern manufacture, has a very light and elegant design. The flowers are formed of rubies and diamonds, and the effect is extremely pleasing. Such work may have originated the ‘giardinetti’ rings, specimens of which are seen in the South Kensington Museum. Two are there described as English work of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They appear to have been used as ‘guards,’ or ‘keepers,’ to the wedding-ring, and are of pleasing floriated design, and of very delicate execution. [Pg 79]



Spanish.

‘Giardinetti’ rings.

Annexed are representations of some remarkably fine rings (French) dating from the close of the fourteenth century or the commencement of the fifteenth.

French.

A handsome ring, of silver gilt, representing St. George and the Dragon, belongs to the end of the fifteenth century. There is a border of roses and fleurs-de-lys around the saint. [Pg 80]

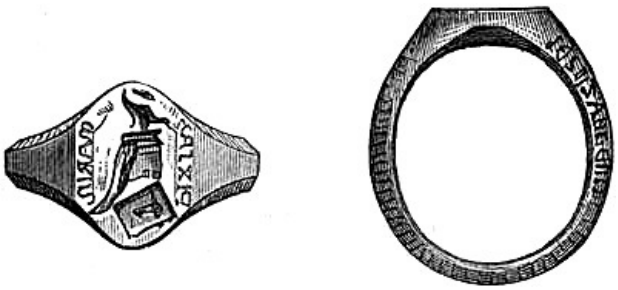
French.

French.

The following examples of French art of the sixteenth century are in the Museum of the Louvre:—

French.

The annexed illustration represents an escutcheon ring (from Viollet le Duc) of the Middle Ages, and is thus described by M. Chabouillet in his ‘Catalogue Général.’ The Cabinet of Medals at Paris possesses a ring dating from the commencement of the fifteenth century, if one may judge from the form of the letters, and that of the helmet engraved on the seal. The ring is of massive gold; the arms, engraved hollow on the seal, represent a shield, charged with a dragon, carrying (perhaps) some prey in his jaws. On the two sides of the intaglio are two names—Marin, Pixian. On the sides of the ring are two inscriptions in relief, one only of which is legible, and this is taken from St. Luke—‘Jesus autem transiens per medium illorum ibat.’ [Pg 81]



‘Escutcheon’ ring. French.

The accompanying are from Chabouillet's 'Orfévrerie de la Rénaissance,' in the Fould Collection (dispersed by auction in 1860).

French.

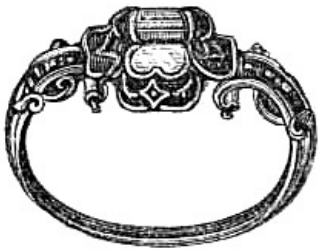
These engravings are from Labarte's 'Orfévrerie du XV. et XVI. Siècles':— [Pg 82]

French. French.

The following represent rings in the Musée Sauvageot, of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; one is elaborately wrought of chiselled iron, of French manufacture—date, 16th century.

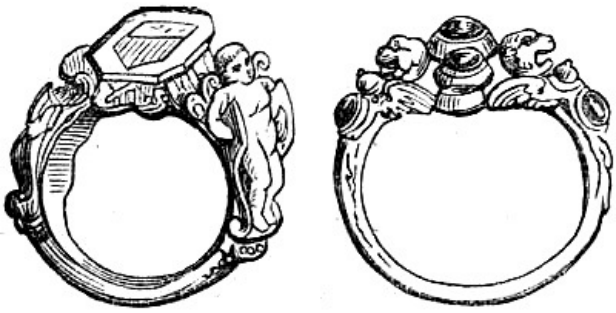
French.

The annexed are two fine specimens of comparatively modern date; one ending in volutes near the bezel, the other enamelled white, red, green, and blue—a turquoise, with diamonds and rubies in settings.

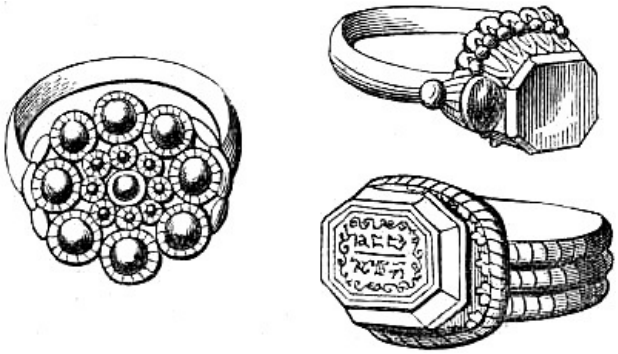


French.

Mr. Fairholt mentions two characteristic specimens of modern French ring-work; one a signet ring, the face engraved with a coat of arms. At the sides two *Cupidons* repose amidst scroll-work partaking of the taste of the *Rénaissance*. The same peculiarity influences the design of the second ring; here a central arch of five stones, in separate settings, are held by the heads and outstretched wings of *Chimæras*, whose breasts are also jewelled. Both are excellent designs. [Pg 83]

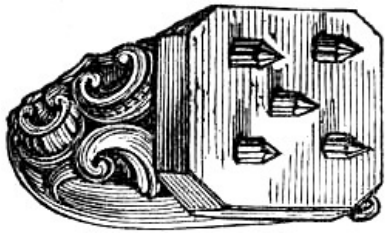


Modern French.



Moorish.

In the Londesborough Collection is a triplicate of Moorish rings, which will enable us to understand their peculiarities. One has a large circular face composed of a cluster of small bosses, set with five circular turquoises and four rubies; the centre being a turquoise, with a ruby and turquoise alternating round it. This ring is of silver. Another, of the same material, [Pg 84] is set with an octangular bloodstone, with a circular turquoise on each side. There is, also, a silver signet ring, bearing the name of its original owner, engraved on a cornelian.



Bavarian.

In the South Kensington Museum is a massive and heavy brass ring, with octagonal bezel armed with five projecting points, used as a weapon by peasants in Upper Bavaria from about the year 1700 to the present time.

The Indians prefer rings with large floriated faces, spreading over three fingers like a shield. When made for the wealthy in massive gold, the flower leaves are of cut jewels, but the humbler classes, who equally love display, are content with them in cast silver. Such a ring is in the British Museum, where there are also two specimens of rings beside it such as are worn by the humbler classes.

A curious gold ring, bearing the impress a ‘merchant’s mark,’ was exhibited by Mr. Sully at a meeting of the Archæological Institute of November 1851. It was found at St. Anne’s Well, near Nottingham, and the date is about the time of Henry VI. From a representation in the ‘Journal’ the impress appears to be composed of the orb of sovereignty, surmounted by a cross, having two transverse bars, like a patriarchal cross. The extremities of the lower limbs terminate with the Arabic numerals, 2—0, the cipher being transversed by a diagonal stroke, as frequently written in early times. On one side of the hoop is seen the Virgin and Child, on the other the Crucifix; these were originally enamelled. Within is inscribed—**Mon Cur avez**. Weight 7 dwts. 21 grs.

A brass signet-ring found in the Cathedral Close at Hereford, bears for impress a kind of [Pg 85] merchant’s mark, a cross, with the lower extremity barbed like an arrow, between the initials G. M.—now in the possession of the Dean of Hereford.

In the Braybrooke Collection is a bronze signet-ring with a merchant’s mark within a cable border: the mark may be intended to represent a buoy, which would accord well with the border, supposing it to be a trader’s cipher; the hoop is likewise twisted to imitate the

strands of a rope. This ring was found in the Thames.

In the same collection is a massive gold thumb-ring engraved as a signet, with a merchant's mark within a rude shield. The shoulders of the hoop are chased with Marguerite flowers, which were commonly adopted in the reign of Henry VI., in honour of the queen-mother, and may indicate the date of the ring. It was found at Littlebury, Essex, in 1848. In the same collection is a large gold thumb-ring, with a round hoop and signet, on which is engraved the letter E of Longobardic form, within delicately-cusped tracery, surmounted by a coronet. The hoop is inscribed externally with the words *in. on. is. al.* (in one is all): probably intended for a charm, of which so many forms are found upon rings of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

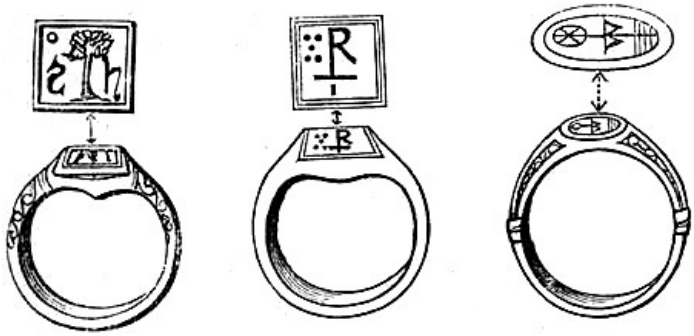
In the Londesborough Collection is the fine specimen (to which I have alluded in a previous page) of a signet-ring bearing a 'merchant's mark.'

'The marks,' observes Mr. Fairholt, 'varied with every owner, and was as peculiar to himself as the modern autograph; they were a combination of initials, or letter-like devices, frequently surmounted by a cross, or a conventional sign, believed to represent the sails of a ship. The marks were placed upon the bales of merchandise, and were constantly used where the coat armour, or badge of a nobleman or gentleman entitled to bear arms would be placed. The authority vested in such merchants' rings is curiously illustrated in one of the historical plays on the life and reign of Queen Elizabeth, written by Thomas Heywood, and to which he gave the quaint title: "If you know not me, you know nobody." Sir Thomas Gresham, the great London merchant, is one of the principal characters, and in a scene where he is absent from home, and in sudden need of cash, he exclaims: "Here, John, take this seal-ring, bid Timothy send me presently a hundred pound." John takes the ring to the trusty Timothy, saying: "Here's his seal-ring; I hope a sufficient warrant." To which Timothy replies: "Upon so good security, John, I'll fit me to deliver it." Another merchant in the same play is made to obtain his wants by similar means:— [Pg 86]

> ———receive thou my seal-ring:
> Bear it to my factor; bid him by that token
> Sort thee out forty pounds' worth of such wares
> As thou shalt think most beneficial.

The custom must have been common to be thus used in dramatic scenes of real life. These plays were produced in 1606.'[15]

'Merchants' marks, which appear to have been imitated from the Flemings during the reign of Edward the Third, and became very common during the fifteenth and early part of the sixteenth century, both on seals and signet-rings, offer a somewhat curious field for research, and are often very useful in identifying the persons by whom domestic and parts of ecclesiastical edifices on which they occur were built. They were more generally used in the great seaports of England than in the south—a fact which is readily accounted for by the frequent intercourse between those ports and Flanders. It may be observed also that such marks belonged chiefly to wool-factors, or merchants of the staple.'—*Archæological Journal* for March 1848. [Pg 87]



Merchants' rings.

In the collections of our English antiquaries are numerous specimens of *thumb-rings*, and in the chapter on 'Ecclesiastical Usages in Connection with Rings' I have mentioned several of particular interest, notably an effigy with a signet-ring of remarkable size represented as worn over both the thumbs. Dr. Bruce found some thumb-rings along the line of the Roman wall. [Pg 88]

The custom of wearing thumb-rings is alluded to by Chaucer, in the 'Squire's Tale,' where it is said of the rider of the brazen horse who advanced into the hall, Cambuscan, that 'upon his thumb he had of gold a ring.' Brome, in the 'Antipodes,' 1638, and also in the 'Northern Lass:' 'A good man in the city wears nothing rich about him but the gout, or a thumb-ring.'

In the 'Archæological Journal' (vol. iii. page 268) is a representation of a curious thumb-ring, which supplies a good example of the signet thumb-ring of the fifteenth century. It is of

silver, alloyed, or plated with baser metal and strongly gilt. The hoop is grooved spirally, and the initial H is engraved upon it; weight 17 dwts. 18 grs. It was found in 1846, in dredging in the bed of the river Severn, at a place called Saxon's or Saxton's Lode.

Signet rings of this kind were worn by rich citizens, or persons of substance not entitled to bear arms. Falstaff bragged that in his earlier years he had been so slender in figure that he could readily have crept through an 'alderman's thumb-ring,' and a ring thus worn—probably, as more conspicuous—appears to have been considered as appropriate to the customary attire of a civic dignitary at a much later period. A character in the Lord Mayor's show in 1664 is described as 'habited like a grave citizen—gold girdle and gloves hung thereon, rings on his fingers, and a seal-ring on his thumb.'

In Labartes 'Hand-book of the Fine Arts in the Middle Ages' is a representation of a fine thumb-ring, of Hindoo workmanship, cut out of a single piece of jade, decorated with gold filagree, and incrusted with rubies. [Pg 89]

A magical thumb-ring of gilt, bearing the figure of a toad, and of German workmanship of the fourteenth century is in the Londesborough Collection, and is described in the chapter on 'Ring Superstitions.' The annexed representation is from a ring in the same collection.

Thumb-ring.

The figure of a morse ivory thumb-ring of an Earl of Shrewsbury, belonging to Dr. Iliff, is given in the 'Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries' (December, 1859), in which it is fully described. On this is engraved various coats of arms, surrounded by the Garter, and ensigned with an earl's coronet. A list of the quarterings is also given.[16]

In the Braybrooke Collection is a massive latten thumb-ring, with a signet engraved with I.H.S. and three tears below; the words, 'in Deo Salus' are inside the hoop. They are from the Penitential Psalms, and in union with the tears. Date from the thirteenth century.

In a portrait of Lady Anne Clifford, the celebrated Countess of Pembroke, she wears a ring upon the thumb of her right hand. [Pg 90]

To the practice of English ladies wearing, formerly, the wedding-ring on the thumb I have alluded in the chapter on 'Betrothal and Wedding-rings.'

Dr. Thomas Chalmers wore the ring of his great-great-great-grandfather, John Alexander, on his thumb.

'Oriental rings,' remarks the Rev. C. W. King, 'exactly like the ancient in shape, and made of cornelian, chalcedony, and agate, with legends in Arabic on the face, for the use of signets, are by no means uncommon in collections. They are of large size, being designed to be worn on the *thumb* of the right hand, in order to be used in drawing the bow-string, which the Orientals pull with the bent thumb, catching it against the shank of the ring, and not with the two first fingers, as is the practice of English archers.'

Brass Thumb-ring.

A brass seal-ring large enough for a man's thumb was found in Hampshire some years ago, and is noticed in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' vol. liv.

CHAPTER II.

RING SUPERSTITIONS.

A mysterious significance has been associated with rings from the earliest periods, among various nations. They were supposed to protect from evil fascinations of every kind, against the ‘evil eye,’ the influence of demons, and dangers of every possible character; though it was not simply in the rings themselves that the supposed virtues existed, but in the materials of which they were composed, in some particular precious stone that was set in them, as charms or talismans, in some device or inscription on the stone, or some magical letters engraven on the circumference of the ring.

The ring worn by the high-priest of the Jews was of inestimable value, chiefly, according to a tradition, of its celestial virtues; and the ring of Solomon, as Hebrew legends state, possessed powers which enabled him to baffle the most subtle of his enemies.[17] Some curious particulars respecting this ring will be found in Josephus (lib. viii. ch. 2), which, [Pg 92] however, are considered as interpolations. According to this he witnessed the healing of demoniacs by one Eleazar, a Jew, in the presence of the Emperor Vespasian, by the application of a medicated ring to the nostrils of the patient. The Jew recited several verses connected with the name of Solomon, and the devils came forth through the noses of the patients. ‘It was to this great prince the honour of this discovery is attributed, as well as other magical operations, and without him it would be improbable to obtain success.’[18] The signet-ring of Solomon had the mystic word *schemhamphorasch* engraved upon it, and procured for him the wonderful *shamir*, which enabled him to build the temple. Every day at noon it transported him into the firmament, where he heard the secrets of the universe. This continued until he was persuaded by the devil to grant him his liberty, and to take the ring from his finger; the demon then assumed his shape as King of Israel, and reigned three years, while Solomon became a wanderer in foreign lands.

According to an Arabian tradition, King Solomon, on going to the bath, left his ring behind him, which was stolen by a Jewess, and thrown by her into the sea. Deprived of his miraculous amulet, which prevented him from exercising the judicial wisdom for which he was celebrated, Solomon abstained for forty days from administering justice, when he at length found the ring in the stomach of a fish that was served at his table. Many curious fictions on this subject are related by Arabian writers in a book called ‘Salcuthat,’ devoted to [Pg 93] the subject of magical rings, and they trace this particular ring of Solomon in a regular succession from Jared, the father of Enoch, to the ‘wisest of men.’[19]

Old legends state that Joseph and the Virgin Mary used at their espousals a ring of onyx or amethyst. The discovery is dated from the year 996, when the ring was given by a jeweller from Jerusalem to a lapidary of Clusium, who indicated its origin. The miraculous powers of the ring having been found out by accident, it was placed in a church, when its efficacy in curing disorders of every kind was remarkable—trifling, however, in comparison with its singular power of multiplying itself. Similar rings were claimed as the genuine relic by many churches in Europe at the same time, and received the same devout homage.

This superstition of the ‘Virgin’s Ring’ still prevails in Catholic countries. Thus, the correspondent of the ‘Standard’ newspaper, in an article contributed to that journal on ‘Art in Perugia’ (Sept. 4, 1875), writes:—‘We went into the Duomo, or cathedral of Perugia. It is not among the churches most worth visiting. Several other churches contain far more, and more interesting works of art in various kinds. The “Nuptial Ring of the Virgin Mary,” which is the treasure on which the Chapter of Perugia most prides itself, is not to be seen. A sacristan whom I innocently asked to show it to me, looked at me and spoke to me as much as if I had requested him to show me round the wondrous scene described by the Seer of the Apocalypse. He told me, indeed, when his first astonishment at my ignorant audacity had somewhat calmed down, that the ring could be seen if I would “call again” on St. Joseph’s day next, on which solemnity it is every year exhibited from a high balcony in the church to [Pg 94] the kneeling crowds of the faithful from all the country-side. Meanwhile it was locked away behind innumerable bars and doors, the many keys of which are in the keeping of I do not know how many high ecclesiastical authorities.

‘The ring itself, a plain gold circlet—large enough, apparently, for any man’s thumb, and about six times as thick as any ordinary marriage-ring (I have seen an accurate engraving of it)—is, of course, in no wise worth seeing. But the casket in which it is kept—a very remarkable specimen of mediæval goldsmiths’ work—is, by all accounts, very much so. However, it is not to be seen, not even on St. Joseph’s day, to any good purpose.’

I may add that the celebrated painting of the Marriage of the Virgin, by Perugino, was formerly in this chapel of the cathedral, called ‘Del Santo Anelo,’ or the Holy Ring, but was removed, with many other spoils, after the treaty of Tolentino, and is now in the Museum of Caen, in Normandy.

In the old Mystery of the ‘Miraculous Espousal of Mary and Joseph,’ Issachar, the ‘Busshopp,’ says:—

> ‘Mary; wole ye have this man
> And hym to kepyn, as yo lyff?’

Maria.—'In the tenderest wyse, fadyr, as I kan,
And with all my wyttys ffyll.'
Ep'us.—'Joseph; with this rynge now wedde thi wyff,
And be her hand, now, thou her take.'
Joseph.—'Ser, with this rynge, I wedde her ryff,
And take her' now her' for my make.'[20]

The planet Jupiter was considered by the Hebrews propitious for weddings, and the newly-married gave rings on those occasions, on which the words *Mazal Tob* were inscribed, [Pg 95] signifying that good fortune would happen under that star.

A remarkable gold talismanic ring, supposed, on satisfactory grounds, by Colonel Tod (author of 'Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han') to be of Hindu workmanship, was found some years since on the Fort Hill, near Montrose, on the site of an engagement in the reign of the unfortunate Queen Mary. This ring had an astrological and mythological import. It represented the symbol of the sun-god Bal-nat'h, around which is wreathed a serpent *guardant*, with two bulls as supporters, or the powers of creative nature in unison, typified in the miniature Lingam and Noni—in short, a graven image of that primæval worship which prevailed among the nations of antiquity. This is 'the pillar and the calf worshipped on the fifteenth of the month' (the sacred *Amavus* of the Hindus) by the Israelites, when they adopted the rites of the Syro-Phœnician adorers of Bal, the sun. Colonel Tod considered that this curious relic belonged to some superstitious devotee, who wore it as a talisman on his thumb.

According to Zoroaster, Ormuzd represented the Good Principle, and Ahrimanes the Evil. The former is seen on ancient sculptures, holding, as an emblem of power, a ring in one hand.

All the Hindu Mogul divinities are represented with rings. The statues of the gods at Elephanta have, amongst other ornaments, finger-rings.

From Asia, legends connected with rings were introduced into Greece, and numberless miraculous powers were ascribed to them. The classical derivation of the ring was attributed to Prometheus, who, having incurred the displeasure of Jupiter, was compelled to wear on his finger an iron ring, to which was attached a fragment of the rock of the Caucasus. [Pg 96]

To adorn the finger-ring with inlaid stone
Was first to men by wise Prometheus shown,
Who from Caucasian rock a fragment tore,
And, set in iron, on his finger wore.

The ring of Gyges, King of Lydia, rendered the wearer invisible when the stone turned inwards[21] (so also the ring of Eluned, the Lunet of the old English romance of Ywaine and Gawaine, and in several German stories). The ring of Polycrates the tyrant, which was flung into the sea to propitiate Nemesis, was found, like that of Solomon, inside a fish served at his table. The story is thus related by Herodotus. Amasis, King of Egypt, after Polycrates had obtained possession of the island of Samos, sent the tyrant a friendly letter, expressing a fear of the continuance of his singular prosperity, for he had never known such an instance of felicity which did not come to calamity in the long run; advising, therefore, Polycrates to throw away some favourite gem in such a way that he might never see it again, as a kind of [Pg 97] charm against misfortune. Polycrates took the advice, and, sailing away from the shore in a boat, threw a valuable signet-ring—an emerald set in gold—into the sea, in sight of all on board. This done he returned home and gave vent to his sorrow. It happened five or six days afterwards that a fisherman caught a fish so large and beautiful that he thought it well deserved to be presented to the King. So he took it with him to the gate of the palace, and said that he wanted to see Polycrates. On being admitted the fisherman gave him the fish with these words: 'Sir King, when I took this prize I thought I would not carry it to market, though I am a poor man who lives by his trade. I said to myself, it is worthy of Polycrates and his greatness, and so I brought it here to give to you.' The speech pleased the King, who replied: 'Thou didst well, friend, and I am doubly indebted both for the gift and the speech. Come now and sup with me.' So the fisherman went home, esteeming it a high honour that he had been asked to sup with the King. Meanwhile the servants, in cutting open the fish, found the signet of their master in the stomach. No sooner did they see it than they seized upon it, and, hastening to Polycrates with great joy, restored it to him, and told him in what way it had been found. The King, who saw something providential in the matter, forthwith wrote a letter to Amasis telling him all that had happened. Amasis perceived that it does not belong to man to save his fellow-man from the fate which is in store for him. Likewise, he felt certain that Polycrates would end ill, as he prospered in everything, even finding what he had thrown away. So he sent a herald to Samos, and dissolved the contract of friendship. This he did that when the great and heavy misfortune came he might escape the grief which [Pg 98] he would have felt if the sufferer had been his loved friend. Polycrates died in the third year of the 64th Olympiad. This seal-ring was taken later to Rome, where Pliny relates that he saw and handled it. The Emperor Augustus had it inserted in a horn of gold, and placed it in the temple of Concord, in the midst of other golden objects of great value. The seal is represented to have been as large as a crown piece, in shape a little oblong. The subject was a lyre, around which were three bees in the upper part; at the foot was a dolphin on the right, and the head of a bull on the left—the lyre, the emblem of poetry; the bees, industry;

the bull, production; and the dolphin, a friend to man.

Some years ago, it was reported that this remarkable seal-ring was found by an inhabitant of Albano in a vineyard, but this story has never been confirmed.

Apart from the superstitious inferences deduced from the singular recovery of the ring, the fact itself may be probably accepted. The Rev. C. W. King, in 'Precious Stones, Gems, and Precious Metals,' observes: 'There can be little doubt that this tale of the "Fish and the Ring" is true. Fish, especially the mackerel, greedily swallow any glittering object dropped into the sea; and within my own recollection, one when opened was found to contain a wedding-ring.'[22]

Legends of the fish and the ring are found in most countries: the ancient Indian drama of Sacontala has an incident of this character. In the armorial bearings of the see of Glasgow, and now of the city, the stem of St. Kentigern's tree is crossed by a salmon bearing in its mouth a ring. The legend attached to this is related in 'Jocelin's Life of St. Kentigern.' In the [Pg 99] days of this saint, a lady having lost her wedding-ring, it stirred up her husband's jealousy, to allay which she applied to Kentigern, imploring his help for the safety of her honour. Not long after, as the holy man walked by the river, he desired a person who was fishing to bring him the first fish he could catch, which was accordingly done, and from its mouth was taken the lady's ring, which he immediately sent to her, to remove her husband's suspicions. So runs the legend; but a more truthful explanation of the arms of St. Mungo attributes the ring to the episcopal office, and the fish to the scaly treasures of the river at the foot of the metropolitan cathedral.[23]

An Italian legend ascribes as an omen of the downfall of the Venetian republic that the ring cast into the Adriatic by the Doge, in token of his marriage to the sea, was found in a fish that was served up at his table a year after the custom had been observed.

A popular ballad of old, called the 'Cruel Knight, or the Fortunate Farmer's Daughter,' [Pg 100] represents a knight passing a cot, and hearing that the woman within is in childbirth. His knowledge in the occult sciences informs him that the child to be born is destined to become his wife. He endeavours to evade the decrees of fate, and, to avoid so ignoble an alliance, by various attempts to destroy the child, but which are defeated. At length, when grown to woman's estate, he takes her to the sea-side, intending to drown her but relents; at the same time, throwing a ring into the sea, he commands her never to see his face again, on pain of death, unless she can produce the ring. She afterwards becomes a cook in a gentleman's family, and finds the ring in a cod-fish as she is dressing it for dinner. The marriage takes place, of course.

The monument to Lady Berry in Stepney Church bears:—paly of six on a bend, three mullets (Elton) impaling a fish, and in the dexter chief point an annulet between two bends wavy. This coat of arms, which exactly corresponds with that borne by Ventris, of Cambridgeshire, has given rise to the tradition that Lady Berry was the heroine of the above story. The ballad lays the scene of the events in Yorkshire, but incidents of the ring and the fish are, as I observed, numerous.[24]

The various arts employed by the ancients in 'divination' were many. The annexed illustrations, representing divination rings, are taken from Liceti, 'Antiqua Schemata' (*Gemmarium Annularium*); the two figures on one ring are trying eagerly to discover future events in a crystal globe. Crystallomancy included every variety of divination by means of transparent bodies. These, polished and enchanted, signified their meaning by certain marks and figures.

The serpent held by the female figure refers to *ophiomancy*, the art which the ancients [Pg 101] pretended to, of making predictions by serpents. According to the *ophites*, who emanated from the Gnostics, the serpent was instructed in all knowledge, and was the father and author of all the sciences.

Divination ring.

The hieroglyphic ring represents a sphinx, the monster described by the poets as having a human face with the body of a bird or quadruped, the paws of a lion, the tail of a dragon, &c. It was said to propose riddles to those it met with, and destroyed those who could not answer them. Upon this they consulted the oracle, to know what should be done. It [Pg 102] answered that they could not be delivered until they could solve this riddle: 'What creature is that which has four feet in the morning, two at noon, and three towards night.' Œdipus answered that it was a man, who, in his infancy, crawled on all fours, until he was sufficiently strong to walk; then went on two legs, until old age obliged him to use a staff to help and support him. On this the monster is said to have dashed out its brains against a rock.

Divination ring.

The star over the head of the sphinx in the engraving represents the divination by stars practised by the Cabalists. The stars vertical over a city or nation were so united by lines as [Pg 103] to form resemblances of the Hebrew letters, and thus words which were deemed prophetic. Burder remarks that the rise of a new star, or the appearance of a comet, was thought to portend the birth of a great person; also that the gods sent stars to point out the way to their favourites, as Virgil shows, and as Suetonius and Pliny actually relate in the case of Julius Cæsar.

The cup or vase represented in the engraving near the sphinx refers to the divination by the cup, one of the most ancient methods of discovering future events by crystalline reflection. The divining cup of Joseph shows that its use was familiar in Egypt at that remote period.[25]

Charmed rings found easy believers among the Greeks and the Romans, and were special [Pg 104] articles of traffic. Such objects, made of wood, bone, or some other cheap materials, were manufactured in large numbers at Athens, and could be purchased, gifted with any charm required, for the small consideration of a single drachma.

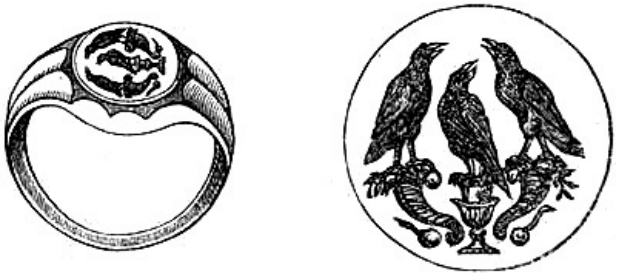
In the 'Plutus' of Aristophanes, to a threat on the part of the sycophant, the just man replies

‘that he is proof against evil influences, having a charmed ring.’ Carion, the servant, observes ‘that the ring would not prevail against the bite of a sycophant.’ The ring was probably a medicated one, to preserve from demons and serpents.

The following engraving from Gorlæus represents a human head with an elephant’s trunk, &c., holding a trident, an amulet against the perils of the sea:—

Amulet ring: Roman.

The council of ravens, prophetic birds (and attributes of Apollo), or crows, which were used as symbols of conjugal fidelity:—



Amulet ring: Roman.

A silver ring on a sardonyx, engraved with the figure of a sow, as a propitiatory sacrifice:— [Pg 105]

Amulet ring: Roman.

In Lucian’s ‘Philopseudes,’ in a dialogue called the Ship or Wish, a man is introduced who desires that Mercury should bestow a ring on him to confer perpetual health and preservation from danger.

Benvenuto Cellini, in his ‘Memoirs,’ mentions the discovery in Rome of certain vases, ‘which appeared to be antique urns filled with ashes; amongst these were iron rings inlaid with gold, in each of which was set a diminutive shell. Learned antiquarians, upon investigating the nature of these rings, declared their opinion that they were worn as charms by those who desired to behave with steadiness and resolution either in prosperous or adverse fortune. I likewise took things of this nature in hand at the request of some gentlemen who were my particular friends, and wrought some of these little rings, but I made them of steel, well-tempered, and then cut and inlaid with gold, so that they were very beautiful to behold; sometimes for a single ring of this sort I was paid above forty crowns.’

In Rome there were altars to the Samothracian deities, who were supposed to preside over talismans. The people of that island were extensive manufacturers of iron rings, to which they attached supernatural qualities.

On ancient Mexican rings and seals set with precious stones are constellation representations, as, for example, Pisces. Those people awaited their Messiah, or Crusher of the Serpent, during the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, in the same zodiacal sign of Pisces, the protecting sign of Syria and Palestine. [Pg 106]

Pliny informs us that the ancients set additional value on articles made of jet, such as rings, buttons, &c., from a notion that it possessed the virtue of driving away serpents—a belief which existed also in the days of the Venerable Bede, who, describing the various mineral productions of Britain, says: ‘It has much excellent jet, which is black and sparkling, glittering at the fire, and, when heated, drives away serpents.’ Some examples of jet rings

have been found at Uriconium.

A portrait of Alexander the Great, set in a gold or silver ring, and carried about on the finger, was supposed by the Greeks to ensure prosperity to the wearer; as a reverse, one of the omens announcing the fall of Nero was the presentation to him of a ring engraved with the Rape of Proserpine, being a symbol of death.[26]

Spartian includes among the omens of Hadrian's coming death the falling off from his finger of his ring, 'which bore a likeness to himself,' as he was taking the auspices on a New Year's day, and so obtaining a foreshadowing of the events of the coming year.

A portrait of Hadrian, engraved with Mercury in a magic ring (Gorlæus):— [Pg 107]

Amulet ring: bust of Hadrian.

Heliodorus describes a precious stone as set in the King of Ethiopia's ring, one of the royal jewels, the shank being formed of electrum and the bezel flaming with an Ethiopian amethyst, engraved with a youthful shepherd and his flock—an antidote to the wearer against intoxication.

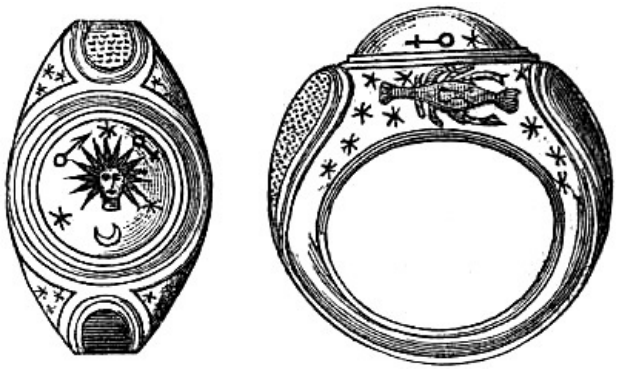
Philostratus relates how Chariclea escaped unharmed from the funeral pyre on which she was condemned to be burnt by the jealous Arsace, from having secreted about her the espousal-ring of King Hydaspes, 'which was set with the stone called Pandarbes, engraved with certain sacred letters' and antagonistic to fire.

In the British Museum is a remarkable collection of ornaments of the Roman period connected with the worship of the Deæ Matres, discovered in the county of Durham, or in some adjoining district in the beginning of this century. Among these are several rings which have been elaborately described by Mr. Edward Hawkins in the 'Archæological Journal' for March 1851 (vol. viii.), with illustrations.

In the Waterton Collection are some specimens of Gnostic Roman rings, of the third century: one, of silver, is set with an intaglio on bloodstone of an Abraxas figure, with head of a jackal. The others have Gnostic emblems and inscriptions. [Pg 108]

Astrological rings in connexion with mythological representations were worn by the ancients.

The accompanying engraving from Gorlæus represents the sun and stars. According to the Gnostic theories, the properties of the sun on the destinies of men were numerous and important. The mystical virtues of the most precious stones were under the solar influence.



Astrological ring.

Planetary rings were formed of the gems assigned to the several planets, each set in its appropriate metal: thus, the Sun, diamond or sapphire in a ring of gold; the Moon, crystal in silver; Mercury, magnet, in quicksilver; Venus, amethyst in copper; Mars, emerald in iron; Jupiter, cornelian in tin; Saturn, turquoise in lead.

From the remotest antiquity every planet in the heavens was believed to possess a virtue peculiar to itself. Each presided over some kingdom, nation, or city; then, extending its influence to individuals, it decided their personal appearance, temperament, disposition, character, health, and fortune, and even influenced the several members and parts of the body. After this, it ruled plants, herbs, animals, stones, and all the various productions of nature. Southey, in the 'Doctor' (vol. iii. p. 112), commenting on the exhibition of the [Pg 109]

Zodiacal signs in the ‘Margarita Philosophica,’ a work of the sixteenth century, observes: ‘There Homo stands naked, but not ashamed, upon the two Pisces, one foot upon each; the fish being neither in air nor water, nor upon earth, but self-suspended, as it appears, in the void. *Aries* has alighted with two feet on Homo’s head, and has sent a shaft through the forehead into his brain. *Taurus* has quietly seated himself across his neck. The *Gemini* are riding astride a little below his right shoulder. The whole trunk is laid open, as if part of the old accursed punishment for high treason had been performed on him. The *Lion* occupies the thorax as his proper domain, and the *Crab* is in possession of his domain. *Sagittarius*, volant in the void, has just let fly an arrow which is on its way to his right arm. *Capricornus* breathes out a visible influence that penetrates both knees. *Aquarius* inflicts similar punctures upon both legs. *Virgo* fishes, as it were, at his intestines, *Libra* at the part affected by schoolmasters in their anger, and *Scorpio* takes the wickedest aim of all.’

The old astrological definition of the Zodiac seems to be this—that it was the division of the great circle of the heavens into twelve parts. These twelve parts are divided into those called *northern* and *commanding* (the first six), and those called southern and *obeying* (the remaining six). The other constellations of the two hemispheres are not unconsidered in astrology, but those of the zodiac are more important, because they form the pathway of the sun, the moon, and the planets, and are supposed to receive from these bodies, as they roll through their spaces, extraordinary energy.[27]

The following illustration from Liceti, ‘Antiqua Schemata Gemmarum Annularium,’ represents Jupiter, Mercury, Pallas, and Neptune surrounded by the signs of the Zodiac:— [Pg 110]

Zodiacal ring.

Among the various modes of enquiring by magical means as to who should succeed to the Roman emperorship during the reigns of Valentinian and Valens, we are told that the letters of the alphabet were artificially disposed in a circle, and a magic ring, being suspended over the centre, was believed to point to the initial letters of the name of him who should be the future emperor. Theodorus, a man of most eminent qualifications and high popularity, was put to death by the jealousy of Valens on the vague evidence that this kind of trial had indicated the first letters of his name. Gibbon remarks on this point that the name of Theodosius, who actually succeeded, begins with the same letters which were indicated in this magic trial. [Pg 111]

This ring mystery, the *Dactylomancia* (from two Greek words signifying *ring* and *divination*), was a favourite operation of the ancients. It was preceded by certain ceremonies, and the ring was subjected to a form of conjuration. The person who held it was arrayed in linen, a circlet of hair was left by an artistic barber on his head, and in his hand he held a branch of vervain. An invocation to the gods preceded the ceremony. [Pg 112]

The ‘suspended ring,’ another mode of divination practised at a later period, is thus described by Peucer among various modes of hydromancy: ‘A bowl was filled with water, and a ring suspended from the finger was librated in the water, and so, according as the question was propounded, a declaration, or confirmation of its truth, or otherwise, was obtained. If what was proposed was true, the ring, of its own accord, without any impulse, struck the sides of the goblet a certain number of times. They say that Numa Pompilius used to practise this method, and that he evoked the gods, and consulted them in water this way.’

The ring suspended over a monarch was supposed to indicate certain persons among those sitting round the table, and if a hair was used, taken from one of the company, it would swing towards that individual only. An ancient method of divining by the ring is similar in principle to the modern table-rapping. The edge of a round table was marked with the characters of the alphabet, and the ring stopped over certain letters, which, being joined

together, composed the answer.

In another method of practising Dactylomancy, rings were put on the finger-nails when the sun entered Leo, and the moon Gemini, or the sun and Mercury were in Gemini and the moon in Cancer; or the sun in Sagittarius, the moon in Scorpio, and Mercury in Leo. These rings were made of gold, silver, copper, iron, or lead, and magical characters were attached to them, but how they operated we are not informed.

Another mode of water divination with the ring was to throw three pebbles into standing water, and draw observations from the circles which they formed.

Divination by sounds emitted by striking two rings was practised by Execetus, tyrant of the Phocians. [Pg 113]

In the enchanted rings of the Greeks the position of the celestial bodies was most important. Pliny states that all the Orientals preferred the emerald jasper, and considered it an infallible panacea for every ill. Its power was strengthened when combined with silver instead of gold. Galen recommends a ring with jasper set in it, and engraved with the figure of a man wearing a bunch of herbs round his neck.[28] Many of the Gnostic or Basilidian gems, evidently used for magical purposes, were of jasper. Apollonius of Tyana, in Cappadocia, who flourished in the first age of the Christian era, and who fixed his residence in the temple of Æsculapius, considered the use of charmed rings so essential to quackery that he wore a different ring on each day of the week, marked with the planet of the day. He had received a present of the seven rings from Iarchas, the Indian philosopher.[29] [Pg 114]

It was a belief among the Poles that each month of the year was under the influence of a precious stone. Thus January was represented by the garnet, emblem of constancy and fidelity; February, the amethyst, sincerity; March, bloodstone, courage and presence of mind; April, diamond, innocence; May, emerald, success in love; June, agate, health and long life; July, cornelian, contented mind; August, sardonyx, conjugal felicity: September, chrysote, antidote against madness; October, opal, hope; November, topaz, fidelity; December, turquoise, prosperity. These several stones were set in rings and other trinkets, as presents, &c. [Pg 115]

In the early and middle ages it was not only generally believed that rings could be charmed by the power of a magician, but that the engraved stones on ancient rings which were found on old sites possessed supernatural properties, the benefits of which would be imparted to the wearer.

The great potentate Charlemagne, we are told by old French writers, was, in his youth, desperately in love with a young and beautiful woman, and gave himself up to pleasure in her society, neglecting the affairs of State. She died, and Charles was inconsolable at her loss. The Archbishop of Cologne endeavoured to withdraw him from her dead body, and at length, approaching the corpse, took from its mouth a ring in which was set a precious stone of remarkable beauty. It was the talisman which had charmed the monarch, whose passionate grief became now immediately subdued. The body was buried, and the Archbishop, fearing lest Charles might experience a similar magical effect in another seducer, threw it into a lake near Aix-la-Chapelle. The virtue of this marvellous ring was not, however, lost by this incident, for the legend relates that the monarch became so enamoured of the lake that his chief delight was in walking by its margin, and he became so much attached to the spot that he had a palace erected there, and made it the seat of his empire. [Pg 116]

In the Persian Tales a king strikes off the hand of a sorceress (who had assumed the appearance of his queen), which had a ring upon it, when she immediately appears as a frightful hag.

The charmed ring of Aladdin plays a wonderful part in the ‘Arabian Nights’ Entertainments.’

One of the earliest ring superstitions in our own country, is that connected with the life of Edward the Confessor. In the mortuary chapel of this saintly monarch in Westminster Abbey are fourteen subjects in *relievi*, represented on the frieze of the screen on the western side, of incidents in the King’s life, in which the legend of the ‘Pilgrim’ (derived from a chronicle written by Ælred—a monk, and, later, abbot of Rievaulx, who died in 1166—but taken almost entirely from the life of St. Edward, by Osbert or Osbern, of Clare, prior of Westminster). is curiously displayed. The whole length of this sculpture is thirty-eight feet six inches by three feet in height. The relief is very bold, the irregular concave ground being much hollowed out behind. The compartment relating to the ring represents St. John, in the garb of a pilgrim, asking alms of the King. The figures are much injured. The monarch occupies the centre of the compartment, and a pilgrim or beggar is before him on the spectator’s right hand. Behind the King is a figure holding a pastoral staff—probably an ecclesiastic—and in front of whom, between the King and himself,—is an object not easily defined, but which appears like a basket. This design is interesting, from the back-ground being entirely filled in by a large and handsome church. This refers to the subject mentioned by Ælred, of the King being engaged in the construction of a church in honour of St. John, when the pilgrim appeared and asked alms. [Pg 117]

According to the legend, King Edward was on his way to Westminster, when he was met by a beggar, who implored him in the name of St. John—the apostle peculiarly venerated by the

monarch—to grant him assistance. The charitable King had exhausted his ready-money in alms-giving, but drew from his finger a ring, 'large, beautiful, and royal,' which he gave to the beggar, who thereupon disappeared. Shortly afterwards, two English pilgrims in the Holy Land found themselves benighted, and in great distress, when suddenly the path before them was lighted up, and an old man, white and hoary, preceded by two tapers, accosted them. Upon telling him to what country they belonged, the old man, 'joyously like to a clerk,' guided them to a hostelry, and announced that he was John the Evangelist, the special patron of King Edward, and gave them a ring to carry back to the monarch, with the warning that in six months' time the King would be with him in Paradise. The pilgrims returned and found the King at his palace, called from this incident 'Havering atte Bower.' He recognised the ring, and prepared for his end accordingly. On the death of the [Pg 118] Confessor, according to custom, he was attired in his royal robes, the crown on his head, a crucifix and gold chain round his neck, and the 'Pilgrim's Ring' on his finger. The body was laid before the high altar at Westminster Abbey (A.D. 1066). On the translation of the remains of Henry the Second, the ring of St. John is said to have been withdrawn, and deposited as a relic among the crown jewels.[30] During the reign of Henry III. some repairs were made at the tower, and orders were given for drawing in the chapel of St. John two figures of St. Edward holding out a ring and delivering it to St. John the Evangelist.

As a proof, also, how this beautiful legend was engrafted on the popular mind in after ages, we find it stated in the account of the coronation of Edward II. (1307), that the King offered, first a pound of gold, made like a king holding a ring in his hand, and afterwards a mark, or eight ounces of gold, formed into the likeness of a pilgrim putting forth his hand to receive the ring, a conceit suggested by the legend of the Confessor. So great was the sanctity in which this monarch (who was influenced by childish and superstitious fancies) was held, that Richard II., whenever he left the kingdom, confided the ring which he usually wore to the custodian of St. Edward's shrine.

'It appears,' observes Mr. Edmund Waterton ('Archæological Journal,' No. 82, 1864), 'that [Pg 119] St. Edward's ring was deposited with his corpse in his tomb. His translation took place on the third of the ides of October (October 13), A.D. 1163, ninety-seven years after the burial. This ceremony was performed at midnight, and on opening his coffin the body was found to be incorrupt. On this occasion the Abbot Lawrence took from the body of the sainted king his robes and the ring of St. John; of the robes the abbot made three copes, as appears from the following entry in the catalogue of the relics of the saint. The abbot also gave the ring to the abbey: "Dompnus Laurentius quondam abbas hujus loci ... sed et annulo ejusdem (Sancti Edwardi) quem Sancto Johanni quondam tradidit, quem et ipse de paradiso remisit, elapsis annis duobus et dimidio, postea in nocte translationis de digito regis tulit, et pro miraculo in loco isto custodiri jussit." The same manuscript ("De Fundacione ecclesie Westm." by Ric. Sporley, a monk of the abbey, A.D. 1450), contains the indulgences to be gained by those who visited the holy relics:—"Ad annulum Sancti Edwardi vj. ann. iijc. xi. dies." No further mention has been found of St. Edward's ring.'[31]

Another legendary story, in connection with saintly interposition, is related in the annals of Venice. Moreover, it forms the subject of a painting, attributed (though with some doubt) to Giorgione, 'St. Mark staying, miraculously, the tempest,' in the Accademia Picture Gallery at Venice.

'In the year 1341, an inundation of many days' continuance had raised the water three cubits higher than it had ever before been seen at Venice; and during a stormy night, while the flood appeared to be still increasing, a poor fisherman sought what refuge he could find [Pg 120] by mooring his crazy bark close to the *Riva di San Marco*. The storm was yet raging, when a person approached and offered him a good fare if he would but ferry him over to *San Giorgio Maggiore*. 'Who,' said the fisherman, 'can reach San Giorgio on such a night as this? Heaven forbid that I should try!' But as the stranger earnestly persisted in his request, and promised to guard him from all harm, he at last consented. The passenger landed, and having desired the boatman to wait a little, returned with a companion, and ordered him to row to *San Nicolo di Lido*. The astonished fisherman again refused, till he was prevailed upon by a further assurance of safety and excellent pay. At *San Nicolo* they picked up a third person, and then instructed the boatman to proceed to the Two Castles at Lido. Though the waves ran fearfully high, the old man had by this time become accustomed to them, and moreover, there was something about his mysterious crew which either silenced his fears, or diverted them from the tempest to his companions. Scarcely had they gained the Strait, than they saw a galley, rather flying than sailing along the Adriatic, manned (if we may so say) with devils, who seemed hurrying with fierce and threatening gestures, to sink Venice in the deep. The sea, which had been furiously agitated, in a moment became unruffled, and the strangers, crossing themselves, conjured the fiends to depart. At the word the demoniacal galley vanished, and the three passengers were quietly landed at the spots where each, respectively, had been taken up.

The boatman, it seems, was not quite easy about his fare, and before parting, he implied, pretty clearly, that the sight of the miracle would, after all, be bad pay. 'You are right, my friend,' said the first passenger; 'go to the Doge and the Procuratori, and assure them that, [Pg 121] but for us three, Venice would have been drowned. I am St. Mark; my two comrades are St George and St. Nicholas. Desire the magistrate to pay you; and add that all the trouble has arisen from a schoolmaster at San Felice, who first bargained with the devil for his soul, and

then hanged himself in despair.’

The fisherman, who seemed to have, all his wits about him, answered that he might tell that story, but he much doubted whether he should be believed; upon which St. Mark pulled from his finger a gold ring, worth about five ducats, saying:—‘Show them this ring, and bid them look for it in my Treasury, whence it will be found missing.’ On the morrow the fisherman did as he was told. The ring was discovered to be absent from its usual custody, and the fortunate boatman not only received his fare, but an annual pension to boot. Moreover, a solemn procession and thanksgiving were appointed in gratitude to the three holy corpses which had rescued from such calamity the land affording them burial.’

Pope Hildebrand, one of the prime movers of the Norman invasion of England, excommunicated Harold and his supporters, and despatched a sacred banner, as well as a diamond ring enclosing one of the Apostle Peter’s hairs, to Normandy.

The mediæval romances abound in allusions to the wonderful virtues of rings. These were cherished conceits among the old writers. In the fabulous history of Ogier le Danois the fairy Morgana gives that hero a ring, which, although at that time he was one hundred years old, gives him the appearance of a man of thirty. After a lapse of two hundred years Ogier appears at the court of France, where the secret of his transformation is found out by the [Pg 122] old Countess of Senlis, who, while making love to him, draws the talisman from his finger, and places it on her own. She instantly blossoms into youth, while Ogier as suddenly sinks into decrepitude. The Countess, however, is forced to give back the ring, and former appearances are restored, but as she had discovered the virtues of the ring, she employs thirty champions to regain it, all of whom are successfully defeated by Ogier.

In the ‘Vision of Pierce Plowman’ (about 1350) the poet speaks of a woman whose fingers were all embellished with rings of gold, set with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires, and *also Oriental stones or amulets to prevent any poisonous infection*.

In the romance of ‘Sir Perceval of Galles’ the knight obtains surreptitious possession of a ring endowed with mysterious qualities:—

Suche a vertue es in the stane
In alle thys werlde wote I nane,
Siche stone in a rynge;
A mane that had it in were,
One his body for to bere,
There scholde no dyntys hym dere,
Ne to the dethe brynge.

So in ‘Sir Eglamour of Artois’:—

Seyde Organata that swete thynge
Y schalle geve the a gode golde rynge
With a fulle ryche stone,
Whedur that ye be on water or on londe,
And that rynge be upon yowre honde,
Ther schall nothyng yow slon.

The ring, a gift to Canace, daughter of King Cambuscan, in the ‘Squire’s Tale’ of Chaucer, taught the language of birds, and also imparted to the wearer a knowledge of plants, which [Pg 123] formed an important part of the Arabian philosophy:—

The vertue of this ring, if ye wol here,
Is this, that if hire list it for to were,
Upon hire thomb, or in hire purse it bere,
There is no fowle that fleeth under haven,
That she ne shal wel onderstond his steven (language)
And know his mening openlie and plaine,
And answere him in his langage againe,[32]
And every gras that groweth upon rote,
She shal eke know and whom it wol do bote,
All be his woundes never so depe and wide.

In the romance of Ywain and Gawaine (supposed to have been written in the reign of Henry VI.), when the knight is in perilous confinement, a lady looks out of a wicket which opened in the walls of the gateway, and releases him. She gives him a ring:—

I sal leue the her mi ring,
Bot yelde it me at myne askyng,
When thou ert broght of al thi payn,
Yelde it than to me ogayne:
Als the bark kills the tre,
Right so sal my ring do the;
When thou in hand hast the stane,
Der (harm) sal thai do the nane;
For the stane es of swilk might,
Of the sal men have na syght—

thus possessing the power ascribed to the ring of Gyges. In a story of the ‘Gseta Romanorum’ a father, on his death-bed, gives a ring to his son, the virtue of which was that whoever wore it would obtain the love of all men. [Pg 124]

In chapter x. of the same work the Emperor Vespasian marries a wife in a distant country, who refuses to return home with him, and yet declares that she will kill herself if he leaves her. In this dilemma the emperor orders two rings to be made having wonderful efficacious properties; one represents on a precious stone the figure of Oblivion, and the other bears the image of Memory. The former he gives to the empress, the latter he keeps himself. Chapter cxx. contains the story of the legacy of King Darius to his three sons. The eldest receives his inheritance, the second all that had been acquired by conquest, and the third a ring, a necklace, and a rich mantle, all of which possess magical properties. He who wore the ring gained the love and favour of all; the collar obtained all that the heart could desire, and whoever laid down on the mantle would be instantly transported to any part of the world he might desire to visit.

In the romance of ‘Melusine,’ the heroine, when about to leave the house of her husband, gives him two rings, and says: ‘My sweet love, you see here two rings which have both the same virtue, and know well for truth, so long as you possess them, or one of them, you shall never be overcome in pleading, nor in battle, if your cause be rightful, and neither you nor others who may possess them shall ever die by any weapons.’

The ring given by the Princess Rigmel to Horn possessed similar properties, as also the ring in the ‘Little Rose-garden,’ given by the Lady Similt to her brother Dietlieb.

In Orlando’s ‘Inamorata’ the palace and gardens of Dragontina vanish at Angelica’s ring of virtue, which also enables her to become invisible. [Pg 125]

> Now that she this upon her hand surveys,
> She is so full of pleasure and surprise,
> She doubts it is a dream, and, in amaze,
> Hardly believes her very hand and eyes.
> Then softly to her mouth the hoop conveys,
> And, quicker than the flash which cleaves the skies,
> From bold Rogero’s sight her beauty shrouds,
> As disappears the sun concealed in clouds.

Lydgate, in his ‘Troy book’ (1513), relates how Medea gives to Iason, when he is going to combat the brazen bulls, and to lull to sleep the dragon that guarded the golden fleece, a ring, in which was a gem charmed against poison, and would render the wearer invisible. ‘It was a sort of precious stone,’ says Lydgate, ‘which Virgil celebrates, and which Venus sent her son Æneas that he might enter Carthage.’

In the metrical romance of ‘Richard Cœur-de-Lion,’ King Modard gives him:—

> Two riche rings of gold:
> The stones wherein be full bold.
> Hence to the land of Ind,
> Better than they shalt thou not find.
> For whoso hath that one stone,
> Water ne shall him drench none.
> That other stone whoso that bear
> Fire ne shall him never dere (hurt).

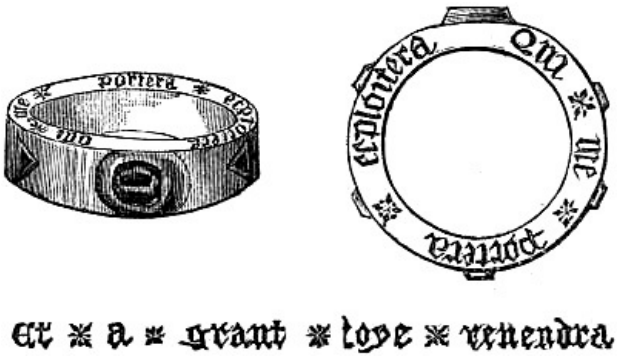
In ‘Floire and Blanceflor’ the latter, drawing from her finger a ring containing a small talisman, says to her lover: ‘Floire, accept this as a pledge of our mutual love; look on it every day; if thou seest its brilliancy tarnished, it is a sign that my life or my liberty is in danger.’

In another part of the story, when going in search of Blanceflor, who has been carried away, Floire receives a ring from his mother: ‘Have now, lief son, this ring: whilst thou preservest it neither fire shall burn, nor water drown, nor weapon injure thee, and all thy wants shall be instantly supplied.’ [Pg 126]

In the ‘Archæologia’ (vol. xix. p. 411) is a notice of a gold ring found in the ruins of the palace at Eltham, in Kent, bearing on the side edges of the interior the following inscription:—

> Qui me portera ecploitera
> Et a grant Joye revendra.
>
> Who wears me shall perform exploits,
> And with great Joy shall return:

implying that the ring was an amulet, and may, possibly, have been presented to some distinguished personage when setting out for the Holy Land in the time of the Crusades. The ring is set with an oriental ruby and five diamonds, placed at equal distances round the exterior.



Amulet ring.

The inscription is in small Gothic characters, but remarkably well-formed and legible. The shape of the ruby is an irregular oval, while the diamonds are all of a triangular form and in their natural crystallised state. [Pg 127]

An emerald ring was thought to ensure purity of thought and conduct. In ‘Caltha Poetarium, or the Humble Bee,’ by T. Cutwode (1599), Diana is represented adorning the heroine of the piece:—

> And, with an emerald, hangs she on a ring
> That keeps just reckoning of our chastity:
> . . . . . .
> And, therefore, ladies, it behoves you well
> To walk full warily when stones will tell.

In the ballad of ‘Northumberland betrayed by Douglas,’ Mary, a Douglas that dabbled in sorcery, shows the chamberlain of Earl Percy, James Swynard, the foes of the former in the field, through the ‘weme’ (hollow) of her ring:—

> I never was on English ground,
> Ne never sawe it with mine eye,
> But as my book it sheweth me,
> And through my ring I may descrye.

The treachery of Earl Douglas is thus foreshadowed, and the chamberlain returns sorrowfully to his master with the news of what he had seen. Earl Percy, however, is determined to keep his hunting appointment with Douglas:—

> Now nay, now nay, good James Swynard,
> I may not believe that witch ladye;
> The Douglasses were ever true,
> And they can ne’er prove false to me.

The ‘witch-ladye’ who effects such powerful influences with her magic ring is, nevertheless, rewarded for her warnings:—

> He writhe a gold ring from his finger
> And gave itt to that gay ladye;
> Sayes ‘it was all that I cold save
> In Harley woods where I cold bee’ (where I was).

[Pg 128]

A ring story in which the Venus of antiquity assumes the manners of one of the Fays, or Fatæ of romance, is quoted by Sir Walter Scott in his notes to the ‘Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.’ It is related by Fordun in his ‘Scotichronicon,’ by Matthew of Westminster, and Roger of Wendover. In the year 1058 a young man of noble birth had been married at Rome, and during the period of the nuptial feast, having gone with his companions to play at ball, he put his marriage-ring on the finger of a broken statue of Venus in the area to remain while he was engaged in the recreation. Desisting from the exercise he found the finger on which he had placed the ring, contracted firmly against the palm, and attempted in vain either to break it, or to disengage his ring. He concealed the circumstance from his companions, and returned at night with a servant, when he found the finger extended and his ring gone. He dissembled the loss and returned to his wife; but whenever he attempted to embrace her he found himself prevented by something dark and dense, which was tangible, though not visible, interposing between them, and he heard a voice saying: ‘Embrace me, for I am Venus whom you this day wedded, and I will not restore your ring.’ As this was constantly repeated, he consulted his relations, who had recourse to Palumbus, a priest skilled in necromancy. He directed the young man to go at a certain hour of the night to a spot among the ancient ruins of Rome, where four roads met, and wait silently until he saw a company pass by; and then, without uttering a word, to deliver a letter which he gave him to a majestic being who rode in a chariot after the rest of the company. The young man did so, and saw a company of all ages, sexes, and ranks, on horse and on foot, some joyful and others sad, pass along; among whom he distinguished a woman in a meretricious dress, who, from the tenuity of her garments, seemed almost naked. She rode on a mule; her long hair, which flowed over her shoulders, was bound with a golden fillet, and in her hand was a

[Pg 129]

gold rod with which she directed the mule. In the close of the procession a tall majestic figure appeared in a chariot adorned with emeralds and pearls, who fiercely asked the young man what he did there. He presented the letter in silence, which the demon dared not refuse. As soon as he had read, lifting up his hands to heaven, he exclaimed: 'Almighty God, how long wilt thou endure the iniquities of the sorcerer Palumbus?' and immediately despatched some of his attendants, who, with much difficulty, extorted the ring from Venus, and restored it to its owner, whose infernal bands were thus dissolved.[33]

Another mediæval story is founded on the same myth, but purified and Christianised. A [Pg 130] knight is playing at ball and incommoded by his ring. He therefore removes it, and places it for safety on the finger of a statue of the Blessed Virgin. On seeking it again he finds the hand of the finger clasped, and is unable to recover his ring; whereupon the knight renounces the world, and, as the betrothed of the Virgin, enters a monastery.

Gifts of rings to the Virgin were common in the Middle Ages. Monstrelet relates that at the execution of the Constable of France, Louis de Luxembourg, in the reign of Louis XI., he took a gold ring set with a diamond from his finger, and, giving it to the Penitentiary, desired he would offer it to the image of the Virgin Mary, and place it on her finger, which he promised to perform.

Mr. J. Baring Gould, in his 'Curious Myths of the Middle Ages,' relates a legend by Cæsarius of Heisterboch of a similar character to that of Venus and the ring. A certain clerk, Philip, a great necromancer, took some Swabian and Bavarian youths to a lonely spot in a field, where, at their desire, he proceeded to perform incantations. First, he drew a circle round them with his sword, and warned them on no consideration to leave the ring.

Then, retiring from them a little space, he began his incantations, and suddenly there appeared around the youths a multitude of armed men brandishing weapons, and daring [Pg 131] them to fight. The demons, failing to draw them by this means from their enchanted circle, vanished, and there was seen a company of beautiful damsels, dancing about the ring, and by their attitudes alluring the youths towards them. One of them, exceeding in beauty and grace the others, singled out a youth, and, dancing before him, extended to him a ring of gold, casting languishing glances towards him, and, by all the means in her power, endeavouring to attract his attention and kindle his passion. The young man, unable to resist any longer, put forth his finger beyond the circle to take the ring, and the apparition at once drew him towards her, and vanished with him. However, after much trouble, the necromancer was able to recover him from the evil spirit.

'The incident of the ring,' remarks Mr. Gould, 'in connexion with the ancient goddess, is certainly taken from the old religion of the Teutonic and Scandinavian peoples. Freyja was represented in her temples holding a ring in her hand; so was Thorgerda Hördabrúda. The Faereyinga Saga relates an event in the life of the Faroese hero Sigmund Brestesson, which is to the point. "They (Earl Hakon and Sigmund) went to the temple, and the earl fell on the ground before her statue, and there he lay long. The statue was richly dressed, and had a heavy gold ring on the arm. And the earl stood up and touched the ring, and tried to remove it, but could not; and it seemed to Sigmund as though she frowned. Then the earl said: 'She is not pleased with thee, Sigmund, and I do not know whether I shall be able to reconcile you; but that shall be the token of her favour, if she gives us the ring which she has in her hand.' Then the earl took much silver, and laid it on her footstool before her, and again he flung himself before her, and Sigmund noticed that he wept profusely. And when he stood up [Pg 132] he took the ring, and she let go of it. Then the earl gave it to Sigmund and said: 'I give thee this ring to thy weal; never part with it;' and Sigmund promised he would not."

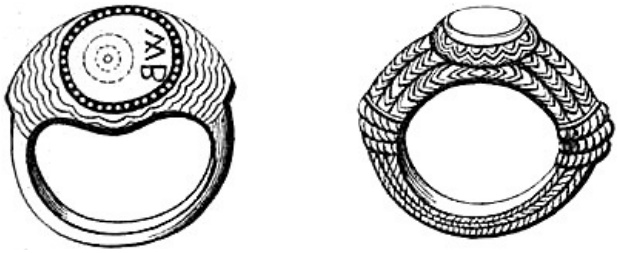
'This ring occasions the death of the Faroese chief. In after years King Olaf, who converts him to Christianity, knowing that this gold ring is a relic of paganism, asks Sigmund to give it to him: the chief refuses, and the king angrily pronounces a warning that it will be the cause of his death. And his word falls true, for Sigmund is murdered in his sleep for the sake of the ring.'

There was no limit to the credulity of believers in the mystic in the middle and even in later ages. Sir Walter Scott, in his 'Demonology and Witchcraft,' remarks that the early dabblers in astrology and chemistry, although denying the use of all necromancy—that is, unlawful or black magic—pretended always to a correspondence with the various spirits of the elements, on the principle of the Rosicrucian philosophy. They affirmed that they could bind to their service, and imprison in a ring, a mirror, or a stone, some fairy sylph or salamander, and compel it to appear when called, and render answers to such questions as the viewer should propose.'[34]

In the reign of Henry VIII. (1533) Jones, the famous, or rather infamous, 'Oxford Conjurer,' told his dupe, Sir William Neville, that amongst other marvels he could make rings of gold which would ensure the favour of great men to those who wore them. He said 'that my lord cardinal (Wolsey) had such,' and he promised one to Sir William and his brother.[35]

It is not a little curious that Henry VIII. himself, the despoiler of monasteries, and, to a [Pg 133] certain extent, the uprooter of many superstitious practices, placed such faith in the traditional virtues of a jewel that had for ages decked the shrine of Thomas à Becket at Canterbury that he caused it to be placed in a ring, which he constantly wore afterwards, in the manner of those times, on his enormous thumb. The last time that this jewel appears in

history is among the ‘diamonds’ of the golden collar of his daughter Queen Mary, who, although a bigoted Roman Catholic, did not scruple to wear the spoils of a shrine. This jewel was called the ‘royal of France’ having been presented to the shrine of the murdered Archbishop by King Louis VII. in 1179.[36]



Charm-rings.

Religious charms were of exhaustless variety. In the Braybrooke Collection is a bone charm-ring, surmounted by a circular signet, on which is engraved the crucifix, with our Saviour upon it, and the two Maries standing on either side of the stem: round the edge of the signet is the inscription ‘In hoc signo vinces,’ headed with a small cross. [Pg 134]

In the ‘Journal of the Archæological Institute’ (vol. iii. p. 358) is an account of a curious magical ring, found on the coast of Glamorganshire, near to the ‘Worm’s Head,’ the western extremity of the county, where numerous objects have been found at various times on the shifting of the sand, such as fire-arms, an astrolabe, and silver dollars. This ring is of gold, much bent and defaced, and inscribed with mystic words both inside and outside the hoop.

Talismanic ring.

‘The talismanic character of these mysterious words seems to be sufficiently proved by comparison with the physical charms given in an English medical MS., preserved at Stockholm, and published by the Society of Antiquaries. Amongst various cabalistic prescriptions is found one “for peynys in theth.... Boro berto briore + vulnera quinque dei sint medecina mei + Tahebal + ghether (or guthman) + + + Onthman,” &c. The last word should probably be read Guthman, and it is succeeded by five crosses, probably in allusion to the five wounds of the Saviour.’ It is supposed that this ring and the other remains alluded to indicate the spot where a Spanish or Portuguese vessel was wrecked about two hundred years ago. [Pg 135]

The following engraving, from the ‘Archæological Journal’ (vol. iii. p. 267), represents another cabalistic ring, found in Worcestershire, and the property of Mr. Jabez Allies. It is of base metal, plated with gold, and is, apparently, of the fourteenth century.

Talismanic ring.

In the ‘Archæological Journal’ (vol. v. p. 159) is an engraving and description of a curious talismanic ring, with an inscription showing stronger evidence of oriental origin than any heretofore noticed, the Greek letters *theta* and *gamma* occurring twice in the legend. The discovery of this relic, which is of gold, weighing 56 grains, was singular. It was found in digging up the roots of an old oak-tree which had been blown down by a violent wind in

1846, on a farm called the ‘Rookery,’ in the parish of Calne, Wiltshire, belonging to Mr. Thomas Poynder, who thinks that the spot where the ring was found was in the track of the fugitive Royalists, after the battle at Rounday Hill, near Devizes, on their retreat towards Oxford, where the King’s head-quarters were stated to be at that time. This curious ring is [Pg 136] divided into eight compartments, with a row of three little rounded points, or studs, between each. The hoop is bent irregularly, so that the inner circle presents seven straight sides, but the angles thus formed do not correspond precisely with the external divisions.

Talismanic ring.

Talismanic ring.

A talismanic ring of gold found in Coventry Park in 1802, represents in the centre device Christ rising from the sepulchre, and in the background are shown the hammer, sponge, and other emblems of the Passion. On the left is figured the wound at the side, with an inscription ‘the well of ewerlastingh lyffe.’ In the next compartment, two smaller wounds, [Pg 137] with ‘the well of confort,’ ‘the well of gracy,’ and afterwards two other wounds inscribed ‘the well of pitty,’ ‘the well of merci.’

From some small remains it is evident that the figure of our Saviour, with all the inscriptions, had been filled with *black* enamel, whilst the wounds and drops of blood issuing from them were appropriately distinguished by *red*. On the inside of the ring is the following inscription: ‘Wulnera quinq’ dei sunt medecina mei, pia crux et passio x̄pi sunt medecina michi, Jaspar, Melchior, Baltasar, ananyzapta tetragrammaton.’

In the ‘Archæologia’ (vol. xviii.) it is stated that Sir Edward Shaw, goldsmith and alderman of London, by his will (*circâ* 1487), directed to be made sixteen rings of ‘fyne gold, to be graven with the well of pitie, the well of mercie, and the well of everlasting life.’

It is, perhaps, impossible now to explain the import of the legends which occur on certain mediæval rings, and devices which are probably, in many cases, anagrammatic, and the original orthography of the legend corrupted and changed in others; but they, no doubt, had a talismanic meaning. A gold ring found in Rockingham Forest in 1841 has inscribed on the outer side, *guttv*: *gutta*: *madros*: *adros*; and in the inner side, *vdros*: *udros*: *thebal*. A thin gold ring discovered in a garden at Newark in 1741 was inscribed with the words *Agla*: *Thalcvt*: *Calcvt*: *Cattama*.

The mystic word, or anagram, *Agla* is engraved on the inner side of a silver ring (of the fourteenth century) found in 1846 on the site of the cemetery of St. Owen’s, which stood on the west site of Gloucester, a little without the south gate, and was destroyed during the siege of 1643. On the outside of the ring is engraved + Ave Maria, and within appear the [Pg 138] letters Agla, with the symbol of the cross between each letter. The weight of the ring is 20

grs. The term Agla designated in the East a wand of dignity or office, and may possibly have been used in connection with magical or alchemical operations.

There is a notice of a curious magical ring against leprosy in the ‘Archæologia’ (vol. xxi. p. 25, 120). In the Londesborough Collection is a ‘religious,’ or ‘superstitious’ ring of silver, the workmanship of which dates it at the end of the fifteenth century, and which is supposed to have been worn as a charm against St. Vitus’s dance. To a circular plate are attached three large bosses, and, between each, two smaller bosses, all the nine of which are hollow, and were filled, apparently, by some resinous substance. On the three larger bosses are engraved the letters S. M. V. (Sancta Maria Virgo) in relief.

In the same collection is a gold ring of the same century, the face engraved with St. Christopher bearing the infant Saviour, worn as a charm against sudden death, more particularly by drowning.

It is very delicately engraved. The circle is formed by ten lozenges, each of which bears a letter of the inscription, ‘de boen cuer.’

Amulet rings.

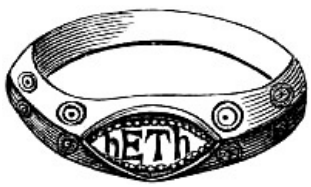
Sir John Woodford is in possession of a gold ring found on the field of Azincourt, which bears the inscription Buro. Berto. Beriora. These mystic words occur likewise in the charm against tooth-ache given in the Stockholm MS. (‘Archæological Journal,’ vol. iv. p. 78). [Pg 139]

A thumb-ring was discovered a few years since in the coffin of an ecclesiastic, in Chichester Cathedral, set with an Abraxas gem,[37] an agate; the deceased churchman, it may be well believed, had worn it guiltless of all knowledge of Alexandrine pantheism. The ring was of gold, and was found on the right-hand thumb-bone of a skeleton, the supposed remains of Seffrid, Bishop of Chichester, A.D. 1125.

Cabalistic ring.

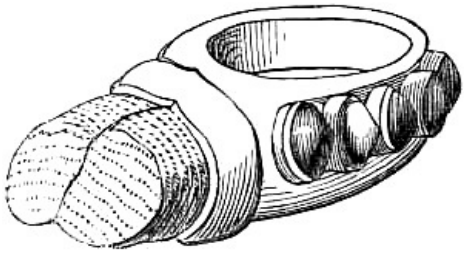
A very large ring, bearing great resemblance to the episcopal ring, was occasionally worn as a thumb-ring by the laity. In the Londesborough Collection is a fine specimen. It is somewhat roughly formed of mixed metal, and has upon the circular face a conventional representation of a monkey looking at himself in a hand-mirror. This is surrounded by a cable-moulding, and on each side is set two large stones. The outer edge of this ring is also decorated with a heavy cable-moulding; inside, next the figure, is the cross and sacred monogram, placed on each side of the mystic word *anamzapta*, showing it to be a charm-ring. [Pg 140]

Another mystical ring in the same collection is inscribed, on an oval boss, hETh; the workmanship, probably English, of about the fifteenth century. This ring was bought at Ely. *Heth* was the sacred name of Jehovah. Dr. Dee and similar Gnostics composed several mystical arrangements founded on these four letters.



Mystical ring.

The Londesborough Collection has also a massive thumb-ring, having the tooth of some animal as its principal gem, supposed to have mystic power over its possessor. It is set all around with precious stones to ensure its potency.



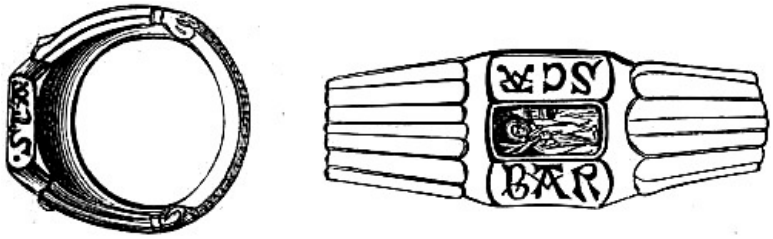
Mystical ring.

The last leaf of the ‘Theophilus’ MS. of the fourteenth century has: ‘Against the falling sickness, write these characters upon a ring; outside, + ou. thebal gut guthani; inside, + eri gerari.’

A ring that had belonged to Remigius, being dipped in holy water, furnished, it is said, a good drink for fever and other diseases. [Pg 141]

The sacred names of ‘Jesus,’ ‘Maria,’ and ‘Joseph’ were formerly inscribed on rings, and worn as preservatives against the plague. Rings simply made of gold were supposed to cure St. Antony’s fire, but if inscribed with magical words their effect was irresistible.

A representation is annexed of an amulet ring found near Oxford, about 1805, bearing an inscription Sca. Bar., Sancta Barbara. The legend of St. Barbara calls her a patroness against storms and lightning.



Amulet ring.

The following engraving represents an amulet wedding-ring, conjectured to be the figure of St. Catherine with her wheel, being an emblem of good fortune; the other being probably, St. Margaret (with the church), an emblem of her faith, wisdom, constancy, and fortitude: time of Richard II.

Amulet ring.

Rings in which pieces of what was asserted to be the ‘true cross’ were placed are sometimes met with in old writings. St. Gregory states that his sister wore one of this kind. That this belief was not always credited is seen in the case of an exchange of rings between a bishop and an abbot in the annals of St. Alban’s Abbey. This occurred in the reign of Richard II., when the Bishop of Lincoln (Beaufort) gave his to John, fifth abbot of St. Alban’s, for one containing a piece of the true cross, and was therefore earnestly prized and begged for by the bishop. Whether the prelate had his misgivings as to the alleged sanctity of the splinter, or considered the garniture of the ring too plain, he very soon after informed the abbot that his own ring was the most valuable of the two, and the difference in value must be paid to him in money. In his zeal for his material interests the bishop overlooked the assurances of friendship which the exchange conveyed, and the abbot was obliged to give him five pounds. [Pg 142]

Relics of martyrs and saints were frequently inserted in rings: in the Londesborough Collection is a silver reliquary, probably intended for the thumb. It has a heart engraved on a lozenge, the reliquary being enclosed beneath. It was found in the ruins of the abbey of St. Bertin, at St. Omer.

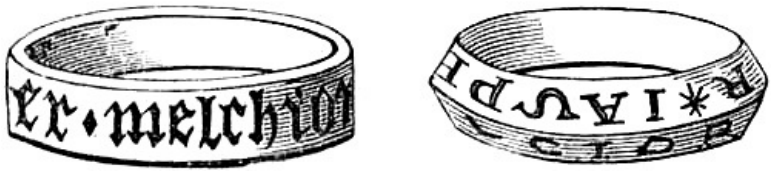
In the possession of Lady Fitz Hardinge is a remarkable reliquary ring, of admirable workmanship, probably of the tenth century, perhaps Anglo-Saxon, but possibly of Irish (Celtic) origin. It is of gold with very large expanded bezel, cruciform or quatrefoil, 1⅞ in. wide. In the centre is a raised boss, intended, possibly, to contain a relic, as the ring is, no doubt, ecclesiastical; from this radiates four monsters’ heads, similar to those on early Irish

work, marked with thin lines of niello, the eyes formed of dots of dark glass pastes, the whole edged with fine corded ornament. [Pg 143]

In the collection of Mr. R. H. Soden Smith is a reliquary gold ring, having suspended on the bezel side a small gold relic-case, chased with two crosses, and edged with beaded work of the twelfth century.

Mr. Fairholt describes a curious Venetian ring, the bezel formed like a box to contain relics. The face of the ring has a representation of St. Mark seated, holding his gospel and giving a benediction. The spaces between this figure and the oval border are perforated, so that the interior of the box is visible, and the relic enshrined might be seen.

Liceti, a Genoese physician of the seventeenth century, who wrote a book on rings, ascribed the want of virtue in medicated rings to their small size, observing that the larger the ring or the gem contained in it, the greater was the effect. He endeavoured to prove that the Philistines, when they were punished for touching the ark of Israel, wore rings on their fingers with the image of the disease engraved on them by way of expiation.



Rings of the Magi.

The names of the Three Kings of Cologne constituted a popular charm against diseases and evil influences in the Middle Ages. The late Crofton Croker, in his description of the rings in the Londesborough Collection, mentions one dating from the fourteenth, or early in the fifteenth century, engraved outside with these names: Gasper: Melchior: Baltazar: in. God. is. a. r.—the latter words, probably, implying 'in God is a remedy.' The three Kings were [Pg 144] supposed to be the Wise Men (according to the legend, three Kings of Arabia) who made offerings to our Saviour. Their bodies travelled first to Constantinople, thence to Milan, and, lastly, to Cologne, by various removals.[38] These three potent names have continued as a [Pg 145] charm even to a late period; for, in January 1748-9, one William Jackson, a Roman Catholic, and a proscribed smuggler, being sentenced to death at Chichester, had a purse taken from his person, containing the following scrap:—

> Sancti tres Reges,
> Gaspar, Melchior, Baltasar,
> Orate pro nobis nunc et in hora
> Mortis nostræ.

The paper on which this invocation was written had touched the heads of the Three Kings at Cologne.

In 'Reynard the Fox,' the hero of that satirical work, describing the treasure he pretends to have discovered for the sole benefit of his royal master and mistress, says: 'Oon of them was a rynge of fyne gold, and within the rynge next the fyngre were wreton lettres enameld wyth sable and asure, and there were three Hebrew names therein, y coude not myself rede ne spelle them, for I onderstand not that language, but mayster Abryon of Tryers, he is a wise man, he onderstandeth wel al maner of langages, and the virtue of al maner of herbes. And yet he byleveth not in God, he is a Jewe, the wysest in conynge, and specyally he knoweth the virtue of stones. I shewed him thys ryng, he sayd that they were the thre names that Seth brought out of Paradys, when he brought to his fader Adam the oyle of mercy. And whomsoever bereth on hym thyse thre names, he shal never be hurte by throndre ne by lyghtning, ne no wytchcraft shal have no power over hym, ne be tempted to doo synne; and also he shall never take harme by colde though he laye thre wynters long nyghtes in the felde though it snowed, stormed, or froze never soo sore, so grete myghte have these wordes.'

The stone set in the ring and its wonderful properties are then enumerated, and the [Pg 146] conclusion is: 'I thought in myself that I was not able ne worthy to bere it, and therefore I sent it to my dere lord, the Kyng, for I knew hym for the moost noble that now lyveth, and also all our welfare and worship lyeth on hym, and for he shold be kepte fro al drede, nede, and ungeluck.'

While the names of saints were employed for the prevention or relief of bodily ailments, those of 'devils' were made the agency for criminal objects; thus we read in Monstrelet's 'Chronicles,' that in the plea of justification made by the Duke of Burgundy for the assassination of Louis, Duke of Orleans, in 1407, he accused the latter of having conspired against the King of France by means of sorcery. Among other things a ring was made use of 'in the name of devils.' A monk undertook this 'who performed many superstitious acts near a bush, with invocations to the devil.' Two evil spirits appeared to him in the shape of two men, one of whom took the ring, which had been placed on the ground, and vanished. After half an hour he returned, and gave the ring to the monk, 'which to the sight was the colour of red, nearly scarlet,' and said to him: 'Thou wilt put it into the mouth of a dead man in the manner thou knowest,' and then vanished. The monk obeyed these instructions 'thinking to

burn the lord our King.’

Mr. Fairholt describes a mechanical ring, of mystic signification, as one of the most curious rings in the Londesborough Collection. The outside of the hoop is perfectly plain, and is set with a ruby and amethyst. Upon pressing these stones a spring opens, and discovers the surface covered with magical signs and names of spirits; among them Asmodiel, Nachiel, and Zamiel occur, a similar series occupying the interior of the hoop. Such a ring might be [Pg 147] worn without suspicion of its true import, looking simplicity itself, but fraught with unholy meaning. It was, probably, constructed for some German mystic philosopher, at a time when students like Faust devoted themselves and their fortune to occult sciences, believing in the philosopher’s stone, the elixir of life, and the power given to man to control the unseen world of spirits.

Cabalistic ring.

Among the charges brought against Joan of Arc were that she had charmed rings to secure victory over her enemies.

The ancient physicians and empirics employed numerous charms for the cure of diseases, and the practice was common among the medical professors of the middle and lower Roman empire. Marcellus, a physician who lived in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, directs the patient who is afflicted with a pain in the side to wear a ring of pure gold, inscribed with some Greek letters, on a Thursday, at the decrease of the moon. It was to be worn on the right hand if the pain was on the left side, and *vice versâ*. Trallian, another physician, living in the fourth century, cured the colic and all bilious complaints by means of an octangular ring of iron, on which eight words were to be engraved, commanding the bile to take possession of a lark! A magic diagram was to be added. He tells us that he had great experience in this [Pg 148] remedy, and had considered it extremely foolish to omit recording so valuable a treasure, but he particularly enjoined keeping it a secret from the profane vulgar, according to an admonition of Hippocrates, that sacred things are for sacred persons only. He recommends also a cure for the stone by wearing a copper ring with the figure of a lion, a crescent, and a star, to be placed on the fourth finger; and for the colic in general a ring with Hercules strangling the Nemæan lion.

Michaelis, a physician of Leipsic, had a ring made of a sea-horse’s tooth, which he applied to all diseases indiscriminately,[39] but jasper was the favourite substance employed when a particular disorder was in question.

Rings with Mottoes, worn as Medicaments.

Galen mentions a green jasper amulet belonging to the Egyptian King Nechepsus, who lived 630 years before the Christian era. It was cut in the form of a dragon surrounded with rays, and worn to strengthen the organs of digestion.

The numerous magical properties of the jasper made it a favourite among the Gnostic or Basilidian gems.

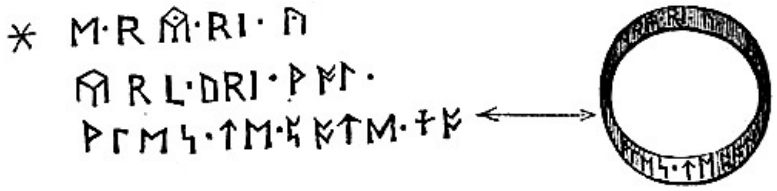
At a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries in March 1875 Mr. Robert Ferguson, M.P., &c., [Pg 149] exhibited among other rings, one of yellow metal, with Anglo-Saxon runes;[40] diameter 1⅒ [Pg 150] inch. It bears an inscription similar to the Cumberland specimen now in the British Museum. The ring is said to have belonged to a Major Macdonald, in 1745, and was obtained by Mr. Ferguson from his descendant. Mr. Ferguson has since presented this ring to the British Museum.

A somewhat similar ring, the property of the Earl of Aberdeen, is described in the ‘Archæological Journal’ (vol. xxi. p. 256) bearing the Runic inscription, ‘whether in fever or leprosy, the patient be happy and confident in the hope of recovery.’

Runic.

The accompanying illustration represents a Dano-Saxon ring worn as a charm against the plague, and bearing an inscription thus rendered:—

> Raise us from dust we pray to thee;
> From pestilence O set us free,
> Although the grave unwilling be.



Dano-Saxon Runic ring.

At the proceedings of the Royal Society of Antiquaries at Copenhagen, in 1838, a gold ring with a Runic inscription, found in Fionia, was exhibited. The words *röd eg lagd álaga* may be rendered ‘I guide the chain of destiny,’ and show that its Scandinavian possessor considered it an amulet. [Pg 151]

Rings of lead, mixed with quicksilver, were used against headaches and other complaints.

