

THE QUEEN'S CORONATION RING.¹

By J. WICKHAM LEGG, F.S.A.

Those who were present at the meeting of the Institute in London in 1893 may remember that when the coronation *ornamenta* were pointed out there was one wanting, and that was the coronation ring ; it could not be shown at Westminster because it never leaves the Queen. I may remind the Institute of one incident connected with the last coronation ; the ring was found to have been made too small for the Queen's wedding finger ; and once it was put on by the archbishop as a sign of the Sovereign's wedding to the realm of England, it could not easily be taken off again : a happy omen of the length of time that Her Majesty was to reign over us, so that now we are celebrating the sixtieth year of her beneficent rule.

Though the ring never leaves the Sovereign, and it is thus impossible for us to see it here, yet the Queen has been graciously pleased to command that the ring shall be photographed, and copies of these photographs I present to the Institute. And at the same time two other coronation rings, in the Queen's possession, were photographed, those of King William IV. and his consort, Queen Adelaide.

There is also a coronation ring of King William III. or Queen Mary II. now in the possession of the Duke of Portland, who has very kindly allowed me to have the ring photographed, and a copy of this photograph I am also able to present to the Institute.

Coronation rings seem to be extremely rare. I find on enquiry that there is no such ring known in the collection of the British Museum or of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. So that a description and drawing of those within our reach may not be unacceptable to members of the Institute, and however imperfect such an account may be, it may yet stimulate inquiry, and cause attention to

¹ Read at the Monthly Meeting of the Institute, December 2nd, 1896.

be paid to rings in the possession of private persons who do not suspect the history of the jewels.

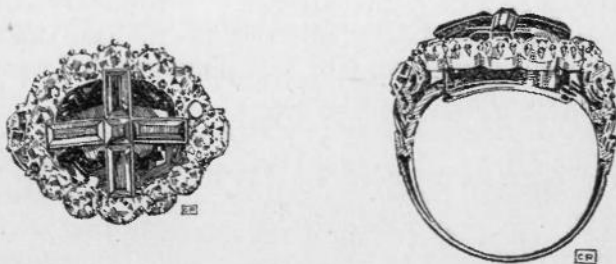
The Queen's coronation ring is of gold, two millimeters broad at its narrowest part; approaching the bezel, it swells out into a width of five millimeters: the diameter of the ring itself is 15 millimeters.

The stone of the ring is a large rounded sapphire (*en cabochon*), set *à jour* or open at the back, 13 millimeters in diameter and surrounded by brilliants. The sapphire is inlaid with a cross of equal arms, made of rectangular rubies, one small table ruby, foursquare, being in the centre of the cross.



THE QUEEN'S CORONATION RING.

The Queen's ring has been constructed on lines like those of King William IV.'s ring, only it is very much smaller in size. The King's ring is also a sapphire, inlaid with a ruby cross, the diameter of the sapphire horizontally being 15 millimeters. The diameter of the ring is 24 millimeters. The hoop of the ring has a width of three millimeters.



KING WILLIAM IV.'S CORONATION RING.

Queen Adelaide's coronation ring is of gold, the hoop four millimeters wide. It is 16 millimeters in diameter

and the stone is an oblong ruby set with brilliants, which is 13 millimeters long and 10 wide. It is not engraved. There are rubies on the part of the ring which swells out to receive the great stone, and on the outside of the hoop, 13 in number; all are *à jour*, or open on the inside of the ring.



QUEEN ADELAIDE'S CORONATION RING.

Queen Mary II.'s ring, belonging to the Duke of Portland, is of gold and the hoop is narrow, hardly a millimeter broad; the diameter is 18 millimeters. The stones are: an oblong ruby, ten millimeters long by eight wide, set flush,¹ facettèd, eight sided, and not engraved; a diamond at each end of the ruby, oval, five millimeters by three. None of the stones is *à jour*.



QUEEN MARY II.'S CORONATION RING.

This ring was exhibited at the Grafton Gallery in the autumn of 1894. Accompanying it was a paper on which was written:

"In this paper is contained Queen Mary's Ruby Coronation Ring y^e old setting shews how it was when she had it first; y^e paper with y^e ring is Queen Mary's hand writing and gives a reason why it was sett in y^e manner. A.A."

