

**THE DIAMOND SIGNET OF QUEEN  
HENRIETTA MARIA, OF THE KING'S  
DIAMOND, AND OF THE SAPPHIRE  
SIGNET BELIEVED TO BE THAT OF  
MARY, QUEEN OF WILLIAM THE THIRD**

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The Diamond Signet of Queen Henrietta Maria, of the King's Diamond, and of the sapphire signet believed to be that of mary, queen of William the third by C. Drury E. Fortnum

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**C. DRURY E. FORTNUM**

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J. THOMSON,  
PHOTOGRAPHER



*Warrant*  
70, GRYSEVEND STREET  
TO THE QUEEN

(1)

THE  
DIAMOND SIGNET  
OF  
QUEEN HENRIETTA MARIA.

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COMMUNICATED TO THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES

BY

C. DRURY E. FORTNUM, ESQ., F.S.A.

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It has long been known that King Charles I. of England, some two years or little more after his accession to the throne and marriage with Henrietta Maria, a daughter of France, ordered that a diamond should be engraved with his arms, as a signet, designing it probably for his Queen's private use.

Although such signet has been lost sight of and forgotten, the record still exists of payment made to the artist for executing the work, and from it alone have we hitherto derived that knowledge.

In the privy seal books of the office of the Clerk of the Pells, now in the Public Record Office (No. 11, p. 142), we read the following entry:

Francis Walwyn.

“ Charles, by the Grace of God King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, &c.

“ To the Trêr and Undertrêr of o' Excheq<sup>r</sup> for the time being, greeting :

“ Wee doe hereby will and cōmand yo<sup>a</sup> out of o' treasure remaining in the Receipt of o' Excheq<sup>r</sup> forthwith to pay or cause to be paid vnto Francis Walwyn or his assignes the sōme of two hundred threescore and seven pounds for engraving, polishing, Dyamond boart<sup>a</sup> and divers other materialls for the Cutting and finishing of o' Armes in a Dyamond with the Ires of the name of o' deereest Consort the Queene on each side. And these o' Ires shal be yo<sup>r</sup> sufficient warr<sup>e</sup> and discharge in this behalfe.

Two hundred three score and seven pounds.

16 January, 1628.<sup>b</sup>

“ Given vnder o' privy Seale att o' pällace of Westm<sup>r</sup> the sixteenth day of January in the fourth yeare of o' Raigne.

“ J<sup>O</sup>: PACKER.”

<sup>a</sup> Boart, i. e. diamond dust.

<sup>b</sup> i. e. 1629 of our present computation.



This entry\* therefore distinctly informs us that on the 16th January, 1623-9, the sum of 267*l.* was paid to one *Francis Walsyn*, a gem-engraver, not otherwise recorded, for cutting, finishing, and polishing a diamond and engraving thereon "*our armes*"—the arms of Charles I.—"*with the letters of the name of our dearest consort the Queen on each side.*" There is no command to engrave "*our arms impaled with those of our beloved consort,*" but "*our arms*" alone, except that they are to be laterally accompanied by the initial letters of that royal lady's name.

In the *Vetusta Monumenta*, Vol. III. Plate 26, No. vii. which illustrates a communication by Astle in 1792, a seal is figured, supposed to be that of Mary Queen of Scots. It is of lozenge shape, and displays a shield bearing, quarterly, 1 and 4, France and England counter-quarterly (1-4 France, 2-3 England), 2, Scotland, 3, Ireland, surmounted by an open crown, and between the letters M. R. This seal was said to be in the French king's collection at Paris (Louis XVI.), "and," says Astle, "seems to have been used by Queen Mary during her widowhood, and whilst she asserted her right of succession to the crown of England."

But Mr. Astle neither tells us his authority for these statements nor names the material on which the arms are cut; he merely gives us the size of the seal and a magnified engraving of its bearings.<sup>b</sup> Mr. Laing, in his *Descriptive Catalogue of Scottish Seals* (Edinburgh 1850), did not refer to this signet, and he was right, for it bears the arms of England under the Stuarts, not those of Scotland and France. Astle probably accepted it for Mary's, believing, as he states, that it might be that used by her during her widowhood. When she was married to the Dauphin "he quartered the arms of England, which gave great offence in that country," but the Dauphin's seal, so quartered, would not agree with that described by Astle. The seal figured by him could not have been the diamond signet which Gori tells us (*Hist. Dact.* p. 180) that *Jacobus Thronus* engraved for Queen Mary I. of England, daughter of Henry VIII.; for her shield bore quarterly France and England merely. But whether the signet figured in the *Vetusta Monumenta* was that engraved under order of Charles I. by Francis Walsyn we are not able with certainty to assert, although there is some probability in such an assumption.


For many years past, and perhaps even till the present day, glass copies of a

\* This record was, I believe, first published by Mr. W. H. Carpenter, in his *Pictorial Notices of Vandyke*, 4to, 1844, and subsequently in Mr. Wornum's edition of *Horace Walpole's Anecdotes of Painting in England*.