In the ‘Récueil des Historiens de France’ we read that Passavant, Bishop of Mans, possessed a ring which had belonged to Gulpherius de Lastour, during the Crusades, which was very precious, and cured a great number of sick persons.

A gold ring of the fourteenth century, in the Londesborough Collection, has an inscription which, freely translated, is ‘May you be preserved from the evil eye!’

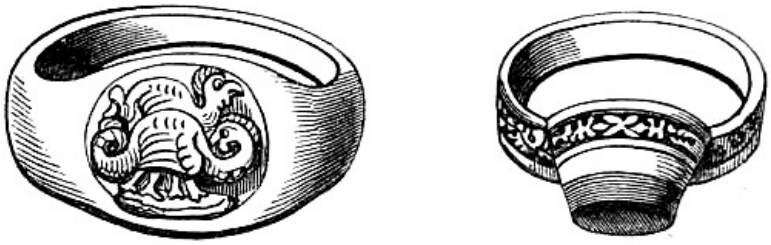
In the Shrewsbury Museum is a small iron ring, with an intaglio representing a fawn springing out of a nautilus-shell. It was discovered at Wroxeter. This and similar devices the Rev. C. W. King ascribes as probable charms against the ‘evil eye.’

This superstition still prevails extensively in the East, and is also entertained in many parts of Europe. That it was well known to Romans we have the authority of Virgil: ‘Nescio quis teneros oculus mihi fascinat agnos’ (*Ecl.* iii.).

The following engraving (from the Collection Chabouillet) represents a Greek amulet ring, adopted by the Etruscans and Romans, and which offers, by the stone and setting, the figure of an eye. These rings were movable, and turned on the axis.

Amulet against the ‘evil eye.’

The great preservative against this was the wearing of a ring, with the figure of a cockatrice, supposed to proceed from a cock’s egg under various planetary and talismanic influences. The Londesborough thumb-ring has two cockatrices cut in high relief upon an agate. [Pg 152]



Amulets against the ‘evil eye.’

The deadly power of the cockatrice is alluded to by Shakspeare in ‘Twelfth Night’ and in

‘Romeo and Juliet’—

> Say thou but *I*,
> And that base vowel *I* shall poison more
> Than the death-darting eye of cockatrice.

So Dryden says:—

> Mischiefs are like the cockatrice’s eye;
> If they see first, they kill; if seen, they die—

alluding to the counter-action, that if the creature was seen by a person first, without being perceived by it, the cockatrice died from the effect of the human eye. The figure of the bird merely gave security against the evil eye; it had no other effect, and for this purpose various engraved stones were used. Thus a ring in the Londesborough Collection has in its centre a Gnostic gem with cabalistic figures, believed able to avert the dreadful glance.

In the same collection is a massive thumb-ring, having the tooth of some animal as its principal gem, supposed to have mystic power over the fortunes of its possessor. It is set all round with precious stones of talismanic virtues. [Pg 153]

A dove, with a branch of olive in its mouth, engraved in pyrites, and mounted in a silver ring, ensured the wearer the utmost hospitality wherever he went, possessing the power of fascination. A fair head, well combed, with a handsome face, engraved on a gem, secured joy, reverence, and honour.

Rings made of the bones of an ostrich were assumed to be of rare virtue.

Charm-ring.

Annexed is a representation of a silver charm-ring in the South Kensington Museum; the hoop is spirally fluted, widening towards the bezel, which is set with a tooth; the shoulder of the ring is pierced in floriated German work of the eighteenth century.

In the Waterton Collection are several rings of hoof—probably that of an ass—enclosed in gold, and considered a remedy for epilepsy. From Cardan (de Venenis) we learn, among other means for a physician to find out whether a patient is ‘fascinated,’ that of a ring made of the hoof of an ass, put on his finger, growing too large for him after a few days’ wearing. It seems that among the Indians and Norwegians the hoof of the elk is regarded as a sovereign cure for the same malady. The person afflicted applies it to his heart, holding it in his left hand, and rubbing his ear with it.

Brand, in his ‘Popular Antiquities,’ states that in Berkshire a ring made from a piece of silver collected at the Communion is supposed to be a cure for convulsions and fits of every kind. If collected on Easter Sunday its efficacy is greatly increased. Silver is not considered necessary in Devonshire, where a ring is preferred made out of three nails or screws that have been used to fasten a coffin, and that have been dug out of the churchyard. It is curious to notice that, according to Pliny, the ancients believed that a nail drawn out of a sepulchre and placed on the threshold of a bed-chamber door would drive away phantoms in the night. [Pg 154]

In Lucian’s ‘Philopseudes’ one of the interlocutors states ‘that since an Arabian had presented him with a ring made of iron taken from the gallows, together with a written charm, he had ceased to be afraid of the demoniacs, who had been healed by a Syrian in Palestine.’

In the ‘Gentleman’s Magazine’ for 1794 we are told that a silver ring will cure fits when it is made from five sixpences collected from as many bachelors, to be conveyed by the hands of a bachelor to a smith that is a bachelor. None of the persons who gave the sixpences were to know for what purpose, or to whom they gave them. The ‘London Medical and Physical Journal’ for 1815 notices a charm *successfully* employed in the cure of epilepsy, after the failure of various medical means. It consisted of a silver ring contributed by twelve young women, and was to be constantly worn on one of the fingers of the patient.

In ‘Notes and Queries’ (vol. i. 2nd series, p. 331) we find a Gloucestershire ring prescription for epilepsy, which shows the persistence of credulity even in the present enlightened period. ‘The curate of Hasfield, going into the house of a parishioner whose daughter was afflicted with epileptic fits, was accosted by the mother of the damsel in a most joyous tone: “Oh! sir, Emma has got her ring.” The good curate, fearing that the poor girl might have stooped to folly, and that this was an intimation that her swain intended to make an honest [Pg 155]

woman of her, sought an explanation, which was afforded in the following prescription:—"Why, you see, sir, our Emma has been long troubled with the fits, and she went to the church door, and asked a penny from every unmarried man that went in, till she got twenty-four. She then took them to a silversmith in Gloucester, who promised to get them changed for 'Sacrament' money (which he said he could easily do, as he knew one of the cathedral clergy). And with that money, sir, he made her a silver ring, and Emma is wearing it, and has not had a fit since."'

In Somersetshire it is a popular belief that the ring-finger, stroked along any sore or wound, will soon heal it. All the other fingers would poison the finger instead of healing it. It is still an article of belief in some persons that there is virtue enough in a gold ring to remove a stye from the eye, if it be rubbed with it.

Although silver appears to be the happy medium chiefly in these wonderful cures, yet we are told that Paracelsus had a ring made of a variety of metallic substances, which he called electrum, and which not only cured epilepsy, but almost every other complaint.

At the meeting of the 'Society of Antiquaries' (June 12, 1873) a very interesting collection of so-called Tau (T) rings were exhibited by Octavius Morgan, Esq., F.R.S., F.S.A. These, bearing the mystical emblem of the T (tau), are by no means of frequent occurrence, and it is not likely that so many were ever brought together before. The tau was early esteemed a sacred symbol, and was considered to be the mark placed on the forehead, as mentioned in the Bible. 'I have,' remarks Mr. Morgan, 'in my collection a champlevé enamel of the [Pg 156] thirteenth century, where the "man in the linen garment," as mentioned in Ezekiel ix., is represented marking the T on the forehead of the faithful children of Israel. A mystical virtue was attached to this T, and, in company with the word A N A N I Z A P T A—which, being faithfully translated from the Chaldee, according to the Rev. C. W. King, means, "Have mercy on us, O Judge"—was thought a most powerful prophylactic against epilepsy.'

A description of these curious rings will be found in the 'Proceedings of the Society' (vol. vi. No. 1, pp. 51, 53).

A toadstone ring (the fossil palatal tooth of a species of Ray) was supposed to protect new-born children and their mothers from the power of the fairies; and this continued a late-day superstition, for Joanna Baillie, in a letter to Sir Walter Scott, mentions one having been repeatedly borrowed from her mother for that purpose. It was believed also to be a specific in cases of diseased kidney, when immersed in water which was drunk by the patient.

In the inventory of the Duke de Berry is mentioned 'une crapaudine assize en un annel d'or;' also, in the inventory of the Duke of Burgundy, we find 'deux crapaudines, l'une en ung anneau d'or, l'autre en ung anneau d'argent.' These were highly esteemed for their magical properties, as I have remarked, and were probably also worn to prevent the administration of poison, being supposed to indicate its presence by perspiring and changing colour. Fenton, who wrote in 1569, says, 'Being used in rings they give forewarning of venom.' In Ben Jonson's 'Fox' (ii. 5) it is thus alluded to:—

> Were you enamoured on his copper rings,
> His saffron jewel, with the toadstone in't?

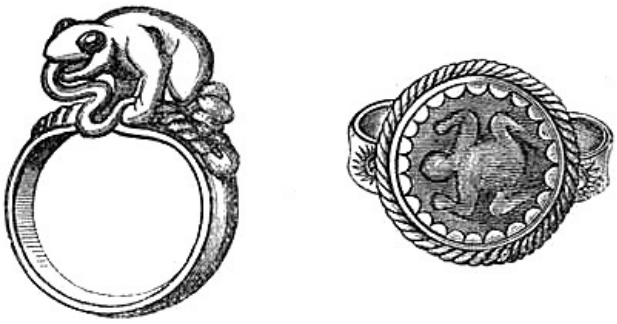
Lupton, in his 'Thousand Notable Things,' says that the stone (which, according to Fenton, [Pg 157] was most commonly found in the head of a he-toad) was not easily attained, for the toad 'envieth so much that man should have that stone. To know whether the stone called *crapaudina* be the right or perfect stone or not, hold the stone before a toad so that he may see it, and, if it be a right and true stone, the toad will leap towards it, and make as though he would snatch it from you.'

Silver toadstone ring
(fifteenth century).

An ingenious method of obtaining the stone is given by the same writer: 'Put a great or overgrown toad (first bruised in divers places) into an earthen pot; put the same into an ant's hillock, and cover the same with earth, which toad at length the ants will eat, so that the bones of the toad and stone will be left in the pot.' A mediæval author, however, states that the stone should be obtained while the toad is living, and this may be done by simply placing upon him a piece of scarlet cloth, 'wherewithal they are much delighted, so that, while they stretch out themselves as it were in sport upon that cloth, they cast out the stone of their head, but instantly they sup it up again, unless it be taken from them through some secret hole in the same cloth.'

The scarlet, however did not always perform this miracle, for Boethius relates how he watched a whole night an old toad he had laid on a red cloth to see him cast forth the stone, but the toad was stubborn, and left him nothing to 'gratify the great pangs of his whole night's restlessness.'

The Londesborough Collection contains two remarkable specimens of rings connected with toad superstition, thus described by Mr. Fairholt: 'The first is of mixed metal, gilt, having upon it the figure of a toad swallowing a serpent. There is a mediæval story of a necromancer introducing himself to another professor of magic by showing him a serpent-ring, upon which the latter, who did not desire anyone to interfere with his practice, produced his toadstone ring, observing that the toad might swallow the serpent, thereby intimating his power to overcome him. The second ring is curious, not only as containing the true toad-stone, but the stone is embossed with the figure of a toad, according to the description of Albertus Magnus, who describes the most valuable variety of this coveted gem as having the figure of the reptile engraved on it.' [Pg 158]



Toadstone rings.

Prætorius mentions that a member of the German house of Alveschleben received a ring from a 'Nixe' to which the future fortunes of his line were to be attached.

The turquoise ring of Shylock, which he would not have given for a 'wilderness of monkeys' ('Merchant of Venice,' scene i.), was probably more esteemed for its secret virtues than from any commercial value, the turquoise, turkise, or turkey-stone having, from remote periods, been supposed to possess talismanic properties. Fenton, in his 'Secret Wonders of Nature' (1569), thus describes the stone: 'The turkeys doth move when there is any peril prepared to him that weareth it.' [Pg 159]

Dr. Donne alludes to

> A compassionate turquoise, that doth tell,
> By looking pale, the wearer is not well.

Among the virtues of the turquoise is one which would spare us the shame of a divorce-court, as it was believed to take away all enmity, and to reconcile man and wife. Holinshed, speaking of the death of King John, says: 'And when the king suspected them (the pears) to be poisoned indeed, by reason of such precious stones as he had about him cast forth a certain *sweat*, as it were bewraeing the poison, &c.' The turquoise was a supposed monitor of poison from this circumstance.

'With the Germans the turquoise is still the gem appropriated to the ring, the "gage d'amour," presented by the lover on the acceptance of his suit, the permanence of its colour being believed to depend upon the constancy of his affection. Inasmuch as this stone is almost as liable to change, and as capriciously as the heart itself, the omen it gives is verified with sufficient frequency to maintain its reputation for infallibility' (The Rev. C. W. King, on 'Precious Stones,' &c.).

Camillus Leonardus, in the 'Mirror of Stones,' describes the *carbuncle* as 'brandishing its fiery rays on every side, and in the dark appearing like a fiery coal. It is esteemed the first among burning gems.'

The ancients supposed this stone to give out a native light without reflection, and they ranked it fifth in order, after diamonds, emeralds, opals, and pearls. The virtue of the carbuncle was to drive away poisonous air, repress luxury, and preserve the health of the body. The wonderful light emitted from the stone is one of the most prolific resources of romance among old writers. [Pg 160]

Shakspeare alludes to the superstition in 'Titus Andronicus' (Act ii. sc. 4).

> *Martius.* Lord Bassianus lies embruèd here
> All on a heap, like to a slaughtered lamb,
> In this detested, dark, blood-drinking pit.
> *Quintus.* If it be dark, how dost thou know 'tis he?
> *Martius.* Upon his bloody finger he doth wear
> A precious ring that lightens all the hole,
> Which, like a taper in some monument,
> Doth shine upon the dead man's earthy cheeks,

And shows the rugged entrails of the pit.

Ben Jonson and Drayton also refer to the same superstition.

The change of colours[41] in stones, portent of evil, was a deep-set superstition in most parts of the world. In the Scotch ballad of ‘Hynd Horn’ we find:—

And she gave to me a gay gold ring [Pg 161]
With a hey lillelu and a how lo lau,
With three shining diamonds set therein,
And the birk and the brume blooms bonnie.
. . . . . .
What if these diamonds lose their hue,
With a hey lillelu and a how lo lau,
Just when my love begins for to rew,
And the birk and the brume blooms bonnie.

For when your ring turns pale and wan
With a hey lillelu and a how lo lau,
Then I’m in love with another man,
And the birk and the brume blooms bonnie.
. . . . . .
Seven long years he has been on the sea,
With a hey lillelu and a how lo lau,
And Hynd Horn has looked how his ring may be,
And the birk and the brume blooms bonnie.

But when he looked this ring upon,
With a hey lillelu and a how lo lau,
The shining diamonds were pale and wan,
And the birk and the brume blooms bonnie.

Oh! the ring it was both black and blue,
With a hey lillelu and a how lo lau,
And she’s either dead or she’s married,
And the birk and the brume blooms bonnie.

A curious passage occurs in a letter addressed by Lord Chancellor Hatton to Sir Thomas Smith, preserved among the Harleian MSS., relating to an epidemic then prevailing: ‘I am likewise bold to commend my humble duty to our dear mistress (Queen Elizabeth) by this letter and ring, which hath the virtue to expel infectious airs, and is (as it letteth me) to be worn between the sweet duggs, the chaste nest of pure constancy (!). I trust, sir, when the virtue is known it shall not be refused for the value.’

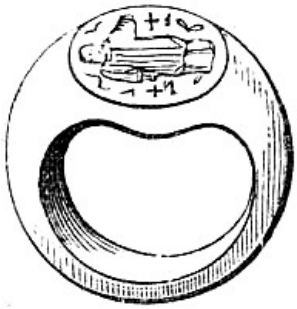
‘Medijcinable’ rings for the cure of the falling sickness and the cramp are mentioned in the [Pg 162] Household Books of Henry IV. and Edward IV.; the metal they were composed of was what formed the King’s offering to the Cross on Good Friday, that day being appointed for the blessing of the rings.

The following entry occurs in the account of the seventh and eighth years of Henry IV. (1406). ‘In oblacionibus domini regis factis adorando crucem in capella infra manerium suum de Eltham, die parasceves, in precio trium nobilium auri, et v. solidorum sterlyng, xxv. s.’

‘In denariis solutis pro eisdem oblacionibus reassumptis, pro annulis medicinalibus inde faciendis, xxv. s.’

A ring considered to possess some healing or talismanic virtues was also termed, in mediæval Latin, *vertuosus*. Thus Thomas de Hoton, rector of Kyrkebymisperton, 1351, bequeathed to his chaplain ‘j. zonam de serico, j. bonam bursam, j. firmaculum, et j. anulum vertuosum. Item, domino Thome de Bouthum, j. par de bedes de corall, j. annulum vertuosum.’

Andrew Boorde, who lived in the reign of Henry VIII., alluding to the cramp-rings, says, in his ‘Introduction to Knowledge,’ the ‘Kynges of England doth halow every yere crampe rynges, ye whych rynges worn on one’s finger doth helpe them whych have the crampe.’ And, again, in his ‘Breviary of Health’ (1557), he writes: ‘The kynge’s majesty hath a great helpe in this matter in halowynge crampe rings, and so given without money or petition, ye which rynges worne on one’s finger doth helpe them,’ &c. This ceremonial was practised by previous sovereigns. Hospinian gives an account of the proceedings, and states that they took place on Good Friday, and originated from the famous ‘pilgrim’ ring of King Edward the Confessor. According to tradition the sapphire in the British crown came from this ring, the [Pg 163] possession of which gave English sovereigns the power of procuring an efficacious blessing to the cramp-rings. Gardiner, in 1529, received a number of cramp-rings to distribute among the English embassage to the Pope, ‘the royal fingers pouring such virtue into the metal that no disorder could resist it.’[42]



Silver Cramp-ring.

The superstitious belief in the efficacy of cramp-rings was by no means, as we have seen, confined to the ignorant and uneducated classes; even Lord Berners, ambassador to the Emperor Charles V., writing to ‘my Lord Chancellor’s Grace’ from Saragossa (June 30, 1518), says, ‘If your Grace remember me with some crampe-ryngs, ye shall doe a thing muche looked for, and I trust to bestowe theym well, with Goddes grace, who evermore preserve and increase your most reverent estate.’

The late Cardinal Wiseman (‘Notes and Queries,’ vol. vii., 1st series, p. 89) had in his possession a manuscript containing both the ceremony for the blessing of the cramp-rings, and that for the touching for the King’s evil. At the commencement of the manuscript are emblazoned the arms of Philip and Mary. The first ceremony is headed ‘Certain Prayers to be used by the Quene’s Heignes in the Consecration of the Crampe-rynges.’ Accompanying it is an illumination, representing the queen kneeling, with a dish containing the rings to be [Pg 164] blessed on each side of her. The second Ceremony is entitled ‘The ceremonye for ye Heling of them that be diseased with the Kynge’s Evill.’ This manuscript was exhibited at a meeting of the Archæological Institute, June 6, 1851.

In Burnet (vol. ii. p. 266 of ‘Records’) there is the whole Latin formula of the consecration of the cramp-rings. It commences with the psalm ‘Deus misereatur nostri.’ Then follows a prayer invoking the aid of the Holy Spirit: the rings then lying in one basin or more, a prayer was said over them, from which we learn that the rings were made of metal, and were to expel all living venom of serpents. The rings were then blessed with an invocation to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and signed frequently with the cross. In the last benediction the prayer is made ‘that the rings may restore contracted nerves.’ A psalm of benediction follows, and a prayer against the frauds of devils. ‘The Queen’s Highness then rubbeth the rings between her hands, saying the prayer implying that as her hands rub the rings, the virtue of the holy oil wherewith she was anointed might be infused into their metal, and, by the grace of God, might be efficacious.’ The remainder of the curious ceremony concluded with holy water being poured into the basin with further prayers. This ceremonial was practised by previous sovereigns, and discontinued by Edward VI. Queen Mary intended to revive it, and, in all probability, did so, from the manuscript to which I have alluded as having belonged to the late Cardinal Wiseman.[43]

The annexed cut represents a cramp-ring of lead, simply cast in a mould, and sold cheap for [Pg 165] the use of the commonalty. It belongs to the fourteenth century.

Lead Cramp-ring.

A curious remnant or corruption of the use of cramp-rings at the present time is noticed by Mr. Rokewode, who says that in Suffolk the use of cramp-rings as a preventive against fits is not entirely abandoned: ‘Instances occur where young men of a parish each subscribe a crooked sixpence to be moulded into a ring for a young woman afflicted with that malady.’

The use of galvanic rings for the cure of rheumatism belongs to our own time, and is by no means extinct; however, we have no right to class this practice among our superstitions. After all, faith works wonders!

Particular rings were worn on certain days from superstitious motives; thus in the inventory of Charles V., in 1379, a ring with a cameo representing a Christian subject is thus described:—‘annel des vendredis, lequel est néellé et y est la croix double noire de chacun costé, où il y a ung crucifix d’un camayeux, Saint Jean et Notre-Dame, et deux angeloz sur les bras de la croix, et le porte le roy continuellement les vendredis.’

Evil portents with regard to rings prevailed in the reign of Elizabeth. The queen’s coronation-ring, which she had worn constantly since her inauguration, having grown into her finger, necessitated the ring being filed off, and this was regarded as an unfavourable augury by many, who, doubtless, attributed any untoward event that occurred at this period to an omen. Few were more credulous in such matters than the strong-minded (in most

respects) queen herself, who was a firm believer in the still popular superstition of ‘good luck.’

Long after this period, however, there were not wanting believers in the supernatural efficacy of charmed rings; there was even a charge against the Puritans of having contributed to foster the popular delusion. In the ‘Scourge,’ a series of weekly papers which appeared between 1717 and 1718, alluding to May 29, the writer says of the Roundheads: ‘Yet these priests of Baal had so poisoned the minds of the populace with such delusive enchantments that from rings, bodkins, and thimbles, like the Israelitish calf of gold, would start up a troop of horse to reinforce the saints.’ [Pg 166]

Even to a comparatively late period the belief in the Gnostic amulets was current in our own country. Immediately after the battle of Culloden the baggage of Prince Charles Edward fell into the hands of the Duke of Cumberland’s army, and many private and curious articles came into the possession of General Belford—amongst others a stone set in silver attached to a ring, which probably the superstitious Prince may have obtained on the Continent as a charm, and carried it as a protection in the hazardous enterprise in which he was engaged. It was a ruby blood-stone, having on one face the figure of Mars, with the inscription beside it, I A *w*. On the other face was a female naked figure, probably Isis, with the inscription, A T I T A.

The ancient superstition of securing the favour of the great by wearing certain precious stones appears in the East by the aid of a talismanic ring—simply, however, of silver, without the assistance of a jewel. In Herbelot’s ‘Customs of the Mussulmans of India’ a formula is given for the making of these rings: ‘Should anyone desire to make princes and grandees subject and obedient to his will he must have a silver ring made, with a small square tablet fixed on it, upon which is to be engraved the number that the letters composing the *ism* represent, which in this case is 2.613. This number by itself, or added to that of its two demons, 286 and 112, and its genius, 1,811—amounting in all to 4,822—must be formed into a magic square of the *solacee* or *robace* kind, and engraved. When the ring is thus finished, he is, for a week, to place it before him, and daily, in the morning and in the evening, to repeat the *ism* five thousand times, and blow on it. When the whole is concluded he is to wear the ring on the little finger of the right hand.’ [Pg 167]

The losing of a ring given as a pledge of affection was considered in former times, as it is not unfrequently now, to be an omen of mishap. The widow of Viscount Dundee, the famous Claverhouse, was met and wooed at Colzium House, in Stirlingshire, by William Livingstone (afterwards Viscount Kilsyth). As a pledge of his love he presented her with a ring, which she lost, next day, in the garden; and this giving rise to sad presentiments, a large reward was offered for its finding and restoration. Strange it may seem, but Lady Kilsyth was killed in Holland with her infant, by the fall of a house, and their bodies were brought to Scotland and interred at Kilsyth. In 1796 the tenant of the garden in which the ring was lost discovered it, when digging for potatoes, in a clod of earth. At first he regarded it as a bauble, but the moment the inscription became apparent the tradition came fresh to his recollection, and he found it was the identical ring of Lady Kilsyth. It was of gold and about the value of ten shillings; nearly the breadth of a straw, and without any stone. The external surface is ornamented with a wreath of myrtle, and on the internal surface is the legend: ‘Zovrs onlly & euver.’ This ring came into the possession of the Edmonstone family. [Pg 168]

In Sir John Bramstone’s autobiography (1631) it is related that his stepmother dropped her wedding-ring off her finger into the sea, near the shore, when she pulled off her glove. She would not go home without the ring, ‘it being the most unfortunate that could befall anyone to lose the wedding ring.’ Happily for her comfort, the ring was found.

Rings *bursting* on the fingers, as an ill-omen, is thus alluded to in the Scotch ballad of ‘Lammilsin’:

. . . .
The Lord sat in England
A drinking the wine.

I wish a may be weel
Wi’ my lady at hame;
For the rings of my fingers
They’re now burst in twain.

In the ‘State Trials’ (vol. xiv., Case of Mary Norkott and John Okeman) is a curious instance of superstition connected with the marriage-ring. It was a case of murder, and the victim, at the touch of the person accused of the crime, ‘thrust out the ring or marriage-finger three times, and pulled it in again, and the finger dropped blood upon the grass.’ Sir Nicholas Hyde said to the witness: ‘Who saw this beside you?’ The answer was: ‘I cannot swear what others saw; but, my Lord, I do believe the whole company saw it, and if it had been thought a doubt, proof would have been made of it, and many would have attested with me.’

The breaking of a ring was of ominous import. Atkinson, in his ‘Memoirs of the Queen of Prussia,’ says: ‘The betrothal of the young couple (Frederic and Sophia Charlotte, first King and Queen of Prussia) speedily followed. I believe it was during the festivities attendant upon this occasion that a ring worn by Frederic, in memory of his deceased wife, with the [Pg 169]

device of clasped hands, and the motto "*à jamais*," suddenly broke, which was looked upon as an omen that this union, likewise, was to be of short duration.'

The breaking of a wedding-ring is still regarded in some parts of England as an import that its wearer will soon be a widow. A correspondent of 'Notes and Queries' found this superstition current in Essex a few years ago. A man had been murdered in that county, and his widow said: 'I thought I should soon lose him, for I broke my wedding-ring the other day, and my sister lost her husband after breaking her ring. It is a sure sign'!

It was an olden superstition that the bending of the leaves to the right or to the left of the orpine plants, or *Mid-summer men*, as they were called (*Telephium*), would never fail to tell whether a lover was true or false. In an old poem, the 'Cottage Girl,' we find:—

> Oft on the shrub she casts her eye,
> That spoke her true love's secret sigh;
> Or else, alas, too plainly told
> Her true love's faithless heart was cold.

In 1801 a small gold ring was exhibited at the Society of Antiquaries (found in a ploughed field near Cawood, in Yorkshire) which had for a device two orpine plants joined by a true-love knot, with a motto above: '*ma fiance velt*,' my sweetheart wills, or is desirous. The stalks of the plants were bent to each other, in token that the parties represented by them were to come together in marriage. The motto under the ring was: '*Joye l'amour feu*.' From [Pg 170] the form of the letters it appeared to have been a ring of the fifteenth century.

The ring conferring divination powers on the wedding-cake is thus alluded to in the 'St. James's Chronicle' (1799):—

> Enlivening source of Hymeneal mirth,
> All hail the blest receipt that gave thee birth!
> Though Flora culls the fairest of her bowers,
> And strews the path of Hymen with her flowers,
> Nor half the raptures give her scatter'd sweets,
> The *Cake* far kinder gratulation meets.
> The bridesmaid's eyes with sparkling glances beam,
> She views the cake, and greets the promised dream;
> For, when endowed with necromantic spell,
> She knows what wondrous things the cake will tell.
> When from the altar comes the pensive bride,
> With downcast looks, her partner at her side,
> Soon from the ground these thoughtful looks arise
> To meet the cake that gayer thoughts supplies.
> With her own hands she charms each destined slice,
> *And through the ring repeats the trebled thrice*.
> The hallow'd ring, infusing magic power,
> Bids Hymen's visions wait the midnight hour;
> The mystic treasure placed beneath her head
> Will tell the fair if haply she will wed.
> These mysteries portentous lie conceal'd
> Till Morpheus calls and bids them stand reveal'd;
> The future husband that night's dream will bring,
> Whether a parson, soldier, beggar, king,
> As partner of her life the fair must take,
> Irrevocable doom of Bridal-cake.

Rowe, in his 'Happy Village' (1796), says 'the wedding-cake now through the ring was led.'

The connection between the bride-cake and wedding-ring is strongly marked in the following custom, still retained in Yorkshire, where the former is cut into little square pieces, thrown [Pg 171] over the bridegroom and bride's head, and then put through the ring.

In the North slices of the bride-cake are put through the wedding-ring, and they are afterwards laid under the pillows at night to cause young persons to dream of their lovers. Douce's manuscript notes say: 'This is not peculiar to the north of England, but seems to prevail generally; the pieces of cake must be drawn nine times through the wedding-ring.'

In Brand's 'Popular Antiquities' we read: 'Many married women are so rigid, not to say superstitious, in their notions concerning their wedding-rings, that neither when they wash their hands, nor at any other time, will they take the ring off the finger; extending, it should seem, the expression of "till death do us part" even to this golden circlet, the token and pledge of matrimony.' There is an old proverb on the subject of wedding-rings, which has, no doubt, been many a time quoted for the purpose of encouraging and hastening the consent of a diffident or timorous mistress:—

> As your wedding-ring wears,
> Your cares will wear away.

A charm-divination on October 6, St. Faith's day, is still in use in the north of England. A cake of flour, spring water, salt, and sugar, is made by three girls, each having an equal

hand in the composition. It is then baked in a Dutch oven, silence being strictly preserved, and turned thrice by each person. When it is well baked it must be divided into three equal parts, and each girl must cut her share into nine pieces, drawing every piece through a wedding-ring which has been borrowed from a woman who has been married seven years. Each girl must eat her pieces of cake while she is undressing, and repeat the following verses:—

O good St. Faith, be kind to-night, [Pg 172]
And bring to me my heart's delight;
Let me my future husband view,
And be my visions chaste and true.

All three must then get into one bed, with the ring suspended by a string to the head of the couch. They will then dream of their future husbands.

A very singular divination practised at the period of the harvest-moon is thus described in an old chap-book: 'When you go to bed place under your pillow a Prayer-book open at the part of the Matrimonial Service, "With this ring I thee wed;" place on it a key, a *ring*, a flower, and a sprig of willow, a small heart-cake, a crust of bread, and the following cards: the ten of clubs, nine of hearts, ace of spades, and the ace of diamonds. Wrap all these in a thin handkerchief of gauze or muslin, and on getting into bed cross your hands and say:—

Luna, every woman's friend,
To me thy goodness condescend;
Let me this night in visions see
Emblems of my destiny.

If you dream of storms, trouble will betide you; if the storm ends in a fine calm, so will your fate; if of a *ring*, or the ace of diamonds, marriage; bread, an industrious life; cake, a prosperous life; flowers, joy; willow, treachery in love; spades, death; diamonds, money; clubs, a foreign land; hearts, base children; keys, that you will rise to great trust and power, and never know want; birds, that you will have many children; and geese, that you will marry more than once.'

There is an old superstition on the colours of stones in 'keepsake' rings:—

Oh, green is forsaken [Pg 173]
And yellow's forsworn,
But blue is the prettiest colour that's worn.

A correspondent of 'Notes and Queries' observes that in the district about Burnley it is common to put the wedding-ring into the posset, and, after serving it out, the unmarried person whose cup contains the ring will be the first of the company to be married.

In Ireland it is a popular belief that finding the ring in a piece of Michaelmas pie would ensure the maiden possessor an early marriage.

The following notice of an advertisement is extracted from an Oxford paper of 1860, and republished in 'Notes and Queries' (3rd series, vol. x. p. 19): 'IMPORTANT NOTICE!—The largest cake ever made in Oxford, weighing upward of 1,000 pounds, and containing 30 gold wedding and other rings, in value from 7*s.* 6*d.* to Two Guineas each! To be seen for sale at No. 1 Queen Street, Oxford, from Thursday, December 27th, until Saturday, January 5th, 1861, when it will be cut out at the low price of 1*s.* 2*d.* per pound (this quality frequently sold for wedding-cake). Persons at a distance desirous of purchasing may rely upon prompt attention being given to their favours.

'N.B.—J. Boffin will feel obliged if persons obtaining the gold rings will favour him with their names.'

A wide-spread superstition or fancy prevails with regard to the use of a gold ring at weddings. Mr. Wood, in his 'Wedding Day in all Ages and Countries,' observes 'that the Irish peasantry have a general impression that a marriage without the use of a gold ring is not legal. At a town in the south-east of Ireland, a person kept a few gold wedding-rings for hire, and when parties who were too poor to purchase a ring of the necessary precious metal [Pg 174] were about to be married, they obtained the loan of one, and paid a small fee for the same, the ring being returned to the owner immediately after the ceremony. In some places it is common for the same ring to be used for many marriages, which ring remains in the custody of the priest.'

Mr. Jeaffreson says: 'I have known labourers of the eastern counties of England express their faith in the mystic efficacy of the golden arrabo in language that in the seventeenth century would have stirred Puritan auditors to denounce the Satanic bauble and its worshippers with godly fervour.'

Pegge, in his 'Curialia,' alludes to the superstition that a wedding-ring of gold rubbed on a stye upon the eyelid was a sovereign remedy, but it required to be rubbed *nine* times.

Mr. W. R. S. Ralston, in his 'Songs of the Russians,' mentions some curious superstitions in connexion with rings in that country.

A custom exists in Russia of catching rain that falls during a thunderstorm in a basin, at the bottom of which rain has been placed. In the Riazan Government, water that has been dropped through a wedding-ring is supposed to have certain merits as a lotion; and at a Little-Russian marriage the bride is bound to give the bridegroom to drink from a cup of wine in which a ring has been put. From the mention of a ring made in the 'Dodola Songs,' and in others referring to storm and rain, it is supposed that a golden ring, in mythical language, is to be taken as a representation of the lightning's heavenly gold.

In the olden time the celestial divinities were supposed to be protectors and favourers of marriage, and the first nuptial crown was attributed to that heavenly framer of all manner of [Pg 175] implements who forged the first plough for man. And so, in some of the songs, a prayer is offered up to a mysterious smith, beseeching him to construct a golden nuptial crown, and out of the fragments of it to make a wedding-ring, and a pin with which to fasten the bridal veil.

There comes a Smith from the Forge, *Glory!*
The Smith carries three hammers, *Glory!*
Smith, Smith, forge me a crown, *Glory!*
Forge me a crown both golden and new, *Glory!*
Forge from the remnants a golden ring, *Glory!*
And from the chips a pin, *Glory!*
In that crown will I be wedded, *Glory!*
With that ring will I be betrothed, *Glory!*
With that pin will I fasten the nuptial kerchief, *Glory!*

When a lover leaves his mistress for a time, he gives her a golden ring (*pérsten'*, a signet-ring, or one set with gems—from *perst*, a finger) and receives from her a gold ring in exchange (*Kol' tsë*, a plain circlet like our own wedding-ring, from *Kolo*, a circle).

It is not a falcon flying across the sky,
It is not a falcon scattering blue feathers,
But a brave youth galloping along the road,
Forth from his bright eyes pouring bitter tears.
He has parted from his own,
The Lower River track, through which,
In all her beauty, Mother Volga flows.
He has parted from the maiden fair,
And with her as a token left
A costly diamond ring;
And from her has he taken in exchange
A plighting ring of gold.
And while exchanging gifts thus has he spoken:
'Forget me not, my dear one,
Forget me not, my loved companion.
Often, often gaze upon my ring; [Pg 176]
Often, often will I kiss thy circlet,
Pressing it to my beating heart,
Remembering thee, my own.
If ever I think of another love,
The golden circlet will unclasp;
Shouldst thou to another suitor yield,
From the ring the diamond will fall.'

CHAPTER III. [Pg 177]

SECULAR INVESTITURE BY THE RING.

The investiture of our English sovereigns *per annulum*, or by the ring, is an important part of our present coronation ceremonial. On this august occasion the master of the Jewel-House delivers the ring (which is of plain gold, with a large table ruby, on which the cross of St. George is engraved), to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who places it on the fourth finger of the sovereign's right hand, saying: 'Receive this ring, the ensign of kingly dignity and of defence of the catholic faith, that as you are this day consecrated head of the kingdom and people, so, rich in faith, and abounding in good works, you may reign with Him who is King of kings, to whom be glory and honour for ever and ever, Amen.'

Of the intrinsic value ascribed to the coronation ring we have an instance recorded in the life of James II. He was detained by the fishermen of Sheerness in his first attempt to escape from England in 1688; the particulars are related in his 'Memoirs:' 'The King kept the diamond bodkin which he had of the queen's, and the *coronation ring*, which, for more

security, he put into his drawers. The captain, it appeared, was well acquainted with the dispositions of his crew one of whom cried out “It is Father Petre—I know him by his lantern jaws;” a second called him an old “hatchet-faced Jesuit;” and a third, “a cunning old rogue, [Pg 178] he would warrant him!”; for, some time after he was gone, and, probably by his order, several seamen entered the King’s cabin, saying they must search him and the gentlemen, believing that they had not given up all their money. The King and his companions told them that they were at liberty to do so, thinking that their readiness would induce them not to persist; but they were mistaken; the sailors began their search with a roughness and rudeness which proved they were accustomed to the employment. At last one of them, feeling about the King’s knee, got hold of the diamond bodkin, and cried out, with the usual oath, he had found a prize; but the King boldly declared he was mistaken. He had, indeed, scissors, a tooth-pick case, and little keys in his pocket, and what was felt was undoubtedly one of these articles. The man still seemed incredulous, and rudely thrust his hand into the King’s pocket; but in his haste he lost hold of the diamond bodkin, and, finding the things the King mentioned, remained satisfied it was so; by this means the bodkin and ring were preserved.’

The ring is said to have been a favourite one of the unfortunate Mary, Queen of Scots, and was sent by her, at her death, to James I., through whom it came into the possession of Charles I., and on his execution was transmitted by Bishop Juxon to his son. It afterwards came into the hands of George IV., with other relics belonging to Cardinal York.

This ring is mentioned in the ‘Inventory of the Goods and Chattels belonging to King James the Second,’ taken July 22, 1703: ‘one ruby ring, having a cross engraved on it, with which the late king was crowned,’ and is valued at 1,500*l.* In Leland’s ‘Collectanea,’ in describing the ceremonies made use of at the coronation of the mother of Henry VIII., it states that the [Pg 179] archbishop ‘next *blest* her ring, and sprinkled on it holy water.’

In the coronation of the kings of France the ring was first blessed by the officiating archbishop, who, seated with the mitre on his head, placed it on the fourth finger of the right hand of the monarch, using a nearly similar form of benediction to that practised at the coronations of our own sovereigns.[44]

In the curious account of the coronation of Louis XIII. of France, preserved in a chronicle of his reign, it mentions: ‘The royal ring being blessed by the Cardinal de Joyeuse (who officiated for the Archbishop of Rheims), a symbol of love, whereby the King was wedded to his realm, he placed it on the fourth finger of His Majesty’s right hand, for a mark of the sovereign power.’

Kirchmann states that at the coronation of Ferdinand III. at Ratisbon, in 1616, a few years before he wrote, the Archbishop and Elector of Maintz, having received from the altar a very precious ring, placed it on the finger of the Emperor, with these words: ‘Accipe regiæ dignitatis annulum, et per hoc Catholicæ fidei cognosce signaculum, et ud hodie ordinaris caput et princeps regni et populi, ita perseverabilis auctor et stabilitor Christianitatis et Christianæ fidei fias, ut feliciter in opere cum Rege regum glorioris per eum, cui est honor et gloria, per infinita secula seculorum.—Amen.’

The typical meaning of the royal investiture by the ring is the union of the sovereign with his [Pg 180] people, whom he is supposed to espouse at this solemnity, and in this sense some older writers have called it ‘the wedding ring of England.’

The ring worn by the queen-consorts of Great Britain at their coronation was of gold with a large table ruby set therein, and small rubies set round about the ring, of which those next the setting were the largest, the rest diminishing in proportion. Queen Mary Beatrice, consort of James the II., wore a ring of this description to her dying day, and nothing during her misfortune could ever induce her to part with it.[45]

That the ring was considered an indication of sovereign will from the earliest times, we have proofs, as I have mentioned, in the Holy Scriptures. So Alexander the Great, on his death-bed, on being asked to whom he would leave the kingdom, answered, to the most worthy, and gave his ring, when speechless, to Perdiccas. The Emperor Tiberius, on the point of death, took his ring from his finger, and held it a short time, as though intending to give it to some one, as his successor; he however, put it on again, and became insensible. Recovering at length, he found that his ring had been taken from him, and demanded it, upon which his attendants smothered him with the cushions.

The Emperor Valerian gave a ring with two precious stones to his successor Claudius. The [Pg 181] knights of ancient Rome were permitted to wear, as the insignia of their rank, golden rings and collars. They were presented at the public expense with a horse and gold ring. Offa, king of the East Angles, is recorded to have appointed Edmund, the son of a kinsman, his successor, by sending him the ring which he received at his own coronation. The ‘pilgrim-ring’ of Edward the Confessor, to which I have alluded in the chapter on ‘Ring Superstitions,’ was in after times preserved with great care at his shrine in Westminster Abbey, and was used at the investiture of subsequent sovereigns.

The investiture of Prince Edmund, second son of King Henry III., as King of Sicily, which took place in 1255, was performed at London by the Bishop of Bononia, in the presence of the King, and a numerous assembly, by the symbol of a ring, which the Pope had sent for

that purpose. Henry is said to have wept for joy, and sent the Pontiff immediately afterwards fifty thousand marks, but this event led to the association of the barons against the King and other great changes.

In 1469, Charles of France having renounced the possession of the duchy of Normandy, for which he received in exchange Guyenne, his ducal ring was sent by Louis XI. to the exchequer at Rouen, where it was broken in two pieces at a solemn assembly held for that purpose in the castle of Bouvreuil, in the presence of the Constable of France, Louis de Luxembourg.

A papal investiture, by a ring, of a sovereign of England is recorded by John of Salisbury, contemporary with Pope Adrian VIII., and who states that the Pontiff ceded and gave to Henry II. the island of Ireland, in hereditary succession, claiming, as his right to do so, the [Pg 182] grant of Constantine by which all islands belonged to the See of Rome. The Pope sent a large gold ring, set with a fine emerald, as a mark of investiture, and which, together with the bull, were deposited in the archives at Winchester. Richard II. resigned the crown to Henry IV. by transferring to him his ring.

In subsequent ages, and within a few centuries of our time, we find the royal power displayed significantly in the ring, which, in the instance I mention, was truly a messenger of grace. Two Scotch burgesses in the stormy days of Queen Mary had been condemned to death, but were reprieved at the foot of the gallows by her Majesty. The messenger was sent in great haste by the Earl of Bothwell, ‘and presented the Queen’s ring to the provost’s inspection for the safety of their lives.’ This was considered a sufficient indication of the royal clemency, and ‘the revival’ (observes Knox, in his ‘History of the Reformation in Scotland’) ‘of an ancient custom practised by Scottish monarchs before the date of the earliest sign-manual on record, when everything in Church and State were represented in types and symbols.’

Another interesting incident in connection with Mary, Queen of Scots, is the ring with which she invested Darnley with the Dukedom of Albany. An engraving and description of this ring will be found in the chapter on ‘Remarkable Rings.’ The infant James, son of Mary, Queen of Scots, was, a few days after his baptism, invested with the ring and other insignia, as Prince of Scotland, Duke of Rothsay, Earl of Carrick and Cunningham, and Baron of Renfrew. The royal child sat in his mother’s lap while a gold ring was placed on his tiny finger.

Among the insignia connected with the investiture of the Princes of Wales is a ring. The [Pg 183] earliest charter of creation known by Selden is that of Edward III. to his son and heir-apparent, Edward, Duke of Cornwall, some years after he was made Duke. This charter contains the particulars of the ceremony of investiture with the coronal, the ring of gold, and the rod of silver. In the letters patent issued by George I. (Sept. 22, 1714), declaring his son George Augustus, Duke of Brunswick Lunenburgh, ‘Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester,’ the investiture is thus described: ‘Likewise, we invest him, the said Prince, with the aforesaid principality and county, which he may continue to govern and protect; and we confirm him in the same by these ensigns of honour—the girding of a sword, the delivering of a cap and placing it on his head, *with a ring on his finger*, and a golden staff in his hand, *according to custom*, to be possessed by him and his heirs, Kings of Great Britain.’[46]

The practice now is that the Prince of Wales is invested with the Earldom of Chester by special patent, while he enjoys by a sort of hereditary prescription certain other titular distinctions. In the patent of creation of Albert Edward, Prince of Wales (dated Dec. 8th, 1841), the Queen, in the patent, states: ‘We do ennoble (our most dear son) and invest with the said principality and earldom, by girting him with a sword, by putting a coronet on his head, and a gold ring on his finger, and also by delivering a gold rod into his hand,’ &c.

According to French writers it was formerly a custom in that country to give a marquis, on [Pg 184] his elevation to that dignity, a ring set with the ruby; a count received a diamond ring.

The royal signet-ring in Anglo-Saxon times served as an authority in law-suits about land. In the Cottonian MSS. (Aug. 2, p. 15), one charter states that ‘Wynfleth, to prove a gift of land by Alfrith, led witnesses to the King, who sent a writ to Leofwin, and desired that men should be summoned to the shire-gemot to try the case, and as an authority sent his signet-ring to this gemot by an abbot and greeted all the witan.’

The charters given by our early kings received the royal confirmation by the ring: thus Richard Cœur-de-Lion, in a charter relating to the exchange of Andeli, in Normandy, belonging to the clergy of Rouen, for other properties, much to the advantage of the ecclesiastics, passed his ring, in sign of investiture, in the silk threads suspended to the parchment. This ring was still attached to the charter in 1666, as appears in the ‘Histoires des Archévèsques de Rouen’ (p. 424), but has since disappeared. M. Achille Deville, in his ‘Histoire du Château-Gaillard,’ observes: ‘Il n’est pas de fois que j’aye touché la charte de ce monarque célèbre (et je l’ai eue souvent entre les mains), que la perte de ce précieux anneau ne m’ait causé de cuisants régrets’—a regret which all lovers of historic relics will fully share.

‘The ninth, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries,’ says Willemin, ‘offer rings attached to diplomas, but it is questionable whether they served to hold the place of the seal, or were simply marks of investiture; we know that anciently the purchaser and recipient of a gift [Pg 185]

were put into possession by a ring.' Dugdale states that 'Osbert de Camera, some time in the twelfth century, being visited with great sickness, granted unto the canons of St. Paul in pure alms for the health of his soul certain lands and houses lying near Haggelane, in the parish of St. Benedict, giving possession of them *with his gold ring*, wherein was set a ruby, appointing that the said gold ring, together with his seal, should for ever be fixed to the charter whereby he so disposed them.' From the same source we are told that 'William de Belmers gave certain lands to St. Paul's Cathedral, and at the same time directed that his gold ring, set with a ruby, should, together with the seal, be affixed to the charter for ever.'

At a meeting of the Archæological Institute, in March 1850, Mr. W. Foulkes exhibited a gold signet-ring, preserved by the family of J. Jones, Esq., of Llanerchrwgog Hall, impressions of which are appended to deeds concerning that property from the middle of the thirteenth century. The impress is a monogram, meaning I and M (Iesus and Maria?), placed under a crown. It has been supposed to be the ring of Madoc, one of the last princes of Powis, and to have descended as a heir-loom, with lands granted by them to the ancestors of Mr. Jones.

A ruby ring is described as the 'Charter of Poynings,' in the will of Sir Michael de Poynings, in 1386. Poynings, in the neighbourhood of Brighton, was the seat of this ancient family from a period soon after the Conquest till the year 1446, when the barony, owing to the marriage of the heiress, merged into the earldom of Northumberland, and became extinct in 1679. Michael de Poynings, a banneret under Edward III. at the battle of Crecy, amongst other grants, left to his heir the ruby ring 'which is the charter of my heritage of Poynings.' This [Pg 186] ruby ring of inheritance, the charter of the 'Sires of Ponynges,' came into possession of his son Thomas, and then to his second son Richard. According to tradition the famous Isabella de Fortibus, Countess of Devon, in the reign of Henry III., settled the boundaries of certain disputed parishes by flinging her ring into a marsh, hence called 'Ring in the Mire.'

So late as the sixteenth century the conveyance of property by means of a ring may be remarked in the following passage or item in the will of Anne Barrett, of Bury, dated 1504, 'My maryeng ryng wt. all thynggs thereon.' It is worthy of note that among the numerous kinds of evidence allowed in courts of law to establish a pedigree, engravings on rings are admitted upon the presumption that a person would not wear a ring with an error upon it. [47]

John O'Molony, Bishop of Limerick in 1687, who, after the siege of that city, followed James II. to Paris, where he assisted in the foundation of a University for the education of Irish priests, left a gold ring at his death, which was to be sent to, and to denote, the head branch of the family. This conferred the privilege to have any of the name of Molony brought up as priests at the University, free of expense.

The custom of serjeants presenting rings on taking the coif, has formed the subject of some [Pg 187] interesting notices in that valuable work 'Notes and Queries.' Mr. Serjeant Wynne in his observations touching the antiquity and dignity of serjeants-at-law (1765) remarks: 'The first introduction of rings themselves on this occasion of making serjeants is as doubtful as that of mottoes. They are taken notice of by Fortescue in the time of Henry VI., and in the several regulations for general calls, in Henry VIII. and Queen Elizabeth's time. Whatever is the antiquity of these rings, that of mottoes seems to fall short of them at least a century. That in the 19th and 20th Elizabeth (1576-77) may perhaps be the first, because till that time they are no more mentioned. When Dugdale speaks of the posies that were usual, he must be understood to speak of the usages of his own time.' The motto which Serjeant Wynne notices as of the earliest occurrence in 19th and 20th Elizabeth was 'Lex regis præsidium.'[48]

In the 'Diary of a Resident in London' (Henry Machyn, Camden Society) we find that on October 17, 1552, 'was made vii serjants of the coyffe, who gayf to (the judges) and the old serjants, and men of the law, rynges of gold, every serjant gayf lyke rynges.'

In the inventory of the effects of Henry Howard, K.G., Earl of Northampton (1614), (Archæologia, vol. ii., part ii., page 350) we find 'v serjeantis ringes waighinge one ounce, three quarters, four graines.' These were presentations to him in his official capacity of Lord Privy Seal.

Serjeant Wynne brings his list of the serjeants called down to the year 1765, and gives, in [Pg 188] most cases, the mottoes, which were not confined, it seems, to individuals, but adopted by the whole call. He remarks that in late years they have been strictly classical in their phrase, and often elegant in their application—whether in expressing the just idea of regal liberty—in a wish for the preservation of the family, or in a happy allusion to some public event, and, at the same time, a kind of prophetic declaration of its success. In the same work will be found an account of the expense and weight of the rings—that these matters were important appears from an extract in 1 Modern Reports, case 30: 'Seventeen serjeants being made the 14th day of November (1669?), a daye or two after, Serjeant Powis, the junior of them all, coming to the King's Bench Bar, Lord Chief Justice Kelynge told him 'that he had something to say to him,' viz., that the rings which he and the rest of the serjeants had given weighed but eighteen shillings apiece; whereas Fortescue, in his book "De Laudibus Legum Angliæ," says "the rings given to the Chief Justices and to the Chief Baron ought to weigh twenty shillings apiece," and that he spoke not this expecting a recompense, but that it might not be drawn into a precedent, and that the young gentlemen there might take notice of it.'

With regard to the cost of the serjeants' rings, and the parties to whom they are presented, Mr. Mackenzie Walcott, M.A., writes in 'Notes and Queries' that on June 8, 1705, fifteen serjeants-at-law took the customary oaths at the Chancery Bar, and delivered to the Lord Keeper a ring for the Queen, and another to H.R.H. Prince George of Denmark, each ring being worth 6*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* The Lord Keeper, and the Lord Treasurer, Lord Steward, Lord Privy [Pg 189] Seal, Lord High Chamberlain, Master of the Household, Lord Chamberlain, and the two Chief Justices, each received a ring of the value of 18*s.*; the Lord Chief Baron, the Master of the Rolls, the Justices of either Bench, and two Chief Secretaries, each, one worth 16*s.*; the Chief Steward and Comptroller, each a ring valued at 1*l.*; the Marshal, Warden of the Fleet, every Serjeant-at-law, the Attorney-General and Solicitor-General, each a ring worth 12*s.*; the three Barons of Exchequer, one each of 10*s.*; the two Clerks of the Crown, the three Prothonotaries, the Clerks of the Warrants, the Prothonotary of Queen's Bench, and the Chirographer, each a ring worth 5*s.*; each Filazer and Exigenter, the Clerk of the Council, and the Custom Brevium, each a ring that cost 2*s.* 6*d.* The motto on the rings was 'Moribus, armis, legibus.'

On the admission of fourteen serjeants in 1737, 1,409 rings were given away, at a cost of 773*l.*, and besides this number, others were made for each serjeant's own account, to be given to friends at the bar, which came to more than all the rest of the expense.

There are some quaint old customs still adhering to the making of a serjeant. He is presented to the Lord Chancellor by some brother barrister (styled his 'colt'), and he kneels while the Chancellor attaches to the top of his wig the little, round, black patch that now does duty for the 'coif,' which is the special badge of the Serjeant. The new Serjeant presents a massive gold ring to the Chancellor, another to his 'colt,' one to the Sovereign, and each of the Masters of the Court of Common Pleas. These rings used also to be given to all the Judges, but of late years the Judges have refused to receive them, thus diminishing a somewhat heavy tax.

It would be curious to know whether this custom is derived from the Romans. Juvenal [Pg 190] alludes to the practice of lawyers exhibiting their rings when pleading:—

> Ideo conducta Paulus agebat
> Sardonyche et que ideo plurisquam Cossus agebat
> Quam Basilus. Rara in tenui facundia panno.

The reader will find a list of mottoes, and much information on the subject of serjeants' rings, in 'Notes and Queries' (1st Series, vol. v. pp. 110, 139, 181, 563; 2nd Series, vol. i. p. 249). The most recent instance (January 1872) of the presentation of a serjeant's ring is that of Mr. J. R. Quain, who chose for his motto 'Dare, facere, præstare.'

At the Loan Exhibition of Ancient and Modern Jewellery at the South Kensington Museum, in 1872, a serjeant's gold ring, inscribed ✠ LEX X REGIS X PRÆSIDIUM, was shown—the property of Mr. John Evans—as the earliest known, the date being 1576-77. The small size of the ring would assume that it was merely complimentary.

Some barristers that Lord Brougham did not think much of, wishing to be made serjeants, he suggested that the most appropriate motto that could be found for their rings would be the old legal word 'scilicet.'

Serjeants' ring.

This illustration represents a serjeant's ring, supposed to be of the seventeenth century—a plain band of gold, engraved with 'Imperio regit unus æquo' (Horace, lib. iii., Ode iv.).

In the collection of Mr. J. W. Singer is a very fine serjeant's ring, which that gentleman attributes as of very early manufacture. It is a rare type of rings of this description, which have not been much noticed. The inscription reads: 'Legis executo regis pservatio.'

In France, Italy, and Germany, a forensic order of knighthood was frequently conferred on [Pg 191] the successful practitioner at the bar. Bartoli, the oracle of the law in the fourteenth century, asserted that at the end of the tenth year of successful professional exertion, the *avocât* belonging to the denomination of *l'Ordre des Avocâts* became *ipso facto* a knight.

When the distinction was applied for, the King commissioned some ancient Knight of the Forensic Order to admit the postulant into it. The *avocât* knelt before the Knight-commissary and said: 'I pray you, my lord and protector, to dress me with the sword, belt, golden spurs, golden collar, *golden ring*, and all the other ornaments of a true knight. I will not use the advantages of knighthood for profane purposes; I will use them only for the purposes of religion, for the Church, and the holy Christian faith, in the *warfare of the science* to which I am devoted.' The postulant then rose; and being fully equipped, and girded with the sword, he became, for all purposes, a member of the order of knighthood.

In the Memoirs of the Maréchal de Vieilleville, who died in 1571, such knights are mentioned as very common.

In 1795 the Order of *Avocâts* was suppressed, after 427 years of a brilliant existence.

Doctors, as indicative of their position, wore formerly a ring on the third finger of the right hand.

A ring formed part of the investiture of three poets-laureate by the Chancellor of the University of Strasburg in 1621, who at their installation pronounced these words: 'I create you, being placed in a chair of state, crowned with laurel and ivy, and wearing *a ring of gold*, and the same do pronounce and constitute poets-laureate in the name of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.' [Pg 192]

Gower, in his 'Confessio Amantis,' mentions a statue of Apollo, adorned with a ring:—

> Forth ryghte he straighte his finger oute,
> Upon the which he had a ringe,
> To seen it was a ryche thynge,
> A fyne carbuncle for the nones,
> Most precious of all stones.

In the early Saxon times, we read that Gumlaughr, the scald, presented to King Ethelred a heroic poem which he had composed on the royal virtues, and received in return 'a purple tunic lined with the richest furs,' also 'a gold ring of the weight of seven ounces.'

In ancient Wales the Judge of the King's palace had as ensign of his office a gold ring from the Queen. It was his duty at his own cost to reward the successful competitor in the musical contests of the bards with a silver chair as 'Pen Cerdd' (chief of song), and who in return presented him with a gold ring, a drinking-horn, and a cushion. The royal minstrel received on his appointment a harp from the King, and a ring from the queen.

'Merchant Marks' (to which I have alluded in the first chapter of this work) originated from the guild or mayor's rings, which were used as personal signets, by such as were not entitled to bear arms. They were worn on the thumb for constant use in sealing. A fine ring of this kind is engraved in the 'Journal of the Archæological Institute.' It was found in the bed of the Severn, near Upton, and is, probably, a work of the fifteenth century; it is of silver and has been strongly gilt. The hoop is spirally grooved, and upon the circular face is a large **H** surrounded by branches.

In the custody of the Mayor of Winchester is a signet-ring with the arms of the city and initials E. W., probably Edward White, Mayor in 1613 and 1621. [Pg 193]

In late times we have the ring adopted as a club badge by the famous Beef-Steak Club, of convivial notoriety. The members wore a blue coat, with red cape and cuffs, buttons with the initials B. S., and behind the President's chair was placed the Society's halbert, which, with the gridiron, was found among the rubbish after the Covent Garden fire in 1808.

Ring of Beef-Steak Club.

Ashmole, in his 'History of the Most Noble Order of the Garter,' mentions that gold rings have been cast into the figures of garters, 'the ground on the outside enamelled with a deep blue, through which the golden letters of the motto appearing, set them off with an admirable beauty. And it seems such rings were in vogue, since the preface to the black book of the Order makes mention of wearing the garter on the leg and shoulder, and sometimes subjoins the thumb, *interdum pollice gestare*, by which we may naturally conclude that gold rings were formed into the fashion of garters, and bestowed by some new-installed knights upon their relations and friends to wear in memorial of so great an honour conferred upon them.'

In the collection of the Rev. W. B. Hawkins is a gold official ring of the Grand Master of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (Malta), with bezel oval, glazed, with skeleton, hour-glass, and scythe, in enamel on a black ground; on the shoulders of the ring is a death's head with cross-bones.

At the meeting of the Archæological Institute at Norwich in July 1847, a ring formed like a strap or garter, buckled, was exhibited, bearing the inscription 'Mater Dei memento mei,' found at Necton, date about 1450. Rings of this fashion were in use from the close of the fourteenth century, shortly after the institution of the Order of the Garter. Other specimens are to be seen in the British Museum, and in the collection of the Archæological Institute. [Pg 194]

A cap and a *ring* are conferred with the degree of Doctor of Civil Laws in Belgium.

In the ‘Biographia Britannica’ (Article ‘Crichton’) we read of the bestowal of a ring on a college disputant. This was in the case of the ‘Admirable Crichton,’ who, when he was only twenty years of age, entered the academic lists with anyone who would compete with him in Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, Greek, Latin, Spanish, French, Italian, English, Dutch, Flemish, and Sclavonian, besides every kind of courtly accomplishment. This he maintained in the College of Navarre, and the president, after many compliments on his vast acquirements, gave him a diamond ring and a purse of money.

At the ceremonies observed on the inauguration of a king-at-arms the crown and ring were generally bestowed by the hand of the monarch himself, as in the case of Sir David Lindsay, Lord Lion, King-at-arms:

> Whom royal James himself had crowned,
> And on his temples placed the round
> Of Scotland’s ancient diadem;
> And wet his brow with hallow’d wine,
> And on his finger given to shine
> The emblematic gem.

Among the insignia of the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem is a ring bearing the Cross.

In the ‘Dublin Penny Journal’ we read of the signet-ring of the famous Turlough Lynnoch, which was found at Charlemont, in the county of Armagh. It bears the bloody hand of the O’Neils, and initials T. O. The signet part of the ring is circular, and the whole of it is silver. James the First made this bloody hand the distinguishing badge of a new order of baronets, and they were created to aid, by service or money for forces, in subduing the O’Neils. [Pg 195]

In 1780 a large gold ring, supposed to have belonged to one of the knights hospitallers of Winckbourne, some of whom are believed to have been buried at Southwell, was found by the sexton of Southwell church while digging a grave. It is six-eighths of an inch in diameter, and three-eighths of an inch in breadth. The following motto is deeply cut on the inside: ‘+ MIEV + MORI + QVE + CHANGE + MA + FOI +’ (better to die than change my faith).

I have already mentioned how, from the earliest times, the ring was considered to denote peculiar distinction, and was the emblem of nobility; and so, amidst many divergences, it still continued to a later period to be considered as a badge of honourable birth. Thus Rabelais alludes to the rings that Gargantua wore because his father desired him ‘to renew that ancient mark of nobility.’ On the forefinger of his left hand he had a gold ring set with a large carbuncle, and on the middle finger one of mixed metal, then usually made by alchemists. On the middle finger of the right hand he had ‘a ring made spire-wise, wherein was set a perfect balew ruby, a pointed diamond, and a Physon emerald of inestimable value.’

The French expression *une bague au doigt* means a sinecure—pay without the work.

In former times the victor in a wrestling match received a ram and a ring. In the Coke’s ‘Tale of Gamelyn,’ ascribed to Chaucer, we read:— [Pg 196]

> There happed to be there beside
> Tryed a wrestling;
> And therefore there was y setten,
> A ram and als a ring.

And in the ‘Litil Geste of Robin Hood’:—

> By a bridge was a wrestling,
> And there tayred was he;
> And there was all the best yemen
> Of all the west countrey.
> A full fayre game there was set up,
> A white bull up yspight,
> A great courser with saddle and brydle,
> With gold burnished full bryght;
> A payre of gloves, a red golde ringe,
> A pipe of wine, good fay;
> What man bereth him best, I wis,
> The prize shall bear away.

So Sir Walter Scott, in the ‘Lady of the Lake’:—

> Prize of the wrestling-match, the King
> To Douglas gave a golden ring.

In the ‘Gulistan,’ or rose-garden of Sadi, is a pretty story in connection with a prize-ring for shooting. A certain King of Persia had a very precious stone in a ring. One day he went out with some of his favourite courtiers, to amuse himself, to the mosque near Shiraz, called Musalla; and commanded that they should suspend the ring over the dome of Azad, saying that the ring should be the property of him who could send an arrow through it. It so befell that four hundred archers, who plied their bows in his service, shot at the ring, and all

missed. A stripling at play was shooting arrows at random from a monastery, when the morning breeze carried his shaft through the circle of the ring. The prize was bestowed upon him, and he was loaded with gifts beyond calculation. The boy, after this, burned his bow and arrows. They asked him why he did so; he replied: 'That my first glory may remain unchanged.' [Pg 197]

At the tournaments held in the reign of Henry VII. (1494) a proclamation was put forth 'that hoo soo ever justith best in the justys roiall schall have a ryng of gold, with a ruby of the value of a m[l] scuttes or under; and hoo soo ever torneyeth the best, and fairyst accumplishit his strokkis schall have a ryng of gold, with a diamant of like value.'

On November 9 (1494) John Peche received from the Ladie Margerete 'the kyngis oldeste doughter, a ryng of gold with a ruby.'

On the 11th, the Earl of Suffolk, Thomas Brandon, received as a reward for his prowess in the lists 'a ryng of gold with a rubee.'

On the third tournament (November 13) Sir Edward A. Borough, as victor, received 'a ryng of gold with a dyamant.'

The Earl of Essex, for his valour in this tournament, received 'a ryng of gold with an emerauld.'

CHAPTER IV. [Pg 198]

RINGS IN CONNECTION WITH ECCLESIASTICAL USAGES.

The ring has, for many ages, formed a part of ecclesiastical insignia. It appears to have had a twofold purpose and signification, the one as a mark of dignity and authority, the other symbolic of the mystical union between the priesthood and the Church.

To commence with the head of the Romish hierarchy: that distinguished authority on antiquarian topics, Mr. Octavius Morgan, M.A., F.R.S., F.S.A., &c., has contributed to the 'Archæologia' (vol. xl. p. 392) a very interesting account of 'Episcopal and other Rings of Investiture;' and, since the publication of that paper, has kindly informed me that Mr. Waterton states, from his own knowledge, that the 'Fisherman's Ring' is the Pope's ring of investiture, and is placed on his finger immediately after his election, before it is engraved. But if, as it sometimes happens, the Pope-elect is not a bishop, he is consecrated prior to his coronation as Supreme Pontiff, and receives the ring with the usual formula, except that the consecrating cardinal kisses his hand after investing him with the ring. 'There is a ring which the Pontiff wears on state occasions—the stone of which is an exquisitely fine cameo, cut in bloodstone, of the head of Our Saviour—which is known to be more than three hundred years old, and is, probably, a fine cinque-cento gem. This descends from one Pope to another. [Pg 199]

'What is called the *Annulus Piscatoris*, or the "Fisherman's Ring," is the Pope's lesser seal, or signet, used for documents of minor consequence, and the impression is usually made on red wax or stamped on the paper; the Bulla being what may be termed the great seal, employed for giving validity to instruments of greater importance, and the impression of it is always on lead. The origin of the Fisherman's Ring is obscure, but it derives its name from a representation of St. Peter in a fisherman's boat of ancient form, which is engraved on it, and not from any tradition that it ever belonged to St. Peter, as, from its English name, is not uncommonly supposed. The Germans call it *Der Fischer-ring*, which is "the Fisherman Ring," whereas we, probably in our translation of *Annulus Piscatoris*, have termed it the "Fisherman's Ring," seeming to imply thereby that it had once belonged to "the Fisherman." The figure of St. Peter forms the centre.'

The Fisherman's Ring.

After the reign of Pope Calixtus the Third, the Ring of the Fisherman was no longer used as

the private seal of the Popes, but was always attached to briefs.

On the death of Innocent the Tenth the name was cut out of the ring or erased. At the decease of Pius the Sixth the usual ceremonies were not observed, and the ring was not broken, as was the practice at the elevation of each pontiff. Aimon, in his 'Tableau de la Cour de Rome,' says that after the Pope's death 'le Cardinal Camerlingue vient en habit violet, accompagné des clercs de la chambre en habits noirs, reconnoître le corps du Pape. Il [Pg 200] l'appelle trois fois par son nom de baptême, et comme il ne lui donne ni réponse, ni signe de vie, il fait dresser un acte sur sa mort par les Protonotaires Apostoliques. Il prend du Maître de la Chambre Apostolique, *l'anneau* du Pêcheur, qui est le sceau du Pape, *d'or* massif, et du prix de cent écus. Il le fait mettre en pièces et donne ces pièces aux Maîtres des Cérémonies à qui elles appartiennent. Le Dataire et les Sécrétaires qui ont les autres sceaux du Pape défunt, sont obligés de les porter au Cardinal Camerlingue, qui les fait rompre en présence de l'Auditeur de la Chambre du Trésorier, et des Clercs Apostoliques, et il n'est permis à aucun autre des Cardinaux d'assister à cette fonction.'

When it was decided by the French in 1798 that the Pope was to be removed to France, on February 18 in that year the Republican Haller, son of the celebrated Swiss physician of that name, chose the moment when the Pontiff was at dinner in the Vatican to announce to him the resolution of the French Republic. He entered the apartment rudely, and, advancing to the Pope, announced the object of his visit, and demanded the instant surrender of the Papal treasures.

'We have already given up all we possessed,' replied the Pope calmly.

'Not *all*,' returned Haller, 'you still wear two very rich rings; let me have them.'

The Pope drew one from his finger: 'I can give you,' he said, 'this one, for it is indeed my own; take it: but the other is the Ring of the Fisherman, and must descend to my successor.'

'It will pass first to me, holy father,' exclaimed Haller, 'and if you do not surrender it quietly [Pg 201] it will be taken from you by force.'

To escape further insult the Fisherman's Ring was given up, but as it was found to be intrinsically of no value it was soon afterwards restored to the Pontiff.

The ring of Pius the Ninth is of plain gold, weighing one and a half ounces, and it was made from the gold which composed the Ring of the Fisherman of Pope Gregory the Sixteenth.[49]

The Fisherman's Ring is always in the custody of the Grand Papal Chamberlain. It is taken to the Conclave, or Council of the Cardinals, with the space left blank for the name; and as soon as a successful scrutiny of votes for a new Pope has taken place, the newly-elected Pontiff is declared, and conducted to the throne of St. Peter, where, before the cardinals have rendered homage to their chief, the Grand Chamberlain approaches, and, placing the Papal ring on the finger of the new Pope, asks him what name he will take. On the reply of the Pontiff, the ring is given to the first Master of the Ceremonies to have the name engraved on it that has been assumed. The announcement of the pontifical election is then made to the people from the balcony of the Papal palace.

Kissing the Pope's ring as an act of reverent homage is a custom which has descended to our own times. One of the important ceremonies at the opening of the great Œcumenical Council at Rome (December 8, 1869) was that every single primate, patriarch, bishop, and [Pg 202] mitred abbot, who were present on this solemn occasion at St. Peter's, and who were to take part in the Council, paused before Pius the Ninth, and, in an attitude of profound reverence, kissed his ring. As high dignitaries they were exempted from kissing the Pope's toe, a condescension reserved for the laity and lower clergy.

In Bishop Bale's 'Image of Both Churches' occurs a curious passage on the subject of episcopal rings: 'Neyther regarde they to knele any more doune, and to kisse their pontifical ryngs, which are of the same metall' (*i.e.* fine gold).

It would seem that the Popes were formerly buried in their pontifical habits and ornaments. In the 'Journal' of Burcard, Master of the Ceremonies in the Pope's chapel from Sixtus the Fourth to Julius the Second, he mentions as having, by virtue of his office, thus clothed the body of Sixtus the Fourth, and amongst other things a sapphire ring of the value of three hundred ducats was placed on his finger, and so little trust was placed in the honesty of those who came to see the body that guards were placed to prevent the ring and other ornaments from being stolen.[50]

In 1482 Cardinal d'Estouteville, Archbishop of Rouen, was buried with great magnificence at Rome, where he died. The body of the prelate was arrayed in the richest robes of cloth of [Pg 203] gold, and his fingers were covered with rings of the greatest rarity and beauty. The brilliancy of the jewels (observes Dom Pommeraye in his 'Lives of the Archbishops of Rouen') excited the cupidity of the canons of St. Mary Major at Rome, where he was interred, insomuch that they threw themselves on the body, and struggled with each other to get at the rings. The monks of St. Augustine, who also attended on this occasion, pretended to be highly scandalized at this profanation—'peut-être,' however, 'pour avoir part au butin'—and attempted on their part to seize the rings. In this unclerical skirmish the body of the archbishop was entirely stripped of its gorgeous trappings, and left naked, a

piteous spectacle.

Matthew Paris informs us that archbishops, bishops, and abbots, with other principals of the clergy, were buried in their pontificalibus; thus ‘they prepared the body of Hubert, Archbishop of Canterbury, for the burial, closing him in his robes, with his face uncovered, and a mitre put on his head, with gloves upon his hands, *a ring on his finger*, and all the other ornaments belonging to his office.’

In describing the finger-ring found in the grave of the Venerable Bede, the writer of a brief account of Durham Cathedral adds: ‘No priest during the reign of Catholicity was buried or enshrined without his ring.’ The practice may have prevailed generally, as many instances of rings recovered from the graves of ecclesiastics show, but it was more particularly the usage of prelates. Martene (‘De Antiquis Ecclesiæ Ritibus’) remarks: ‘Episcopus debet habere annulum, quia sponsus est. Cæteri sacerdotes non, quia sponsi non sunt, sed amici sponsi, vel vicarii.’

The bones of St. Dunstan were discovered in the time of William, fortieth abbot of Glastonbury: a ring was on the finger-bone of this saint. [Pg 204]

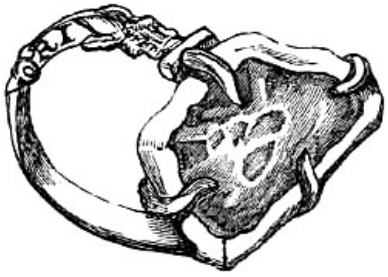
William, the twenty-second abbot of St. Alban’s Abbey, who died in 1235, was buried in pontifical habits ‘with a ring on his finger.’

Richard de Gerbery, forty-fifth Bishop of Amiens, in the thirteenth century, died in 1210, and was buried in the cathedral, in pontificalibus, with mitre, ring, and ivory cross.

When the body of St. John of Beverley (died 721) was translated into a new shrine, about the year 1037, a ring, among other articles, was found in his coffin. We have a much earlier instance cited by Aringhi, that the ring of St Caius (283-296) was found in his tomb: ‘intra sepulchrum tria Diocletiani Imperatoris numismata, sub quo coronatus fuerat, et Sanctissimi Pontificis annulus adinventatus est.’

A gold ring was found in the tomb of St. Birinus, Bishop of Dorchester, who died in 640.

Mr. E. Waterton mentions a remarkable ring, set with fine opal, preserved at Mayence Cathedral, where it was found with an enamelled crosier in the tomb, as was supposed, of Archbishop Sigfroi III. (1249).



Ring of Thierry, Bishop of Verdun.

In the Londesborough Collection is the ring of Thierry, Bishop of Verdun (who died in 1165), found in his tomb in 1829. It is of gold, with a sapphire, an irregular oval with five capsular marks on the face; the shank, two winged dragons, between the heads of which is the inscription AVE MARIA GRATIA. This ring was procured in exchange from the collection of M. Failly, Inspector of Customs, at Lyons in 1848.

Mr. Octavius Morgan remarks: ‘It is difficult to reconcile the practice of returning the ring to the Emperor’ (to which I have in this chapter alluded) ‘with that of interring the bishop with his ring on his finger; but it is probable that, when in the twelfth century the Emperor ceded to the Popes the right of investiture by the ring the sending back the ring was dispensed with; and, being the property of the Church, and not of the Emperor, the bishop was allowed to be interred with his ring as an emblem of his dignity.’ [Pg 205]

The Rev. C. W. King remarks that the custom of burying ecclesiastics with all their official insignia appears to have lasted far down into the Middle Ages; for, amongst the amusing adventures of Andreuccio da Perugia, related by Boccaccio, he, when reduced to despair, joins some thieves in plundering the tomb of the Archbishop of Naples, interred the previous day in all his precious vestments, and with a ring on his finger valued at five hundred scudi. Two parties of plunderers, headed by a priest of the cathedral, visit the tomb in succession, and almost at the same time; to which circumstance Andreuccio owes his escape from a horrible death, and returns home in possession of the ring, which more than makes up for all his losses.

The Rev. C. W. King considers it probable that this common practice of plundering the tombs, gave origin to the huge rings of gilt metal, which bear the titles, or coats of arms, of some pope or bishop.

On the subject of pontifical rings of an ordinary character, I may observe that they are found in several collections, usually of brass or copper gilt.

Benvenuto Cellini, in his ‘Memoirs,’ mentions a magnificent diamond as having been [Pg 206]

presented to Pope Paul the Third by the Emperor Charles the Fifth on his entry into Rome (1536), for which he was desired to make a ring, and succeeded in giving the diamond a tint which surpassed anything yet done.

Ring of Pope Pius II.

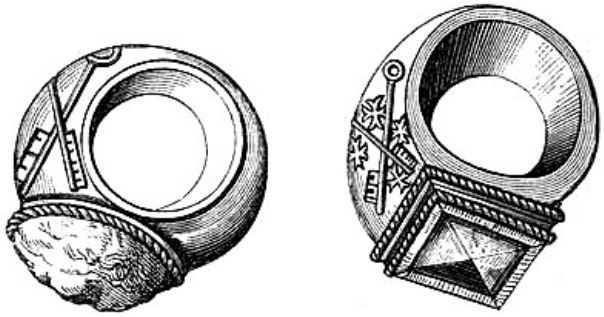
In the collection of Thomas Windus, Esq., F.S.A., is a ring bearing the arms of Pope Pius II. of the family of Piccolomini, the Papal tiara, and inscription, ‘Papa Pio.’ The ring is of brass, thickly gilt; the stone topaz: on the sides are the four beasts of the ‘Revelation.’ [Pg 207]

In the Braybrooke Collection is the ring of Pope Boniface, from whose tomb it was taken during the popular insurrection at Rome, 1849. It is large and of gilt bronze, set with a large amethyst, cut into facets. It is of the usual type of Papal rings, and massive; on one side of the broad shank is engraved the triple crown, with bands for tying it, extending until they are met by the cords attached to the keys, which appear on the other side. The sides of the box-setting are square for an inch below the stone, and on them are the emblems of the four Evangelists in high relief: all these are winged.

In the Waterton Collection at the South Kensington Museum are some remarkably fine specimens of bronze-gilt Papal rings of the fifteenth century, very massive and in excellent condition. Most of these have the symbols of the four Evangelists, the triple crown, and crossed keys.

At a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries in November, 1858, Octavius Morgan, Esq., F.R.S., F.S.A., exhibited a Papal ring of great interest, massive, and of copper-gilt, set with blue glass. At the angles were the symbols of the four Evangelists in relief; on the hoop was inscribed PAVLVS PP SECNDVS (Paulus Papa Secundus). At the sides were two shields; one of them bearing three fleurs-de-lys, and ensigned with an open crown, probably the arms of France; the other charged with a lion debruised by a bend, being the arms of the family of Barbo of Venice, to which Paul II. belonged. In the upper part of this shield was a small Papal tiara, which might have been placed there for want of room above, or might have been adopted by the Pope’s relation, Marco Barbo, made by him a cardinal in 1464, and who died 1490. [Pg 208]

Mr. Morgan had received this interesting addition to his collection from Venice.



Papal Rings (Gorlæus).

In the Londesborough Collection is a fine specimen of a Papal ring. The crossed keys

surmount a coat of arms on one side of the ring; the keys alone appear on the opposite side; foliated ornament fills the space above the circlet on either side. This ring is set with a large crystal. [Pg 209]

Papal Ring.

At the suppression of the monasteries there were found in Worcester Cathedral ‘four pontifical rings of gold, with precious stones’ At the same period, amongst the plate and jewels in Winchester Cathedral was a ‘pontyfycall ryng of silvare and gilt, with counterfeitt stones.’ At St. Augustine’s Church at Canterbury were three pontifical rings with precious stones, and one of silver gilt; at St. Swithin’s Church at Winchester, four pontifical rings with precious stones.

The earliest document with a certain date in which mention is made of a bishop’s ring is that usually cited in the 28th canon of the Council of Toledo, held in 633. The ring was of gold and jewelled, but at this Council it was ordained that the ring of a prelate reinstated in his diocese, after an unjust deposition, should be delivered to him, which was merely confirming a ceremony already ancient in the confirmation of bishops, which may be traced to the fourth century.

In the consecration of bishops in the Anglo-Saxon Church, the hands and head were anointed with oil, the crosier delivered into his hands, and the ring placed on his finger; each ceremony being accompanied with a prayer. ‘There is, however,’ remarks Mr. Octavius Morgan (‘Archæologia,’ vol. xxxvi. part ii. p. 373), ‘another authority, at least contemporary with the Toledo Council, if not of earlier date. St. Isidor, Bishop of Seville, who died A.D. 636, in his work ‘De Ecclesiasticis Officines’ (lib. ii. cap. 5), when writing on the episcopal dignity, informs us that the staff and ring were given to the bishop on his consecration, and mentions the twofold purpose and signification of the ring, but does not tell us from what source these insignia were derived.’[51] [Pg 210]

That the episcopal ring, from the earliest times, was considered a symbol of sacerdotal authority, we have many instances. In the ‘Continuation of the History of Simeon of Durham’ we are told that Bishop Ralph (1099) having been inveigled into a boat and his life in danger, he drew the ring which he wore from off his finger, and his notary took his seal, and they cast them into the river, being apprehensive that, as these were well known everywhere throughout England, the enemy would prepare deceitful writs by their means.

The same bishop, a month before his decease in 1128, directed that he should be carried into the church, opposite the altar, there to make confession of his sins. Placing a ring upon the altar he thereby restored to the church everything of which he had deprived it, and this restitution he confirmed by charter and seal, which are still preserved in the treasury of the Dean and Chapter of Durham. To the charter was also attached the episcopal gold ring (which is no longer there). The charter states that ‘he has surrendered to the Lord St. Cuthbert and his monks whatsoever he had taken from them after he came to the bishopric,’ &c., ‘restoring them by (placing) a ring upon the altar,’ &c. [Pg 211]

Thomas à Becket, when at Rome in 1166, during his quarrel with Henry II., solemnly resigned, in the presence of the Papal Court, his episcopal ring into the hands of Pope Alexander, whom he exhorted to name a fitting successor.

In the History of the Archbishops of Canterbury, by Gervase, we read that in 1179, Godfrey, Bishop-elect of St. Asaph’s, resigned his bishopric by surrendering his ring.

An ancient custom in the Archbishopric of Rouen was that the body of the deceased prelate, before being interred in the cathedral, was carried to the church of St. Ouen (at Rouen), where it remained exposed a whole day. The dean of the cathedral, in committing the body to the charge of the Abbot of St. Ouen, said ‘Ecce,’ to which the latter replied ‘Est hic.’ Then the dean gave the Archbishop’s ring to the abbot, at the same time placing his hand in the coffin of the defunct, and saying: ‘You gave it to him living; behold he is dead,’ alluding to the custom of the Archbishops of Rouen being consecrated in the church of St. Ouen.

Mr. Waterton remarks ‘that in 511, the Council of Orleans makes mention of the rescript of Clodovicus, wherein he promises to leave certain captives at the disposition of the Gallican bishops, “si vestras epistolas de *annulo vestro* signatas sic ad nos dirigatis.”’ The same eminent antiquarian states that ‘prior to the eleventh century, many, if not all, of the episcopal rings were signets; for before that time large official seals were not in general use. Each bishop seems to have chosen the subject to be engraved on his ring, at pleasure. St. Augustine, in one of his letters, mentions that he sealed it with his ring, “qui exprimit faciem [Pg 212]

hominis attendentis in latus." In writing to Apollinaris, Bishop of Valence, Clodovicus begs him to send the seal, or signet (*signatorum*), which he had promised, made in such a way "ut annulo ferreo et admodum tenui, velut concurrentibus in se delphinulis concludendo, sigili duplicis forma geminis cardinalis inseratur." And, referring to the subject to be engraved on the bezel, he adds, "si quæras quid insculpendum sigillo, signo monogrammatis mei per gyram scripti nominis legatur indicio."'

In the early days of Christianity bishops sealed with their rings the profession of faith which the neophytes made in writing. They also sealed their pastoral letters. Ebregislaus, Bishop of Meaux, in 660, wore on his ring an intaglio, representing St. Paul, the first hermit, on his knees before the crucifix, and above his head, a crow, by which he was miraculously fed.

In conformity with a decree of St. Sergius I. (687-701), the bishops of France and Spain used to seal up the baptismal fonts with their rings from the beginning of Lent to Holy Saturday.

From ancient documents it would appear that bishops sometimes called their rings 'annuli ecclesiæ.' David, Bishop of Benevento, in the time of Charlemagne, issued a mandate, ending as follows: 'annulo sanctæ nostræ ecclesiæ firmavivus roborandum.' In 862, Rathbodus, Bishop of Treves, writes thus: 'Hanc epistolam Græcis litteris, hinc, inde, munire [Pg 213] decrevimus, et annulo ecclesiæ nostræ bullare censuimus.' In 985 Pope John XVI. sealed with his ring the confirmation of the decree made by the Council of Mayence, in favour of the monks of Corvey, in Saxony.

These quotations are sufficient to prove that until the 11th century the bishops used their rings as signets; but we must not infer that every episcopal ring was a signet. It is probable that each bishop had a large jewelled ring to use when pontificating.

