

"Poor little Reenie!" exclaimed Clifton, with remorseful tenderness; "and while you were making such an effort I knew nothing of your troubles!"

Reenie nestled close up to him at the kind words.

"I do not care, so that you are not angry with me. But, indeed, I did not realise what I had done, or what it meant, until one day when the picture was nearly completed, and Mr. Staines called to me to come and look at it. I had never taken the trouble before. What did I care for the picture? It was only the independence of the money I wanted. But when he asked me for my opinion, I had to go and look; and then—oh! then, Cliff!"

"What then, dear?"

"I felt so ashamed when I saw what he had made of me. They say that it is very beautiful, and sweet and pure, and all that; but in this first moment I could not appreciate this. I only recognised that the girl whom you meant to make your wife should never have made her face the world's property in such a fashion."

Clifton was amazed at the passion of her words. The childish creature he had loved had developed into a woman all at once, with a woman's capacity for pain.

"Do not think of it again, Reenie," he said earnestly. "I love and honour you more than ever for the effort you made. The vexation I felt was but momentary, and utterly unworthy of my better nature."

"And you do not think me degraded?" asked Reenie plaintively. "Indeed, I never went back after I had recognised that it was a wrong to you. He had to finish the picture without me."

"Degraded? No, indeed, my darling, there was nothing in what you did that was not purely womanly and modest. Come, Reenie, give me a kiss, and forgive me that I ever seemed to doubt you for a moment."

Reenie smiled through her tears, as she obeyed.

Mr. Mellim insisted upon acting a father's part to the girl and giving her away when the time should come for the wedding. And Mr. Staines sent a pretty sketch of Reenie's head for a wedding-present. Reenie did not particularly care for this: it reminded her too keenly of certain trying passages in her life. But Clifton told her that he prized it above all other gifts, and so she became reconciled in time to its presence.

Mrs. Daryll lingered a year longer, but soon ceased to suffer either pain or irritation. As for Madge, she took herself off in a huff, because her young master showed small appreciation of her tale-bearing propensities.

Clifton Daryll is now a prosperous man, and has a fine house, and can afford to buy pictures; but the one he most values amongst the gems of art in his collection is the little sketch of Reenie's head by the great artist, Mark Staines.

A GOSSIP ON RINGS AND WEDDING RINGS.

BY ARDERN HOLT.

"'Tis love, 'tis love, that makes the world go round."



POSY RINGS.

LOVE and wedding rings are, we hope, intimately associated; yet Colley Cibber exclaims: "Oh! how many torments lie in the small circle of a wedding ring." Do you know why this gold circlet is placed on the left hand? Opinions differ. On the one side, it is affirmed

concerned. It is more grateful to women to know that men in a thousand graceful ways have demon-



EGYPTIAN RINGS. (SCARAB ON LEFT, PORCELAIN ON RIGHT.)

that a vein proceeding from the heart to that finger is the cause; on the other, that it denotes that the wife is subject to her husband.

Napoleon I., when he married his second Empress, whispered in M. Pradt's ear: "The Roman law ordains that all slaves should wear rings, and as the women are our slaves, they ought to wear this badge of servitude." The Little Corporal and the Great Emperor was not given to weighing his words as far as politeness was



GIMMEL RING.
(Londesborough Collection.)

strated the tenderness of their passion by "the giving and receiving of a ring." Herrick sings—

"And as this round
Is nowhere found
To flaw or else to sever,
So let our love
As endless prove,
And pure as gold for ever."

It was more the fashion in old days than now to engrave a verse within the ring. Many such have been handed down to us; for example—

"Thus may our lives be one perpetual round,
Nor care, nor sorrow, ever shall be found."

Other mottoes, or posies as they were called—such as "Let likings last;" "United hearts, death only parts;" "Let us share in joy and care;" "As God decreed, so we agreed;" and "Love and live happily"—characterised wedding and betrothal rings alike. The following were chiefly confined to marriage rings:—



EGYPTIAN SNAKE RING.
(British Museum.)

"A virtuous wife preserveth life;" "By God alone we two are one;" "Christ for me hath chosen thee;" "Hearts united live contented;" "God's blessing be on thee and me;" and "God did foresee we should agree." Lady Cathcart, who, as the Scotchman once said, "was 'unco' wastefu' o' husbands," on her fourth wedding ring had inscribed, "If I survive, I will have five." Whether she had the opportunity of carrying out her threat history sayeth not. William III was hardly the kind of man to display any sentimental weakness openly, and yet when he died a gold ring was found tied to his left arm by a ribbon—the ring containing the Queen's hair. During their courtship he had presented the Princess Mary with one in the form of a gold strap and buckle, set with diamonds and the posy, "I will win and wear thee if I can."

Love has ever proved superior to sorrow—indeed, grief strengthens affection—and a certain Baron Rosen sent to Siberia, and deprived of all his personal trinkets, refused to relinquish his wedding ring, declaring that if it went his finger should go with it, and his wishes were respected. Dr. Johnson preserved his wife's wedding ring, with this inscription: "Eheu! Eliza Johnson, nupta Jul. 9, 1736; mortua, eheu! March 17, 1752."

