

CORONATION EXHIBITION

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Coronation Exhibition by Edward British Museum

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EDWARD BRITISH MUSEUM

**CORONATION
EXHIBITION**

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THE manuscripts here shown illustrate the history of English Coronations from the tenth century, their story being taken up by printed books in the reign of Henry VIII., and by engravings in that of Edward VI., with whom also begins the series of coronation and accession medals. A few manuscripts showing the coronations of foreign kings and queens are included in the exhibition, for comparison with the contemporary English ones. The exhibition is arranged chronologically, the medals only being kept distinct.

CORONATION EXHIBITION.

1. The Gospels of King Athelstan: a copy of the four Gospels, in Latin, with illuminations, written early in the 10th century, and presented by King Athelstan [925-940] to Christ Church, Canterbury.

The donation is recorded on f. 14, and on f. 23 (here exhibited) are written the names of ODDA REX and MIHTHILD MATER REGIS, *i.e.*, the Emperor Otto and his mother Mechtild; whence it is concluded that the MS. (the illuminations of which are German in style) was sent by Otto to Athelstan at the time of his marriage with the latter's sister [A.D. 929]. According to tradition, this volume was used at the coronations of the kings of England for the purpose of taking the coronation oath. The only authorities for the tradition are a statement (which only speaks of past, not of contemporary, usage) in the catalogue of Sir R. Cotton's library, made in 1621, and some Latin verses on a leaf inserted by Sir R. Cotton; but there is nothing to show upon what evidence the statement was based. The volume passed with the rest of the Cotton Library into the keeping of the British Museum at its foundation. [Cotton MS. Tiberius A. 11., f. 24.]

2. The Gospel of St. John, with extracts from the other Evangelists, in Latin, written in the 12th century; bound in thick oak boards, covered with leather, having brass corner-pieces, stamped with fleurs-

de-lys. To the lower cover is attached a bronze-gilt crucifix.

A note by John Ives, a former owner of the book, dated 18 Oct., 1772, states that T. Madox [1666-1727], the historian of the Exchequer, told T. Martin [1697-1771], the antiquary, that he believed it "was used to take the Coronation Oath upon by all our Kings and Queens till Henry VIII.;" but there does not appear to be any evidence to support this statement. It may be the "little book with a crucifix" mentioned by T. Powell in 1631 as preserved in the Exchequer, in the chest of the King's Remembrancer, and may very probably have been used there for the purpose of administering oaths. [Stowe MS. 15.]

3. 'Promissio Regis,' or coronation-pledge of King Aethelred, crowned at Kingston on Thames, March, A.D. 978. Anglo-Saxon.

The formula, first devised by Saint Dunstan for the coronation of King Eadgar in 973 and adopted in a Latin form in the service used up to the time of Edward I., runs as follows: "In the name of the Holy Trinity I promise three things to the Christian people and my subjects: first, that God's church and all Christian people of my dominions hold true peace; the second is that I forbid robbery and all unrighteous things to all orders; the third, that I promise and enjoin in all dooms justice and mercy, that the gracious and merciful God of His everlasting mercy may forgive us all, who liveth and reigneth." [Cotton MS. Cleop. B. XIII., f. 56.]

4. Form of Coronation of an English king before the Norman Conquest. In Latin.

The passage shown gives the words said on the actual placing of the crown on the king's head, "God crown thee with the crown of glory and with the honour of righteousness and the acts of strength, that by the ministry of our blessing with true faith and manifold fruit of good works thou mayest attain the crown of an everlasting

kingdom, by the gift of Him whose kingdom endureth for ever and ever. Amen." These words remain in all services to the time of James II. In the same volume is bound up another formula belonging to a later date, apparently the 12th century. [Cotton MS. Claud. A. III., f. 13.]

5. Coronation - procession of Richard I.;
3 September, 1189.

The procession is shown approaching Westminster. It is headed by a number of monks, after whom come two bishops carrying croziers, four barons carrying candles in silver-gilt candlesticks, and two bishops with crosses; then the Earl Marshal bearing the sceptre surmounted by a cross, and the Earl of Salisbury bearing the *virga regalis* surmounted by a dove; next, David, Earl of Huntingdon, brother of the king of Scotland, Robert, Earl of Leicester, and John, Earl of Mortain and Gloucester (afterwards King John), bearing the three swords of State; then four nobles, carrying a chest containing the coronation robes and other royal treasures, and the Earl of Albemarle and Essex bearing the royal crown. Behind him comes the King, attended by the Bishops of Durham and Bath [who have the same privilege to this day]; a canopy is held over his head by four attendants [barons of the Cinque Ports?], and a procession of nobles follows in the rear. [Royal MS. 15 E. IV., *Les anciennes et nouvelles Chroniques d'Angleterre*, dedicated and presented to Edward V. (probably a mistake for IV.), late 15th cent., f. 255 b.]