Of the importance attached to the possession of the episcopal ring we are told that Gundulf, the good Bishop of Rochester, in his last days distributed all his goods to the poor, even to his shoes, and bequeathed his rich vestments to the cathedral. There was only one ornament with which he could not part, that was the episcopal ring, and he confided this to the care of his attendants, intending, probably, that it should be delivered to his successor. Ralph, who had lately been elected Abbot of Battle, had formerly been Prior of Rochester, and had been deservedly popular. The monks were anxious that he should be the successor of Gundulf, and were prepared to elect him, if they could obtain the consent of the archbishop. If to the Abbot of Battle Gundulf bequeathed or resigned the episcopal ring, it might be produced as an indication of Gundulf's wish that Ralph, of Battle Abbey, should succeed him. A suggestion to this effect was made to the old bishop, who said curtly: 'He is a monk, what has he to do with an episcopal ring?' He was, probably, offended at the ambition of the ex-prior of Rochester, who ought to have been contented with his newly-acquired dignity at Battle Abbey. Soon after this, another Ralph made his appearance at the priory, Ralph of [Pg 214] Seez, who afterwards became Archbishop of Canterbury. Having been ejected from his monastery by violence, he came to England, and was received everywhere with hearty regard, on account of his virtues and accomplishments. Hearing of Gundulf's illness, he hastened to Rochester, to console his old friend on the bed of sickness. Ralph was obliged to leave Rochester after a short visit, but on quitting his friend he was recalled, and Gundulf, demanding of his attendant the episcopal ring, placed it as a parting gift in the hand of Ralph of Seez, who suggested it might be better disposed of to one of Gundulf's episcopal friends, since it did not pertain to an abbot to wear a ring. He reminded the bishop that, though not living a monk, still a monk he was. 'Take it, nevertheless,' said the bishop, 'you may want it some day.'

The possession of this ring reconciled the monks to the appointment of Ralph of Seez as successor of Gundulf to the bishopric of Rochester, as they regarded the donation in the light of a prophecy.

'Before,' says Mr. Waterton, 'receiving the pastoral staff and mitre, the bishop-elect is invested by the consecrating bishop with the pontifical ring. The formula seems to have varied at different times, the most ancient one, contained in the Sacramental of St. Gregory, 590, is this: "Accipe annulum discretionis et honoris, fidei signum, et quæ signanda sunt signes, et quæ aperienda sunt prodas, quæ liganda sunt liges, quæ solvenda sunt solvas, atque credentibus per fidem baptismatis, lapsis autem sed pœnitentibus per mysterium reconciliationis januas regni cœlestis aperias; cunctis vero de thesauro dominico ad æternam salutem hominibus, consolatus gratiâ Domini nostri Jesu Christi."

'Another form, of a later date, has the above, with the following addition:—"Memor [Pg 215] sponsionis et desponsationis ecclesiasticæ et dilectionis Domini Dei tui, in die quâ assecutus es hunc honorem, cave ne obliviscaris illius."

'The ancient Ordo Romanus contains a formula couched in more elegant words: "Accipe annulum pontificalis honoris, ut sis fidei integritate ante omnia munitus, misericordiæ operibus insistens, infirmis compatiens, benevolentibus congaudens, aliena damna propria deputans, de alienis gaudiis tanquam de propriis exultans."

'The formula,' continues Mr. E. Waterton, 'seems to have varied at different times; that contained in the pontifical of Ecgberht, Archbishop of York, is as follows: "Accipe annulum pontificalis honoris ut sis fidei integritate munitus." The Anglo-Saxon pontifical at Rouen, and that of St. Dunstan at Paris, both give the following: "Accipe ergo annulum discretionis

et honoris, fidei signum, et quæ signanda sunt signes, et quæ aperienda sunt prodas.”’

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the ring, as a part of ecclesiastical investiture, was a fruitful subject of discord between the Emperors and the Popes, until 1123, the Emperor Henry the Fifth, alarmed by the threats of the Pontiff, ceded the right to Calixtus II., from which time the rings were sent to the bishops-elect from the Pope—a practice continued in the Roman Catholic hierarchy to the present time. In preceding ages, however, monarchs were not so yielding. In the romance of ‘King Athelstan,’ the sovereign says to an offending archbishop:—

> Lay down thy cross and thy staff,
> The myter and the ryng that I to thee gaff,
> Out of my land thou flee.

Cardinals on their creation receive a ring in which is usually a sapphire. Wolsey was raised to this dignity in 1515, the Pope having forwarded with the hat (an unusual thing to be sent out of Rome) a ring of more than ordinary value. [Pg 216]

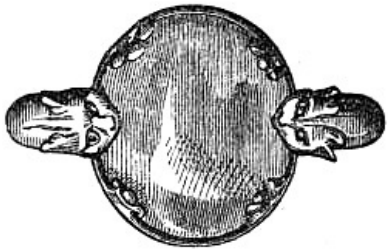
Cardinals wear their rings at all times, but on Good Friday they lay them aside, as a sign of the mourning in which the Church is placed for her Spouse. At the recent installation of cardinals (September 1875) the venerable Pontiff presented each dignitary with a gold ring set with a sapphire.

In 1191 the fashion of the episcopal ring was definitively settled by Innocent III., who ordained that it should be of gold, solid, and set with a precious stone, on which nothing was to be cut; previous to this, bishops’ rings were not restricted to any special material or design. ‘In the thirteenth century,’ remarks Mr. E. Waterton, ‘many of the episcopal rings were of very rude fashion, frequently in almost literal conformity with the rescript of Innocent III., without regard to shape or elegance. The stone was set just as it was found, merely having the surface polished, and the shape of the bezel was adapted to the gem. There are proofs that cameos were worn in episcopal rings. In the list of rings and precious stones collected by Henry III. for the shrine of St. Edward, in Westminster Abbey, there is enumerated: “j *chamah* in uno annulo pontificali.” We know that during the Middle Ages the glyptic art had declined very much, and that from their fancied assimilation antique gems were occasionally used for devout subjects. Thus the monks of Durham converted an antique intaglio of Jupiter Tonans into the ‘caput Sancti Oswaldi.’

During the latter part of the thirteenth century the large episcopal rings were enriched by the addition of previous stones, which were set around the principal one. Thus, in the ‘Wardrobe Book’ there is the following entry: ‘Annulus auri cum quatuor rubettis magnis qui fuit Fratris J. de Peccham, nuper Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi. He died in 1292.’ [Pg 217]

Episcopal rings were usually set with sapphires, probably from a popular belief that this precious stone had the power of cooling love; owing, perhaps, to the coldness of its touch, due to its density. The Rev. C. W. King, however, gives as a reason for the choice of the sapphire that, besides its supposed sympathy with the heavens, mentioned by Solinus, and its connexion with the god of day, Apollo, the violet colour agrees with the vestments appropriated to the priestly office.

An episcopal ring, with gold and a sapphire, said to have belonged to St. Loup, is in the treasury of the Cathedral of Sens, and is, probably, of the Carlovingian period.



Episcopal ring.

‘Mention occurs,’ remarks Mr. E. Waterton, ‘of episcopal rings being set with the balass-ruby, the emerald, the topaz, the turquoise, the chalcedony, and, as accessories, pearls and garnets. Sometimes these gems were of great value.’ The Rev. C. W. King thinks it probable that when mediæval rings occur, set with a ruby instead of a sapphire, they belong to bishops who were at the same time cardinals. At the disgraceful seizure of Archbishop Cranmer’s effects, in 1553, we find mentioned, among the articles of considerable value taken from his house at Battersea: ‘six or seven rings of fine gold, with stones in them, whereof were three fine blue sapphires of the best; an emerald, very fine; a good turquoise and a diamond.’ [Pg 218]

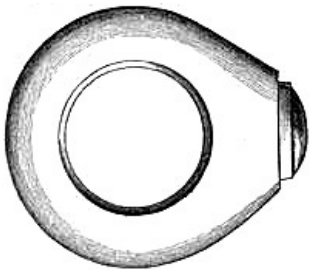
At the degradation of a bishop in former times, the reasons were given in a solemn assembly, and judgment pronounced, the mitre was removed from his head, and the pontifical ring drawn off his finger, as having outraged the Church.

With regard to the finger on which the episcopal ring is worn, a correspondent of ‘Notes and Queries’ (vol. v., first series, p. 114), remarks that ‘all who wear rings, *ex officio*, wear them

on the third finger of the right hand. Cardinals, bishops, abbots, doctors, &c., do this for the reason that it is the first vacant finger. The thumb and the first two fingers have always been reserved as symbols of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. When a bishop gives his blessing he blesses with the thumb and two first fingers. Our brasses, with sepulchral slabs, bear witness to this fact.'

A French writer observes that formerly the episcopal ring was worn on the fore-finger, but as, for the celebration of the holy mysteries, bishops were obliged to place it on the *fourth* finger, the custom prevailed of carrying it thus.

Mr. E. Waterton gives his explanation thus, and there could be no better authority: 'It appears that bishops formerly wore their rings on the index of their right hand, being the middle one of the three fingers which they extend when they are giving their blessing, but when celebrating mass they passed the ring on to the annular. They wore it on the index as the fore-finger was indicative of silence, that they ought to communicate the divine mysteries only to the worthy. Gregory IV., in 827, ordered that the episcopal ring should not be worn on the left, but on the right hand, as it was more distinguished (*nobile*) and was the hand with which the blessing was imparted.'[52] [Pg 219]



Episcopal Thumb-ring.

The episcopal ring is now always worn on the annular finger of the right hand, and bishops never wear more than one. In the pictures of the early Italian masters, however, and on sepulchral effigies, bishops are represented with many rings, some of which are not unfrequently on the second joint of the fingers. A thumb-ring is often seen; one is represented (p. 219) belonging to a late Dean of St. Patrick's, the sketch of which was made by the late Mr. Fairholt, when it was in the possession of Mr. Huxtable, F.S.A., in 1847. It is of bronze, thickly gilt, and set with a crystal. In Raffaelle's portrait of Julius II. the Pope is represented as wearing six rings. Certain it is, as late as the year 1516, the Popes occasionally wore two or more rings. [Pg 220]

As the large pontifical ring was of a size sufficient to enable the bishop to pass it over the silk glove which he wears when pontificating, a smaller, or guard ring, was used to keep it on the finger.

In the Waterton Collection is a very pale gold episcopal ring, with oblong hexagonal bezel, set with a pale cabochon sapphire, and the hoop divided into square compartments chased with rosettes, and finished on the shoulders with monsters' heads. French, of the early part of the fifteenth century.

In the Anglo-Saxon annals, an archbishop bequeaths a ring in his will, and a king sends a golden ring, enriched with a precious stone, as a present to a bishop. So great was the extravagance among the clergy for these ornaments that Elfric, in his 'canons,' found it necessary to exhort the ecclesiastics 'not to be proud with their rings.' In the mediæval romances we are told that at the marriage of Sir Degrevant, there came

> Erchebyschopbz with ryng
> Mo than fiftene.

In the effigy of Bishop Oldham (died 1519), in Exeter Cathedral, the uplifted hands of the recumbent figure, which are pressed together, are adorned with no less than seven large rings on the fingers, three being on the right, and four on the left hand. In addition to these, a single signet-ring of extraordinary size is represented as worn over both the thumbs. [Pg 221]

But the number of these rings is exceeded by far in the case of the arm of St. Blaize, exhibited in the Cathedral of Brunswick, on the fingers of which are no less than *fourteen* rings. This relic was brought from Palestine by Henry the Lion in the eleventh century, and is encased in silver.

In a miniature in the 'Heures d'Anne de Bretagne' (1500), representing St. Nicholas and the miracle of the three children, the bishop is represented with one hand extended in the act of blessing, with a large ring over two fingers. A ring is on one of the fingers of the other hand. In paintings of the early bishops of the Church they are figured with gloves having the ruby on the back of the hand, and the official ring on the fore-finger of the right hand sometimes, but not always, introduced.

Dart, in his 'History of Canterbury,' gives an inventory of the *Ornamenta Ecclesiastica* taken in 1315. One of the *annuli pontificales* was of elaborate character, and is thus described: 'Annulus quadratus magnus cum smaragdine oblongo, et quatuor pramis, et quatuor

garnettis.' The others had sapphires surrounded by smaller gems. One of these rings was set 'cum sapphiro nigro in quatuor cramponibus ex omne parte discoperto.'

In the 'Archæological Journal' (vol. ii., 1854) is an interesting account by the late Mr. Albert Way, of the ecclesiastical mortuary or corse-present: 'Whether this was originally a composition for offerings omitted, or in the nature of a payment for sepulture, frequently consisted, amongst other things of a ring. Thus in the archdeaconry of Chester, on the death [Pg 222] of every priest, his best signet, or ring, with various other objects belonging to the bishop as being the archdeacon.'

The King, in like manner, on the death of every archbishop and bishop, was entitled to a gold ring with other things. On the death of some abbots the King claimed the like. These rights existed in the reign of Edward I. and probably earlier. In the province of Canterbury the second-best ring of the bishop accompanied the seals, which, there is reason to think, were given up to their metropolitans. In 1310, on the death of Robert Orford, Bishop of Ely, his pontifical ring not having been delivered up in due course, a mandate was issued by Archbishop Winchelsey, directed to Richard de Oteringham, then administering the spiritualities of the vacant see, to obtain possession of the ring, which appeared to have been kept back by two of the monks of Ely. The mandate recites all the circumstances which had occurred, describing the ring as 'annulum qui pontificalis vulgariter appellatur, qui de jure et consuetudine nostre ecclesie Cantuariensis ad nos dignoscitur pertinere.' It was alleged by the monks of Ely that the deceased prelate had made a gift of this ring in his lifetime to the Prior and Convent, but that, having no other pontifical ring, he had retained it for his own use until his death. The Prior and Convent then had possession of the ring, which they forthwith caused to be affixed to the shrine of St. Ealburga. The two monks incurred the penalty of excommunication; the Archbishop forthwith cited the Prior and Convent to appear before him, and there can be little doubt that the ring was ultimately delivered up. The details of this curious transaction are related in Archbishop Winchelsey's Register, and [Pg 223] may be seen in Wilkins's 'Concilia,' vol. ii. p. 403.

In regard to two of the sees in Wales, St. Asaph and Bangor, the claim extended to the palfry with bridle and saddle, the *capa pluvialis*, or riding-cloak, and the hat used by the deceased prelate. The seals and best ring were likewise demanded, as in the case of the other bishops of the Principality, and of the province of Canterbury in general. On the decease of Anian, Bishop of Bangor, in 1327, the metropolitan see being at that time vacant, the Prior of Christ Church claimed the ring, seals, and other effects, which had not been rendered up to him in due course. The following entry appears on this occasion: 'De annulo et sigilis Episcopi Bangorensis restituendis.—Magister Kenewricus Canonicus Assavensis, officialis noster sede Bangorensi vacante, habet literam de annulo secundo meliori et omnibus sigillis bone memorie domini Aniani Episcopi Bangorensis, ac etiam de aliis bonis nobis et ecclesie nostre Cantuarien de jure et consuetudine antiqua et approbata debitis post mortem cujuslibet Episcopi Bangorensis, que de Magistro Madoco Archidiacono Angles' executore testimenti dicti domini Aniani recepit, nobis absque more majoris dispendio apud Cantuariam transmittendis necnon de omnibus aliis bonis que ad manus suas sede Bangorensi vacante vel plena devenerunt; et ad certificandum nos infra xx dies post recepcionem presentium quod super premissis duxerit faciendis. Dated at Canterbury, July 15, 1328.'

These instructions from the Prior to his official seem to have produced no effect. A letter is found subsequently in the same register (K. 12, f. 158, v^{o}), addressed from Mayfield by Simon Mepham, Archbishop of Canterbury, to Henry Gower, Bishop of St. David's, stating the demand of the Prior had not been satisfied, and requiring him to obtain restitution of the [Pg 224] seals and ring which had belonged to the deceased prelate. The matter appears accordingly to have been adjusted without delay, since a formal acquittance is found in the same volume, dated at Canterbury, February 3, 1328.

A similar occurrence is recorded in the register on the decease of David Martyn, Bishop of St. David's, March 9, 1328. His executors had delivered the seals and ring to Master Edmund de Mepham, who had departed this life; and a letter is found from Henry de Eastry, Prior of Christ Church, to Robert Leveye, Edmund's executor, requesting him to render up these objects to which the Prior was entitled.

The Wardrobe Books and other records would doubtless show that the rights of the Crown were constantly enforced on the decease of archbishops and bishops with no less jealous vigilance than those of the Church of Canterbury. In the Wardrobe Book of 28th Edward I., for instance, amongst various articles mention is made of the gold ring of William de Hothum, Archbishop of Dublin, who died in 1298, set with a sapphire, as also of many silver *ciphi* and gold rings set with various gems, delivered to the King on the decease of several other prelates at that period. In the same record are to be found the gold rings of the abbots of Glastonbury, St. Alban's, and Abingdon, lately deceased, in custody of the King's wardrobe.

It is deserving of remark that at an earlier period no claim, as regarded the pontifical ring, appears to have been acknowledged by the Bishops of Rochester.

Mr. Edmund Waterton, in the 'Archæological Journal' (vol. xx. pp. 235 *et seq.*), gives a list of a few of the authentic episcopal rings now in existence in England.

The ring of Seffrid, Bishop of Winchester, who died in 1151. This is most curious, for it is set [Pg 225]

with a gnostic gem, representing the figure with the head of a cock. It is a strange subject for the ring of a bishop.

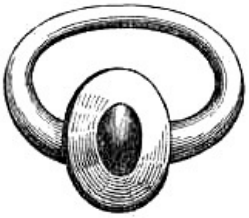
A massive gold ring set with a sapphire, found in a tomb on the thumb of the skeleton of a bishop, supposed to be Hilary, Bishop of Chichester, who died in 1169, together with a silver chalice, and paten, and a pastoral staff.

A gold ring with an octagonal sapphire, set *à griffes*, and with four small emeralds in the corners. This was found in a stone coffin on which was inscribed EPISCOPUS, and which also contained some remains of vestments, and a pastoral staff.

These three rings belong to the Dean and Chapter of Chichester.

Gold ring set with a ruby, and found in York Minster in the tomb of Archbishop Sewall, who died 1258.

A gold ring, also set with a ruby, found in the tomb of Archbishop Greenfield, who died 1315.



Ring of
Archbishop Sewall.

Ring of
Archbishop Greenfield.

A gold ring, the stone of which has fallen out and which bears on the inside the *chançon* ‘×honnor×et×joye×,’ found in the tomb of Archbishop Bowett, who died in 1423.

The three last rings are preserved in York Minster.

A large gold ring set with an irregular oval sapphire secured by four grips in the form of fleurs-de-lys. The stone is pierced longitudinally. This was found in Winchester Cathedral, and may be assigned to the thirteenth century. [Pg 226]

Episcopal ring
(thirteenth century).

The ring of William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, died 1404. A massive plain gold ring, set with a sapphire. By his will he bequeathed to his successor in the Bishopric of Winchester, his best book, *De Officio Pontificali*, his best missal, and his larger gold pontifical ring, set with a sapphire, and surrounded with four balass-rubies.

A gold ring found in the tomb of Bishop Gardiner, in Winchester Cathedral (died 1555). It is set with an oval *plasma* intaglio of the head of Minerva; on the shoulders of the hoop are two square facetted ornaments, each set with five small rubies *en cabochon*.

These rings belong to the Dean and Chapter of Winchester Cathedral.

Ring of Bishop Stanbery.

A massive gold ring set with a sapphire. The shoulders are ornamented with flowers, and inside is the *chançon* ‘en : bon : an.’ Found in the tomb of John Stanbery, Bishop of Hereford, 1452. [Pg 227]

A gold ring set with an uncut ruby, and which has on either shoulder a Tau cross, filled in with green enamel, and a bell appended. Within is the inscription enamelled ‘Ave Maria.’ Found in the tomb of Richard Mayhew, or Mayo, Bishop of Hereford, 1504.

These rings were found in Hereford Cathedral. They are figured in the ‘Archæologia’ (vol. xxxi. p. 249).

A massive gold ring set with a sapphire, *en cabochon*. This was found on one of the fingers of St. Cuthbert, when his coffin was opened by the visitors in 1537. It came into the possession of Thomas Watson, the Catholic Dean appointed on the dismissal of Robert Horne, the Protestant Dean, in 1553. Dean Watson gave the ring to Sir Thomas Hare, who gave it to Antony Brown, created Viscount Montague, by Queen Mary, in 1554. He gave it to Dr. Richard Smith, Bishop of Calcedon, *in partibus*, and Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District, whom he had for a long time sheltered from the persecution. Bishop Smith gave the ring to the monastery of the English Canonesses of St. Augustine at Paris; and it is now preserved at St. Cuthbert’s College, Ushaw, near Durham. The ring is evidently not one worn by the sainted bishop during his lifetime. It does not appear to have been of an earlier date than the fourteenth century; and a gold ring, set with a sapphire, and almost its counterpart, which was found at Flodden, is now in the British Museum. Probably the ring had belonged to one of the bishops of Durham, and had been offered to the shrine of St. Cuthbert, and placed on a finger of the corpse on some occasion when the shrine was opened. The authentication of the ring simply states the fact that it was found on the hand of St. Cuthbert in 1537. [Pg 228]

The ring of Arnulphus, consecrated Bishop of Metz in 614, is stated to be preserved in the treasury of the cathedral of that city. It is believed to be of an earlier date than the fourth century, and it is set with an opaque milk-white cornelian, engraved with the sacred symbol of the fish.

In addition to these examples are two other French episcopal rings. One is that of Gerard, Bishop of Limoges, who died in 1022. Didron thus describes it: ‘Cet anneau est en or massif; il pese 14 gram. 193 m.; aucune pierrerie ne le decore. La tête de l’anneau, ou chaton, est formée de quatre fleurs trilobées opposées par la base sur lesquelles courent de légers filets d’email bleu.’

In August 1763 the remains of Thomas de Bitton, Bishop of Exeter from 1293 to 1307 were discovered in the cathedral of that city. The skeleton was nearly entire, and among the dust in the coffin a gold ring was found and a large sapphire set in it. This ring and a chalice recovered at the same time are preserved within a case in the chapter-house of the cathedral.

The following extracts from the Wardrobe Book of 28th Edward I. (A.D. 1299-1360), relating to episcopal rings, are of interest:—

‘Jocalia remanencia in fine anni 27.

‘Annulus auri cum sapphiro qui fuit fratris Willelmi quondam Dublin’ archiepiscopi defuncti.

‘Jocalia remanencia in fine anni 27 de jocalibus Regi datis, et post decessum prælatorum Regis restitutis anno 25.

‘Annulus auri cum sapphiro crescenti qui fuit N. quondam Sarum episcopi defuncti.

‘Annulus, auri cum rubetto perforato qui fuit Roberti Coventr’ et Lichfield’ episcopi defuncti. [Pg 229]

‘Jocalia remanencia in fine anni 27 de jocalibus Regi datis et post decessum prælatorum Regis restitutis. Annulus auri cum sapphiro qui fuit J. Ebor’ archiepiscopi defuncti anno 24.

‘Jocalia remanencia in fine anni, 27 de jocalibus receptis de venerabili Patre Will’ Bathon’ et Wellen’ episcopo.

‘Tres annuli auri cum rubettis.

‘Unus annulus auri cum ameraudâ.

‘Unus annulus auri cum topacio (chrysolite).

‘Unus annulus auri cum pereditis (topaz).’

The *Jocalia Sancti Thomæ*, which is given by Dart in his history of Canterbury Cathedral, are as follows:—

‘Annulus pontificalis magnus cum rubino rotundo in medio:

‘*Item.* Annulus magnus cum sapphiro nigro qui vocatur lup.

‘*Item.* Annulus cum parvo sapphiro nigro qui vocatur lup.

‘*Item.* Annulus cum sapphiro quadrato aquoso.

‘*Item.* Annulus cum lapide oblongo qui vocatur turkoyse.

‘*Item.* Annulus unus cum viridi cornelino sculpto rotundo.

‘*Item.* Annulus parvus cum smaragdine triangulato.

‘*Item.* Annulus unus cum chalcedonio oblongo.’

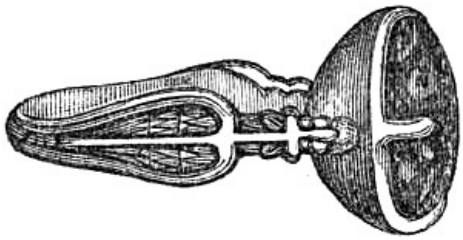
The term *lup* may signify *en cabochon*, uncut.

In 1867 Mr. Binns exhibited a gold episcopal ring, at a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries, which he obtained at the shop of a jeweller at Worcester, and supposed to be the ring of Walter de Cantilupe, who presided over the see of Worcester from 1236 to 1266. In the ‘Archæologia’ (vol. xx. p. 556) is figured an amethyst ring, which was discovered at Evesham [Pg 230] Abbey, on the finger of the skeleton of Henry of Worcester, abbot of that house, 1256-1263.

In the possession of the Dean and Chapter of Wells is a fine massive episcopal ring of gold, the date supposed to be the commencement of the twelfth century. It has a solid projecting bezel, set with an irregularly-shaped ruby, polished on the surface and pierced longitudinally —an oriental stone which has been used as a pendant.

At the Loan Exhibition of Ancient and Modern Jewellery at the South Kensington Museum, in 1872, Mr. R. H. Soden Smith contributed, amongst his fine collection of 140 finger-rings, a series of seven gold episcopal rings of the pointed or stirrup-shaped type; these are mostly set with sapphires, rudely shaped and polished. Date from the 13th and 14th centuries.

This engraving represents a gold episcopal ring, in the Londesborough Collection, with sapphire. French work of the thirteenth century.

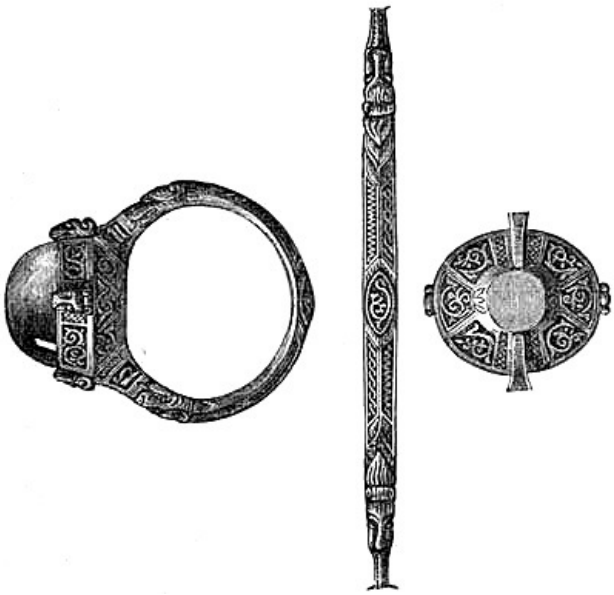


French Episcopal ring.

In the Royal Irish Academy is a large episcopal ring, but, of comparatively modern date. It is the largest ring in the collection, and had originally held a very fine amethyst, which was removed by Dean Dawson, when the ring was in his possession, and a piece of glass inserted in its stead.

Episcopal ring.

In the Waterton Collection is one of the finest of mediæval gold episcopal rings, obtained at [Pg 231] Milan. It has been reset with an amethyst, the original stone, stated to have been a valuable sapphire, having been removed. No date is assigned to it.



Episcopal ring.

Abbots were invested with the ring. Lawrence, seventeenth Abbot of Westminster, is said to have been the first of that dignity who obtained from the Pope (Alexander III.) the privilege of using the mitre, ring, and gloves. He died in 1167, and was represented on his monument with a mitre, ring, and staff. In 1048, Wulgate, twelfth Abbot of Croyland, received the crosier and *ring* from the *king*. The consecration of an abbot was similar, in most respects, to the episcopal ceremony. The abbot received from the bishop, or whoever was appointed to officiate, the insignia of his ecclesiastical dignity.

The privilege of the mitre, pontifical ring, &c., was conceded to the abbots of St. Denis, in France, about the year 1177 by Alexander III. [Pg 232]

Jocelyn of Brakelond, in his 'Chronicles of St. Edmundsbury' (twelfth century), informs us that Sampson was inaugurated abbot of that monastery in 1182, by the Bishop of Winchester, who placed the mitre on his head, and the ring on his finger, saying: 'This is the dignity of the abbots of St. Edmund; my experience early taught me this.'

In the reception of novices into the Roman Catholic sisterhood, one of the ceremonies performed was the presentation of a ring blessed by the bishop, usually of gold with a sapphire. After the benediction of the veil, the ring, and the crown, the novices receive the first as a mark of renouncing the world; the ring, by which they are married to the Son of God, and the crown, as a type of that prepared for them in heaven. The origin of this custom of espousals to Christ dates from a very remote period. 'We meet,' remarks Lingard, in his 'History and Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church,' 'for more than a thousand years after the first preaching of Christianity, with females who, to speak the language of our ancestors, had wedded themselves to God.'

On one of four rings of St. Eloy (6th century), preserved before the Revolution of 1793 in the treasury of the church at Noyon, in France, was inscribed:—

> Annulus Eligii fuit aureus iste beati,
> Quo Christo sanctam desponsavit Godebertam.

(This gold ring of the ever-blessed St. Eloy was that with which he married St. Godiberte to Christ.)

John Alcock, Bishop of Ely (1486), gives 'an exhortacyon made to relygyous systers in the tyme of theyr consecracyon by him: "I aske the banes betwyx the hyghe and moost myghty Prynce, Kyng of all kynges, Sone of Almyghty God, and the Virgyn Mary, in humanyte Cryste Jesu of Nazareth, of the one partye, and A. B. of the thother partye, that yf ony or woman can shewe any lawfull impedymente other by any precontracte made on corrupcyon of body or soule of the sayd A. B. that she ought not to be maryed this daye unto the sayd mighty Prynce Jesu, that they wolde accordynge unto the lawe shewe it."' [Pg 233]

There is no doubt that these 'espousals to Christ' were in connection with the spiritual marriage of the bishop with the Church implied by the sanctity of the episcopal ring. 'The mystical signification,' observes Mr. E. Waterton, 'attached to this ring has been set forth by various ecclesiastical writers. "Datur et annulus episcopo," observes St. Isidore, of Seville, in the 16th century, "propter signum pontificalis honoris, vel signaculum secretorum." In 1191 Innocent III. wrote that "annulus episcopi perfectionem donorum Spiritus Sancti in Christo significat." Durandus, who lived in the 13th century, enlarges upon the subject in his "Rationale." "The ring," he says, "is the badge of fidelity with which Christ betrothed the Church, his holy Bride, so that she can say: 'My Lord betrothed me with his ring.' Her

guardians are the bishops, who wear the ring for a mark and a testimony of it; of whom the Bride speaks in the Canticles: 'The watchmen who kept the city found me.' The father gave a ring to the prodigal son, according to the text, 'put a ring on his finger.' A bishop's ring, therefore, signifies *integritatum fidei*; that is to say, he should love as himself the Church of God committed to him as his Bride, and that he should keep it sober and chaste for the heavenly Bridegroom, according to the words, 'I have espoused you to one Husband, that I my present you as a chaste virgin to Christ,' and that he should remember he is not the lord, but the shepherd."' [Pg 234]

It was the custom in former ages for the high dignitaries of the Church, at the time of their elevation to episcopal rank, to celebrate such event with pompous ceremonies. We find recorded, among others, the marriage of prelates, especially in Italy. In 1519, Antonio Pucci was elected Bishop of Pistoja, and made his solemn entrée with a brilliant cortége. On reaching a nunnery called San Pier Maggiore, 'he descended from his horse,' says Michel-Ange Salvi, 'and entered the church, which was richly decorated. After praying, he went towards the wall which separated the church from the convent, where an opening had been made, and, in an apartment there, wedded the abbess, placing on her finger a sumptuous ring. After this he went to the cathedral, and with various ceremonies was inducted into his bishopric.'

At Florence, when an archbishop was elected, he proceeded to a convent dedicated to St. Peter, and was married to the abbess. A platform was erected, surmounted by a rich baldequin, near the high altar; a golden ring was brought to the prelate, which he placed on the finger of the abbess, whose hand was sustained by the oldest priest of the parish. The archbishop slept one night at the convent, and the next day was enthroned, with great ceremony, in the cathedral.

The same usages were practised at the installation of the archbishops of Milan, the Bishops of Bergamo, Modena, &c.

Aimon, in his 'Tableau de la Cour de Rome,' describing the ceremonies attending the consecration of cardinals, says: 'Le Pape leur fait alors une exhortation, et leur assigne des titres; leur met au doigt annulaire de la main droite, un anneau d'or, dans lequel est enchassé un saphir, qui coûte à chaque Eminence cinq cents ducats. Cet anneau est donné au nouveau Cardinal pour lui apprendre *qu'il a l'Église pour épouse*, et qu'il ne le doit jamais abandonner.' [Pg 235]

During the ceremony of consecrating the Bishop of Limoges at Nôtre Dame in Paris (1628), in presence of the Queen and the Duke of Orleans, the former sent the Bishop a rich diamond ring, which she took from her finger, in token of the spiritual marriage which he was contracting with the Church.

M. Thiers, in his 'Traité des Superstitions,' gives a curious instance of these espousals to Christ: a Carmelite, in his assumed quality of 'Secretary of Jesus,' had persuaded some of his devotees to sign contracts of marriage with the Saviour. A translation of one of these I now give: 'I, Jesus, son of the living God, the husband of my faithful, take my daughter, Madelaine Gasselin, for my wife; and promise her fidelity, and not to abandon her, and to give her, for advantage and possession, my grace in this life, promising her my glory in the other, and a portion of the inheritance of my Father. In faith of which I have signed the irrevocable contract by the hand of my secretary. Done in the presence of the Father Eternal, of my love, of my very worthy mother Mary, of my father St. Joseph, and of all my celestial court, in the year of grace 1650, day of my father St. Joseph.

'Jesus, the husband of faithful souls.

'Mary, mother of God. Joseph, husband of Mary. The guardian angel Madelaine, the dear lover of Jesus. [Pg 236]

'This contract has been ratified by the Holy Trinity, the day of the glorious St. Joseph, in the same year.

'Brother Arnoux, of St. John the Baptist, Carmelite. Déchaussé, unworthy secretary of Jesus.'

'I, Madelaine Gasselin, unworthy servant of Jesus, take my amiable Jesus for my husband, and promise him fidelity, and that I never have any other but Him, and I give Him, as a proof of my truth, my heart, and all that I shall ever be, through life unto death doing all that is required of me, and to serve Him with all my heart throughout eternity. In faith of which I have signed with my own hand the irrevocable contract, in the presence of the ever-adorable Trinity, of the holy Virgin, Mary, mother of God, my glorious father St. Joseph, my guardian angel, and all the celestial court, the year of grace 1650, day of my glorious father St. Joseph.

'Jesus, lover of hearts.

'Mary, mother of God. Joseph, husband of Mary. The guardian angel Madelaine, the dearly-beloved of Jesus.

'This contract has been ratified by the ever-adorable Trinity the same day of the glorious St. Joseph, in the same year.

‘Brother Arnoux, of St. John the Baptist.’

A curious legend of a ring of espousals received from our Saviour by a pious maiden, is recorded by Nider, in his treatise ‘In Formicario,’ and is referred to by Kirchmann (‘De Annulis’). He writes in praise of celibacy, and describes a certain maiden who, rejecting all earthly loves, is filled with sincere affection for Christ only. After praying for some token of [Pg 237] Divine acceptance: ‘orti locello quo nunc oculis corporeis visum dirigo. Et ecce in eodem momento et locello vidit tres or duos circiter violarum amenos flosculos.... Violas manu collegit propria et conservavit solliciter, ut exinde amor et spes artius ad suum sponsum grate succrescerent.’

After enforcing the miraculous character of the event by reminding his readers that it was not the season of flowers, but somewhere about the feast of St. Martin, he continues:—‘In sequenti anno iterum in orto suo laboraret quodam die, et ibidem in locum certum intuitum dirigeret, optando ex imo cordis desiderio quatenus ibi reperiret in signum Christifere desponsationis annulum aliquem, si divinæ voluntatis id esset: et en altera vice non sprevit Deus preces humilis virginis sed reperit materialem quemdam annulum quem vidi postmodum. Erat autem coloris albi, de minera qua nescio, argento mundo videbatur similior. Et in clausura ubi jungebatur in circulum due manus artificiose insculpte extiterunt.... Hunc annulum virgo gratissime servavit in posterum, et altissimo suo sponso deinceps ut antea in labore manuum suarum vivere studuit.’ *Vide* J. Nider, *In Formicario*, Cologne, 1473 (?) [‘Notes and Queries’].

This mystical union by the ring was exemplified in a singular manner in the instance of Edmund Rich, who was consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury in 1234. When a young man he made a vow of celibacy, and, that he might be able to keep it, he wedded himself to the mother of our Lord. He had two rings made with ‘Ave Maria’ engraved on each. One he placed on the finger of an image of the Virgin, which stood in a church at Oxford, and the other he wore on his own finger, considering himself espoused in this manner to the Virgin. [Pg 238] He cherished the remembrance of this transaction to his death, and at his funeral the ring was observed on his finger.[53]

In the legends of the saints there are frequent allusions to the espousals with Christ, in which the ring is prominently mentioned; thus of St. Catherine of Alexandria, it is said that, as she slept upon her bed, ‘the blessed Virgin appeared to her again, accompanied by her divine Son, and with them a noble company of saints and angels. And Mary again presented Catherine to the Lord of Glory, saying, “Lo, she hath been baptized, and I myself have been her godmother!” Then the Lord smiled upon her, and held out his hand, and plighted his troth to her, putting a ring upon her finger. When Catherine awoke, remembering her dream, she looked, *and saw the ring upon her finger*; and, henceforth regarding herself as the betrothed of Christ, she despised the world, and all the pomp of earthly sovereignty, thinking only of the day which should reunite her with her celestial and espoused Lord.’

In a painting by Ghirlandago, St. Catherine is represented with a ring conspicuous on her finger, in allusion to her mystical espousals.

Mrs. Jameson, in her ‘Sacred and Legendary Art,’ mentions an engraving of the marriage of [Pg 239] St. Catherine by one of the earliest artists of the genuine German school, the anonymous engraver known only as ‘Le Graveur de 1466,’ ‘the scene is Paradise; and the Virgin-Mother, seated on a flowery throne, is in the act of twining a wreath, for which St. Dorothea presents the roses; in front of the Virgin kneels St. Catherine, and beside her stands the Infant Christ (here a child about five or six years old), and presents the ring,’ &c.

In Titian’s ‘Marriage of St. Catherine,’ ‘the Infant Christ is seated on a kind of pedestal, and sustained by the arms of the Virgin. St. Catherine kneels before him, and St. Anna, the mother of the Virgin, gives St. Catherine away, presenting her hand to receive the ring; St. Joseph is standing on the other side; two angels behind the saint, look on with an expression of celestial sympathy.’

St. Agnes, in the old legend, when tempted to marry the son of Sempronius, the prefect of Rome, by rich presents, rejects them with scorn, ‘being already betrothed to a lover who is greater and fairer than any earthly suitor.’

In Hone’s ‘Everyday Book’ (vol. i. p. 141) there is a curious story connected with St. Agnes, ‘who,’ says Butler, ‘has always been looked upon as a special patroness of purity, with the immaculate mother of God.’ It seems that a priest who officiated in a church dedicated to that saint was very desirous of being married. He prayed the Pope’s licence, who gave it him, together with an emerald ring, and commanded him to pay his addresses to the image of St. Agnes in his own church. The priest did so, and the image put forth her finger and he put the ring thereon; whereupon the image drew her finger again, and kept the ring fast, and the priest was contented to remain a bachelor, ‘and yet, as it is sayd, the rynge is on the [Pg 240] fynger of the ymage.’

Mrs. Jameson remarks, on a painting representing in one compartment of the picture the Espousal of St. Francis of Assisi with the Lady Poverty, that she is attended by Hope and Charity as bridesmaids, being thus substituted for Faith. St. Francis places the ring upon her finger, while our Saviour, standing between them, at once gives away the bride and bestows the nuptial benediction.

St. Herman of Cologne, in the thirteenth century, is said to have had an ecstatic dream, in which the Virgin descended from heaven, and, putting a ring on his finger, declared him her espoused. Hence he received from the brotherhood with which he was connected the name of Joseph. He died in 1236.

In Hone's 'Everyday Book' it is remarked that the meeting of St. Anne and St. Joachim at the Golden Gate was a popular theme. The nuns of St. Anne, at Rome, showed a rude silver ring as the wedding one of the two saints.

In the Braybrooke Collection is a thick, gold, nun's ring, with a conical surface to the band of the hoop, and an inscription of the fourteenth century, in Longobardic characters, '× O (for *avec*) cest (for *cet*) *anel seu* (for *je suis*) *espose de Jheusu Crist*.' In the Waterton Collection at the South Kensington Museum is also a nun's ring of the same date, inscribed 'God with Maria.'

In former times complaints were made in the 'Constitutions' of nuns wearing several rings. In the 'Ancren Riwle, or Regulæ Inclusarum' (Camden Society) nuns are forbidden to have brooch or *ring*, or studded girdle:—

> Ring ne broche nabbe ye; ne gurdel i-membred.

'Espousals to God' were not confined to the religious portion of the community. [Pg 241]

Eleanora, third daughter of John, King of England, on the death of her husband, the Earl of Pembroke, in 1231, in the first transports of her grief, made in public a solemn vow, in presence of Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury, that she would never again become a wife, but remain a true spouse of Christ, and received the ring in confirmation, which vows she, however, subsequently broke, to the indignation of a strong party of the laity and clergy of England, by her marriage with Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester. At the head of the clergy was one William de Avendon, a Dominican friar, who quoted a tractate on vows, by one 'Master Peter,' from which it appears that a sacred plight-ring was considered almost as impassable a barrier as the veil itself, against the marriage of the wearer.

Mary, sixth daughter of Edward I., took the veil at Amesbury, thirteen young ladies being selected as her companions. The spousal rings placed on their fingers were of gold, adorned with a sapphire, and were provided at the expense of the King.

In a very interesting paper by Mr. Harrod, F.S.A., in the 'Archæologia' (vol. xl. part 2) we have particulars of the custom, which prevailed in the Middle Ages, of widows taking a vow of chastity, and receiving a particular robe and ring. Sir Harris Nicolas printed in the 'Testamenta Vetusta' an abstract of the will of Lady Alice West, of Hinton Marcel, widow of Sir Thomas West, dated in 1395, and proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. There is a bequest to her son Thomas, amongst other things of 'a ring with which I was yspoused to God.'

Sir Harris rightly says that this could not have been her marriage-ring, and it was certain she had not entered a convent. This is still more clearly made out by a reference to the transcript of the will in the registers of the Prerogative Court. [Pg 242]

Gough, in his 'Sepulchral Monuments,' quotes a story, from Matthew Paris, of one Cecily Sandford, a lady of condition, who, on her deathbed, having passed through the usual forms with her confessor, and he ordering her attendants to take off a gold ring he observed on her finger, although just expiring, recovered herself enough to tell them she would never part with it, as she intended carrying it to heaven with her into the presence of her celestial spouse, in testimony of her constant observance of her vow, and to receive the promised reward. She had, it appears, made a vow of perpetual widowhood, and with her *wedding*-ring assumed the russet habit, the usual sign of such a resolution.

'In the "Colchester Chronicle," portions of which are printed in Cromwell's "History of Colchester," one entry appears to confirm the conjecture that the whole was composed in the fourteenth or fifteenth century, "Anno Dñi ccciij. Helena mortuo Constancio perpetuam vovit viduitatem."

'By the testament of Katharine Rippelingham, dated February 8, 1473, who calls herself "advowes," she desires to be buried in the church of Baynardes Castell of London, where she was a parishioner; and by her will, in which she gives herself the title of "widow advowes," she shows herself in the full exercise of her rights of property, devising estates, carrying out awards, and adjusting family differences, and in an undated codicil she bequeaths to her daughter's daughter, Alice Saint John, "*her gold ring* with a diamante sette therein, *wherewith she was 'sacred.'*"'

'Sir Gilbert Denys, Knight of Syston, 1422: "If Margaret my wife will after my death vow a vow of chastity, I give her all my moveable goods, she paying my debts and providing for my children; and, if she will not vow a vow of chastity, I desire that my goods may be distributed, or divided into three equal parts, &c." [Pg 243]

'John Brakenbury, in 1487, leaves his mother certain real estate, "with that condicion that she never mary, *the which she promised afore the parson and the parish of Thymmylbe*, and if she kepe not that promise, I will she be content with that which was my fader's will, which she had every peny."

‘William Herbert, knight, Lord Pembroke, in his will dated July 27, 1469, thus appeals to his wife: “And, wife, that you remember your promise to take the order of widowhood, so ye may be the better maistres of your owen, to perform my will, and to help my children, as I love and trust you.”

‘William Edlington, esquire, of Castle Carlton, on June 11, 1466, states in his will: “I make Christian, my wife, my executor on this condicion, that she take the *mantle and the ring* soon after my decease; and, if case be that she will not take the mantle and the ring, I will that William, my son (and other persons therein named) be my executors, and she to have a third part of all my goods moveable.”

‘Lady Joan Danvers in 1453, gives the ring of her profession of widowhood to the image of the crucifix, near the north door of St. Paul’s.

‘Lady Margaret Davy, widow, in 1489, leaves her profession-ring to “Our Lady of Walsingham.”’

Gough prints the Act of Court from the Ely Registers, on the taking the vow by Isabella, Countess of Suffolk, in 1382. This took place at the priory of Campsey, in the presence of the [Pg 244]
Earl of Warwick, the Lords Willoughby, Scales, and others. The vow was as follows: ‘Jeo Isabella, jadys la femme William de Ufford, Count de Suffolk, vowe à Dieu, &c., en presence de tres reverentz piers en Dieu evesques de Ely et de Norwiz, qe jeo doi estre chaste d’ors en avant ma vie durante.’ And the Bishop of Ely, with authority of the Bishop of Norwich (in whose diocese Campsey was) received and admitted the same, ‘et mantellum sive clamidem ac annulum dicte voventis solempniter benedixit et imposuit super eam.’

Catherine, sixth daughter of Henry the Fourth, married to William Courtenay, Earl of Devon, on the death of her husband, took the vow of perpetual widowhood in 1511.

Dugdale, in his ‘History of Warwickshire’ and in his ‘Baronage,’ prints a licence from John, Bishop of Lichfield, to one N. N. to administer the vow of chastity to Margery, wife of Richard Middlemore, who died 15th of Henry the Seventh, which contains this passage: ‘In signum hujusmodi continentiæ et castitatis promisso perpetuo servando eandem Margeriam velandam seu peplandam habitumque viduitatis hujusmodi viduis, ut præfertur, ad castitatis professionem dari et uti consuetum cum unico annulo assignandum.’

Legacies and gifts of rings for religious purposes were frequent in former times; thus, amongst other rich gifts to the Cathedral of Canterbury, Archbishop Hubert, in 1205, presented four gold rings adorned with precious stones. Henry the Third, while on a visit to St. Alban’s Abbey, made some costly presents, including bracelets and rings, and five years afterwards gave similar gifts at another visit to the same abbey.

The same monarch, among other gifts to Salisbury Cathedral, ‘offered one gold ring with a [Pg 245]
precious stone called a ruby.’ After hearing mass he told the dean that he would have the stone and the gold applied to adorn a sumptuous gold ‘text’ (a Bible for the use of the altar) enriched with precious stones given by Hubert de Burgh.

Dugdale mentions in a list of jewels formerly in the treasury of York Cathedral ‘a small mitre, set with stones, for the bishop of the boys, or, as he was anciently called, the barne bishop; also a pastoral staff and *ring* for the same.’

The Bishop of Ardfert, in Ireland, gave to St. Alban’s ‘three noble rings; one set with an oriental sapphire, the second with a sapphire that possessed some *medicinal* quality, and was formed like a shield, and the other with a sapphire of less size.’

Henry de Blois presented to the same abbey a large ring set with jewels; the middle one was a sapphire of a faint colour, and in the circuit four pearls and four garnets.

John of St. Alban’s, a knight, left as a legacy to the monks of the abbey ‘a number of rings containing many precious stones.’

At the death of Walter, Abbot of Peterborough, among his effects, containing many rich articles, were no less than thirty gold rings, the offerings of the faithful.

Thomas Chillenden, fortieth Abbot of Canterbury, gave several pontifical rings to the abbey.

Thomas de la Chesnaye (died 1517) left, for the shrine of the Virgin at Rouen Cathedral, a ring garnished with a costly precious stone. Eustace Grossier, canon of the same cathedral, bequeathed, in 1534, his signet-ring to the shrine of St. Romain. Two years afterwards Jean de Lieur, another canon, left four rings to the shrine of the Virgin, ‘où il y a en une, une [Pg 246]
petite esmaraude; en laultre une petite turquoise, en laultre ung petit saphir, et en laultre ung petit rubi.’ In 1544 Etienne Burnel leaves to Our Lady a gold ring with a ruby enchased, and a pendant pearl; and to the shrine of St. Romain a gold ring with a diamond.

Charles the Third (? Naples) took from his finger a ring of great value to adorn the golden canopy, enriched with precious stones, for the Host, in the church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem.

Lady Morgan, in her ‘Italy,’ mentions the miraculous statue of the Virgin and Child at Loretto: ‘The Bambino holds up his hand as if to sport a superb diamond ring on his finger, presented to him by Cardinal Antonelli: it is a single diamond and weighs thirty grains.’

In the ‘Annals of Ireland’ we read that in 1421 Richard O’Hedian, Archbishop of Cashel, was accused, among other crimes, of taking a ring away from the image of St. Patrick (which the Earl of Desmond had offered) and giving it to his mistress.

Louis VII., of France, laid the first stone of the porch and two towers of the abbey church of St. Denis, in 1140. When the officiating minister pronounced the words ‘lapides pretiosi omnes muri tui et turres, Jerusalem, gemmis ædificabunter,’ the King took a costly ring from his finger, and threw it into the foundations. Several of the other persons present followed the example.

Saint Honoré, eighth Bishop of Amiens, in the sixteenth century, left his pastoral ring to the treasury of the cathedral, but it was sold by one of his successors, Bishop Gervain. It was afterwards repurchased and replaced in the treasury by Bishop Godefroy.

We read in the account of the spoliation of the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket, at Canterbury (temp. Henry VIII.), of a stone ‘with an Angell of gold poynting thereunto, offered there by a King of France’ (which King Henry put) ‘into a ring, and wore it on his thumb.’ The shrine blazed with gold and jewels; the wooden sides were plated with gold, and damasked with gold wire: cramped together on this gold ground were innumerable jewels, pearls, sapphires, balasses, diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, and also ‘in the midst of the gold, rings, or cameos of sculptured agates, cornelians, and onyx stones.’ [Pg 247]

The stone that the rapacious Henry took was said to be as large as a hen’s egg, or a thumb-nail, and was commonly called the ‘Regale of France’ offered to the shrine by Louis VII. of France, when on a pilgrimage there.[54]

At the meeting of the Archæological Institute at Norwich in 1847 Sir Thomas Beevor exhibited a silver ring, with a zigzag tooling and the word ‘✠Dancas✠’ signifying a token of thanks, or acknowledgment of services received, or, possibly, an *ex voto*, in accordance with the common usage of suspending such ornaments near the shrines of saints, as appears in the inventories of St. Cuthbert’s shrine, &c.

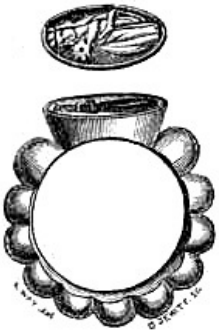
Adam Sodbury, fifty-third Abbot of Glastonbury, gave to the abbey, among other precious gifts, ‘a gold ring with a stone called Peritot, which was on the finger of St. Thomas the Martyr, when he fell by the swords of wicked men.’ [Pg 248]

Among what may be called ‘religious’ rings, I would notice those which are termed ‘decade,’ ‘reliquary,’ ‘pilgrims,’ &c., some of which are highly interesting, and serve to show how, in past ages, the zeal of our forefathers was animated by these rings, or, as some would call them, these *aids* to superstition. In olden wills they are frequently mentioned as heir-looms of great value.

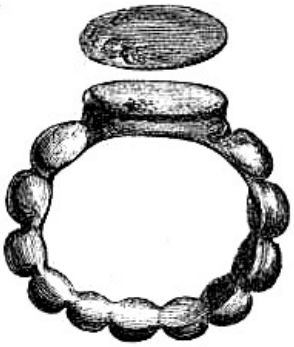
What are termed DECADE-rings, having ten projections at intervals all round the hoop, were common in former times, and were used as beads for repeating *Aves*. In the Braybrooke Collection a ring is mentioned with eleven knobs, the last being larger than the others, indicating ten *Aves* and one *Paternoster*. Each of the knobs is separated by three small beaded dots across the hoop from its neighbour, probably symbolic of the Trinity. At a meeting of the Archæological Institute at Norwich, in 1847, a curious ring was exhibited dating from the reign of Henry VI., found at St. Faith’s, near Norwich. It is engrailed, presenting ten cusps, and may be placed in the class of decade-rings. On the facet is engraved the figure of St. Mary Magdalen (or St. Barbara?), and on the outer circle ‘de bon cver’ (‘de bon cœur’).

Another ring of the same date is of a more delicate workmanship, and bears on the facet, St. Christopher, the hoop engrailed like the last, and has the legend ‘en. bo. n. ane’ (‘en bon an’).

At the same exhibition of antiquities among the rings of latten or base-metal was shown one engraved with the figure of a female saint, probably St. Catherine; the hoop formed with eleven bosses, date about 1450. A similar brass ring bearing the same figure, found near British and Roman weapons in the bed of the Thames, at Kingston, engraved in Jesse’s ‘Gleanings in Natural History,’ is here represented. This ring has eleven bosses, and, although found in the immediate vicinity of vestiges of an earlier date, may be regarded as of mediæval date, having been accidentally thrown together in the alluvial deposit. [Pg 249]



Latten ring, with figure of St. Catherine (?).

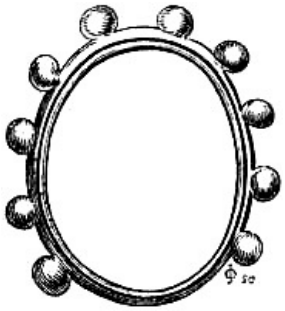


Thumb-ring.

Two decade-rings of the fifteenth century were also exhibited at the Norwich meeting, bearing the monogram I.H.S. one found in Norwich Castle, and the other at Heigham.

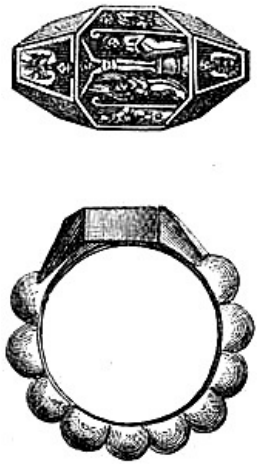
A gold ring with ten knobs, was found in 1846, at Denbigh, in pulling down an old house. Its weight is a quarter of an ounce. A similar ring of base metal, discovered in a tomb in York Minster, is preserved in the treasury of that church; and another example, in silver, of precisely similar form, was found in Whitby Abbey, Yorkshire.

Mr. Edward Hoare, of Cork, writing to the editor of the 'Archæological Journal,' observes that, as far as he has been able to obtain information about decade-rings, they were worn by [Pg 250] some classes of religious during the hours of repose, so that on awaking during the night they might repeat a certain number of prayers, marking them by the beads or knobs of the rings. If worn on any finger except the thumb, at other periods of time than those of repose, it must have been as a sort of penance, and perhaps these rings were sometimes so used. The addition of a twelfth boss marked the repetition of a creed.



Silver Decade-ring.
(In the possession of E. Hoare, Esq.)

The following illustration is from the 'Gentleman's Magazine' (1792), of a ring found near Croydon, concerning which a correspondent of that work wrote that he remembered a similar ring in the possession of a man advanced in years, who had passed his youth at sea. 'The ring,' he said, 'was a *dicket* (a corruption of "Decade"), to be placed, successively, on each of the fingers, and turned with the thumb; the cross and larger boss for the *Paternoster*; the ten smaller ones for *Ave Maria*, and that he used to say his prayers with it on board ship without being noticed by the sailors, in the hurry and confusion of a man of war.'



Decade-ring, found near Croydon.

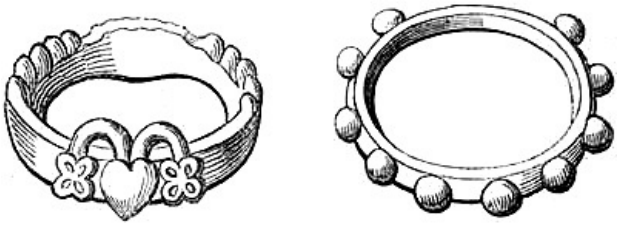
In the rich collection of E. Hoare, Esq., is a curious decade signet-ring, of which the following is a representation from the 'Archæological Journal' (vol. ii. p. 198). It was [Pg 251] discovered near Cork in 1844, and is thus described: 'The hoop is composed of nine knobs or

bosses, which may have served instead of beads in numbering prayers, whilst the central portion which forms the signet supplied the place of the *gaùde*.' Some persons (as Mr. Hoare remarked) have considered this ring as very ancient; Mr. Lindsay supposed it to have been of earlier date than the ninth century, regarding the device as representing an arm, issuing from the clouds, holding a cross with a crown, or an ecclesiastical cap, beneath it. Sir William Betham expressed the following opinion respecting this relic: 'There can be little doubt but your ring is a decade ring, as there are ten knobs or balls about it. The globe surmounted by a cross is a Christian emblem of sovereignty; the ring and cross, of a bishop; the cap looks like a crown, and, only that the ring is too old, it might be considered the ciulid or barred crown of a sovereign prince. It certainly is of considerable antiquity, and Mr. Lindsay is not far out in his estimation.'

Decade signet-ring.

Decade-ring.

In the Londesborough Collection is a 'religious' ring, apparently a work of the fourteenth century. It has a heart in the centre, from which springs a double flower. On the upper edge of the ring are five protuberances in each side: they were used to mark a certain number of prayers said by the wearer, who turned his ring as he said them, and so completed the series in the darkness of the night. [Pg 252]



Decade rings.

It has been stated by French antiquaries that metal rings formed with ten bosses, and one of as early date as the reign of St. Louis, have been found in France. It was at that period that the use of the *chapelet* in honour of the Blessed Virgin is supposed to have been devised by Peter the Hermit.

A decade silver ring found at Exton, in Rutlandshire, in the possession of Mrs. Baker, of Stamford, has also a central projection engraved with a cross.

In Mr. Hoare's collection is a silver decade-ring found in 1848 in Surrey. The hoop has ten projections resembling the cogs of a wheel, and on the circular facet is the monogram I.H.S. surmounted by a cross, with a heart pierced by three nails.

In the Londesborough Collection is a ring of Delhi workmanship which has been referred to as a decade. The face is convex, circular, and of turquoise, engraved and inlaid with Oriental characters in gold, surrounded by ten cup-shaped bosses of rubies. The sides of the bosses are enamelled green, and the backs red and white like leaflets. The back of the face is richly enamelled with flowers having red blossoms and green leaves, among which, upon the shank, are intermingled some pale-blue blossoms, and within the centre, where the shank is attached to the back of the face, are small golden stars upon an enamelled ground, and on each side leaves of green enamel. The inscription reads 'Jan (John) Kaptani.' [Pg 253]

Ring of Delhi work.

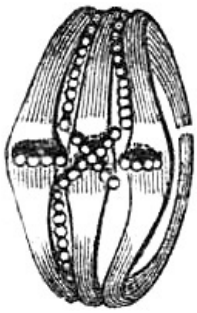
Mr. Edmund Waterton, at a meeting of the Archæological Institute (December, 1862), gave the following notice of some rings of a peculiar class, of which he sent several specimens for

inspection: ‘On a former occasion I exhibited, at one of the meetings, some of the so-called—and wrongly—rosary-rings, one of which had seven, the other eleven, and the third, thirteen knobs or bosses. I stated my opinion that we ought to consider these examples as belonging to a form of ring prevalent about the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and described in wills and inventories as rings with “knoppes or bulionys.” I had never met with a proper rosary, or, more properly, decade, ring of a date anterior to the sixteenth century. But a remarkable specimen has lately been added to my collection which I send for exhibition. It is of ivory; there are ten knobs or bosses for the *Aves*, and an eleventh of larger size and different form, for the *Pater*. There are holes around the hoop, probably merely for ornament. I am inclined to ascribe it to the fourteenth century, and think it not unlikely it is of Irish origin. I am induced to form this opinion from the peculiar fashion of the eleventh boss, which presents a type found in rings discovered only in Ireland. This ring was found many years ago in an old tomb in Merston churchyard, in Holderness. I also send another decade-ring, of silver, and of a later date and type. This ring was formerly in the possession [Pg 254] of the Reverend Mother Anne More, Lady Abbess of the English Augustinian Nuns at Bruges, and sister of Father More, of the Society of Jesus, the last male descendant of Sir Thomas More. He gave the More relics to Stonyhurst College.’

Trinity ring.

Among other examples of ‘religious’ rings, I may mention a beautiful one of gold, of fifteenth-century work, found at Orford Castle in Suffolk, and the property of the Rev. S. Blois Turner. On the facet is engraved a representation of the Trinity, the Supreme Being supporting a crucifix; on the flanges are St. Anne instructing the Virgin Mary, and the *Mater Dolorosa*. These designs were probably enamelled.

A representation is here given of a gold triple ring, brought from Rome, and, possibly, emblematic of the Trinity. It is an Early Christian ring, dating, probably, from the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century.



Religious rings.

At the meeting of the Archæological Institute in March 1850 an exquisite gold ‘religious’ ring of the fifteenth century was exhibited, found within the precincts of Lewes Priory. It is [Pg 255] delicately chased with the following subjects: on the facet, the Virgin and child; on one side, the Emperor Domitian; on the other, St. Pancras; on the flanges are represented the Holy Trinity, and St. John with the Holy Lamb. The work was originally enriched with transparent enamel.

Religious ring.

In the Londesborough Collection is a gold ‘religious’ ring, enamelled with a diamond in the

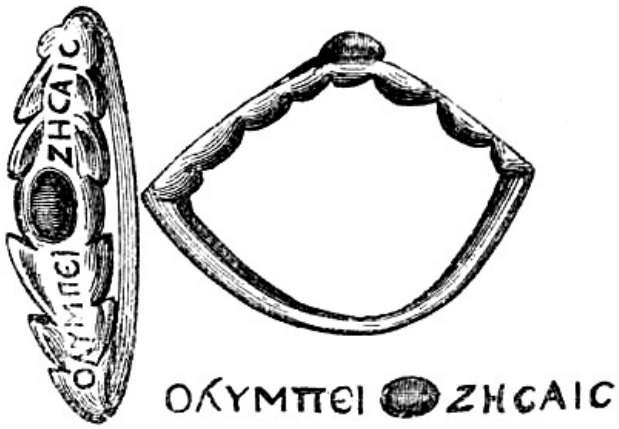
centre, and six rubies, arranged like a sacred cross, around it. The scrolls are enriched with white, blue, and green enamel.

At Barnard Castle, in 1811, a gold ring was found of eight globules, in weight equal to three guineas and a half. On the second is S; on the fourth, US; on the sixth, JH; on the eighth, S, the abbreviation of Sanctus Jesus; on the first, is the Saviour on the cross in the arms of God; on the third, the Saviour triumphing over death; on the fifth, the Saviour scourged; on the seventh, Judas, the traitor.

The accompanying illustration represents a ‘religious’ ring, found in the eighteenth century near Loughborough, and described in the ‘Gentleman’s Magazine’ for 1802. The figures are those of the Virgin Mary, Child, and St. Michael.

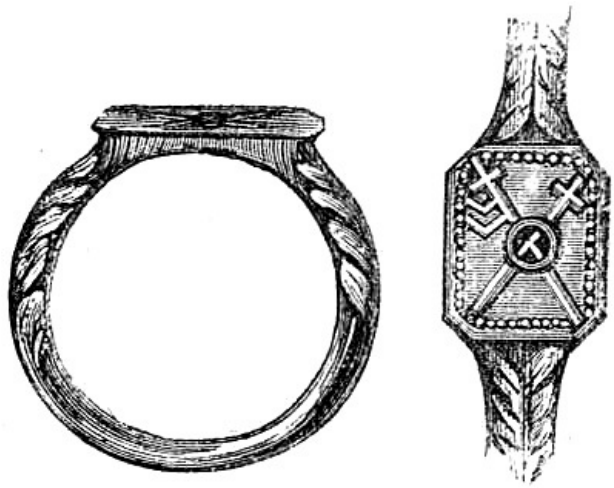
Religious ring.

A ring of a curious form is described in the ‘Gentleman’s Magazine’ for 1811, as having been found in the parish of Stonham-Aspal, Suffolk. The gold seemed pure, but the workmanship was rude, and the gem which it enclosed was supposed to be a virgin sapphire. [Pg 256]



Religious ring.

The following represents a large and curious ring found about 1750 at the hermitage on the River Itchen, at Southampton, which is noticed in Sir Henry Englefield’s ‘Walk Round Southampton,’ and is mentioned in the ‘Gentleman’s Magazine’ for 1802. The bezel is little broader than the hoop.

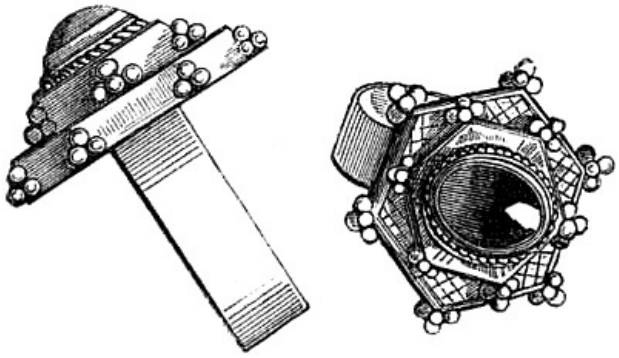


Religious ring.

In the collection of Mr. Octavius Morgan, F.R.S., F.S.A., is a Jewish ring enamelled with figures in relief, representing the Creation, the Temptation, and the Fall of Adam and Eve; date, sixteenth century. [Pg 257]

‘Paradise’ rings.

In the cathedral library at Chichester is an ancient gem having the Gnostic equivalent of the blessed name Jehovah. This was used by Seffrid, Bishop of Chichester (died 1159), as his episcopal signet.



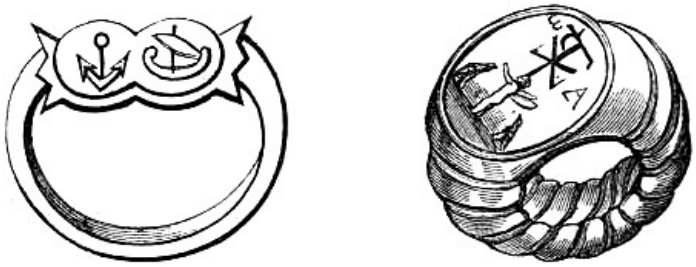
Reliquary ring.

In the Gérente Collection is a reliquary ring of silver-gilt elaborately ornamented. [Pg 258]

The Bessborough Collection has a ring with a frog or toad cut in a magnificent almandine, of Roman work—a favourite device in the later Imperial times, the animal typifying a new birth by its total changes of form and habits, and hence adopted into the list of Christian symbols.

The Rev. C. W. King notices in his ‘Antique Gems,’ among some ‘highly curious and undoubted Christian subjects engraved on gems, one of the most interesting—a red jasper set in an elegant antique gold ring, the shank formed of a corded pattern, in wire, of a novel and beautiful design. The stone bears, in neatly-formed letters: IHCOYC-ΦEOY-YIOC-THPE, “Jesus, Son of God, keep us.” Another, of equal interest and of the earliest period of our religion, a fish cut on a fine emerald (quarter of an inch square), is set in an exquisitely-moulded six-sided ring, with fluted and knotted shank, imitating a bent reed, very similar to a bronze one figured in Caylus.’

The first of the annexed illustrations represents an early Christian ring with the symbol of an anchor.



Early Christian rings.

The other engraving is from Gorlæus, of an early Christian ring with the sacred emblems, found in the Catacombs at Rome.

The following illustration represents a key-ring, with sacred monogram. [Pg 259]

Early Christian.

In the Waterton ‘Dactyliotheca’ is an early Christian ring having ‘the Holy Church represented by a pillar, on which are figured twelve dots, which denote the twelve apostles. Three steps, thrice repeated, lead to the pillar, symbolising the *lavacrum regenerationis*, which was formerly received by three immersions, and three interrogations, and three replies given by those who were being baptised.’

In the treasuries of various continental churches are ‘religious’ rings, to which a high value is attached. In the church of St. Ursula, at Cologne, is one called the ring of that saint, and is, certainly, of very early date.

Mr. J. W. Singer informs me that he has seen in the treasury of the cathedral of Liége, a large shrine, far above the size of life, in silver-gilt, the bust of St. Lambert, the patron of the cathedral. One hand has a crosier, and the other holds a book. On the right hand are six rings, and on the left are three, of the seventeenth and eighteenth century style; the shrine being late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. The rings are on very different parts of the fingers, some being on the first joint.

These rings may have been votive offerings; one is a ruby ring having a stone weighing ten carats.

In a catalogue (kindly lent to me by Mr. Singer), ‘Des Bijoux de la Très Sainte Vierge del Pilar de Saragosse’ of offerings by the pious to the sacred treasury for many centuries, and which were sold in 1870 to defray the expenses of repairs and embellishments to the Holy Chapel, numerous costly rings are included among other precious objects. [Pg 260]

With a few instances of ‘religious’ rings, including pilgrims’ rings, &c., now in the possession of several eminent collectors, and exhibited at various meetings of the Archæological Society, I must conclude the present chapter.

In the curious catalogue of Dr. Bargrave’s Museum (Camden Society) is mentioned ‘a small gold Salerno ring, written on the outside—not like a posey, in the inside, but on the out —*Bene scripsisti de Me, Thoma*. The story of it is, that Thomas Aquinas, being at Salerno, and in earnest in a church before a certain image there of the Blessed Virgin Mary, his devotion carried him so far as to ask her whether she liked all that he had writ of her, as being free from original sin, the Queen of Heaven, &c., and entreated her to give him some token of her acceptance of his endeavours in the writing of so much in her behalf; upon which the image opened its lipps and said, *Bene scripsisti de Me, Thoma*.

Religious seal-ring.

‘Salerno layeth a little beyond Naples on the Mediterranean Sea; and the goldsmiths of that place, for their profit, make thousands of these rings, and then have them touch that image which spake. And no merchant or stranger that cometh thither but buyeth of these rings for presents and tokens.’

A seal-ring, considered to belong to the fifteenth century, was discovered at Cuddesden in 1814, by some workmen, in front of the gate of the episcopal palace. It is of brass; the impress is an oblong octagon; the device is the word *pax*, with a crown above, and a heart [Pg 261]

and palm-branches below.

In the collection of the Hon. Richard Neville is a ring of silver-gilt (time, Henry VII.), with bevelled facets, engraved with figures of saints, found at the Borough Field, Chesterford; also a latten ring found in the Thames (1846), the impress being the Virgin and Child; and the ring of latten—**ihc**—discovered in repairing Weston Church, Suffolk; within is inscribed, **in deo salus**.

A gold ring in the possession of Mrs. Baker, of Stamford, stated to have been found in the tomb of an ecclesiastic, in a stone coffin, near Winchester, bears a representation of St. Christopher.

A ring found at Loughborough, in 1802, represents the Virgin and St. Michael, with motto.

Religious ring.

A silver ring found at Carlisle, in 1788, bears an inscription below, which has been suggested for 'Mary, Jesus.' The bezel of this ring is a rude representation of joined hands, surmounted by a crown, and a portion of the hoop is decorated with lozenge-shaped spaces, filled with a row of quatrefoils. A correspondent to the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for 1788, in allusion to this ring, mentions that the hands joined together exactly resemble one found at Shaf Abbey, with the motto 'iheu.' Or, he suggests, 'it may be a wedding-ring, and to be read, *Marith* (marrieth) *us*.' [Pg 262]

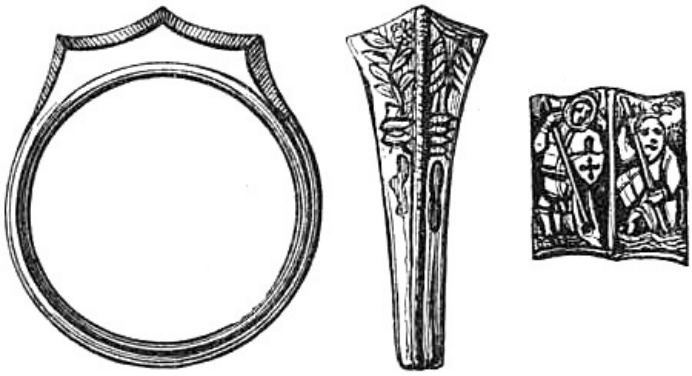
A similar ring, with the hands joined, and inscribed *Jesus Nazarenus*, is represented in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' (vol. liv. p. 734, and vol. lv. p. 333).

Inscription on a supposed religious ring, found at Carlisle.

The annexed engraving represents a ring found, about 1790, in Stretly Park, near Nottingham. The figure is that of St. Edith, and the ring probably belonged to the abbess of some religious house in the neighbourhood.

Religious ring.

The following illustration represents a ring discovered, in 1812, while harrowing near Froxfield, Hants; weight 4 dwt. 7 grs. It is supposed to have been worn by a warrior in the Crusades. The bezel part exhibits on the dexter side a knight with a shield, charged with a cross, thrusting a lance down the throat of a dragon—probably meant for St. George. The figure on the corresponding side varies in having a cross on the right side of his mantle, and appears to be in a boat, or wading through water; and it may be conjectured to be intended for St. Christopher. [Pg 263]



Religious ring.

Representation of a ring with a crowned I over a pillar, supposed to be the initial of our Saviour's name as King of the Jews:

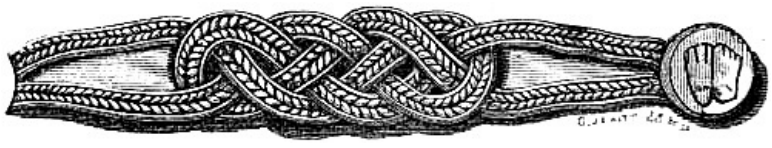
Religious ring.

Mr. Davis, of Hempton, Oxfordshire, possesses a brass ring found there, in the form of a strap and buckle, or of a garter, so contrived as to admit of being contracted or enlarged, to suit the wearer's finger; the end of the strap being formed with little knobs, upon which the buckle catches, and keeps the ring adjusted to the proper size. The hoop is inscribed in relief, MATER DEI MEMENTO.

In the Waterton Collection is an ecclesiastical ring, silver-gilt, with circular bezel set with a cabochon crystal, the shoulders ornamented with cherubs' heads in full relief, supported by brackets; on the reverse of the bezel is engraved the figure of Christ on the Cross; sixteenth century; diameter two and a half inches. [Pg 264]

Ecclesiastical ring.

A singular silver ring, of which a representation is given in the 'Archæological Journal' (vol. iii. p. 78) was exhibited at a meeting of the Institute in 1846 by Mr. Talbot. The interlaced plated work resembles some ornaments of the Saxon period, but is remarkable for having the impress of two feet, which may, probably, be regarded as one of the emblems of the Passion, or as a memorial of the pilgrimage to the Mount of Olives, where the print of the feet of the Saviour which miraculously marked the scene of His Ascension, was visited by the pilgrims with the greatest veneration.



Pilgrim ring.

In the collection of Mr. Octavius Morgan, F.R.S., F.S.A., is a gold ring, probably one of those obtained at Jerusalem, as tokens of pilgrimage to the Holy City. On the head, which is circular, is engraved the Jerusalem Cross, and around the hoop the first words of Numbers vi. 24: 'The Lord bless thee and keep thee,' in Hebrew characters. [Pg 265]

At a meeting of the Archæological Institute (Feb. 1855), Mr. Gough Nichols exhibited

impressions from two signet-rings, also bearing as a device the ‘Jerusalem Cross,’ or cross potent between four crosslets, the insignia of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, worn likewise on the mantles of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre. This device is regarded as emblematic of the five wounds of our Lord. On one of these rings, of gold, purchased at Brighton, the cross appears between two olive-branches, with the word ‘Jerusalem’ in Hebrew characters beneath; on the other the branches alone are introduced. The ring last mentioned, which is of silver, is in the possession of Mr. Thompson, of Leicester. These are supposed to be memorial rings brought as tokens of pilgrimage to the Holy City.

A gold ring of most beautiful workmanship was exhibited at the Lincoln meeting of the Archæological Institute, by the Rev. S. Blois Turner, bearing the device of the bear and *bâton ragulé*, with the motto inscribed above, ‘Soulement une’ (only one). Around the hoop are the words, ‘be goddis fayre foot’. This very singular legend has been supposed to have reference to the miraculous impress of the Saviour’s feet on the Mount of Olives, which was regarded by pilgrims with extreme reverence, and, like the five wounds, was probably used as a symbol of talismanic virtue. This ring, formerly in the possession of George IV., now belongs to General Johnson. Weight 230 grains.

In the Braybrooke Collection is a brass ring strongly gilt, with a long, oval, flat signet, engraved with Hebrew characters, ‘Pray for the peace of Jerusalem,’ from Psalm cxxii., [Pg 266] supposed to be one of the rings given to tourists to the holy city, as a certificate of their visit, and called in the East ‘hadji’ or pilgrims’ rings.

In the same collection is a slight silver ring, with narrow and flat band to hoop, surmounted by a circular signet; on the hoop is this inscription, in relief, between lines raised along each edge, headed and ended by small flowers, ‘M S D MONSERRATA.’ On the signet, also in relief, appears a double-handled stone-mason’s saw (*serra*), the Latin for which furnished the key to this monkish riddle; it reads thus, ‘Mater Sancta de Monserrata,’ or Holy Mother of Monserrat, in Spain, where there was a chapel dedicated to the Virgin, and this is, probably, the ring of a pilgrim to that shrine.

At the meeting of the Archæological Institute at Norwich in 1847 some curious examples of religious rings (of silver) were exhibited, connected, most probably, with charms and superstitions. A ring dating about the period of Henry VI. is engraved with the figure of a female saint, and the symbols of the five wounds. Another, of the same age, found at Fransham, has the hoop swaged or twisted; on the angular facets had been engraved figures of saints. The engraving on another ring was ‘+Maria+Anna+Ih’us.’

Amongst the rich collection of rings lent by Mr. R. H. Soden Smith to the Loan Exhibition of Ancient and Modern Jewellery at the South Kensington Museum in 1872, were six rings, gold and silver, of the iconographic type, having for the most part figures of saints engraved on the bezel, one inscribed within, in Gothic letters, ‘yspartir+canc+dec+’ (*partir sans désir*).

In the ‘Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall’ (Sept. 1875) is a note on an ancient signet-ring found at Penryn by Mr. W. H. Tregelles: ‘This ring was found a few years since in [Pg 267] a field near Budock church, by a watchmaker of the neighbourhood, of whom I bought it for Mr. Octavius Morgan, F.S.A., late M.P. for Monmouthshire. It has been the subject of much interesting discussion, the result of which, with a description of the ring, and three impressions in hard wax, I have deposited in the Museum of the Royal Institution of Cornwall, at Truro.

‘It is an oriental ring of silver, set with an oblong sard, engraved; it appears at one time to have been gilt, and the loop and back of the bezel were ornamented with a small pattern in niello, now almost obliterated by long wear.

‘In the middle of the device is a cartouche, or escutcheon, terminating at the top in a Greek cross potent. In the lower part of the escutcheon is engraved a paschal lamb, and in the upper part are some oriental characters, which have not been deciphered with certainty. On either side of the escutcheon is some ornamental scroll-work, having in the middle the Jerusalem cross potent.

‘It was submitted to Mr. Albert Way and Mr. C. W. King; and the latter gentleman, who took much pains to make out the inscription, considered that the characters were Servian, and that they represent the name of some ecclesiastic of the Greek Church to whom it once belonged.

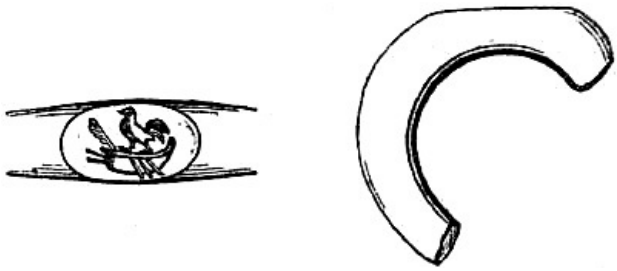
‘It was evidently an ecclesiastical ring, and M. Castellane stated that he has seen several Armenian priests at Rome wearing similar rings. It may, perhaps, date from the early part of the last century.

‘The most probable conjecture as to the reason of such an object being found in Cornwall is that it may have been brought over by some traveller, and, having been lost by him or the [Pg 268] person to whom he gave it, was mislaid among rubbish, and carted out with manure.’

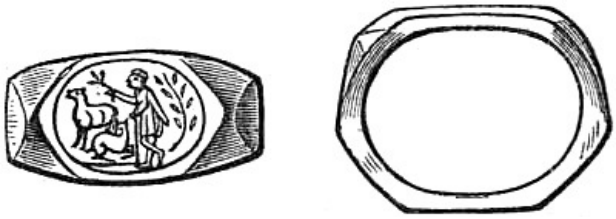
In the first chapter of this work I have alluded to rings of the early Christians, a subject of

great interest, to which I again refer in these notices of ‘religious’ rings, with additional illustrations from the ‘Archæological Journal.’

The following cut represents a portion of a ring of dark-green jasper, from Rome, dating, probably, from the second or third century. On the oval bezel a symbol is engraved in intaglio, viz. a boat, on which is a cock, carrying a branch of palm.



A bronze ring, probably Christian, of the third or fourth century, of an oval octagonal form, set with red jasper, engraved in intaglio with the subject of a shepherd. From Rome.



The ring here represented is of bronze, engraved with a ship, the emblem of the Church, between the letters *chi* and *rho*. This ring was obtained at Rome.

The accompanying illustrations are of small gold rings, in workmanship and form dating from the third or fourth century. [Pg 269]

Annexed (probable date about 440) is a signet-ring, the subject incised upon the gold apparently a matrimonial or love-ring.

To the same period may be ascribed a bronze ring, of coarse workmanship, taken from the Roman catacombs. A circular hoop is surmounted by a flat circular bezel, on which is engraved an ear of corn between two fishes, emblem of the bread of life, and those who live in faith of it.

Another bronze ring is engraved with the sacred symbol, the united *chi* and *rho* between the *alpha* and *omega* above, and two sheep below. Probable date, the middle of the fourth century. Found at Rome.

To the same class of rings belongs the last of the above engravings. It is of bronze, having a simple convex hoop; the device, a draped male figure with nimbus, and standing before a cross appearing to spring from a bunch of grapes. It was brought from Athens, and is probably Byzantine, of the sixth or seventh century. [Pg 270]

The following engraving represents a ring of duplex form, of solid gold, weighing 5½ dwts. It has engraved

D
FILINAN
A

and

Vivas
in Deo*.

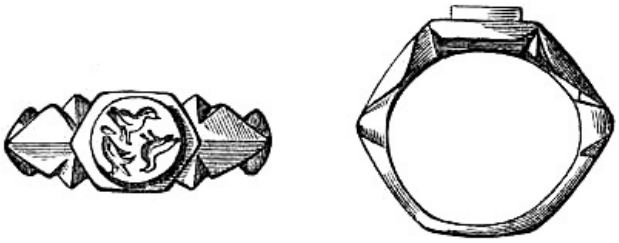
The ring probably dates from the latter part of the third, or beginning of the fourth, century. It was discovered in the neighbourhood of Masignano, a small township of Fermo.

Early Christian rings of silver are unusual; that now represented is of duplex form. On one oval is engraved the name FAVSTVS, and on the other is a palm-branch. The date is, probably, of the latter half of the fourth century.

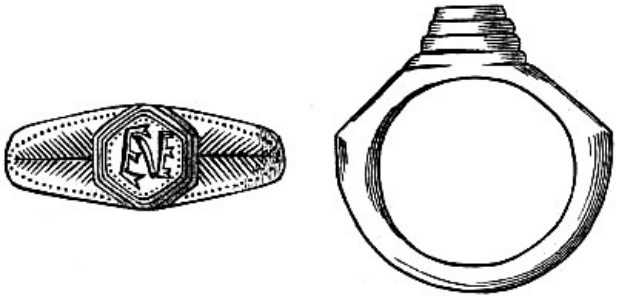
A bronze ring, intended for a signet. On the bezel is a monogram deeply cut in reverse, which has been rendered by Rossi, *Deus dona vivas in Deo*. From Rome, and of the fourth century.