In Russia, as in many other countries, both husband and wife have a ring in testimony of their nuptials. The members of our own Royal Family adopt this plan.

The Duke of Connaught wears on his fourth finger a plain gold hoop with "Marguerite" engraved inside; his wife's ring bearing the name of "Arthur." And at the present moment a well-known London firm advertises gentlemen's wedding rings as a speciality.



ETRUSCAN GOLD RING.
(British Museum.)



GREEK GOLD RING.
(British Museum.)



BABYLONIAN ENGRAVED
CYLINDER.
(British Museum.)



DARNLEY RING.
(South Kensington
Museum.)

The Prince of Wales gave his bride a hoop with six stones: beryl, emerald, ruby, turquoise, jacinth, and emerald; the initial forming his own pet name, "Bertie." It has always been recognised among lovers that there is a special stone for each month in love's calendar. January is represented by the garnet (constancy); February, by the amethyst (sincerity);

March, by the bloodstone (courage); April, by the diamond (innocence); May, by the emerald (success in love); June, the agate (long life); July, the chameleon (contented mind); August, the sardonyx (married happiness); September, the chrysope (clearness of intellect); October, opal (fortunate); November, topaz (fidelity); December, turquoise (prosperity).

When our Queen was married she distributed in remembrance of the event, gold rings enclosing her likeness, but so exceedingly small that they were invisible except by means of a magnifying glass: they are highly treasured amongst many members of the aristocracy to this day.

A wedding ring need not of necessity be gold. Ere this many loving couples have been married, and legally married too, with a curtain ring, and among these were people of no less note than the then Duke of Hamilton and one of the beautiful Miss Gunning. Iron rings have been made to do the duty of gold, and sometimes even leather. We read of one bride whose finger was encircled during the ceremony with a piece of kid cut from her own glove; while the very poorest classes were content with rush rings. The Puritans abolished wedding rings altogether, and to this day some members of the Society of Friends object to

their use on account of their heathen origin.

Time was when they were worn on the thumb. When George I. was King, as soon as the ceremony was over, the bride removed her wedding ring from the ring finger to the thumb, and the traces of the custom are still visible in some pictures of the period where they are there depicted. This perhaps accounts for the saying, "Wear



ROMAN IRON RING.
(Engraved Stone)
(British Museum.)



MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS' SIGNET
RING. (British Museum.)

my husband on my thumb." Another class of thumb ring was ecclesiastical.

Brides of our day would hardly object to the old custom that, after the bridegroom had placed the wedding ring on the wife's finger, he should supplement it by several others with gems. In early days the espousal circlet was placed first on one finger, then on another, before its final resting place, with the words: "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen." Interesting relics of old days are the gimmel rings, used both for marriage and betrothal. They were made of two or three movable hoops, one of which was worn by each of the lovers during the betrothal; but at the



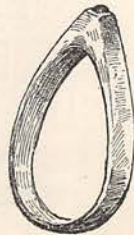
RING SAID TO HAVE BEEN GIVEN BY CHARLES I. TO JUXON. (South Kensington Museum.)



THUMB RING OF POPE INNOCENT VIII. (British Museum.)

marriage the completed ring was united again, and served for a keeper or wedding ring, the hoops being kept together by clasped hands, and sometimes attached to a heart. In the north of Europe the wedding ring opened in the centre, so that there was room for the finger to enlarge with age, but in this case it was not of plain gold, but chased and engraved. No doubt the double and triple gimmel rings originated in the old idea of a betrothed couple dividing a coin, each keeping half. But there are other rings for us to consider, and I will dismiss this part of my subject with Douglas Jerrold's view of the question: "Alack! the wedding ring, like the ring of Saturn, for good or evil, it circles the whole world."

When rings were first worn it was



BISHOP'S RING. (South Kensington Museum.)

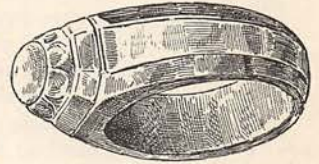
not so much for ornament as a sign of power and authority. They were mostly signet rings bearing a distinguishing badge. Many seal rings are found in Egyptian and other ancient tombs.

Very beautiful relics of the kind have been handed down to us—the Egyptian, of pure gold, heavy but simple in design, and some of glass and pottery; the Babylonian, cylindrical, cut from some hard substance like crystal, and perforated from end to end, so that they could be hung about the neck. The Egyptian snake rings are more quaint and curious than beautiful. The Greeks have left us iron and gold rings of exquisite workmanship. One from Etruria, now in the British Museum, has the hoop formed of the bodies of two lions, their paws supporting an engraving of a lion in heraldic colours. Among the Romans, iron rings were worn, save by ambassadors, senators, and persons of high degree; and Tiberius made a property qualification for wearing rings.



CRAMP RING.

