

**A GUIDE TO THE ENGLISH
MEDALS EXHIBITED IN
THE KING'S LIBRARY**

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A guide to the English medals exhibited in the King's Library by Herbert A. Grueber

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HERBERT A. GRUEBER

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114
Medal

SYNOPSIS OF THE CONTENTS
OF THE
BRITISH MUSEUM.

(DEPARTMENT OF
COINS AND MEDALS.)

A GUIDE
TO THE
ENGLISH MEDALS

EXHIBITED IN THE
KING'S LIBRARY.

FIRST EDITION.

BY
HERBERT A. GRUEBER.

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INTRODUCTION.

MEDALS serve for two purposes, for the illustration of history and as records of the contemporary state of art. Some series, like that of Italy, have more interest for their artistic merit than their historical import. This may also be said in a great degree of the French medals; but in the English and Dutch series the interest lies rather in the historical value than in the artistic qualities, the medallie art of neither country attaining at any time any high degree of excellence. The medals which are described in this Guide, although to some extent examples of contemporary art, must therefore be considered interesting chiefly as records and illustrations of the history of England for a period of over three hundred years. For this reason a classification of the medals by artists has not been attempted, and a simple chronological order has been preferred. This, however, has been relaxed in a few instances, as in that of the personal medals, which for the most part are placed at the end of the reign in which the persons portrayed flourished; and in a few cases where it has been considered advisable to class together the medals of a particular artist, in order that the merit of his work could be better studied and compared. This has been done in the case of the medals by Stephen of Holland, Simon Passe, and some of those by Thomas and Abraham Simon. The military and naval decorations form a separate series, and are therefore described at the end of the Guide; by this means making the arrangement more useful to those who take special interest in this particular branch. A small selection could, however, only be made from the series in the Museum collection, on account of the limited space for exhibition. In many cases where English medals fail to illustrate important events, selections have been made

ARRANGE-
MENT.

from the Dutch and other series in order to render the historical record as complete as possible.

HISTORICAL
SERIES.

With very few exceptions, there are no medals of interest in the English series dating before the reign of Henry VIII. During the fifteenth century a few counters were struck, which directly or indirectly refer to events in English history; but these are for the most part of French work, and the medal which is placed first in this Guide, although bearing the portrait of an Englishman, John Kendal, is undoubtedly of Italian work, and was probably executed at Venice. The Dassier series of the early sovereigns, being a production of the last century, cannot be said to have a place in the early medallic records of this country, and is not included in this exhibition. The series of English medals may therefore be said to commence with the reign of Henry VIII., of which period, besides a number of interesting jetons and medalets, there are some well-executed medals of the King himself, such as No. 3, his portrait evidently after a painting by Holbein, another recording his supremacy over the Church (Nos. 4-5), and several remarkable badges. There are also other medals, chiefly personal, which bear the portraits of Sir Thomas More, Thomas Cromwell Earl of Essex, Anne Boleyn, and Michael Mercator, himself a medallist as well as a diplomatist. The short reign of Edward VI. gives but few examples, of which two are exhibited, one bearing only a portrait of the king, which appears to be a cast in lead from a silver plate; and the other, his coronation medal, the type of which was taken from the "Head of the Church" medal of Henry VIII. The only other interesting works of this reign are the Christ's Hospital badges and medalets, the School having been founded by Edward in 1553. Of Mary there is also little worthy of note beyond some excellent portraits of herself and Philip, and a medal which refers to the condition of England during her reign. These were executed by Trezzo at Madrid, and are the first signed medals of the English series. The illness of Elizabeth in 1572, her struggle with the Papal party, as well as her acceptance of the protection of the Netherlands, and the defeat and destruction of the Spanish Armada, afforded subjects for commemoration. The medals relating to the destruction of the Armada are certainly among the finest pieces

ever produced in England, and are good examples of the art of the time. The period of Elizabeth ends with a series of medallion portraits by Stephen of Holland, most of which bear the date 1562, and all apparently executed about that year.

The undisputed accession of the House of Stuart to the English throne and the peaceable reign of its first king limit the subjects for medallion illustration. The medals of the reign of James are purely personal, with few exceptions, such as the Gunpowder Plot (No. 45), and the alliance between England, France, and the United Provinces, for the protection of the latter against the power of Spain (Nos. 46-47). The rest present us with several portraits of the King and of various members of the royal family, and of leading personages, of whom are the Marquis (afterwards Duke) of Buckingham, Richard Sackville Earl of Dorset, Sir Thomas Bodley, founder of the public library at Oxford, and others. There is also a series of royal badges, a species of memorial which becomes much more general in the next reign. These are followed by a selection of engraved portraits of royal personages and others by Simon Passe, who excelled in this style of work.