A bronze ring with circular hoop, the bezel engraved with the sacred monogram. This ring is said to have been found in the neighbourhood of the house of Pudens.

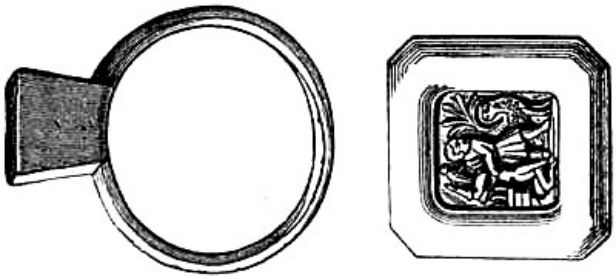
A bronze ring of coarse workmanship and angular form. The device, two doves and a fish. [Pg 271]



The shoulders of the following bronze ring are engraved as palm branches. The bezel is raised by four steps or tables, and engraved with a monogram. From Rome.



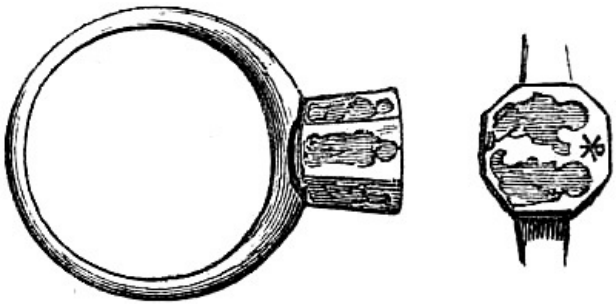
A bronze ring with high, projecting bezel. On the square face the subject of Abraham’s sacrifice is deeply engraved. The execution may be attributed, perhaps, to the latter end of the third century, but, more probably, to the fourth. Brought from Viterbo.



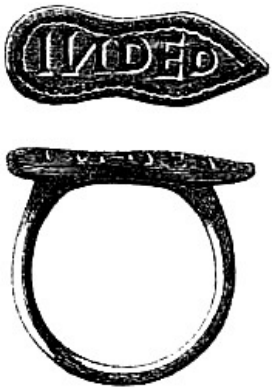
Bronze ring, formed as a circle of half-round metal, engraved with a double-fluked anchor, crossed by one of a single fluke, and surrounded by a pearl border. From the catacombs at Rome. [Pg 272]

Bronze ring, with plain rounded hoop. Device, a draped female standing between two birds. On either side is the Christian monogram. Found, it is believed, in the catacombs of St. Calixtus; date, fourth century of our era.

An iron ring of octagonal form, the bezel engraved with two human figures and the sacred monogram. A human figure is represented on each face of the octagon. This is a remarkable ring of its class.



Bronze ring, with bezel shaped as the sole of a shoe, and incised with the legend IN DEO, in the collection of C. D. E. Fortnum, Esq., F.S.A.:



In Montfaucon's 'L'Antiquité Expliquée' are several illustrations of Roman rings with the bezels representing a human foot. One seems to have been a Christian seal, the inscription on which, DEDONAO, is there, perhaps, put for DEI DONA. Montfaucon mentions one in his own cabinet, inscribed, between two crosses, DEI DONA. [Pg 273]

A bronze stamp, formed as the sole of a shoe, is preserved in the Christian Museum of the Vatican. Inscription reversed, SPES IN DEO.

A child's ring of gold. A simple hoop, flattened out on the bezel, which is engraved with the palm-branch. This ring was found in a child's tomb in the neighbourhood of Rome.

Bronze ring, the bezel engraved with the sacred monogram, round which is placed the inscription, COSME VIVAS. This was discovered in one of the catacombs on the Via Appia.

A small iron ring, on which is engraved the lion of St. Mark, dating, probably, from the sixth century. Found in a Coptic grave near the temple of 'Medinet Aboo,' at Thebes.

Mr. Hodder M. Westropp, in his 'Handbook of Archæology,' remarks that Christian inscriptions 'are all funeral, and are, for the most part, found in the Catacombs, or subterranean cemeteries of the early Christians in Rome. They are characterised by symbols and formulæ, peculiar to the Christian creed; the idea of another life—a life beyond the grave—usually prevails in them. The symbols found in connection with the funeral inscriptions are of three kinds; the larger proportion of these refer to the profession of [Pg 274]

Christianity, its doctrines and its graces. A second class, of a partly secular description, only indicate the trades of the deceased, and the remainder represent proper names; thus a lion must be named as a proper name, *Leo*; *Onager*, an ass; a dragon, *Dracontius*. Of the first kind the most usually met with is the monogram of Christ. The other symbols generally in use are the ship, the emblem of the church; the fish, the emblem of Christ; the palm, the symbol of martyrdom; the anchor, representing hope in immortality; the dove, peace; the stag, reminding the faithful of the pious aspiration of the Psalmist; the horse was the emblem of strength in the faith; the hunted hare, of persecution; the peacock and the phœnix stood for signs of the resurrection; Christ, as the good pastor, and the A-Ω of the Apocalypse, was also introduced in the epitaphs. Even personages of the pagan mythology were introduced, which the Christians employed in a concealed sense, as Orpheus, enchanting the wild beasts with the music of his lyre was the secret symbol of Christ, as the civilizer of men, leading all nations to the faith. Ulysses, fastened to the mast of his ship, was supposed to present some faint resemblance to the Crucifixion.’

CHAPTER V.

[Pg 275]

BETROTHAL AND WEDDING RINGS.

It would be difficult to find a subject more interesting in all its associations than a wedding-ring. From the most remote times it has had a mystical signification, appealing to our most cherished feelings, hopes and wishes. The circular form of the ring was accepted in days by-gone, as a symbol of eternity, thus indicative of the stability of affection. We find some of our noted divines echoing the sentiments of old enthusiasts on the figurative virtues of a ring. Thus Dean Comber and Wheatley express themselves: ‘The matter of which this ring is made is gold, signifying how noble and durable our affection is; the form is round, to imply that our respect (or regards) shall never have an end; the place of it is on the fourth finger of the left hand, where the ancients thought there was a vein that came directly from the heart, and where it may be always in view; and, being a finger least used, where it may be least subject to be worn out; but the main end is to be a visible and lasting token of the covenant which must never be forgotten.’

Jeremy Taylor, in his sermon on a ‘Wedding-ring for the Finger,’ conveys, in quaint and forcible language, the duties and responsibilities of married life.[55]

[Pg 276]

In an old Latin work, ascribing the invention of the ring to Tubal Cain, we find: ‘The form of the ring being circular, that is, round, and without end, importeth thus much, that mutual love and hearty affection should roundly flow from one to the other, as in a circle, and that continually and for ever.’

Herrick has versified this conceit:—

Julia, I bring
To thee this ring,
Made for thy finger fit;
To show by this
That our love is,
Or should be, like to it.

Close though it be,
The joint is free;
So, when love’s yoke is on,
It must not gall,
Nor fret at all
With hard oppression.

But it must play
Still either way,
And be, too, such a yoke
As not, too wide,
To overslide,
Or be so straight to choke.

So we who bear
This beam, must rear
Ourselves to such a height
As that the stay
Of either may
Create the burthen light.

And as this round
Is nowhere found
To flaw, or else to sever,
So let our love
As endless prove,
And pure as gold for ever.

The same idea is conveyed in some lines by Woodward (1730) ‘to Phoebe, presenting her with a ring:’— [Pg 277]

Accept, fair maid, *this earnest of my love*,
Be this the type, let this my passion prove;
Thus may our joy in endless circles run,
Fresh as the light, and restless as the sun;
Thus may our lives *be one perpetual round*,
Nor care nor sorrow ever shall be found.

In modern poetry we have many sweet and tender allusions to the wedding-ring. Thus Byron writes:—

In that one act may every grace
And every blessing have their place,
And give to future hours of bliss
The charm of life derived from this:
And when e’en love no more supplies,
When weary nature sinks to rest,
May brighter, steadier light arise
And make the parting moment blest!

In a collection of poems printed in Dublin (1801) we find some touching lines to ‘S. D., with a ring:’—

Emblem of happiness, not bought nor sold,
Accept this modest ring of virgin gold.
Love in the small but perfect circle trace,
And duty in its soft yet strict embrace.
Plain, precious, pure, as best becomes the wife;
Yet firm to bear the frequent rubs of life.
Connubial love disdains a fragile toy,
Which rust can tarnish, or a touch destroy,
Nor much admires what courts the gen’ral gaze,
The dazzling diamond’s meretricious blaze,
That hides with glare the anguish of a heart,
By nature hard, tho’ polish’d bright by art.
More to thy taste the ornament that shows
Domestic bliss, and, without glaring, glows;
Whose gentle pressure serves to keep the mind
To all correct, to one discreetly kind;
Of simple elegance th’ unconscious charm, [Pg 278]
The only amulet to keep from harm,
To guard at once and consecrate the shrine;
Take this dear pledge—it makes and keeps thee mine.

The most painful ordeal for ‘Patient’ Grisild (in Chaucer’s ‘Clerk’s Tale’) is the surrender of what she most valued to her imperious lord, the Marquis, the wedding-ring with which she had espoused him. This, in her sore affliction, she returns to him:—

Here again your clothing I restore,
And eke your wedding-ring for evermore.

The celebrated Sanscrit drama, which Kalidasa wrote upon the beautiful Sakuntala, turns upon Dushyanta’s recognition of his wife by means of a ring which he had given to her.

The tender and affectionate faith derived from the wedding-ring is illustrated in the legend of Guy, Earl of Warwick. The doughty knight, when in a moment of temptation he is about to marry the beautiful Loret, daughter of the Emperor Ernis, is recalled to his duty at the sight of the wedding-ring, and remembers his fair Félice, who is far distant, pining at his absence:—

The wedding-ring was forth brought;
Guy, then, on fair Félice thought,
He had her nigh forgotten clean.
‘Alas,’ he said, ‘Félice, the sheen!’
And thought in his heart anon—
‘’Gainst thee now have I misdone!’
Guy said, ‘penance I crave,
None other maid my love shall have.’

We see also the tenderness that a wedding-ring can inspire in the instance of Louis IX. of

France, who in his youth was married to Marguerite of Provence, the victim of a cruel jealousy on the part of Blanche of Castile, the King's mother. The young Prince, who loved his wife dearly, constantly wore a ring ornamented with a garland of lilies and daisies, in allusion to his spouse and himself. A magnificent sapphire bore the image of a crucifix, and the inscription 'hors cet annel pourrions nous trouver amour.' [Pg 279]

In the German ballad of 'The Noble Moringer,' translated by Sir Walter Scott, the hero, after some years' absence on a pilgrimage, returns disguised as a palmer to his castle, on the eve of his wife's nuptials with another knight. The lady

> ———Bade her gallant cup-bearer a golden beaker take,
> And bear it to the palmer poor to quaff it for her sake.
>
> It was the noble Moringer, that dropp'd amid the wine
> A bridal-ring of burning gold, so costly and so fine.
> Now listen, gentles, to my song, it tells you but the sooth,
> 'Twas with that very ring of gold he pledged his bridal troth.
>
> Then to the cup-bearer he said, 'Do me one kindly deed,
> And, should my better days return, full rich shall be thy meed.
> Bear back the golden cup again to yonder bride so gay,
> And crave her of her courtesy to pledge the palmer grey.'
>
> The cup-bearer was courtly bred, nor was the boon denied,
> The golden cup he took again, and bore it to the bride.
> 'Lady,' he said, 'your reverend guest sends this and bids me pray
> That, in thy noble courtesy, thou pledge the palmer grey.'
>
> The ring hath caught the lady's eye, she views it close and near,
> Then might you hear her shriek aloud, 'The Moringer is here!'
> Then might you see her start from seat, while tears in torrents fell,
> But whether 'twas for joy or woe, the ladies best can tell.

The veneration for a wedding-ring is shown in the instance of the great lexicographer, Dr. Samuel Johnson. He writes, under date March 28, 1753: 'I kept this day as the anniversary of my Letty's death, with prayers and tears in the morning. In the evening I prayed for her conditionally, if it was lawful.' Her wedding-ring was preserved by him, as long as he lived, with an affectionate care, in a little round wooden box, and in the inside of which was a slip of paper inscribed: 'Eheu! Eliz. Johnson, nupta Jul. 9, 1736; mortua, eheu! Mart. 17, 1752.' [Pg 280]

According to the 'London Press,' Mr. John Lomax, bookseller, of Lichfield, who died lately at the age of eighty-nine, possessed, among many other Johnsonian relics, this wedding-ring of Mrs. Johnson.

The poet Moore, in his 'Diary,' mentions the gift of his mother, of her wedding-ring. He writes: 'Have been preparing my dear mother for my leaving her, now that I see her so much better. She is quite reconciled to my going, and said this morning: "Now, my dear Tom, don't let yourself be again alarmed about me in this manner, nor hurried away from your house and business." She then said she must, before I left her this morning, give me her wedding-ring as her last gift; and accordingly, sending for the little trinket-box in which she kept it, she herself put the ring on my finger.'

The value, even to death, attached to wedding-rings has been frequently shown. In a testamentary document made at Edinburgh Castle by Mary, Queen of Scots, before the birth of her son James, and when under the impression that she would die in childbed, among numerous bequests, she enumerates her rings, of which she had a large number. Among them was a diamond ring, enamelled red, recorded by the Queen herself as that with which 'she was espoused.' On the other side is written 'For the King who gave it me.' This is presumed to be the ring with which Darnley wedded Mary in the privacy of Rizzio's chamber at Stirling, for at the public solemnity of their nuptials in the Chapel Royal of Holyrood three rings of surpassing richness were used. [Pg 281]

The ring with which James, Duke of York (afterwards King James the Second), married Mary of Modena, had a small ruby set in gold. The Queen showed it to the nuns of Chaillot, with whom she resided chiefly in the days of her sorrowful widowhood, exile, and poverty. Although obliged to part with most of her jewels, she would never give up this ring, which she valued above everything. Even William of Orange, remarkable for his stern and taciturn disposition, felt sensibly the tender feelings which a marriage-ring can nourish after the death of a beloved object. On his decease a ribbon was found tied to his left arm, with a gold ring appended to it, containing some hair of the Queen. The Londesborough Collection contained a royal ring, which is supposed to have been the same given by the Prince of Orange to the Princess Mary. It is of gold, the strap and buckle set with diamonds, and is enamelled black. Engraved in letters in relief is the motto of the Order of the Garter. The following words are engraved within: 'I'll win and wear thee if I can.' 'This posy' (as the late Crofton Croker observed) 'has a double construction; whether addressed to the princess before marriage or after is doubtful, with reference to William's design to contest the crown of England with her father.'

Baron Rosen was sent a captive to Siberia, in consequence of political tumults which occurred on the accession of the Emperor Nicholas to the throne of Russia. On his arrival he was searched, and some family trinkets taken from him. He was then required to give up a gold ring which he wore on his finger. He replied: 'It is my wedding-ring, and you can only [Pg 282] have it by taking the finger also.' Fortunately the ring was spared.

However, like everything, humanly speaking, the wedding-ring has had its vicissitudes, and, from being the emblem of all that is pure and holy in life, has been desecrated to the vilest and most impious of usages. Nothing can be more humiliating to good faith and rectitude than to read the accounts of what took place not many years ago concerning the 'Fleet Marriages.' In Burns' 'Registers' of these mock celebrations we read sad cases of this abominable system, which prevailed in the last century, of clandestine marriages. A case is there mentioned of a young lady who had been inveigled into the trap of a marrying parson (?), and, finding herself unable to escape without money or a pledge, told her persecutors, who wanted to force a marriage upon her, that she liked the gentleman who desired to marry her so well that she would meet him on the next night. She gave them a ring as a pledge, which she said was her mother's ring, who enjoined her that if she should marry it was to be her wedding-ring. By this contrivance 'she got rid of the black doctor and his tawny crew.'

Great was the disgust of the respectable portion of the community for these disgraceful alliances. It is recorded in the 'Daily Post' for 1742, of a gentleman possessed of a considerable fortune, that he bequeathed it in the hands of trustees for his wife, with the proviso that if she married an Irishman they were to pay her ten guineas for a 'Fleet' marriage, a dinner, and ring; the remainder, about eight thousand pounds, to devolve on his nephew. On a trial for bigamy in 1731, Samuel Pickering deposed: 'The prisoner was [Pg 283] married at my house in the "Fleet." I gave her away, and saw the ring put upon her hand, and broke the biscuit over her head.'

On the suppression of the Fleet marriages in the middle of the last century commenced the scandalous Gretna Green marriages—the name derived from that of a farmstead in the vicinity of the village of Springfield, in the parish of Graitney, Dumfriesshire. The official who performed these irregular marriages was of different vocations—sometimes a blacksmith. In the report of a late Court of Probate case at Westminster, an agriculturist, Thomas Blythe, admitted that he did a small stroke of business in the 'joining' line as well; and in reply to counsel's question 'how the marriage ceremony was performed' he replied: 'I first asked them if they were single persons. They said they were. I then asked the man, "Do you take this woman for your wife?" He said, "Yes." I then asked the woman, "Do you take this man for your lawful husband?" She said, "Yes." I then said, "Put on the ring," and added, "the thing is done, the marriage is complete."'

A ring sent as a love-pledge, or token, was in frequent use in former times. Philip de Comines relates in his 'Memoirs' that, a marriage between the Princess of Burgundy and the Duke of Austria (1477) being determined upon, a letter was written by the young lady at her father's command signifying her consent to the alliance, and a diamond ring of considerable value was sent as a pledge or token of it. At the time arranged for the ceremony the Princess was at Ghent, and, in the presence of ambassadors sent on that occasion, she was asked whether she designed to make good her promise. The Princess at once replied 'that she had written the letter and sent the ring in obedience to her father's command, and freely owned [Pg 284] the contents of it.'

The engagement by a ring is also historically exemplified in late times by the notorious intimacy of George the Fourth, when Prince Regent, with Mrs. Fitzherbert. In order to overcome her scruples to a private marriage (the Royal Marriage Act having been a bar), the Prince caused himself one day to be bled, and put on an appearance of having attempted his own life, and sent some friends to bring her to him. She was then induced to allow him to engage her with a ring in the presence of witnesses, but she afterwards broke the engagement, went abroad, and for a long time resisted all the efforts made to induce her to return. It is singular that one of the chief instruments in bringing about the union of this ill-assorted pair was the notorious Philippe Egalité, Duke of Orleans.

In old times rings made of rushes were used for immoral purposes, not only in England, but in France. Douce refers Shakspeare's 'Tib's rush for Tom's forefinger' to this custom ('All's Well that Ends Well,' act ii. sc. 2). In D'Avenant's 'Rivals' we find:—

> I'll crown thee with a garland of straw, then,
> And I'll marry thee with a rush ring.

The 'crack'd' ring (alluded to in Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Captain') applied metaphorically to female frailty:—

> Come to be married to my lady's woman,
> After she's crack'd in the ring.

The abuse of the rush ring led to the practice being strictly prohibited by the constitutions of Richard Poore, Bishop of Salisbury, in 1217; but it had a long continuance. Quarles, in 'Shepheard's Oracles' (1646), writes:—

> And while they sport and dance, the love-sick swains [Pg 285]

Compose rush rings and myrtleberry chains.

In Greene's 'Menaphon' we find:—''Twas a good world when such simplicitie was used, saye the olde women of our time, when a ring of a rush would tye as much love together as a gimmon of gold.'

The practice of the rush ring in France prevailed for a considerable period.

Another equivocal pretence for engagement was the ring of St. Martin,[56] so named from the extensive franchises and immunities granted to the inhabitants of the precincts of the Collegiate Church of St. Martin's-le-Grand. In a rare tract, entitled 'The Compter's Commonwealth' (1617), is an allusion to these rings, which shows their import: 'This kindnesse is but like alchimie, or *Saint Martin's rings*, that are faire to the eye and have a rich outside, but if a man should break them asunder and looke into them, they are nothing but brasse and copper.'

In 'Whimsies, or a New Cast of Character' (1631), mention is made of St. Martin's rings and counterfeit bracelets as 'commodities of infinite consequence. They will passe for current at a May-pole, and purchase a favour from their May-Marian.' [Pg 286]

So also in 'Plaine Percevall, the Peace-maker of England': 'I doubt whether all be gold that glistereth, sith St. Martin's rings be but copper within, though they be gilt without, sayes the goldsmith.'

The materials of which wedding-rings have been made are numerous; besides the various metals, we have an instance of a leather ring made on the spur of the moment out of a piece of kid cut from the bride's glove. As a substitute for the usual ring, the church key has been put into requisition. Horace Walpole, in a letter to Mr. (afterwards Sir Robert) Mann, dated July 27, 1752, alludes to the use of a curtain-ring for this purpose: 'The event which has made most noise since my last is the extensive wedding of the youngest of the two Gunnings,' and he then describes an assembly at Lord Chesterfield's, when the Duke of Hamilton made love to Miss Gunning, and two nights after sent for a parson to perform the marriage ceremony. The Doctor refused to act without a licence and a ring. 'The Duke swore he would send for the Archbishop; at last they were married with a ring of the bed-curtain, at half-an-hour past twelve at night, at May Fair Chapel.'

In 'Notes and Queries' (2nd series, vol. x.) we find an editorial note on this subject. A parish clerk recollected an instance of a party that came to the church, and requested to be married with the church key. It was what is called a 'parish wedding,' and the parochial authorities, though willing to pay the church fees, because 'they were glad to get rid of the girl,' had not felt disposed to furnish the wedding-ring. The clerk stated, however, that, feeling some hesitation as to the substitution of the church key in his *own* church, he [Pg 287] stepped into the great house hard by, and there borrowed an old *curtain-ring*, with which the marriage was solemnised.

Sir John Suckling, in his ballad on a 'Wedding,' has this conceit on a ring:—

> Her fingers were so small, the ring
> Would not stay on which they did bring,
> It was too wide a peck:
> And to say truth, for out it must,
> It look'd like the great collar, just
> About our young colt's neck.

Perhaps one of the smallest wedding-rings on record is that which is mentioned in the *fiançailles* of the Princess Mary, daughter of Henry VIII., to the Dauphin of France, son of King Francis I. The *fiancé* was represented on that occasion by Admiral Bonnivet, the French Ambassador. The dauphin was born February 28, 1518, and the event of his birth was made a matter of State policy, for a more intimate alliance with France. On October 5, in the same year, the bridal ceremonies took place at Greenwich with great pomp. King Henry took his station in front of the throne; on one side stood Marie of France, and Queen Katherine; in front of her mother was the Princess Marie, just *two* years old, dressed in cloth of gold, with a cap of black velvet on her head, blazing with jewels. On the other side stood the two legates, Wolsey and Campeggio. After a speech by Dr. Tunstal, the Princess was taken in arms; the consent of the King and Queen was demanded, and Wolsey approached with a diminutive ring of gold, fitted to the young lady's finger, in which was a valuable diamond. Admiral Bonnivet, as proxy for the baby bridegroom, passed it over the second [Pg 288] joint. The bride was blessed, and mass performed by Wolsey, the King and the whole Court attending it.

The blessing of the wedding-ring is of ancient origin. The form prescribed for the 'halowing' is given in 'The Doctrine of the Masse Booke from Wottonberge, by Nicholas Dorcaster,' 1554: 'Thou Maker and Conserver of mankinde, Gever of Spiritual Grace, and Grauntor of Eternal Salvation, Lord, *send thy + blessing upon this ring*, that she which shall weare it maye be armed wyth the virtue of heavenly defence, and that it may profit her to eternal salvation, thorowe Christ,' etc. A prayer followed this: '+ halow Thou, Lord, this ring which we blesse in Thy holye Name, that what woman soever shall weare it, may stand fast in Thy peace, and continue in Thy wyll, and live, and grow, and wax old in Thy love, and be multiplied into the length of daies, thorow our Lord,' etc.

Rings were formerly placed on the missal book, with money at marriages; thus in the 'Wardrobe Book,' roll 18, of Edward the First, there is an entry of 'money given to place upon the missal book, along with the ring with which she was married, 40*s.*'

A similar entry occurs on the marriage of Margaret, fourth daughter of the same monarch, when the King gave sixty shillings to be placed on the missal with the spousal ring.

The 'heathenish origin,' as it was termed, of the wedding-ring, led during the Commonwealth to the abolition of its use during weddings, and is thus referred to in Butler's 'Hudibras:'—

> Others were for abolishing
> That tool of matrimony, a ring,
> With which the unsanctified bridegroom [Pg 289]
> Is marry'd only to a thumb[57]
> (As wise as ringing of a pig,
> That's used to break up ground and dig),
> The bride to nothing but her will
> That nulls the after-marriage still.

This 'heathenish' origin may have been derived from the supposition that the ring was regarded as a kind of phylactery, or charm, and to have been introduced in imitation of the ring worn by bishops.

'Though the Puritans,' remarks Mr. Jeaffreson, in his 'Brides and Bridals,' 'prohibited and preached against the ring, to the injury of goldsmiths, and the wrath of ring-wearing matrons, they did not succeed in abolishing the tool, or even in putting it so much out of fashion as some people imagined. Even Stephen Marshall, the Presbyterian minister of Finchingfield, Essex, when his party was most prosperous, married one of his lightly-trained daughters with the Book of Common Prayer and a ring; and gave this for a reason, that the [Pg 290] statute establishing the Liturgy was not repealed, and he was loth to have his daughter turned back upon him for want of a legal marriage.'

The Rev. George Bull, subsequently Bishop of St. David's, also in these Presbyterian times, who married a Miss Gregory, in defiance of tyrannical enactments used a wedding-ring with the motto: 'Bene parere, parêre, parare det mihi Deus.' (See chapter on 'Posy, Motto, and Inscription Rings.')

The Puritan scruples against the wedding-ring were much criticised at the time:—

> Because the wedding-ring's a fashion old,
> And signifies, by the purity of gold,
> The purity required i' the married pair,
> And by the rotundity the union fair,
> Which ought to be between them endless, for
> No other reason, we that use abhor.
> *A Long-winded Lay-lecture* (published 1674).

> They will not hear of wedding-rings
> For to be us'd in their marriage;
> But say they're superstitious things,
> And do religion much disparage:
> They are but vain, and things profane;
> Wherefore, now, no wit bespeaks them,
> So to be tyed unto the bride,
> But do it as the spirit moves them.
> *A Curtain-lecture* ('Loyal Songs,' vol. i No. 15).

The objections of the Dissenters to the ring in marriage were answered by Dr. Comber, ('Office of Matrimony,' &c., folio edition, part 4,) by Dr. Nicholls upon the Office of Matrimony, and Wheatley in his 'Rational Illustration.'

In the ancient ritual of marriage the ring was placed by the husband on the top of the thumb of the left hand, with the words, 'In the name of the Father;' he then removed it to the [Pg 291] forefinger, saying, 'and of the Son,' then to the middle finger, adding, 'and of the Holy Ghost;' finally he left it on the fourth finger, with the closing word 'Amen.'

The English 'Book of Common Prayer' orders that the ring should be placed on the fourth finger of the woman's left hand. The spousal manuals of York and Salisbury assign this practical reason for the selection of this finger: 'quia in illo digito est quædam vena procedens usque ad cor.'[58] Other reasons than its connection with the heart are assigned by Macrobius. The author of the 'Vulgar Errors' had entirely overthrown the anatomical fiction.

On the subject of ring-fingers, a 'Polyglot Dictionary' by John Minshew (1625) says: 'Vetus versiculus singulis digitis Annulum tribuens, Miles, Mercator, Stultus, Maritus, Amator. Pollici adscribitur Militi, seu Doctori; Mercatorum, a pollice secundum; Stultorum, tertium; Nuptorum vel Studiosorum, quartinum; Amatorum, ultimum.'

Amongst the Hebrews, the finger of God denoted his power, and it was the forefingers of the gods of Greece and Italy which wore the ring, the emblem of divine supremacy.

Why the ring is worn on the left hand is said to signify the subjection of the wife to the husband; the right hand signifies power, independence, authority, the left dependence or subjection.[59] Columbiere remarks: 'Some of the ancients made the ring to denote servitude, alleging that the bridegroom was to give it to his bride, to denote to her that she is to be subject to him, which Pythagoras seemed to confirm when he suggested wearing a straight ring, that is, not to submit to over-rigid servitude.' [Pg 292]

It is very observable that none of the Hereford, York, and Salisbury missals mention the hand, whether right or left, on which the ring is to be put.

In the 'British Apollo' (vol. i. page 127, edit. MDCCXXVI.) a question is asked: 'Why is it that the person to be married is enjoined to put a ring upon the fourth finger of his spouse's left hand?' The answer is: 'There is nothing more in this than that the custom was handed down to the present age, from the practice of our ancestors, who found the left hand more convenient for such ornaments than the right, in that 'tis ever less employed; for the same reason they chose the fourth finger, which is not only less used than either of the rest, but is more capable of preserving a ring from bruises, having this one quality peculiar to itself, that it cannot be extended but in company with some other finger, whereas the rest may be singly stretched to their full length and straightened. Some of the ancients' opinions in the matter, viz. that the ring was so worn because to that finger, and to that only, comes an artery from the heart; but, the politer knowledge of our modern anatomists having clearly demonstrated the absurdity of that notion, we are rather inclined the continuance of the custom owing to the reason above mentioned.'

These explanations, given in the curious and entertaining miscellany, from which I have quoted, are from the writings of Macrobius, to which I have alluded. These appear to settle the contention as to the proper finger for the wedding-ring. [Pg 293]

'Rings in modern times,' remarks Madame de Barrera, 'have been made in some countries Love's telegraph. If a gentleman wants a wife, he wears a ring on the first finger of the left hand; if he be engaged, he wears it on the second finger; if married, on the third; and on the fourth if he never intends to be married. When a lady is not engaged she wears a hoop or diamond on her first finger; if engaged, on her second; if married, on the third; and on the fourth, if she intends to die a maid. As no rules are given for widows, it is presumed that the ornamenting of the right hand, and the little finger of the left, is exclusively their prerogative.'

'This English fashion is, perhaps, too open a proclamation of intentions to suit such as do not choose to own themselves as mortgaged property.'

The Greek Church directs that the ring be put on the right hand, and such may have been the practice in England, since Rastell, in his counter-challenge to Bishop Jewell, notes it as a novelty of the Reformation 'that the man should put the wedding-ring on the fourth finger in the left hand of the woman, and not in the right hand as hath been many hundreds of years continued.'

With the bridal ring, formerly, were delivered the keys of the house. This is of ancient origin, as I have noticed in mentioning the rings of the Romans. We read in Photius that Theosebius says to his wife: 'I formerly gave to thee the ring of union; now of temperance to aid thee in the seemly custody of my house.' He advisedly speaks of that custody, for the lady of the house in Plautus says:—

> Obsignate cellas, referte annulum ad me, [Pg 294]
> Ego huc transes.

Some Roman keys attached to rings, so as to be worn on the fingers, and which are well known to antiquaries, were recently found at Water Newton, in digging for gravel, close to the road from Stamford to Peterborough. These were of brass and bronze, and of the size used by the Roman ladies, who were accustomed to carry their casket-keys in this manner.

Roman Key-rings.

Mr. Waterton suggests that the key-rings found on Roman sites may have been worn by slaves or by the confidential *servi* who had care of the wardrobes, cabinets, &c., of their masters.

Among the old Northmen, the keys of the store-room were occasionally deputed to the wife on the wedding-day, and were carried at her side as a sign of housewifely dignity.

In the Saxon formula of matrimony, the father of the bride said: 'I give thee my daughter to be thy honour and thy wife, to keep thy keys, and to share with thee in thy bed and goods, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.'

Leybard, the famous saint of Tours, in the sixth century, being persuaded in his youth to marry, gave his betrothed a ring, a kiss, and a pair of shoes—the latter being a sign of his great subjection to her and to bind his feet, the ring binding his hands. [Pg 295]

A MS. in the Harleian library, quoted by Strutt, states that 'by the civil law, whatsoever is given *ex sponsalitia largitate*, betwixt them that are promised in marriage, hath a condition (for the most part silent) that it may be had again if marriage ensue not, but if the man should have had a kiss for his money, he should lose one half of that which he gave. Yet with the woman it is otherwise, for, kissing or not kissing, whatsoever she gave, she may ask and have it again.' However, this extends only to gloves, *rings*, bracelets, and such like small wares.

Plain gold wedding-rings which are at present used as a visible pledge of matrimony, seem to have descended to us in the mere course of traditionary practice from the times of the Saxons, without any impulse from written authority or rubric. At the marriage of Queen Mary with Philip of Spain in 1554 the wedding-ring was laid in the Bible to be hallowed. Some discussion had previously taken place in the Council about this ring, which the Queen decided by declaring that she would not have it adorned with gems, 'for she chose to be wedded with a plain hoop of gold, like other maidens.'[60]

Plain gold rings appear to have been given away at weddings in great numbers at this period; thus Anthony Wood writes that 'Killey (in 1589) at Trebona was equally profuse beyond the limits of a sober philosopher, and did give away in gold-wire rings (twisted), at the marriage of one of his maid-servants to the value of four thousand pounds.' [Pg 296]

The Prince Regent, on the celebration of his unhappy marriage with Caroline of Brunswick, presented a number of rings to the members of his family and friends. These gifts, with other accounts, being in the list for settlement by Parliament later, gave rise to the undignified Jeffreys scandal.

At the marriage of Queen Victoria, rings were distributed having the royal likeness in profile in gold; the legend being 'Victoria Regina.' The whole was less than a quarter of an inch in diameter, but with the aid of a powerful magnifying-glass the features were disclosed, beautifully delineated. The Queen was so pleased with this microscopic work of art that she ordered six dozen impressions to be struck and set by the court jewellers, Rundle and Bridges, in gold rings for distribution among distinguished personages.[61]

At the marriage of the Princess Royal of England, in 1858, to the heir of the now German Empire, the wedding-rings used were of Silesian gold, manufactured at Breslau. The maker of these, who has a large gold-refining establishment in that town, had the two rings mounted on a skin of parchment, on which was engrossed a short history of his gold-works at Richenstein, from which we learn that in former days Silesia was a California on a small scale, gold not only being obtained by mining, but by washing the sands of certain rivers. In the form of a heading to an historical document, the two gold wedding-rings were presented to the Prince. [Pg 297]

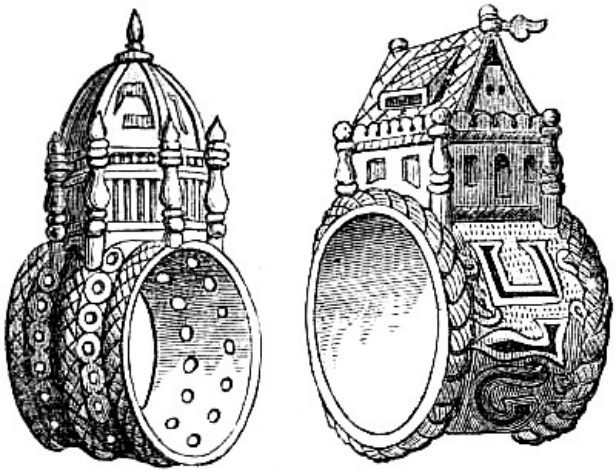
To give an idea of the immense number of plain gold wedding-rings required in the present day, it is stated that no less than thirty thousand have passed through the Birmingham Assay Office in one year.

As pledges of betrothal, or wedding gifts, rings are of very ancient origin. They were worn by the Jews prior to Christian times, and constitute, even at present, an important feature in their marriage ceremonials. Wheatley says: 'The reason why a ring was pitched upon for the pledge, rather than anything else, was because anciently the ring was a seal, by which all orders were signed, and things of value secured, and therefore the delivery of it was a sign that the person to whom it was given was admitted into the highest friendship and trust. For which reason it was adopted as a ceremony in marriage to denote that the wife, in consideration of being espoused to the man, was admitted as a sharer in her husband's counsels, and a joint partner in his honour and estate, and therefore we find that not only the *ring*, but the *keys*, were, in former times delivered to her at the marriage.'

A passage in Ruth (chap. iv. verse 7) gives some reason to suppose that the ring was used by the Jews, as a covenant, in making agreements, grants, &c., whence the wedding engagement by a ring may have been derived. Leo Modena, in his 'History of the Rites, Customs, and Manner of Life of the Present Jews throughout the World' (translated by Edm. Chilmead, 8vo.; London, 1650), alluding to the Jewish manner of marrying, states that 'before the bride's dowry is produced and read, the bridegroom putteth a ring upon her finger, in the presence of two witnesses, which commonly used to be the Rabbines, saying, withal, unto her: "Behold thou art my espoused wife, according to the custom of Moses and of Israel."' [Pg 298]

Selden says that rings were first given in lieu of dowry-money,[62] and that the wedding-ring

came into general use by the Jews *after* they saw it was everywhere prevalent. These Jewish rings were, in past ages, generally of large size and elaborate workmanship. Some curious examples are mentioned in the Londesborough Collection Catalogue. One ring, formerly belonging to the late Crofton Croker, is of German or Flemish work of the seventeenth century. It is of brass, with three points, or bosses, and belongs to a class of ring called Mazul-touv (pronounced *Mussul-taub*), or, freely translated, 'Joy be with you,' or 'Good luck to you.' In the same collection is a Jewish 'tower' betrothal ring, enamelled blue, of the sixteenth century. Another betrothal ring belongs to the same class and date, called 'temple,' or 'tower,' from the figure of the sacred temple placed on their summit. In one of the Londesborough specimens it takes the form of a sexagonal building with a domed roof of an Eastern character; in another it is square, with a deeply-pitched roof, having movable vanes at the angles, and is probably the work of some German goldsmith. On the former of these rings the inscription is in enamelled letters, 'Joy be with you;' and the same words are in more richly-designed letters on the curve of the latter ring. [Pg 299]



Hebrew Marriage Rings.

A ring of gold, enamelled and decorated with five blue enamelled rosettes and five filigree bosses. The roof only of the temple surmounts the ring; it is decorated with light-green enamel, it opens on a hinge, and exhibits beneath the letters טוב. From the Londesborough Collection.

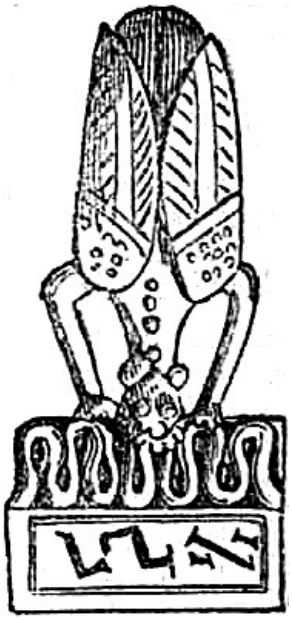
Hebrew Betrothal Ring.

A remarkably fine example of these rings is in the Braybrooke Collection. It has five filigree bosses equidistant along the broad exterior, which is also ornamented with filagree scroll-work, filled with blue and white enamel; the summit of the hoop is surmounted by a pyramid-shaped tower opening upon a hinge, but without any inscription, which is often covered by it. In this case the word or words are engraved on the inside of the ring, and are probably *Mazul-touv* or *Mussul-taub* ('Joy be with you'). The tower is to represent the ark of the covenant; the bosses or points are sometimes supposed to represent the number of witnesses at the ceremony required by law of the Jews. The points or bosses consist of rosettes with six leaves, each of blue, and six leaves of white, enamel. The pyramidical ark has the sides filled with blue enamel only; on the two narrow sides there is a small perforation to represent the window, in allusion to the dove. [Pg 300]

A large silver-gilt Hebrew wedding-ring, in the same collection, is of a remarkable form. The hoop is three-quarters of an inch wide, with raised edges, and plain surface between the five

elevations on its upper portion. The centre one of these is a hexagonal tower, with pent-house roof sloping on each side to the course of the hoop; the gables and sides of these are pierced with fourteen holes for windows, and the roof is scored to imitate tiles; on each side of this is a smaller bell-shaped tower, equidistant from it, with four circular holes in them; and on each side of these last is a still smaller tower of the same shape, and at an equal distance, but without any windows. There is not the usual inscription on any part of this ring.

Jewish.



Jewish.

The annexed illustrations, from rings in the Bailewski Collection, represent a gold Jewish ring of the thirteenth century, and one of the fourteenth century.

In the collection of the late Lady Fellows was a fine Jewish betrothal ring of gold decorated with filigree and enamel. Instead of any setting, the head is formed with a steep ridge, like the roof a house, opening on hinges; within is a cavity, closed by a lid, and probably intended to contain a charm or pastille. On the inner side of the hoop are engraved two Hebrew words signifying good fortune. [Pg 301]

In a communication from Mr. Singer (whose unique collection of wedding-rings with inscriptions I have noticed in the chapter on ‘Posy, Inscription, and Motto Rings’) he informs me that he has a fine Hebrew ring of sixteenth-century work—‘a *real* old one, as most of those now about are forgeries. This has the Hebrew word “mussul taub” in a short Hebrew character, meaning “We wish you good luck,” engraved on the inside.’

According to Jewish law in modern times, it is necessary that the ring should be of a certain value. It is therefore examined and certified by the officiating Rabbi and the chief officers of the synagogue, when it is received by the bridegroom. When absolute property it must not be obtained by credit or by gift. When this is properly certified the ring is returned to him,

and he places it on the bride's finger, calling attention to the fact that she is by these means, consecrated to him. So completely binding is this action that, should the marriage be no further consecrated, no other could be contracted by either party, without a legal divorce.

The Rev. C. W. King, in 'Antique Gems,' remarks that huge gold rings adorned with filigree-work and surmounted by a small temple, with Hebrew inscriptions on the interior of the shank, puzzle the beholders as to their use, being much too large for the finger. They were [Pg 302] made for the use of the synagogue, and are placed on the finger of the couple at a certain part of the marriage rites.

Mr. Singer, in describing the Hebrew wedding-ring in his collection, adds: 'The Hebrews married on the first finger, as to the ring. This is done now, but even the Jews change a little, and after the ceremony the Jewish ladies take off their ring, and place it on the third finger, the same as we do, for now they wear the ordinary ring.'

The following illustrations represent the marriage-rings of the German Jews, the workmanship of the sixteenth century, and very fine specimens of art. Both are of gold; the larger one is richly ornamented in filigree with enamels of light and dark green. It is crowned by a house; the roof, which is covered with enamelled tiles, opens by means of a key, and the space within serves for perfumes or some souvenir. Four small crowns of gold are suspended from the ring.

Jewish Wedding-rings (from the Fould Collection).

The other, smaller in size, is also richly decorated, but is crowned with only the roof of a house, enamelled white and red. The enamels which decorate the other parts of the ring are [Pg 303] white.

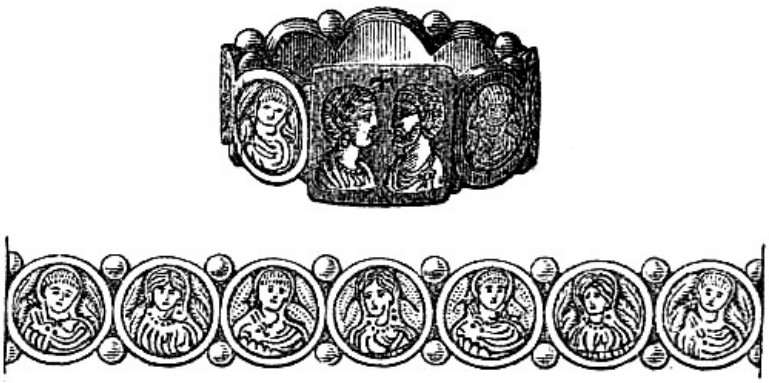
The wedding-rings of the Romans were generally of iron, called 'Pronubum,'[63] symbolical of the lasting character of the engagement, and probably springing out of another Roman custom, the giving of a ring as earnest, upon the conclusion of a bargain.

It was the custom to betroth before marriage, as it is at this day. They that acted between the two parties were called 'Proxenetæ,' 'Auspices,' and 'Pronubi,' which last name was very much in use. When the marriage-maker was a woman she was called 'Pronuba'; and it was a condition that such a one was to have had but one husband. They arranged about the portion, and other marriage articles, which conditions were afterwards written on tablets, and sealed with the ring called *annulus signatorius*.

The ring was used in marriage among Christians as early as 860. Pronubal or pledge rings passed between the contracting parties among the Romans. When the marriage settlement had been properly sealed, rings, bearing the names of the newly-married couple, were handed round to the guests.

There were others, also, of pure gold and a plain circle (*linea infinita*) to symbolise conjugal [Pg 304] fidelity, and to act as a reminder that the love of married people should be infinite. Kirchmann asserts that in Rome the custom was to place in the hand of the newly-made bride a ring of pure gold, at the same moment in which a ring of iron was sent to the house of her parents, a remembrance of modesty and domestic frugality.

In the possession of A. W. Franks, Esq., M.A., F.R.S., F.S.A., is a gold ring, remarkable for the amount of the ornamentation with which it is covered. This fine Byzantine *bicephalic* ring was, doubtless, used as a signet, and was, possibly, a matrimonial or betrothal gift. It has been suggested that the heads resemble those of the Emperor Leo I. and Verina (A.D. 457-74), but it is doubtful whether they are imperial portraits. It is presumed that this ring was found in Egypt, where it had been preserved in the Demetrio Collection ('Arch. Journal,' vol. xxix. page 305).



Byzantine.

A loadstone sometimes was set instead of a jewel, indicative of love’s attractions.

Later, however, Tertullian and Isidore, Bishop of Seville, mention the ‘annulus nuptialis sponsalitius,’ as being of gold. Sometimes there were inscriptions on the rings, such as ‘May you live long!’ ‘I bring you good fortune!’ Frequently a stone was inserted upon which was engraved an intaglio, such as a hand pulling the lobe of an ear, and the words ‘Remember me’ above it. [Pg 305]

Among the old Northmen, the exchanging of rings between the betrothed did not form, so far as can be ascertained from the ancient sagas and laws, any essential part in the wedding ceremonial, neither in pagan, nor in Christian times. Mention is, however, made of an exchange of rings, but this was only done as a kind of memorial gift, and no importance was attached to it. The custom of the betrothal ring was first introduced into Norway at a much later period, in imitation of that in vogue in southern countries.

In the ‘Sword,’ Tyrfing, in the ‘Hervarer-Saga,’ the Princess Ingburgo, who is betrothed to Hialmar, says to the latter, as he is leaving for battle: ‘I swear by Varra,’ presenting to him her ring in pledge, ‘that to whomever Uller gives victory, I am the bride but of one.’

Viga Glum’s ‘Saga’ we read of the Scandinavian use of a ring. In the midst of a wedding-party Glum calls upon Thorarin, his accuser, to hear his oath, and, taking in his hand a silver ring which had been dipped in sacrificial blood, he cites two witnesses to testify to his oath on the ring. ‘In Iceland’ (remarks Mr. Wood, in his ‘Wedding-days in all Countries’) ‘a large ring was used for the ratification of all engagements; it was variously formed of bone, jet, stone, gold, and silver. Sometimes it was so large as to allow the palm of the hand to be passed through it. So in the solemnisation of a betrothing contract the bridegroom passed four fingers and his palm through one of these rings, and in this manner he received the hand of his bride. Sometimes these rings for confirming mutual contracts were placed upon the altar and there used. We may, perhaps, trace this custom in the old form of marriage in the Orkneys, where the contracting parties join their hands through a perforation, or ring, in a stone pillar.’ [Pg 306]

Among the Anglo-Saxons, at the betrothal of a young couple, after the taking of hands, an exchange of presents was made. Amongst those given by the bridegroom was a ring, which, after being blessed by the priest with a prayer, was placed on the maiden’s right hand, and was to be worn so until the time of marriage. On this event, if espousals had previously taken place (for they were not necessary), the ring was removed by the bridegroom to the bride’s left hand, and was placed on the first finger, having been blessed by the priest with a prayer.

Betrothal rings sometimes bore the name and title of the Saviour in full; one in the Londesborough Collection represents two hands clasped in front, so that it was, most probably, a gift, or betrothal ring. It is of silver, somewhat rudely fashioned. The inscription is in uncial characters, and, shorn of its somewhat awkward abbreviation, reads: ‘Jesus Nazareneus Rex.’

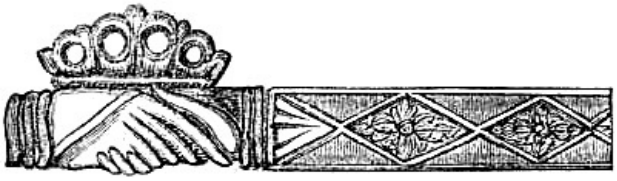
Mr. H. T. Wake, of Cockermouth, gives the following account of a curious betrothal ring in ‘Notes and Queries’ (Series v. vol. ii. p. 528): ‘In a small shrubbery, adjoining a house at Mosser, near Cockermouth, has recently been found a massive finger-ring, of fine gold. When discovered, it was lying on the surface, but is supposed to have been removed, along with some mould, from a garden at the back of the house, a short time previously. It is plain inside, without any hall-mark, but the exterior is polygonal in shape, having the following inscription engraved in large capitals on thirteen facets, viz.:— [Pg 307]

x | 10 | sv | 1 s | ig | n | e | de | am | is | t | e | a

‘The posy seems to be: “Josui signe de amis te,” and to mean “Joshua’s token of love to thee,” the A following being the initial of the young woman to whom it was presented. I take it to be a betrothal ring of the eleventh or twelfth century; and from the admixture of the Roman and Gothic E in the inscription, which peculiarly appears also in the great seal of William the Conqueror, in the word “EVNDE,” as well also from its being in French, it is probably as old as the Norman period. I bought it of the farmer’s wife who found it.’

A betrothal ring, in the collection of the Rev. James Beck, has two hearts surmounted by a crown—denoting the sovereignty of love over the heart—set with marcasites.

A silver ring of a similar import, found at Carlisle, is here represented, and from the clasped hands, crowned, was evidently a betrothal ring.



Betrothal ring.

In the Middle Ages, solemn betrothal by means of the ring often preceded matrimony.

Henry, Duke of Saxony and Bavaria, married Matilda, eldest daughter of Henry the Second, King of England, in 1168. A picture of this event was painted at the time, and afterwards hung up in the church of St. Blosius, at Brunswick, which is engraved by Scheidius in his [Pg 308] 'Origines Guelficæ,' Matilda is represented as holding the plight-ring, a golden hoop, adorned in the centre with a magnificent brilliant, but she seems much at a loss to know what to do with it.

In 1235 an embassy was sent to make a formal petition for the hand of Isabella, second daughter of King John of England, from the Emperor Frederick of Germany. She was presented with a plight-ring, and as the chief of the embassy, Peter de Vineâ, placed it on her finger, he formally declared her the empress of the whole Roman empire. Isabella, on her part, sent a ring to the Emperor in token of her acceptance of his troth.

In the 'Dutch Courtezan,' an old play, a pair of lovers are introduced plighting their troth. Beatrice says to Fréeville: 'I give you faith, and prethee, since, poore soule, I am so easie to believe thee, make it much more pitty to deceive me. Weare this sleight favour in my remembrance.' (Throweth down a ring to him.)

Fréeville. 'Which when I part from,
Hope, the best of life, ever part from me!
Graceful mistresse, our nuptiall day holds.'
Beatrice. 'With happy constancye a wished day.'

In the 'Merchant of Venice' Bassanio and Gratiano give the rings received from Portia and Nerissa to the young doctor and his clerk, after the discomfiture of Shylock, although Portia had said:—

This house, these servants, and this same myself,
Are yours, my lord; I give them with this ring:
Which, when you part from, lose, or give away,
Let it presage the ruin of your love,
And be my vantage to exclaim on you.

Bassanio answers:— [Pg 309]

When this ring
Parts from this finger, then parts life from hence;
O, then be bold to say, Bassanio's dead.

Solemn betrothal was sometimes adopted by lovers, who were about to separate for long periods. Thus Chaucer, in 'Troilus and Cressida,' describes the heroine as giving her lover a ring, and receiving one from him in return:—

Soon after this they spake of sundry things,
As fell to purpose of this aventure,
And, playing, interchangeden their rings,
Of which I cannot tellen no scripture.

Half of broken
betrothal ring.

Shakspeare has more than one allusion to this custom, which is absolutely enacted in the

‘Two Gentlemen of Verona,’ when Julia gives Proteus a ring, saying: ‘Keep you this remembrance for thy Julia’s sake,’ and he replies: ‘Why, then we’ll make exchange:—here, take you this.’ A ritual of Bordeaux (1596) gives a form of betrothal by public ceremony, when rings were interchanged. Kleist, in his ‘Kate of Heilbron,’ makes Frederick say:—

> To tally close,
> As joints of rings dissever’d,

alluding to the custom sometimes practised by lovers, among the common people, plighting a faith, when a ring is broken in two, one half of which was kept by each party, that if from time to time, or at the day of marriage, the two pieces agree with each other, proof may be thus afforded that they have not been transferred, and consequently that both bride and bridegroom remain still of the same mind; otherwise, the engagement is annulled. [Pg 310]

> A ring of pure gold she from her finger took,
> And just in the middle the same then she broke;
> Quoth she: ‘As a token of love you this take,
> And this, as a pledge, I will keep for your sake.’
> (‘Exeter Garland.’)

De Laet, writing in 1647, states that he remembers when it was the custom (and an ancient one) for the gentleman to present the lady on their betrothal with two rings, the one set with a diamond, the other with a ruby table-cut. This gift went by the French name ‘Mariage.’

Among the Germans at the present day the interchange of rings is practised at the publication of the banns among the Lutherans; the minister joins the hands of the couple, and rings are interchanged.

‘The Italians,’ observes Mr. Wood, ‘in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries used betrothing rings, which were generally made of silver, inlaid with niello. The bezel was either oval or circular, and the shoulders of the hoop were shaped so as to form sleeves, from each of which issued a right hand. The hands were clasped together in the Fede. Some of these rings were of a large size, and were worn by men. The diamond was long esteemed by the mediæval Italians as the favourite stone for setting in espousal rings, and it was called “pietra della reconciliazione,” from its supposed power to maintain concord between man and wife.’

It was also usual, at the periods mentioned, for the Italian ladies to give their lovers rings which contained their portraits. Lovers wore these rings on holidays, as was the practice in England, as we find in ‘England’s Helicon’ (1600):—

> My songs they be of Cinthia’s prayse, [Pg 311]
> I weare her rings on holly-dayes.

When a noble Venetian married in the seventeenth century, a day was appointed for giving the bride a ring, and the ceremony was performed in her house, in the presence of relations and friends. The ring-giving was followed by the usual sacrament in church.

In modern Greece, two rings, one of gold and the other of silver, are interchanged at the betrothal, which takes place as follows:—The priest, remaining in the sacrarium, delivers to the persons to be betrothed, and who are standing without the sacred doors, lighted candles into the hands of each, and then returns with them into the body of the church. Here, after prayers have been said, two rings are brought out, of gold and silver respectively, which had previously been placed upon the altar to be dedicated and consecrated, and the priest gives the gold ring to the man, and the silver ring to the woman, repeating three times this form of words: ‘The servant of God, M., espouses the handmaid of God, N., in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, now and ever, and to endless ages, Amen.’

After a threefold repetition of the same words to the woman, the rings are put on the right-hand finger, and are taken off, and interchanged by the bridegroom’s man, both in order that the woman may not take too deeply to heart her inferiority, which the less costly material of the ring seems to hint at, as also to confirm the mutual right and possession of property, either present or future.

The ring ceremony in Russian marriages differs materially from that of English usage. In the first place, there are two rings, and these are changed three times. The man places the ring first on the woman’s finger, then the priest changes the man’s ring, and places it on her finger, and then again the priest and the man join and place the ring where it is to remain for life. [Pg 312]

Have these *three* changes anything in connection with a peculiarity in Russian legends of the ever-predominating number ‘three’? Thus fathers are said usually to have three sons, the heroes and knights-errant ride through three times nine empires; the bravest are always thirty-three years old; they achieve their deeds only on the third attempt. Or, are the three changes emblematic of the Trinity?

At the Russian marriages of the Imperial family the rings are exchanged by a third person. At the wedding of the Duke of Edinburgh and the Grand Duchess Marie Alexandrovna, daughter of the Emperor of Russia (January 23, 1874), the master of the ceremonies carried the marriage rings on plates of gold, and placed them on the altar. The confessor of the

Emperor and Empress then received the rings from the Archipretres of the court, and, whilst a prayer was being said, placed them upon the fingers of the bride and bridegroom, when the Metropolitan began the office.

In Spain the gift of a ring is looked upon as a promise of marriage, and is considered sufficient proof to enable a maiden to claim her husband.

Among the Armenians (observes Madame de Barrera) children are betrothed from their earliest youth, sometimes when only three years old, sometimes as soon as born. When the mothers on both sides have agreed to marry their son and daughter, they propose the union to their husbands, who always sanction the choice of the wives. The mother of the boy then goes to the friends of the girl, with two old women and a priest, and presents to the infant [Pg 313] maiden a ring from the future bridegroom. The boy is then brought, and the priest reads a portion of the Scripture, and blesses the parties. The parents of the girl make the priest a present, in accordance with their means; refreshments are partaken of by the company, and this constitutes the ceremonies of the betrothals. Should the betrothals take place during the infancy of the contracting parties, and even should twenty years elapse before the boy can claim his bride, he must every year, from the day he gives the ring, send his mistress at Easter a new dress, &c.

The olden matrimonial Gemmel, or Gemmow, ring was a kind of double ring, curiously made. There were links within each other, and though generally double, they were, by a further refinement, made triple, or even more complicated; thus Herrick writes:—

> Thou sent’st to me a true love-knot, but I
> Return a ring of jimmals, to imply
> Thy love had one knot, mine a triple tye.

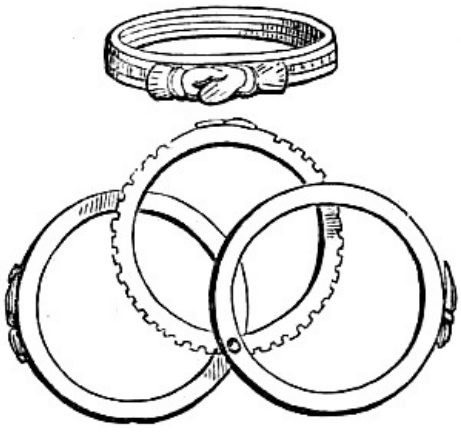
Ray, among his north-country words, explains ‘jimmers’ as ‘jointed hinges,’ and adds, ‘in other parts called wing-hinges.’

At a meeting of the Archæological Institute, in November 1851, the Rev. W. C. Bingham exhibited a silver gemmel-ring of singular fashion, date fourteenth century, found in Dorsetshire, the hoop formed in two portions, so that a moiety of the letters composing the legend, ✠ Ave Mari, appears on each, and it only becomes legible when they are brought together side by side. Each demi-hoop is surmounted by a projecting neck and a small globular knob, so that the ring appears to have a bifid head. The two portions of this ring are not intertwined, and as no adjustment now appears by which they might be kept together in [Pg 314] proper juxtaposition, it is possible that in this instance it was intended that each of the affianced parties should retain a moiety of the gemmel.

There is an allusion to the ‘joint’ ring in Dryden’s play of ‘Don Sebastian’:—

> A curious artist wrought ’em,
> With joynts so close as not to be perceived;
> Yet are they both each other’s counterpart.
> (Her part had Juan inscribed, and his, had Zayda—
> You know those names were theirs:) and in the midst
> A heart divided in two halves was placed.
> Now if the rivets of those rings, inclos’d,
> Fit not each other, I have forged this lye,
> But if they join, you must for ever part.

A ring in the Londesborough Collection illustrates this passage. It parts into three hoops, secured on a pivot; the toothed edge of the central hoop forming an ornamental centre to the hoop of the ring, and having two hearts in the middle; a hand is affixed to the side of the upper and lower hoop; the fingers slightly raised, so that when the hoops are brought together they link in each other, and close over the hearts, securing all firmly.



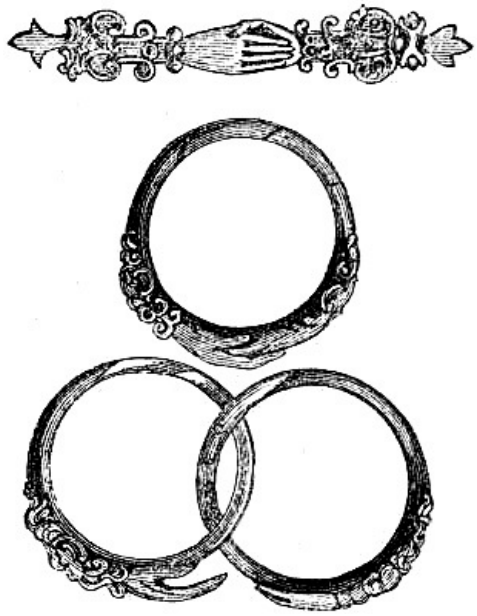
Jointed betrothal ring.

The late Mr. Crofton Croker, in his privately-printed catalogue of Lady Londesborough’s [Pg 315] Collection, gives the following account of the use to which the ring has been put: ‘There can

be little doubt, from the specimens that have come under observation, that it had been used as a betrothing ring by an officer of the King's German Legion with some Irish lady, and that the notched ring was retained by some confidential female friend, who was present as a witness at the betrothal ceremony—usually one of the most solemn and private character—and at which, over the Holy Bible, placed before the witness, both the man and the woman broke away the upper and lower rings from the centre one, which was held by the intermediate person. It would appear that the parties were subsequently married, when it was usual, as a proof that their pledge had been fulfilled, to return to the witness or witnesses to the contract the two rings which the betrothed had respectively worn until married; and thus the three rings, which had been separated, became reunited, as in the present instance.'

A gemmel-ring, of which a representation is given (page 316), was dug up in 1800, at Horselydown, Surrey, found among some Roman and English remains and skeletons of human bodies, about nine feet below the surface. The ring is constructed in twin or double hoops, one side being flat, the other convex. On the lower hand is represented a heart. On the flat side of the hoops are engraved in Roman capitals, 'Usé de Vertu.' This ring is probably not later than Queen Elizabeth's reign.

A plain gemmel wedding-ring, with an inscription inside each hoop, which the Prince Regent, afterwards George IV., had given to Mrs. Fitzherbert, was exhibited, with the lady's miniature, at the Loan Collection of precious objects at the South Kensington Museum in 1872. [Pg 316]



Gemmel-ring, found at Horselydown.

This practice of dividing the betrothal rings has its origin from ancient times, and reminds us of the practice among the Franks of breaking the *sou d'or* in two pieces, in sign of a sacred engagement. Thus we read of Childeric, King of France, when in exile, wishing to know when he might return to his country, dividing the *sou d'or*, keeping one part, and giving the other to a trusty friend, who tells him: 'When I send to you this half, and you find that it unites with the other, you will understand that you can return.' The propitious moment having arrived, Childeric received the token, and, returning, was re-established in his dominions.[64]

From other passages in 'Don Sebastian,' it appears that one of the two rings was worn by Sebastian's father, the other by Almeyda's mother, as pledges of love. Sebastian takes off his ring, which had been placed on his finger by his dying father; Almeyda does the same with hers, which had been given to her by her mother at parting, and Alvarez unscrews both the rings and fits one half to the other. [Pg 317]

In Sir Henry Ellis's 'Original Letters Illustrative of English History' (series ii. vol. ii. page 290) we have a curious anecdote in connection with linked rings. Lady Catherine Grey (a sister of Lady Jane Grey) married the Earl of Hertford, much to the displeasure of Queen Elizabeth, who sent the bridegroom to the Tower, and subjected the countess to great hardships. They were both exposed to an ordeal of examination to prove the validity of the marriage, and amongst other evidence Lady Catherine exhibited a ring which she declared had been used at the marriage ceremony.

It was of gold, and consisted of five links, on four of which were engraved as many verses of the Earl's composition, expressing the assurance of his lasting faith and love, and the ring could, apparently, have been prepared for no other purpose than that of serving as their marriage-ring.

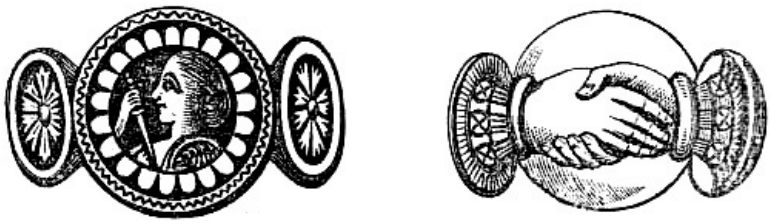
The judgment of the commissioners appointed to examine into the marriage was to dissolve it, and it was so pronounced in the Bishop of London's palace in 1562. Lady Hertford sank

under this cruel conduct of the Queen, and on her dying bed called to her attendants to bring her the box in which her wedding-ring was. She first took from it a ring with a pointed diamond in it, and said to Sir Owen Hopton (at whose house, Cockfield Hall, Suffolk, she had been staying): 'Here, Sir Owen, deliver this unto my lord; it is the ring that I received of him, and gave myself unto him, and gave him my faith.' [Pg 318]

'What say you, madam,' answered Sir Owen, 'was this your wedding-ring?'

'No, Sir Owen, this is the ring of my assurance unto my lord, and there is my wedding-ring,' taking another ring of gold out of the box. This consisted of five links, having engraved in it the verses of the Earl's composition, which she had exhibited to the commissioners of inquiry. (See chapter on 'Posy, Inscription, and Motto Rings.')

'Deliver this,' she said, 'unto my lord, and pray him, as I have been a faithful and true wife, that he would be a loving and natural father unto my children, to whom I give the same blessing that God gave unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' (See chapter on 'Remarkable Rings.')



Ring with representation of Lucretia.

A gemmel-ring of the fifteenth century, in the Londesborough Collection, bears an engraved head of Lucretia, the same kind as that mentioned by Shakspeare ('Twelfth Night,' act ii. sc. v.) where Malvolio, breaking open the letter, purporting to be in the handwriting of his mistress, says:—

> By your leave, wax. Soft! and the impressure her Lucrece, with which she uses to seal.

Lucretia is seen grasping her dagger. The clasped hands, adopted on the gemmel-rings, became a frequent emblem on the solid wedding-ring. [Pg 319]

Wedding-ring of Sir Thomas Gresham.

The betrothal or wedding ring of Sir Thomas Gresham (1544) engraved in Burgon's life of that eminent merchant prince, opens horizontally, thus forming a double ring of gold, linked together in the form of a gemmel; in one half is set a white stone, in the other a red; in the interior of each half is a cavity, in one of which is a small figure of a child in gold, enamelled; 'QVOD DEVS CONIVNSIT' is engraved on one half, and 'HOMO NON SEPARET' on the other.

This interesting relic was formerly in the possession of the Thruston family, at Weston Hall, Suffolk, and was exhibited at the Society of Antiquaries (April 1862) by Granville Leveson Gower, Esq.

A gemmel-ring of the sixteenth century, found in the Thames, is in the Londesborough Collection. Originally gilt, it is of silver: two hands are clasped; on the opposite side two quatrefoils spring from a heart engraved: 'Help God!' or 'God help!'

Gemmel-ring.

A remarkably fine gemmel-ring (Londesborough) is here engraved. It is set with sapphire and amethyst, the elaborate and beautiful design enriched by coloured enamels. The lower figure in the representation of this ring shows it parted, displaying the inscription on the flat side of each section, which is also enriched by engraving and *niello*. [Pg 320]

The clasped hands (originating from the ancient Romans), adopted on the gemmel-rings, we are told in Chambers's 'Book of Days,' are still the fashion, and in constant use in that curious local community of fishermen inhabiting the Claddugh at Galway on the western coast. They number with their families between five and six thousand, and are particularly exclusive in their tastes and habits; rarely intermarrying with others than their own people. The wedding-ring is an heirloom in the family; it is regularly transferred from the mother to the daughter who is first married, and so passes to her descendants. Many of these gemmel-rings, still worn there, are very old.

'Claddugh' ring.

Mr. Mackenzie E. C. Walcot, F.S.A., etc., in 'Notes and Queries,' writes: 'A ring of gold, about the time of the thirteenth century, was found at Burbage, near Marlborough, and, apparently, from the clasped hands on the lower side, a gemmel or betrothal ring, has a sapphire uncut, held by four bent cramps, and on the circle the following letters in two lines, divided by punctuation in the form of ×. The letters, of course, are of the period:—

∀Λ NI W∀ I∀
× × ×
IE AU AL HN

I have alluded to sacred inscriptions on some betrothal rings. The following engraving refers to one in the Londesborough Collection, described in page 306. [Pg 321]

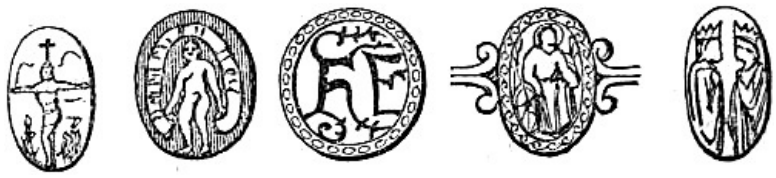
Betrothal ring with sacred inscription.

In the Braybrooke Collection is a splendid gold gemmel ring, with enamelled and jewelled twin or double hoops, which play one within another, like the links of a chain. Each hoop has one of its sides convex, the other flat, and each is set with a stone, one a fine ruby, the other an aquamarine, or beryl, so that, upon bringing together the flat surfaces of the hoops the latter immediately unite in one ring, and as they close, the stones slide into contact, forming a head to the whole. The inside flat surfaces are inscribed with the words 'Quod Deus conjunxit, homo non separet,' part on one hoop, part on the other, so as to be legible when

these are opened, but entirely concealed when they are reunited in one ring. This seems to be an exception to the general rule, with respect to rings of the same denomination, since the hoops cannot be dissevered according to the usual custom at betrothals. Nares, in his 'Glossary,' observes that the name 'gimmal' was preserved to rings made triple, or even more complimentary. This splendid specimen is of Italian workmanship, dating about the end of the fifteenth or the beginning of the sixteenth century.

At a meeting of the Archæological Institute in March 1863 the Rev. John Beck exhibited some curious specimens of linked or 'puzzle-rings.' One of gold consists of seven slender rings linked together, which, when properly adjusted, combine in a knot. Another, of silver, consists of four slight rings, set with a blue stone, and ornamented with flowers of forget-me-not. A third, also of silver, has nine rings, which, when intertwined, unite so as to present a *fede* as the head of the ring. [Pg 322]

The French term for the hooped rings is *foi*, *alliance*, which last word in the 'Dictionnaire de Trevoux' is defined to be a ring 'que l'accordé donne à son accordée, où il y a un fil d'or et un fil d'argent.'



Devices on Wedding-rings.

CHAPTER VI. [Pg 323]

TOKEN RINGS.

Rings as 'tokens' date from very early times. We are told that Clovis, King of the Franks, in the latter part of the fifth century, wishing to marry Clotilde, niece of Gondebauld, King of Burgundy, deputed Aurelianus, in whom he had perfect confidence, to ascertain whether the maiden had any predilection for him. The messenger travelled in very humble guise, and arrived at the castle in Burgundy where Clotilde resided. The princess, however, knew beforehand his mission, and was prepared to receive him. She concealed this knowledge, however, and treated him as an ordinary mendicant, receiving him hospitably, and, according to the custom of those times, even washing his feet. While this operation was being performed, Aurelianus said: 'Princess, if you will permit me, I will tell you of strange things.'

'Speak,' replied Clotilde.

'Clovis, King of the Franks, has sent me to announce his wish to marry you. Is it your desire that I should ask permission from your father?'

'What proof can you give me of the truth of your mission?'

'The ring of my Sovereign, which he entrusted me with for this object.'

'But,' said Clotilde, 'I am a Christian, and I cannot marry a pagan. If, however, it is the will of God that I should become the wife of Clovis, I am content.' [Pg 324]

Thus saying, she received the ring, and gave Aurelianus her own ring in return, and after some difficulties with Gondebauld were overcome, Aurelianus married Clotilde in the name of King Clovis, by the gift of 'one sou and one denier,' as the price of her liberty, according to the custom of that period.

If the old historians are to be credited, this is the earliest instance of a marriage by proxy.

Edward the First, in 1297, presented Margaret, his fourth daughter, with a golden pyx, in which he deposited a ring, the token of his unfailing love. He placed it in her hands with a solemn benediction, when she bade him farewell, preparatory to rejoining her husband at Brussels.

Hardyng, in his 'Chronicles,' relates a pretty story of Oswald, King of Northumberland (seventh century), and Kineburg, his consort. A hermit, of extraordinary sanctity, desirous of ascertaining whether any person surpassed himself in purity of life, was, in answer to his meditation, told by revelation 'that King Oswald was more holy, though he had wedded a wife.' The pious hermit accordingly repaired to the king, with holy zeal, to be informed concerning his course of life. On which Oswald, in the true spirit of that love and confidence which reposed on the purity and virtue of his beloved wife, referred the hermit to her,

bidding him carry to her his ring, with his command that she should entertain him (the hermit) as though he were her own royal spouse. The Queen, who had the greatest veneration for her husband, failed not to obey his instructions, but, while she shared with [Pg 325] the holy man the regal repast, showed him that it consisted only of bread and water, no other food being permitted to him; thus exhibiting an example of that self-denial by which purity of life is alone attainable. When night came, the hermit was more surprised than ever when the queen ordered him to be put into a cold-water bath, according to the custom of the King whom he wished to imitate. Gladly, and yet right early in the morning, did the venerable man take leave of the queen; and, having restored to King Oswald his ring, frankly acknowledged that his whole entire life was not so holy as one of the King's days and nights. I must observe, however, that, with this rigid observance of sobriety and virtue, King Oswald is the first prince of our Saxon rulers who is recorded to have been served in silver dishes. We can easily understand a hermit's repugnance to bathing of any kind.

Some other instances of rings as tokens are related by mediæval historians. We are told by Matthew Paris that Pope Innocent, desiring to gain King John over to favour his plans, and knowing that he was covetous, and a diligent seeker after costly jewels, sent him four gold rings adorned with precious stones, in token that the rotundity of the rings signified eternity; 'therefore your royal discretion may be led by the form of them to pray for a passage from earthly to heavenly, from temporal to eternal things. The number of four, which is a square number, denotes the firmness of mind which is neither depressed in adversity nor elated in prosperity; which will then be fulfilled, when it is based on the four principal virtues, namely—justice, fortitude, prudence, and virtue.... Moreover, the greenness of the emerald denotes faith; the clearness of the sapphire, hope; the redness of [Pg 326] the pomegranate denotes charity, and the purity of the topaz, good works.... In the emerald, therefore, you have what to believe; in the sapphire, what to hope for; in the pomegranate, what to love; and in the topaz, what to practise; that you ascend from one virtue to another, until you see the Lord in Zion.'

Henry the Fourth, Emperor of Germany, was cruelly treated by his son, who conspired against him, and forced him to abdicate the throne. The degraded emperor is said to have been reduced by famine to such extremities that he ate the leather of his boots for hunger. He sent his ring and sword as his last token of forgiveness to his rebel son, with the simple and touching message: 'If thou hadst left me more, I would have sent more to thee.'

Thomas Chester, a writer for the minstrels in the reign of Henry the Sixth, and who is stated to have translated the 'Erle of Tolouse,' a metrical romance, relates that an Earl of this house, disguised in pilgrim's weeds, asked alms of the empress, consort of Diocletian, Emperor of Germany, to whom his secret is known, and who gives him forty florins and a ring. He receives the latter present with the greatest satisfaction, and, although obliged to return home, comforts himself with this reflection:—

Well is me I have thy grace
Of the to hav thys thyng,
If ever I hav grace of the
That any love between us be
This may be a tokenyng.

The empress, on the false accusation of two knights, is thrown into prison. The Earl of Toulouse, disguised as a monk, obtains permission to act as her confessor; the empress, not knowing him in his present disguise, confesses that she once gave a ring to the 'Erle.' On [Pg 327] this he challenges the two knights, and, of course, overcomes them in combat. On the death of the emperor he marries the empress.

This story reminds us of the lines in 'Marmion,' by Sir Walter Scott:—

The fair Queen of France
Sent him a turquoise ring and glove,
And charged him as her knight and love
For her to break a lance:

a fatal gift, as Flodden Field proved.[65]

In the 'Lays' of Marie, the Princess Guilliadun, having fallen in love with Sir Eliduc, sends him as tokens a ring and a rich girdle.

In the 'Lyfe of Ipomydon,' the manuscript of which is in the Harleian Collection at the British Museum, the queen gives her son a ring-token:—

It befell upon a day,
The queen to her son gan say,
In privitie and in counsail,
'Thou hast a brother withouten fail,
Privily gotten me upon,
Ere I was wedded to any mon.
But hastily he was done fro me,
I ne wot if he alive be,
And he me sent, this ender (last) year,
A rich ring of gold full clear; [Pg 328]

An ever he any brother had,
That I should give it him, he bade;
That where he come, among high or low,
By that ring he should him know.
Than take this ring, my son, of me:
In what country that he be,
Who that knoweth this ilke ring,
He is thy brother without lesing.’

Ipomydon accepts the ring, and promises to spare no pains in searching for its original proprietor, who, after various adventures, is found in the person of Sir Campanys, with whom he has an encounter, during which the latter discovers his mother’s ring on the finger of Ipomydon.

In the romance of ‘Sir Isumbras,’ when he and his wife and child are taken prisoners by the ‘Soudan,’ the lady, before her separation from her husband and child—

———callyd hir lorde to hir agayne,
A rynge was thaire takynnynge.

The mother of Sir Perceval of Galles gives him a ring-token:—

His moder gaffe hym a ryng,
And bad he solde agayne it bryng;
‘Sonne, this salle be oure takynnynge,
For here I salle the byde.’

The knight sets forth on his travels, and soon changes the ring for another:—

Thofe he were of no pryde
Forthirmore ganne he glyde
Tille a chambir ther besyde,
Moo sellys to see;
Riche clothes faude he sprede
A lady slepuned on a bedde
He said, ‘forsothe a tokyne to wedde
Salle thou lefe with mee;’
Ther he kyste that swete thynge, [Pg 329]
Of hir fynger he tuke a rynge,
His aweune moder takynnynge
He lefte with that fre.

In the very pretty poem of ‘Lay le Fraine,’ by Marie, the lady of a knight, ‘a proud dame and malicious,’ having twins, consigns the charge of one of them to a confidential servant, to be taken away and left to the mercy of anyone who might find it. At the same time, that the child might be known to have been born of noble parents, she took a rich mantle lined with fur—

And lapped the little maiden therein,
And took a ring of gold fine,
And on her right arm it knit
With a lace of silk in plit.

The child is placed in a hollow ash-tree, near a nunnery, by the maid, and on being discovered by the porter is taken to the abbess, by whom she is reared and becomes an accomplished and beautiful maiden. A rich knight falls in love with her and persuades her to live with him in his castle, to which she repairs, and

With her took she no thing
But her pel, and her ring.

The lord, however, is induced to marry her sister, taking Le Fraine with him to the wedding, who places on her bed in her room the magnificent ‘pel,’ or mantle, by which and the ring she is discovered by her mother.

In the romance of the ‘Seven Wise Masters’ (Cotton MSS.) is a story, ‘The Two Dreams,’ in which a ring displays a prominent feature.

In the ballad of the ‘Lass of Lochroyan’ (‘Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border’) Lord Gregory says:—

‘Gin thou be Annie of Lochroyan [Pg 330]
(As I trow thou binna she),
Now tell me some of the love-token
That passed between thee and me.

‘O dinna ye mind, Lord Gregory,
As we sat at the wine,
We changed the rings from our fingers,
And I can show thee thine?

‘O yours was gude and gude enough,
But aye the best was mine;
For yours was of the gude red gowd,
But mine o’ the diamond fine.’

In the ballad of ‘Cospatrick’ (the designation of the Earl of Dunbar in the days of Wallace and Bruce) we have:—

‘He gae to me a gay gowd ring,
And bade me keep it abune a’ thing.’

‘And what did you wi’ the gay gowd ring
I bade you keep abune a’ thing?’

‘I gae them to a ladye gay
I met in greenwood on a day.’

In the ballad of ‘Prince Robert,’

Prince Robert has wedded a gay ladye
He has wedded her with a ring,
Prince Robert has wedded a gay ladye,
But he darna bring her hame.

The Prince is poisoned, and his lady-love arrives just after the funeral, and is told:—

‘Ye’se get nane o’ his gowd, ye’se get nane o’ his gear,
Ye’se get nothing frae me.
Ye’se no get an inch o’ his good braid land,
Though your heart suld burst in three.’

[Pg 331]

‘I want nane o’ his gowd, I want nane o’ his gear,
I want nae land frae thee:
But I’ll hae the rings that’s on his finger,
For them he did promise to me.’

‘Ye’se no get the rings that’s on his finger,
Ye’se no get them frae me;
Ye’se no get the rings that’s on his finger,
An your heart suld burst in three.’

In the ballad of ‘Broomfield Hill’ a witch-woman says to ‘a lady bright:’

Take ye the rings off your fingers,
Put them on his right hand,
To let him know when he doth wake,
His love was at his command.

The Child of Elle receives from the page of his lady-love, the ‘fayre Emmeline,’ some tokens of her affection to him in her ‘woe-begone’ state:—

And here she sends thee a ring of golde,
The last boone thou mayst have,
And biddes thee weare it for her sake,
When she is layde in grave.

The famous Guy, Earl of Warwick, after marvellous adventures abroad, returns to his own country, and becomes a hermit at Guy’s Cliff, near Warwick Castle. Falling sick, he sends a ring-token to the fair Félice. He came to his rocky dwelling,

Like pilgrim poore, and was not knowne;
And there I lived a hermit’s life,
A mile and more out of the towne,
And dayle came to beg my bread
Of Pheliss, att my castle-gate,
Not known unto my loved wiffe,
Who dayle mourned for her mate:
Till, at the last, I fell sore sicke,
Yea, sicke soe sore that I must dye;
I sent to her a ringe of golde,
By which she knew me presentlye.

[Pg 332]

In the romance of ‘Floire and Blanceflor,’ the young hero, on his way to Babylon, arrives at a bridge, the keeper of which has a brother in the city, to whose hospitality he wishes to recommend Floire, and for that purpose he gives him his ring. ‘Take this ring to him,’ he says, ‘and tell him from me to receive you in his best manner.’ The message was attended with complete success.

King John is said to have made use of a ring to aid his criminal designs upon the beautiful

wife of the brave Eustace de Vesci, one of the twenty-five barons appointed to enforce the observance of Magna Charta. The tyrant, hearing that Eustace de Vesci had a very beautiful wife, but far distant from court, and studying how to accomplish his licentious designs towards her, sitting at table with her husband and seeing a ring on his finger, he laid hold of it and told him that he had such another stone, which he resolved to set in gold in that very form. And having thus got the ring, he presently sent it to her in her husband's name; by that token conjuring her, if ever she expected to see him alive, to come speedily to him. She, therefore, upon sight of the ring, gave credit to the messenger and came with all expedition. But it so happened that her husband, casually riding out, met her on the road, and, marvelling much to see her there, asked what the matter was; and when he understood how they were both deluded he resolved to find a wanton, and put her in apparel to personate his lady.

The King afterwards boasting to the injured husband himself, Eustace had the pleasure to undeceive him.

When Richard III. brings his rapid wooing to a conclusion he gives the Lady Anne a ring, saying:— [Pg 333]

> Look, how this ring encompasseth thy finger,
> Even so thy breast encloseth my poor heart;
> Wear both of them, for both of them are thine.

Passionate words, but too noble for a man both faithless and cruel.

Margaret, eldest daughter of Henry VII., married to James IV. of Scotland, when requiring money, sent to her royal husband, not only letters, but a token, as is seen in the Treasurer's accounts: 'June 30 (1504): Given to the Queen to give away, when she sent Master Livesay, Englishman, with a ring in token—18*s.*' So we have later: 'Luke of the wardrobe carried letters, with a ring, to Stirling to the Queen's grace.'

In 1515, while under the tyranny of the Duke of Albany at Edinburgh, Margaret endeavoured to escape to Blackater, a fortress within a few miles of Berwick. She sent a faithful clerk, Robin Carr, to Lord Dacre, who had proposed her flight, and a ring was to be Carr's credential to King Henry the Eighth, whom he was to see afterwards. The King, however, did not recognise the token, though it was one that his sister had worn in her girlish days.

In 'Cymbeline' (act i. sc. ii.) Imogen gives Posthumus a ring when they part, and he gives her a bracelet in exchange:—

> '———Look here, love;
> This diamond was my mother's; take it, heart;
> But keep it till you woo another wife,
> When Imogen is dead.'
> *Posthumus.*—'How! how! another?
> You gentle gods give me but this I have,
> And sear up my embracements from a next
> With bonds of death! Remain thou here, [Pg 334]
> (*Putting on the ring*)
> While sense can keep it on.'