<sup>b</sup> Astle's original drawing is in the Society's possession.

seal-ring stone have been sold at Holyrood Palace, passing for the signet of Mary Queen of Scots, the original of which is stated to have been in the possession of the Earl of Buchan.

That the signet, of which these vitreous pastes are copies, had existed somewhere and was an original work executed for royal use, there could be but little doubt, but that it could not have belonged to Queen Mary of Scotland was clearly proved by an able paper on the subject, published in the eleventh volume of the *British Archaeological Association's Journal*, at page 78, by Mr. George Vere Irving, who refutes the statement of such a signet ever having been used by that unfortunate Queen. This refutation equally applies to the seal figured by Astle. But Mr. Irving himself falls into error when suggesting the probability of its having belonged to Mary of Modena, the Queen of James II. referring to the fact pointed out by Miss Strickland in her memoir of that amiable and ill-used lady, that many objects which had belonged to her were by some supposed to have, and by others represented as having, belonged to her more renowned namesake, the daughter of James V. of Scotland.

That such attribution was erroneous, Mr. Syer Cuming, in a paper published in the seventeenth volume of the *Journal* of the same *Association*, at page 223, clearly proves, pointing out moreover the all-important fact, probably overlooked by Astle, and certainly by Mr. Vere Irving, that the apparent letter M was not in its simple integrity, but was crossed by a bar between the outer limbs, thereby converting it into a monogram composed of the letters H and M = , thus bearing its own evidence that neither Mary Stuart, Mary d'Este, nor Mary the Queen of William III. could have been the owner of such a signet. With the names of one Queen only did such a monogram correspond, viz. Henrietta Maria, Queen of the martyred Charles I. True, it had been suggested by some, anxious to connect the relic with Mary of Scotland, that the H might stand for the initial of her husband, Henry Darnley, but that even at that period of her misguided career she should have ventured to use a signet bearing the arms of England with all its quarterings, *pur et simple*, is improbable. In confirmation of his suggestion Mr. Syer Cuming refers to the fifteenth plate in Pinkerton's *Medallic History*, whereon are figured two medalets or counters of 1628, having on one side the Queen Henrietta Maria's armorial shield, bearing England and France impaled, accompanied by a similar monogram; and on the reverse a high tree in a forest, with the motto *SVPEREMINET OMNES*. Curiously enough, Pinkerton states that a counter of Mary of Scotland is known having a similar reverse, but the date, 1628, on the obverse and the arms of Henrietta Maria

are sufficient proof as to whose reign it may be referred. We may therefore reasonably conclude, to use Mr. Cuming's own words, that the "impressions sold at Holyrood Palace as mementos of Scotland's fair Queen were really taken from the signet of the wife of her ill-fated grandson."

It is always difficult to trace every step in the history of objects that have belonged to royal or historical personages, the more so when they lived and died in such troublous times. That the diamond signet was in the hands of the King and Queen in, and probably previous to, 1628[9] is presumable from the fact that payment to Walwyn was ordered by the warrant of January in that year.

Mr. Syer Cuming, in his paper above referred to, alludes to an impossible myth, connecting the stone with Queen Mary of Scotland, that on the scaffold she had given it to Bishop Juxon, with injunction to convey it to her son King James. But Dr. Juxon was then barely five years old. Mr. Cuming however shrewdly suggests that there may be a glimmer of truth in this myth, and that it may, although we have no record of the fact, have been so given by King Charles to Bishop Juxon, who attended him at his execution, and who, it has been said, received the George from his royal master, with instruction to convey it to James the then Duke of York. Whether such were really the case, and whether the stone was ever in the possession of James the Second, we have no positive information, but it is perhaps more probable that it remained in the hands of Henrietta Maria, was taken by her to France, and that sooner or later it was disposed of among other jewels and valuables to meet the necessities of the sadly stricken royal family.\*

Another episode of its history is seemingly met with in the *Book of Travels* by Jean Baptiste Tavernier,<sup>3</sup> a diamond merchant and jeweller, who visited Persia in about December 1664, four years previous to the death of Henrietta Maria. At page 484 of his first volume (ch. xvii. of book iv.) he relates that in a conversation with the Nazar of the King of Persia at Ispahan, on piercing diamonds, the King asked whether Tavernier, who had brought a fine jewel for his inspection, thought that in Persia there were not artificers as able at stone-cutting as any in his own country; on which Tavernier, to convince the Nazar of his Majesty's error, "*tirant de ma pochète une bague de diamant où sont gravées les armes du Roy d'Angleterre que je luy montray. Des qu'il l'eut vû il parut surpris,*" &c., &c. The Nazar then took the ornament for which he was nego-

\* A curious statement occurs in a letter of 21 Dec. 1640, from Rosetti to Card. Barberini referring to the poverty of the royal family at that time. He writes, "*ed essi re e regina erano ridotti ad un segno d'infirmita tale che non havevano da mangiare la mattina seguenti se non impegnavano le gioie.*"

<sup>3</sup> Tavernier, J. B., *Voyage en Turquie*. 3 vols. 4to. Paris, 1672—1679.