6. Narrative by Matthew Paris, monk of St. Alban's Abbey (d. 1259), in his *Historia Anglorum*, of the coronation of Henry III.;
28 Oct. 1216. In Latin.

Matthew Paris relates that the king, then aged nine, took the oath before the clergy and people, "having before him the Holy Gospels and relics of many saints, to keep honour, peace and reverence toward God and Holy Church, and to His ordained, all the days of his life, and also to

keep right justice among the people committed to him, and to blot out any bad laws or unjust customs that may be in his kingdom, and to keep the good and cause them to be observed by all." Autograph MS. of Matthew Paris. [Royal MS. 14 C. vii., f. 100.]

7. Coronation of King Henry III.

Probably the King's second coronation, at Westminster, 17 May, 1220, by the Archbishop of Canterbury and other prelates, since at his first coronation, at Gloucester, 28 Oct. 1216, by the Bishop of Winchester, a plain circlet of gold was used. The King, wearing a dark blue mantle and red under-garment, is seated on a double-tiered seat, and holds the sceptre in his right hand and a model of a church in his left. The crown (a gold circlet with fleurs-de-lys) is being placed on his head by two prelates, whose croziers are supported by their free arms. [Cotton MS. Vitellius A. xiii., Pictures of the Kings of England, 14th century. f.6.]

8. Narrative of the Coronation of Eleanor of Provence, Queen of Henry III.; 1236.

At this coronation "there was grete strif amonges the ministres of the kinges household for their seruices, and for the rightes perteynyng to their seruices," so that it was arranged that "all rightes were reserved to every man without prejudice untyll the quindecim of Easter then following." Thus in the passage shown, which relates chiefly to the banquet, Henry de Hastings served "of Nappery" without prejudice to the claim of Thurstan le Despenser, who also claimed that office. The same page relates that Walter de Beauchamp de Hamelegh "did laye that daye the salt and knyves," and that Hugh Dawbeney [de Albini], Earl of Arundel, was excluded from the office of butler, being under excommunication for interfering with the hounds of the Archbishop of Canterbury. A translation, written early in the 16th century, of a passage in the book of records known as the "Red Book of the Exchequer," perhaps as a precedent for the coronation of Anne Boleyn. [Cotton MS. Vesp. C. xiv., ff. 157 b, 158.]

9. 'Liber Regalis,' or coronation-service of the 14th century, with music. In Latin.

The general form of the service in this book remained practically unchanged (though translated in 1603 into English) until the accession of James II. Some copies of the *Liber Regalis* have longer rubrics, but these are probably later. The opening rubric is as follows: "On the day on which the new king is to be consecrated, early in the morning let the prelates and nobles meet in the royal palace at Westminster, to consider the consecration of the new prince and the confirmation and establishment of the laws and customs of the realm, in fashion as follows. Let a conspicuous place be provided in the aforesaid palace, upon which let the late king's heir, who now is to reign, be raised up with all courtesy and reverence; he himself being first washed, as the custom is, and arrayed in clean clothes, and wearing only shoes upon his feet. Thereafter let a procession be set in order, of the archbishops and bishops and the abbot and convent of Westminster and other persons, in silk copes and with thuribles and other things suitable to a procession. And thus arrayed in processional manner let them meet the king that is to be in the aforesaid palace and lead him in procession to the church; and when he is led in and placed upon a platform in a suitable seat, let this anthem be sung by all present: "Let thy hand be made strong and thy right hand be exalted" [Ps. lxxxix. 13 in the Vulgate version]. [Harley MS. 2901, f. 3 b.]

10. Coronation of Marie de Luxemburg, queen-consort of Charles IV. of France; Whitsuntide, 1323.

It is noticeable that the crown is being placed upon her head by the king, no cleric being represented in the miniature at all, though the narrative states that the Archbishop of Trèves was present. [Harley MS. 4411, French Chronicle, early 13th century, f. 144 b.]