Yet he afterwards gives it up to Iachimo—upon a false representation, however—to test his wife's honour:—

> ———Here, take this too;
> It is a basilisk unto my eye,
> Kills me to look on't.

A diamond ring was sent by Henry the Eighth in 1542 to Sir Arthur Plantagenet (Lord Lisle, natural son of Edward the Fourth) in token of forgiveness, and accompanying an order for his release from the Tower, but the unfortunate prisoner, in his excess of joy, died.

In Shakspeare's 'Henry the Eighth' (Act v. sc. i.) a ring is delivered by the King to Cranmer, in token of royal confidence and esteem:—

> Be of good cheer,
> They shall no more prevail than we give way to.
> Keep comfort to you; and this morning see
> You do appear before them; if they shall chance,
> In charging you with matters, to commit you,
> The best persuasions to the contrary
> Fail not to use, and with what vehemency
> The occasion shall instruct you: if entreaties
> Will render you no remedy, *this ring*
> *Deliver them*, and your appeal to us
> There make before them.

The sequel of this incident is related in Foxe's 'Acts and Monuments of the Christian Martyrs,' printed in 1563:—'Anon the Archbishop was called into the council-chamber, to

whom was alleged as before is rehearsed. The Archbishop answered in like sort as the King had advised him; and in the end, when he perceived that no manner of persuasion or entreaty could serve, he delivered them the King's ring, revoking his cause into the King's [Pg 335] hands. The whole council being thereat somewhat amazed, the Earl of Bedford, with a loud voice, confirming his words with a solemn oath, said: "When you first began the matter, my Lords, I told you what would become of it. Do you think the King would suffer this man's finger to ache? Much more, I warrant you, will he defend his life against brabling varlets. You do but cumber yourselves to hear tales and fables against him." And, incontinently, upon the receipt of the *King's token*, they all rose, and carried to the King his ring, surrendering that matter, as the order and use was, into his own hands.'

By the same capricious monarch a turquoise ring was sent to Cardinal Wolsey, in his last troubles at Esher, by Sir John Russel, as a 'token' from His Majesty, with the assurance that 'he loved him as well as ever he did, and was sorry for his trouble.' On hearing subsequently from Dr. Buttes of the serious illness of his discarded favourite, he sent a valuable ring to him, and Mistress Anne Boleyn, then at the King's side, at her royal lover's request, took a gold tablet from her girdle, and gave it with a speech expressing sympathy and commendation—false gifts and hollow words!

In after years, when a deputation was sent by the council of King Edward the Sixth to reduce the recusant Princess Mary to conformity with the Protestant religion, she, on her knees, delivered *a ring as a token* to the King, saying 'she would die his true subject and sister, and obey him in all things, except in matters of religion.'

When, as Queen, Mary lay on her deathbed, King Philip, her husband, who did not revisit England after his return to Spain, sent a message and a *ring-token* to his consort, a ruby set [Pg 336] in gold, which she bequeathed to him among other jewels.

One of the most interesting episodes of ring-tokens is that which Queen Elizabeth is said to have given to the Earl of Essex 'in token of esteem,' with the intimation that if ever he forfeited her favour, and it should be sent back to her, the sight of it would ensure his forgiveness. The chief authorities for the story appear to be the 'Relation of M. Aubrey de Maurier,' printed in 1688, and the account given at the same period by Lady Elizabeth Spelman. The particulars of this occurrence are related in the memoirs of Robert Carey. When Essex lay under sentence of death, he determined to try the virtue of the Queen's ring by sending it to her and claiming the benefit of her promise. Knowing, however, that he was surrounded by the creatures of those who were bent on taking his life, he was fearful of trusting to any of his attendants. At length, looking out of his window, he saw, early one morning, a boy whose countenance pleased him, and he induced him by a bribe to carry the ring, which he threw down from above, to the Lady Scroop, his cousin, who had taken so friendly an interest in his fate. The boy, by mistake, took the ring to the Countess of Nottingham, the cruel sister of the fair and gentle Scroop, and, as both these ladies belonged to the royal bed-chamber, the mistake might easily occur. The Countess carried the ring to the Lord Admiral, who was a deadly foe of Essex, and told him the message, but he bade her suppress both. The Queen, unconscious of the incident, waited in the painful suspense of an angry lover for the expected token to arrive, but, not receiving it, she concluded that he was too proud to make the last appeal to her tenderness, and, after having once revoked the warrant, she ordered the execution to take place.

The romantic story of the Queen visiting the Countess of Nottingham, who had kept back the [Pg 337] ring; of her shaking her on her death-bed, and crying out bitterly 'that God might forgive, but she could not,' is somewhat credited as documents come to light. In Birch's 'Memoirs of the Peers of England during the Reign of James the First,' this story is given, as having been repeatedly told by Lady Elizabeth Spelman, great-granddaughter of Sir Robert Carey. The Queen is said to have been so hurt by this revelation of Lady Nottingham that she never went to bed, nor took any sustenance from that period. 'In confirmation of the time of the Countess's death,' says Birch, 'it appears from the parish register of Chelsea that she died at Arundel House, London, February 25, and was buried the 28th, 1603. Her funeral was kept at Chelsea, March 21st following, and Queen Elizabeth died three days afterwards.'

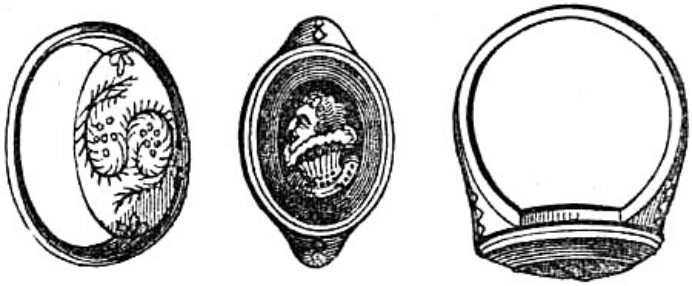
The celebrated ring on which the life of the Earl of Essex is thus said to have depended has been claimed by various persons. In 'Old England' (vol. ii. p. 74) a story is told that when, in 1564, Mary, Queen of Scots, married Darnley, she sent to her fair cousin of England a diamond-ring in the form of a heart, in token of the event and her own affection. The ring was accompanied by some Latin verses by Buchanan, thus translated:—

> This gem behold, the emblem of my heart,
> From which my cousin's image ne'er shall part;
> Clear in its lustre, spotless does it shine,
> 'Tis clear and spotless as this heart of mine.
> What though the stone a greater hardness wears,
> Superior firmness still the figure bears.

'According' (observes the editor of 'Old England') 'to information which has been communicated to us, with an implicit faith on the part of our informants, that was the ring [Pg 338] presented by Elizabeth to Essex, as being the most precious it was in her power to give him.'

Another account says that Mr. Thomas Penning, of the Exchequer, had, in 1781, a purse and

ring by bequest from Mr. Sotheby, whose sister he married, and who was related to the late Mrs. Cooke, by long succession and inheritance from Sir Anthony Cooke, of Giddy Hall, Essex, preceptor of Edward the Sixth, and to whose family, according to tradition, these precious objects were given by Queen Elizabeth. The ring was of gold, with the Queen's bust in bas-relief on a garnet, dressed as in her sixpenny and threepenny pieces of 1574, with the same features round it in the garter with the motto, and fastened with a buckle composed of two diamonds, and the strap turned by another. Over the bust was the crown, composed of twelve diamonds, and on each side the collet three diamonds. On the inner surface, immediately under the bust, was the union rose.



The 'Devereux' Ring.

Perhaps the strongest claim to the possession of the real ring of Essex is that which was exhibited at the Society of Antiquaries, March 1858, by the Rev. Lord John Thynne. It is of gold, slightly made, and ornamented on the inside with blue enamel. On the face is set a cameo cut in sardonyx, representing Queen Elizabeth in a high ruff. The workmanship is good, and shows considerable skill in the adaptation of the layers of the stone to the details [Pg 339] of the dress. It seems to have been originally made for a very small finger, and to have been subsequently enlarged. The ring is said to have been the property of Lady Frances Devereux, daughter of the Earl of Essex, and afterwards Duchess of Somerset, and to have passed from mother to daughter until it came to Louisa, daughter of John, Earl of Granville, who married Thomas Thynne, second Viscount Weymouth, great-grandfather of the present owner. It has been stated by Captain Devereux that no mention of the ring in question is made in the elaborate will of the Duchess of Somerset. She may, however, have given it to her daughter in her lifetime. The ring appears to have been made for a female finger, and as it is not very likely that the Queen would have worn her own portrait in a ring, it is more probable that this ring was intended for one of the ladies of her court, and it may have been enlarged for some subsequent owner. It is undoubtedly a remarkable work of art of the period of Elizabeth.

It may be noticed that the Hon. Captain Devereux, in his 'Lives and Letters of the Devereux, Earls of Essex,' seems to believe in the story of the ring, but the evidence he adduces is not sufficient to justify his faith.

Another ring, which is in the possession of C. W. Warner, Esq. (and is, together with that noticed, engraved in the 'Lives and Letters of the Devereux, Earls of Essex'), sets forth a rival claim to be the identical ring given to Essex, of which, however, it shows no internal evidence, being a slight ring, without any device, and has an enamelled hoop, set with a pear-shaped diamond.

In 'Manningham's Diary,' 1602-1603 (Camden Society), is the following entry: 'Dr. Parry told me the Countess Kildare assured him that the Queene caused the ring wherewith shee was [Pg 340] wedded to the crowne to be cutt from hir finger, some six weekes before her death, but wore a ring which the Earl of Essex gave her unto the day of hir death.'[66]

The interchange of rings as royal tokens between Queen Elizabeth and Mary, Queen of Scots, was frequent; whether genuine in the feelings that prompted their transmission (at least, as regards the former) may be questioned. On the baptism of the son of the Scottish Queen (afterwards James the Sixth) we are informed that the Duke of Bedford, besides a gold font, the present of Queen Elizabeth, sent 'ane ring with ane stane to be delivered to the said woman who should occupy the place of the Queen's Grace of England at the said baptism.' Mary is mentioned by the English ambassador to the Scottish court as wearing, on the celebration of Twelfth Day in 1562, no jewels or gold, but a ring sent to her by Elizabeth. It may have been that which, a prisoner at Lochleven Castle, she wished to obtain from the royal jewels which had been kept back from her by the Earl of Moray.[67] It had been sent to her as a token of friendship, and the promise that if it were returned to the donor in any [Pg 341] period of misfortune she would do her best to assist her.

Miss Strickland informs us that Mary, in a letter to Elizabeth, though unable, as she mentions, to send back the ring, reminds Elizabeth of her promise. This interesting letter is still preserved at Hatfield House. 'It will please you to remember,' she writes, 'you have told me several times that on receiving the ring you gave me you would assist me in my time of trouble. You know that Moray has seized all that I have, and those who had the keeping of some of these things have been ordered not to deliver any of them to me. Robert Melville, at any rate, to whom I have secretly sent for this ring, as my most precious jewel, says "he dare not let me have it." Therefore I implore you, on receiving this letter, to have compassion on your good sister and cousin, and believe that you have not a more affectionate relative in the

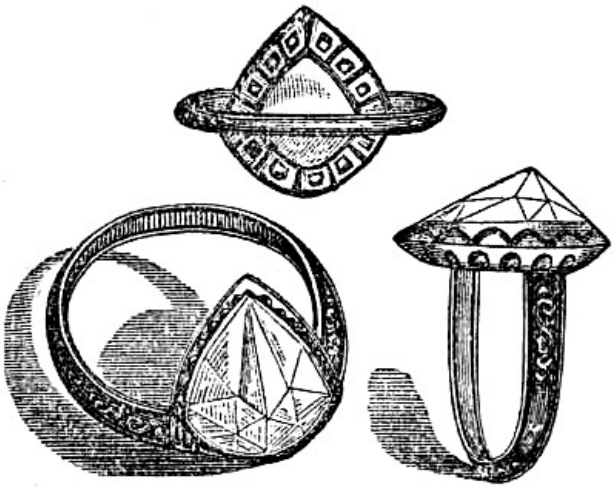
world,' etc. etc., 'dated from my prison this 1st of May' (1568).

On the escape of Mary from her 'prison,' Sir Robert Melville, anticipating a counter-revolution from the general feeling in favour of the Queen, was one of the first who came to her at Hamilton Castle to renew his homage, bringing with him as a peace-offering the precious ring so often demanded in vain.

'On leaving Scotland,' says Miss Strickland, 'after her fatal resolution of throwing herself on the protection of Queen Elizabeth, Mary sent the ring as an *avant-courier*, with a letter. This romantic toy, which she regarded in the same light as one of the fairy talismans in eastern love, was actually the lure which tempted her in this desperate crisis of her fortunes to enter England, under the fond idea that its donor could not refuse to keep her promise. She [Pg 342] concludes an affecting letter to Queen Elizabeth (dated from Dundrennan) thus: "To remind you of the reasons I have to depend on England, *I send back to the Queen the token of her promised friendship and assistance*."'

This memorable ring is described by Aubrey, to have been a delicate piece of mechanism, consisting of several joints, which, when united, formed the quaint device of two right hands supporting a heart between them. This heart was composed of two separate diamonds, held together by a central spring, which, when opened, would allow either of the hearts to be detached.

'Queen Elizabeth,' says Aubrey, 'kept one moietie, and sent the other as a "token" of her constant friendship to Mary, Queen of Scots, but she cut off her head for all that.'



Essex ring (?).

The circumstance of the ring is further verified beyond dispute by Mary herself, in a subsequent letter to Elizabeth, in which she bitterly reproaches her with her perfidious conduct. 'After I escaped from Lochleven,' she says, 'and was nearly taken in battle by my rebellious subjects, I sent you by a trusty messenger the diamond you had given me as a token of affection and demanded your assistance. I believed that the jewel I received as a pledge of your friendship would remind you that when you gave it me I was not only flattered with great promise of assistance from you, but you bound yourself on your royal word to advance over the border to my succour, and to come in person to meet me, and that [Pg 343] if I made the journey into your realm that I might confide in your honour.' Elizabeth, as is well known, took no notice either of the pledge or allusions to her former professions.

The illustration on the preceding page represents the ring mentioned (p. 339) as the property of the Warner family. Sir Thomas Warner, to whom it was presented by James the First, placed it on his shield of arms, with the motto, 'I hold from the King.'

During the Duke of Norfolk's imprisonment in the Tower he sent two diamond rings, as *love-tokens* to Mary, Queen of Scots, while she was at Coventry.

In the metrical chronicle of the 'Life of Sir Nicholas Throgmorton' we find that when Elizabeth heard rumours of the death of her sister, Queen Mary, to be really sure, she sent Sir Nicholas Throgmorton to the palace to request one of the ladies of the bed-chamber, who was in her confidence, 'if the queen were really dead, to send her as a *token* the black enamelled ring which Her Majesty wore night and day':—

She said (since nought exceedeth woman's fears,
  Who still do dread some baits of subtlety):
'Sir Nicholas, know a ring my sister wears
  Enamell'd black—a pledge of loyalty—
The which the King of Spain in spousals gave.
If aught fall out amiss, 'tis that I crave.

'But hark! ope not your lips to anyone
  In hope us to obtain of courtesy,
Unless you know my sister first be gone,

For grudging minds will still coyne (coin) treachery.
So shall thyself be safe, and us be sure.
Who takes no hurt shall need no care of cure.’

Elizabeth’s meaning seems to have been that the ring should not be sought for until Mary’s death.

A ring ‘token’ was also the announcement of Queen Elizabeth’s death. Lady Scroope, it seems, gave the first intelligence of the event by dropping from the window of the palace a sapphire ring to her brother, Sir Robert Carey, who was lurking beneath the chamber of death at Richmond. He departed with this ring at his utmost speed to announce the tidings to the Scottish monarch. [Pg 344]

The sapphire in this ring is in the possession of the Countess of Cork, and was exhibited at the Loan Exhibition of Jewellery at South Kensington in 1872. A statement in the catalogue records the incident related. The ring is mentioned in Robertson’s ‘History of Scotland’ and Banks’ ‘Peerage Books.’ It was afterwards given to John, Earl of Orrery, by the Duchess of Buckingham, natural daughter of James the Second.

I may here remark that Camden relates a romantic incident, that while Queen Elizabeth was celebrating the anniversary of her coronation, Henry of Anjou, one of her royal suitors, in a fit of gallantry, took from her finger a ring in token of betrothal, and put it on his own in presence of the Court; but as this story is entirely refuted by history I forbear the details.

An incident in connection with ring-tokens is related in the life of that distinguished knight and courtier, Sir John Perrot, which has additional interest from having formed the subject of a poem by the late Mrs. Maclean (‘L. E. L.’). The ballad, which appeared some years ago in one of the ‘annuals,’ is so charming and characteristic that I have ventured to reproduce it:—

The evening tide is on the turn; so calm the waters flow,
There seems to be one heav’n above, another heav’n below;
The blue skies broken by white clouds, the river by white foam,
The stars reflect themselves, and seem to have another home.

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A shade upon the elements; ’tis of a gallant bark,
Her stately sides fling on the waves an outline dim and dark;
The difference this by things of earth, and things of heav’n made,
The things of heav’n are trac’d in light, and those of earth in shade.

Wrapt in his cloak a noble knight stept to and fro that deck,
Revolving all those gentler thoughts the busier day-hours check;
A thousand sad, sweet influences in truth and beauty lie
Within the quiet atmosphere of a lone starry sky.

A shower of glittering sparkles fell from off the dashing oar,
As a little boat shot rapidly from an old oak on shore;
His eye and pulse grew quick, the knight’s, his heart kept no true time
In his unsteady breathing, with the light oar’s measur’d chime.

‘Thou hast loiter’d—so, in sooth, should I—thy errand be thy plea,
And now, what of my lady bright, what guerdon sent she me?
Or sat she lonely in her bower, or lovely in the hall?
How look’d she when she took my gift? sir page, now tell me all.’

‘I found her with a pallid cheek, and with a drooping head;
I left her, and the summer rose wears not a gladder red.
And she murmur’d something like the tones a lute has in its chords;
So very sweet the whisper was, I have forgot the words.’

‘A health to thee, my lady love, a health in Spanish wine,
To-night I’ll pledge no other health, I’ll name no name but thine.’
The young page hid his laugh, then dropp’d in rev’rence on his knee:
‘In sooth, good master, that I think to-night may scarcely be.

‘While kneeling at your lady’s feet another dame passed by,
The lion in her haughty step, the eagle in her eye:
“And doth the good knight barter gems? God’s truth, we’ll do the same,”
A pleasant meaning lit the smile that to her proud eyes came.

‘She took the fairest of the gems upon her glittering hand,
With her own fingers fasten’d it upon a silken band,
And held it to the lamp, then said: “Like this stone’s spotless flame
So tell your master that I hold his high and knightly fame.”’

Low on his bended knee the knight received that precious stone,
And bold and proud the spirit now that in his dark eyes shone:

‘Up from your sleep, my mariners, for ere the break of day,
And even now the stars are pale, I must be miles away.’

[Pg 346]

The spray fell from the oars in showers, as in some fairy hall
They say in melting diamonds the charmèd fountains fall;
And though, as set the weary stars, the darker grew the night,
Yet far behind the vessel left a track of silver light.

They saw again that self-same shore which they that morn had pass’d,
On which they look’d as those who know such look may be the last—
Then out he spoke, the helmsman old: ‘I marvel we should go,
Just like a lady’s messenger, on the same path to and fro.’

‘And ’tis to see a lady’s face this homeward task we ply.
I wot the proudest of us all were proud to catch her eye.
A royal gift our queen hath sent, and it were sore disgrace
If that I first put on her gem, and not before her face!’

On the terrace by the river-side there stood a gallant band,
The very flower of knight and dame were there of English land;
The morning wind toss’d ostrich plume, and stirr’d the silken train,
The morning light from gold and gem was mirror’d back again.

There walk’d the Queen Elizabeth; you knew her from the rest
More by the royal step and eye than by the royal vest;
There flashed, though now the step was staid, the falcon eye was still,
The fiery blood of Lancaster, the haughty Tudor’s will.

A lady by the balustrade, a little way apart,
Lean’d languidly, indulging in the solitude of heart
Which is Love’s empire tenanted by visions of his own—
Such solitude is soon disturb’d, such visions soon are flown.

Love’s pleasant time is with her now, for she hath hope and faith,
Which think not what the lover doth, but what the lover saith.
Upon her hand there is a ring, within her heart a vow;
No voice is whispering at her side—what doth she blush for now?

A noble galley valiantly comes on before the wind;
Her sails are dyed by the red sky she’s leaving fast behind.
None other mark’d the ship that swept so eagerly along;
The lady knew the flag, and when hath lover’s eye been wrong?

The lonely lady watch’d; meantime went on the converse gay.
It was as if the spirits caught the freshness of the day.
‘Good omen such a morn as this,’ her Grace of England said,
‘What progress down our noble Thames hath Sir John Perrot made?’

[Pg 347]

Then spoke Sir Walter Raleigh, with a soft and silvery smile,
And an earnest gaze that seem’d to catch the Queen’s least look the while,
‘Methinks that ev’ry wind in heav’n will crowd his sails to fill,
For goeth he not forth to do his gracious Sovereign’s will?’

With that the bark came bounding up, then staid her in her flight;
And right beneath the terrace she moor’d her in their sight.
‘Now, by my troth,’ exclaimed the Queen, ‘it is our captain’s bark.
What brings the loiterer back again?’—her eye and brow grew dark.

‘Fair Queen,’ replied a voice below, ‘I pay a vow of mine,
And never yet was voyage delayed by worship at a shrine.’
He took the jewel in his hand, and bent him on his knee,
Then flung the scarf around his neck, where all the gem might see.

His white plumes swept the very deck, yet once he glanc’d above;
The courtesy was for the Queen, the glance was for his love.
‘Now fare-thee-well,’ then said the Queen, ‘for thou art a true knight.’
But even as she spoke the ship was flitting from the sight.

Woe to the Spaniards and their gold amid the Indian seas,
When rolled the thunder of that deck upon the southern breeze,
For bravely Sir John Perrot bore our flag across the main,
And England’s bells for victory rang when he came home again.

In the will of Thomas Sackville, Duke of Dorset (Lord High Treasurer in the times of Elizabeth and James I.), given in Collins’s ‘Baronage,’ is a mention of a token ring. It is

described as ‘of gold and enamelled black, and set round with diamonds to the number of twenty; whereof, five, being placed in the upper part of the said ring, do represent the fashion of a cross.’ It is further mentioned as to be a heirloom. ‘And to the intent that they may knowe howe just and great cause bothe they and I have to hould the sayed Rynge, with twentie Diamonds, in so highe esteeme, yt is most requisite that I doe here set downe the whole course and circumstance, howe and from whome the same rynge did come to my possession, which was thus: In the Begynning of the monethe of June, one thousand sixe [Pg 348] hundred and seaven, this rynge thus set with twenty Diamonds, as is aforesayed, was sent unto me from my most gracious soveraigne, King James, by that honourable personage, the Lord Haye, one of the gentlemen of His Highnes Bedchamber, the Courte then beying at Whitehall in London, and I at that tyme remayning at Horsley House in Surrey, twentie myles from London, where I laye in suche extremetye of sickness as yt was a common and a constant reporte all over London that I was dead, and the same confidentlie affirmed even unto the Kinge’s Highnes himselfe; upon which occasion it pleased his most excellent majestie, in token of his gracious goodness and great favour towards me, to send the saied Lord Hay with the saied Ringe, and this Royal message unto me, namelie, that his Highness wished a speedie and a perfect recoverye of my healthe, with all happie and good successe unto me, and that I might live as long as the diamondes of that Rynge (which therewithall he delivered unto me) did endure, and in token thereof, required me to weare yt and keepe yt for his sake.’

Among other token rings, under affecting circumstances, I may also mention those given on the eve of his execution (1651) by James Stanley, Earl of Derby, Governor of the Isle of Man —‘a man,’ observes Lodge, ‘of great honour and clear courage.’ A minute narrative of the circumstances of his final hours was penned with touching simplicity by a Mr. Bagaley, one of his gentlemen, who was allowed to attend him to the last, and the manuscript has been carefully preserved in the family. A transcript of the most part of it may be found in Collins’s ‘Peerage.’ He wrote letters to his wife, daughter, and sons, and sent a servant to purchase all the rings he could get. These were wrapped in separate papers, and Bagaley, under the [Pg 349] Earl’s instructions, directed them to his children and servants, and the unfortunate nobleman said: ‘As to them I can say nothing; silence and your own looks will best tell your message.’

Rings, as ‘tokens,’ or pledges, for the repayment of loans were made for Queen Henrietta Maria, the consort of Charles the First, while she was in Holland, endeavouring to raise money and troops for her unfortunate husband. To such as gave her pecuniary assistance she was accustomed to show her gratitude by the gift of a ring, or some other trinket from her own cabinet; but when the increasing exigencies of the King’s affairs compelled her to sell or pawn in Holland the whole of her plate and most of her jewels for his use, she adopted an ingenious device by which she was enabled, at a small expense, to continue her gifts to her friends, and in a form that rendered them more precious to the recipient parties, because they had immediate reference to herself. She had a great many rings, lockets, and bracelet clasps made with her cipher, the letters ‘H. M. R.,’ Henrietta Maria Regina, in very delicate filagree of gold, entwined in a monogram, laid on a ground of crimson velvet, covered with thick crystal, cut like a table-diamond and set in gold. These were called the King’s pledges, or ‘tokens,’ and presented by her to any person who had lent her money, or had rendered her any particular service, with an understanding that if presented to Her Majesty at any future time, when fortune smiled on the royal cause, it would command, either repayment of the money advanced, or some favour from the Queen as an equivalent.

‘Many of these interesting testimonials are still in existence’ (observes Miss Strickland), ‘and, in families where the tradition has been forgotten, have been regarded as amulets [Pg 350] which were to secure good fortune to the wearer.’ One of these royal pledges, Miss Strickland informs us, has been preserved as an heirloom in her family, and there is a ring with the same device, in possession of Philip Darrell, Esq., of Cales Hill, Kent, which was presented to his immediate ancestor by that queen.

It was in the reign of Charles the First that a fearful incident occurred in Scotland (1630) at the Castle of Frendraught—a fire breaking out at midnight in a sudden manner, ‘yea, in ane clap,’ says Spalding, involving the whole of the inmates in destruction, excepting three persons. Viscount Melgum, son of the Marquis of Huntly, only twenty-four years of age, who was a guest of the Laird of Frendraught at the time, perished, leaving a widow and child. A popular ballad of the day speaks of his being called on to leap from the window:—

‘How can I leap, how can I win,
  How can I leap to thee?
My head’s fast in the wire-window,
  My feet burning from me.’
He’s ta’en the rings from aff his hands,
  And thrown them o’er the wall;
Saying, ‘Give them to my lady fair,
  Where she sits in the hall.’

A pledge or token ring of remarkable interest was exhibited by Mr. J. W. Singer at the Loan Exhibition of Ancient and Modern Jewellery, South Kensington Museum, in 1872. This ring (of silver, set with a yellow topaz, diamonds, and a small ruby of English manufacture) has been preserved in the Penderell family, as that given by King Charles II. as a token of

gratitude for the fidelity which saved him in the oak-tree at Boscobel, after the battle of Worcester. At the King's Restoration the five brothers Penderell attended at Whitehall, [Pg 351] 'when his Majesty was pleased to own their faithful service, and graciously dismissed them with a princely reward' ('Boscobel Tracts').

This ring now belongs to Mrs. Whiteby, of Beckington, Somerset, fifth in descent from Penderell. A yearly pension of one hundred pounds for *ever* was conferred upon the family, a portion of which (forty pounds) is now only received by a male relative.

A ring-token, of sinister omen, is mentioned of the same monarch. This ill bestowal of a ring from royalty is exemplified in the case of that hideous judicial monster Jeffreys. With thorough want of judgment, Charles II., in a fit of imprudency, habitual to him, gave the infamous judge a ring from his own finger. This was popularly termed *Jeffreys's blood-stone*, as he obtained it soon after the execution of Sir Thomas Armstrong. Roger North says: 'The King was persuaded to present him with a ring, publicly taken from his own finger, in token of his Majesty's acceptance of his most eminent services; and this, by way of precursor, being blazoned in the Gazette, his Lordship went down into the country as from the King, *legatus à latere*.' And a mission of blood and brutality it was!

A ring-token or present is mentioned in the 'True Remembrances' of Richard Boyle, the great Earl of Cork, who says: 'When first I arrived in Ireland, June 23, 1588, all my wealth then was twenty-seven pounds three shillings in money, and two *tokens* which my mother had given me, viz. a diamond ring, which I have ever since and still do wear, and a bracelet of gold worth about ten pounds.'

Many other instances of ring-tokens might be mentioned, but the limits to which this work is confined prevent me from enlarging on the subject. I will merely allude as a memorable [Pg 352] instance in modern times, to the ring-token presented to George III. on his birthday in 1764 by his Queen. It was a ring splendidly ornamented with brilliants, and contained an enamel in which were the portraits, exquisitely represented, of their children.

I will conclude these notices of token rings with a very stirring ballad by Mr. Planché, entitled 'The Three Rings':—

'Good morrow, lovely lady! Is thy noble lord with thee?'
'Sir knight, since to the wars he went, full moons have wasted three;
Three weary moons have wax'd and waned since he sail'd o'er the main,
And little wist I when these eyes shall see my lord again.'

'Forget him, lovely lady, as by him thou art forgot.'
'Thou dost him wrong, sir knight; by him forgotten I am not:
I hold within my arms a pledge for his true love to me,
This new-born babe—his child and mine—which he hath yet to see.'

'Oh, let me be thy servant, lady—I will love thee dear—'
'Sir knight, I am a wedded wife, such words I may not hear—'
'None else can hear them, lady. What witnesses are nigh?'
'This heart, which is Hernando's, and God who sits on high.'

'Sweet lady, yet a boon, upon my bended knee, I crave—'
'Sir knight, if one which I can grant with honour, ask and have.'
'Oh, give me these three golden rings that on thy fingers shine.'
'Sir knight, with life alone I part with these three rings of mine!'

'Oh, lend them but a day—an hour—to wear them for thy sake—'
'It may not be, such act my lord would proof of falsehood make.'
'Enough, enough, unkind one! Then I may nought obtain?'
'When thou would'st aught that I may grant, sir knight, demand again.'

The knight hath mounted his steed and away—his love is changed to hate.
At the nearest town he lighted down before a goldsmith's gate:
He hath bought three rings of plain red gold, like those by Clara worn,
'O bitterly thy slight of me, proud lady, shalt thou mourn!'

He hath mounted again his coal-black barb before the break of day.
And who is he, the warrior bold, who meets him on the way?
It is the brave Hernando, who, the Soldan's city won, [Pg 353]
Now pants to hold within his arms his wife and new-born son.

'What news? what news? thou noble knight; good friend, thy tidings tell—
How fare my wife and infant child—say, are they safe and well?'
'Thy wife is well, and eke the boy'—'Thy speech is brief and cold;
Clara is true?'—'For answer, look on these three rings of gold.'

One instant, and his vizor's clos'd, his lance is in the rest—
'Defend thee now, thou felon knight! Foul shame be on thy crest!'
One charge—one shock. The traitor's corse is from the saddle cast,

Through plate, and chain, and gambeson, Hernando's spear hath pass'd.

He buries in his courser's flank his bloody spears again;
Away! away! he scales the hill—he thunders o'er the plain!
'Up, Clara, up!' her mother cries; 'Hernando comes! I see
The well-known blazon on his shield. 'Tis he, my child, 'tis he!'

'Oh, mother! rides he fast as one who to his true-love hies?
Canst see his face, dear mother? Looks joy from out his eyes?'
'His helmet, child, is open, and he rideth fast enow,
But his cheek is pale, and bent, as if in anger, seems his brow.'

The tramp of armed feet is heard upon the turret stair;
Forth springs to meet her lord's embrace that lady fond and fair.
By the silken locks, in which his hands have oft been fondly twined,
He hath seized and dragged her from her bower with jealous fury blind.

He hath bound her at his horse's heels—nor shriek nor prayer he heeds;
O'er rugged rock, through bush and briar, the goaded courser speeds;
Her flesh is rent by every thorn, her blood stains every stone,—
Now, Jesu sweet, have mercy! for her cruel lord hath none!

And lo! the sharp edge of a flint hath shorn the cord in twain;
Down leaps the vengeful lord to make his victim fast again.
'What have I done.? Before I die, my crime, Hernando, say?'
'The golden rings I charged thee keep, thou false one, where are they?'

'Oh where, but on the hand which, with my heart, I gave to thee!
Draw off my glove—I cannot—for my strength is failing me!'
'Oh curses on my frantic rage!—my wrong'd—my murder'd wife—
Come forth, my sword! Then, Clara, shall life atone for life!'

She staggered up, love gave her strength, the sword afar she hurl'd,
'Thou know'st my innocence! Oh, live to prove it to the world!
Weep not for Clara—loved by thee, contented she expires! [Pg 354]
Live for our child—the boy whose fame shall emulate his sire's!'

'Our child!—the child my fury hath made motherless to-day!
And when he for his mother asks—O God—what shall I say?'
'Say that her name was Clara—that *thy* love was her pride—
That, blessing him and thee, she smiled, as in thy arms she died!'

Mr. Planché has borrowed the subject of his admirable poem from a legend still popular in Normandy. It is that of Marianson, the wife of a French noble. An evil spirit instigates a false knight to borrow the three golden token-rings of the lady during the absence of her lord. He takes them to a jeweller, who is ordered to prepare three others exactly similar, and then returns the lady her own rings. On his way he meets the husband, whose wife he declares has been unfaithful, and in proof of his assertion he shows the three surreptitious rings. The result of this is the fearful death of Marianson, being tied to the tail of a wild horse, and torn to pieces, and the after-discovery of the three rings in her drawer by the jealous husband.

A somewhat similar legend is related of the Lady of Toggenburg, who lived in a castle near the Lake of Zurich. Her 'token' ring was stolen by a crow, who dropped it in the park, where it was found by a young squire, who placed it on his finger. The Count of Toggenburg, passing at the time, saw the ring, and, inflamed by jealous fury, without asking any questions, rushed into the castle, and hurled his wife from the battlements into the lake. The young squire was torn to pieces by wild horses.

CHAPTER VII. [Pg 355]

MEMORIAL AND MORTUARY RINGS.

Bequests of rings are frequently mentioned in wills of the middle and later ages. In the reign of Henry the Third, two rings were bequeathed to that monarch by a bishop of Chichester, one adorned with an emerald, the other with a ruby. These jewels were taken out and employed to decorate an image of the Virgin at Westminster, and were placed on her forehead.

In the will of Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford and Essex (1319), among various

bequests is ‘un anel d’or avec un ruby qe ma femme me devisa, qe ad tout pleni de coups, et est en un petit forcer en une graunte husche au bout de la basse gardrobe’ (the gold ring with a ruby which his wife devised to him, and which is all covered with bruises, and is in a little casket in a great box at the end of the lower wardrobe). This is probably the same ring mentioned in an inventory of effects as an ‘anel d’or ove j Rubie.’

Thomas de Hoton, rector of Kyrkebymisperton (1351), bequeathed to his chaplain, amongst other objects, ‘j annulum vertuosum.’ Another is to ‘Domine Thome de Bouthum.’ These were supposed to possess some healing, or talismanic properties, such rings being termed, in mediæval Latin, *vertuosus*.

In the ‘Bury Wills and Inventories’ (Camden Society) are various bequests of rings. Some of these entries are very curious. John Baret (1463) leaves to ‘Elizabet Drury, my wyf, a ryng of gold with an ymage of the Trinitie.’ To Dame Margarete Spurdaunce ‘a doubyl ryng departyed of gold, with a ruby and a turkeys, with a scripture wretȳ with jnne, for a rememberaunce of oold love vertuously set at all times to the pleseer of God.’ To his nephew, Thomas Drury, ‘my best ryng of gold next mȳ signet, therein is wretyn *Grace me governe*, with letteris of I and B, accordyng to my name innamelid.’ To his niece Katerine, ‘for a tookne of rememberaunce, a gold ryng, wretyn with jnne the gold ryng, *In noi é Ih’u signo me signo tab*.’ To William Clopton, ‘the jemews and the rynges of sylvir, therin wretyn *Grace me governe*, for a tookne he vowchesaf in tyme comyng to shewe his good maistershepe to my wil.’ To ‘Thomais Brews, esquiyer, my crampe ryng, with blak innamel and a part sylvir and gilt.’ [Pg 356]

Anne of Cleves, who survived Henry VIII., left by her will several mourning-rings of various values for distribution among her friends and dependents.

In the ‘Wills from Doctors’ Commons, 1495 to 1695’ (Camden Society), Cecily, Duchess of York (1495), gives to John Metcalfe and Alice his wife ‘all the ringes that I have, except such as hang by my bedes and Agnus, and also except my signet.’

Anne Barett (1504) bequeaths to Our Lady of Walsingham ‘my maryeng ryng, with all thyngys hangyng theron.’

Agnes Hals (1554) leaves to her son ‘a rynge with the Passion of gold,’ and to her niece ‘my ringe with the wepinge eie;’ to another son ‘my rynge with the dead mān̄es mān̄es head.’

Jasper Despotin, M.D. (1648), wills and appoints ‘ten rings of gold to be made of the value of twenty shillings a peece sterling, with a death’s head vpon some of them, within one moneth after my depture, and to be disposed of amongst my friends as my executrices shall thinke meet.’ To M̄r. Gibbon, ‘fortie shillings sterling to buy him a ring for a memoriall of me.’ [Pg 357]

Lady Anne Drury (1621) bequeaths ‘tenne pounds a peece to all my brothers to buy them ringes, and twentie pounds to be bestowed in ringes of tenne shillinges amongest my freinds whom they shall thinke fitte.’

Edmund Lee (1535) mentions in his will ‘my ij wrethed rynge of gold, whych I ware on my thombe;’ also ‘my gold ryng wt a turkes, and a crampe ryng of gold wt all.’

Dame Maude Parr (1529), amongst other bequests of rings, mentions one ‘with a table diamontt sett with blacke aniell, meate for my little finger.’

Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester (1557), bequeaths, ‘to my Lord Legate’s Grace (Cardinal Pole) a ring with a dyamounte, not so bigge as he is wourthie to have, but such as his poore orator is able to geve.’

Speaker Lenthall (1682) appoints his executor ‘to give my friends Sir John Lenthall, his lady and children, and other my cozens and nephews, 50 gold rings with this motto, “Oritur non Moritur.”’ In a codicil he adds: ‘I also desire that my son will weare his mother’s wedding-ring about his arme in remembrance of her.’

William Prynne (1699) bequeaths ‘to my deare brother, Mr. Thomas Prynne, my best gold ring with my father’s armes.’ To Katheryne Clerke, ‘my best serjeant’s ring.’ To her husband, ‘one of my gold rings. Item. I give to every one of their sonnes and daughters who shal be living at the tyme of my decease one gold ring, and one hundred pounds a peece.’ [Pg 358]

In the will of Sir Richard Gresham (died 1548), father of the founder of the Exchange, he bequeathed a ring to the Protector, Duke of Somerset, and another to the profligate Duchess of Somerset, each of the value of five pounds, and he also left rings to all his friends.

John Meres, an ‘Esquire Beadle’ of Corpus Christi College, left, in 1558, to the Vice-Chancellor of the College a ring weighing a royal (valued at ten shillings): to Dr. Hutcher, a ring worth fifteen shillings, and a gold ring set with a cornelian to each of the ‘supervisors.’ Meres had a patent for being gauger in 1550.

Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, gave by will (1575) a gold ring with a round sapphire to Edmund Grindal, Archbishop of York, who succeeded him in the see of Canterbury.

In Collins’s ‘Baronage’ is the curious will of Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset (Lord High Treasurer in the times of Elizabeth and James I.), in which several rings are mentioned (see

chapter on ‘Token-Rings’). Amongst others ‘a ring of gold enamelled black, wherein is set a great table diamonde, beying perfect and pure, and of much worth.’ This ring, with other jewels, was given to him by the King of Spain. During the minority of his descendants, these were to be consigned, as heirlooms, ‘in a strong chest of iron, under two several keys,’ to the custody of the Warden, and a senior fellow of New College, Oxford.

Sir Philip Sidney (1586) desires that ‘three gold rings, set with large diamonds, might be fashioned exactly alike, for his aunt, the Countess of Sussex; another aunt’s husband, the Earl of Huntingdon; and his brother-in-law, the Earl of Pembroke.’

Thomas Wentworth, one of the chiefs of that great house, who died in 1587, bequeathed to his son and heir, William, besides other valuables, his gold ring, ‘whereon is engraved his crest, badge, and cognizance.’ [Pg 359]

Among the Rokeby family papers, in the will of Sir Ralph Rokeby (1600), is the bequest of several rings, ‘gratuities to kynsfolkes.’

Thomas Sutton, founder of the Charter House, bequeaths (in 1611) ten pounds to Mr. Thomas Brown, ‘to make him a ring.’

Our great national dramatist, Shakspeare, in his will (dated 1616) mentions certain moneys for the purchase of rings by several of his friends. Five are mentioned: two are his townsmen, Hamlet (*Hamnet*) Sadler, and William Reynolds, who have each twenty-six shillings and eightpence left them ‘to buy them ringes,’ the other three being the actors (‘my fellows,’ as he affectionately terms them), John Hemynge, Richard Burbage, and Henry Cundell, each of whom has a similar sum.

In the testament of Richard Burgess, vicar of Witney (1632), he gives to his eldest son, John, the ring which he usually wore on his left hand, and also ‘twenty shillings to each of the two overseers of his last will, to purchase rings.’

Sir Henry Wotton, in 1637, leaves to each of the Fellows at Eton College ‘a plain gold ring, enamelled black, all save the verge, with this motto within, “Amor unit omnia.”’

In a will, dated 1648, occurs this clause: ‘I do will and appoint ten rings of gold to be made, of the value of twenty shillings a piece, sterling, with a death’s-head upon some of them.’

The stock of rings described in the Duke of Newcastle’s play, ‘The Varietie’ (1649), as the treasure of an old country lady, is suggestive of past legacies or memorials as well as the tastes of the yeomanry at that period: ‘A toadstone, two Turkies (turquoises), six thumb-rings, three alderman’s seals, five gemmals, and foure death’s-head,’ The enumeration concludes with the uncomplimentary observation, ‘these are alehouse ornaments’ (Fairholt). [Pg 360]

There are numerous varieties of mourning rings left by bequest in former times. The accompanying illustration represents one that would appeal to the feelings of the survivors in the simple and affecting inscription which it bears: ‘When this you see, remember me.’ The ring is of silver, jet, and gold.

Old Mourning ring.

Miss Agnes Strickland, in her ‘Lives of the Four Princesses of the Royal House of Stuart,’ mentions a circumstance in the life of the Princess Henrietta Anne (1670), that, ‘as Bossuet was kneeling by her bedside, she suddenly turned to one of her ladies and spoke to her in English, which the Bishop did not understand, to tell her that when she should have entered into her rest, she was to give Bossuet the emerald ring which had been ordered to be made for him as a memorial of her.’

Izaak Walton added a codicil to his will (1683) for the distribution of memorial rings to several of his relations and friends, with the motto, ‘A friend’s farewell. I. W., obiit;’ the value of the rings to be thirteen shillings and fourpence each. In the will itself he gives to his son-in-law, Dr. Hawkins, ‘whom I love as my own son;’ to his daughter, his wife, and his son Izaak, a ring to each of them, with the motto, ‘Love my memory. I. W., obiit.’ To the Lord Bishop of Winchester a ring, with the motto, ‘A mite for a million. I. W., obiit.’ [Pg 361]

In a codicil of the last testament of Nell Gwyn (1687) she requests that Lady Fairborne may have fifty pounds given to her to buy a ring.

Dr. John Spencer, Master of Corpus Christi College, in his will (1693) left twenty shillings to each of the Fellows of his college for a funeral ring.

Queen Elizabeth, eldest daughter to James the First, wore to the day of her death a mourning ring, in which was a lock of her brother's hair, brought over to Bohemia by a faithful servant, with the device of a crown over a skull and cross-bones, and the letters 'C. R.' After her death, in 1662, it was much prized by her descendants, and was long a heirloom among them.

On the eve of the death of Henrietta Anne, the daughter of Charles the First, she sent most tender messages to her brothers King Charles the Second, and James, Duke of York; and, drawing from her finger a ring, she expressed a wish that it might be sent to the former, as a memorial of her dying love.

A remarkable interest is attached to the bequest of a ring by Sir Charles Cotterell, master of the ceremonies, who died in 1700. The particulars are given in the 'Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries' (January 30, 1862). 'I bequeath to my constantly obliging Friend, S^{r} Stephen Fox, a ring wth a figure cut in an onyx, which was given by King Charles y^{e} first, from his Finger to S^{r} Philip Warwick, at y^{e} Treaty in the Isle of Wight, to seal letters he there writt for him, and wh^{ch} S^{r} Philip left to me for a Legacy, and w^{ch} I cannot leave to anybody that has been a greater Honourer of that Excellent Prince's Memory, nor a Worthier Friend [Pg 362] to us both, and who for these reasons I know will value it.' To this has been added, by Sir Stephen Fox, 'which I leave to my son Stephen and his Heirs, enjoining him to keep it in remembrance of the excellent King that gave it off his Finger to S^{r} Philip Warwick, who died in August 1684, and his son Philip at New Market a month after, and excellent S^{r} Charles Cotterell died in the year 1700, and after this was left to my good son Charles, who died in September 1713. Ste(phen) Fox.'

At the commencement of the first of these memoranda, and (observes Mr. Franks, by whom these particulars were given to the Society) at the conclusion of the last are much-mutilated impressions from a very small antique gem, which, there can be no doubt, is the onyx set in the ring in question. The figure is of fine workmanship, and represents a partially-draped young man standing in profile to the right. It is, possibly, a representation of Mercury, and resembles somewhat in attitude the bronze statue found at Huis, in the south of France, and known as the Payne Knight Mercury.

Mr. Franks corrects an error of Sir Stephen Fox as to the date of the death of Sir Philip Warwick, which took place January 15, 1682-3.

The subsequent history of this remarkable ring is contained in a short note written on the envelope enclosing the above memoranda, by the Earl of Ilchester, son of Sir Stephen Fox. 'Memorandum: I am much concerned for the loss of the ring which was given by King Charles I. to Sir Philip Warwick, as mentioned in the enclosed paper. This ring was stolen when my house in Burlington Street was broken open by rogues in January 1722.'

'With these papers' (remarks Mr. Franks) 'is preserved a long letter giving an account of the [Pg 363] burglary, which took place during the absence of the family, and was of a very cool and daring character. It is sadly to be feared that the gold setting of the ring has found its way to the melting-pot; the onyx, however, may have been preserved, and may, probably, be hereafter identified by the mutilated impressions in the Earl of Ilchester's possession.'

In the Appendix to Pepys's 'Diary' is a list of all the persons to whom rings and mourning were presented upon the occasion of his death (May 26, 1703) and funeral, by which it appears that forty-six rings of the value of twenty shillings, sixty-two at fifteen shillings, and twenty at ten shillings were distributed among friends on that occasion.

In a codicil to the will of Bishop Burnet (died 1715) a long list of legacies occurs to his children; some of these were afterwards erased, and amongst them the bequest of 'my pointed diamond' to Gilbert, his second son. The ring was given to the late Sir John Sewell of Doctors' Commons, by a descendant from Bishop Burnet. This ring is in the possession of Mr. C. Desborough, Bedford. In the collection of the Duke of Richmond is a memorial ring, gold, set with diamond, hoop enamelled in white, and inscribed 'E. S. Dux Buckingensis,' divided by a ducal coronet on a black ground. English work of the middle of the seventeenth century. Made in memory of Edmund Sheffield, second Duke of Buckingham, who died a minor in 1735.

That great man, George Washington, in his will, thus bequeaths 'to my sisters-in-law Hannah Washington and Mildred Washington, to my friends Eleanor Stuart, Hannah Washington, of Fairfield, and Elizabeth Washington, of Hayfield, I give each a mourning-ring of the value of one hundred dollars. These bequests are not made for the intrinsic value of them, but as [Pg 364] mementos of my esteem and regard.'

In a few loving words addressed by a Lady Palmerston, when dying, to her husband, after mentioning the wealth at her disposal, which she gave to him, she mentions two chocolate-cups formed of mourning-rings, which were used daily by Lady Palmerston in memory of departed friends; these she wished her husband to look upon as a remembrance of death, and also of the fondest and most faithful friend he ever had.

A very long list might be added of bequests of rings by distinguished persons, but I must be content to notice how the practice has been continued at intervals to the present time. A

notable item occurs in the will of Charlotte Augusta Matilda, eldest daughter of George III., and Queen of Wurtemberg, in which she bequeaths to the Princess Augusta, among other costly objects, a ring containing a watch, set with brilliants.

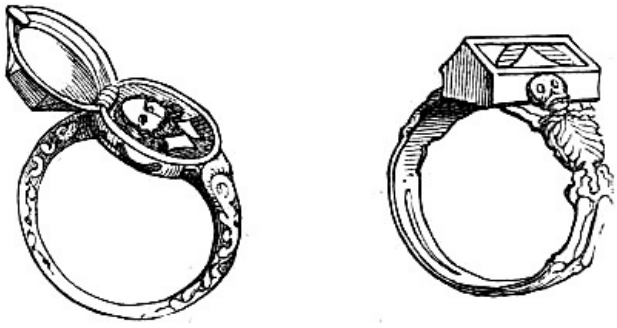
Rings were formerly given to attendants at funerals; an extract from the books of the Ironmongers' Company, dated 1719, states: 'The master acquainted the court that one John Turney, an undertaker for funerals, had lately buried one Mrs. Mason for the Hall, but had refused the master, wardens, and clerk each a ring, &c., according to his agreement, the persons invited being served with gloves, hat-bands, and rings. Ordered: the said undertaker be compelled to perform his agreement as the master and wardens shall direct.' The practice of offering rings at funerals is introduced as an incident in 'Sir Amadace.'

In former days widows wore their ring on the thumb as an emblem of widowhood, and the following 'trick' in connection with it is mentioned in the 'Spectator:'—'It is common enough [Pg 365] for a stale virgin to set up a shop in a place where the large thumb-ring, supposed to be given her by her husband, quickly recommends her to some wealthy neighbour, who takes a liking to the jolly widow that would have overlooked the veritable spinster.'

Among the most touching episodes in connection with memorial rings is that exhibited in the closing hours of the unfortunate Mary, Queen of Scots, at Fotheringay Castle, just previous to her execution. She distributed the jewels that remained to her among her faithful attendants as tokens of her affection and regard. Among other sad memorials, she desired that a sapphire ring, which she took from her finger, might be conveyed as a mark of grateful acknowledgment to her brave kinsman Lord Claude Hamilton. Concerning this ring, Bishop Burnet says, 'it is carefully preserved as one of the most precious heirlooms of that illustrious family.' Miss Strickland informs us that it is now in the possession of Lord Claude's accomplished representative, the present Duke of Hamilton, 'by whom it was courteously shown to me at Hamilton Palace in 1857. It is a large square sapphire of peculiar beauty, rose-cut in several diamond-points, and set in gold enamelled blue in the curious cinque-cento work of that period.'

In the 'Times' (January 2, 1857) is an account of another memorial ring of the last sad hours of Queen Mary at Fotheringay. The letter is signed 'A Constant Reader.' 'There is a lady residing at Broadstairs who is in possession of the identical ring which was worn by Mary, previous to her execution, and given by her to one of her maids of honour as a token of remembrance, and who was afterwards so reduced as to be compelled to sell it for the value of the gold. The engraving is on amber, the usual material for such purposes at that period, [Pg 366] and, as you may see from the enclosed impression, is much worn by time. It is supposed that the seal in the late Earl of Buchan's collection was copied from it. This valuable antique was purchased many years ago by a member of the present possessor's family, at the sale of the celebrated antiquary John M'Gowan, of Edinburgh, who considered it a most valuable gem.'

A ring memorial was sent by the Countess of Hertford (the great granddaughter of Henry VII., and one of the victims of Queen Elizabeth's jealousy) on her dying bed by the hands of Sir Owen Hopton, of Cockfield Hall, Suffolk: 'This shall be the last token unto my lord that ever I shall send him. It is the picture of myself.' The ring bore a death's head with an inscription around it: 'while I live—yours.'



Memorial rings, Charles I.

The Londesborough Collection contains two memorial rings of King Charles I., one of gold, with a table-faced diamond, and two smaller diamonds on each side. On the shank is engraved an elongated skeleton, with cross-bones above the skull, and a spade and pickaxe at the feet upon black enamel. Within is engraved 'C. R., January 30, 1649, Martyr.'

The other ring is also of gold, with a square table-faced diamond on an oval face, which [Pg 367] opens and reveals beneath a portrait of Charles in enamel. The face of the ring, the back and side portions of the shank are engraved with scroll-work, filled in with black enamel.

Memorial ring, Charles I.

In the fifteenth day's sale (May 11, 1842) at Strawberry Hill (lot 59), 'a truly interesting relic,' as the ring was termed, is recorded to have been bought by Mr. Harvey, of Regent Street, for fifteen guineas. In Horace Walpole's catalogue it is described as one of the *only seven* mourning-rings given at the burial of Charles I. It has the King's head in miniature behind a death's-head between the letters 'C. R.' The motto is 'Prepared be to follow me.' A present to Horace Walpole from Lady Murray Elliott.

'A long and minute account of a ring,' remarks the late Crofton Croker, 'with a miniature of Charles I., appeared in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for July 1823. It was then in the possession of the late Captain I. Toup Nicholas, R.N., and he inherited it from the Giffard family. This ring had four diamonds on the top, on lifting up which, a head of King Charles, enamelled on a turquoise, presented itself. The size of the painting does not exceed the fourth part of an inch; the execution is particularly fine, and the likeness excessively faithful. The small part of his Majesty's dress which is visible, appears similar to that in which he is usually represented; and a piece of the ribbon to which the "George" is suspended is discernible; on closing the lid the portrait becomes perfectly hid. Although miniatures of [Pg 368] Charles I. are not uncommon, this is particularly valuable from the portrait being concealed, and also from its being supposed to be the smallest of him.'

At page 152 of Hulbert's 'History of Salop' is an account of a ring in the possession of the Misses Pigott, of Upton Magna, said to be one of the four presented by Charles I., prior to his execution. It bears a small but beautiful miniature of the royal martyr. Inside the ring and reverse of the portrait is inscribed over a death's-head 'January 30, 1649,' inside of the ring is engraved 'Martyr Populi.'

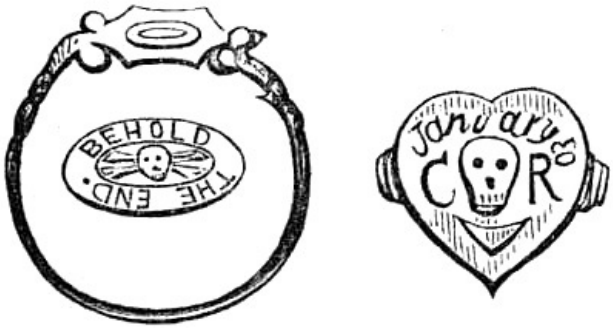
A similar ring to this is in the possession of Mrs. Henderson (formerly Miss Adolphus), of London; and is said to have come to her in the female line, through her mother's family. Charles presented it to Sir Lionel Walden on the morning in which he lost his life. It bears a miniature likeness of the King, set in small brilliants. Inside the ring are the words 'Sic transit gloria mundi.' A ring bearing the same inscription and a miniature of King Charles is in the collection of John Evans, Esq., F.R.S., Vice-President of the Antiquarian Society.

In the family of Rogers, of Lota, a ring is still preserved as a heirloom which was presented to an ancestor by King Charles I. during his misfortunes. In the will of Robert Rogers, which was registered in the Record-office, Dublin, occurs the following paragraph: 'And I also bequeath to Noblett Rogers the miniature portrait-ring of the martyr Charles I., given by that monarch to my ancestor, previous to his execution, and I particularly desire that it may be preserved in the name and family.' The miniature, which is beautifully painted in enamel, and said to be by Vandyck, has been re-set in a very tasteful and appropriate style: the [Pg 369] original settings and inscriptions exactly correspond with those on the ring in the possession of the Misses Pigott, as previously mentioned. The correspondent of 'Notes and Queries,' from whom I have derived this information, adds: 'I have lately seen a ring with a portrait of Charles on ivory in a coarse and very inferior style, and in a plain gold setting. It is in the possession of a gentleman, in whose family it has remained for several generations.'

Another memorial ring of Charles I. is described in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' (September 1823) as having belonged to a lady named Heanaud, who died at Chelsea in 1809. 'The ring itself was of pure gold, and without jewellery or ornament of any kind. On the top of it was an oval of white enamel, not more than half an inch in longitudinal diameter, and apparently about an eighth of an inch in thickness. The surface was slightly convexed, and divided into four compartments, in each of which was painted one of the four cardinal virtues, which, although so minute as to be scarcely perceptible to the clearest sight, by the application of a glass appeared perfectly distinct, each figure being well proportioned, and having its appropriate attitude. By touching a secret spring the case opened and exposed to view a very beautifully-painted miniature of the unfortunate Charles, with the pointed beard, mustachios, etc., as he is usually portrayed, and, from its resemblance to the portraits generally seen of the monarch, having every appearance of being a strong likeness. Within the lid of this little box (for box, in fact, it was) were enamelled, on a dark ground, a skull

and cross-bones.’

Mr. Howe, master-gunner at the castle of Carisbrooke, had a little son, who was a great favourite of the unfortunate Charles. One day, seeing him with a sword at his side, the King asked him what he intended doing with it. ‘To defend your Majesty from your Majesty’s enemies,’ was the reply, which so pleased the King that he gave the child the signet-ring he was wearing. It has descended to Mr. Wallace, of Southsea, a kinsman of Mr. Cooke, of Newport, who belonged to the Howe family. [Pg 370]



Royalist memorial ring.

In Lockhart’s ‘Life of Scott’ it is stated that Sir Henry Halford gave Sir Walter Scott a lock of the hair of Charles I., when the royal martyr’s remains were discovered at Windsor, April 1813. Sir John Malcolm gave him some Indian coins to supply virgin gold for the setting of this relic, and, for some years, Sir Walter constantly wore this ring, which had the word ‘Remember’ embossed upon it.

Memorial ring of Charles I.

Miss Gerard is in possession of a memorial gold ring which is stated to have been given to Bishop Juxon by Charles I., on the scaffold, since which period it has been preserved as an heirloom in the family of the present owner. The ring appears to resemble those of the period of Henry VIII. It is described and engraved in the ‘Gentleman’s Magazine’ for October 1797. The bezel is hexagonal, with death’s-head in white enamel on black ground, surrounded by the legend ‘BEHOLD . THE . ENDE;’ round the edge is the motto ‘RATHER . DEATH . THEN . FALS . FAITH.’ At the back the initials ‘M’ and ‘L’ tied with a mourning ribbon.

This interesting ‘memorial’ was exhibited at the Loan Exhibition of Ancient and Modern Jewellery at the South Kensington Museum in 1872.

In the Braybrooke Collection is one of the Royalist mourning-rings, of gold, with slight hoop beautifully inlaid with black enamel, the top surmounted by an oval box three quarters of an inch long, the sides of which are ornamented with perpendicular ovals of black and white enamel alternately. The inside or under part of the box is inlaid with fifteen longer ovals in a similar manner, round a black centre, in imitation of a sun-flower. The box contains a large and beautifully-painted portrait of Charles I. on blue enamel ground, over a surface as large as half an acorn. The base of this is bound by a narrow band of plain gold. Lord Braybrooke described this ring as one of the most beautiful he had seen, and, besides the superiority of the workmanship, the likeness is well preserved. [Pg 371]

In the same collection is a Royalist gold mourning-ring with black enamel inlaid upon the shoulders of the hoop and also upon the circular box on the top, which contains a sort of love-knot, or possibly intended for the royal cipher, below a cut crystal setting.

After the execution of Dr. John Hewett, chaplain to Charles I., and the object of Cromwell’s vindictive cruelty, a mourning-ring inscribed ‘Herodes necuit Johannem,’ was worn by the Royalists.

The mourning-ring for King Charles II. bore the inscription ‘Chs. Rex. Remem.—obiit—ber.: 6th Feb. 1685.’

In the Waterton Collection at the South Kensington Museum is a memorial gold ring, with oval bezel set with crystal, beneath which is a crown with the initials ‘C. R. K. B.’ in gold, over hair (Charles II. and Catharine of Braganza). English. Date about 1685. Diameter, nine-

tenths of an inch.

Devices illustrative of death have frequently formed the subjects of mourning-rings. Among some antiquities found in Sussex, and exhibited at the Society of Antiquaries in March 1866, [Pg 372] was the fragment of a mourning-ring set with a coffin-shaped crystal, on which was delicately engraved a skeleton.

In the Braybrooke Collection is a gold ring of about the end of the sixteenth or beginning of the seventeenth century, with a hexagonal tablet, which is inlaid with a white stone engraved with a death's-head; round it on the gold are engraved the words 'Dye to Live.'[68]

In the same collection is a 'memento mori' ring, of bronze, with a tablet on the hoop, half an inch square, and edges serrated; a death's-head is engraved upon it with the above inscription. Rings with the same device and words are alluded to by Beaumont and Fletcher in the 'Chances:'

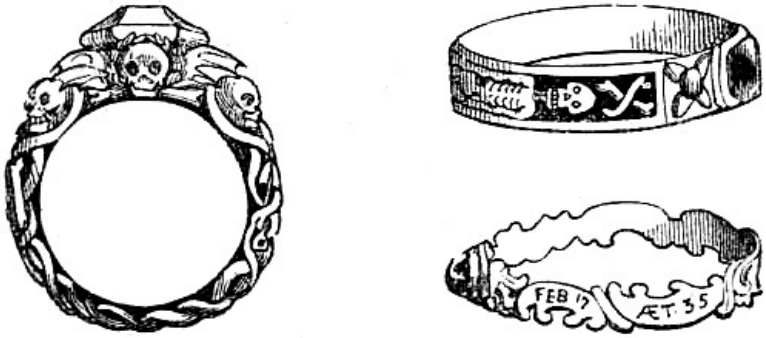
> I'll keep it as they keep death's-heads in rings,
> To cry 'memento' to me.

Rings engraved with skulls and skeletons were not, however, necessarily mourning-rings, but were worn also by persons who affected gravity. Luther wore a gold ring with a small death's-head in enamel, which is now preserved in Dresden (see 'Remarkable Rings'). Biron, in 'Love's Labour's Lost,' refers to 'a death's face in a ring.'

Mr. Fairholt describes a ring on which two figures of skeletons surround the finger and [Pg 373] support a small sarcophagus. The ring is of gold, enamelled, the skeletons being made still more hideous by a covering of white enamel. The lid of the sarcophagus is also enamelled, with a Maltese cross in red on a black ground studded with gilt hearts. This lid is made to slide off and display a very minute skeleton lying within (Londesborough Collection).

In the 'Recueil des Ouvrages d'Orfévrerie,' by Gilles l'Egaré, published in the early part of the reign of Louis XIV., is an unusually good design for a mourning-ring with skull decorations.

In the Londesborough Collection is a fine specimen of a mourning-ring of the early part of the last century.



Memorial and mortuary rings.

In digging a grave in or near Ripon some years ago a sexton discovered an ancient signet-ring, on which was engraved a dormouse coiled up in sleep, with an inscription around it, in black-letter characters, 'Wake me no man.' A similar ring is said to have been turned up in a churchyard near Scarborough.

At a meeting of the Royal Archæological Institute in April 1875, Mr. Fortnum, F.S.A., exhibited a mourning-ring of Queen Anne, the bezel of which is formed as a coffin, [Pg 374] containing a mat of the Queen's hair, over which are the crowned initials A. R., and a death's-head and cross-bones beneath a piece of crystal. The hoop is enamelled black, with the inscription 'ANNA . REGINA . PIA . FELIX,' in letters of gold; inside is engraved, 'Nat. 5 Feb. 1664. Inaug. 8 March 1702. Obt. 1 August 1714.'

In the Braybrooke Collection is a small and delicate lady's gold mourning-ring, in memory of Queen Mary, wife of William III. The hoop, which is very slight, is inlaid upon the shoulders with black enamel and surmounted by a square box for setting, ornamented with perpendicular lines of the same down the sides. The box contains a tress of the deceased Queen's hair, plaited, with 'M. R.' and a crown in small gold ciphers laid over it. A crystal, cut into facets, encloses them. The under side of the box has a death's-head and cross-bones inlaid in black enamel.

In the same collection is a gold mourning-ring, inscribed, in letters of gold on black enamel, 'Gulielmus III. Rex., 1702.' After the 'Rex.' is a death's-head of gold. It is a slight gold hoop with a silver frame on the summit, set round with six small pearls, and made to imitate a buckle with a gold tongue across it, so that the band of it, visible below, resembles the garter.

In the collection of the late Lady Fellows was an ivory patch-box, with figure-subject carved in relief, formerly belonging to the unfortunate Queen Marie Antoinette, and containing a

small gold ring, given by her to one of her attendants.

Pope bequeathed sums of five pounds to friends, who were to lay them out in rings; and Gray, the poet, in his will, gives an amount of stock to Richard Stonehewer, adding: ‘And I beg his acceptance of one of my diamond rings.’ The same bequest is given to Dr. Thomas Warton of a diamond ring and five hundred pounds. To his cousins he leaves his watches, rings, etc. [Pg 375]

A touching instance of ‘memorial’ rings occurs in late times. The Princess Amelia, before her death, in 1810, had the sad satisfaction of placing on the finger of her royal father, George III., a ring made by her own directions for the express purpose, containing a small lock of her hair enclosed under a crystal tablet, set round with a few sparks of diamonds. This memorial of affection, given almost on her death-bed, hastened the attack of the mental disorder from which the King had suffered so much about twenty years before. The circumstances attending this gift were very affecting; she held the ring in her hand at the time of her father’s accustomed visit, and, while placing it on his finger, said, ‘Take this in remembrance of me.’

This affecting incident was commemorated by Dr. Wolcot in some elegant lines, very different to his usual compositions:—

> With all the virtues blest, and every grace
> To charm the world and dignify the race,
> Life’s taper losing fast its feeble fire,
> The fair Amelia thus bespoke her sire:
> ‘Faint on the bed of sickness lying,
> My spirit from its mansion flying.
> Not long the light these languid eyes will see,
> My friend, my father, and my king,
> Receive the token and remember me!’

Lord Eldon wore a mourning-ring in memory of his wife, and desired in his will that it might be buried with him.

A very interesting memorial ring in connection with the death of Nelson is mentioned in a communication to ‘Notes and Queries’ (vol. vii. 1st series, p. 305). Mr. Nicholls, of Pelsall, Staffordshire, writes: ‘I am in possession of a ring which in place of a stone has a metal basso-relievo representation of Nelson (half-bust). The inscription inside the ring is as follows: “A gift to T. Moon from G. L. Stoppleberg, 1815.” The late Mr. Thomas Moon was an eminent merchant of Leeds, and the writer has always understood that the ring referred to, is one of three or half a dozen which were made subsequently to Nelson’s death. The metal (blackish in appearance) forming the basso-relievo, set in them, being in reality portions of the ball which gave the late lamented and immortal admiral his fatal wound at Trafalgar.’ [Pg 376]

Another memorial ring of the greatest of our naval commanders is described in ‘Notes and Queries’ (4th series, vol. x. p. 292) as belonging to a lady whose husband’s father’s aunt married Earl Nelson (a clergyman), and whose husband inherited the ring. ‘It is of gold; on the bezel, a broad oblong with rounded corners, is a black enamelled field, surrounded by a white border. In coloured enamel on the field appear two coronets, one that of a viscount, with the velvet cap, but showing, however, only seven pearls, the letter “N,” in Old English character, appearing underneath. The second coronet is a British ducal one, without the cap, and has under it the letter “B” in old English. Beneath the above runs in Roman capitals the word “Trafalgar.” Round the broad hoop of the ring is incised, in Roman capitals, “Palmam qui meruit ferat,” the hero’s motto, and inside the bezel, in English cursive characters, “Lost to his country 21 Oct 1805. Aged 47.”’

Of course, the coronets and letters ‘N’ and ‘B’ refer to the titles Nelson and Bronté, but the heraldic insignia were evidently not executed by an adept. The case in which this ring is lodged appears to be the original one, and has on a printed oval label ‘Sa’ (the rest wanting, probably ‘ms’), ‘Jew’ (rest, of course, ‘eller’), ‘Silversmith, and Cutleer, 35, Strand.’ [Pg 377]

On the subject of Nelson memorial rings, the Rev. Dr. Gatty, in ‘Notes and Queries’ (4th series, vol. x. p. 356), says: ‘I do not think these rings can be very uncommon, and I have no doubt that Sir Thomas Hardy and other officers serving under Lord Nelson received one. My wife, who is a daughter of the Rev. A. J. Scott, D.D., Nelson’s chaplain and foreign secretary on the “Victory,” has one in her possession, which was sent to her father, and to whom Lord Nelson left a legacy of 200*l.* Our friend Mrs. Mirehouse, a daughter of the late Bishop Fisher of Salisbury, has also a similar ring. We have always thought they were given, after the old fashion of “mourning” rings. The pattern is certainly handsome and tasteful.’

Mr. H. S. Williams, F.R.H.S., writing to the editor of ‘Notes and Queries’ (4th series, vol. x. p. 441), remarks that rings (with the Viscount’s coronet with ‘N’ beneath it for the title Viscount Nelson, the ducal coronet, that of Sicily, for the Bronté estate and dukedom) of this description were made in 1806 by Lord Nelson’s private friend Salter, jeweller in the Strand, and by the order of Dr. William Nelson, who was then Earl Nelson. There were fully a hundred of these rings originally made, as every admiral and post captain, then living, who was present at the Battle of Trafalgar had one, as well as every member of the Nelson, Bolton, and Matcham families.

The custom of decorating the dead with their jewellery (including rings) has been traced in a remarkable manner to the earliest periods of the world's history. In Genesis xli. 56, 57, we read: 'The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto all the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And *all countries* came into Egypt for to buy corn, because that the famine was so sore in all lands.' [Pg 378]

But Joseph could not empty the storehouses of Egypt to satisfy the cravings of all lands, nor sell away the bread of Egypt at any price when money became less precious than bread.

Such was the state of things when an Arabian princess in Yemen wrote, or when in her name were written, to be inscribed on her sepulchre, some impressive lines. Ebn Hesham relates that a flood of rain had laid bare a sepulchre in Yemen, in which lay a woman having on her neck seven collars of pearls, and on her hands and feet bracelets and armlets, and ankle-rings, seven on each, *and on every finger a ring in which was set a jewel of great price*, and at her head a coffer filled with treasure, and a tablet with an inscription thus translated by Mr. Forster:—

> In thy name, O God, the God of Himyar,
> I, Tajah, the daughter of Dzu Shefar, sent my servant to Joseph,
> And he delaying to return to me, I sent my handmaid,
> With a measure of silver, to bring me back a measure of flour:
> And not being able to procure it, I sent her with a measure of gold:
> And not being able to procure it, I commanded them to the ground:
> And finding no profit in them, I am shut up here.
> Whosoever may hear of it, let him commiserate me;
> And should any woman adorn herself with an ornament
> From my ornaments, may she die with no other than my death.

Inexorable with the Arabian princess, severe with his own brethren, proof against the blandishments of Potiphar's wife, yet susceptible of every pure and generous affection, this saviour of Egypt was ever consistent with himself.[69] [Pg 379]

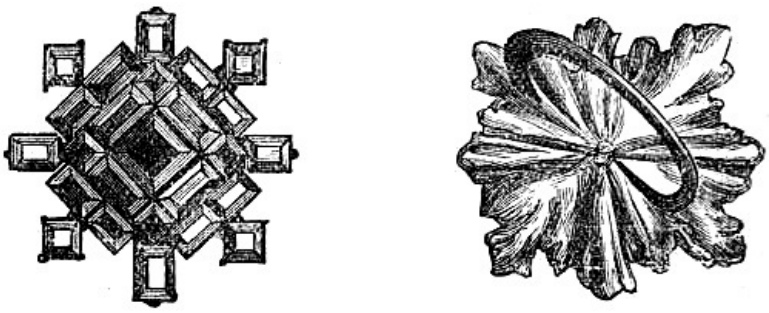
This Biblical monument confirms in a remarkable manner the truth of the Old Testament history.

In opening ancient sepulchral barrows plain or jewelled rings have in many instances been found, which, perhaps, a widowed wife or widower took from their fingers, and flung, in the intensity of their grief, into the graves of those they mourned. A modern instance of this is given in the 'Times' of October 28, 1865, when, at the funeral of Lord Palmerston in Westminster Abbey, the chief mourner, the Rev. Mr. Sullivan, as 'a precious offering to the dead,' threw into the grave several diamond and gold rings. Small rings are frequently met with on the breasts of mummies. At the excavations at Veii and Præneste, by Padre Raffaele Garucchi, a great quantity of tiny rings of yellow and blue enamel were found, of a similar character to those mentioned.

It was customary among the Anglo-Saxons to place rings and other ornaments in the grave: an early Anglo-Saxon poem, recounting the adventures of the chieftain Beowulf and his burial, states 'they put into the mound rings and bright gems.'

The custom of burying corpses with a ring on the finger continued for ages, as I have remarked in several chapters of this work. Annexed is an illustration, from the 'Archæologia' (vol. ii. p. 32, 1773), of a ring with seventy-five table-diamonds, set in gold, found in 1748 in a grave at Carne, seven miles west of Mullinghar, in the county of Westmeath, Ireland.

In the antiquarian researches in the Ionian Isles in 1812 ('Archæologia,' vol. xxxiii.) some rings were discovered in tombs at Samo and Ithaca. One of these appears to have been a silver finger-ring, or signet, bearing on the upper part an elliptic piece of glass or crystal, in a state of decomposition, turning on the wire that passes through it. [Pg 380]



Squared-work diamond ring found in Ireland.

The other is a gold ring of solid fabric, having for device the figure of a female with a bare head; one arm is enveloped in the folds of her dress, while the other hand is pouring incense on a slender altar. A zigzag garland surrounds the verge of the field. The locality would suggest that it may represent Penelope sacrificing to some tutelar deity, and invoking it to conduct Ulysses home in safety—a conceit which might hold good, even were the work decided to be Roman.

There are some remarkably fine specimens of rings in the Royal Danish Museum, which have been discovered in Scandinavian graves, and some of which are represented in the chapter on ‘Rings from the Earliest Period’ (p. 68).

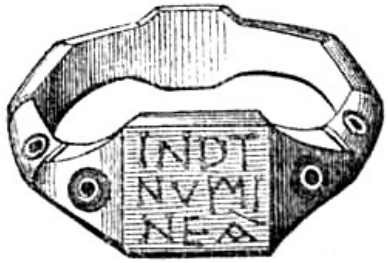
On the opening of some barrows on the wolds of Yorkshire in 1815, 1816, and 1817, among other disinterments was the skeleton of a female, and some of her ornaments; amongst others, a ring of red amber, in exterior diameter 1⅝ in., in interior diameter half an inch. Also a small ring scarcely one inch in diameter, and a ring of very nearly standard gold, [Pg 381] weighing 3 dwts. 21 grs. In front this ring is clasped in a kind of rose, or quatrefoil, and it is an ornament by no means of despicable workmanship. The era of this interment is supposed to be prior to a general extension of Christianity in Britain.

Stukeley (Abury, p. 45) records the finding of a flat gold ring in a barrow at Yatesbury. Douglas, in his discoveries of a later date (‘Nenia Brit.’ p. 117), says ‘rings to the finger seldom occur of any ponderous metal, like the Roman ones of gold, silver, and bronze.’

In the museum at Mayence (the Roman Maguntiacum, or Mogontiacum), so exceedingly rich in antiquarian remains, there are some fine specimens of finger-rings found in Franconian graves. The following illustration represents a gold ring, set with a coin, which is probably the copy of a Roman one:—

Mortuary ring at Mayence.

In the second cut the inscription of the reverse, excepting a few letters, is erased in the process of fastening the ring to it, by the melting of the metal.



Mortuary ring at Mayence.

A metal ring with inscription translated ‘In Dei nomine, Amen.’

A gold finger-ring with a figure in the centre of the shield; the ornaments of dragons on the [Pg 382] outer panels are inlaid with dark blue enamel:—

Mortuary ring at Mayence.

In ancient times rings were burnt with the corpse. When Cynthia’s shade appears to Propertius, he remarks: ‘Et solitam digito adederat ignis;’ ‘a fact (remarks the Rev. C. W. King) which fully accounts for the number of fine intagli partly or wholly calcined which every collector meets with not unfrequently, and often with the greatest regret at the destruction of some matchless specimen of the skill of the engraver.’

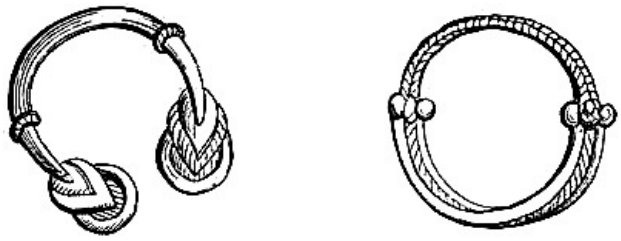
At the burial of Cæsar we are told that, among the tokens of grief exhibited by the Romans, the matrons burned on his funeral pyre their personal ornaments, the robes and even the rings of their sons.

‘The Greeks and Romans,’ observes Mr. Fairholt, ‘literally revelled in rings of all styles and

sizes. Nothing can be more beautiful in design and exquisite in finish than Greek jewellery; and the custom of decorating their dead with the most valued of these ornaments has furnished modern museums with an abundance of fine specimens.'

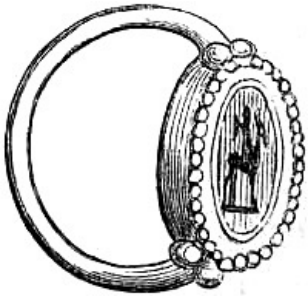
The two rings next represented are copied from originals found in the more modern Etruscan sepulchres, and are probably contemporary with the earliest days of the Roman Empire.

In one of these rings the hoop is not perfected, each extremity ending in a broad, leaf-shaped ornament, most delicately banded with threads of beaded and twisted wire, acting as a brace upon the finger. [Pg 383]



Gold rings from Etruscan sepulchres.

Lord Braybrooke purchased in 1849 a Roman gold finger-ring, set with an intaglio in ribbon onyx, which was found in a Roman stone coffin at York: subject, a Fortuna Redux. In the same collection is a very curious and massive gold mourning-ring formed of two knotted withes twisted together; the knots are hollowed to receive enamel. The inscription inside the hoop is, in old English characters: 'When ye loke on thys, thyncke on hym who gave ye thys.' This ring was found in the Thames at Westminster.



Ring found at Amiens.

In the Londesborough Collection is the representation of a ring found upon the hand of a lady's skeleton, who was buried with her child in a sarcophagus discovered in 1846 in a field near Amiens, called 'Le Camp de César;' on two of her fingers were rings, one of which was set with ten round pearls, the other, represented in the collection mentioned, is of gold, in which is set a red cornelian, engraved with a rude representation of Jupiter riding on the goat Amalthea. The child also wore a ring, with an engraved stone. The whole of the decorations for the person found in this tomb proclaim themselves late Roman work, probably of the time of Diocletian. [Pg 384]

It is customary in Russia on the death of a sovereign to distribute mourning-rings to those connected with the imperial court. A writer in 'Notes and Queries' (4th series, vol. iii. p. 322) remarks: 'When I was at St. Petersburg, I saw one of the rings given on the death of the late Emperor Nicholas. They were in the form of a serpent, enamelled black. Attached to the head and within the body of the ring was a narrow band of metal inscribed with the name of Nicholas, and the date of his death. This band was held within by a spring, in the same way as a spring measuring-tape. The serpent's head was mounted with two diamonds for eyes. The ring I saw was presented to the gentleman in whose possession it then was by reason of his official appointment of dentist to the imperial family.'

In early times it was usual to bury sovereigns with their rings. During some repairs at Winchester Cathedral in 1768 a monument was discovered containing the body of King Canute. On his forefinger was a ring containing a very fine stone.

In the 'Archæologia' (vol. xlii. part ii. p. 309) is an account, by the Rev. J. G. Joyce, B.A., F.S.A., of the opening and removal of a tomb in Winchester Cathedral in 1868, reported to be that of King William Rufus. Gale, in his 'History of Winchester,' states that the tomb was broken open during the civil wars, and amongst other articles found was a large gold ring. The body of Rufus, however, had been removed out of the tomb in which it had originally lain (whether this or another) many years before the civil wars broke out. Stow gives this testimony, and an inscription upon a mortuary chest into which the bones of Rufus were translated (1525), and which inscription was repeated a second time (1661). There is reason for doubting whether this ring really belonged to King Rufus, and that the tomb supposed to be that of the King is that of an ecclesiastical dignitary. The Rev. J. G. Joyce adds: 'I have not dwelt upon the ring, because, while Milner, after Gale, alleges such a ring to have been taken out of the tomb by the rebels, it is open to uncertainty whether this be actually the [Pg 385]

one, and if so it was assuredly in company with the chalice (found with the ring), and so makes against Rufus, and in favour of a more saintly occupant.'

The ring known as that found in this tomb is not of gold, but of bronze gilt. It is apparently intended for the thumb, very coarsely executed, and has a plain square imitation jewel, which is a very poor copy of a sapphire. A representation of this and another ring from tombs in Winchester Cathedral are here given, from Woodward and Wilks' 'History of Hampshire' (London, 1858-69).

Ring found in the tomb of William Rufus, Winchester Cathedral.

Ring discovered at Winchester Cathedral.

According to Matthew Paris, Henry II. was arrayed after death in his royal vestments, having a golden crown on his head and a great ring on the finger. The will of Richard II. directs that he should be buried with a ring, *according to royal custom*. The same monarch, as Grafton states, caused the dead body of Robert de Vere, Duke of Ireland, to be arrayed in [Pg 386] princely garments, garnished with a chain of gold, and rich rings put on his fingers, with his face uncovered.

As an instance of royal interments with a ring at a late period, I may mention that of William Frederic, Duke of Gloucester, who married his cousin the Princess Mary, daughter of George III. He was buried in his uniform, and wore on his finger a ring which had been an early love-gift to him from the Princess whom he married.

Ring of Childeric.

In 1562 the Calvinists rifled the tomb of Queen Matilda, consort of William the Conqueror, in the church of the Holy Trinity at Caen. One of the party observed a gold ring with a sapphire on one of the Queen's fingers, and, taking it off, presented it to the Abbess of Montmorenci.

The same custom of monarchs being buried with their rings prevailed in France during the early and middle ages. The gold ring of Childeric I., formerly in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris, was found in the King's tomb at Tournay. It bore the inscription 'Childirici regis.'[70]

'The ring was not set with a gem, but had an oval bezel in the gold, engraved with his bust in [Pg 387] front face, holding a spear as in the type of the contemporary Byzantine aurei. He wore the long hair of the Merovingian line. Traces remained of the legend 'Childirici Regis.' The intaglio was very neatly cut, infinitely superior to the execution of the Merovingian coin-dies, and, in fact, so much in the style of Leo's aurei, that it might reasonably be supposed a present sent, with other offerings, from Constantinople' (the Rev. C. W. King, 'Handbook of Engraved Gems'). The engraving is taken from J. J. Chiflet's 'Anastasis.'

In 1793, at the exhumation of the bodies buried at the Abbey of St. Denis, rings were found in several of the royal tombs. That of Jeanne de Bourbon, consort of Charles V., was of gold, with the remains of bracelets and chains. The ring of Philippe le Bel was also of gold; that of Jeanne de Bourgoyne, first wife of Philippe de Valois, was of silver, as also the ring of Charles le Bel.

To the ancient custom of interring prelates with their rings I have alluded in the chapter on 'Rings in Connection with Ecclesiastical Usages.'

In 1780 the tomb of the great German Emperor Frederic, who died in 1250, was opened, and the body discovered arrayed in embroidered robes, booted, spurred, and crowned. A [Pg 388] costly emerald ring was on one of the fingers, and the ball and sceptre in the hands.

