

REPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS.

REPORT

PRESENTED TO THE

Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

AT ITS THIRTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING,

MAY 27, 1878,

WITH AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY

1877—1878.

ALSO

Communications

MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

No. XX.

BEING No. 2 OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.

CAMBRIDGE :

PRINTED FOR THE CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY.

SOLD BY DEIGHTON, BELL & CO.; AND MACMILLAN & CO.
GEORGE BELL AND SONS, LONDON.

1878.

Price Three Shillings.

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OF THE

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REPORTS.

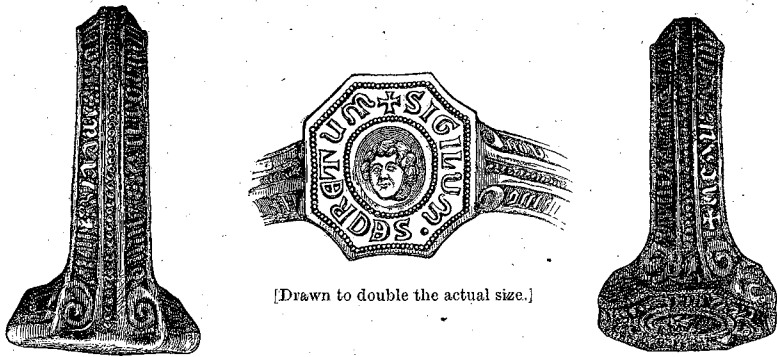
Reports I—X (1841—1850). Ten numbers. 1841—1850. 8vo.

PUBLICATIONS. QUARTO SERIES.

- I. A Catalogue of the original library of St Catharine's Hall, 1475. Ed. by Professor CORRIE, B.D. 1840. 1s. 6d.
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- III. An account of the Consecration of Abp. Parker. Ed. by J. GOODWIN, B.D. 1841. *With a facsimile.* 3s. 6d.

XIII. - NOTICE OF A RING FOUND AT MONTPENSIER
AND SUPPOSED TO HAVE BELONGED TO THE BLACK
PRINCE. Communicated by EDW. HALLSTONE, Esq.,
Junr.

[May 27, 1878.]



[Drawn to double the actual size.]

THIS ring which has been kindly shewn to me by the Baron Jérôme Pichon, residing at 17, Quai d'Anjou, Paris, is a fine specimen of fourteenth century work; and as it has been assigned to the former possession of Edward, the Black Prince, claims the attention of English archæologists.

The castle of Montpensier, of which no traces now exist, stood at an elevation of 1456 feet above the level of the sea,

at no great distance from Aigueperse in the *arrondissement* of Riom, and the province of Auvergne. Here it was that in 1866 a young shepherdess was tending her flock, when her eyes lit upon something sparkling in the ground beneath her, near to what had evidently in days of yore served as one of the fosses of the château. The object proved to be a gold ring, beside which were traces of human bones. Not that the jewel lay exactly upon the surface of the ground, but that in lazily turning over the soil with the end of her crook, the shepherdess had displaced some four or five inches of earth. It is difficult to say how far what she asserted is true, viz., that within the ring there was a portion of a human finger-bone.

The ring itself is in very good preservation, weighs $\frac{1}{2}$ oz., and is $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter: the signet is octagonal, set with an extremely fine ruby, what is called a "balais," upon which is cut a head, and around in the gold is SIGILLVM SECVRITVM. This head is nearly full face, round and chubby in appearance, and on the top has massive hair dressed in short small curls, and falling low down over the ears. Around the side of that part of the ring which forms the seal are a series of small shields, in which are inserted in relief the letters S^c.-GE-OR-GI-US. Around the ring itself in the hoop is in relief the beginning of a verse in Saint Luke's Gospel—JESVS NVTVM TRVNSIENS PER MEDIVM ILLORVM IBIT ET VERBVM¹, &c.

So much for the description of the ring. At first it fell into the hands of M. Victorin Jusseraud, then Mayor of Montpensier, whose nephew, my friend M. Edward Jusseraud, of the War Office in Paris, drew my attention to it, and kindly procured me an introduction to the Baron Pichon. This nobleman, already known for his collections of objects of *virtù*, purchased the jewel of Monsieur Victorin Jusseraud in 1877 and it is now deposited in the company of many other mag-

¹ Sc. CVRO . FVCTVM . EST.

nificent rings in his collection. To these gentlemen we owe a debt of thanks.

Three notices (of which I have freely availed myself) have been already published concerning this discovery of the shepherdess. I. In the *Compte-rendu de l'association française pour l'avancement des sciences*, 5^e Session, held at Clermont Ferrand in 1876, p. 658, by Monsieur Michel Cohendy, archiviste du Puy de Dôme, &c., &c. II. In the *Compte-rendu des séances (1876—1877) de la société du musée de Riom*, p. 42, also by M. Cohendy: and III. in the *Academia Española*, tome I. Part I., p. 9, by Señor Don F. M. Tubino.

In former times the castle of Montpensier had been a place of considerable importance. It was here that Louis VIII., the husband of Blanche of Castille and father of Saint Louis, rested on his return from the war against the Albigenses, and died on Nov. 28, 1226. Proof of this is given by a charter in which King Philip III., when ratifying a deed of foundation in favour of the Abbey of St André de Clermont, reminds the monks that the heart and entrails of the king, his uncle, had been transferred from the castle of Montpensier to the above-mentioned monastery. At that time Guichard de Beaujeu was possessor of this fief. His son Humbert was constable of the castle, and accompanied Saint Louis in his crusades, assisting at the battle of Massora in 1250, and at the siege of Tunis in 1270. At the end of the fourteenth century Jean duc de Berry et d'Auvergne was lord and master.