There are no medals which indicate the early contest between Charles I. and the Parliament, those which are issued before 1640 referring for the most part to the royal family and to eminent persons, with the exception of the Scottish coronation medals of 1633 and those commemorating the settlement of the Dutch Fishery question in 1636. After the Declaration of Parliament in 1642, when the country was divided into two parties, a new era in its medallion history begins, and medals are struck in extraordinary numbers. This continues during the period of the Civil War, and, besides medals which record the successes of both parties, there is a large number of Royalist and Parliamentarian badges, with portraits of the generals and statesmen on both sides. Fortunately, England at this time produced several artists, whose works are fitted to take the first rank in the national series. These artists were Thomas and Abraham Simon, who worked for the Parliament, and Thomas Rawlins, who was in the service of the King. The series of this reign ends with several examples of the badges worn by those who sympathised with the royal cause and with a few medals

recording the King's death. With the period of the Commonwealth the issue of royalist badges ceases, and for the next ten years the medals are of the parliamentary class. These consist of portrait medals of the Protector, of his family, and of the leading statesmen and generals, and also of military and naval rewards, for the most part executed by the two Simons. The Dunbar medal (Nos. 149-150), which was issued for distribution among those engaged in that battle, is the first authorized military decoration known. It was struck by order of the Parliament immediately after the engagement. Naval medals were also issued on several occasions, the most important being those for Blake's victories over the Dutch in 1653 (Nos. 155-158). The Commonwealth series closes with several medals, English and Dutch, commemorating the death of the Protector, and also with a few personal medals, chiefly by the Simons.

The Restoration of Charles II. was an occasion not to be passed by unnoticed by medallists, and of no event are there more medals, except perhaps of the accession of William III. and Mary. Some anticipate the restoration of the King, and others trace step by step his return from Holland, his landing at Dover, the joy expressed by the people at his return, and his coronation at Westminster. The unpopular cession of Dunkirk is only recorded on medals issued in France by Louis XIV. or on Dutch satirical medalets; but the well-contested engagements of the subsequent struggle between England and Holland for the dominion of the sea, and the close of the war by the Peace of Breda, are numerous illustrated. Those which refer to the Peace of Breda were for the most part executed in Holland, and are remarkable examples of the Dutch medallist style of that time. Of the next war with Holland from 1672-1674, there are no English medals, and those relating to it which are exhibited are French and Dutch. The alarm created by the growing strength of the Catholic party and the discovery of the pretended Popish Plot, with the murder of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey and also the Rye House Plot, form the subjects of the next group of medals (Nos. 233-238, 240). Of those of the 'Popish Plot' there is a remarkable medal, which appears to be Dutch, and which gives in detail the supposed circumstances connected with the murder of Godfrey. Many of the portraits of the

illustrious men who flourished during this reign are the work of the two Simons, and were mostly executed soon after the Restoration. The important events of the short reign of James II. give much scope to engravers. Medals are shown recording the rebellion of Monmouth and Argyll and its suppression, the attempt of James to re-establish the Roman Catholic religion by the repeal of the Test Act, the imprisonment of the Seven Bishops, and lastly the invitation to William of Orange, with the abdication and flight of James, his queen and son. On these latter medals frequent allusions are made to the supposed illegitimacy of the young Prince. The series of plots and rebellions which followed the flight of James are for the most part recorded by medals struck by the Stuarts abroad (Nos. 292-319): these were issued for distribution among those who sympathised with the exiled house. The medals which bear the portraits of James II. and his son are supposed to have been presented to those who visited them in their exile. No. 311, on which the rule of the House of Hanover is satirized, is one of the medals struck for the purpose of rousing the adherents of the House of Stuart into action; whilst No. 315 refers to the rebellion of 1745, and the next medal to the secret visit of the Younger Pretender to London in 1752, when he was again planning an invasion. The series ends with a medal setting forth the claims of Henry Duke of York as Henry IX. to the throne of his grandfather.

With the Stuart family are specially connected the medalets which are called touch-pieces (Nos. 320-324). The custom of touching by the sovereigns of this country for the cure of scrofula or 'the King's evil' appears to have existed since the reign of Edward the Confessor. At first the practice was rare, but in course of time it increased to such an extent that it is said Elizabeth's 'healings,' which were at first monthly, became of daily occurrence, and many thousands were touched. The power was not claimed by Cromwell; but at the Restoration it was revived, and Charles touched during his reign over 90,000 applicants. It was also much practised by James II., but repudiated by William III. It was again revived by Anne, who was the latest sovereign to perform the ceremony, and among the last of those whom she touched was the afterwards celebrated Dr. Johnson. The Elder Pretender claimed the power, and