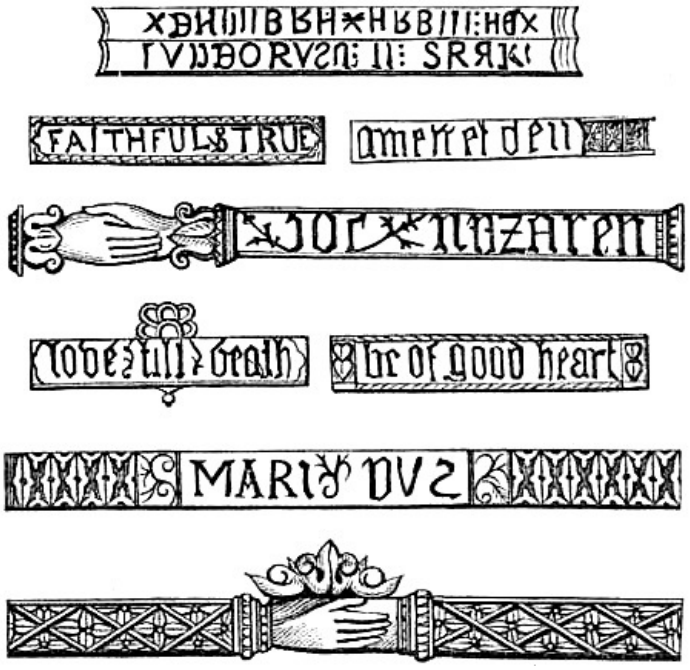
Some interesting 'memorial' rings were shown at the Loan Exhibition of Ancient and Modern Jewellery at the South Kensington Museum in 1872, the principal of which I have already mentioned. One of gold, oval bezel, set round with amethysts, had, beneath glass, a

representation of a fallen tree, and a funeral urn with initials; the motto, ‘Fallen to rise;’ date, 1779; the property of Mr. G. F. Duncombe. Dr. Ashford exhibited a memorial gold ring, hasp enamelled on the outside in black, with figure of a skeleton and funereal emblems. Date, 1715. Five rings belonging to Mrs. M. E. Vere Booth Powell; one of gold, oval bezel set round with rubies, in the centre an urn jewelled with diamonds beneath a weeping willow; dated at back 1779. A ring with a long, pointed, oval bezel, with miniature of a female figure seated beside an inscribed pedestal, on which is an urn; date, 1788. Another of a similar form, with miniature of an old man holding a skull, seated near a Gothic building; inscribed, ‘Omnia vanitas;’ 1782. A duplicate of this ring, undated. A ring with long eight-sided bezel, gold, with dark-blue translucent enamel; in the centre an urn set with diamonds; dated 1790. A gold ring, bezel set with portrait of Charles I.; the property of the Rev. W. B. Hawkins. A massive gold ring, enamelled and set with sapphire, engraved inside, ‘Napoleon Buonaparte à Joachim Murat,’ 1809; exhibited by Mr. George Bonnor. A gold ring, richly chased and enamelled in black, the bezel square, with rounded top, which opens, showing within a representation of a corpse; Italian, sixteenth century; the property of Dr. Ashford. A gold ring, in the centre of which is a death’s-head in enamel, with the legend ‘Memento mori’ in enamelled black letters; sixteenth century. Also, a gold ring with bezel hollow; has [Pg 389] had upon it a death’s-head in enamel, inscribed ‘Remember Death;’ round the edge of the bezel is ‘Yeman + + joyce;’ early sixteenth century. A gold ring, hexagonal bezel with motto ‘Death * sy * myn * eritag +’; sixteenth century. The last three rings were exhibited by R. H. Soden Smith, Esq., F.S.A. Memorial ring with portrait of Augustus III., son of Augustus the Strong, King of Poland and Saxony; early eighteenth century. Another with enamelled skull, set with diamonds, probably German of the seventeenth century; also, one of the same date, enamelled, with skull and female face. The property of C. Drury Fortnum, Esq., F.S.A.

CHAPTER VIII. [Pg 390]

POSY, INSCRIPTION, AND MOTTO RINGS.

Within the hoop of the betrothal ring it was customary from the middle of the sixteenth to the close of the eighteenth century to inscribe a motto or ‘posy’ (poesie), consisting chiefly of a very simple sentiment.



Motto and device rings.

Shakspeare, in the ‘Merchant of Venice’ (act v. scene 1), makes Gratiano, when asked by [Pg 391] Portia the reason of his quarrel with Nerissa, answer:

> About a hoop of gold, a paltry ring,
> That she did give me, whose posy was
> For all the world like cutler’s poetry
> Upon a knife, *Love me and leave me not*.

Hamlet (act iii. scene 2) says—

> Is this a prologue, or the posy of a ring?

In ‘As You Like It’ (act iii. scene 2) Jaques remarks: ‘You are full of pretty answers; have you not been acquainted with goldsmiths’ wives, and conned them out of rings?’

In Ben Jonson’s comedy, ‘The Magnetic Lady,’ the parson, compelled to form a hasty wedding, asks:

> Have you a wedding ring?

To which he receives an answer—

> Ay, and a posie:
> *Annulus hic nobis, quod sic uterque, dabit*.

He exclaims:

> ————Good!
> *This ring will give you what you both desire*;
> I’ll make the whole house chant it, and the parish.

The following illustration represents a posy-ring of the simplest form, such as would be in use in the early part of the seventeenth century.

Posy-ring.

Herrick, in his ‘Hesperides,’ says:

> What posies for our wedding-rings,
> What gloves we’ll give and ribbonings!

And in his ‘Church Miserie’: [Pg 392]

> Indeed, at first, man was a treasure;
> A box of jewels, shop of rarities,
> A ring whose posie was ‘my pleasure.’

And in the same work, ‘The Posie:’

> Lesse than the least
> Of all Thy mercies is my posie still:
> This on my ring,
> This, by my picture, in my book I write.

Some of these posies and inscriptions are very appropriate and tender; others are quaint and whimsical. Not the least curious among the latter is that, well known, of Dr. John Thomas, Bishop of Lincoln, in 1753, who had been married three times. On his fourth espousals he had the following motto inscribed on his wedding-ring:

> If I survive
> I’ll make thee five.

Burke, in his ‘Anecdotes of the Aristocracy,’ states that Lady Cathcart, on marrying her fourth husband, Hugh Macguire, had inscribed on her wedding-ring:

> If I survive
> I will have five.

In far better taste than these was the motto on the ring presented by Bishop Cokes to his wife on the day of their marriage. It bore the representations of a hand, a heart, a mitre, and a death’s-head, with the words:

> These three I give to thee,
> Till the fourth set me free.

‘On the wedding-ring that Dr. George Bull, Bishop of St. David’s (1703), gave to his wife, was the inscription: “Bene parêre, parare det mihi Deus”—a prayer she might be a prolific [Pg 393] mother, an obedient wife, and a good housekeeper. The prayer was heard; she had five sons and six daughters, lived in wedlock happily fifty years, and was esteemed a model housekeeper’ (Singer).

Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, died 1439, had three daughters, who all married noblemen. Margaret’s husband was John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, and the motto of her wedding ring was, ‘Till deithe depart.’ Alianour married Edmund, Duke of Somerset, and her motto was, ‘Never newe.’ Elizabeth married Lord Latimer, and hers was, ‘Til my live’s end.’

The custom of having posies on rings is thus alluded to in the ‘Art of English Poesie,’

published in 1589: ‘There be also another like epigrams that were sent usually for New Year’s gifts, or to be printed or put upon banketting dishes of sugar-plate or of March paines, etc.; they were called Nenia or Apophoreta, and never contained above one verse, or two at the most, but the shorter the better. We call them poesies, and do paint them now-a-dayes upon the back sides of our fruit-trenchers of wood, or *use them as devises in ringes* and armes.’

Henry VIII. gave Anne of Cleves a ring with the posy ‘God send me well to kepe’—a most unpropitious alliance, for the King expressed his dislike to her soon after the marriage. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries posies were generally placed outside the ring.

In 1624 a collection of posies was printed, with the title, ‘Love’s Garland, or Posies for Rings, Handkerchiefs, and Gloves, and such pretty Tokens as Lovers send their Loves.’

At a meeting of the Archæological Institute, in March 1863, some curious posy rings were exhibited by the Rev. James Beck; one, of particular interest, dating from the early part of [Pg 394] the fifteenth century, had been dug up at Godstow Priory, Oxfordshire. It is a broad massive hoop of gold, of small diameter, suited for a lady’s finger. The decoration on the hoop consists of three lozenge-shaped panels, in which are represented the Trinity, the Blessed Virgin with the infant Saviour, and a Saint, nimbed, clad in a monastic habit, with the cowl falling upon the shoulders. The intervening spaces are chased with foliage and flowers of the forget-me-not; the whole surface was enriched with enamel, of which no remains are now visible. Within the hoop is delicately engraved in small black-letter character:

> Most in mynd and yn myn herrt
> Lothest from you ferto deparrt.

Also a plain gold hoop of the sixteenth century, found in 1862 at Glastonbury Abbey, within which is engraved ‘Devx. corps. vng. cver,’ with the initials ‘C. M.’ united by a true-love knot. Several plain gold rings of the seventeenth century were also shown, inscribed with the following posies, in each case within the hoop:—

> I haue obtain’d whom God ordain’d.
> God unite our hearts aright.
> Knitt in one by Christ alone,
> Wee joyne our loue in god aboue.
> Joyn’d in one by god a lone,
> God above send peace and love.

At the Loan Exhibition of Ancient and Modern Jewellery at the South Kensington Museum in 1872, J. W. Singer, Esq.,[71] contributed a collection of posy rings, the mottos, for the most part, inscribed within the hoop.

Gold, English of the fifteenth century, inscribed in Gothic letters ‘Gevoudroy.’ [Pg 395]

Another of the same date, gold; on the outside are engraved four Maltese crosses; within, three Gothic letters, apparently E.

Gold, English, early sixteenth century, inscribed in large semi-Gothic characters, ✠I x x AM x x YOURS x x K : S.

Gold, chased, has been enamelled ✠ESPOIR. EN. DIEU. (English, late sixteenth century.)

Gold, massive, ‘MY HART AND I UNTILL I DY.’ (English, late sixteenth century.)

Gold, massive, ‘I LOVE AND LIKE MY CHOYSE.’ (English, early seventeenth century.)

Silver gilt: within, ‘I CHUSE NOT TO CHANGE.’ (English, seventeenth century.)

Gold, chased, traces of enamel, ✠Let. Reson. Rule. (English, seventeenth century.)

Gold, chased, ‘Let reason rule affection.’ (English, seventeenth century.)

Gold, chased, traces of black enamel, ‘A token of good-will.’ (English, seventeenth century.)

Brass, ‘Live in Loue.’ (English, seventeenth century.)

Rings with double-line posies:

Gold, ‘In God aboue and Christ his Sonne, We too are joyned both in one.’ (English, seventeenth century.)

Gold, ‘Who feares the Lord are blest, wee see; Such thou and I God grant may bee.’ (English, seventeenth century.)

Gold, ‘As I in thee have made my choyce, So in the Lord let vs rejoice.’ 1637, [Pg 396] W. D. A. (English, seventeenth century.)

Gold, ‘As I expect so let me find, A faithfull ♡ and constant mind.’ (English, seventeenth century.)

Gold, ‘I like my choyce, so will. . . .’ the remainder obliterated. (English, seventeenth century.)

Gold, chasing worn away, ‘Tho’ little, accept it,’ letters black enamelled. (English, early eighteenth century.)

Gold, chased with representation of skeleton, cross-bones, and hour-glass encircling the hoop; has been enamelled black, ‘You and I will lovers dye.’ (English, about 1720.)

Gold, ‘Fear the Lord and rest content, So shall we live and not repent. B. W. 1730.’ (English, eighteenth century.)

Gold, chased, inscribed within ‘T. Rowe, C. obt. 13 May, 1715, æt. 28.’ Worn by Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe, the poetess.

Gold, overlaid with open-work pattern of flowers in coloured enamel, ‘Rite to requite.’ (English, eighteenth century.)

Silver, two hands holding a heart, ‘Love and feare God.’ (English, eighteenth century.)

Gold, massive, ‘Virtus est pretiosa gemma. Auribus frequentius quam linguâ utere.’ Outside, in Gothic letters, ‘Voluptate capiuntur homines non minus quam hamo pisces.’ (Modern English.)

A double-line gold wedding-ring in the collection of Mr. J. W. Singer bears the words:

Them which God copleth
Let no man put them asonder.

This ring is a very early sixteenth-century one, and shows that wedding-rings were not, formerly, the plain ones of the present day, but were ornamented with fine work. Mr. Singer has several rings of this description, ornamented in the same way.

Je sui ici en liu dami (Je suis ici en lieu d’ami).

No treasure like a treu friend. (Eighteenth century.)

Not to but on, till life be gon.

Correct our ways; Love all our dayes. [Pg 397]

Hearts united live contented.

No cut to unkindness.

Conceave consent, confirme content.

No recompenc but remembrance.

Vertue only bringeth felicitie.

[The above nine rings from the Braybrooke Collection.]

From the Waterton Collection in the South Kensington Museum:

‡Amour‡Merci. (French, fourteenth century.)

Pensez deli Parkisvici (pensez de lui par que je suis ici). (English, early fifteenth century.)

Je. le. de. sir. (English, late fifteenth century.)

Por tous jours. (English, fifteenth century.)

Nul sans peyn; *inside*, Sans mal desyr. (English, early sixteenth century.)

+ My worldely joye alle my trust + hert, thought, lyfe, and lust. (English, early sixteenth century.)

A plain gold hoop ring, inscribed within with a heart pierced with an arrow, and the word ‘Eygen,’ a star, and the word ‘Uwer.’ (Dutch or German, sixteenth century.)

Devx. corps, vng. ever. (English, sixteenth century.)

C’est mon plaisir. (English, sixteenth century.)

+ Quant. dieu. plera. melior. sera. (English, sixteenth century.)

Pour bien. (English, sixteenth century.)

My wille were. (English, sixteenth century.)

Time. deum. me. ama. q̄d̄ R_{IE}. (English, sixteenth century.)

+ Observe Wedloke; *inside*, Memento mori. (English, sixteenth century.)

Loyalte na peur. (French, seventeenth century.)

Let liking last. (English, seventeenth century.)

This sparke will grow (set with a diamond). (English, seventeenth century.) [Pg 398]

Accept this gift of honest love, which never could nor can remove. 1. Hath tide. 2. Mee sure. 3. Whilst life. 4. Doth last. (English, seventeenth century.)

+ MB. Remember + the (a heart) + that + is + in + payne. (English, seventeenth century.)

Time lesseneth not my love. (English, seventeenth century.)

In constancie I live and dye. (English, seventeenth century.)

Love the truth. (English, seventeenth century.)

My promise past shall always last. (English, eighteenth century.)

You have me hart. (Lady's betrothal ring. English, eighteenth century.)

Love ever. (English, seventeenth century.)

Love true, 'tis joy. (English, early seventeenth century.)

Love me. (English, eighteenth century.)

Keepe. fayth. till. deth.

I fancy noe butt thee alone.

+ Not this but mee;
* yf. this. then me.

Wheare grace is found
Love doth abound.

My soul will keep thine company to heaven.

Mr. Singer informs me that his early pre-Reformation wedding-rings have the motto prefaced with a cross, and, as this died out, the remains of a cross, in a kind of rude *star*, sometimes carried on between each word.

Mr. Singer has one bronze wedding-ring with a motto, found in Wiltshire, but numerous silver ones.

Ma vie et mon amour
Finiront en un jour.

[Pg 399]

Dieu nous unisse
Pour son service.

Seconde moi pour te rendre heureuse.

Nos deux cœurs sont unis.

En ma fidélité je finirai ma vie.

Domine dirige nos.

Let us agree.

Continue constant.

My love is true
To none but you.

The gift is small,
But love is all.

In God and thee
My joy shall be.

Let not absence banish love.

Love in thee is my desire.

Whear this i giue
I wish to liue.

Let vs loue
Like turtle doue.

God saw thee
Most fit for me

(on the wedding-ring of the wife of John Dunton, the bookseller).

God did decree this unitie.

Where hearts agree, there God will be.

I have obtained whom God ordained.

Virtue passeth riches.

No force can move affixed Love.

Vnited hartes Death only partes.

Liue, loue, and be happie.

The love is true that I O U.

My love is fixt, I will not range.
I like my choice too well to change.

This is the thing I wish to win. [Pg 400]

Well projected if accepted.

God thought fitt this knott to knitt.

A loving wife prolongeth life.

Let virtue be a guide to thee.

Thy Desart hath won my hearte.

Death only partes two loving heartes.

* B * TRVE * IN * HARTE *.

True loue is lye to man and wye.
(True love is life to man and wife.)

Lett Death leade loue to rest.

To Bodys on harte.

Good will is aboue Gould.

True love is the bond of peace.

A virtuous wife preserveth life.

Let our contest bee who loves best.

No chance prevents the Lord’s intents.

I joy in thee, joy thou in me.

And this also will pass away.

Fear God, honour the Prince,
Lye still Joan, and don’t wince.

If thee dosn’t work, thee shasn’t eat.
(From Monmouthshire.)

From the ‘Card of Courtship; or, The Language of Love, fitted to the Humours of all Degrees, Sexes, and Conditions,’ 1653:

Thou art my star, be not irregular.

Without thy love I backward move.

Thine eyes so bright are my chief delight.

This intimates the lover’s states.

My life is done when thou art gone.

This hath no end, my sweetest friend.

Our loves be so, no ending know. [Pg 401]

Love and joye can never cloye.

The pledge I prove of mutuall love.

I love the rod and thee and God. 1646.

All I refuse, but thee I chuse.

Gift and giver, your servants ever.

Non mœchaberis.

Tuut mon coer.

Mulier viro subjecta esto.

Sans departir à nul autre.

Tout mon cuer avez.

Lel ami avet.

Par ce present ami aumer rent.
(By this gift to love me given.)

Let Reason rule.

J'aime mon choix.

À vous à jamais.

Je suis content.

L'amour nous unit.

Je suis content, j'ai mon désir.

Je vous aime d'un amour extrême.

Ce que Dieu conjoint, l'homme ne le sépare point.

Desire hath no rest.

This and my heart.

Acceptance is my comfort.

God us ayde

(on a curious old ring, chased with the Nortons' motto),

i h c Naserus rex Judiorum me serere +.

My giving this begins thy bliss.

Remember Him who died for thee,
And after that remember me.

Let me wish thee full happy be.

Tibi soli [Pg 402]

(on Beau Fielding's ring; *temp.* Queen Anne).

From a Commonplace Book of the seventeenth century in Sion College Library:

There is no other, and I am he,
That loves no other, and thou art she.

Eye doth find, heart doth choose,
Faith doth bind, death doth lose.

Let us be one { To live in love
Till we are none { I love to live.

Love well, and { Virtus non vultus
Live well. { Patior ut potiar.
Sequor ut consequar.

I seek to be
Not thine, but thee.

Nowe ys thus

(inscription upon a gold ring found about 1786 on the site of the battle of Towton, Yorkshire. The weight was more than an ounce; it had no stone, but a lion passant was cut upon the gold. The inscription was in old black characters. The crest is that of the Percy family, and it is supposed the ring was worn by the Earl of Northumberland on the day of the battle (March 29, 1461). The motto seems to allude to the times: 'The age is fierce as a lion').

Je change qu’en mourant. Unalterable to my Perdita through life

(inscribed on a ring presented to Mrs. Robinson, by the Prince Regent, afterwards George IV.).

If love I finde, I will bee kinde.

In thee my choyse how I reioyce.

In thee my choice I do rejoice

(this posy is on a massive gold ring, which is thus described by a writer in ‘Notes and Queries’:—In the centre of the ornamentation outside is a shield, with three lions passant on it. On the right of the shield H, and on the left of it I, each letter having an old-fashioned crown over it. At the extreme ends of the ornamentation, outside the letters H and I are three fleurs-de-lys). [Pg 403]

Take *hand* and *heart*, ile nere depart.

Live and dye in constancy.

A vertuous wife y^{t} serveth life.

As long as life your loving wife.

I will be yours while breath indures.

Love is sure where faith is pure.

A vertuous wife doth banish strife.

As God hath made my choyse in thee,
So move thy *heart* to comfort mee.

God y^{t} hath kept thy *heart* for mee,
Grant that our love may faithfull bee.

God our love continue ever,
That we in heaven may live together.

The *eye* did find, y^{e} *heart* did chuse,
The *hand* doth bind, till death doth loose.

First feare y^{e} Lord, then rest content,
So shall we live and not repent.

Breake not thy vow to please the eye,
But keepe thy love, so live and dye.

I am sent to salute you from a faithfull friend.

This and my heart.

Acceptance is my comfort.

Too light to requite.

Patience is a noble virtue.

Lost all content, if not consent.

A friend to one as like to none.

Your sight, my delight.

Virtue meeting, happy greeting.

As trust, bee just.

For a kiss, take this. [Pg 404]

No better smart shall change my heart.

Hurt not y^{r} *heart* whose joy thou art

My heart and I until I dye.

Sweetheart I pray doe not say nay.

My heart you have and yours I crave.

As you now find so judge me kind.

Let this present my good intent (1758).

One word for all, I love and shall.

My constant love shall never move.

Like and take, mislike forsake.

The want of thee is griefe to mee.

Be true to me y^{t} gives it thee.

Privata di te moriro.
Deprived of thee I die.

Till y^{t} I have better
I remayne your detter.

Mon esprit est partout.
Mon cœur est avec vous.

Lite to requite.

Faithfull ever, deceitefull never.

I present, you absent.

Despise not mee, y^{t} ioyes in thee.

I live, I love, and live contented,
And make my choice not to be repented.

Desire hath set my heart on fire.

I hope to see you yielde to mee.

Both, or neither, chuse you whether.

Heart, this, and mee, if you agree.

This accepted, my wish obtained.

This accepted, my wish affected.

Thy friend am I, and so will dye.

O y^{t} I might have my delight.

Parting is payne when love doth remayne. [Pg 405]

My corne is growne, love reape thy owne.

This thy desert shall crown my heart.

I fancy none but thee alone.

God sent her me my wife to be.

God’s appointment is my contentment.

This is your will to save or kill.

If you but consent, you shall not repent.

If you deny, then sure I dye.

Wth teares I mourne, as one forlorne.

A friend to one, as like to none.

Your sight, my delight.

Grieve not his heart whose joy thou art.

First love Christ that died for thee.
Next to Hym love none but me.

Joye day and night bee our delight.

Divinely knitt by Grace are wee,
Late two, now one; the pledge here see.
B. & A. (1657).

Loue and liue happy (1689).

Avoid all strife ’twixt man and wife.

Joyfull loue this ring do proue.

In thee, deare wife, I finde new life.

Of rapturous joye I am the toye.

In thee I prove the joy of love.

In loving wife spend all thy life (1697).

True love will ne’er remove.

In unitie let’s live and dy.

Happy in thee hath God made me.

I loue myself in louing thee.

Silence ends strife with man and wife.

More weare—more were (1652).

I kiss the rod from thee and God.

This ring doth binde body and minde. [Pg 406]

Endless as this shall be our bliss
(Thos. Bliss, 1719).

Death neuer parts such loving hearts.

Loue and respect I doe expect.

No gift can show the love I ow.

Loue thy chast wife beyond thy life (1681).

Loue and pray night and daye.

Great joye in thee continually.

My fond delight by day and night.

Pray to love, love to pray (1647).

Honour et Foye

(inscription on a gold ring belonging to Earl Fitzwilliam):

Motto ring.

Body and minde in thee I finde.

Deare wife, thy rod doth leade to God.

God alone made us two one.

Eternally my loue shal be.

Worship is due to God and you.

God aboue continew our loue.

I wish to thee all joie may bee.

With my body I worship thee.

Beyond this life, loue me, deare wife.

Rien ne m’est plus,
Plus ne me rien (fifteenth century).

Une seule me suffit.
Elle m’a bien conduite.

De cuer entier.

In adversis etiam fida.
Even in adversity faithful.

Device—a mouse gnawing away the net in which a lion is caught. [Pg 407]

Non immemor beneficii.
Mindful of kindness.

All that I desire of the Lord is to fear God and love me.

En bon foy.

I cannot show the love I O.

I love and like my choice.

Ryches be unstable
And beuty wyll dekay,
But faithful love will ever last
Till death dryve it away.

On a mediæval armillary ring, consisting of eight rings, one within the other, each having a portion of the motto:

W. ♡ A. ☞ D. G. CS,
T. L. A. L. A. R. CT.

(Where heart and hand do give consent,
There live and love and rest content.)

Device—a golden apple.

Vous le meritez.
You deserve it.

I change only in Death.

Love I like thee; sweets requite mee.

Faithfull ever, deceitful never.

I like, I love, as turtle dove.

As gold is pure, so love is shure.

From ‘The Mysteries of Love and Eloquence; or, the Arts of Wooing and Complementing, as they are manag’d in the Spring Garden, Hide Park, the New Exchange, and other eminent places’ (London, 1658, pp. 154, 157):

Thou wert not handsom, wise, but rich;
’Twas that which did my eyes bewitch.

[Pg 408]

Divinely knit by God are we,
Late one, now two, the pledge you see.

We strangely met, and so do many,
But now as true as ever any.

As we begun so let’s continue.

My beloved is mine and I am hers.

True blue will never stain.

Against thou goest I will provide another.

Let him never take a wife
That will not love her as his life.

I do not repent that I gave my consent.

What the eye saw the heart hath chosen.

More faithful than fortunate.

Love me little but love me long.

Love him who gave thee this ring of gold,
’Tis he must kiss thee when thou ’rt old.

This circle, though but small about,
The devil, jealousy, shall keep out.

If I think my wife is fair
What need other people care.

This ring is a token I give to thee
That thou no tokens do change for me.

My dearest Betty is good and pretty.

I did then commit no folly
When I married my sweet Molly.

’Tis fit men should not be alone,
Which made Tom to marry Jone.

Su is bonny, blythe, and brown;
This ring hath made her now my own.

Like Philis there is none;
She truely loves her Choridon.

Nosce teipsum.

Think on mee.

Desire and deserve.

Keepe faith till death. [Pg 409]

As God hath appointed
Soe I am contented.

(These are given from wills of the seventeenth century in the glossary appended to ‘Fabric Rolls of York Minster,’ published by the Surtees Society.)

Ever last

(on the rings given at the funeral of John Smith, Alderman of London, who ‘made a great game by musk catts which he kept’).

Redime tempus

(on the rings given at the funeral of Samuel Crumbleholme, Master of St. Paul’s).

This and the giver
Are thine for ever.

My Joyh consisteth in Hope.

Quies servis nulla.

I desire to disarne (disarm).

I will you trewllie serve.

Success to the British flag.

Valued
Love may greater B.

(Love undervalued may greater be.)

Great Dundee for God and me

(engraved on the inside of a ring with a skull, Viscount Dundee. This relic of the famous Claverhouse, given to him by King James, was in the possession of Miss Graham of Dundrune. It is stated to have been missing since 1828).

Christ and thee my comfort be

(‘Gentleman’s Magazine,’ vol. ii. p. 629).

OV EST NVL SI LOIAVLS [Pg 410]
QVI SE POET GARDER DES MAVXDISANS

(on a gold ring found on Flodden Field, in the possession of George Allen, Esq., of Darlington, 1785).

✠ I love you my sweet dear heart
✠ Go ✠ I pray you pleas my love

(on a silver ring found at Somerton Castle, Lincoln, in 1805).

CANDU PLERA MELEOR CERA

(inscribed on a brass thumb-ring formerly in the possession of the Marquis of Donegal, 1813).

✠ IN GOD IS ALL

(on a silver ring found among the ruins of the Priory of St. Radigund, near Dover, in 1831).

Tout pour bein feyre

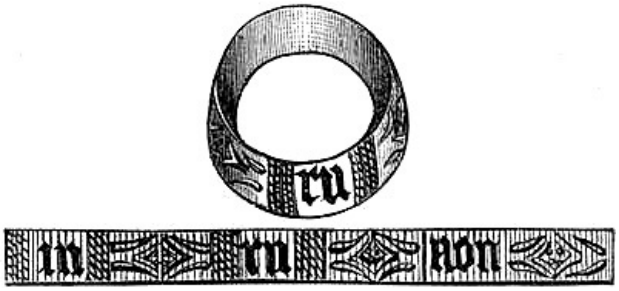
(inscribed on a ring found at St. Andrew’s Chapel, near Ipswich).

Mon cur avez
Honour et joye

(on a gold ring found near St. Anne’s Well, Nottingham).

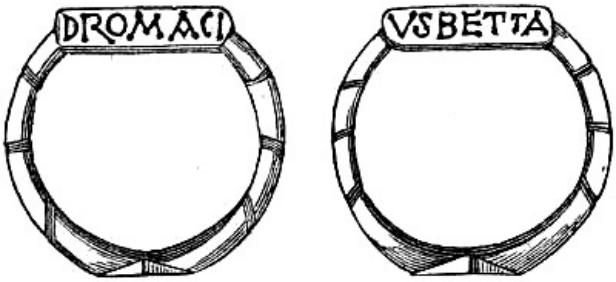
✠ Amor. vincit. om.

(on a silver ring found near Old Sarum).



Inscription ring.

An enamelled ring is mentioned in the ‘Gentleman’s Magazine’ (vol. lxxix.) as having been found in 1808 in the ruins of an old manor-house, occupied in the sixteenth century by a family of distinction, which then becoming extinct, the manor-house fell to decay. [Pg 411]



French Inscription ring.

(Inscription ring of gold, found in Sarthe, France, bearing the names ‘Dromachius’ and ‘Betta,’ supposed to be a marriage ring, of, probably, the fifth century.)

Joye sans cesse. B. L.

Loue alway, by night and day.

Filz ou fille (Anthony Bacon, 1596).

To enjoy is to obey.

Loue for loue.

Post spinas palma.

All for all.

Mutual forbearance (1742).

In loues delight spend day and night.

Love’s sweetest proofe.

En bon foye.

Truth trieth troth.

Beare and forbeare.

Lett nuptiall joye our time employe.

Not this bvt me.

None can prevent the Lord’s intent.

Christ for me hath chosen thee.

By God alone we two are one. [Pg 412]

God’s blessing be on thee and me.

Love me and be happy.

The love is true I owe you.

God did foresee we should agree.

In God and thee my joy shall be.

Absence tries love.

Virtue surpasseth riches.

Let virtue rest within thy breast.

I lyke my choyce.

As circles five by art compact shews but one ring in sight,
So trust uniteth faithful mindes with knott of secret might;
Whose force to breake no right but greedie death possesseth power,
As time and sequels well shall prove. My ringe can say no more.

(The Earl of Hertford's wedding-ring consisted of five links, the four inner ones containing the above posies of the Earl's making. See page 318, 'Betrothal and Wedding Rings.')

Joye sans fyn. (Fourteenth century.)

In 'Manningham's Diary,' 1602-1603 (Camden Society), we have the following 'Posies for a jet ring lined with sylver':

'"One two," so written as you may begin with either word. "This one ring is two," or both sylver and jet make but one ring; the body and soule one man; twoe friends one mynde. "Candida mens est," the sylver resembling the soule, being the inner part. "Bell' ame bell' amy," a fayre soule is a fayre frend, etc. "Yet faire within." "The firmer the better," the sylver the stronger and the better. "Mille modis læti miseros mors una fatigat."'

Live as I or else I dye.

Within thy brest my harte doth rest.

(On two gold posy-rings found in Sussex, 1866.)

In 1780 the sexton of Southwell, in digging a grave, found a gold ring weighing nine dwts. six grs. On the inside is the following inscription, in characters very distinct, deep, and not inelegantly cut: [Pg 413]

+ MIEV + MOVRI + QUE + CHANGE + MA FOY +.

The cross at the beginning is of the same size as the letters, that between the words very small.

You dear!

(The meaning is thus conjectured of, possibly, a rebus, or canting device, on a silver signet-ring, found in the bed of the river Nene, at Wisbeach St. Peter's; the letter U and a deer trippant implying, perhaps, the writer's tender regard towards his correspondent. Date about the time of Henry V. or Henry VI.)

Inscription ring.

The annexed engraving (from the 'Archæological Journal,' March, 1848) represents a curious ring, the property of Mr. Fitch, and belonging to his interesting cabinet of Norfolk antiquities. It is a plain hoop of silver, of the size here seen, and bears the inscription 'Ethraldric on Lynd.' Its date has been assigned to as early a period as Saxon times, but we are inclined to attribute it to a subsequent age, the twelfth, or, perhaps, so late a date even as the thirteenth century. It may deserve notice that the mintage of London, of coins of Canute, Harold, Edward the Confessor, the Conqueror, and subsequent kings, is designated by the legend 'On Lynde.' This ring was found during the construction of the railway at Attleborough, in Norfolk. [Pg 414]

True-love knots were common formerly. In the inventory of the effects of Henry Howard, K.G., Earl of Northampton, 1614, is mentioned 'a golde ringe sett with fifteene diamondes in a true lover's knotte, with the wordes *nec astu, nec ense*.'

In the Waterton Collection in the South Kensington Museum are some interesting specimens of this peculiar kind of ring of English and Italian workmanship.

At the commencement of the present century 'Harlequin' rings were fashionable in England. They were so called because they were set round with variously-coloured stones, in some way resembling the motley costume of the hero of pantomime.

'Regard rings,' of French origin, were common even to a late period, and were thus named from the initials with which they were set forming the acrostic of these words:[72]

R uby [Pg 415]
E merald
G arnet
A methyst
R uby
D iamond

L apis lazuli
O pal
V erd antique
E merald.

The French have precious stones for all the alphabet, excepting f, k, q, y, and z, and they obtain the words *souvenir* and *amitié* thus:

S aphir or sardoine
O nyx or opale
U raine
V ermeille
E meraude
N atralithe
I ris
R ubis, or rose diamant.

A méthiste, or aigue-marine
M alachite
I ris
T urquoise or topaze
I ris
E meraude.

Thus lapis lazuli, opal, verd antique, emerald represented *love*, and for *me* malachite and emerald.

Names are represented on rings by the same means. The Prince of Wales, on his marriage to [Pg 416] the Princess Alexandra, gave her as a keeper one with the stones set with his familiar name, Bertie—beryl, emerald, ruby, turquoise, jacinth, emerald.

These name-rings are common in France; thus, *Adèle* is spelt with an amethyst, a diamond, an emerald, a lapis lazuli, and another emerald.

Among the motto or 'reason' rings, as they were termed, is an example, described in the 'Archæologia' (vol. xxxi), a weighty ring of fine gold, found in 1823 at Thetford, in Suffolk. The device which appears upon this ring is an eagle displayed; on the inner side is engraved a bird, with the wings closed, apparently a falcon, with a crown upon its head.

The following posy or motto, commencing on the outer side, is continued on the interior of the ring: 'Deus me ouroye de vous seuir a gree—com moun couer desire' (God work for me to make suit acceptably to you, as my heart desires). The devices appear to be heraldic, and the motto that of a lover, or a suitor to one in power. The eagle is the bearing of several ancient Suffolk families; it was also a badge of the House of Lancaster, and Thetford was one portion of the Duchy of Lancaster.

These mottos were occasionally engraved in relief. In the Londesborough Collection is one of gold, found in the Thames. The inscription upon it is 'Sans vilinie' (without baseness).

'A very early ring,' remarks Mr. Fairholt, 'with an unusually pretty posy, is in the collection of J. Evans, Esq., F.S.A. It is gold, set with a small sapphire, and is inscribed "IE, SVI, ICI, EN LI'V D'AMI" (I am here in place of a friend). It was probably made at the beginning of the [Pg 417] fourteenth century. Beside it is placed two other specimens of inscribed rings. The first is chased with the Nortons' motto, 'God us ayde;' the second is inscribed withinside with the sentence, 'Mulier, viro subjecta esto.' Both are works of the fifteenth century.

Posy ring.

Inscription rings.

Mr. Fairholt describes two gold wedding-rings of the sixteenth century, which were then generally inscribed with a posy of one or two lines of rhyme. One is formed like a badge of

the Order of the Garter, with the buckle in front and the motto of the Order outside the hoop; withinside are the words, ‘I’ll win and wear you.’ The other is the ordinary form of wedding-ring, inscribed, ‘Let likinge laste.’ They were generally inscribed *withinside* the hoop. Thus Lyly, in his ‘Euphues’ (1597), addressing the ladies, hopes they will favour his work—‘writing their judgments as you do the posies in your rings, which are always next to the finger, not to be seen of him that holdeth you by the hand, and yet known by you that wear them on your hands.’

Posy rings.

[Pg 418]

The Rev. C. W. King remarks that ‘antique intagli set in mediæval seals have, in general, a Latin motto added around the setting. For this the Lombard letter is almost invariably employed, seldom the black letter, whence it may be inferred, which, indeed, was likely on other grounds, that such seals, for the most part, came from Italy, where the Lombard alphabet was the sole one in use until superseded by the revived Roman capitals about the year 1450. Of such mottos a few examples will serve to give an idea, premising that the stock was not very extensive, judging from the frequent repetitions of the same legends, on seals of widely different devices. Thus a very spirited intaglio of a lion passant, found in Kent, proclaims—“SUM LEO QUOVIS EO NON NISI VERA VEHO;” another gives the admonition to secresy—“TECTA LEGE, LECTA TEGE;” a third in the same strain—“CLAUSA SECRETA TEGO;” another lion warns us with “IRA REGIA,” the wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion—an apt device for a courtier. Less frequently seen are legends in old French, and these are more quaint in their style; for instance, around a female bust—“PRIVÉ SUY E PEU CONNU:” whilst a gryllus of a head, covered with a fantastic helmet made up of masks, gives the advice, in allusion to the enigmatical type—“CREEZ CE KE VUUS LIRREZ,” for “Croyez ce que vous lirez.”’

[Pg 419]

CHAPTER IX.

CUSTOMS AND INCIDENTS IN CONNECTION WITH RINGS.

One of the most singular usages in former times in which a ring was employed was the annual celebration at Venice of the wedding of the Doge with the Adriatic. This custom is said to date from the era of Pope Alexander III., and the Doge of Venice, Zidni, in the twelfth century. This prince having on behalf of the pontiff attacked the hostile fleet of Frederic Barbarossa, and obtained a complete victory, with the capture of the emperor’s son, Otho, the Pope in grateful acknowledgment gave him a ring, ordaining that henceforth and for ever, annually, the governing Doge should, with a ring, espouse the sea. The pontiff promised that the bride should be obedient and subject to his sway, for ever, as a wife is subjected to her husband.

It is recorded that in this year (1177) this pompous ceremony was performed for the first time. The Doge died in the following year. On Ascension Day the Venetians, headed by their Doge, celebrated the triumphant event. Galleys, sailing-vessels, and gondolas accompanied the chief of the State, who occupied a prominent position on the ‘Bucentoro,’ which held, as its name implies, two hundred persons. This vessel was decorated with columns, statues, etc., and the top was covered with crimson velvet. There were twenty-one oars on each side. [Pg 420] Musical performers attended in another barge. The vessel left the Piazza of St. Mark under a salute of guns, and proceeded slowly to the Isle of Lido. Here the Doge, taking the ring from his finger, gave it to his betrothed wife, the Adriatic, by dropping it into her bosom, repeating these words: ‘We espouse thee, oh sea! in token of our just and perpetual dominion.’[73]

The reader will remember the well-known lines of Byron, written at Venice:

> The spouseless Adriatic mourns her lord;
> And, annual marriage now no more renew’d,
> The Bucentaur lies rotting, unrestored,
> Neglected garment of her widowhood.

It is probable that Shakspeare alluded to this custom when he says in ‘Othello:’—

> I would not my unhoused free condition
> Put into circumscription, and confine
> For the sea’s worth.

Byron, in the ‘Two Foscari,’ again alludes to the ‘marriage’ ring of the Doge. When the Council of Ten demanded of the Doge Foscari—

> The resignation of the ducal ring,
> Which he had worn so long and venerably,

he laid aside the ducal bonnet and robes, surrendered his ring of office, and exclaimed:

> There’s the ducal ring,
> And there’s the ducal diadem. And so
> The Adriatic’s free to wed another.

So, Rogers:

> He was deposed,
> He who had reigned so long and gloriously;
> His ducal bonnet taken from his brow, [Pg 421]
> His robes stript off, his seal and signet-ring
> Broken before him.

Rings, in common with jewels of various descriptions, were given by our monarchs on state occasions, and as New Year’s gifts, as marks of special favour. In Rymer’s ‘Fœdera’ there is a curious inventory of rings and ouches, with other jewels, which King Henry VI. bestowed in 1445, as New Year’s gifts, on his uncle and nobles. In the inventories of Queen Elizabeth’s jewels there are numerous instances of such gifts.

New Year’s gift ring.

At the marriage of Henry VI. with Margaret of Anjou, Cardinal Beaufort presented a gold ring to the bride, given to him by Henry V., and which the latter wore when crowned at Paris.

The crest of the Cromwells is a demi-lion rampant arg., in his dexter gamb a gem-ring or. The origin of this is stated thus:—At a tournament held by Henry VIII., in 1540, the King was particularly delighted with the gallantry of Sir Richard Cromwell (whom he had knighted on the second day of the tournament), and exclaiming ‘Formerly thou wast my *Dick*, but hereafter thou shalt be my *Diamond*,’ presented him with a diamond ring, bidding him for the future wear such a one in the fore-gamb of the demi-lion in the crest, instead of a javelin as heretofore. The arms of Sir Richard with this alteration were ever afterwards borne by the elder branch of the family, and by Oliver Cromwell himself, on his assuming the Protectorate, though previously he had borne the javelin.

A gold ring found St. Mary’s Field, near Leicester, in 1796, had been a New Year’s gift, and [Pg 422] is inscribed ‘en bon an.’

New Year’s gift ring.

In former times when St. Valentine’s Day was kept as a joyous festival, the drawing of a kind of lottery took place, followed by ceremonies not much unlike what is now generally called the game of ‘forfeits.’ Married and single persons were alike liable to be chosen as a valentine, and a present was invariably given to the choosing party. Rings were frequently bestowed. Pepys, in 1668, notes: ‘This evening my wife did with great pleasure show me her stock of jewels, increased by the ring she hath lately made as my valentine’s gift this year, a turkey (turquoise) stone set with diamonds.’ Noticing also the jewels of the celebrated Miss Stuart, he says: ‘The Duke of York, being once her valentine, did give her a jewel of about eight hundred pounds, and my Lord Mandeville, her valentine this year, a ring of about

three hundred pounds.’

Rings have been employed frequently in facilitating diplomatic missions, and in negotiations of a very delicate and critical nature. Plutarch relates an anecdote of Luculus to prove his disinterestedness. Being sent on an embassy to King Ptolemy Physcon, he not merely refused all the splendid presents offered to him, amounting in value to eighty talents (15,444*l.*), but even received of his table allowance no more than was absolutely necessary for his maintenance, and when the King attended him down to his ship, as he was about to return to Rome, and pressed upon his acceptance an emerald ‘of the precious kind,’ set in [Pg 423] gold (for a ring), he declined this also, until Ptolemy made him observe it was engraved with his own portrait, whereupon, fearing his refusal should be considered a mark of personal ill-will, he at last accepted the ring as a keepsake. At a dark epoch in the fortunes of the unhappy Mary, Queen of Scots, when, in 1567, scarcely a shadow of regal power was left to her, an attempt was made to induce her to resign the crown. Sir Robert Melville was employed on this mission, giving her, as an authority for his errand, a turquoise ring confided to him for that purpose by the confederate lords.

A ring in the possession of Miss H. P. Lonsdale is stated to have been given by Queen Anne, from her finger, to a Mr. Nugent for some diplomatic services. It is of gold, set with a heart-shaped ruby crowned with three small diamonds. At the back is a royal crown, and the letters ‘A. R.’

Clement VII., to propitiate King Henry VIII., sent him a consecrated rose; while, to gain the good services of Cardinal Wolsey, the Pope drew from his finger a ring of value, which he entrusted to the care of Secretary Pace at Rome, expressing regret that he could not himself present it in person.

When the Duchess of Savoy was held a prisoner by Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, she found means to send her secretary to solicit the aid of Louis XI. As she was prevented from writing, the only credentials she could give her emissary was the ring the King had given her on the occasion of her marriage. This passport would have sufficed, but that, unfortunately, the bearer, when he presented himself to the King, wore the cross of St. André. Louis ordered the man to be arrested, suspecting him to be a spy of the Duke of Burgundy, and [Pg 424] that he had stolen his sister’s ring. The messenger would have been hung, but for the timely arrival of the Lord of Rivarola, who was sent by the Duchess, urging the King to assist her.

Plutarch mentions that Clearchus, Cyrus the Younger’s general, in return for favours received from Ctesias, the physician of Tisaphernes, presented him with his ring as an introduction to his family in Sparta.

At the declaration of peace between England and Spain in 1604 King James gave the Spanish Ambassador, the Duke de Frias, Constable of Castile, who negotiated the treaty, a large diamond ring, in commemoration of the *marriage*, as he called the peace.

Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, had a large diamond cut by Berghem into a triangle, which he had set in a ring representing two clasped hands, the symbol of good faith, and sent to Louis XI., ‘an allusion’ (remarks the Rev. C. W. King), ‘though in an acceptable form, to his deficiency in that virtue.’

An anecdote connected with the celebrated ‘Pitt’ diamond is related by Mr. Eastwick, and shows how important results may sometimes be secured, when reason and logic may not prevail. This jewel passed through some curious adventures, and, after having ornamented the sword of Napoleon at Waterloo, was sent as a present in a ring by George IV. to the Sovereign of Persia, Fath-Ali-Shah. The bearer of this costly ring, Sir Harford Jones, was stopped in his journey by a messenger from the court, and desired not to enter the capital, where French interests were then paramount. After Sir Harford had exhausted every argument to show that he ought to be received, without making any impression on the Persian Khan, he said, ‘Well, if it must be so, I shall return, but this must go with me,’ and he [Pg 425] took from his pocket the beautiful diamond ring which had been sent for the Shah. The sparkle of the gem produced a magical effect; the Khan no sooner beheld it than he lost his balance, and fell back from his seat quite out of breath; then, recovering himself, he shouted, ‘Stop, stop, Elchi! May your condescending kindness go on increasing! This alters the matter. I will send an express to the heavenly-resembling threshold of the asylum of the world! I swear by your head that you will be received with all honour. Mashallah! it is not everyone that has diamonds like the Inglis.’ He was as good as his word; the express courier was despatched, and Sir Harford Jones entered the city of Teheran by one gate, while General Gardanne, the French envoy, was packed off by the other.

[This stone must have been a fraction or portion of the cutting of this famous diamond, as the ‘Regent’ is still in the French *Garde-meuble*, or national treasury.]

In 1514 Venice deputed two ambassadors to France and England; amongst other *bribes*, two rings were ordered to be given privily to the French Secretary, Robertet, ‘as a mark of love in the Signory’s name.’ One had a ruby and a diamond.

A correspondent of ‘Notes and Queries’ (3rd series, vol. i. p. 486) gives an interesting

extract from an old newspaper (the ‘Mercurius Publicus,’ for November 29, 1660), in which allusion is made to the King’s Gift Rings. On the disbanding of Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper’s regiment at Salisbury, ‘the men joyfully welcomed His Majestie’s Commissioners by shouts and acclamations, and understanding of His Majestie’s goodness in bestowing freely a full week’s pay, over and above their just arrears, they broke out into another great shout, and [Pg 426] then unanimously resolved with that week’s pay to buy, each man, a ring, whose posie should be “The King’s gift,” as an earnest and memorandum, to be ready on all occasions when His Majesty’s service (and none but his), should call them.’

I may mention the gift of rings to the native chiefs of India by the Prince of Wales, during his recent progress in that country. At Aden the Prince expressed his acknowledgments, on behalf of the Queen, for the services rendered by the Sultan of Lahej to the garrison of Aden, and put a massive gold ring with the initials ‘A. E.’ on the Sultan’s finger with his own hand.

The Maharajah of Benares was presented with a ring having an oval miniature portrait of the Prince, in enamel, set in brilliants.

Identification by means of a ring is alluded to in the Greek romance, by Heliodorus, of ‘Theagines and Chariclea.’ The latter, through a ring and fillet which had been attached to her at her birth, is, after many adventures, discovered to be the daughter of Hydaspes, and becomes heiress of the Ethiopian sovereignty. The modern Italian poets have availed themselves of this incident.

Roger of Wendover relates how Richard Cœur de Lion, when returning from the Crusades, secretly, and in disguise, through Germany to his own country, was identified in a town of Slavonia, called Gazara, by means of a ring. The King had sent a messenger to the nearest castle to ask for peace and safe-conduct from the lord of that province. He had on his return purchased of a Pisan merchant for nine hundred bezants, three jewels called carbuncles, or more commonly ‘rubies.’ One of these he had, whilst on board ship, enclosed in a gold ring, [Pg 427] and this he sent by the said messenger to the governor of the castle. When the messenger was asked by the governor who they were that requested safe conduct, he answered that they were pilgrims returning from Jerusalem. The governor then asked what their names were, to which the messenger replied, ‘one of them is called Baldwin de Bethune, the other Hugh, a merchant who has also sent you a ring.’ The lord of the castle, looking more attentively at the ring, said, ‘He is not called Hugh, but King Richard,’ and then added, ‘although I have sworn to seize all pilgrims coming from those parts, and not to accept of any gift from them, nevertheless, for the worthiness of the gift, and also of the sender, to him who has so honoured me, a stranger to him, I both return his present and grant him free permission to depart.’

A ring, in all probability, saved the Emperor Charles V. from the most critical position in which he had ever been placed. Having requested permission of Francis I. to pass through France, in order to reach sooner his Flemish dominions, where his presence was urgently required, the rival, so lately his prisoner, not only granted the request, but gave him a most brilliant reception. Some of the French King’s counsellors thought this generous conduct to a crafty foe was quixotic in the extreme, and that Charles should be detained until he had cancelled some of the hard conditions, to which he had compelled Francis to subscribe to purchase his release. Among those who strongly advocated the policy of detaining the imperial guest was the King’s fair friend, the Duchesse d’Estampes. Charles, who was informed of the dangerous weight thrown in the scale against him, resolved to win over the influential counsellor. One day, as he was washing his hands before dinner, he dropped a [Pg 428] diamond ring of great value, which the Duchess picked up and presented to him. ‘Nay, madam,’ said the Emperor gallantly to her, ‘it is in too fair a hand for me to take back.’ The gift had its full value, and Charles pursued his way without molestation.

Instances are recorded in which the wearing of a ring has been the means of saving life. Such happened to the Count de St. Pol at the battle of Pavia. He had fallen covered with wounds; avarice recalled him to life. A soldier, seeking for pillage, arrived at the place where the unfortunate Count lay extended, senseless, among the dead. He perceived a very beautiful diamond glitter on the finger of the apparently lifeless man. Not being successful in drawing the ring off, he began to cut the finger. The pain extorted a piercing cry from the Count, who had only swooned. He mentioned his name, and had the presence of mind to recommend silence to the soldier, telling him that if he boasted of having in his power a prince of the house of France, the Emperor’s generals would take him into their own hands in order to get his ransom; and he promised to make the soldier’s fortune if he would take care of his wounds, and follow him to France. This reasoning had its effect; the soldier secretly conveyed the Prince to Pavia, had his wounds dressed, and was nobly rewarded for it.

Taylor, in his ‘Danger of Premature Interments’ (1816) relates the following incident. The heroine of this event was named Retchmuth Adolet. She was the wife of a merchant at Cologne, and is said to have died of the plague, which destroyed a great part of the inhabitants of that city in 1571. She was speedily interred, and a ring of great value was [Pg 429] suffered to remain on her finger, which tempted the cupidity of the grave-digger. The night was the time he had planned for obtaining possession of it. On going to the grave, opening it, and attempting to take the ring from off the finger of the lady, she came to herself, and so terrified the sacrilegious thief, that he ran away and left his lantern behind him. The lady took advantage of his fright, and with the assistance of his lantern, found her way home, and lived to be the mother of three children. After her real decease, she was buried near the door of the same church, and a tomb was erected over her grave, upon which the incident related was engraved.

Mrs. Bray, in a notice of ‘Cotele,’ and ‘the Edgcumbes of the Olden Time’ (‘Gentleman’s Magazine,’ November 1853), relates a singular circumstance of this character, which ‘is so well authenticated, that not even a doubt rests upon its truth.’ It refers to the mother of that Sir Richard Edgcumbe, Knight, who, in 1748, was created Baron of Mount Edgcumbe.

‘The family were residing at Cotele (I do not know the date of the year), when Lady Edgcumbe became much indisposed, and to all appearance died. How long after is not stated, but her body was deposited in the family vault of the parish church. The interment had not long taken place, before the sexton (who must have heard from the nurse or servants that she was buried with something of value upon her) went down into the vault at midnight, and contrived to force open the coffin. A gold ring was on her ladyship’s finger, which in a hurried way he attempted to draw off, but, not readily succeeding, he pressed with great violence the finger. Upon this the body moved in the coffin, and such was the [Pg 430] terror of the man, that he ran away as fast as he could, leaving his lantern behind him. Lady Edgcumbe arose, astonished at finding herself dressed in grave-clothes, and numbered with the tenants of the vault. She took up the lantern, and proceeded at once to the mansion of Cotele. The terror, followed by the rejoicing of her family and household, which such a resurrection from the tomb occasioned, may well be conceived. Exactly five years after this circumstance, she became the mother of that Sir Richard Edgcumbe, who was created Baron. Polwhele, in his “History of Cornwall,” says: “Of the authenticity of this event there can be no reasonable doubt. A few years ago a gentleman of my acquaintance heard all the particulars of the transaction from the late Lord Graves, of Thancks, which is in the neighbourhood of Cotele. But I need not appeal to Lord Graves’s authority, as I recollect the narrative as coming from the lips of my grandmother Polwhele, who used to render the story extremely interesting from a variety of minute circumstances, and who, from her connexion and intimacy of her own with the Edgcumbe family, was unquestionably well-informed on the subject.”

‘It may seem strange that when Lady Edgcumbe was thus committed to the grave she was not buried in lead; but at the period of her supposed death it was very unusual to bury persons, even of high rank and station, in a leaden coffin, if they died and were buried in the country. The nearest town to Cotele of any note was Plymouth, a seaport to which there was then no regular road from the far-distant old mansion, and I question if at that period Plymouth could have furnished such an unusual thing as a lead coffin. Lady Edgcumbe was probably buried in oak secured by nails or screws, which without much difficulty could be [Pg 431] forced open by the sexton in his meditated robbery of the body.’

While rings have favoured the living, they have also been the means of recognising the dead. An instance of this is related in the history of the great Duke of Burgundy, renowned for the splendour of his court and his love of jewels. He died in the battle of Nanci, and his body was not found until three days afterwards, when it was recognised by one of the Duke’s household by a ring and other precious jewels upon it; otherwise the corpse was so disfigured that it could not have been identified.

The body of the great naval commander Sir Cloudesley Shovel, who was shipwrecked on the rocks of Scilly in 1707, was washed on shore, when some fishermen, it is said, having stolen a valuable emerald ring, buried the corpse. The ring, being shown about, made a great noise over the island, and was the cause of the discovery and ultimate removal of the body to Westminster Abbey.

Another account is that which was published under the authority of the Earl of Romney, grandson of Sir Cloudesley Shovel. Some years after the fatal shipwreck, an aged woman confessed to the parish minister of St. Mary’s on her deathbed that, exhausted with fatigue, one man who had survived the disaster reached her hut, and that she had murdered him to secure the valuable property on his person. This worst of wreckers then produced a ring taken from the finger of her victim, and it was afterwards identified as one presented to Sir Cloudesley Shovel by Lord Berkeley.

William Trotter, of an ancient family on the Scottish border, is recorded to have fallen at the battle of Flodden; and, in corroboration of the fact, a gold ring was found about the middle [Pg 432] of the last century, upon the site of the field of battle, bearing an inscription in Norman-French, having between each word a boar’s head, the armorial bearings of the Trotters.

Martius, in ‘Titus Andronicus,’ when he falls into a dark pit, discovers the body of Bassianus, by the light of the jewel on the dead man’s hand:—

Upon his bloody finger he doth wear
A precious ring, that lightens all the hole,
Which, like a taper in some monument,
Doth shine upon the dead man's earthy cheeks,
And shows the rugged entrails of this pit:
So pale did shine the moon on Pyramus,
When he by night lay bath'd in human blood.

I may mention the employment of rings for criminal purposes, such as their use for concealing poison, of which we have instances in past ages, and in late times. Hannibal, we are told, from a fear of being delivered up to the Romans by Prusius, King of Bithynia, swallowed poison, which, to be prepared for the worst, he carried with him in the hollow of a ring. To this Juvenal alludes in his Tenth Satire:—

Nor swords, nor spears, nor stones from engines hurl'd,
Shall quell the man whose frown alarm'd the world;
The vengeance due to Cannæ's fatal field,
And floods of human gore—a ring shall yield.

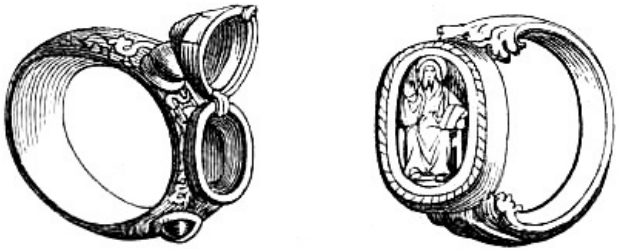
Demosthenes is also said to have died in a similar manner. The keeper of the Roman treasures, after the robbery by Crassus of the gold deposited there by Camillus, broke the stone of his ring in his mouth, in which poison was concealed, and immediately expired.

'The ancients,' remarks the Rev. C. W. King ('Antique Gems'), 'were acquainted with vegetable poisons, as speedy in their effects as the modern strychnine, as appears in the death of Britannicus from a potion prepared by Locusta, and in innumerable other instances. [Pg 433] These hollow rings were put together with a degree of skill far beyond that of our modern jewellers; for the soldering of the numerous joinings of the gold plates of which they are formed is absolutely imperceptible even when breathed upon—a test under which the best modern solder always assumes a lighter tint.'

Motley, in his 'Rise of the Dutch Republic,' relates that in the conspiracies against the life of the Prince of Orange (about 1582), under the influence of the court of Spain, the young Lamoral Egmont, in return for the kindness shown to him by the Prince, attempted to destroy him at his own table by means of poison which he kept concealed in a ring. Sainte Philip de Marnix, Lord of Aldegonde, was to have been taken off in the same way; and a hollow ring filled with poison was said to have been found in Egmont's lodgings. The young noble was imprisoned, and his guilt was undoubted, but he owed his escape from death to the Prince of Orange.

Poison ring.

A poison ring of curious construction is described by Mr. Fairholt as richly engraved, and set with two rubies and a pyramidal diamond; the collet securing the latter stone opens with a spring, and exhibits a somewhat large receptacle for such virulent poisons as were concocted by Italian chemists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.



Venetian poison ring.

The other ring has a representation of St. Mark seated holding his gospel, and giving a [Pg 434] benediction. The spaces between this figure and the oval border are perforated, so that the interior of the box is visible, and the relic enshrined might be seen.

It is recorded of the infamous Pope Alexander VI. (Borgia) that he caused a key, similar to the key-ring, to be used in opening a cabinet, but the Pope's key was poisoned in the handle, and provided with a small sharp pin, which gave a slight puncture, sufficient to allow the poison to pass below the skin. When he wished to rid himself of an objectionable friend he

would request him to unlock the cabinet; as the lock turned rather stiffly, a little pressure was necessary on the key handle, sufficient to produce the effect desired.

The signet-ring of Cæsar Borgia was exhibited a few years ago at a meeting of the British Archæological Association by the Rev. C. H. Hartshorne. It is of gold, slightly enamelled, with the date 1503, and round the inside is the motto, ‘Fays ceque doys avien que pourra.’ A box dropped into the front, having on it ‘Borgia,’ in letters reversed, round which are the words ‘Cor unum una via.’ At the back is a slide, within which, it is related, he carried the poison he was in the habit of dropping into the wine of his unsuspecting guests.

Another ring-device of Cæsar Borgia was: ‘Aut Cæsar aut nihil.’ The following distich was made upon him:—

> Borgia Cæsar erat factis et nomine Cæsar;
> ‘Aut nihil aut Cæsar’ dixit, utrumque fuit.

In late times the death of Condorcet was occasioned by a subtle poison, made by Cabanis, and enclosed in a ring. The particulars of this tragedy are related by Arago. Proscribed by [Pg 435] the Revolution of 1792, Condorcet, formerly secretary to the Academy of Sciences, took refuge in the house of a Madame Vernet, at Paris, a lady who generously risked her own life in endeavouring to save that of the eminent philosopher. Fearing to compromise his protectress by a longer stay, Condorcet left Paris with the intention of taking refuge in the country house of an old friend, who was, however, absent, and he wandered about, taking shelter at night in some stone-quarries, but was at length arrested, and conducted to Bourg-la-Reine, where he was placed in a damp cell. The next morning (March 28, 1794) he was found dead in his prison, having taken poison, which he carried about with him in a ring.

A singular story of a poisoned ring appeared in the French newspapers a few years ago, to the effect that a gentleman who had purchased some objects of art at a shop in the Rue St. Honoré, was examining an ancient ring, when he gave himself a slight scratch in the hand with a sharp part of it. He continued talking to the dealer a short time, when he suddenly felt an indescribable sensation over his whole body, which appeared to paralyse his faculties, and he became so seriously ill that it was found necessary to send for a medical man. The doctor immediately discovered every symptom of poisoning by some mineral substance. He applied strong antidotes, and in a short time the gentleman was in a measure recovered. The ring in question having been examined by the medical man, who had long resided in Venice, was found to be what was formerly called a ‘death’ ring, in use by Italians when acts of poisoning were frequent about the middle of the seventeenth century. Attached to it inside were two claws of a lion made of the sharpest steel, and having clefts in them [Pg 436] filled with a violent poison. In a crowded assembly, or in a ball, the wearer of this fatal ring, wishing to exercise revenge on any person, would take their hand, and when pressing in the sharp claw, would be sure to inflict a slight scratch on the skin. This was enough, for on the following morning the victim would be sure to be found dead. Notwithstanding the many years since which the poison in this ring had been placed there, it retained its strength sufficiently to cause great inconvenience to the gentleman as stated.

A singular interest is attached to the recovery of lost rings, of which there are many instances. One is recorded in connection with the wonder-working hand of St. Stephen of Hungary, which is now in the castle of Buda. In 1621, Pope Gregory canonised this monarch, after a lapse of two hundred years that his remains had been lying in the cathedral of Stuhlweissenberg, and on their removal it was discovered that the skeleton had no right hand. This created much stir, as it was known that a very valuable ring had been on one of the fingers, but no tidings of the missing member were heard until some years after, when a certain abbot Mercurius, who had formerly been treasurer to the cathedral, had an interview with the reigning monarch Ladislaus. The story he told was a rich one, the hand with the ring on it had been committed to his safe keeping by a beautiful youth, ‘dressed all in white.’ The historian Feesler, himself an ecclesiastic, says that ‘Ladislaus saw through Mercurius, but left God to deal with him.’ In the chapter on ‘Ring Superstitions’ I have mentioned the discovery of Lady Dundee’s ring, and the omen attached to it.

The late Professor De Morgan, in ‘Notes and Queries’ (December 21, 1861), related an [Pg 437] instance of a recovered ring, which (although not vouching for its truth) he states as having been commented upon nearly fifty years ago in the country town close to which the scene is placed, with all degrees of belief and unbelief. A servant-boy was sent into the town with a valuable ring. He took it out of the box to admire it, and in passing over a plank bridge he let it fall on a muddy bank. Not being able to find it he ran away, took to the sea, and finally settled in a colony, made a large fortune, came back after many years, and bought the estate on which he had been a servant. One day, while walking over his land with a friend, he came to the plank bridge, and there told his friend the story. ‘I could swear,’ he said, pushing his stick into the mud, ‘to the very spot where the ring was dropped:’ when the stick came back the ring was on the end of it.

A large silver signet-ring was lost by a Mr. Murray, in Caithness, as he was walking one day on a shingly beach bounding his estate. Fully a century afterwards it was found in the shingle in fair condition, and restored to Mr. Murray’s remote heir, Sir Peter Murray

Thrieplund, of Fingask.

The truth of a similarly recovered ring I am able to attest from my acquaintance with the late Mrs. Drake, of Pilton, near Barnstaple, to whose family the incident refers. The husband of this lady, while with her in a boat off Ilfracombe about fifteen years ago, lost a valuable ring. Of course no hopes were ever entertained of its recovery. In 1869, however, the ring was picked up on the beach at Lee, near Ilfracombe, by a little child who was living in the valley. The ring was readily identified, as it bore the inscription: 'John, Lord Rollo, born Oct. 16, 1751, died April 3, 1842.' [Pg 438]

In the bed of the river in the parish of Fornham St. Martin, in Suffolk, was found, some years since, a gold ring with a ruby, late in the possession of Charles Blomfield, Esq., which is conjectured by some to be the ring that the Countess of Leicester is related (by Matthew Paris) to have thrown away in her flight after the battle of Fornham St. Genevieve, October 16, 1173. The Earl and Countess of Leicester were taken prisoners at this battle.

A matron of East Lulworth lost her ring one day: two years afterwards she was peeling some potatoes brought from a field half-a-mile distant from the cottage, and upon dividing one discovered her ring inside.

A Mrs. Mountjoy, of Brechin, when feeding a calf, let it suck her fingers, and on withdrawing her hand found that her ring had disappeared. Believing the calf was the innocent thief, she refused to part with it, and after keeping the animal for three years, had it slaughtered, and the ring was found in the intestines.

A wealthy German farmer, living near Nordanhamn, was making flour-balls in 1871 for his cattle. At the end of his work he missed his ring, bearing his wife's name. Soon afterwards the farmer sold seven bullocks, which the purchaser shipped to England, on board the 'Adler' cattle-steamer on October 26. Two days afterwards an English smack, the 'Mary Ann' of Colchester, picked up at sea the still warm carcass of a bullock, which was opened by the crew to obtain some fat for greasing the rigging. Inside the animal they found a gold ring inscribed with the woman's name and the date 1860. Captain Tye reported the circumstance as soon as he arrived in port, and handed the ring over to an official, who sent it up to London. The authorities set to work to trace its ownership, and found that the only ship reporting the loss of a beast that could have passed the 'Mary Ann' was the steamer 'Adler,' from which a bullock supposed to be dead, had been thrown overboard on October 28. Meanwhile, the 'Shipping Gazette' recording the finding of the ring had reached Nordanhamn, and one of its readers there had recognised the name inscribed upon it; communications were opened with the farmer, and in due time he repossessed his ring. [Pg 439]

In the chapter on 'Ring Superstitions' allusion is made to the marvellous stories of rings found in the bodies of fishes. An instance, however, of this character was mentioned in the newspapers lately, as having occurred at St. John's, Newfoundland. It is said that a signet-ring bearing the monogram 'P.B.' was discovered by a fisherman in the entrails of a cod-fish caught in Trinity Bay. The fisherman, John Potter, kept the prize in his possession for some time, but, the incident getting known, he was requested by the colonial secretary to send or bring the ring to St. John's, as he had received letters from a family named Burnam, of Poole, England, stating that they had reason to feel certain that the ring once belonged to Pauline Burnam, who was one of the several hundred passengers of the Allan steamship 'Anglo-Saxon,' which was wrecked off Chance Bay (N.F.) in 1861, the said Pauline Burnam being a relative of theirs. The fisherman, in whose possession the ring was, brought it to St. John's, and presented it at the colonial secretary's office. After a brief delay he was introduced to a Mr. Burnam, who at once identified the object as the wedding-ring of his mother, and which she had always worn since her marriage at Huddersfield, in the year 1846. The ring was accordingly given up to Mr. Burnam, who rewarded the fortunate finder with fifty pounds. [Pg 440]

On October 7, 1868, some fishermen, throwing their nets in the Volga, captured a sturgeon, which was found to be the same as that which his Imperial Highness the heir-presumptive of the Russian crown had accepted as an offering in 1866 from the municipality of Nijni. At the desire of the Prince the fish was restored to the sea. Its identity was proved by a silver ring attached to the right gill of the fish, on which was inscribed the date, Aug. 27, 1866. Another similar ring, which had been attached to the left gill, had disappeared.

It is to be presumed that the sturgeon was returned to the water with some mark to indicate the period at which it was re-captured. Some time after this occurrence a similar case occurred in the Volga, when another sturgeon, which had been offered as a present to the late Emperor Nicholas, and had been recommitted to its native element, was taken alive, and recognised by the rings attached to it.

The French newspapers of May 1873 announced that at one of the principal *restaurants* in Paris, a valuable diamond ring was found in the stomach of a salmon purchased at the central markets.

In the 'Gentleman's Magazine' (January 1765), is the account of a Mrs. Todd, of Deptford, who, in going in a boat to Whitstable, endeavoured to prove that no person need be poor who was willing to be otherwise; and being excited with her argument, took off her gold ring, and, throwing it out into the sea, said 'it was as much impossible for any person to be

poor who had an inclination to be otherwise, as for her ever to see that ring again.' The second day after this, and when she had landed, she bought some mackerel, which the [Pg 441] servant commenced to dress for dinner, whereupon there was found a gold ring in one. The servant ran to show it to her mistress, and the ring proved to be that which she had thrown away.

Brand, in his 'History of Newcastle,' relates that a gentleman of that city, in the middle of the seventeenth century, dropped a ring from his hand over the bridge into the River Tyne. Years passed on, when one day his wife bought a fish in the market, and the ring was discovered in its stomach.

A correspondent to 'Notes and Queries' (vol. i. series 3, p. 36), relates the following curious anecdote: 'A gentleman, who was in the habit of frequenting a favourite spot for the sake of a view that interested him, used to lounge on a rail, and one day in a fit of absence of mind got fumbling about the post in which one end of the rail was inserted. On his way home he missed a valuable ring; he went back again and looked diligently for it but without success. A considerable time afterwards in visiting his old haunt, and indulging in his usual fit of absence, he was very agreeably surprised to find the ring on his finger again, and which appears to have been occasioned by (in both instances), his pressing his finger in the aperture of the post, which just fitted sufficiently with a pressure to hold the ring. I afterwards tried the experiment at the spot, and found it perfectly easy to have been effected with an easily fitting ring.'

A curious antique ring, discovered in 1867 near the site of the Priory of St. Mary, Pilton, near Barnstaple, was exhibited by Mr. Chanter, the owner, at the Exeter Meeting of the Royal Archæological Institute (July 1873). The ring is of pure gold, weighing 131 grains, a large egg-shaped sapphire being in the middle, in a solid oval setting. The stone had a hole [Pg 442] drilled through the lower edge, through which a gold stud was passed, but it did not extend through the gold setting. The stone had been evidently flawed by the operation. The ring was intended for the thumb, and for ecclesiastical use, dating from about 1100 or 1200. A singularity is attached to the discovery. Some men were engaged in hedging, when they had to cut down some old trees. After cutting down one, they found the 'moot' of another underneath, and right in the centre of the latter was a round ball eight or ten inches in diameter, which the men took at first to be a cannon-ball. On opening the clay, however, the ring, bright and perfect, was exposed in the centre. A theory to account for this remarkable discovery is that the ring might have been stolen and buried by the thief for concealment under the tree in a ball of clay. For some reason or other the ring was left there, and in the course of time another tree grew over the old one.

Among the singular *discoveries* of rings, I may mention the following:—In 1697 a woman was drowned for theft, in the Loch of Spynie, in Morayshire, and in 1811 the skeleton was brought to light, with a ring on its finger. In 1862, during some discoveries made at Pompeii, a body was too far decayed to be touched, but liquid plaster of Paris was poured upon it, and a cast was taken, so accurately done that a ring was found on the finger. In the excavation of an Anglo-Saxon burial-place at Harnham Hill, near Salisbury, a silver twisted ring was found on the middle finger-bone of a skeleton. In some sepulchral objects from Italy, Styria, and Mecklenburg, obtained by the late J. M. Kemble, Esq., was a finger-ring of bronze, in which the bone still lay. The Abbé Cochet, the indefatigable Norman explorer, mentions this as of [Pg 443] usual occurrence. 'Au doigt de la main sont les bagues, ou des anneaux d'or, d'argent, de cuivre, ou de bronze. Quelques unes de ces bagues sont unies; mais d'autres ont des chatons en agate, en verroterie rouge ou vert, ou des croix encaustées sur métal. Communement, elles sont encore passées au doigt que les porta, dont la phalange est tout verdie par l'oxyde du bronze' ('La Normandie Souterraine,' p. 29).

In Moore's 'Life of Byron' we have an instance of a lost ring recovered under peculiarly interesting circumstances: 'On the day of the arrival of the lady's (Miss Millbanke) answer, he (Lord Byron) was sitting down to dinner, when his gardener came in, and presented him with his mother's wedding-ring, which she had lost many years before, and which the gardener had just found in digging up the mould under her window. Almost at the same moment, the letter from Miss Millbanke arrived, and Lord Byron exclaimed, "If it contains a consent, I will be married with this very ring." It *did* contain a very flattering acceptance of his proposal (of marriage), and a duplicate of the letter had been sent to London, in case this should have missed him.'

Among the numerous applications of rings to various purposes, one of the most curious is the custom, once prevalent in the Isle of Man, that if a man grossly insulted a married woman he was to suffer death, but if the woman was unmarried the Deemster, or judge, gave her a rope, a sword, and a ring, and she had it put to her choice either to hang him with the rope, or to cut off his head with the sword, or to marry him with the ring.

In one of Robin Hood's ballads we find that a ring was part of a prize for archery:— [Pg 444]

A greate courser, with saddle and brydle,
With gold burnished full bright;
A paire of gloves, a red golde ring,

A pipe of wyne, good fay.
What man berest him best, I wist,
The prize shall bear away.

Rings were proffered as bribes: in the old legend of King Estmere, the porter of King Adlan's hall is bribed by that monarch and his brother, disguised as harpers, to admit them:—

Then they pulled out a ryng of gold,
Layd itt on the porter's arme,
'And ever we will thee, proud porter,
Thou wilt saye us no harme.'
Sore he looked on King Estmère,
And sore he handled the ryng,
Then opened to them the fayre hall gates,
He lett for no kind of thyng.

The lady, King Adlan's daughter, for whose sake the ring is given, is thus described:—

The talents of gold were on her head sette,
Hanged low down to her knee;
And everye ring on her small fingèr
Shone of the chrystall free.

In the romance of 'Earl Richard,' we have another instance of a ring fee, or bribe, to a porter:—

She took a ring from her finger
And gave't the porter for his fee,
Says, 'tak you that, my good porter,
And bid the queen speak to me.'

In the capital ballad of the 'Baffled Knight,' or 'Lady's Policy,' the latter in answer to the [Pg 445]
overtures of her drunken wooer says:—

Oh, yonder stands my steed so free,
Among the cocks of hay, sir;
And if the pinner should chance to see
He'll take my steed away, sir.

The Knight rejoins:—

Upon my finger I have a ring,
It's made of finest gold-a,
And, lady, it thy steed shall bring
Out of the pinner's fold-a.

Miller, in his 'History of the Anglo-Saxons,' relates a pretty story of a 'bribe' ring, an episode in the battles between Edmund Ironside and Canute. It was on the eve of one of these conflicts that a Danish chief, named Ulfr, being hotly pursued by the Saxons, rushed into a wood, in the hurry of defeat, and lost his way. After wandering about some time, he met a Saxon peasant, who was driving home his oxen. The Danish chief asked his name. 'It is Godwin,' answered the peasant; 'and you are one of the Danes who were compelled yesterday to fly for your life.' The sea-king acknowledged it was true, and asked the herdsman if he could guide him either to the Danish ships, or where the army was encamped. 'The Dane must be mad,' answered Godwin, 'who trusts to a Saxon for safety.' Ulfr entreated this rude Gurth of the forest to point him out the way, at the same time urging his argument by presenting the herdsman with a massive gold ring, to win his favour. Godwin looked at the ring, and after having carefully examined it he again placed it in the hand of the sea-king, and said: 'I will not take this, but will show you the way.' Ulfr spent the day at the herdsman's cottage; night came, and found Godwin in readiness to be his guide. [Pg 446]
The herdsman had an aged father, who, before he permitted his son to depart, thus addressed the Danish chief: 'It is my only son whom I allow to accompany you; to your good faith I entrust him, for remember that, there will no longer be any safety for him amongst his countrymen if it is once known that he has been your guide. Present him to your King, and entreat him to take my son into his service.' Ulfr promised, and he kept his word. The humble cowherd, who afterwards married the sea-king's sister, became the powerful Earl Godwin, of historic celebrity.

In former times rings denoted quality, if we may judge from the expressions in an old play ('First Part of the Contention: York and Lancaster;' Shakspeare Society):—

I am a gentleman, looke on my ring,
Ransome me at what thou wilt, it shall be paid.

In the popular German ballad of 'Anneli,' or the 'Anneli Lied,' translated by Mr. J. H. Dixon ('Notes and Queries,' 3rd series, vol. ix.), the maiden, whose lover is drowned in the lake while swimming, is in a boat with a fisherman who recovers the body, which she places on

her lap:—

And she kiss’d his mouth, and he seem’d to smile,
  ‘Oh, no, I will not repine,
For God in heaven hath granted him
  A happier home than mine.’

And she chaf’d in hers his clammy hands—
  Ah! what does the maiden see?
There was a bridal-ring for one
  Was never a bride to be.

She drew from his finger that posied ring,
  ‘Fisherman—lo! thy fee!’

[Pg 447]

And clasping him round and round she plunged,
  And scream’d with a maniac glee—
‘No other young man in Argovie
Shall drown for the love of me!’

Mr. R. S. Ralston, M.A., in his ‘Songs of the Russians,’ mentions an interesting custom in connection with rings: ‘Among the games is that called the “Burial of the Gold.” A number of girls form a circle, and pass from hand to hand a gold ring, which a girl who stands inside the circle tries to detect. Meanwhile they sing in chorus the following verses:—

See here, gold I bury, I bury;
Silver pure I bury, bury;
In the rooms, the rooms of my father,
Rooms so high, so high, of my mother.
Guess, O maiden, find out, pretty one,
Whose hand is holding
The wings of the serpent.

The girl in the middle replies:—

Gladly would I have guessed,
Had I but known, or had seen,—
Crossing over the plain,
Plaiting the ruddy brown hair,
Weaving with silk in and out
Interlacing with gold.
O, my friends, dear companions,
Tell the truth, do not conceal it,
Give, oh give me back my gold!
  My mother will beat me
  For three days, for four;
  With three rods of gold,
  With a fourth rod of pearl.

The chorus breaks in, singing:—

The ring has fallen, has fallen
Among the guelders and raspberries,
Among the black currants.
  . . . . .
Disappeared has our gold,

[Pg 448]

Hidden amid the mere dust,
Grown all over with moss.’

In Warner’s ‘History of Ireland’ (vol. i. book 10) is the following ring anecdote: ‘The people were inspired with such a spirit of honour, virtue, and religion, by the great example of Brien, and by his excellent administration, that, as a proof of it, we are informed that a young lady of great beauty, adorned with jewels and a costly dress, undertook to journey alone from one end of the kingdom to the other, with a wand only in her hand, on the top of which was a ring of exceeding great value; and such an impression had the laws and government of this monarch made on the minds of all the people that no attempt was made on her honour, nor was she robbed of her clothes or jewels.’

This forms the subject of one of the sweetest melodies of Moore:—

Rich and rare were the gems she wore,
And a bright gold ring on her wand she bore;
But oh! her beauty was far beyond
Her sparkling gems and snow-white wand.

Janus Nicius Crytræus relates that a certain pope had a tame raven, which secreted the pope’s ring, or *annulus Piscatoris*. The pope, thinking that some one had committed the robbery, issued a bull of excommunication against the robber. The raven grew very thin, and lost all his plumage. On the ring being found, and the excommunication taken off, the raven

recovered his flesh and his plumage.

Upon this story was founded the admirable Ingoldsby legend of the ‘Jackdaw of Rheims.’

During the great war of liberation in Germany, the ladies deposited in the public treasury [Pg 449]
their jewels and ornaments to be sold for the national cause, and they each received in turn an iron ring inscribed ‘Ich gab Gold am Eisen’ (I gave gold for iron). Russell, who mentions this in his ‘Tour in Germany,’ 1813, adds:—‘A Prussian dame is as proud, and justly proud, of this coarse decoration as her husband and her son is of his iron cross.’

A singular mode of securing a ring on the finger is mentioned by a correspondent to ‘Notes and Queries’ (4th Series, vol. vi. p. 323): ‘In the possession of a lady relative of mine is an old painting in oils, representing Sir William Segar, Principal King-at-Arms to James I. (1604), and his wife. They stand side by side, and are three-quarter portraits of life size. On the fourth finger of Lady Segar’s right hand is a jewelled ring, to which are attached several black strings, curiously joined at the back of the hand, and fastened round the wrist.’

A curious and tragical incident in connection with a ring is related in the ‘Lives of the Lindsays.’ The young Colin, Earl of Balcarres, was obtaining for his bride a young Dutch lady, Mauritia de Nassau, daughter of a natural son of Maurice, Prince of Orange. The day arrived for the wedding, the noble party were assembled in the church, and the bride was at the altar; but, to the dismay of the company, no bridegroom appeared. The volatile Colin had forgotten the day of his marriage, and was discovered in his night-gown and slippers, quietly eating his breakfast. He hurried to the church, but in his haste left the ring in his writing-case; a friend in the company gave him one; the ceremony went on, and, without looking at [Pg 450]
it, he placed it on the finger of the bride. It was a *mourning* ring, with the death’s-head and cross-bones. On perceiving it at the close of the ceremony she fainted away, and the evil omen had made such an impression on her mind that, on recovering, she declared she should die within the year, and her presentiment was too truly fulfilled.

Louis de Berquem, of Bruges, to whom is ascribed the art of cutting and polishing the diamond, made his first attempts in 1475, upon three rough and large diamonds, confided to him for that purpose by Charles the Rash, Duke of Burgundy. One of these was cut in a triangular shape, and mounted on a ring, on which were figured two hands, as a symbol of alliance and good faith, and was presented to Louis XI., King of France.

Mr. Howitt, in his additions to the ‘History of Magic’ of Ennemoser, remarks: ‘In the St. Vitus’s dance patients often experience divinatory visions of a fugitive nature, either referring to themselves or to others, and occasionally in symbolic words. In the “Leaves from Prevorst,” such symbolic somnambulism is related, and I myself have observed a very similar case: Miss V. Brand, during a violent paroxysm of St. Vitus’s dance, suddenly saw a black evil-boding crow fly into the room, from which, she said, she was unable to protect herself, as it unceasingly flew round her, as if it wished to make some communication. This appearance was of daily occurrence with the paroxysm for eight days afterwards. On the ninth, when the attacks had become less violent, the vision commenced with the appearance of a white dove, which carried a letter containing a betrothal ring in its beak; shortly afterwards the crow flew in with a black-sealed letter. The next morning the post brought a [Pg 451]
letter with betrothal cards from a cousin, and a few hours after the news was received of the death of her aunt at Lohburg, of whose illness she was ignorant. Of both these letters, which two different posts brought in on the same day, Miss V. Brand could not possibly have known anything. The change of birds and their colours during her recovery, and before the announcement of agreeable or sorrowful news, the symbols of the ring and the black seal exhibit in this vision a particularly pure expression of the soul, as well as a correct view into the future.’

A French MS. of the thirteenth century gives the earliest version hitherto discovered of the fable of the three rings, known by the story in Boccaccio’s ‘Decamerone,’ and by Lessing’s ‘Nathan.’ From these, however, it differs essentially. In the present version the true ring is found out after the father’s death, while Boccaccio and Lessing tell the contrary. Of course the allegorical meaning of the true ring is the Christian faith, and the two false are the

Mohammedan and the Judaic faith. The Mohammedan faith is considered the oldest because it represents the pagan faith in general.

Among the singular uses to which rings have been applied, I may mention what were called ‘meridian.’ These were various kinds of astronomical rings formerly in use, but now superseded by more exact instruments. In the French ‘Encyclopédie’ (Diderot and D’Alembert) will be found an account of the ‘solar’ ring (*anneau solaire*), which showed the hour by means of a small perforation, ‘un trou, par lequel on fait passer un rayon de soleil.’ [Pg 452] Zeller also describes a kind of sun-dial in the form of a ring. This was called the astronomical ring, ‘annulus astronomicus.’[74]

Dial rings.

The Rev. Danson R. Currer has a *brass* ring-dial, probably of the kind formerly designated as ‘journey rings.’

Mr. Edward Jones, of Dolgellau, has a dial-ring consisting of two concentric rings moving within the other, the larger one having a linear groove, and the smaller one a slight hole working into it. [Pg 453]

Dial ring.