It is quite possible that the ring was entrusted as a pass or safe-conduct to one of those English generals who concentrated their forces and then spread them over the provinces of Guienne, Gascony and Auvergne. They marched forward to oppose the army of King John of France at the time when Edward III. had espoused the cause of Charles of Navarre. The passage of the English troops is thus described by Froissart (*ed. Luce*. Vol. v.):—*Li princes de Galles et se route, ou bien avait deux*

mil hommes d'armes et six mil archiers, chevauroient à leur aise et recouvroient de tous vivres a grand faison; et trouvoient le pays d'auvergne où ja il estoit entré et avalé, si gras et si raempli de tous biens, que merveilles seroit à considérer. Mais comme plentiveus que il le trouvaissent il ne voloient mies entendre ne arrester a cou; ançois voloient guerrier et grever leurs ennemis. Si ardoient et essilloient le pays tout devant yaus et environ. Et quant il estoient entré en une ville et il le trouvoient raemplie et pourveue largement de tous vivres et il si estoient refreschi deux jours ou trois et il s'en partoient il essilloient le demorant et effondroient les tonniaus plains de vins et ardoient bleds et avainnes afin que leur ennemi n'en euissent aise; et puis si chevauroient avant. Et tout dis trouvaient il bon pays et plantiveus," &c. Thus far Froissart. From Lemerre's "Histoire du moyen âge" we learn that the Black Prince feeling that his troops were too few and too badly provided with food and material of war, offered to abandon his former conquests, his booty and his captives, and cease to bear arms against his suzerain for seven years. A demand was then made that he should render himself up as a prisoner of war together with a hundred of his knights. This proposal rendered battle inevitable. The English now reduced to 8,000 men fortified themselves in the plain of Maupertuis a few leagues from Poitiers. Famine prevailed in their camp, and they could easily have been starved out: John on the other hand was eager for battle and felt certain of victory, seeing that he was in command of 16,000 men. It is needless to recount the details of the combat, fought on Sept. 19, 1356. The French were entirely routed, leaving as many as 11,000 men lying dead upon the field. John and his son Philip fought bravely throughout, the former receiving three wounds, and both were taken prisoners. The royal captives were conducted in triumph to London. After the peace of Bretigny John returned to France, but subsequently he made an expedition, it is said on a love affair, to London, and died in the Savoy, April 8, 1364.

It is to this period of history that M. Cohendy assigns the ring under our notice, and gives the following reasons for thinking that it once belonged to the Black Prince.

I. The cast of countenance and the form of the hair is like the type found on the coins of Ed. III. and more particularly the nobles.

II. The coincidence of the words found on the reverse of these nobles: $\text{I} \text{Æ} \text{S} \text{V} \text{S} \text{ } \text{A} \text{V} \text{T} \text{Æ} \text{Ω} \text{ } \text{T} \text{R} \text{Ω} \text{N} \text{S} \text{I} \text{Æ} \text{N} \text{S} \text{ } \text{P} \text{Æ} \text{R} \text{ } \text{Ω} \text{Æ} \text{D} \text{I} \text{V} \text{Ω} \text{ } \text{I} \text{L} \text{L} \text{O} \text{R} \text{V} \text{Ω} \text{ } \text{I} \text{B} \text{T} \text{T} \text{ } \text{Æ} \text{T} \text{ } \text{V} \text{Æ} \text{R} \text{B} \text{V} \text{Ω}$, &c.

III. The presence of a rose marking the intervening spaces between the words.

IV. The letters, S^o Georgius, as given above, Saint George being the patron saint of England.

V. The elegance and richness of the bijou, (an exceptional work of art for the time when it was made) suggests that it could only have been the property of some great and illustrious personage.

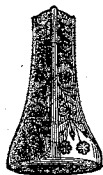
Now in reply to all this we would by no means say that the ring was never the property of the Black Prince, but we simply suggest a verdict of "not proven." The expression *sigillum secretum* or privy seal is, as is well known, by no means confined to illustrious personages as M. Cohendy seems to think. It is used in contradistinction to the "seal of office." Thus in monastic documents we find the conventual seal and the private seal of the abbot or prior, but in the same documents we find the seal of quite poor and unimportant people also bearing the words *sigillum secretum*. The head is undoubtedly like that on the coins of Edward III. both in face and form. The manner of wearing the hair may or may not be the same as on the money of that period.

The legend $\text{I} \text{Æ} \text{S} \text{V} \text{S} \cdot \text{A} \text{V} \text{T} \text{Æ} \text{Ω}$, &c., was, as we know from

Maundeville (page 11, ed. Halliwell, 1839), a common charm for travellers.

Again, it is quite possible to imagine the device marking the intervening spaces between each word to be a rose, but it is by no means positively clear that this is the case: and even so the *rose* did not become a party-badge until the following century. The best argument however in favour of its having belonged to an English general of high rank is the name of England's patron saint, St George; while at the same time the extreme richness of the workmanship and the fineness and purity of the ruby make it conceivable that the owner was a man of high rank. Thus although, on the one hand, it may have belonged to the Black Prince, on the other, there are equal grounds for supposing that it was owned by one of his followers; and if it be true, as the shepherdess asserted, that there were remains of a finger within the circle of the ring, it would seem suggestive of an idea that the knight, who wore it when on some delicate and confidential mission, was attacked before the earthworks of Montpensier and paid the penalty of his temerity with his life.

Of this same period, the signet-ring of Charles V. of France is set with a fine ruby, and decorated with similar roses on the shank, as is seen in the following woodcut taken, by the kind permission of the author, from King's *Antique Gems and Rings*, vol. I. page 397, (London, 1872).



[Actual size.]