This must refer to the writing which follows: "this

¹ "Set flush" is an expression used by jewellers to signify that the stone is

closed over with gold; "*à jour*" means that the stone is open at the back.

Ruby so set was given me by the Prince three days after we wear married w^{ch} being the first thing he gave me I have ever had a perticular esteem for it when I was to be crowned I had it made big enough for y^e finger for y^e occasion but by mistake it was put on y^e King's finger and I had to put on [his?] Mine was designed for him, but we changed & I have worn it ever since till last thursday y^e 1st of Nov. 1689 y^e stone dropt out at diner I was extreemly¹ troubled at it upon the account forementioned, therefore having found it lockit up for fear of y^e like mischance againe."

The writing that follows has been added later and in some parts is hard to make out, the paper having been folded through the second line:

"Oct. y^e [date illegible] 1694 I gave it at [? to] Beauvoir to set fast" [here the writing is almost illegible].

The ring seems to have been worn by the Egyptians² and the Greeks; the Romans gave it to their civil magistrates; whence it seems to have passed to the Christian bishop and the Christian king. It is not, however, spoken of among the *ornamenta* in the coronation service of the pontifical ascribed to Egbert of York, who died in 766,³ nor in the very similar service in the Leofric mass book.⁴

Many historians now-a-days reject the statement that Offa, King of the East Angles, gave his successor the ring which he had received from the bishop when he was made king,⁵ as they look upon this Offa as a mythical person. But in the coronation service of the Benedictional of Robert of Jumièges,⁶ Bishop of London and Archbishop of Canterbury just before the Norman Conquest,

¹ Here the writing passes from recto to verso.

² Genesis xli, 42. "And Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand." (R.V.)

³ *The Pontifical of Egbert, Archbishop of York*, A.D. 732-766, ed. W. Greenwell, Surtees Society, 1853. p. 101.

⁴ *The Leofric Missal*, ed. F. E. Warren, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1883. p. 231.

⁵ See J. Battely, *Antiquitates S.*

Edmundi Burgi, Oxon. 1745. Append. p. 119.

⁶ fo. 166. I quote from a transcript in the possession of the Henry Bradshaw Society. (The book is really a pontifical, though named a benedictional.) This recension of the Coronation service appears also in MS. Tiberius B. viii. in the British Museum; and elsewhere. It is printed in A. Taylor's *Glory of Regality*, Lond. 1820. p. 395; and in the *York Pontifical*, ed. W. G. Henderson, Surtees Society, 1875. p. 270.

a ring is given immediately after the anointing, before the sword, crown, and sceptre.

The formula is :

Hic detur anulus.

Accipe anulum signaculum videlicet sanctae fidei soliditatem regni Augmentum potentiae per quae scias triumphali potentia hostes repellere hereses destruere subditos coadunare et Catholicae fidei perseuerabilitati conecti. per dominum.

Sequatur oratio.

Deus cuius est omnis potestas et dignitas da famulo tuo propriae suae dignitatis effectum in qua te remunerante permaneat semperque timeat tibi que iugiter placere contendat. per dominum.

These formulae are to be found word for word in an Order for the Coronation of the kings of the Franks printed by Martene,¹ and also in the English coronation service printed by Dr. Henderson in his appendix to Christopher Bainbridge's Pontifical.² The ring in this order is also given immediately after the anointing, and before the sword, crown, and sceptre. But in the next recension of the order it comes after the sword and crown, and before the sceptre and verge, are given, and an alteration is made in the words used in the delivery of the ring which run thus :

Accipe regiae dignitatis anulum et per hunc in te Catholicae fidei signaculum quia ut hodie ornaris caput et princeps regni ac populi ita perseveres auctor ac stabilitor Christianitatis et Christianae fidei, ut felix in opere, locuples in fide, cum Rege regum glorieris ; cui est honor et gloria per aeterna saeculorum saecula. Amen.³

Words like these are continued to the present day, only since the time of James I. they are said in English.

In the recension of the coronation order contained in the *Liber regalis* the ring is delivered at the same place and with the same words, but an exorcism and blessing

¹ Edm. Martene, *De antiquis ecclesiae ritibus*, Lib. ii. cap. x. ordo v. Bassani, 1788. t. ii. p. 117.

² *Liber pontificalis Chr. Bainbridge*

Archiepiscopi Eboracensis, ed. Henderson, Surtees Society, 1875. Appendix III. p. 273.