The romantic attachment of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, to Mary, the second sister of Henry VIII., is an interesting episode in ring history. She had been married in 1514 to Louis XII. of France, a political union of youth and beauty to debilitated old age. Brandon was sent with several English nobles to grace the nuptials. There is reason to believe that Mary had flattered his hopes of marrying her long before she quitted England. King Louis died three months after his marriage, and a few days after the Queen was secretly married to Suffolk. That during the brief interval between the marriage and death of the French monarch some interchange of affection occurred between the lovers is certain. A rumour had spread that Suffolk had shown a diamond ring she gave him. ‘The truth is,’ she writes, ‘that one night at Tournay, being at the banquet, after the banquet he put himself upon his knees before me, and in speaking and in playing he drew from my finger the ring, and put it upon his, and since showed it to me; and I took to laugh, and to him said that he was a thief, and that I thought not that the King had with him led thieves out of his country. The word *larron* he could not understand, wherefore I was constrained to ask how one said in Flemish *larron*. And afterwards I said to him in Flemish *dieffe*, and I prayed him many times to give it me again, for that it was too much known. But he understood me not well, and kept it on unto the next day that I spake to the King, him requiring to make him to give it to me, because it was too much known—I promising him one of my bracelets the which I wore, the which I gave him. And then he gave me the said ring; the which one other time at Lylle, being set nigh to my lady of Hornes, and he before upon his knees, it took again from my finger. I spake to the King to have it again; but it was not possible, for he said unto me that he would give me others better, and that I should leave him that. I said unto him that it was not for the value, but for that it was too much known. He would not understand it, but departed from me. The morrow after he brought me one fair point of diamond, and one table of ruby, [Pg 454]

and showed me it was for the other ring, wherefore I durst no more speak of it, if not to beseech him it should not be shewed to any person; the which hath not all to me been done.’ ‘Thus signed, M.’

In ‘Household Words’ (vol. ix. p. 277), there is an account of two rings supposed to have been stolen from Charles II. on his death-bed. ‘I should have told you, in his fits his feet were as cold as ice, and were kept rubbed with hot cloths, which were difficult to get. Some say the Queen rubbed one and washed it in tears. Pillows were brought from the Duchess of Portsmouth by Mrs. Roche. His Highness, the Duke of York, was the first there, and then I think the Queen (he sent for her); the Duchess of Portsmouth swooned in the chamber, and was carried out for air; Nelly Gwynne roared to a disturbance, and was led out, and lay roaring behind the door; the Duchess wept and returned; the Princess (afterwards Queen Anne) was not admitted, he was so ghastly a sight (his eye-balls were turned that none of the [Pg 455] blacks were seen, and his mouth drawn up to one eye), so they feared it might affect the child she goes with. None came in at the common door, but by an odd side-door, to prevent a crowd, but enough at convenient times to satisfy all. The grief of the Duchess of Portsmouth did not prevent her packing and sending many strong boxes to the French ambassador’s; and the second day of the King’s sickness, the chamber being kept dark—one who comes from the light does not see very soon, and much less one who is between them and the light there is—so she went to the side of the bed, and sat down to, and, taking the King’s hands in hers, felt his two great diamond rings; thinking herself alone, and, asking him what he did with them on, said she would take them off, and did it at the same time, and looking up saw the Duke on the other side, steadfastly looking on her, at which she blushed much, and held them towards him, and said: “Here, sire, will you take them?” “No, madam,” he said, “they are as safe in your hands as mine, I will not touch them until I see how things will go.” But, since the King’s death, she has forgot to restore them, though he has not that she took them, for he told the story.’

This extract is taken from a letter written by a lady who was the wife of a person about the court at Whitehall, and forms part of a curious collection of papers lately discovered at Draycot House, near Chippenham.

In connection with incidents concerning rings, I may allude to the golden spoil that Messrs. Garrard, goldsmiths, of the Haymarket, London, purchased from the prize-agents of the British forces employed on the Gold Coast. These precious objects appear to have been [Pg 456] collected by the King of Ashantee in great haste as a propitiatory offering, and were evidently seized and sent at random to the British general. Among them are rings of the most beautiful yet fantastic shapes, showing the extraordinary imitative talents which the Ashantee goldsmiths possess. Perhaps the most curious of these is a ring finely chased, the signet of which is made of what seems to be an ancient Coptic coin. Two rings appear to have been copied from early English betrothal rings, precisely such as those by which lovers plighted their troth in this country many years ago.

[Pg 457]

CHAPTER X.

REMARKABLE RINGS.

A volume of some amplitude might be written on the very attractive subject of the present chapter, for there are very few families in the kingdom cherishing a regard for ancestry and for the antiquarian interests of their country, who could not show examples of rings possessing unusual interest, not only of family, but of general importance. The Loan Exhibition of Ancient and Modern Jewellery at the South Kensington Museum in 1872 exhibited an unusual display of finger-rings contributed from every part of the kingdom, many of them of extreme rarity and beauty; while the famous Waterton Collection acquired by the Museum, described by one of the most eminent authorities on this particular subject as ‘in its almost unlimited extent, comprising the rings of all ages and nations,’ afforded specimens, many of which were unique, and of singular interest.

The limits of the present book enable me only to mention a few instances of remarkable rings, in addition to those which have been already alluded to in the previous chapters. Rings of the earliest ages naturally attract our observation more than those of later times, and are invaluable studies to the historian and the antiquarian, throwing light upon many subjects, of which they are in some cases the only reflex, and enabling us to judge of the progress of art in distant eras, to assist chronological researches, and to explain by [Pg 458]

inscriptions and figures many dubious points which would otherwise remain obscure.

No doubt there are many instances in which we have to depend on tradition alone for circumstances in connection with ring incidents, but even in these cases romance and poetry lend their aid in rendering them full of charm and interest, as an acquaintance with the mediæval writers more especially will prove, and to which I have frequently alluded in the preceding chapters.

Among the most remarkable collections of cameos, intaglios, and finger-rings, are those known as the 'Devonshire Gems,' formed in the last century by William Cavendish, third Duke of Devonshire. Eighty-eight, including some of the finest cameos, were withdrawn from it, and mounted in enamelled gold as a parure, unsurpassed for beauty and rarity.

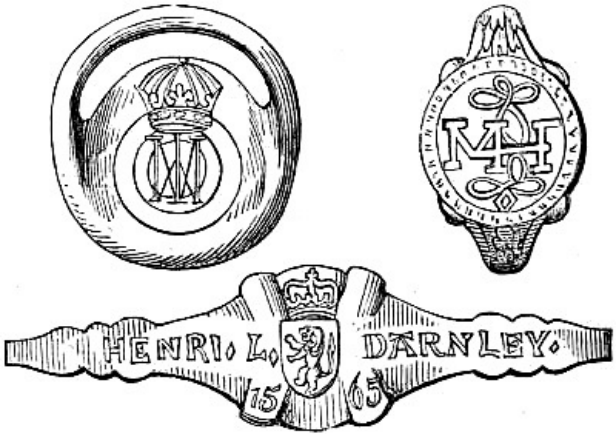
These precious gems were exhibited at the South Kensington Museum in 1872. Amongst the finger-rings were a scarabæus in grey and white onyx of three strata, in its antique ring of massive gold, thickened and expanded at the shoulders; a splendid specimen of a large gold ring of the best Italo-Greek work, the hoop formed of delicately woven corded pattern, the large deep bezel enriched with exquisite applied ornament in minute threaded work, perhaps the finest ring of its type known; a ring with intaglio of female head chased on the gold of the bezel is of antique Greek type; an intaglio of beautiful antique work on banded onyx, set in a massive gold ring; a most remarkable Roman ring, the bezel representing a Cupid's head, chased in full relief on the solid; a small gold ring, the square bezel engraved with a dolphin, and the hoop formed of triple beaded pattern; eight antique Roman rings, for [Pg 459]
the most part of the second and third centuries, one of which has the open-work hoop; a very interesting mediæval ring of rude workmanship, formed of electron, or gold much alloyed with silver; on the circular bezel is a head in intaglio, and in rather rude lettering 'VIVAT,' the shoulders have pellets at the side of the hoop—the date would appear to be of the seventh or eighth century; a good example of the iconographic type of English ring engraved on the bezel with figures of saints, fifteenth century; a massive gold ring, shoulders and hoop chased, Gothic inscriptions within the hoop; a fine English fifteenth century signet; a massive signet of the sixteenth century; a signet with shield of arms engraved on the under side of a thin piece of rock crystal and coloured, sixteenth or seventeenth century.

Among the classical antiquities in the British Museum is a rich collection of gems retaining their antique settings, a treasure not to be surpassed by any in Europe. Among these is a magnificent intaglio of Hercules slaying the Hydra, very deeply cut on a rich sard, and set in a massive gold ring of the form fashionable during the Lower Empire. The wonderful lion-ring from the Prince of Canino's collection I have already described in the first chapter of this work. An account of the Museum gems will be found in the works of the Rev. C. W. King, on 'Precious Stones' and 'Antique Gems.'

In the same magnificent collection are some curious rings, amongst other objects from Switzerland, of the people who built their habitations on piles in the lakes.

In the British Museum is also preserved the gold signet-ring of Mary, Queen of Scots. On the face is engraved the royal arms and supporters of the kingdom of Scotland, with the motto [Pg 460]
'IN DEFENS' and her initials 'M. R.' In the inner side of the seal a crowned monogram is engraved, 'which might have been an unsolved enigma, but for the existence, in the State Paper Office, of a letter written by Mary to Queen Elizabeth, in which she has drawn the identical monogram after signing her name. Sir Henry Ellis, who first traced out this curious history, says, "It is clearly formed of the letters M. and A. (for Mary and Albany), and gives countenance to the opinion that the written monogram was intended for Elizabeth and Burghley to study, the subsequent creation of the title of Duke of Albany in Lord Darnley ultimately opening their eyes to the enigma."'

A similarly interesting ring is that of Henry, Lord Darnley, husband to Mary, Queen of Scots, now in the Waterton Collection at the South Kensington Museum. On the bezel it bears the two initials 'M. H.' united by a lover's knot. In the hoop is the name engraved 'HENRI L. DARNLEY,' and the year of the marriage, 1565.



Signet-ring of Mary, Queen of Scots, and the Darnley ring.

In the interesting ‘Notices of Collections of Glyptic Art,’ by the Rev. C. W. King, M.A., published in the ‘Archæological Journal’ for October 1861, is a description of some remarkable rings in the Queen’s and other collections. By the kindness of the editor of the Journal I am enabled to give an abstract of the valuable papers contributed by the Rev. C. W. King. In the Royal Collection is a ruby set in a massy gold ring, having the name of ‘Loys XII.,’ and the date of his decease, 1515, engraved inside. The ruby has a head in profile of King Louis, and is a stone of considerable size (being half an inch in diameter) and of the finest quality. The drawing is correct, though somewhat stiff, after the usual manner of the Quattro Cento heads; the relief is somewhat flat, and all the details most accurately finished; both for material and execution this gem is an invaluable monument of the early times of the art. [Pg 461]

The signet-ring made for Charles II., when Prince of Wales, has the ostrich plumes between the letters ‘C. P.’—‘Carolus Princeps’—neatly and deeply cut upon a table *diamond* (½ × ⅜ inch in size) formed into a heater-shaped, seven-sided shield. The stone is slightly tinged with yellow, but of fine lustre, and such that of its nature no doubt whatever can be entertained. The ring, holding this in every respect interesting relic, has the back enamelled with a bow and quiver *en saltire*. A marvellous specimen of metal-work is the signet of his unfortunate father, having the royal arms most minutely engraved upon a shield of steel, and the lion and unicorn (modelled with matchless skill in the same metal in full relief) reclining upon the shoulders of a gold ring, and that of a size by no means inconvenient for wear upon the little finger.

The Marlborough gems[75] constitute a famous collection, as it now stands, formed by the union of the Arundel and the Bessborough, together with certain additions made at the close of the last century by the grandfather of the present Duke of Marlborough. This collection includes many masterpieces of art set in rings of fine gold in a plain solid imitation of the ancient ring worn by the later Romans, having a slight round shank, gradually thickening towards the shoulders. [Pg 462]

The Bessborough Collection deservedly ranks as one of the first in Europe for the interest and value of the works of art it contains (as viewed exclusively in that light) and the gems themselves, are pre-eminently distinguished by the unusual taste and elegance of the rings in which they are for the most part set. In this point of view alone they will furnish a rich treat to every amateur in that elegant branch of the jeweller’s craft. Some are choice examples of the Rénaissance goldsmiths’ skill; the majority, however, plainly show that they were made to the commission of the noble possessor, exhibiting as they do the most varied designs in the Louis XV. style, in which one is at a loss what most to admire, the fertility of invention displayed in the great variety of the forms, or the perfection of workmanship with which these designs have been carried out in the finest gold.

The Rev. C. W. King mentions a ring in this collection, with a representation of a dancing fawn upon sard, as the most elegant design ever invented by Italian taste. Appropriately to the subject, the shank consists of two thyrsi, whilst around the head of the ring runs an ivy garland, the leaves enamelled green. The execution of this charming idea equals the design.

Another exquisite old Italian ring is described as being adorned with two masks of Pan upon the shoulders, the very masterpieces of chasings in gold, so vigorous, so full of life, are these minute full-faced heads in half relief. [Pg 463]

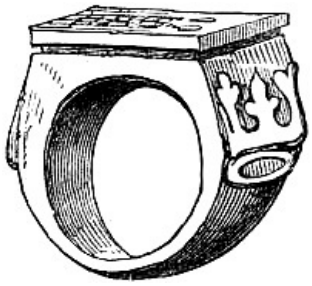
In the same collection is a sard engraved with a head of Lucilla, mediocre in execution, but set in a ring worthy of Cellini, to whose age the workmanship belongs. It is certainly the most artistic example of this ornament that has ever come under the Rev. Mr. King’s notice. Two nude figures, one seen in front, the other from behind, carved out in flat relief upon the shoulders of the shank, bear torches in either hand, which wind round the setting; doves and flowers fill up the interval between them. The perfection of these minute chasings is beyond all description, each is a finished statuette; curious, too, is the elegance with which they are employed, so as to fall naturally into the curvature required by their position.

These extracts from the paper in the ‘Archæological Journal,’ by the Rev. C. W. King, will suffice to show the great value and beauty of these precious objects.

The famous ring of Chariclea is thus mentioned by the Rev. C. W. King in his ‘Handbook of Engraved Gems.’ It is ‘an extract from the flowery pages of the tasteful Bishop of Tricca, Heliodorus, who, though writing amidst the fast-gathering clouds of the fourth century, still retained a tinge of early culture, and could not extinguish a sinful admiration for artistic beauty. Like other educated men of his, and even lower, times, he was still able to appreciate the productions of an art, even then, nearly extinct, for with what enthusiasm does he enlarge upon the description of the ring worn by his heroine Chariclea (‘Æthiop.’ v. 13), possibly a work the beauty of which he had himself admired in reality, or, perhaps, actually possessed! “Such is the appearance of all amethysts coming from India and Ethiopia; but that which Calasiris now presented to Nausicles was far above them in value, for it was enriched with an engraving, and worked out into an imitation of nature. The subject was a boy tending his flocks, himself standing upon a low rock for the sake of looking about him, and guiding his sheep to their pasture by the music of his Pandean pipe. The flock seemed obedient to the signal, and submitted themselves readily to be conducted by the guidance of his notes. One would say they were themselves laden with fleeces of gold, and those not of the artist’s giving, but due to the amethyst itself, which painted their backs [Pg 464]

with a blush of its own. Pictured also were the tender skippings of the lambs; whilst some running up against the rock in troops, others, turning in frolicsome turnings around the shepherd, converted the rising ground into an appearance of a pastoral theatre. Others, again, revelling in the blaze of the amethyst, as if in the beams of the sun, were pawing and scraping the rock with the points of their hoofs, as if they bounded up against it. Such amongst them as were the first born, and the more audacious, seemed as if they were wishing to leap over this round of the gem, but were kept in by the artist, who had drawn a border like a golden fold around them and the rock. Now this fold was in reality of stone, and not imitative, for the engraver, having circumscribed a portion of the gem's edge for this purpose, had depicted what he required in the actual substance, deeming it a clever stroke to contrive a stone wall upon a *stone*."' 'A remark,' adds the Rev. C. W. King, 'proving that our author is describing a real intaglio, not drawing upon his fancy merely.'

The Rev. Walter Sneyd possesses a ring of singular interest, supposed to have belonged to [Pg 465] Roger, King of Sicily (died 1152). A representation of this relic is given in the 'Archæological Journal' (vol. iii. p. 269). 'It is of mixed yellow metal, gilt; on either side of the hoop there is a crown—of the form commonly seen on coins or money of the twelfth century—and on the signet are the words "ROGERIVS REX," chased in high *relief*. In the form of the character they correspond closely with legends on coins of Roger, second Duke of Apulia of that name, crowned King of Sicily 1129. This ring has every appearance of genuine character; but it is difficult to tell for what purpose it was fabricated, the inscription not being inverted, and the letters in relief ill-suited for producing an impression. It seems very improbable that King Roger should have worn a ring of base metal, and the conjecture may deserve consideration that it was a signet not intended for the purpose for sealing, but entrusted in lieu of credentials to some envoy.'



Supposed ring of Roger,
King of Sicily.

In the Waterton Collection is a ring assumed on good grounds to have been that with which Cola di Rienzi, the famous tribune of Rome, was united to Catarina di Riselli. 'The ring,' remarks Mr. Waterton, 'was purchased for me in Rome, for a trifling sum, at one of the periodical clearing sales of the Monte di Pietà, and I had it for several months before I discovered certain facts—which many archæologists consider to be corroborative of my supposition—that this ring was the nuptial ring of Cola di Rienzi. Its style, when compared with other objects of the period, enables us to ascribe its date to the first half of the [Pg 466] fourteenth century. The bezel is an irregular octagon, in the centre there is cut, signet-wise, a device, two stars divided per pale. Around this are inscribed two names—Catarina, Nicola —the interstices being filled up with niello. These names are written from left to right, and not reversed. The ring is an elegant specimen of Italian workmanship, and I consider it to have been produced by a Florentine artist. The reasons for believing that this may have been the *fiancial* ring of Rienzi and his wife are the following: 1. The two names, Nicola (di Rienzi) and Catarina (di Riselli). 2. The date of the ring, which we may assign to 1320-1340, the time when Rienzi lived. 3. Neither Rienzi nor his wife had any armorial bearing; and, having great faith in his destiny, he is stated to have selected a star for his device. The two stars divided per pale were interpreted by an eminent Roman archæologist to be significant of the star of Rienzi, and that of his wife.'

A curious seal-ring, formerly in the possession of Sir Richard Worsley, of Appuldercombe, in the Isle of Wight, was exhibited at a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries in 1775. An impression in wax was also shown at the Plymouth Local Committee of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society, in July 1850, by Mr. Cotton, of Ivybridge. The thumb-ring, set in gold, and of exquisite workmanship, is said to have been in the possession of the Worsley family since the time of Henry VIII. That King usually wore it on his finger, and presented it to Sir James Worsley, his yeoman of the wardrobe, and governor of the Isle of Wight. The device represents a warrior completely armed from head to foot, and covered with a vest or surcoat; his helmet is flat at the top, and brought round under the chin, exactly in the same form as those worn in France about the middle of the thirteenth century, during the reign of [Pg 467] Saint Louis. The scabbard of his sword hangs by his side, but the sword itself lies broken at his feet. His uplifted arms grasp a ragged or knotted staff, with which he is in the act of attacking a lion, who stands opposed to him. His shield bears the coat armour of the Stuart family; viz., Or, a fesse checky Az. and Argt. Over the lion's head appears an arm in mail, holding a shield, with the above coat of arms of the Stuarts; and in an escutcheon of pretence, a lion rampant, the arms of Scotland and of Bruce. The sleeve of the drapery, [Pg 468] which falls loosely from the arm, is ornamented on the border with three *fleurs de lis*; and the whole is enclosed within a double tressure fleury and counter-fleury, which together

form the arms of Scotland.

The ‘Worsley’ seal-ring.

‘The warrior here represented’ (says Dr. Mills, Dean of Exeter, in his account of this ring) ‘seems to be Sir Walter Stuart, born anno 1393, so called from being hereditary High Steward of Scotland. He married Margery, daughter of Robert Bruce, and sister to David Bruce, Kings of Scotland. David dying without male issue, Margery became an heiress; and therefore her arms are placed here in an escutcheon of pretence on those of Walter Stuart, her husband.’

The device here represented seems to be in some measure ascertained by the account given by Sir Simeon Stuart’s family in the Baronetage of England, which says that Sir Alexander Stuart had an honourable augmentation granted by Charles VI., King of France, viz. argent the lion of Scotland, debruised with a ragged staff bend-wise or. This honour was probably granted to Sir Alexander on account of some martial achievement performed either by him or his ancestors. But the seal seems to determine it to Walter Stuart, the husband of Margery Bruce, as there is not more than fifty years between his death and the accession to the throne of Charles VI. As Sir James Worsley, ancestor to Sir Richard, married Mary, eldest daughter of Sir Nicholas Stuart, of Hartley Mauditt, in Hampshire, it is highly probable that this ring descended to the family of Worsley by this alliance.

The ring of St. Louis of France was formerly kept in the treasury of St. Denis. In ‘Le Trésor Sacré de Sainct Denys’ (1646) this ring is thus described: ‘L’anneau du mesme glorieux Roy Sainct Louis qui est précieux: il est d’or, semé de fleurs de lys, garny d’un grand saphir quarré sur lequel est gravée l’image du mesme sainct avec les lettres S. L., qui veulent dire *Sigillum Lodovici*. Sur le rond de l’anneau par le dedans sont gravez ces mots, “*C’est le Signet du Roy S. Louis*,” qui y ont esté adjoustez après sa mort.’ A representation of this remarkable ring is here given. It is now in the Musée des Souverains at the Louvre. [Pg 469]

Ring of St. Louis.

‘The wedding-ring,’ remarks the Rev. C. W. King, ‘of the same prince is said to have been set with a sapphire engraved with the Crucifixion; the shank covered with lilies and *marguerites*, allusive to his own name and his wife’s. This attribution is a mere *custode’s* story. Mr. Waterton, who examined this gem, puts it down to a much later age: the King, a full length, has the nimbus, showing the figure to be posterior to his beatification. It

probably belongs to Louis XII.’s time.’

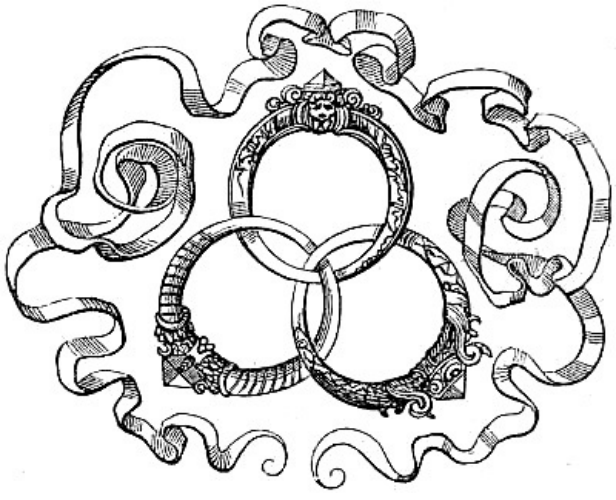
In the Braybrooke Collection is a cameo portrait of Madame de Maintenon, on a very large and fine ruby, three eighths of an inch by half an inch wide, in a most beautiful gold ring, contemporaneous setting; presented to Louis XIV. when she retired into the convent of St. Cyr. In the same collection is a cameo portrait of Queen Elizabeth, by Valerio Vicentini, on a sardonyx of three strata, in a fine gold setting of the period; also a cameo portrait of Charles I. on black jasper, a splendid work of art, in a beautifully-enamelled gold ring of his time. [Pg 470]

The Rev. C. W. King describes the famous signet-ring of Michael Angelo, preserved in the Paris Collection. ‘It is a sard engraved with a group representing a Bacchic festival, quite in the Renaissance style. In the exergue is a boy fishing, the rebus upon the name of the artist *Gio Maria da Pescia*. Many connoisseurs, however, hold the gem to be an undoubted antique. Of this relic the following curious story is told:—In the last century, as the Abbé Barthelemy was exhibiting the rarities of the Bibliothèque to a distinguished antiquary of the day, he suddenly missed this ring, whereupon without expressing his suspicions, he privately despatched a servant for an emetic, which, when brought, he insisted upon the *savant’s* swallowing, and the ring came to light again.’[76]

The celebrated gem representing Apollo and Marsyas, which belonged to Lorenzo de’ Medici, and formed one of the magnificent collection of the Grand-Duke of Tuscany, once, mounted on a ring, decorated the hand of the parricide Nero, who used it to sign his sanguinary mandates. Numbers of copies have been taken of this gem in ancient and modern times. It is thus described by Tenhove: Apollo, in a noble attitude, is holding his lyre, and regarding with disdain Marsyas, who, bound to a tree, and his hands tied behind him, awaits the just punishment of his temerity. The young Scythian who is to execute the sentence, kneels before Apollo, apparently imploring his clemency. The quiver and arrows of the god are suspended from one of the branches of the tree; on the foreground are the instruments of which the satyr has made such unfortunate use. [Pg 471]

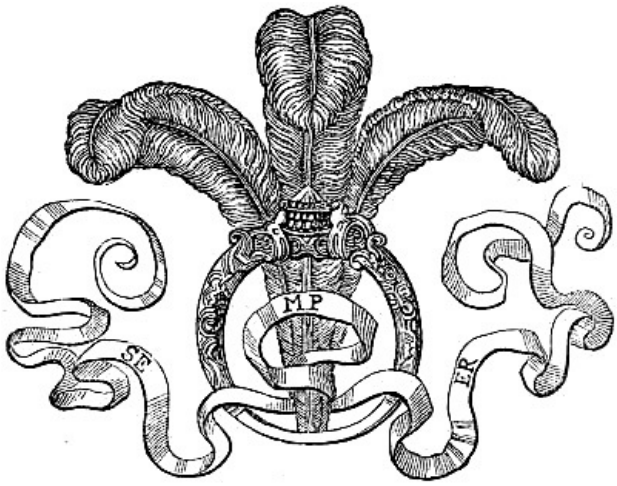
It is known that Nero had the folly to imagine himself the first musician of his time, and in selecting this subject he doubtless intended to get rid of all competition, by deterring those who might otherwise have felt disposed to enter the lists with him. Perhaps he was looking at his left hand, and assuming Apollo for his model, when he had the singer Menedemus, of whom he was jealous, flayed, as it were, with whipping, in his presence, whose yells of agony seemed to the emperor so melodious that he warmly applauded. Lorenzo’s feeling with regard to the gem was, doubtless, of a very different character: he selected the stone on account of its marvellous beauty of execution.

Among the art treasures, in connection with rings and camei in the British Museum, the Rev. C. W. King notices a cameo with a lion passant, in low relief in the red layer of a sardonyx, exquisitely finished, which has its value greatly enhanced by the ‘Lavr. Med.’ cut in the field, attesting that it once belonged to the original cabinet of Lorenzo de’ Medici. This stone, set in a ring, has its face protected by a glass; a proof of the estimation in which its former possessor held it. [Pg 472]



Ring Device of Cosmo de’ Medici.

Cosmo de’ Medici had for device three diamonds on rings, intertwined emblems of excellency, superiority, and endurance.



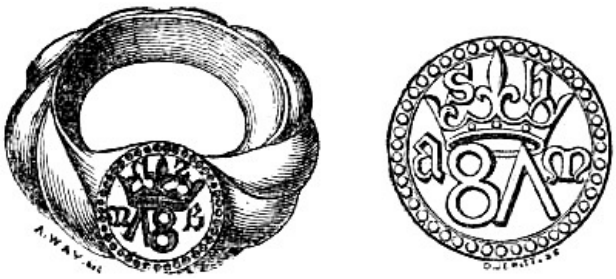
Ring Device of Lorenzo de’ Medici.

Lorenzo de’ Medici had a ring with a diamond; a plume of three colours, green, white, and red, to signify that in loving God he displayed three virtues: the white plume representing faith; the green, hope; the red, charity. Pope Leo X. adopted this device. [Pg 473]

Pietro de’ Medici had a falcon holding a diamond-ring in its claws, signifying that everything should be done to please God.

Ring Device of Pietro de’ Medici.

In the Staunton collection of antiquities (Longbridge House, near Warwick) is a remarkable ring, which is described (with illustrations) in the ‘Archæological Journal’ (vol. iv. p. 358). It is a beautiful gold signet-ring, found, about the year 1825, in the ruins of Kenilworth Castle, by a person named Faulkner, who was in the constant habit of searching among the rubbish with the expectation of making some valuable discovery. Its weight is 4 dwts. 10 grs. The impress is very singular; under a crown appear the numerals 87, of the forms usually designated as Arabic, of which no example has been noticed in this country, except in MSS. prior to the fifteenth century. Above the crown are the letters **s** and **h**; lower down on one side is seen the letter **a**, and on the other **m**. Various interpretations of this remarkable device have been suggested: it has been supposed that it might have reference to the coronation of Elizabeth, Queen of Henry VII., solemnised at Westminster, A.D. 1487, or have been connected with the enterprise of Lambert Simnel, which occurred during that year at the instigation of Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy. Mr. Hawkins considers its age to have been about the reign of Edward IV., the crown with fleur-de-lys ornaments, and the form of the **m** being of similar character to those on his coins; a similar type of crown may, however, be found in earlier times, as shown by the great seals and other authorities as early even as the reign of Richard II. The letters have been supposed to be the initials of a sentence such as ‘Sancta virgo adjuva me’ (the second letter being read as **h**) or, supposing the ring to be referred to the times of Henry VII., ‘Sigillum,’ or ‘secretum, Henrici, anno (14) 87. M^{h}.’ The most probable explanation, however, appears to have been proposed by Mr. John Gough Nichols: that the ring, which is of a size suited to a lady’s finger, might have been a betrothal or wedding present; the initials **s.h.** and **a.m.** being those of the two parties, the Arabic numerals indicating the date 1487, and the crown being merely ornamental, frequently used during the fifteenth century on seals by persons not entitled by rank to use them. [Pg 474]



Ring found at Kenilworth Castle.

The coronet, with an initial letter, adopted as a device on the seals or signet-rings of commoners, appears on numerous rings of the fifteenth century, as well as on seals appended to documents. It appears on another ring of later date in Mr. Staunton's collection, of base metal gilt, found in Coleshill Church, Warwickshire. The device appears to be a crown placed upon a shaft or truncheon, resting on a heart, in base, with the initials of the wearer, I. G., at the sides. [Pg 475]

At a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries (May 1875), Mr. Robert Day (Local Secretary for Ireland) exhibited a silver ring of fourteenth-century work, the hoop portion of which is formed of two hands, which grasp an octagonal signet that bears the centre device of a letter R crowned, with the motto 'Bacchal,' and a spray of roses in the border. 'To illustrate this,' remarks Mr. Day, 'I send a small coin of base silver, having a similar crowned R on the obverse. These crowned letters recall the familiar lines of Chaucer, of

> ———a crowned A,
> And after, Amor Vincit Omnia.

The ring was dug up in a potato garden at Howth, near Dublin. The motto "Bacchal" I am unable to throw any light upon, except it be a contraction of Baccalaureus. On the rim is a star of six points, to show the position for sealing.'

A ring-relic of Fotheringay, belonging to Mrs. Simpson, of Edinburgh, is of gold, set with a diamond cut in facets, with three smaller diamonds over it, representing a crowned heart. It is considered to have belonged to the unfortunate Mary, Queen of Scots.

A gold signet-ring, curious and interesting in several respects, the property of Mr. James Neish, of the Laws, Dundee, was exhibited at a meeting of the Archæological Institute in May 1864, when the following particulars were given:—It was found about 1790, in digging the foundations of Heathfield House, on the Hawkhill, Dundee, formerly called the Sparrow Muir. The device (of which a representation is given in the 'Archæological Journal,' No. 82, 1864, p. 186) is a head, apparently regal, bearded, with the hair long at the sides; on the breast there is a mullet or star of five points introduced in scrolled ornament; around the edge is a corded bordure with knots at intervals like a *cordelière*, instead of the pearled margin usually found on seals. This knotted cincture is well known as worn by the Franciscans, thence designated as *Cordeliers*; as accessory to heraldic or personal ornaments, its use seems to have been first adopted by Anne of Brittany, after the death of Charles VIII., in 1498, as we are informed by Palliot and other writers. It has, however, sometimes been assigned to a rather earlier period. The hoop of Mr. Neish's ring is plain and massive, the weight being 199 grains. The device is engraved with skill. It is difficult to tell whether the object worn on the head is intended for a crown or a helmet, with lateral projections resembling horns. Examples of helmets with cornute appendages, especially found in classical art, are not wanting in mediæval times. It has been suggested that the mullet on the breast may indicate some allusion to the heraldic bearing of the Douglas family, especially as the ring was discovered in the district of Angus, of which the earldom was conferred in 1377 on a branch of that noble race. Mr. Neish—to whom both this remarkable ring and also Heathfield House where it was found, belong—stated that he had been informed by two persons that they remembered the discovery; one, moreover, said that Mr. Webster, of Heathfield House, to whom it formerly belonged, told him that the late Mr. Constable, of Wallace Craigie (the Monkbarns of the 'Antiquary),' had taken interest in the discovery, and having carried the ring to Edinburgh, he had found there in some depository a proclamation regarding the loss of a gold ring on Sparrow Muir, by a certain Allan Dorward, who had been employed by David, Earl of Huntingdon, brother of William the Lion, in building a church founded by the Earl at Dundee, and completed in 1198. The King, according to tradition, was so pleased with the builder's work that he presented to him a ring, which Allan, being afterwards at a boar-hunt on the Sparrow Muir, had there lost, and he had offered a reward for its recovery, as made known in the proclamation before mentioned. This tradition has been related by Mr. Andrew Jervise, in his 'Memorials of Angus and the Mearns,' p. 178. According to another version the ring was asserted to have been given by David II. (A.D. 1329-70) to his master mason, and lost by him on the Sparrow Muir in the manner before related. [Pg 476] [Pg 477]

So much for tradition. The beautiful ring in Mr. Neish's possession may possibly be assigned to the later part of the fourteenth century; the workmanship presents no feature of early character to justify the supposition that it was a gift from William the Lion. There is also the assurance of one of the most accurate and acute of Scottish antiquaries that no such

document or ‘advertisement’ as is alleged to have been put forth by the loser of the ring is in existence; neither is there any record of any architect employed by David II., or by his father Robert I.

The supposition seems to be that the ring may have belonged to some person of the family of Douglas by whom St. Francis was held in special veneration, and that hence the *cordelière* was introduced upon it. There existed at Dundee a Franciscan convent, which appears to have received support from the Douglas family. [Pg 478]

A relic of Flodden Field (1513), a ring, was found in 1783, on the site of the battle. It bore the following inscription in Norman-French: ‘On est mal loiauls amans qui se poet garder des maux disans’ (no lovers so faithful as to be able to guard themselves against evil-speakers). Between every two words, and at the beginning of each line, is a boar’s head. This being the crest of the Campbells, it is not improbable that the ring was that of the Argylls, and might have belonged to Archibald Campbell, the second Earl of Argyll, who was killed while commanding the van of the army at the fatal battle of Flodden Field,—

> Where shiver’d was fair Scotland’s spear,
> And broken was her shield.

I have previously alluded to the signet-ring of Mary, Queen of Scots, in the British Museum. A few additional particulars of this celebrated relic will be interesting. It were now a fruitless task to seek to discover through what means this ring passed into the collection of the Queen of George III. It subsequently came into possession of the late Duke of York, and at the sale of his plate and jewels at Christie’s, in 1827, it was purchased for fourteen guineas.

This ring is massive, and weighs 212 grs.; the hoop has been chased with foliage and flowers, and enamelled, and appears to have been much worn; a few traces of the enamel remain. The impress is the royal achievement, engraved on a piece of crystal or white sapphire, of oval form, measuring about three-quarters of an inch by five-eighths. The royal [Pg 479] cognizance or the crest, on a helmet of mantlings, and ensigned with a crown, is a lion sejant affronté gu. crowned, holding in his dexter paw a naked sword, and in the sinister a sceptre, both erect and ppr. Above the crest appear the motto and the initials previously alluded to. The shield is surrounded by the collar of the Thistle, with the badge, and supported by unicorns chained and ducally gorged. On the dexter side there is a banner charged with the arms of Scotland; on the sinister another with three bars, over all a saltire. It is remarkable that the heraldic tinctures are represented on the back of the engraved stone, either by enamelling or painting, and the field or back-ground is coloured dark blue. This mode of ornamentation is found in some of the fine Italian works of the period.

Sir Thomas Hepburn has a gold ring traditionally regarded as having been worn by Queen Mary of Scotland. The hoop is enamelled black; the setting consists of six opals surrounding one of much larger size, presenting the appearance of a six-petalled flower.

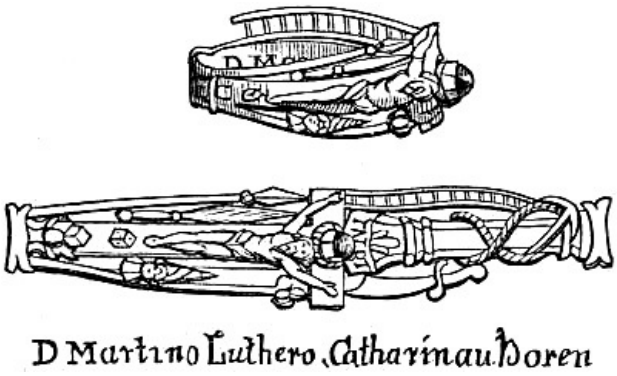
Apropos of Queen Mary’s assumption of the arms of England in defiance of Elizabeth, they are so engraved upon a signet-ring that belonged to the late Earl of Buchan, as certified upon the little boxes containing facsimiles of the seal, and sold to all sight-seers at Holyrood Palace. The arms of England and France are placed in the first and fourth quarter of the shield: those of Scotland in the second quarter, and those of Ireland in the third quarter.

A ring of very exquisite workmanship connected with the Seymour family, and in the possession of the Earl of Home, was exhibited at the Society of Antiquaries (April 1864), and [Pg 480] is an interesting historical relic. The body of the ring is made of mother-of-pearl, and on it is set an oval medallion, with a cipher ‘E. R.’ in relief, the E. being made of diamonds, the R. of blue enamel: on each side along the shank of the ring is a line of rubies set in gold. The medallion with the cipher opens, and discloses a recess in the mother-of-pearl with a bust in low relief, apparently a portrait of Jane Seymour, three-quarter face. The bust is made of gold, coloured with enamel or paint, and is set with a small diamond as a brooch. The inner surface of the lid with the cipher encloses a bust in profile of Queen Elizabeth in enamelled gold, with a ruby set as a brooch. Within the ring, and therefore at the back of the portrait of Jane Seymour, is a small oval plate of gold, ornamented with translucent enamel, and representing an earl’s coronet, over which is a phœnix in flames. The phœnix was a well-known badge of Queen Elizabeth, but it was also adopted as the crest of the Seymour family, to whom it must here be referred. Edward Seymour, eldest son of the Protector by his second wife, was created Earl of Hertford by Queen Elizabeth in 1559, and it is probable that the ring was made shortly after, before he lost the favour of the Queen through his marriage with Lady Catherine Grey.

In ‘Archæologia,’ vol. xxxi., is a fine example of a weighty ring of fine gold, found in 1823 at Thetford, in Suffolk. The device which appears upon this ring is an eagle displayed; on the inner side is engraved a bird, with the wings closed, apparently a falcon, with a crown upon its head. The following posy, or motto, commencing on the outer side, is continued on the interior of the ring:—**dens me ouroye de bous senir a gree—com moun coner desiri**—‘God work for me to make suit acceptably to you, as my heart desires.’ The devices [Pg 481] appear to be heraldic, and the motto that of a lover, or a suitor to one in power. The eagle is the bearing of several ancient Suffolk families; it was also a badge of the House of Lancaster, and Thetford was one portion of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Heraldic ring.

In the ‘Revue Britannique’ for January 1869, the discovery was announced of the two wedding-rings interchanged between Martin Luther and Catherine von Bora, one of nine nuns, who, under the influence of his teaching, had emancipated themselves from their religious vows. She afterwards married Luther. The *Revue* states that the ring of the great Reformer is at Waldenburg, and the bride’s ring is now in Paris; that they are similar in composition, the latter being smaller. They are of silver gilt, with a figure of Christ upon the cross, and bear inside the same inscription, ‘D. Martino Luthero Catherinan Boren, 13 Juni, 1589.’ It is further stated that the bride’s ring belongs to a Protestant lady, Madame Michael Girod, and was purchased by her at an old store-shop in Geneva.



Supposed betrothal ring of Martin Luther.

Considerable doubts exist, however, as to the authenticity of these rings, a writer in ‘Notes and Queries’ pointing out an evident mistake in the date, and the inscription on the bride’s ring ‘D. Martin*o* Luther*o* Catherinan Boren:’ not meaning ‘Dr. Martin Luther to Catherinan Boren’ but the reverse. Another correspondent of the same work mentions that ‘Luther’ rings were made for a jubilee at Leipsic in 1825. [Pg 482]

Betrothment ring
of Martin Luther.

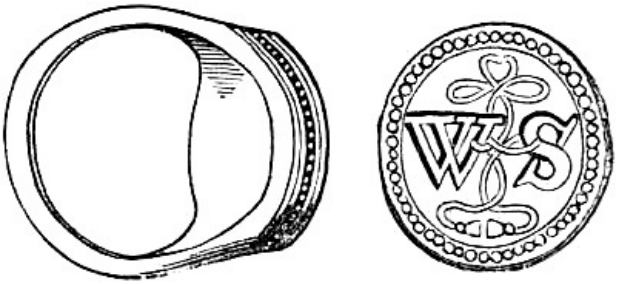
Mr. H. Noel Humphreys, an eminent authority on these subjects, states (‘Intellectual Observer,’ February 1862): ‘The betrothment-ring of Luther, which belonged to a family at Leipsic as late as 1817, and is doubtless still preserved with the greatest care as a national relic of great interest, is composed of an intricate device of gold-work set with a ruby, the emblem of exalted love. The gold devices represent all the symbols of the “Passion.” In the centre is the crucified Saviour: on one side the spear, with which the side was pierced, and the rod of reeds of the flagellation. On the other is a leaf of hyssop. Beneath are the dies with which the soldiers cast lots for the garment without seam, and below are the three nails. At the back may be distinguished the inside of the ladder, and other symbols connected with the last act of the Atonement; the whole so grouped as to make a large cross, surmounted by the ruby, the most salient feature of the device. On the inside of the ring the inscriptions are still perfect. They contain the names of the betrothed pair, and the date of the wedding-day in German, “der 13 Junij 1525.” This was the ring presented to the wife at the betrothal, and worn by her after the marriage. The *marriage-ring* worn by Luther after his marriage was still more intricate in its structure. It is an ingeniously contrived [Pg 483]

double-ring, every intricacy of structure having its point and meaning. In the first place, though the double-ring can be divided, so as to form two complete rings, yet they cannot be separated from each other, as the one passing through the other causes them to remain permanently interlaced, as an emblem of the marriage vow, though still forming two perfect rings; illustrating also the motto engraved within them, "*Was Got zussamen füget soll Kein Mensch Scheiden*"—what God doth join no man shall part. On the one hoop is a diamond, the emblem of power, duration, and fidelity; and on the inside of its raised mounting, which, when joined to the other hoop, will be concealed, are the initials of Martin Luther, followed by a D., marking his academic title. On the corresponding surface of the mounting of the gem of the other hoop are the initials of his wife, Catherine von Bora, which, on the closing of the rings, necessarily lies close to those of Luther. The gem in this side of the ring is a ruby, the emblem of exalted love; so that the names of Catherine and Luther are closely united, when the rings are closed, beneath the emblems of exalted love, power, duration, and fidelity.

Marriage ring of Martin Luther.

'There can be but little doubt that these curious and interesting rings were designed by the celebrated painter and goldsmith, Lucas Cranach, and possibly wrought with his own hand, [Pg 484] the marriage of his friend Luther being a special occasion which he doubtless wished to honour with every attention. Lucas was, indeed, one of the three select friends whom Luther took to witness his betrothal; the others being Dr. Bugenhagen, town preacher of Wittenberg, and the lawyer Assel, who all accompanied him to Reichenbach's house, where Catherine resided.'

Among the numerous articles of Shakspearian interest presented to the Shakspeare Library and Museum at Stratford, by Miss Anne Wheler, the surviving sister of the historian of Stratford-on-Avon, the late Mr. Robert Bell Wheler, is a gold signet-ring described as Shakspeare's, having the initials 'W. S.' a true lover's knot entwined between them.



Shakspeare's ring (?).

An account of the discovery of the ring appeared in the 'Guide to Stratford-on-Avon,' by Mr. Wheler, published in 1814, from which it appears that the ring was found four years previously by a labourer's wife upon the surface of the mill close adjoining Stratford churchyard. 'I purchased it on the same day,' observes Mr. Wheler, 'for thirty-six shillings (the current value of the gold), yet the woman had sufficient time to destroy the precious *ærugo* by having it unnecessarily immersed in aquafortis, to ascertain and prove the metal, at a silversmith's shop. It is of tolerably large dimensions (weighing 12 dwts.), and evidently a gentleman's ring of Elizabeth's age.' To prove the authenticity of the ring, Mr. Wheler [Pg 485] made many efforts to discover whether there existed anywhere Shakspeare's seal attached to letter or other writings, but ineffectually. 'From a close observation of the ring,' adds Mr. Wheler, 'I should be inclined to suppose that it was made in the early part of the poet's life. Mr. Malone, in a conversation I had with him in London, said he had nothing to allege against the probability of my conjecture as to its owner.'

No positive proof, however, according to Mr. Wheler's own admission, can be adduced as to the authenticity of the ring having belonged to Shakspeare, but the very probability gives an interest to it, which most persons who inspect it will feel.

'Is it Shakspeare's?' remarks Mr. Fairholt. 'It is evidently a gentleman's ring, and of the poet's era. It is just such a ring as a man in his station would fittingly wear—gentlemanly, but not pretentious. There was but one other person in the small town of Stratford at that time to whom the same initials belonged. This was one William Smith, but his seal is attached to several documents preserved among the records of the corporation, and is totally different.' [He was a draper; and his seal has a device upon it consisting of a skull with a bone in the mouth; the letters 'W. S.' are under it, and very small. This ring was, most

probably, of silver. It is unlikely that a small trader like Smith should wear a heavy gold ring, like this which claims to be Shakspeare's.] Mr. Halliwell, in his 'Life of Shakspeare,' observes, that 'little doubt can be entertained that this ring belonged to the poet, and, it is, probably, the one he lost before his death, and was not to be found when his will was executed, the word *hand* being substituted for that of *seal* in the original copy of that document.' [The concluding words of the will are, 'in witness whereof I have hereunto put my seale,' the last word being struck through with a pen, and *hand* substituted.] [Pg 486]

In the 'Gentleman's Magazine' (May 1810) we find: 'For further confirmation of circumstances we may observe over the porch leading into the gate of Charlecote Hall, near Stratford-on-Avon, erected in the early part of Elizabeth's reign by the very Sir Thomas Lucy who is said to have prosecuted Shakspeare, the letters "T. L." connected in a manner precisely similar to that on the ring.'

Initials of Sir Thomas Lucy
at Charlecote Hall.

The crossing of the centre lines of the W., with the oblique direction of the lines of the S., exactly agree with the characters of that day. For proof, we need wander no farther than Stratford Church, where the Cloptons' and Totness' tombs will furnish representations of rings, and Shakspeare's monument of letters, exactly corresponding in point of shape. The connection or union of the letters, by the ornamental strings and tassels, was then frequently used, of which we may meet with numerous instances upon seals of that period.

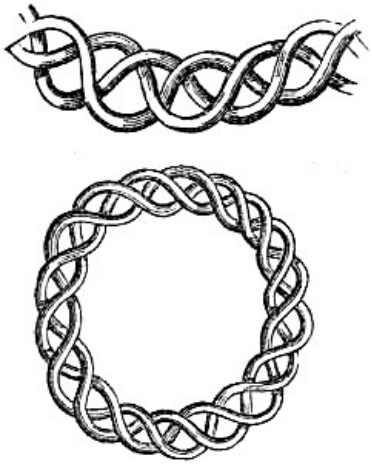
In the life of Haydon the painter we have the following letter from him to Keats (March 1, 1818): 'My dear Keats, I shall go mad! In a field at Stratford-upon-Avon, that belonged to Shakspeare, they have found a gold ring and seal with the initials "W. S." and a true lover's knot between. If this is not Shakspeare's whose is it?—a true lover's knot! I saw an impression to-day and am to have one as soon as possible: as sure as you breathe and that he was the first of beings the seal belonged to him.

'O Lord!' 'B. R. Haydon.'

The ring of Sir Walter Raleigh, which he wore at the time of his execution, is, according to the statement in 'Notes and Queries' of a descendant of that truly 'great' man, in the possession of a member of the Blanckley family, being a heir-loom, the Blanckleys being directly descended from Sir Walter, and having several interesting relics of their distinguished ancestor. [Pg 487]

Octavius Morgan, Esq., F.R.S., F.S.A., exhibited at a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries (February 1857) a rare and curious 'Trinity' ring, turned out of one piece of ivory, and belonging to the latter part of the seventeenth century. It is formed by a single band of ivory, making three circuits, so intertwined with one another as not to touch, and thus forming a threefold ring. 'Its curiosity is great,' remarked Mr. Morgan, 'because these rings were only made by one person; so much art and skill were required in the making that they were the wonder of the time, and no one at the present day knows by what contrivance they were turned, or how they could now be made. The interest consists in having ascertained the maker of the ring, which I by chance met with some years ago in this city.... We find from Doppelmayer that Stephan Zick (born 1639), the artist to whom I attribute this ring, was descended from a Nuremberg family long famous for their skill in this art.... Doppelmayer, describing some of the wonderful objects which he produced, says, the work which most distinguished him was his Trinity rings. Of these he made only three; the two first were in the Museums of Vienna and Dresden, and the third became the property of an amateur collector of curiosities in Nuremberg as a wonderful work of art and skill. This was written in 1730. On comparing this ring with the engraving in Doppelmayer, it exactly corresponds. The little box turned as a case for it shows how it was cared for, and is indicative of the period when it was made. We also learn from Doppelmayer that these Trinity rings seem to have been first made in gold by a jeweller of Nuremberg, Johan Heel, about 1670, and he describes them as consisting of a single piece of wire, forming a three-fold circuit, each circuit skilfully intertwined with the other two so as not to touch each other, the ends being so cleverly united that the point of juncture could not be discovered. Thus there were three rings in one, and hence the name. The inventor of these ingenious rings is not known, but it is considered to be a Jesuit, named Scherern, about 1660. It certainly required great skill to have turned such a ring out of one piece of ivory, a work which I believe it is not possible to accomplish with any machinery now in use. The inference I draw from the foregoing is, that if Stephan Zick alone could make these rings of ivory—if [Pg 488]

he only made three, and that if one of these is at Vienna, and another at Dresden, I must now be the fortunate possessor of the third.'



Ivory-turned rings.

(The greatest progress in ivory-carving was made in Flanders, Holland, and Germany, about the middle of the sixteenth century. There are in the museums of Munich, Vienna, and Berlin, a quantity of ivory vases, etc., covered with exquisite carvings.—*Labarte.*)

Mr. Edwards, in his 'History and Poetry of Finger-rings,' mentions, and gives an illustration of, a ring that may well claim a place among remarkable specimens. It is a gigantic ring, presented in 1852, by some citizens of California to President Pierce. The description of this [Pg 489] golden monster is given from Gleason's 'Pictorial Newspaper' (December 25, 1852): 'It weighs upwards of a full pound, and for chasteness of design, elegance of execution, and high style of finish, has, perhaps, no equal in the world. The design is by Mr. George Blake, a mechanic of San Francisco. The circular portion of the ring is cut into squares, which stand at right angles to each other, and are embellished each with a beautifully executed design, the entire group representing a pictorial history of California, from her primitive state down to her present flourishing condition, under the flag of our Union.

'Thus, there is given a grizzly bear in a menacing attitude, a deer bounding down a slope, an enraged boa, a soaring eagle, and a salmon. Then we have the Indian with his bow and arrow, the primitive weapon of self-defence; the native mountaineer on horseback, and a Californian on horseback, throwing his lasso. Next peeps out a Californian tent. Then you see a miner at work with his pick, the whole being shaded by two American flags, with the staves crossed and groups of stars in the angles. The part of the ring reserved for the seal is covered by a solid and deeply carved plate of gold, bearing the arms of the State of California in the centre, surmounted by the banner and stars of the United States, and inscribed with "Frank Pierce" in old Roman characters. This lid opens upon a hinge, and presents to view, underneath, a square box, divided by bars of gold into nine separate compartments, each containing a pure specimen of the varieties of one found in the country. Upon the inside is the following inscription: "*Presented to* Franklin Pierce, *the Fourteenth President of the United States*."

'The ring is valued at two thousand dollars. Altogether, it is a massive and superb affair, rich [Pg 490] in emblematical design and illustration, and worthy its object.'

In the collection of Lord Braybrooke is the ring of Tippoo Saib, which is thus described in the catalogue: 'This magnificent jewel has a plain gold hoop, with the entire surface set with rubies; on the centre is perched a large bird, apparently intended for a hawk, made of gold and beautifully executed, with the plumage composed completely of precious stones, the diamond, emerald, ruby, and sapphire. A better idea of the splendour of this ornament will be formed from a description of the bird. Length from the base of the bill to the end of the tail, 3¼ inches; girth round the body, 3¼ inches; width across the scapulars, 1½ inch; width across the tail, three-quarters of an inch; height 1⅛ inch. In the beak are two small ruby-drops, a single emerald in the crest, and rubies for the eyes; a single row of nine sapphires encircles the throat, and 139 rubies, including those on the hoop, 14 in number, with 29 diamonds, some of them very large, and all set flat, cover the rest of the neck, breast, back, and tail. Several gems beside have been lost from their setting. Across the belly, behind the legs, is an inscription in some Indian characters, which has not yet been explained beyond the following remarks upon it in a letter addressed by the (late) A. Way Esq., who copied it, to Lady Braybrooke: "The characters are a corruption of the ordinary Sanscrit, that is, I suppose, some local variety or peculiarity of a dialect in Tippoo's district; they appear to signify certain titles of the great chief, commencing with a portion of his proper style, '*Maha ra jah*,' sufficient to show that the inscription relates only to the name of Tippoo Saib. This is all that I can at present offer in regard to your highly curious jewel.—Nov. 24, 1848." This [Pg 491] unique and interesting ring was brought from India by some one in the army, at the time of the capture of Seringapatam, 1792, under the first Marquis Cornwallis, and presented to his family, by whom it has been preserved and descended as an heirloom through his eldest grandchild, the late Lady Braybrooke. It was stated at the time of its presentation that

Tippoo was in the habit of wearing it when he went out hawking, perhaps only when he did so in state. Weight of the whole 2 oz. 6 dwts. 7 grs.'

The Baroness Burdett Coutts possesses a gold ring set with large green tourmaline. It is of Indian workmanship, and is said to have belonged to Tippoo Saib.

The Rev. C. W. King in his 'Precious Stones, Gems, and Precious Metals,' mentions 'an unparalleled specimen of Oriental caprice and extravagance—a finger-ring cut out of a solid piece of emerald of remarkably pure quality, with two emerald drops and two collets set with rose diamonds, and ruby borders in Oriental mountings, formerly belonging to Jehanghir, son of Akbar, Emperor of Delhi, whose name is engraved on the ring. Diameter 1¼ × 1⅛ in. This ring was presented by Shah Soojah to the East India Company, and was purchased by the late Lord Auckland, when Governor-General of India. Now in the possession of the Hon. Miss Eden.'

A wonderful ring was presented by the Great Mogul to the only envoy of the Emperor of Germany who ever visited his court. 'The very first sight of this jewel,' observes the Rev. C. W. King, 'sufficed to convince one that it could have had no other origin than this, such a show of barbarian splendour did it exhibit, forming in itself a complete cabinet of every kind of precious stone of colour to be found in his dominions. Its form was that of a wheel about [Pg 492] three inches in diameter, composed of several concentric circles, joined together by the spokes radiating from the centre, in which was set a large round sapphire. The spokes at all their intersections with the circles, had collets soldered on them, each containing some coloured gem; in fact, every stone of value except the diamond occurred in this glorious company. On the back was fixed the shank, and when worn it covered the whole hand like some huge mushroom.'

On the death of the late Cardinal York at Rome, amongst various relics of the house of Stuart, purchased for Lord John Scott, were the ring worn by the Pretender—James the Third, as he was styled abroad—on his marriage with the Princess Clementina Sobieski, and the marriage-ring of his son, Prince Charles Edward, enclosing a beautiful little miniature; a gold ring with a white rose in enamel, worn by King James the Second and his son; a ring with a cameo portrait in ivory of James the Second; a ring with a miniature portrait of Henry Stuart, Cardinal, Duke of York, when young; a ring with a cameo portrait, by the celebrated engraver Pickler, of James Sobieski, great-uncle of the Pretender's wife; a ring with a cameo portrait, by the same artist, of the wife of Prince Charles Edward; also one with a cameo portrait of the Duchess of Albany, and another containing a lock of her hair.

In the possession of R. H. Soden Smith, Esq., F.S.A., is a gold ring, having in the bezel a miniature of Prince James Stuart, the old Chevalier, set round with small crystals. English contemporary work.

Sir Watkin Williams Wynn possesses a gold ring, set with a ruby, surrounded by the Garter, crowned with the motto 'Dieu et mon Droit' on the hoop.

This is an interesting family relic, having been a present from Prince Charles Edward. [Pg 493]

A signet-ring, believed to be the Council Seal of Queen Henrietta Maria, made by warrant, Sept. 6, 1626, is the property of Miss Hartshorne, and has a circular bezel, set with sapphire, engraved with escutcheon, bearing the arms of England surmounted by a crown, the letters M and R at the sides; on the shoulders is the rose of England in coloured enamel. Diameter of the ring 1⅛ in. This curious relic was exhibited at the Loan Exhibition of Ancient and Modern Jewellery at the South Kensington Museum in 1872.

Mr. Octavius Morgan, F.R.S., F.S.A., has in his valuable collection of rings one formed with a diminutive squirt, which, being concealed in the hand, would, at pleasure, throw a jet of water into the eye of anyone examining it.[77]

In the Waterton Collection is a bronze squirt-ring with octagonal bezel, finely chased with [Pg 494] mask of Silenus, the ring hollow, with tube projecting from the hoop, so that it can be used as a squirt. Italian work of the sixteenth century. L. one and seven-tenths inch.

Squirt-ring.

In the same collection, also, is a ring made to serve as a *whistle*. It is of lead, with circular

bezel finely chased in relief, with profile heads of Charles the Fifth and his empress. Flemish, sixteenth century. Diameter one and one-eighth inch.

In the ‘Annual Register’ for 1764 we read that Mr. Arnold, of Devereux Court, in the Strand, watchmaker, had the honour to present His Majesty George the Third with a most curious repeating watch of his own making, *set in a ring*. The size of the watch was something less than a silver twopence; it contained 120 different parts and weighed altogether five dwts. seven grains and three-fourths. [Pg 495]

Among curious ring relics may be mentioned one in which a tooth of Sir Isaac Newton was set. The tooth was sold to a nobleman in 1816 for 730*l.*, who had it placed in the ring, and wore it constantly on his finger. Denon, the French *savant*, wore a ring set with a tooth of Voltaire.

At Norwich in 1847 a silver ring was exhibited, set with a dark-coloured substance, supposed to be the palatal tooth of a fish, like those of the *Sphœrodus Gigas*. This closely resembles the precious ring given (according to tradition) by Richard Cœur-de-Lion, to one of the Dawnay family in the Holy Wars, and adopted as their crest. It is preserved in the collection of Viscount Downe, and was shown by him at a meeting of the Institute at York. Another ring, with the same kind of setting, belonged to the late Mr. Albert Way. Date, the thirteenth century.

In the collection of Mr. A. J. B. Beresford Hope is a gold ring set with a sapphire of extraordinary brilliancy, known as the ‘saphir merveilleux,’ which formerly belonged to Philippe d’Orléans (Égalité), and is mentioned by Madame de Genlis.

In 1765, a very beautiful and perfect gold ring was found by a workman among the ruins of the North Gate House, on Bedford Bridge, when that building was pulled down. It bears the initials ‘J.B.,’ and is engraved with a death’s-head and the words ‘Memento mori.’ There seems to be every probability that this ring once belonged to John Bunyan, who was imprisoned there. This precious relic was sold to Dr. Abbot, chaplain to the Duke of Bedford, and presented by him in his last illness to the Rev. G. H. Bower, perpetual curate of Elstow, the birthplace of Bunyan.

The London press has lately announced that Dean Bower bequeathed to his nephew, Mr. Henry Addington, this ring. [Pg 496]

In the preceding chapter I have mentioned several portrait-rings of remarkable interest; I may add that at the Loan Exhibition of Ancient and Modern Jewellery at the South Kensington Museum in 1872, some fine and highly curious specimens of this character were shown, and amongst them the following:—

Colonel Dawson Damer is the possessor of a gold ring with a miniature by Cosway of the eye of George, Prince of Wales.

Professor Maskelyne has an intaglio portrait of Sir Isaac Newton, set in a ring, which was presented to the late Dr. Maskelyne, Astronomer Royal, by Dr. Shepherd, of Cambridge, contemporary of Newton.

In the collection of Earl Beauchamp is a gold ring with enamel portrait of the Regent Orleans, by Petitot; French, beginning of the eighteenth century. Also a gold ring with profile portrait of Frederic the Great; and another portrait within; eighteenth century.

Belonging to the Rev. J. C. Jackson is a gold ring set with intaglio, an emerald portrait of James II.; eighteenth century; formerly the property of Cardinal York. A gold ring, black enamelled, with miniature portrait of Prince Charles Edward; eighteenth century.

A ring with a portrait head of Queen Elizabeth (?) in carved jacinth, mounted in gold, set with brilliants; French, sixteenth century, the property of George Bonnor, Esq.

Till, in his account of ‘Coronation Medals,’ mentions (but without citing his authority) that the late Cardinal of York wore constantly, till his decease, a ring which bore the portraits of the Pretender, James the Third, and his wife; it was taken from his finger in the hour of his dissolution, by his servant, and sold as a perquisite—a relic of the instability and mutation of human greatness—to William, Baron Bartholdy, son to the Jewish Plato, Moses Mendelssohn. It is now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, to which it was presented by Mrs. Maria Graham (since Calcott), in 1824. [Pg 497]

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APPENDIX. [Pg 499]

CHAPTER I.

RINGS FROM THE EARLIEST PERIOD. P. 18.

Counterfeit rings belong to all ages and peoples. Hall, in his ‘Satires,’ says:—

> Nor can good Myron weare on his left hand
> A signet-ring of Bristol diamond,
> But he must cut his glove to show his pride
> That his trim jewel might be better spied:
> And that men might some burgesse him repute
> With sattin sleeves hath graced his sacke-cloth suit.

The punishment of whipping in former days was inflicted on dishonest traders in rings. In the ‘Diary of Henry Machyn, from 1550 to 1563’ (Camden Society), is the following entry in 1556:—‘The iij day of July was a man wypyd a-bowtt the post of reformacyon be^{f} the standard in Chepsyd for sellyng of false rynges.’

Fines were also inflicted; in the records of the Goldsmiths’ Company we find: ‘In 1512 Robert Mayne, for mysworkyng of rings wars (worse) than sterling v oz and dj, leaves in pledge 2½ dozen of the said rings, pledges as security for the payments of fines and defaults.’

In the same records we have a curious account for ‘costs in the Chauncerie for the recoverie of a counterfete Diamant set in a gold ring (8th Edward IV., 1469),’ which affords an idea of lawyers’ charges in those days:—

[Pg 500]

	£	*s.*	*d.*
For boat-hire to Westminster and home again for the suit in the Chancery began in the old warden’s time, for the recovery of a counterfeit diamond set in a gold ring	0	0	6
For a breakfast at Westminster spent on our counsel	0	1	6
To Mr. Catesby, serjeant at law, to plead for the same	0	3	4
To another time for boat-hire in and out, and a breakfast for two days	0	1	6
Again for boat-hire and one breakfast	0	1	0
To the keeper of the Chancery door	0	0	2
To Timothy Fairfax at two times	0	8	4
To Pigott for attendance at two times	0	6	8
To a breakfast at Westminster 7*d.*, boat-hire 4*d.*	0	0	11
	1	3	11

Pliny’s account of Rings. P. 25.

Pliny’s remarks on rings are as follow:—‘It was the custom at first to wear rings on a single finger only—the one, namely, that is next to the little finger, and thus we see the case in the statues of Numa and Servius Tullius. In later times it became the practice to put rings on the finger next to the thumb, even in the case of the statues of the gods; and, more recently again, it has become the fashion to wear them upon the little finger as well. Among the peoples of Gallia and Britannia, the middle finger, it is said, is used for this purpose. At the present day, however, among us, this is the only finger that is excepted, all others being loaded with rings, smaller rings even being separately adapted for the smaller joints of the fingers. Some there are who heap several rings on the little finger alone; while others, again, wear but one ring on this finger—the ring that sets a seal on the signet-ring itself; this last being carefully shut up as an object of rarity, too precious to be worn in common use, and only to be taken from the cabinet (dactyliotheca) as from a sanctuary. And thus is the wearing of a single ring upon the little finger no more than an ostentatious advertisement that the owner has property of a more precious nature under seal at home. Some, too, make a parade of the weight of their rings, while to others it is quite a labour to wear more than one at a time; some, in their solicitude for the safety of their gems, make the hoop of gold tinsel, and fill it with a lighter material than gold, thinking thereby to diminish the risk of a fall. Others, again, are in the habit of enclosing poisons beneath the stones of their rings, and so wear them as instruments of death. And then, besides, how many of the crimes that are stimulated by cupidity are committed through the instrumentality of rings! How happy the times—how truly innocent—in which no seal was put to anything! At the present day, on the contrary, our very food even, and our drink, have to be preserved from theft through the agency of the ring; and so far is it from being sufficient to have the very keys sealed, that the signet-ring is often taken from off the owner’s fingers while he is overpowered with sleep, or lying on his deathbed.’

[Pg 501]

Shrewsbury Morse-ivory Thumb-ring. P. 89.

The coat-of-arms engraved on this ring consists of—'Quarterly of four: 1. Talbot, a lion rampant, with a bordure engrailed; 2. Strange, two lions passant; 3. Neville, a saltire; 4. Verdon, a fret.'

Dr. Iliff observes: 'The date of the ring appears to me to be about the middle of the sixteenth century, and it may, therefore, be ascribed to Francis Talbot, fifth Earl of Shrewsbury of that family, who was elected K.G. in 1545, and died September 25, 1560.

'With respect to the quarterings on the ring, I would observe that the first coat was assumed, as the paternal coat of Talbot, by Sir Gilbert Talbot (who died in 1298) on marrying Gwenllian, daughter of Rhys Vychan ap Gruffyd, Lord of North Wales, in lieu of his paternal arms, Bendy of ten argent and gules. The second quartering (Strange) was brought in by the marriage of Richard, Lord Talbot, of Eccleswall, Lord Strange, of Blackmere, in right of his wife Angharad, daughter and heir of John, Lord Strange. The third and fourth quarterings (Neville and Verdon) were brought in by the marriage of John Talbot, first Earl of Shrewsbury, of that family, with Maud, only daughter and heir of Sir Thomas Neville, Lord Furnival, and great-granddaughter of Thomas de Furnival, Lord of Sheffield, by Joan, daughter and co-heir of Theobald de Verdon, Baron of Webley.'

[Pg 502]

The Soden Smith Collection of Ancient Rings.

In the splendid collection of rings belonging to Mr. R. H. Soden Smith, F.S.A. (one hundred and forty specimens of which, dating from various periods, and commencing with ancient Egyptian, were exhibited at the Loan Exhibition of Jewellery at the South Kensington Museum, in 1872), are some fine works of ancient art. I may mention an antique Etruscan gold ring, with broad oblong bezel, repoussé, with representation of a chimera and griffin, the sides of the bezel enriched with delicate filigree work. An antique Etruscan gold ring, terminating in two serpents' heads, ornamented with three collars of filigree work. An iron ring (probably Etruscan), the surface plated with gold, chased with figure of a cock upon a pillar, and having a gold dot inserted. An antique Græco-Roman gold ring, the hoop formed of four strands of twisted wire-work, the bezel set with projecting onyx of four strata. An antique Roman silver pennannular ring, ending in two serpents' heads. A Roman ring, of the third century, the bezel set with a pierced piece of rough emerald, shoulders chased from the solid with beaded ornament. A silver pennannular ring, of Oriental type, terminating in ribbed hexagonal knobs. Found with Roman coins, in removing old London Bridge. An antique Roman bronze key-ring, found at Silchester. A gold Roman ring, of the third century, very massive, of angular outline, set with intaglio on nicolo onyx, engraved with a figure of Mercury; ploughed up in Sussex. A series of five gold antique Roman rings, set with emeralds, jasper, and sard; some engraved with subjects in intaglio. Antique Greek rings of gold, hollow, set with sards, vitreous pastes, &c. An antique Roman bronze ring, plated with gold. An antique Roman silver ring, the bezel engraved with a hare. Two gold rings of the Lower Empire, or Byzantine, with projecting bezels; one set with root of emerald, the other with ribbon onyx.

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CHAPTER II.

RING SUPERSTITIONS.

Solomon's Ring. P. 93.

In the Koran (chapter xxxvi., 'revealed at Mecca'), it is stated:—'We also tried Solomon, and placed on his throne a counterfeit body.' In the chapter on 'Ring Superstitions' I have mentioned the fable of Solomon's ring. The exposition of the passage in the Koran is taken from the following Talmudic fiction:—Solomon, having taken Sidon and slain the king of that city, brought away his daughter Jerâda, who became his favourite; and because she ceased not to lament her father's loss, he ordered the devils to make an image of him for her consolation; which being done, and placed in her chamber, she and her maids worshipped it morning and evening, according to their custom. At length Solomon, being informed of this idolatry, which was practised under his roof by his vizir Asâf, he broke the image, and, having chastised the women, went out into the desert, where he wept, and made supplication to God, who did not think fit, however, to let his negligence pass without some correction. It was Solomon's custom, while he washed himself, to trust his signet, on which his kingdom depended, with a concubine of his, named Amîna. One day, therefore, when she had the ring in her custody, a devil named Sakhar came to her in the shape of Solomon, and received the ring from her, by virtue of which he became possessed of the kingdom, and sat on the throne in the shape which he had borrowed, making what alterations in the law he pleased. Solomon, in the meantime, being changed in his outer appearance, and known to none of his subjects, was obliged to wander about and beg alms for his subsistence; till at length, after the space of forty days, which was the time the image had been worshipped in his house, the devil flew away and threw the ring into the sea, where it was immediately swallowed by a fish, which being taken and given to Solomon, he found the ring in its belly,

and having by this means recovered the kingdom, took Sakhar, and, tying a great stone to his neck, threw him into the Lake of Tiberias.

[Pg 504]

Charmed Ring of Sir Edward Neville. P. 132.

In the Confession of Sir Edward Neville, he alludes thus to the ‘charmed’ ring:—‘William Neville did send for me to Oxford that I should come and speak with him at “Weke,” and to him I went; it was the first time I ever saw him; I would I had been buried that day. When I came he took me to a *littell* room, and went to his garden, and there demanded of me many questions, and among all others, asked if it were not possible to have a ring made which should bring a man in favour with his Prince; “seeing my Lord Cardinal had such a ring, that whatsoever he asked of the King’s Grace, that he had; and Master Cromwell, when he and I were servants in my Lord Cardinal’s house, did haunt to the company of one that was seen in your faculty; and shortly after, no man so great with my Lord Cardinal as Master Cromwell was; and I have spoke with all them that has any name in this realm; and all they showed me that I should be great with my Prince, and this is the cause that I did send for you, to know whether your saying will be agreeable to theirs, or no.” And I, at the hearty desire of him, showed him that I had read many books, and especially the works of Solomon, and how his ring should be made, and of what metal; and what virtues they have after the canon of Solomon. And then he desired me instantly to take the pains to make him one of them; and I told him that I could make them, but I made never none of them, and I cannot tell that they have such virtues or no, but by hearing say. Also he asked me what other works I had read. And I told him that I had read the magical works of Hermes, which many men doth prize; and thus departed at that time. And one fortnight after, William Neville came to Oxford, and said that he had one Wayd at home at his house that did show him more than I did show him; for the said Wayd did show him that he should be a great lord, nigh to the parts that he dwelt in. And that in that lordship should be a fair castle; and he could not imagine what it should be, except it were the castle of Warwick. And I answered and said to him, that I dreamed that an angel took him and me by the hands, and led us to a high tower, and there delivered him a shield, with sundry arms, which I cannot rehearse, and this is all I ever showed him save at his desire. I went thither with him, and as concerning any other [Pg 505] man, save at the desire of Sir Gr. Done, Knt., I made the moulds that ye have, to the intent that he should have had Mistress Elizabeth’s gear.’

Wedding-ring of the Virgin Mary and Joseph. P. 93.

In Patrick’s ‘Devotions of the Roman Church’ is a curious account of the wedding-ring of the Virgin Mary and Joseph. It is there described as of onyx or amethyst, wherein was discerned a representation of the flowers that budded on his rod. ‘It was discovered in the year 996 in this way:—Judith, the wife of Hugo, Marquis of Etruria, being a great lover of jewels, employed one Ranerius, a skilful jeweller and lapidary of Clusium, to go to Rome to make purchases for her. There he formed an intimacy with a jeweller from Jerusalem, who, when Ranerius was about to return home, professed great affection, and offered him a ring as a pledge of friendship. Ranerius, looking upon it as of little value, declined it with a slight compliment; but the jeweller from the Holy Land bade him not contemn it, for it was the wedding-ring of Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, and made him take it, with a special charge that it should not fall into the hands of a wicked person. Ranerius, still careless of what he said, threw it into a little chest with articles of inferior value, where it remained until his forgetfulness cost him dear; for when his son was only ten years old (the number of years that his father disregarded the Virgin’s ring) the boy died, and was carried to his burial. But, behold, as the hearse went forward, on a sudden the dead child rose from the coffin, ordered the bearers to stop, and, calling to his father, told him that, by favour of the Blessed Virgin, he was come from Heaven to tell him that, as he had contemned religion by concealing her most holy ring in a common heap, he must immediately send for it, and publicly produce it, that it might be openly venerated. The chest being brought and delivered into the son’s hand, he presently found the ring, although he had never seen it before; then most reverently kissing it, and showing it to the spectators, they religiously adored it, during the joyful pealing of the bells, which rang of their own accord; whereupon, ordering himself to be carried to the place where he desired to be buried, he delivered the ring to the curate of [Pg 506] the parish, and then, laying himself down in the coffin, he was interred.—This ring wrought many miracles; ivory ones touched with it, worn by women in difficult labour, relieved them; an impression of it in wax, applied to the hip, removed the sciatica; it cured diseases of the eyes, reconciled married people that quarrelled, and drove out devils. Five centuries afterwards, in 1473, the church of Musthiola, where it effected these wonders, becoming ruinous, the ring was deposited with a religious community of the Franciscans at Clusium. One of the brethren of the order, named Wintherus, a crafty German, and very wicked, having obtained from the magistrates an appointment to show the ring, on a certain occasion, after exhibiting it at the end of his sermon, stooped down, as if he were putting it into the place provided for it, but instead of doing so he slipped it up his sleeve, and privily conveyed himself and the ring from the city across the water. All was well so far, but when he got into a neighbouring field it suddenly became dark, so that, not knowing which way to go, but well knowing what was the matter, he hung the ring on a tree, and, falling on the ground, penitently confessed his sin to it, and promised to return to Clusium if it would

dispel the darkness. On taking it down it emitted a great light, which he took advantage of to travel to Perusia, where he sojourned with the Augustin friars, till he determined on making another effort to carry it into Germany. He was again hindered by the darkness returning. It infested him and the whole city for twenty days. Still he resolved not to return to Clusium, but tell his story in great confidence to his landlord, one Lucas Jordanus, who with great cunning represented to him his danger from the Clusians, and the benefits he would receive from the Perusians if he bestowed the ring on that city. Wintherus followed his advice. As soon as the ring was shown to the people the darkness disappeared, and Wintherus was well provided for in the house of the magistrate. Meanwhile the Bishop of Clusium, coming to Perusia, endeavoured in vain to obtain the relic. The city of Sena sent an ambassador to resist the claims of the Clusians; he was entertained by the Perusians with great respect, but they informed him that, having used no sacrilegious arts to obtain the Blessed Virgin's ring, they respected her too much to restore it to the owners; that they received it within their [Pg 507] walls with as much respect as they would do the Ark of the Covenant, and would defend their holy prize by force of arms. The bereaved Clusians laid the case before Pope Sixtus IV., and the Perusians did the same. Wintherus was ordered by the Pope, on the importunity of the Clusians, into closer confinement; but, as the heat abated, he passed a merry life in Perusia, and at his death the Franciscans and the canons of St. Lawrence disputed for the possession of his body. This honour was, in the end, obtained by the latter, in whose chapel he was buried before an altar dedicated to St. Joseph and the Virgin, and a monument was erected by the Perusians to the ring-stealer's memory, with an inscription which acknowledged that the receivers were as much indebted to him for it as if it had been his own property, and he had offered it of his own accord.

In the pontificate of Innocent VIII., A.D. 1486, the arbitration of the dispute was left to Cardinal Piccolominæus, who adjudged the relic to Perusia. The important decision was celebrated in that city by every imaginable expression of joy, and for the greatest honour of the sacred ring, a chapel was built for it in the church of St. Lawrence, with an inscription, informing the reader that there the untouched mother, the Queen of Heaven, and her spouse, were worshipped; that there in the sanctuary of her wedding-ring she lent a gracious ear to all prayers; and that he who gave the ring (Wintherus) defended it by his protection. The pencil was called in to grace the more substantial labours of the architect. A curious picture represented the High Priest in the Temple of Jerusalem, taking Joseph and Mary by their hands to espouse them with the venerated ring; one side of the solemnity was graced by a band of virgins, the companions of Mary during her education; the other side was occupied by a company of young men, Joseph's kinsmen of the house of David, holding their withered rods. The imagination of the artist employed one of these in breaking his own rod across his knee, as envious of Joseph's, which, by its miraculous budding, had ended the hopes of all who, by the proclamation, had become candidates for her hand. In addition to this, an altar was raised and dedicated to St. Joseph; his statue was placed at its side; his birthday was kept with great pomp; a society of seculars, called his Fraternity, was instituted to serve in the chapel jointly with the clergy of St. Lawrence; and on the joint [Pg 508] festival of Mary and her spouse the splendid solemnity was heightened by the solemn exhibition of the ring, and by a picture of their miraculous nuptials being uncovered to the eager gaze of the adoring multitude.'

The ring is said by some to have been made of one whole stone, green jasper or a plasma, hollowed out, and itself forming both hoop and bezel, unalloyed with any metal.

In Raffaelle's beautiful picture, *Le Sposalizio*, Mary and Joseph stand opposite to each other in the centre; the high-priest, between them, is bringing their right hands towards each other; Joseph, with his right hand (guided by the priest), is placing the ring on the third finger of the right hand of the Virgin; beside Mary is a group of the virgins of the Temple; near Joseph are the suitors, who break their barren wands—that which Joseph holds in his hand has blossomed into a lily, which, according to the legend, was the sign that he was the chosen one.

The Rev. C. W. King, in his 'Handbook of Engraved Gems,' observes: 'The highest glory ever attained by a work of the engraver was that of the cameo of the Abbey of St. Germain des Prés, which enjoyed for an entire millennium the transcendent (though baseless) fame of adorning the espousal-ring of the Virgin Mary, and of preserving the portraits after the life of herself and Joseph. But, alas! antiquaries have now remorselessly restored the ownership of gem and portraits to the two nobodies (probably *liberti*, judging from their names), whose votive legend, "Alpheus with Aretho," is but too plainly legible in our Greek-reading times.'

When the Abbey was destroyed by fire in 1795, this ring, with other valuables, disappeared; it subsequently came into the hands of General Hydrow, and from him passed into the Imperial Russian Cabinet.

Ring of Gyges. P. 96.

Nizámi, the famous Persian poet, who died in 1209, has a story of a ring which is a very close version of the ring of Gyges. A hot vapour once rent the ground, and brought to light in the chasm a hollow horse of tin and copper with a large fissure in its side. A shepherd saw it, [Pg 509] and discovered in the body an old man asleep, with a gold ring on his finger. He took it off, and went next morning to his master to learn the value of his booty; but during his visit he

discovered, to his astonishment, that when he turned the seal towards his palm he became invisible. He determined to make use of this power, and he proceeded to the palace, and secretly entered the council-chamber, where he remained unseen. When the nobles had left it, he revealed himself to the king by this miracle as a prophet. The king at once took him as his minister, and eventually the shepherd succeeded him on the throne.

In Reginald Scot's 'Discovery of Witchcraft,' 1665, is given a charm whereby 'to go invisible by these three sisters of the fairies,' Milita, Achilia, and Sibylia. You are 'first to go to a fair parlour, or chamber, and on even ground, and in no loft, and from people nine dayes, for it is better; and let all thy cloathing be clean and sweet. Then make a candle of virgin wax and light it, and make a fair fire of charcoles in a fair place in the middle of the parlour or chamber; then take fair clean water that runneth against the East, and set it upon the fire, and if thou warm thyself say these words, going about the fire three times holding the candle in thy right hand.' The incantation is too profane to be repeated. The following is the effect produced: 'and if they come not the first night, then do the same the second night, and so the third night, until they do come, *for doubtless they will so come*; and lie thou in thy bed in the same parlour or chamber, and lay thy right hand out of the bed, and look thou have a fair silken kerchief bound about thy head, and be not afraid, they will do thee no harm; for there will come before thee three fair women, and all in white cloathing, *and one of them will put a ring upon thy finger wherewith thou shalt go invisible*. Then with speed bind her with the bond aforesaid. When thou hast this ring on thy finger, look in a glass and thou shalt not see thyself. And when thou wilt go invisible, put it on thy finger, the same finger that they did put it on, and every new moon renew it again,' &c.

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The Cruel Knight and the Fortunate Farmer's Daughter. P. 99.

'The Fish and the Ring, or the Cruel Knight, and the Fortunate Farmer's Daughter' (a reprint for William Robinson, Esq., 1843).

In famous York city a farmer did dwell,
Who was belov'd by his neighbours well;
He had a wife that was virtuous and fair,
And by her he had a young child every year.
In seven years six children he had,
Which made their parents' hearts full glad;
But in a short time, as we did hear say,
The farmer in wealth and stock did decay.
Though once he had riches in store,
In a little time he grew very poor;
He strove all he could, but, alas! could not thrive,
He hardly could keep his children alive.
The children came faster than silver or gold,
For his wife conceiv'd again, we are told,
And when the time came in labour she fell;
But if you would mind an odd story I'll tell:

A noble rich Knight by chance did ride by,
And hearing this woman did shriek and cry,
He being well learned in the planets and signs,
Did look in the book which puzzled his mind.
The more he did look the more he did read,
And found that the fate of the child had decreed,
Who was born in that house the same tide,
He found it was she who must be his bride;
But judge how the Knight was disturb'd in mind,
When he in that book his fortune did find.

He quickly rode home and was sorely oppressed,
From that sad moment he could take no rest;
At night he did toss and tumble in his bed
And very strange projects came into his head,
Then he resolv'd and soon try'd indeed,
To alter the fortune he found was decreed.
With a vexing heart next morning he rose,
And to the house of the farmer he goes,
And asked the man with a heart full of spite,
If the child was alive that was born last night?

[Pg 511]

'Worthy sir,' said the farmer, 'although I am poor,
I had one born last night, and six born before;
Four sons and three daughters I now have alive,
They are in good health and likely to thrive.'
The Knight he reply'd, 'If that seven you have,
Let me have the youngest, I'll keep it most brave,

For you very well one daughter may spare,
And when I die I'll make her my heir;
For I am a Knight of noble degree,
And if you will part with your child unto me
Full three thousand pounds I'll unto thee give
When I from your hands your daughter receive.

The father and mother with tears in their eyes,
Did hear this kind offer and were in surprize;
And seeing the Knight was so noble and gay,
Presented the infant unto him that day.
But they spoke to him with words most mild,
'We beseech thee, good sir, be kind to our child.'
'You need not mind,' the Knight he did say,
'I will maintain her both gallant and gay.'
So with this sweet babe away he did ride,
Until he came to a broad river's side.
Being cruelly bent he resolv'd indeed
To drown the young infant that day with speed,
Saying, 'If you live you must be my wife,
So I am resolved to bereave you of life;
For till you are dead I no comfort can have,
Wherefore you shall lie in a watery grave.'
In saying of this, that moment, they say,
He flung the babe into the river straightway;
And being well pleased when this he had done,
He leaped on his horse, and straight he rode home.
But mind how kind fortune for her did provide,
She was drove right on her back by the tide,
Where a man was a fishing, as fortune would have,
When she was floating along with the wave.
He took her up, but was in amaze;
He kissed her and on her did gaze,
And he having ne'er a child in his life,
He straightway did carry her home to his wife.
His wife was pleased the child to see,
And said, 'My dearest husband, be ruled by me,
Since we have no children, if you'll let me alone,
We will keep this and call it our own.'
The good man consented, as we have been told,
And spared for neither silver nor gold,
Until she was over eleven full year, [Pg 512]
And then her beauty began to appear.