It would take a long chapter to give even a brief summary of the many romances and thrilling incidents with which rings are associated. History is full of them. Before the date of the sign manual, and long after, the sovereign's will was signified by his or her ring, as in the days of Mary Queen of Scots, when her messenger arrived in hot haste, armed with the Queen's ring for the Provost, to reprieve two luckless citizens at the foot of the gallows. Many of that ill-fated Queen's rings still remain to us. Just before the birth of her son James, she made a will specially bequeathing her espousal ring of diamonds enamelled red to "the King who gave it me." "Mary Queen of Scots' ring" is an heirloom in Sir J. Stuart's family. It has a centre heart-shaped stone, three stones set in an ancient crown on each side, and beyond a gold fleur-de-lis. Her signet ring is at the British Museum, and at South Kensington is another ring of hers showing the cipher of the Queen and Darnley. The ring with the portrait of Charles I., given by him to Juxon before his execution, was among the most prized treasures in the Stuart Exhibition at the New Gallery, 1889.



TOADSTONE RING. (South Kensington Museum.)

Episcopal rings are too long a subject for me to enter upon here. There is scarcely an ancient clerical tomb which does not boast of some. Many curious virtues have been from time to time ascribed to rings. The cramp rings of the middle ages, sometimes made of the handles of coffins, were blessed by the King, and originated in one given to Edward the Confessor, supposed to cure epilepsy. Gyges, King of Lydia, possessed one which, he claimed, rendered him invisible. In the fourth century a gold circlet depicting Hercules

strangling the Nemæan lion cured colic in the true believer; and others bearing the names of the three Kings of Cologne were supposed to possess innumerable virtues. Even now a sty on the eyelid is supposed to be cured by rubbing with a wedding ring. The toadstone rings of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were silver, with a jewel supposed to be taken from the head of a very old toad. Their owners could detect poison by its means, for it changed colour. Shakespeare alludes to this in *As You Like It*, act ii., scene 1:—

“Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like a toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.”

In Sweden, maidens anxious to foretell the future place a ring, a coin, and a piece of black ribbon each under a separate cup. If the ring is first exposed, they marry within the year; the coin secures a rich husband; but the ribbon denotes an old maid. The Russian girls conceal their finger-rings amid the corn in the barn, and then bring in a hen to peck the grain. She whose property is first unearthed is supposed to be the first to marry. In England, a ring, a button, and a coin are often placed in the wedding cake. She who secures the ring is to be the next bride; the

button, the old maid; the coin secures a wealthy suitor. A ring put in posset “infuses magic power,” and “will tell the fair if haply she will wed.”

Rings did not always encircle the finger. In the fifteenth century and later they were frequently hung by a ribbon round the neck; and a ring in the bandstring in the seventeenth century was mentioned as an essential of good dressing. The dandies of an earlier period cut holes in their gloves that the gems on their fingers might be seen.



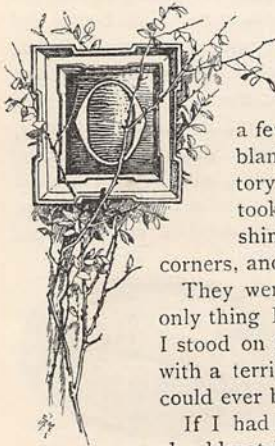
KINGS OF COLOGNE RING.
(South Kensington Museum.)

There is a comic side to the history of rings. Addison, in the *Spectator*, alludes to “a gold ring to be grinned for by men,” which the writer considers should bear the posy, “The frightful grinner be the winner.”

John Heywood, in the sixteenth century, alludes to “Him that hoppeth best, at last to have the ring”; and in an old church at Bury St. Edmund’s a record is kept of a certain bride who, having no arms, had the ring placed on the fourth toe of her left foot, and signed the register with her right foot.

THE BRIGHTENING OF THREE DREARY BACK ROOMS.

FIRST PAPER.



IF the dull cold dreariness of their aspect, there could be no question. Outside, a few yards from the windows, the blank walls of a great manufactory shut out light and air, and took away all chance of the sun shining into those dark bogie-like corners, and chasing the spiders away.

They were large rooms: that was the only thing I could say in their praise as I stood on the threshold, and wondered, with a terrible sinking of the heart, if I could ever bring myself to live in them.

If I had had one particle of choice I should not have gone there, but as it was, circumstances had ordained that it was to be my home, and I had to give myself up to making the best of it.

Now, had I possessed plenty of money, this “making the best” would not have been so very difficult; beautiful painted glass and Morris papers would have wrought wonders, and I should soon have had a pretty room; but money was not very plentiful with me just then, and I was obliged to count the cost of everything that I ordered.

The first room was papered with an old-fashioned flock paper, dreadfully dark, in colours of brown and purple; it was very ugly, but, like many ugly things, was

in wonderful preservation. I hardly liked to tear it down and have the walls scraped and another put up; I ought not to begin with an unnecessary expense. Then I remembered that I could paint it—the expense



MY POLISHED PINE MANTEL-PIECE.