³ Idem, appendix I. p. 219.

of the ring have been added.¹ When the *Liber regalis* appeared in an English dress for the Coronation of King James I. the blessing and exorcism both disappeared, while the words at the delivery of the ring, and the collect after, were retained.² It is ordered also that the ring shall be set on the king's wedding finger, the fourth finger of the left hand.³ In the Order for King Charles I. the second prayer, the blessing of the ring, is restored, with the words at the delivery of the ring, and the collect.⁴ It is also added that the Archbishop shall put "*the Ring on the fourth finger of the King's right hand.*" All these three forms were recited at the Coronation of King Charles II.⁵ but at that of King James II. the blessing of the ring and the collect following the delivery are omitted, and only the words at the delivery of the ring remain⁶; and though the latter remain, yet I do not find certainly that the former have ever been restored in any of the orders printed after.

The delivery of the ring, immediately after the anointing, took place in the first English orders earlier than in the later mediaeval orders; but at the coronation of Queen Anne we find the earlier place was restored, and the ring delivered before the crown was set on the Queen's head, after the delivery of the orb and pallium.⁷ It would seem to have retained this place ever since. It is so at all events in the Coronation Orders of King George IV. King William and Queen Adelaide, and of the Queen. It is curious to note this return, it may be unconscious, to the earlier custom: the same kind of return to earlier usage may be noticed in another part of Queen Anne's order; that the coronation is interpolated into the Eucharistic service itself, after the gospel and Nicene

¹ See my edition of the *Liber regalis* in *Missale ad usum ecclesie Westmonasteriensis*, Henry Bradshaw Society, 1893, fasc. ii. col. 703.

² W. Prynne, *Signal Loyalty and Devotion of Gods true Saints and pious Christians towards their Kings*, London, 1660. Part ii. p. 263.

³ Thomas Milles, *Catalogue of Honor*, Lond. 1610. p. 60.

⁴ *The Manner of the Coronation of King Charles I. of England*, ed. Chr. Wordsworth, Henry Bradshaw Society,

Lond. 1892. p. 41. In one manuscript the exorcism is also translated.

⁵ Sir Edw. Walker, *A circumstantial account of . . . the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles the Second*, London, T. Baker, 1820. p. 103.

⁶ Francis Sandford, *A History of the Coronation of . . . James II.* In the Savoy, 1687. p. 95.

⁷ J. R. Planche, *Regal Records*, Lond. 1838. p. 127. The account professes to be drawn "from official records in the College of Arms & MSS. in the British Museum."

Creed, the very place in which it appears in the pontifical of Egbert; whereas in the *Liber regalis* the coronation took place before mass began. As far as I can find out the custom of Queen Anne's order continued to 1838. It will be noticed that the recitation of the Nicene Creed is thus made a prelude to the coronation ceremonies, just as it precedes them in the Russian and Constantinopolitan orders.

The exact *formula* of delivery is as follows :

Then an Officer of the Jewel House delivers to the Lord Chamberlain the Queen's Ring, who delivers the same to the Archbishop, in which a Table Jewel is enchased; the Archbishop puts it on the Fourth Finger of Her Majesty's Right Hand, and saith;

Receive this Ring, the Ensign of Kingly Dignity, and of Defence of the Catholic Faith; and as You are this day solemnly invested in the Government of this earthly Kingdom, so may You be sealed with that Spirit of Promise, which is the Earnest of an heavenly Inheritance, and reign with Him who is the blessed and only Potentate, to whom be Glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The earlier Coronation Orders do not give us much detail of the material of which the ring is to be composed, and though the ring with which the king was consecrated is found in the inventory of the jewels of Edward I. yet no description is given of it beyond saying that it was of gold.¹ The earliest instance of a description that I have met with is in some letters patent of King Richard II. in the muniment room of Westminster Abbey. He thereby records that he has given to the shrine of the glorious confessor *quoddam solenne iocale, anulum videlicet aureum cum quodam lapide precioso vocato ruby non modici valoris in eodem anulo inserto*; but that he will retain the ring for his own use unless he go out of England, and that then it shall be placed on the shrine, but restored to him as soon as he returns back again to England: and after his death the king desires that the ring shall be used in the coronation of his successors; but nevertheless returned to the shrine as soon as the solemnity of crowning be over.²

¹ "Anulus auri cum quo fuit Rex consecratus." (John Topham, *Liber vicesimo octavo*, London, Soc. Antiq. 1787. p. 351.)