The fisherman was one day at an inn,
And several gentlemen drinking with him:
His wife sent this girl to call her husband home,
But when she did into the drinking room come,
The gentlemen they were amazed to see
The fisherman's daughter so full of beauty.
They ask'd him if she was his own,
And he told them the story before he went home:
'As I was fishing within my bound,
One Monday morning this sweet babe I found;
Or else she had lain within a watery grave;'
And this was the same which now he gave.
The cruel Knight was in the company,
And hearing the fisherman tell his story,
He was vexed at the heart to see her alive,
And how to destroy her again did contrive,
Then spake the Knight, and unto him said,
'If you will but part with this sweet maid
I'll give you whatever your heart can devise,
For she in time to great riches may rise.'
The fisherman answered, with a modest grace,
'I cannot unless my dear wife were in the place,
Get first her consent, you shall have mine of me,
And then to go with you, sir, she is free.'
The wife she did also as freely consent,
But little they thought of his cruel intent;
He kept her a month very bravely they say,
And then he contrived to send them away.

He had a great brother in fair Lancashire,
A noble rich man worth ten thousand a year,

And he sent this girl unto him with speed
In hopes he would act a most desperate deed.
He sent a man with her likewise they say,
And as they did lodge at an inn on the way,
A thief in the house with an evil intent
For to rob the portmanteau immediately went,
But the thief was amazed, when he could not find
Either silver or gold, or aught to his mind,
But only a letter the which he did read
And soon put an end to this tragical deed:
The Knight had wrote to his brother that day,
To take this poor innocent damsel away,
With sword or with poison that very same night, [Pg 513]
And not let her live till morning light.
The thief read the letter, and had so much grace
To tear it, and write in the same place,
'Dear brother, receive this maiden from me,
And bring her up well as a maiden should be;
Let her be esteem'd, dear brother, I pray,
Let servants attend her by night and by day.
For she is a lady of noble worth,
A nobler lady ne'er lived in the north;
Let her have good learning, dear brother, I pray,
And for the same I will sufficiently pay;
And so, loving brother, this letter I send,
Subscribing myself your dear brother and friend.'
The servant and maid were still innocent,
And onward their journey next day they went.
Before sunset to the Knight's house they came
Where the servant left her, and came home again.
The girl was attended most nobly indeed,
With the servants to attend to her with speed;
Where she did continue a twelvemonth's space,
Till this cruel Knight came to this place,
As he and his brother together did talk,
He spy'd the young maiden in the garden to walk.
She look'd most beautiful, pleasant, and gay,
Like to sweet Aurora, or the goddess of May.
He was in a passion when he did her spy,
And instantly unto his brother did cry,
'Why did you not do as in the letter I writ?'
His brother replied, 'It is done every bit.'
'No, no,' said the Knight, 'it is not so I see,
Therefore she shall back again go with me;'
But his brother showed him the letter that day,
Then he was amazed, but nothing did say.

Soon after the Knight took this maiden away,
And with her did ride till he came to the sea,
Then looking upon her with anger and spite,
He spoke to the maiden and bade her alight.
The maid from the horse immediately went
And trembled to think what was his intent.
'Ne'er tremble,' said he, 'for this hour's your last;
So pull off your clothes, I command you, in haste.'
This virgin, with tears, on her knees did reply,
'Oh! what have I done, sir, that now I must die?
Oh! let me but know how I offend
I'll study each hour my life to amend,
Oh! spare my life and I'll wander till death, [Pg 514]
And never come near you while I have breath.'
He hearing the pitiful moan she did make
Straight from his finger a ring did take,
He then to the maiden these words did say,
'This ring in the water I'll now throw away;
Pray look on it well, for the posy is plain,
That you when you see it may know it again.
I charge you for life never come in my sight,
For if you do I shall owe you a spite,
Unless you do bring the same unto me:'
With that he let the ring drop in the sea,
Which when he had done away he did go,
And left her to wander in sorrow and woe.
She rambled all night, and at length did espy
A homely poor cottage, and to it did hie,
Being hungry with cold, and a heart full of grief

Being hungry with cold, and a heart full of grief,
She went to this cottage to seek for relief;
The people reliev'd her, and the next day
They got her to service, as I did hear say,
At a nobleman's house, not far from this place
Where she did behave with a modest grace.
She was a cookmaid and forgot the time past,
But observe the wonder that comes at last.

As she for dinner was dressing one day,
And opened the head of a cod, they say,
She found such a ring, and was in amaze
And she, in great wonder, upon it did gaze
And viewing it well she found it to be
The very same the Knight dropped in the sea,
She smil'd when she saw it, and bless'd her kind fate,
But did to no creature the secret relate.

This maid, in her place, did all maidens excel,
That the lady took notice, and lik'd her well;
Saying, she was born of some noble degree,
And took her as a companion to be.
The Knight when he came to the house did behold
This beautiful lady with trappings of gold,
When he ask'd the lady to grant him a boon,
And said it was to walk with that virgin alone.
The lady consented, telling the young maid
By him she need not fear to be betrayed.
When he first met her, 'Thou strumpet,' said he,
'Did I not charge thee never more to see me?
This hour's thy last, to the world bid good night, [Pg 515]
For being so bold to appear in my sight.'
Said she, 'In the sea you flung your ring,
And bid me not see you unless I did bring
The same unto you. Now I have it,' cries she,
'Behold, 'tis the same that you flung into the sea.'
When the Knight saw it, he flew to her arms,
And said, 'Lovely maid, thou hast millions of charms.'
Said he, 'Charming creature, pray pardon me,
Who often contrived the ruin of thee:
'Tis in vain to alter what heaven doth decree,
For I find you are born my wife to be.'
Then wedded they were, as I did hear say,
And now she's a lady both gallant and gay,
They quickly unto her parents did haste,
When the Knight told the story of what had passed.
But asked their pardon, upon his bare knee,
Who gave it, and rejoiced their daughter to see.
Then they for the fisherman and his wife sent,
And for their past troubles did them content.
And so there was joy for all them that did see
The farmer's young daughter a lady to be.

The Rev. C. W. King, in his 'Handbook of Engraved Gems,' gives the following fish-and-ring story. Pietrus Damianus, a very unlikely personage to have ever read of Polycrates, relates in his Fifth Epistle a story worth translating literally, as a specimen of the style of thought of his age:—'This Arnulphus was the father of King Pepin and grandfather of Charlemagne, and when, inflamed with the fervour of the Holy Ghost he sacrificed the love of wife and children, and exchanged the glory and pomps of this world for the glorious poverty of Christ, it chanced, as he was hastening into the wilderness, that in his way he had to cross a river, which is called the Moselle; but when he reached the middle of the bridge, thrown over it where the river's stream ran deepest, he tossed in there his own ring with this protestation, "When I shall receive back," said he, "this ring from the foaming waves of this river, then will I trust confidently that I am loosed from the bonds of all my sins." Thereupon he made for the wilderness, where he lived no little space dead unto himself and the world. Meanwhile, the then Bishop of Metz having died, Divine Providence raised Arnulphus to the charge of that see. Continuing in his new office to abstain from eating flesh, according to the [Pg 516] rule observed by him in the wilderness, once upon a time a fish was brought him for a present. The cook, in gutting the same, found in its entrails a ring, and ran full of joy to present it to his master; which ring the blessed Bishop no sooner cast eyes upon than he knew it again for his own, and wondered not so much at the strange mine that had brought forth the metal, as that, by the Divine propitiation, he had obtained the forgiveness of his sins.'

The same distinguished writer, in the work before mentioned, relates the story told by St.

Augustine, bishop of the city where it happened, ‘and who has deemed it worthy of insertion in his great work, “De Civitate Dei” (xxii. 8):—“There lived an old man, a fellow-townsman of ours at Hippo, Florentius by name, by trade a tailor, a religious poor person. He had lost his cloak and had not wherewith to buy another. Certain ribald youths who happened to be present overheard him, and followed him as he went down, mocking at him as though he had demanded of the martyrs the sum of fifty *folles* (12½ denarii) to clothe himself withal. But Florentius walking on without replying to them, espied a big fish thrown up by the sea, and struggling upon the beach, and he secured it through the good-natured assistance of the same youths, and sold it for 300 *folles* (75 denarii) to a certain cook, by name Carthosus, a good Christian, for pickling, telling him at the same time all that had taken place—intending to buy wool with the money, so that his wife might make therewith, as well as she could, something to clothe him. But the cook in cutting up the fish found in its belly a gold ring, and forthwith, being moved with compassion, as well as influenced by religious scruples, restored it to Florentius, saying, ‘Behold how the Twenty Martyrs have clothed thee.’”’

King Edward’s Ring. P. 119.

In the ‘Life of Edward the Confessor’ (forming one of the series of the chronicles and memorials of Great Britain and Ireland, during the Middle Ages, published by the authority of H.M. Treasury, under the direction of the Master of the Rolls), Mr. Luard, the editor, has given the translation of a manuscript in the public library of the University of Cambridge, to which the date of 1245 is ascribed, and written in Norman-French. The legend of the Confessor’s ring is thus introduced:— [Pg 517]

The King was at the service
Where was dedicated the church
Of Saint John, who to God was dear,
And whom the King could so much love:
No saint had he so dear except Saint Peter.
Lo, a poor man who was there,
A stranger and unknown,
When he saw King Edward,
For the love of Saint John prays him
That of his possession he would give him a part.
The King who hears his prayer,
Puts his hand to his alms-chest,
But neither gold nor silver does he there find.
He bids his almoner to be summoned,
But he was not found for the crowd.
The poor man ceases not to beg
And the King is in distress
Because neither gold nor silver he finds at hand.
And he reflects, remains silent,
Looks at his hand and remembers
That on his finger he had a cherished ring
Which was large, royal, and beautiful;
To the poor man he gives it for the love
Of Saint John, his dear lord;
And he takes it with joy,
And gently gives him thanks;
And when he was possessed of it,
He departed and vanished.
But to this no one paid attention.
Soon after it chanced that
Two palmers of English birth,
Who go to seek the Holy Sepulchre
By a path where no one guides them
In the land of Syria,
Go astray, far out by the way,
See neither man nor house:
Now they have arrived in the wilderness,
The night comes on, the sun sets;
Nor do they know which way to turn,
Nor where they can lodge for the night,
They fear robbers, they fear wild beasts,
They fear monsters and dreadful tempests,
And many an adventure of the desert. [Pg 518]
The dark night surprises them.

Now behold a band of youths
In a circle which was very large and beautiful,
By whom the whole road and air
Were lightened as if by lightning,
And an old man white and hoary,

Brighter than the sun at mid-day,
Before whom are carried two tapers,
Which lighten the path;
He, when he comes close to the palmers
Salutes them; says, ‘Dear friends
Whence come you? Of what creed
Are you, and of what birth?
What kingdom and King? What seek you here?’
And one of them answered him,
‘We are Christians, and desire
Have we to expiate our sins;
We are both from England;
We have come to seek the Holy Sepulchre,
And the holy places of this country,
Where Jesus died and lived.
And our King is named Edward,
The good prince, whom may God preserve to us,
He has not such a saint from here to France.
But it has befallen us by mishap
We have lost to-day the company
Which comforts and which guides us,
Nor know we what has become of us.’

And the old man answered there,
Joyously like a clerk,
‘Come after me, I go before;
Follow me, I will conduct you
Where you will find a good hostelry.
For love of King Edward
You shall have lodging and good care,
Your leader I will myself be,
And your host.’ He leads them on;
They enter a city,
They have found a good hostelry,
The table prepared, and good treatment,
Linen and bed, and other preparatives;
The tired ones, who had great need,
Repose themselves after supper. [Pg 519]
In the morning, when they depart,
They find their host and leader,
Who, when they have issued from the gate,
Gently thus comforts them.
‘Be not troubled nor sad,
I am John the Evangelist;
For love of Edward the King,
I neither will nor ought to fail you;
For he is my especial
Friend and loyal King.
With me he has joined company,
Since he has chosen to lead a chaste life,
We shall be peers in paradise.
And I tell you, dear good friends,
You shall arrive, be assured,
In your country safe and sound.
You shall go to King Edward,
Salute him from me,
And that you attempt not a falsehood
To say, you shall carry proofs—
A ring, which he will know,
Which he gave to me, John,
When he was at the service
Where my church was dedicated;
There I besought him, for the love
Of John; it was I in poor array.
And let King Edward know well,
To me he shall come before six months (are over).
And since he resembles me,
In paradise shall we be together
And that of this he may be confidently assured
You shall tell him all that whatever I tell you.’

They, who well understand his words,
Give him thanks for all his benefits,
And when they are possessed of the ring
The saint departed and vanished;

And the pilgrims depart,
Who now are on the certain path
Without ill, and without trouble;
The saint leads and conducts them;
They hasten to go to King Edward,
That they have not arrived seems tardy to them,
And they relate their adventure,
Show the ring at once,
Whatever they relate he believes true,
When he sees the proofs; [Pg 520]
Of this witness bears the whole
Company, large in numbers.

Demons imprisoned in Rings. P. 132.

There was a strong belief that familiar spirits could be carried about in rings and trinkets. Le Loyer, in his curious work 'Des Spectres,' writes: 'With regard to the demons whom they imprisoned in rings or charms, the magicians of the school of Salamanca and Toledo, and their master Picatrix, together with those in Italy who made traffic of this kind of ware, knew better than to say whether or not they had appeared to those who had them in possession or bought them. And truly I cannot speak without horror of those who pretend to such vulgar familiarity with them, even to speaking of the nature of each particular demon shut up in a ring; whether he be a Mercurial, Jovial, Saturnine, Martial, or Aphrodisiac spirit; in what form he is wont to appear when required; how many times in the night he awakes his possessor; whether benign or cruel in disposition; whether he can be transferred to another; and if, once possessed, he can alter the natural temperament, so as to render men of Saturnine complexion Jovial, or the Jovials Saturnines, and so on. There is no end of the stories which might be collected under this head, to which, if I gave faith, as some of the learned of our time have done, it would be filling my paper to little purpose. I will not speak, therefore, of the crystal ring mentioned by Joaliun of Cambray, in which a young child could see all that they demanded of him, and which eventually was broken by the possessor, as the occasion by which the devil too much tormented him. Still less will I stay my pen to tell of the sorcerer of Courtray, whose ring had a demon enclosed in it, to whom it behoved him to speak every five days.' By this familiar (remarks Heywood, in his 'Hierarchie of the Blessed Angels') 'he was not onely acquainted with all newes, as well forrein as domesticke, but learned the cure and remedie for all griefs and diseases; insomuch that he had the reputation of a learned and excellent physition. At length, being accused of *sortilège*, or enchantment, at Arnham, in Guelderland, he was proscribed, and in the year 1548, the Chancellor caused his ring, in the public market, to be layd on an anvil and with an iron [Pg 521] hammer to be beaten in pieces. Mengius reporteth from the relation of a deare friend of his (a man of approved fame and honestie) this history. In a certain town under the jurisdiction of the Venetians, one of their præstigious artists (whom some call Pythonickes), having one of these rings in which he had two familiar spirits exorcised and bound, came to a predicant or preaching friar, a man of sincere life and conversation; and confessed unto him that hee was possessed of such an enchanted ring, with such spirits charmed, with whom he had conference at his pleasure. But since he considered with himselfe that it was a thing dangerous to his soule, and abhominable both to God and man, he desired to be cleanely acquit thereof, and to that purpose hee came to receive of him some godly counsell. But by no persuasion would the religious man be induced to have any speech at all with these evil spirits (to which motion the other had before earnestly solicited him), but admonished him to cause the magicke ring to be broken, and that to be done with all speed possible. At which words the familiars were heard (as it were) to mourne and lament in the ring, and to desire that no such violence might be offered to them; but rather than so, that it would please him to accept of the ring, and keepe it, promising to do him all service and vassallage; of which, if he pleased to accept, they would in a short time make him to be the most famous and admired predicant in all Italy. But he perceiving the divels cunning, under this colour of courtesie, made absolute refusall of their offer; and withall conjured them to know the reason why they would so willingly submit themselves to his patronage? After many evasive lies and deceptious answers, they plainly confessed unto him that they had of purpose persuaded the magition to heare him preach; that by that sermon, his conscience being pricked and galled, he might be weary of the ring, and being refused of the one, be accepted of the other; by which they hoped in short time so to have puft him up with pride and heresie, to have precipitated his soule into certaine and never-ending destruction. At which the churchman being zealously inraged, with a great hammer broke the ring almost to dust, and in the name of God sent them thence to their own habitation of darknesse, or whither it pleased the highest powers to dispose them.

'Of this kind doubtless was the ring of Gyges—such likewise had the Phocensian tyrant, who, [Pg 522] as Clemens Stromæus speaketh, by a sound which came of itselfe, was warned of all times, seasonable and unseasonable in which to mannage his affaires; who, notwithstanding, could not be forewarned of his pretended death, but his familiar left him in the end, suffering him to be slain by the conspirators. Such a ring, likewise, had one Hieronimus, Chancellor of Mediolanum, which after proved to be his untimely ruine.' ['Hierarchie of the Blessed

Angels.’]

A learned German physician has given an instance in which the devil, of his own accord, enclosed himself in a ring as a familiar, thereby proving how dangerous it is to trifle with him.

Cramp-Rings. P. 164.

The precise date when the Kings of England commenced to bless rings, regarded as preservatives against the cramp or against epilepsy, the *morbus Sancti Johannis*, is uncertain. The earliest mention of the practice, which Mr. Edmund Waterton has found, occurs in the reign of Edward II.: ‘The prayer used in the blessing of the ring implores—‘ut omnes qui eos gestabunt, nec eos infestet vel nervorum contractio, vel comitialis morbi periculum.’ And the King, to impart this salutary virtue, rubbed the rings between his hands, with this invocation: ‘Manuum nostrarum confricatione quas olei sacri infusione externa sanctificare dignatus es pro ministerii nostri modo consecra,’ &c. Hitherto these rings are simply described as *annuli*. But in the 44th of Edward III., in the account-book of John of Ipres, or Ypres, they are termed *medicinales*.’

In the last chapter of the ‘Constitutions of the Household,’ settled in the reign of Edward II., the following entry appears: ‘Item, le Roi doit offrer de certein le jour de grant vendredi a crouce v. s. queux il est accustumez receivre devers lui a la mene le chapelein afair eut anulx a *donner pur medicine* az divers gentz.’

In the Eleemosyna Roll of 9th Edward III. the following entry occurs: ‘In oblacione domini Regis ad crucem de Gneythe die parasceves in capella sua infra mannerium suum de Clipstone, in precium duorum florencium de Florencia xiiij. die Aprilis vi. *s.* viij. *d.*, et in denariis quos posuit pro dictis florenciis reassumptis *pro annulis medicinalibus inde* faciendis, eodem die vi. *s.*; summa xii. *s.* viii. *d.*’ [Pg 523]

In the Eleemosyna Roll of 10th Edward III. we have the following entry: ‘In oblacione domini Regis ad crucem de Gneyth in die parasceves apud Eltham, xxix. die Marcii v. *s.*, et pro iisdem denariis reassumptis pro annulis inde faciendis per manus Domini Johannis de Crokeford eodem die v. *s.*’ And in the following year: ‘In oblacione domini Regis ad crucem de Gneyth in capella sua in pcho de Wyndesore die parasceves v. *s.*, et pro totidem denariis reassumptis pro annuli inde faciendis v. *s.*’

In the accounts of John de Ypres, 44th Edward III., the following entries are found: ‘In oblacionibus Regis factis adorando crucem in capella sua infra castrum suum de Wyndesore, die parasceves in pretio trium nobilium auri et quinque solidorum sterling. xxv. *s.* In denariis solutis pro iisdem oblacionibus reassumptis pro annulis medicinalibus inde faciendis, ibidem, eodem die xxv. *s.*’

The same entries occur in the 7th and 8th Henry IV.

In the 8th Edward IV. mention occurs that these cramp-rings were made of silver and of gold, as appears by the following entry: ‘Pro eleemosyna in die parasceves c. marc., et pro annulis de auro et argento pro eleemosyna Regis eodem die,’ &c. And a Privy Seal of the next year, amongst other particulars relates: ‘Item paid for the King’s Good Fryday rings of gold and silver xxxiii. *l.* vi. *s.* viii. *d.*’

Mention of these rings is also found in the Comptroller’s accounts in the 20th Henry VII.

A MS. copy of the Orders of the King of England’s Household, 13th Henry VIII., 1521-1522, preserved in the National Library at Paris (No. 9,986), contains ‘the order of the Kinge’s of England, touching his coming to service, hallowing y^{e} crampe rings, and offering and creeping to the crosse.’ ‘First, the King to come to the closett or to the chappell with the lords and noblemen wayting on him, without any sworde to bee borne before him on that day, and there to tarry in his travers till the bishop and deane have brought forth the crucifix out of the vestry (the almoner reading the service of the cramp-rings), layd upon a cushion before the high altar, and then the huishers shall lay a carpet before y^{t} for the King to creepe to the crosse upon: and y^{t} done, there shall be a fourme set upon the carpet before [Pg 524] the crucifix, and a cushion layd before it for the King to kneele on; and the Master of the Jewell house shal be ther ready with the crampe-rings in a basin or basins of silver; the King shall kneele upon the sayd cushion before the fourme, and then must the clerke of the closett bee ready with the booke conteyninge y^{e} service of the hallowing of the said rings, and the almoner must kneel upon the right hand of the King, holding of the sayd booke; and when y^{t} is done the King shall rise and go to the high altar, where an huisher must be ready with a cushion to lay for his grace to kneele upon, and the greatest Lord or Lords being then present shall take the basin or basins with the rings, and bear them after the King, and then deliver them to the King to offer; and this done, the Queen shall come down out of the closett or travers into the chappell with ladies and gentlewomen wayters on her, and creepe to the crosse; and that done, she shall returne againe into her closett or travers, and then the ladies shall come downe and creepe to the crosse, and when they have done, the lords and noblemen shall in likewise.’

A letter from Dr. Thomas Magnus, Warden of Sibthorpe College, Nottinghamshire, to Cardinal Wolsey, written in 1526, contains the following curious passage: 'Pleas it your Grace to wete that M. Wiat of his goodness sent unto me for a present certaine crampe ringges, which I distributed and gave to sondery myne acquaintaunce at Edinburghe, amongse other to M. Adame Otterbourne, who, with one of thayme, releved a mann lying in the falling sekenes in the sight of myche people; sethenne whiche tyme many requestes have been made unto me for crampe ringges at my departing there, and also sethenne my comyng from thennes. May it pleas your Grace therefore to shew your gracious pleasure to the said M. Wyat, that some ringges may be kept and sent into Scottelande, whiche, after my poore oppynnyon shulde be a good dede, remembering the power and operacyon of thame is knowne and proved in Edinburghe, and that they be gretly required for the same cause both by grete personnages and other.'

Mr. Edmund Waterton thinks that the illuminated manual which Queen Mary used at the blessing of the cramp-rings, and which I have mentioned was in the possession of the late [Pg 525] Cardinal Wiseman, was the same from which Bishop Burnet printed the formula. Mr. Waterton states that on the second leaf of the MS. the service for the blessing of the rings begins with this rubric: 'Certeyne Prayers to be used by the Quene's Heighnes in the Consecration of the Cramperings.'

The next rubric is as follows: 'The Ryngs lyeing in one basin or moo, this Prayer shall be said over them,' &c. This is followed by the *Benedictio Annulorum*, consisting of several short formulas or sentences. Then another rubric sets forth: 'These prayers beinge saide, the Queene's Heighnes rubbeth the rings betwene her hands, sayinge *Sanctifica Domine Annulos*,' &c.

'Thenne must holly water be caste on the rings, sayeing, *In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti*, Amen. Followed by two other prayers.'

Miss Strickland claims the blessing of the cramp-rings as the peculiar privilege of the Queens of England. But her argument falls to the ground when tested by collateral and official documents.

Mr. Waterton concludes his most interesting article on Royal Cramp-rings ('Archæological Journal,' vol. xxi. pp. 103-113) by stating that he has been unable to accompany the essay by the representation of any example, 'but I have never met with a specimen that could with any certainty be pronounced a royal cramp-ring, neither have I found any description of the rings made, as the entries state, from the gold and silver coins offered by the King on Good Friday, and then redeemed by an equivalent sum. Probably they were plain hoop-rings. In the will of John Baret, of Bury St. Edmunds, 1463, a bequest is made to "my Lady Walgrave" of a "rowund ryng of the Kynge's silvir." In another part of his will he bequeaths to "Thomais Brews, esquiyer, my crampe ryng with blak innamel, and a part silvir and gilt." And, in 1535, Edmund Lee bequeaths to "my nece Thwarton my gold ryng w^{t} a turkes, and a crampe ryng of gold w^{t} all."

'But there is no evidence to show that the second ring mentioned by John Baret was a royal cramp-ring; whereas it appears to me that the one bequeathed by Edmund Lee may have been one of the royal cramp-rings, for otherwise a more particular description would have been given.'

An interesting account of 'the ceremonies of blessing cramp-rings on Good Friday, used by [Pg 526] the Catholic Kings of England,' will be found in Pegge's 'Curialia Miscellanea' (Appendix No. 3, p. 164).

It is curious that in Somersetshire the ring-finger is thought to have the power of curing any sore or wound that is rubbed with it.

CHAPTER V.

BETROTHAL AND WEDDING-RINGS. P. 275.

I should not omit to mention the famous sermon of good Jeremy Taylor on 'a wedding-ring for the finger,' which is worthy the perusal not only of those who have entered the matrimonial life, but of others who contemplate an entrance into the same. The text is (Genesis ii. 18), 'And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help-meet for him.' Although no allusion is made to the substantial character of the nuptial circle, yet the deductions made from the text are the sweetest and the holiest that could be imagined, and the brightest jewels of the mineral world could not exceed in beauty the language of the grand old divine. 'When thou layest out for such a good upon earth, look up to the God of heaven. Let Him make his choice for thee, who hath made this choice of thee. Look *above* you before you look *about* you.' 'Give God the tribute of your gratulation for your good companion. Take heed of paying your rent to a wrong landlord. When you taste of the stream, reflect on the spring that feeds it. Now thou hast four eyes for thy speculation, four hands for thy operation, four feet for thy ambulation, and four shoulders for thy sustentation. What the sin against the Holy Ghost is in point of divinity,

that is unthankfulness in point of morality; an offence unpardonable. *Pity it is but that moon should ever be in an eclipse, that will not acknowledge her beams to be borrowed from the sun.* He that praises not the giver, prizes not the gift.' '*It is between a man and his wife in the house, as it is between the sun and the moon in the heavens; when the greater light goes down, the lesser light gets up; when the one ends in setting, the other begins in shining.*

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'Husband and wife should be as the milch-kine, which were coupled together to carry the ark of God; or as the two Cherubims, that looked one upon another, and both upon the mercy-seat; or as the two tables of stone, on each of which were engraven the laws of God. In some families married persons are like Jeremiah's two baskets of figs, the one very good, the other very evil; or like fire and water, whilst the one is flaming in devotion, the other is freezing in corruption. There is a two-fold hindrance in holiness: first, on the right side; secondly, on the left. On the right side, when the wife would run in God's way, the husband will not let her go; when the fore-horse in a team will not draw, he wrongeth all the rest; when the general of an army forbids a march, all the soldiers stand still.' 'Man is an affectionate creature. Now the woman's behaviour should be such towards the man, as to require his affection by increasing his delectation; *that the new-born love may not be blasted as soon as it is blossomed, that it may not be ruined before it be rooted*.' 'Husband and wife should be like two candles burning together, which make the house more lightsome; or like two fragrant flowers bound up in one nosegay, that augment its sweetness; or like two well-tuned instruments, which, sounding together, make the more melodious music.' 'A spouse should be more careful of her children's breeding than she should be fearful of her children's bearing. *Take heed lest these flowers grow in the devil's garden.*' '*Good education is the best livery you can give them living; and it is the best legacy you can leave them when dying.*' 'Let these small pieces of timber be hewed and squared for the celestial building; by putting a *sceptre of grace* into their hands, you will set *a crown of glory* upon their heads.' 'Marriages are styled *matches*, yet amongst those many that are married, how few are there that are *matched*! Husbands and wives are like locks and keys, that rather break than open, except the wards be answerable.'

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CHAPTER VI.

RING TOKENS.

The Essex Ring. P. 336.

The story of the ring given by Queen Elizabeth to the Earl of Essex is of such romantic interest that it is sad to destroy the charm by casting doubts on its authenticity; but, at the present day especially, a crucial test is applied to numbers of similar instances, and 'historic doubts' crop up incessantly, with which heretofore no profane hand was expected to meddle. The story of the Essex ring-token has been investigated with great care by a writer in the 'Edinburgh Review' (No. 200), who says: 'Whatever might be the supposed indignation of Elizabeth against her dying cousin, Lady Nottingham, it is clear that as the real offender was Lord Nottingham, he would naturally have more shared in her displeasure; and it is very improbable that a fortnight after the Queen had shaken the helpless wife on her death-bed, the husband, by whose authority the offence was committed, should have continued in undiminished favour. The existence of the ring would do but little to establish the truth of the story, even if but one had been preserved and cherished as the identical ring; but as there are two, if not three, which lay claim to that distinction, they invalidate each other's claims. One is preserved at Hawnes, in Bedfordshire, the seat of the Rev. Lord John Thynne; another is the property of C. W. Warren, Esq.; and we believe the third is deposited for safety at Messrs. Drummond's bank.

'The ring at Hawnes is said to have descended in unbroken succession from Lady Frances Devereux (afterwards Duchess of Somerset) to the present owner. The stone in this ring is a sardonyx, in which is cut in relief a head of Elizabeth, the execution of which is of a high order. That the ring has descended from Lady Frances Devereux, affords the strongest presumptive evidence that it was not *the* ring. According to the tradition, it had passed from her father into Lady Nottingham's hands. According to Lady Elizabeth Spelman, Lord Nottingham insisted upon her keeping it.

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In her interview with the Queen, the Countess might be supposed to have presented to her the token she had so fatally withheld; or it might have remained in her family, or have been destroyed; but the most improbable circumstance would have been its restoration to the widow or daughter of the much-injured Essex by the offending Earl of Nottingham. The Duchess of Somerset left a long, curious, and minute will, and in it there is no mention of any such ring. If there is good evidence for believing that the curious ring at Hawnes was ever in the possession of the Earl of Essex, one might be tempted to suppose that it was the likeness of the Queen, to which he alludes in his letters as his "fair angel," written from Portland Road, and the time of his disgrace after the proceedings in the Star Chamber, and when still under restraint at Essex House. Had Essex at this time possessed any ring, a token, by presenting which he would have been entitled to favour, it seems most improbable

that he should have kept it back, and yet regarded this likeness of the Queen, whose gracious eyes encouraged him to be a petitioner for himself. The whole tone of this letter is in fact almost conclusive against the possibility of his having in his possession any gift of hers endowed with such rights as that of the ring which the Countess of Nottingham is supposed to have withheld.'

CHAPTER IX.

CUSTOMS AND INCIDENTS IN CONNECTION WITH RINGS.

Wedding of the Adriatic. P. 419.

In Richard Lassel's 'Voyage of Italy' is an account of the performance of this ceremony at Venice, about the year 1650. 'I happened to be at Venice thrice at the great sea Triumph, or feast of the Ascension, which was performed thus: About our eight in the morning the Senators, in their scarlet robes, meet at the Doge's Pallace, and there, taking him up, they walk with him processionally unto the shoar, where the Bucentoro lyes waiting them; the Pope's Nuncio being on his right hand, and the Patriarch of Venice on his left hand. Then, [Pg 530] ascending into the Bucentoro by a handsome bridge thrown out to the shoar, the Doge takes his place, and the Senators sit round about the galley as they can, to the number of two or three hundred. The Senate being placed, the anchor is weighed, and the slaves being warned by the Captain's whistle, and the sound of trumpets, begin to strike all at once with their oars, and to make the Bucentoro march as gravely upon the water as if she also went upon cioppini (high shoes then worn by the Venetian ladies). Thus they steer for two miles upon the Laguna, while the music plays and sings Epithalamiums all the way long, and makes Neptune jealous to hear Hymen called upon in his Dominions. Round about the Bucentoro flock a world of Piottas and Gondolas, richly covered overhead with sumptuous Canopies of silks and rich stuffs, and rowed by watermen in rich liveries as well as the Trumpeters. Thus forrain Embassadors, divers noblemen of the country and strangers of condition, wait upon the Doge's gally, all the way long both coming and going. At last the Doge, being arrived at the appointed place, throws a Ring into the sea, without any other ceremony than by saying, *Desponsamus te, Mare; in signum perpetui dominii*. *We espouse thee, O Sea, in Testimony of our perpetual dominion over thee*; and so returns to the Church of St. Nicolas, in Lio (an Island hard by), where he assists at High Mass with the Senate. This done, he returns home again in the same state, and invites those that accompanied him in his gally to dinner in his Pallace, the preparations of which dinner we saw before the Doge was got home.'

By the kindness of Mr. Octavius Morgan, F.R.S., Vice-President of the Antiquarian Society, &c., I am enabled to reproduce in the present work a privately-printed tract by that eminent antiquarian, which will be found of great utility to ring-collectors generally.

Classification for the Arrangement of a Collection of Finger-Rings.

The Rings are divided into Two Grand Chronological Classes.

Class I. Antique, comprising all European Rings prior to the year A.D. 800, when the Empire [Pg 531] of Charlemagne was established in Europe, and England was united under one Sceptre, and all Oriental Rings prior to the Hedjira, A.D. 622, or prior to the Mussulman Conquest of the various countries.

Class II. Medieval and Modern, comprising all Rings subsequent to those dates.

Each Ring in the Collection should have a small label or ticket, of card or parchment, attached to it, bearing on one side the special letters belonging to the group, and on the other its number in the group; thus any Ring removed from the Collection, when once so arranged, can be easily restored to its proper group and place.

The letters O and Y (Nos. 15 and 25) are left vacant in case any collector should desire to make or add any other group.

CLASS I.—ANTIQUE.

Arranged according to the various nations in the order of their antiquity or pre-eminence.

1 A Egyptian.
2 B Assyrian.
3 C Babylonian.

4 D Phœnician.
5 E Hebrew.
6 F Greek.
7 G Etruscan.
8 H Roman.
9 I Early Christian.
10 J Byzantine.
11 K Hindoo.
12 L Persian.
13 M Sassanian.
14 N Gnostic.
15 O
16 P Celtic.
17 Q Scandinavian.
18 R Teutonic.
19 S Gaulish.
20 T Frankish (*Merovingian*).
21 U Ancient British.
22 V Ancient Scotch.
23 W Ancient Irish.
24 X Anglo-Saxon (*Early*).
25 Y
26 Z Unascertained and Miscellaneous.

CLASS II.—MEDIEVAL AND MODERN.

DIVIDED INTO OFFICIAL AND PERSONAL.

OFFICIAL.

Ecclesiastical.

27 **A** Rings of Popes, or with Papal insignia.
28 **B** Rings of Cardinals, or with Cardinals' insignia.
29 **C** Rings of Archbishops or Bishops, or with Episcopal insignia.
30 **D** Rings of Abbots and Priors, or Abbesses or Prioresses.
31 **E** Rings of other Ecclesiastical Dignitaries.

Civil.

32 **F** Rings bearing the insignia of Sovereigns, not being Signet Rings.
33 **G** Rings of Investiture.
34 **H** Credential Rings.
35 **I** Presentation Rings (*Sergeants*).
36 **K** Masonic Rings.

Military.

37 **L** Rings worn by Knights of various orders.
Knights of Malta.
" Templars.
" St. John of Jerusalem.

PERSONAL.

Signet Rings.

38 **a** Heraldic, with Coats of Arms or Badges.
39 **b** Merchants' Marks.

40 **c** Crowned Letters or Devices.

41 **d** Letters without Crowns.

42 **e** Other Devices.

43 **f** Persian, Cufic, and Arabic, with names.

44 **g** Antique Intagli in Medieval settings.

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Love, Betrothal, and Marriage.

45 **h** Tokens of Love.

46 **i** Posy Rings.

47 **j** Giardinetti.

48 **k** Betrothal Rings.

49 **l** Gimmal Rings.

50 **m** Marriage Rings.

51 **n** Jewish Nuptial Rings.

Mourning and Memorial Rings.

52 **o** Rings with Hair.

53 **p** Rings with Portraits.

54 **q** Rings with Memorial Devices and Inscriptions.

55 **r** Rings with Emblems of Death.

Historical Rings.

56 **s** Rings used by, or belonging to, Historical Persons.

57 **t** Rings commemorating Historical Events.

58 **u** Rings emblematical of particular Persons, Events, or Countries.

Religious.

59 **v** Devotional (*Decade*).

60 **w** Rings bearing Religious Devices or Inscriptions.

61 **x** Rings bearing Figures or Emblems of Saints.

62 **y** Pilgrims' Rings (*Jerusalem, Mount Serrat, &c.*).

63 **z** Rings for containing Reliques.

Charm, Magic, and Medicinal.

64 **a a** Cramp Rings.

65 **b b** Rings with Toadstones or other substances believed to possess medicinal virtues.

66 **c c** Astrological and Cabalistic Rings.

67 **d d** Talismanic, with Cufic, Arabic, and Gnostic Inscriptions.

68 **e e** Poison Rings.

Ornamental Rings.

69 **f f** Rings with Precious Stones, according to their kind.

70 **g g** Rings set with enamels, paste, or other ornaments, having no special meaning. [Pg 534]

71 **h h** Peasants' Rings.

72 **i i** Asiatic, including Modern Persian, Hindoo, and Chinese.

73 **k k** African.

74 **l l** Miscellaneous Rings, which group will contain all such as cannot be brought under the other heads of classification, such as whistle-rings, puzzle-rings, squirt-rings, jointed rings to form devices, rings with watches, dials, compasses, &c.

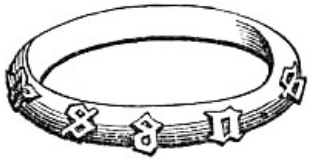
75 **m m** Rings made of strange and unusual materials, not being metal.

76 **n n** Unascertained.

Additional Note.

In the chapter on ‘Memorial and Mortuary Rings’ (page 378), I have related the circumstance of an Arabian princess in Yemen, who had been buried with her rings and other jewels; a tablet recording that she had vainly endeavoured to exchange them for flour during the great famine mentioned in the Holy Scriptures.

A singular incident of this character is stated in Forbes’s ‘India’ (vol. ii. p. 18): ‘The present finest mausoleum in Cambaya was erected to the memory of a Mogul of great rank, who, during a famine which almost depopulated that part of the country, *offered a measure of pearls for an equal quantity of grain*; but not being able to procure food at any price, he died of hunger, and this history is related on his monument.’



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Footnotes:

[1] In 1841 Mr. Joseph Bonomi read a paper before the Royal Society of Literature on an ancient signet-ring of gold, resembling in every respect, except the name of the king, the ring which Pharaoh put on the finger of Joseph. The account of its purchase, loss, and subsequent recovery is very interesting. It was bought by Lord Ashburnham at Cairo in 1825. In the spring of the same year his Lordship embarked a valuable collection on board a brig he had chartered at Alexandria, to carry his heavy baggage to Smyrna. This was attacked and pillaged by Greek pirates, who sold their booty in the island of Syra. The ring then became the property of a Greek merchant, in whose possession it remained until it was sold at Constantinople, and was brought to England in 1840. It then passed from the hands of Mr. Bonomi into those of Lord Ashburnham, its former possessor. It is conjectured, from evidence peculiar to Egyptian antiquities, that this ring belonged to the age of Thothmes III.

Egyptian Gold Signet-ring.

In the winter of 1824 a discovery was made in Sakkara of a tomb enclosing a mummy entirely cased in solid gold (each limb, each finger of which had its particular envelope inscribed with hieroglyphics), a scarabæus attached to a gold chain, a gold ring, and a pair of bracelets of gold with other valuable relics. This account was wrested from the excavators *à coups de bâton* administered by Mohammed Defterdar Bey, by which means were recovered to Signor Drovetti (at whose charge the excavation was made) the scarabæus and gold chain, a fragment of the gold envelope, and the bracelets, now in the Leyden Museum, which bear the same name as this ring. From the circumstance of the bracelets bearing the same name as this ring, and from the word Pthah, the name of the tutelar divinity of Memphis (of which city Sakkara was the necropolis) being also inscribed upon it, there is little doubt it was found in that place, and, from the confession of the Arabs, a great probability that it came out of the same excavation. The discovery of so much gold in a single tomb, which, from the nature of the ornaments, must have belonged to the Pharaoh himself, or to a distinguished officer of his household, accords well with Mr. Cory’s system of chronology, which places the death of the patriarch Joseph in the twenty-first year of the reign of Thothmes III., at which period the treasury of Pharaoh must have been well stored with the precious material of these ornaments accumulated by the prudent administration of the patriarch. Assuming, therefore, that Mr. Cory’s system is correct, this ring may be regarded, not only as an excellent specimen of that kind called Tabát (a word still used in Egypt to signify a stamp or seal), but also as resembling in every respect, excepting the

name, the ring which Pharaoh put on the hand of Joseph.

[2] Mr. Layard, in 'Nineveh and Its Remains,' describes the wife of an Arab Sheikh, whom he met, as having a nose adorned with a prodigious gold ring, set with jewels of such ample dimensions that it covered her mouth, and was obliged to be removed when she ate.

[3] The Egyptians made the scarabæus the symbol of the world, because it rolled its excrements into a globe; of the sun; of the moon, from horns; one-horned, of Mercury; of generation, because it buried the bowls in which it included its eggs, &c.; of an only son, because they believed that every beetle was male and female; of valour, manly power, &c., whence they forced all the soldiers to wear a ring upon which a beetle was engraved. All these superstitions are very ancient, for they occur upon the sepulchres of Biban-el-Molook, and are traced to the Indians, Hottentots, and other nations. In the hieroglyphs it is used for the syllable *Khepra*, and expresses the verb 'to be, exist.' In connection with Egyptian notions, the Gnostics and some of the Fathers called Christ the Scarabæus.

'The usual mode of mounting the scarab,' observes the Rev. C. W. King, in 'Antique Gems,' 'as a finger-ring, was, the *swivel*, a wire as a pivot passing through the longitudinal perforation of the stone (the edge of which was generally protected by a gold rim), and then brought through holes in each end of a bar of gold, or else of a broad, flat band of plaited wire, and bent into a loop of sufficient size to admit the finger, which was usually the fore-finger of the left hand. For the sake of security, the ends of the loop were formed into small disks, touching each extremity of the scarabæus. This loop, or ring shank, as it may be considered, was treated in a great variety of fashions, and sometimes was made extremely ornamental. One that I have seen terminated in rams' heads, the pivot entering the mouth of each; in another the shank was formed as a serpent, the head of which was one of the supporting points, and the tail tied into a knot. Occasionally the form of the shank was varied by bending the bar upon itself, so as to form a bow in the middle of its length; the ends were then beaten to a point, which, being twisted inwards, passed into the opposite holes of the stone, and thus formed a handle to the signet. This last manner of mounting the scarabæus was often used by the Egyptians, the shank being made of every kind of metal; it was also the common setting of the Phœnician stones of this form.'

[4] Appendix.

[5] Cellini, in his 'Memoirs,' says that Pope Clement VII. showed him a gold Etruscan necklace of exquisite workmanship, which had just been discovered in the ground. On examining it, 'Alas,' cried he, 'it is better not to imitate these Etruscans, for we should be nothing but their humble servants. Let us rather strike out a new path, which will, at least, have the merit of originality.'

[6] Appendix.

[7] Addison remarks that when at Rome he had 'seen old Roman rings so very thick about, and with such large stones in them, that it is no wonder a fop should reckon them a little cumbersome in the summer season of so hot a climate.'

A Roman ring found in Hungary contained more than two ounces of gold.

[8] 'As soon as the despotic power of the Cæsars was established,' remarks the Rev. C. W. King ('Handbook of Engraved Gems'), 'it became a mark of loyalty to adorn either one's house, or one's hand, with the visible presence of the sovereign. Capitolinus notices that the individual was looked upon as an impious wretch, who, having the means, did not set up at home a statue of M. Aurelius; and, a century later, the Senate obliged by an edict every householder to keep a picture of the restorer of the Empire, Aurelian. That official swore such portraits in their rings as an indispensable mark of distinction may be deduced from the negotiations of Claudius (preserved by Pliny) confining the *entrée* at court to such as had received from him a gold ring having the imperial bust carved on it.'

[9] Xenophon, in his 'Economics,' states that the Greek matrons had the power of sealing up, or placing the seal upon the house-goods, and at Rome, Cicero's mother was accustomed to enhance to consumers the merits of some poor thin wine, *vile Sabinum*, by affixing to each amphora her official signet.

It appears that the women of Greece did not use the ring as frequently as the men, and that theirs were less costly.

[10] Amber rings were worn in our own country to a late date; thus Swift, writing to Pope respecting Curll and the 'Dunciad,' says:—'Sir, you remind me of my Lord Bolingbroke's ring; you have embalmed a gnat in amber.'

[11] At the exhibition of antiquities and works of art at the Archæological meeting of January 5, 1849, Major Ker Macdonald produced a ring supposed to be a recent imitation of the ring of Ethelwulf.

[12] I am much indebted to Mr. R. H. Soden Smith, F.S.A.—a gentleman so distinguished in art circles, and the possessor of a remarkably fine and rare collection of rings—for information on some points connected with this work.

[13] There is the well-known anecdote of Francis the First, who, in order to let the Duchess

d'Estampes know that he was jealous, wrote with a diamond these lines on a pane of glass, 'which,' says Le Vieil, in his 'Peinture sur Verre,' 'may be still seen in the Château Chambord':—

> Souvent femme varie,
> Mal habil qui s'y fie.

A similar story is recorded of Henry the Fourth of France and the Duke of Montpensier. The latter had written with his diamond ring on a pane of glass the following, in allusion to his love for the aunt of the King:—

> Nul bonheur me contente,
> Absent de ma Divinité.

Henry, in the same manner, wrote under it:—

> N'appellez pas ainsi ma tante,
> Elle aime trop l'Humanité.

It was on the pane of a window in Hampton Court Palace that, during one of the festivals given there by Henry the Eighth, the ill-fated Earl of Surrey wrote with his diamond ring the name of fair Geraldine, and in quaint verse commemorated her beauty.

[14] Calmet, in his 'Dictionary,' states that the Arabian princesses wore golden rings on their fingers, to which little bells were suspended, as well as in the flowing tresses of their hair, that their superior rank might be known, and that they might receive in passing the homage due to them.

[15] Montfaucon, in his 'L'Antiquité Expliquée,' describes the representation of a trading seal 'as one of the most extraordinary that has yet been seen.' It was given to him by a monk of St. Victor, at Marseilles. The form was oblong, and the inscription was in three lines, the first of which is P. Hileyi, Publii Hileyi, at the end of which words was a well-formed *caduceus*. The second and third lines were Sex. Maci Paullini, Sexti Maci Paullini. The *caduceus*, which was a symbol of traffic, denotes that these were two merchants and co-partners, and the anchor, that they were adventurers by sea. One thing remarkable is that the first name, P. Hileyi, was taken by design, but yet so that it might be read; the letters being cut very deep, they contented themselves with taking out so much of them only as would spoil that part of the impression upon wax, or any other matter, and leave the other name to be impressed alone. That this was done by design appeared from the varnish seen in these traces, as well as in the rest of the seal, and was probably done by Sextus Macius Paullinus at the death of his partner Publius Hileyus.

[16] Appendix.

[17] Chaucer, in his 'Squire's Tale,' says:—

> 'Then speaken they of Canace's ring
> And saiden all that such a wondrous thing
> Of crafte of ringès heard they never none,
> Save that he, Moses, and King Solomon
> Hadden a name of cunning in such art.'

[18] Among the Mohammedans at present a talisman, consisting generally of a formula on a scrap of paper, or sentences from the Koran, is placed in a piece of stuff and put into a ring between the stone and the metal. Although the Mussulman doctors generally concur in considering these practices vain, and many Asiatics do not use them, yet the multitude still retain a predilection for them.

[19] Appendix.

[20] Appendix.

[21] Plato relates the story of Gyges differently to that by Herodotus. He tells us that Gyges wore a ring, the stone of which, when turned towards him rendered him invisible, so that he had the advantage of seeing others without being seen himself. By means of this ring he deprived Candaules of his throne and life, with the concurrence of the queen. 'This,' remarks Rollin, 'probably implies that in order to compass his own criminal design he used all the tricks and stratagems which the world calls subtle and refined policy, which penetrates into the most secret purposes of others without making the least discovery of its own.' This story, thus explained, carries in it a greater appearance of truth than what we read in 'Herodotus.'

Cicero, after relating the fable of Gyges' famous ring, adds, that if a wise man had such a ring he would not use it to any wicked purpose, because virtue considers what is honourable and just, and has no occasion for darkness.

[22] See chapter on 'Customs and Incidents in Connexion with Rings.'

[23] Dr. Gordon, in his 'History of Glasgow,' quotes the legend thus, from the 'Aberdeen Breviary:'—'The Queen of Cadzow was suspected by her husband, King Roderick, of being too intimate with a knight whom he had asked to hunt with him. The King waited his

opportunity to abstract from the satchel of the knight, when asleep, a ring which the Queen had presented to him. King Roderick, in furious jealousy, threw it into the Clyde. When they returned to the palace of Cadzow from the day's hunting, the King, in the course of the evening, asked her where her ring was. It could not be produced. Death was threatened if it were not forthcoming. The Queen sent one of her maids to the knight for the ring, and being unsuccessful, a bearer was sent to *Cathures* (Glasgow), to St Mungo, making a full confession of all. The Apostle of Strathclyde commiserated the Queen. Forthwith he sent one of his monks to the river to angle, instructing him to bring home alive the first fish that he caught. This was done. St. Mungo (*dear friend*) found the annulet in the mouth of the miraculous fish, and speedily sent it to the Queen, who restored it to her husband, and thereby saved her life.'

[24] Appendix.

[25] 'A Berril,' observes Aubrey in his 'Miscellanies,' 'is a kind of crystal that hath a weak tincture of red. In this magicians see visions. There are certain formulas of prayers to be used before they make the inspection which they term a *Call*. In a manuscript of Dr. Forman, of Lambeth (which Mr. Elias Ashmole had), is a discourse of this and the prayer; also there is a Call which Dr. Napier did use. James Harrington (author of "Oceana") told me that the Earl of Denbigh, then ambassador at Venice, did tell him that one did show him three several times, in a glass, things past and to come. When Sir Marmaduke Langdale was in Italy he went to one of these Magi, who did show him a glass where he saw himself kneeling before a crucifix.' A 'Berrill' belonging to Sir Edward Harley is thus described by Aubrey:—'It is a perfect sphere; the diameter of it I guess to be something more than an inch; *it is set in a ring* or circle of silver resembling the meridian of a globe; the stem of it is about ten inches high, all gilt. At the four quarters of it are the names of four angels, viz., Uriel, Raphael, Michael, Gabriel. On the top is a cross *patée*. This, it appears, was efficacious in detecting thieves; it also forewarned death.'

Dr. Dee's famous crystal, now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, will be remembered. (See discoveries in the tomb of Childeric, at Tournay, in chapter on 'Memorial and Mortuary Rings.')

[26] The superstitious custom of carrying the medals of Alexander the Great, as if they had some salutary virtue in them, was frequent among the Christians of Antioch, as is evident from St. John Chrysostom's declamation against the practice:—'What shall we say of those that use enchantments and ligatures, and bind upon their head and feet brass medals of Alexander of Macedon? Are these our hopes? And shall we, after the passion and death of our Saviour, place our salvation in an image of a heathen king?'

[27] Montfaucon, in his 'L'Antiquité Expliquée,' has a singular theory in regard to the signs of the Zodiac. He mentions a fine gem on which were represented the figures of Mercury, Jupiter, and Venus, included in a large circle which contained the twelve signs of the Zodiac. These he conjectured to signify the days of the week, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. 'But, why,' he observes, 'do the three gods in this image indicate so many days of the week? Some ancient and particular custom is referred to and expressed, without doubt. Ausonius, in his "Eclogues," inserts a verse current in his time preceded by this question:—"Quid quoque die demi de corpore oporteat?" On what days is it most proper to cut the beard, nails, or hair? "Ungues Mercurio, barbam Jove, Cypride crines." That is, on Wednesday pare your nails, shave your beard on Thursday, and on Friday cut your hair. This usage Ausonius rallies in eight pleasant verses. "Mercury," says he, "a pilferer by trade, loves his nails too well to let them be pared. Jupiter, venerable by his beard, Venus adorned by her hair, are by no means willing to part with what is so dear to them."... I think it certain that these deities are represented as presiding over Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, without being able to assign the certain reason why they are pictured upon this gem.'

A very extraordinary form of oath, by which the astronomer Vettius Valens bound his disciples to secresy, is quoted by Selden. 'I adjure thee, most honoured brother and your fellow-students, by the starry vault of heaven, *by the circle of the zodiac*, the sun, the moon, and the five wandering stars (by which universal life is governed), by Providence itself, and Holy Necessity, that you will keep these things secret, nor divulge them except to those who are worthy and are able to make a just compensation to me, Valens.'

[28] According to the ancient lapidaries, a ram with the half-figure of an ox, or any stone set in a silver ring, whoever was touched with should be immediately reconciled. A woman, one half a fish, holding a mirror and a branch, cut on a marine hyacinth (pale sapphire), set in a gold ring, the signet covered with wax, procured any desire. A man ploughing, and over him the hand of the Lord making a sign, and star, if cut on any stone, and worn in all purity, ensured safety from tempest and immunity to crops from storms. Head, with neck, cut in green jasper; set in a brass or iron ring engraved with the letters B. B. P. P. N. E. N. A.: wear this, and thou shalt in no wise perish, but be preserved from many diseases, especially fever and dropsy; it likewise gives good luck in fowling. Thou shalt be reasonable and amiable in all things; in battle and in law-suits thou shalt be victor. Man standing and tall, holding an obolus (patera) in one hand and a serpent in the other, with the sun over his head, and a lion at his feet: if cut on a diacordius (diadochus) set in a leaden ring and put underneath wormwood and fenugreek, carry it to the bank of a river and call up whatsoever evil spirit thou pleasest, and thou shalt have from them answers to all thy questions. A youth having a

crown on his head and seated on a throne with four legs, and under each leg a man standing and supporting the throne on his neck; round the neck of the seated figure a circle, and his hands raised up to heaven; if cut on a white hyacinth (pale sapphire) ought to be set in a silver ring of the same weight as the stone, and under it put mastic and turpentine; make the seal in wax and give it to any one, and let him carry it about on his neck or person, either the wax or the ring, and go with pure mind and chastity before king, noble, or wise man, and he shall obtain from them whatsoever he may desire. A bearded man holding a flower in his hand cut on carnelian, and set in a tin ring, the ring being made on the change of the moon on a Friday, the 1st or the 8th of the month, whomsoever thou shalt touch therewith he shall come to do thy will. Man standing on a dragon, holding a sword, must be set in a leaden or iron ring; then all the spirits that dwell in darkness shall obey the wearer, and shall reveal to him in a low-toned song the place of hidden treasure and the mode of winning the same. Man riding and holding in one hand the bridle, in the other a bow, and girt with a sword, engraved on pyrites set in a gold ring, it will render thee invincible in all battles; and whosoever shall steep this ring in oil of musk and anoint his face with the said oil, all that see him shall fear him, and none shall resist. Man erect in armour, holding a drawn sword, and wearing a helmet, if set in an iron ring of the same weight, renders the wearer invincible in battle. Capricorn on carnelian, set in a silver ring and carry about with thee, thou shalt never be harmed in purse or person by thine enemies, neither shall a judge pass an unjust sentence against thee; thou shalt abound in business and in honour, and gain the friendship of many, and all enchantments made against thee shall be of none effect, and no foe, however powerful, shall be able to resist thee in battle. (Extracts from 'Sigil-charms,' 'History of the Glyptic Art,' 'Handbook of Engraved Gems,' by the Rev. C. W. King.)

[29] 'The Hermetic Brethren had certain rules that they observed in relation to the power of precious stones to bring good or bad fortune through the planetary affinities of certain days, because they imagined that the various gems, equally as gold and silver, were produced through the chemic operation of the planets working secretly in the telluric body.... All yellow gems and gold are appropriate to be worn on Sunday, to draw down the propitious influences or to avert the antagonistic effects of the spirits on this day, through its ruler and name-giver, the Sun. On Monday, pearls and white stones (but not diamonds) are to be worn, because this is the day of the Moon, or of the second power in Nature. Tuesday, which is the day of Mars, claims rubies and all stones of a fiery lustre. Wednesday is the day for turquoises, sapphires, and all precious stones which seem to reflect the blue of the vault of heaven.... Thursday demands amethysts and deep-coloured stones of sanguine tint, because Thursday is the day of Thor—the Runic impersonated Male Divine Sacrifice. Friday, which is the day of Venus, has its appropriate emeralds, and reigns over all the varieties of the imperial, yet, strangely, the sinister, colour, green. Saturday, which is Saturn's day, the oldest of the gods, claims for its distinctive talisman the most splendid of all gems, or the queen of precious stones, the lustre-darting diamond.' (The 'Rosicrucians,' by Hargrave Jennings.)

[30] There is a tradition that this ring found its way to the chapel of Havering (have the ring), in the parish of Hornchurch, near Romford, and was kept there until the dissolution of religious houses. Weaver says he saw a representation of it on a window of Romford church. The legend is also displayed on an ancient window in the great church of St. Lawrence, at Ludlow, to which town the pilgrims who received the ring from the saint are said to have belonged. A tradition to this effect was current in the time of Leland, who notices it in his 'Itinerary.'

[31] Appendix.

[32] To understand the language of birds was peculiarly one of the boasted sciences of the Arabians. Their writers relate that Balkis, the Queen of Sheba, or Saba, had a bird called *Huddud*, a lapwing, which she despatched to King Solomon on various occasions, and that this trusty bird was the messenger of their amours. We are told that Solomon, having been secretly informed by the winged confidant that Balkis intended to honour him with a grand embassy, enclosed a spacious square with a wall of gold and silver bricks, in which he ranged his numerous troops and attendants, in order to receive the ambassadors, who were astonished at the suddenness of these splendid and unexpected preparations.

[33] Moore, in his juvenile poem of the 'Ring,' has made use of this legend, and added considerably to its fanciful conceptions:—

'Young Rupert for his wedding-ring
Unto the statue went,
But, ah! how was he shock'd to find
The marble finger bent!

'The hand was closed upon the ring
With firm and mighty clasp;
In vain he tried, and tried, and tried,
He could not loose the grasp.'

Austin is the hermit that Rupert seeks, and whose aid enables him to regain the ring from the female fiend:—

"In Austin's name take back the ring,

The ring thou gav’st to me;
And thou’rt to me no longer wed,
Nor longer I to thee.”

‘He took the ring, the rabble pass’d,
He home returned again;
His wife was then the happiest fair,
The happiest he of men.’

[34] Appendix.

[35] Appendix.

[36] A curious legend is connected with this famous jewel. The French monarch had visited the shrine of the saint to discharge a vow which he had made in battle, and he knelt before it with the stone set in a ring on his finger. The officiating prelate entreated the King to bestow the jewel on the shrine, but as the jewel ensured good luck, Louis hesitated, but offered, in compensation, one hundred thousand florins. The prelate was satisfied, but the saint evidently was not, for the stone leaped from the ring and fastened itself to the shrine. So bright was the stone that it was impossible to look at it distinctly, and at night it burned like fire.

[37] Abraxas-stones were so called from having the word *Abraxas* or Abrasax engraved on them. They are cut in various forms, and bear a variety of capricious symbols, mostly composed of human limbs, a fowl’s head and serpent’s body. These gems are represented as coming from Syria, Egypt, and Spain. It is certain that the use of the name Abraxas was at first peculiar to the Gnostic sect of the Basilideans. There is little doubt that the greater part of the Abraxas-stones were made in the Middle Ages as talismans.

[38] The shrine of the Magi, in Cologne Cathedral, dates from the twelfth century. The central subject is the Virgin with the infant Jesus; on the left, the Adoration of the Three Kings, accompanied by the Emperor Otho IV. On the right, the Baptism of Christ by John the Baptist, in presence of an angel. All these figures are of pure gold, and in full relief. The architectural decorations are covered with enamels and precious stones. Above these figures is a cover of silver-gilt, on removing which the skulls of the Three Kings are seen, with their names, Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, traced in rubies. The crowns of copper gilt replace those of massive gold, which disappeared during the revolutionary storms. They weighed each six pounds, and were enriched with fine pearls and an aigrette of diamonds. Above the relics is the figure of Christ, as the Judge of men, between two angels, who hold the instruments of the Passion. This reliquary is 5½ feet long, by three wide, 5 feet high. It was begun in 1170, and made by order of Archbishop Philip von Heinsberg. In the Rosicrucian theory, Caspar, or Gaspar, is the ‘White One;’ Melchior is the ‘King of Light;’ Beltasar, the ‘Lord of Treasures.’ Balthasar, or Balthazar, is the septuagint spelling of Belshazzar. Talismanic rings and other objects were manufactured largely for sale to the pilgrims at the shrine of the ‘Three Kings.’

Mr. Thomas Wright, M.A., has, in his edition of the ‘Chester Plays,’ described, at length, this popular legend.

A magic ring was found a few years ago at Dunwich, with this inscription:—

‘Jasper fert myrrham; thus Melchior; Balthasar aurum,
Hæc tria qui secum portabit nomina Regum,
Solvitur a morbo, Christi pietate, caduco.’

Bishop Patrick, in his ‘Reflections on the Devotions of the Roman Church,’ 1674, asks, with assumed *naïveté*, how these names of the Three Wise Men—Melchior, Balthazar, and Jasper—are to be of service, ‘when another tradition says they were Apellius, Amerus, and Damascus; a third, that they were Megalath, Galgalath, and Sarasin; and a fourth calls them Ator, Sator, and Peratoras; which last I should choose (in this uncertainty), as having the more kingly sound.’

[39] The horn of the narwhal (which in the Middle Ages passed for the horn of the unicorn) was supposed to possess, among other virtues, that of neutralising and detecting the presence of poison. Various old writers relate that it became agitated when placed in contact with a poisoned body, and the most efficacious antidote to poison was the water in which it had been steeped. A piece of the horn was attached to a chain of gold, in order that it might be plunged into a dish without putting in the fingers.

[40] The Runic characters are of very remote antiquity, and of entirely pagan origin. They are attributed to Odin, whom tradition asserts to have been eminently skilful in the art of writing, as well for the common purposes of life, as for the operations of magic. It is the earliest alphabet in use among the Teutonic and Gothic nations of Northern Europe. The name is derived from the Teutonic *rûn*, a mystery; whence *runa*, a whisper, and *helrun*, divination. They were distinguished into various kinds: the *noxious*—or, as they were called, the *bitter*—employed to bring various evils on their enemies; the *favourable* averted misfortunes; the *victorious* procured conquest to those who used them; the *medicinal* were inscribed on the leaves of trees for healing; others served to dispel melancholy thoughts; to prevent shipwreck; were antidotes against poison; preservatives against the anger of

enemies; efficacious to render a mistress favourable—these last were to be used with great caution. If an ignorant person had chanced to write one letter for another, or had erred in the minutest stroke, he would have exposed his mistress to some dangerous illness, which was only to be cured by writing other runes with the greatest niceness. All these various kinds differed only in the ceremonies observed in writing them, in the materials on which they were written, in the place where they were exposed, in the manner in which the lines were drawn, whether in the form of a circle, of a serpent, or a triangle, &c.

'In the strict observance of these childish particulars consisted' (remarks Mallet in his 'Northern Antiquities') 'that obscure and ridiculous art which acquired to so many weak and wicked persons the respectable name of priests and prophetesses, merely for filling rude minds with so much jealousy, fear, and hatred.'

Grimm states that the Anglo-Saxon Runic alphabet was derived from the Scandinavian at a period when it had only sixteen letters, the complementary letters of the two alphabets having been formed on principles that offer not the slightest analogy. While on the subject of Runic calendars I may mention (although unconnected with rings) a singular Runic almanack which was exhibited at the Winchester meeting of the Archæological Institute in 1845. It is in the form of a walking-stick, called in the north of Europe a 'rim-stok,' or 'primstaf.' The symbols and figures which ornament this calendar relate to the saints' days and the successive occupations of the seasons. The staff is of a fashion rarely to be found in the north, and appears to be the same which was procured at Trondheim, in Norway, by Mr. Wolff, formerly Norwegian consul at London, who published an account of it.

[41] A modern poet thus apostrophises the turquoise and its changeful properties in the following beautiful sonnet:—

'In sunny hours, long flown, how oft my eyes
Have gazed with rapture on thy tender blue!
Turquoise! thou magic gem, thy lovely hue
Vies with the tints celestial of the skies.
What sweet romance thy beauty bids arise,
When, beaming brightly to the anxious view,
Thou giv'st th' assurance dear that love is true!
But should thy rays be clouded, what deep sighs,
What showers of tenderness distress the heart!
Ah! much of joy I owe thee, but no woe.
As to my mind, thou ever didst impart
That feeling blest which made my pale cheek glow
(For love was mine, shorn of his wings and dart).
Turquoise! in warmest strains thy praise should flow,
Such as some gifted minstrel could bestow.'

[42] A more homely remedy for the same disorder is given in Wittal's 'Little Dictionary,' where we find that—

'The bone of a hare's foot, closed in a ring,
Will drive away the cramp, whenas it doth wring.'

[43] Appendix.

[44] Queen Bertha, consort of King Louis the Seventh, of France, was crowned by the Pope, who also placed a ring on her finger, saying: 'Receive this ring, emblem of the Holy Trinity, by which you may resist heresy and bring the heathen to a knowledge of the faith by the virtue thus given. God, the source of all dignity and honour, give to thy servant, by this sign of the faith, grace to persevere in His sight, that she may evermore rest firm in the faith by the merits of Jesus Christ.'

[45] The ruby, according to De Laert (1647), appears to have been very generally used for rings, and unpolished; for, 'unlike the diamond that hath no beauty unless shaped and polished, the ruby charms without any aid from art.' True rubies, and of good colour uncut, but with their natural surface polished, set in rings, date from the earliest times. Gesner states that Catherine of Arragon used to wear a ring set with a stone luminous at night, which he conjectures was a ruby.

[46] A MS. account of the 'Conveyance of Great Estates into the King's presence at the time of their creation' (British Museum, Additional MSS. No. 6,297) gives the preparation for a creation of the Prince. After the rich habits given on this occasion, we read: 'Item, a sword, the scabbard covered with crimson cloth of gold, plain, and a girdle agreeable to the same. Item, a coronal. Item, a verge of gold. Item, a ring of gold to be put on the third finger.'

[47] The use of a seal, or signet-ring, for the purchase of property is mentioned in the Bible. In Jeremiah the formalities are thus given: 'And I bought the field of Hanameel, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. And I subscribed the evidence, *and sealed it*, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed, according to the law and custom, and that which was open' (chap. xxxii.).

[48] In the Braybrooke Collection is a gold band-ring with a similar inscription, found at

Wimbish, in Essex. It is noticed in the seventh volume of the 'Archæological Institute Journal,' p. 196, and is described as a serjeant-at-law's gold ring, the hoop ⅜ of an inch in width, and of equal thickness; the motto 'Lex regis præsidium.'

[49] Horace Walpole, in one of his letters, alludes to the 'Fisherman's Ring' in his usual lively manner: 'Mr. Chute has received a present of a diamond mourning-ring from a cousin; he calls it *l'annello del Piscatore*. Mr. Chute, who is unmarried, meant that his cousin was *fishing* for his estate.'

[50] To show how little, in former times, the sanctity of the Popes was regarded after death, Aimon, in his 'Tableau de la Cour de Rome,' relates that 'when the Pope is in the last extremity, his nephews and his servants carry from the palace all the furniture they can find. Immediately after his death, the officers of the Apostolic Chamber strip the body of everything valuable, but the relations of the Pope generally forestal them, and with such promptitude that nothing remains but bare walls and the body, placed on a wretched mattress, with an old wooden candlestick and a wax end in it.'

[51] In the 'Archæologia,' vol. xxxvi., Mr. Octavius Morgan remarks 'that in the beginning of the seventeenth century some attention seems to have been paid to the subject of rings in general, and several persons wrote concerning them. John Kirchmann, a learned German of Lubeck, published a treatise "De Annulis;" and about the same time Henry Kornmann wrote another small treatise "De Triplici Annulo." Kirchmann appears to have made deep researches on the subject, and in the chapter on "Episcopal Rings" he gives their history as far as he was able to trace it, though he cannot find in ancient writers any facts relating to them earlier than the reign of Charlemagne. In gratitude to this monarch for the important services he had rendered the Church, it was decreed in the eighth century that the Emperor should have the power of electing the Popes and ordering the Holy See, and that in addition the archbishops and the bishops of the provinces should receive investiture from him. No newly-elected prelate could be consecrated until he received from the Emperor the ring and the staff; these were to be returned on the death of the prelate. But this practice was disused for a time; for we find enumerated in the old chronicles of Mayence, among the jewels in that city, "sixteen large and good pontifical rings—one of ruby, with other gems, one of emerald, one of sapphire, and one of topaz."'

[52] The mode of giving the benediction differs in the two Churches. In the Greek it is given with the forefinger open, to form an I, the middle finger curved like a C, the ancient *sigma* of the Greeks, the thumb and annulary crossed form an X, and the little finger curved represents a C. All this gives IC XC, the Greek monogram of Jesus Christ. Thus, as the author of the 'Guide of Painting,' of Mount Athos, observes:—'By the Divine providence of the Creator, the fingers of the hand of man, be they more or less long, are arranged so as to form the name of Christ.'

The Latin benediction is more simple, being made with the annulary and the little finger closed, the three first fingers open, symbolical of the Trinity.

'Formerly, bishops and priests blessed alike; latterly, bishops reserved to themselves the right of blessing with their fingers, the priest with the open hand; the bishops facing the congregation, the priests in profile, with the hand placed edgeways. The sign of the cross was formerly made with three fingers open, but now with the open hand, from the forehead to the breast, and from the left to the right shoulder by the Latins, but from the right to the left by the Greeks' (Didron, 'Iconographie Chrétienne').

[53] The reader will be reminded of the anecdote of Queen Elizabeth, who, drawing from her finger the coronation ring, showed it to the Commons, and told them that when she received that ring she had solemnly bound herself in marriage to the realm, and it would be quite sufficient for the memorial of her name, and for her glory, if, when she died, an inscription were engraved on her marble tomb: 'Here lyeth Elizabeth, which (*sic*) reigned a virgin, and died a woman.' This coronation ring was filed off her finger shortly before her death, on account of the flesh having grown over it.

[54] In 'A Relation, or rather True Account of the Islands of England,' about the year 1500 (Camden Society), the author, after describing the shrine of St. Thomas, at Canterbury, adds: 'Everything is left far behind by a ruby not larger than a man's thumb-nail, which is set to the right of the altar. The church is rather dark, and particularly so where the shrine is placed, and when we went to see it the sun was nearly gone down, and the weather was cloudy, yet I saw the ruby as well as if it had been in my hand. They say it was a gift of the King of France.'

[55] See Appendix.

[56] The gilding and silvering of locks, *rings* (firmalx anelx), and other articles of a similar nature made of copper or latten (faitz de cupre ou laton) having been prohibited by the statute 5th Henry IV. c. 13, under what was then a heavy penalty, the 'disloyal artificers,' against whom this enactment was made, appear to have taken refuge in the sanctuary of St. Martin's-le-Grand, where they were able to labour in their vocation unmolested by the marshal or the sheriff. This may be inferred from 3 Edw. IV. c. 4, by which it was declared unlawful to import various articles of foreign manufacture, including *rings* of *gilded copper or laten*, but with an express declaration that the Act was not to extend to or be prejudicial

or hurtful to Robert Styllington, clerk, dean of the King's Free Chapel of 'St. Martin's le Graunt, de Londres,' nor to his successors.

[57] English ladies at one time wore the wedding-ring on the thumb. At Stanford Court, Worcestershire, may be seen the portraits of five ladies of the Salway family, in the days of Queen Elizabeth, all of whom have their wedding-rings on their thumbs. According to the 'British Apollo,' the brides of George the First's time used to remove the ring from its proper abiding-place to the thumb as soon as the ceremony was over.

In Southerne's 'Maid's Last Prayer' (Act iv. vol. i. p. 67) we find:—'Marry him I must, and wear my wedding-ring upon my thumb, too, that I'm resolved.'

An instance of several wedding-rings being used at the bridal ceremony is related by Burcard, master of the ceremonies to the Pope's Chapel from Sixtus IV. to Julius II. At the marriage of a daughter of Pope Innocent VIII. to Lewis of Arragon, Marquis of Geracio (January 3, 1492), the pair approached the Pope, and, both being on their knees, the husband put the ring on the proper finger of the left hand of his spouse, then several rings on the other fingers of both hands.

[58] In the Waterton Collection, at the South Kensington Museum, a forefinger, from a bronze statue of late Roman work, wears a large ring upon the second joint. In Germany it is still customary to wear the ring in this fashion, a custom borrowed from their Roman subjugators.

[59] A correspondent to 'Notes and Queries' (vol. viii. series i. p. 575) observes, with regard to the ring being placed on the third finger of the right hand of the Blessed Virgin in Raffaelle's 'Sponsalizio,' at Milan, and in Ghirlandais's fresco of the same subject in the Santa Croce, at Florence, 'that it has been customary among artists to represent the Virgin with the ring on the right hand, to signify her superiority over St. Joseph, from her surpassing dignity of Mother of God. Still, she is not always represented so.'

[60] A bishop, in the thirteenth century, gives the following reasons why the ring should be of gold. He says that 'one Protheus made a ring of iron with an adamant enclosed therein, as a pledge of love, because as iron subdueth all things, so doth love conquer all things, since nothing is more violent than its ardour, and, as an adamant cannot be broken, so love cannot be overcome, for love is strong as death. In course of time gold rings set with gems were substituted for the adamantine ones of baser metal, because, as gold excelleth all other metals, so doth love excel all other blessings, and as gold is set off with gems, so is conjugal love set off by other virtues.'

[61] In the reign of George the Fourth, a limited number of plain gold rings were made, having a well-executed miniature medallion of that King set beneath a large diamond. One of these was in the possession of the late Lady Fellows.

[62] It was formerly the custom in Brittany that, on the night after the marriage, the husband presented his wife with a ring and act of dowry.

[63] Latour St. Ybars, in his tragedy of 'Virginius,' alludes to the iron ring:—

> Alors qu' Icilius ne m'a jamais offert
> Pour gage de sa foi que cet anneau de fer,
> Claudius, sans respect pour l'amour qui m'anime
> Par cet appas grossier croit m'entraîner au crime,
> Et ces ornaments vils qu'il m'ose présenter
> Sont fait de ce métal qui sert pour acheter!
> Va rendre à Claudius tous ces dons, et sur l'heure
> Les présents de cet homme ont souillés ma démeure,
> Et ce seroit blesser notre honneur et nos dieux
> Que d'y porter la main, que d'y jeter les yeux.

[64] The 'betrothing penny' given at the ceremony of marriage was in olden times a common usage both in England and in France, representing either earnest-money, or the actual purchase of the bride. In the pontifical of Amiens, the bridegroom is to say: 'De cet anneau t'espouse, et de cet argent te hounoure, et de mon corps te doue.' In an ancient manuscript of the Salisbury Missal, in the Harleian Collection, the bridegroom says: 'Wyth thys rynge y the wedde, and thys golde and selvir the geve, and with my bodi y the worshippe, and with all my worldith catel y the honoure.'

[65] Pitscottie says 'the Queen of France wrote a love-letter to the King of Scotland, calling him her love, showing him that she had suffered much rebuke in France for defending his honour. She believed surely that he would recompense her with some of his kingly support in her necessity; that is to say, that he would raise her an army and come three foot of ground on English ground for her sake. To that effect she sent him a ring off her finger, with 14,000 French crowns to pay his expenses.'

[66] Appendix.

[67] Lady Moray, the wife of the Scottish Regent, had appropriated, during the Queen's troubles, many of her most valuable jewels. She wrote to her from Tutbury, March 28th, 1570:—

‘We are informed that ye have tane in possession certain of our jewels, such as our Henry of dyamant and ruby, with a number of other dyamant, ruby, perles, and gold worke, whereof we have the memoir to lay to your charge, which jewels incontinent, after the sight hereof, ye sall deliver to our right trusty cousins and counsellors, the Earl of Huntley, our lieutenant, and my Lord Setoun, who will, on so doing, give you discharge of the same.’

Lady Moray paid no attention to Queen Mary’s request for the return of her jewels, well knowing that she was in no condition for enforcing her demands.

[68] ‘The skull and skeleton decorations for rings’ (remarks Mr. Fairholt) ‘first came into favour and fashion at the obsequious court of France, when Diana, of Poictiers, became the mistress of Henry the Second. At that time she was a widow, and in mourning, so black and white became fashionable colours; jewels were formed like funeral memorials; golden ornaments, shaped like coffins, holding enamelled skeletons, hung from the neck; watches, made to fit in little silver skulls, were attached to the waists of the denizens of a court that alternately indulged in profanity or piety, but who mourned show.’

[69] *Biblical Monuments*, by William Harris Rule, D.D., and J. Corbet Anderson; 1871, 1873.

[70] This great founder of the Merovingian dynasty, the father of Clovis, died in 482, and was buried with his treasures, weapons, and robes. Nearly twelve hundred years afterwards, a labourer, a poor deaf and dumb man, accidentally discovered the royal grave, and was astonished, and almost terrified, at the sight of the treasures it contained. Among them was the signet-ring alluded to, which, with a considerable number of the other treasures of the tomb, were deposited in the Bibliothèque, then ‘Royale,’ at Paris, which was broken into by burglars in 183-. An alarm being given, in their hasty flight they threw the objects into the Seine; the ring was not recovered.

In the tomb were found, besides the skeletons of his horse and page, his arms; a cornelian Etruscan scarab, doubtless deposited therein as an amulet of wondrous virtue; also a crystal divining-ball, two inches in diameter, and more than three hundred little *bees*, of the purest gold, their wings being inlaid with a red stone like cornelian.

On the authority of the historian Augustin Thierry, it is stated that these ornaments resembling bees were only what in French are called *fleurons* (supposed to have been attached to the harness of his war-horse). Montfaucon is of the same opinion.

[71] I am greatly indebted to this gentleman for the loan of a manuscript catalogue of ring mottos and inscriptions on wedding-rings, of which—besides those exhibited at the Kensington Museum—I have availed myself in the following pages of this chapter. Mr. Singer has, I believe, the finest collection of inscribed wedding-rings known, numbering two hundred and forty-five specimens of every kind, in gold and silver, each weighing from three dwts. and upwards, and none less than a hundred years old, some dating from five hundred years.

Mr. Singer’s collection is also enriched with some interesting betrothal rings, and there are fourteen double-line motto-rings which are matchless. This collection has been accumulated during the last quarter of a century, at a very considerable cost.

[72]This play upon words has been applied in a political sense. ‘So,’ as the late Mr. Crofton Croker observed, ‘when the Repeal question was agitated in Ireland, rings and brooches, set in precious stones, made to represent the word “Repeal” were popular:—

R uby
E merald
P earl
E merald
A methyst
L apis lazuli.

One of these was given to a gentleman as a relic of this memorable agitation, but the bit of lapis lazuli had dropped out, and he took it to a working jeweller in Cork to have the defect supplied. When it was returned, he found that a topaz had been substituted for the missing bit of lapis lazuli. “How is this?” he inquired, “you have made a mistake.” “No mistake, sir,” said the witty workman, whom he afterwards discovered to be an ardent Repealer, “It is all right: it *was* repea*l*, but let us repea*t* that we may have it yet.”’

[73] Appendix.

[74] In Knight’s ‘Pictorial Shakspeare’ is the following note on the dial which Touchstone drew ‘from his “poke:”’ ‘“There’s no clock in the forest,” says Orlando; and it was not very likely that the fool would have a pocket-clock. What then was the *dial* that he took from his poke? We have lately become possessed of a rude instrument kindly presented to us by a friend, which, as the Maid of Orleans found her sword, he picked “out of a deal of old iron.” It is a brass circle of about two inches in diameter. On the outer side are engraved letters, indicating the names of the months, with gradual divisions; and on the inner side, the hours of the day. The brass circle itself is to be held in one position by a ring; but there is an inner slide in which there is a small orifice. This slide being moved, so that the hole stands opposite the division of the month when the day falls of which we desire to know the time,

the circle is held up opposite the sun. The inner side is then, of course in shade, but the sunbeam shines through the little orifice and forms a point of light upon the hour marked on the inner side. We have tried this dial and found it give the hour with great exactness.'

A correspondent of 'Notes and Queries' (vol. xii. 3rd series, p. 79) mentions that rings to ascertain the time are regularly sold at the Swiss fairs. They are called *cadrans*. The price of one is twenty centimes.

[75] This magnificent collection was sold, in one lot (June 28th, 1875), to Mr. Bromilow, of Battlesden Park, for 35,000*l.*

[76] In Montfaucon's 'L'Antiquité Expliquée' there is a fine illustration of this beautiful seal. My edition of the work is in English (1721), and the engraving is in vol. i. page 145. It is thus described: the child Bacchus is in the arms of his nurse. She is generally thought to have been Ino, called also Leucothea, or the daughters of Ino (according to others) brought him up. A nymph, or perhaps another nurse, is sitting by. The old man is either Silenus, or it may be Athamas, Ino's husband. Several other nymphs have on their heads baskets full of flowers and fruits. Two Cupids, or Genii, stretch a canopy over Bacchus and the company that are about him. A nymph presents a cup to one of the Cupids. On the side of the figure is an old satyr leaning against a tree. He is playing on a kind of crooked hautboy. At the end, behind the tree, is a young boy, holding with both hands a bason, in which a goat seems to be going to drink. It is not easy to say who a naked man is with the crown on, and holding a cup in one hand, and in the other the bridle of a horse that is prancing. Some have taken it for Apollo.

[77] A curious story of a *squirt*-ring is mentioned in Thiebault's 'Original Anecdotes of Frederick II.' M. de Guines, ambassador of France at Berlin, had greatly mortified the Prussian nobles, and especially the other foreign ministers, by the ostentatious pomp which he displayed. Those whose limited means he thus eclipsed longed for some opportunity to wound the vanity of the proud man who daily humbled theirs, and excited their envy. At this crisis a Russian ambassador, who was returning home to present at his own court his newly-married bride, stopped on his way at Berlin. Prince Dolgorouki, the Russian ambassador there, did the honours of the Russian court to his countryman, and gave him and his wife a dinner, to which were invited all the corps diplomatique. M. de Guines was seated next to the bride. The lady, who had been initiated into all the court gossips, had enlisted under the banner of the malcontents, and taken upon herself the task of vexing the magnificent Frenchman. She had placed upon her finger a ring of very exquisite and curious workmanship, to which she called the attention of her neighbour during the course of the dinner. As he stooped to examine the jewel, the wearer pressed a spring concealed in the side of the ring within her hand, and jerked a small quantity of water into the eyes of the ambassador. The ring contained a syringe. The minister wiped his face, jested good-humouredly on the diminutive little instrument, and thought no more of it. But his fair enemy had not yet accomplished her purpose of mortifying the ambassador. Having refilled the squirt unperceived by him, she called his attention to herself, and again discharged the water in his face. M. de Guines looked neither angry nor abashed, but, in a serious tone of friendly advice, said to his foolish aggressor: 'Madame, this kind of jest excites laughter the first time; when repeated it may be excused, especially if proceeding from a lady, as an act of youthful levity; but the third time it would be looked upon as an insult, and you would instantly receive in exchange the glass of water you see before me: of this, madame, I have the honour to give you notice.' Thinking he would not dare to execute his threat, the lady once more filled and emptied the little water-spout at the expense of M. de Guines, who instantly acknowledged and repaid it with the contents of his glass, calmly adding, 'I warned you, madame.' The husband took the wisest course, declaring that the ambassador was perfectly justified in thus punishing his wife's unjustifiable rudeness. The lady changed her dress, and the guests were requested to keep silence on the affair. [Madame de Barrera.]

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