² *Archæologia*, 1890. Vol. lii. p. 282.

This ring seems to have been restored to the abbey by king Henry V. for Widmore notes that this king "restored a ring, in which was a ruby valued at a thousand marks; it was first given by king Richard II. but had been taken away."¹

The stone or material is mentioned neither in James I.'s or Charles I.'s order; but it appears in Charles II. "Then the Master of the Jewell-House delivered a Ring with a Ruby to the Arch-B^p."² and in King James II. further details are given "The *Master of the Jewell-House* delivered the KING'S RING (in which a *Table Ruby* was enchaced, and on that *S^t George's Cross* engraven) to the *Archbishop*."³ It has been seen that a ruby in a gold ring was used for the coronation of William and Mary. For the coronations between that of 1689 and 1831 I have no evidence: but King William IV. was invested with a gold ring of which the chief jewel was a sapphire marked with a ruby cross; and the same design may be noticed in the ring given at the last coronation.

Here we may notice an unconscious imitation of the ceremonies used in the consecration of a bishop. From very ancient times a ring has been part of the ensigns of a bishop. In the middle ages the episcopal ring was usually adorned with a sapphire: it is curious to note that at the last two coronations, at all events, the traditional ruby of the coronation ring has been changed into the episcopal sapphire.

The King's ring, with the exception of that of King James I., was put on the wedding finger of the right hand. This is in accordance with the rule of the Sarum manual which directed that the wedding ring should be put upon the fourth finger of the bride's right hand⁴; not the left hand, as in the Edwardine marriage service, and all the editions of the Book of Common Prayer since.

¹ Richard Widmore, *An history of the church of St. Peter Westminster*, London, 1751. p. 113.

² Walker, *loc. cit.* A drawing is given of the ring on the same plate as the crown and pall.

³ Sandford, *loc. cit.* See also p. 21. There is a drawing of the ring on the "second plate of the regalia," No. xii. In a paper on the Scottish Regalia (John

J. Reid & Alexander J. S. Brook, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 1890. p. 139.) there is a drawing of the ruby ring ascribed by tradition to the coronation at Holyrood of King Charles I.

⁴ *Manuale ad usum Sarum*, p. 19* in Appendix to *Manuale* . . . Ebor. Surtees Soc. 1875. ed. Henderson.

The ring of the Queen consort is placed on the same finger.¹ It is described by Sandford as "a Rich *Ring*" without further particulars; but in the "Second Plate of the Regalia" a drawing is given (No. xiii.) which shows a large stone, octagonal, without any engraving, and with sixteen smaller stones on the outside of the ring.² A later writer describes it as "likewise gold, with a large table ruby set therein, and sixteen other small rubies set round about the ring; of which those next the setting are the largest, the rest diminishing in proportion."³ It will have been noticed that Queen Adelaide's ring as Queen Consort adheres to this rule that the outside of the ring shall be adorned with smaller rubies.

The Queen consort has been invested with a ring as long as the reigning king. Both King and Queen had rings given to them in the coronation service of Robert of Jumièges, and the custom has continued down to the present time.

The Roman Emperor seems never to have been invested with a ring during his coronation at St. Peter's, though he was anointed, and he received the crown, orb, sceptre, and sword. Nor did the Empress receive a ring. In the modern Roman pontifical there is a service for the coronation of a king and queen, (in the present state of Europe it must be but rarely used) but no ring is given in either of these orders. But in the orders printed by Martene for the coronation of the emperor as king of Germany at Aken and as king of Italy at Milan, rings are given in both.⁴ The king of France seems always to have had a ring given at his coronation.

¹ From the different orders I can find no evidence that the ring of the Queen Consort is placed on the forefinger. At the coronation of Queen Anne, the consort of King James I. the ring was placed on the fourth finger of the left hand, just as it was upon the King's left hand. (See Milles, *loc. cit.*)

² Sandford, *op. cit.* p. 21.

³ Richard Thomson, *A faithful account of the . . . Coronation*, London, John Major, 1820. p. 87. This corresponds with Sandford's drawing.

⁴ Martene, *op. cit.* lib. II. cap. ix. ordd. iv. & v.