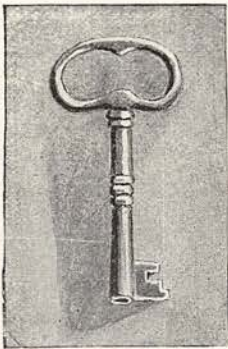


BY W. CADE GALL.



THE KEY OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S DESPATCH-BOX.

KEYS, in our own day, have not only lost their former beauty, but are fast losing their significance as well. With the adoption of patent contrivances and strong-box "combinations," the whole tribe of portable keys threatens to become as extinct as tirling-pins, tinder-boxes, and warming-pans.

To a person of imaginative temperament all old keys possess a strong fascination. But if keys ever become obsolete or descend into mere emblems or talismans, surely the keys presented in the course of this article could scarcely fail to interest the most practical mind. The history of such keys, for example, as those of the Bastille or the Tower of London, could they ever be told, might form a narrative to which the most thrilling of Dumas or Ainsworth would be mediocre and dull by comparison. The turning of the key in the lock of Traitors' Gate, to let the

unhappy Princess Elizabeth or Lady Jane Grey pass inwards to the Tower—the jingle of the bunch in Jules Durand's girdle, as the French prince, statesman, or musketeer was dragged along the dungeon pavement, are here quickly revived in the fancy.

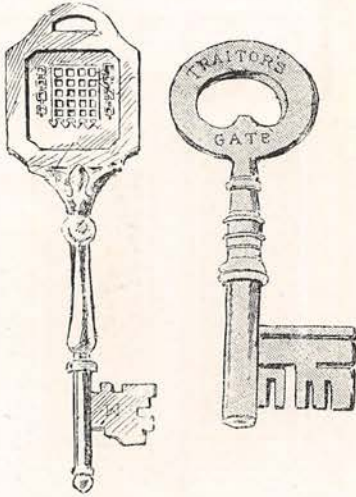
It is difficult to know where to begin the task of describing the accompanying keys, sketched or photographed by the writer, either in their original houses and resting-places, from the National collection, or from the cabinets of private collectors. One would scarcely say which was the most interesting—the key of the Palace of the Escorial, or the key of Oliver Cromwell, or Richelieu, or that of King William and Queen Mary. The first-named key is of gold—with several replicas of gilt—and unlocks the door at the entrance to the royal apartments of the sovereigns of Spain. This series of chambers—containing the Royal Jewel



RICHELIEU'S KEY.

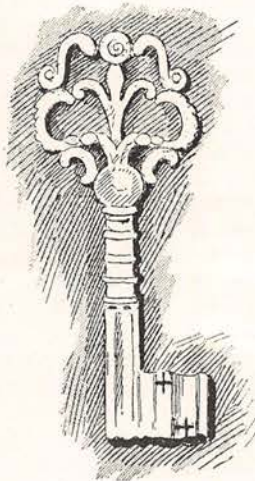


Room in the old days—is prefaced by a vestibule, and every day, at a certain hour, when the king had bestirred himself, this vestibule was thrown open by the Chamberlain.



KEYS AT THE TOWER OF LONDON.  
(By permission of Lieutenant-General Milman.)

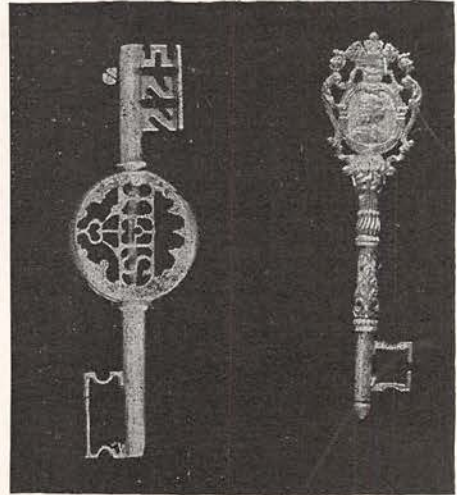
The key of William and Mary belongs to that class of cipher and monogram keys which were introduced early in the seventeenth century, and which became common to the nobility of every grade. Another example is the royal key of St. James's Palace in use by His Majesty George III., which, with several others mentioned in the course of this article, are now the property of Mr. Gurney, who courteously permitted the writer to photograph them. One of the most curious is that of the unfortunate Mary, Queen of Scots, which had, in addition, a rather curious history after it left the hands of its royal owner. It is said to have passed into the possession, successively, of the late Duke of York, a nurse, a physician, a locksmith, and an Edinburgh architect before its origin was known, the cipher, MARIE, being very intricate, although the thistle, joined with the Crown of France, might have given some clue to its possessor. It may



KEY CARRIED BY OLIVER CROMWELL.

be mentioned that another set of clavical wisecracs connect this key with James, Duke of Ormond. They claim to see in it the cipher of the earl and that of his spouse, Elizabeth Dingwall. As this is a matter of considerable contention among antiquarians, we will let our readers decide as to the key's real origin for themselves.

Another royal key, that of the Empress Maria Theresa of Austria, carries the Imperial eagle surmounted by the crown, framed by a



HOLYROOD PALACE CHAPEL KEY, WITH MOVABLE BIT AND I.H.S. KEY OF THE CASTLE OF WURTZEMBERG.

scroll. The bit consists of a scalloped square, with a trefoil chiselled out in the centre. A comparison of this key with that of the Archduchess Marie is interesting. The bit on the latter displays what almost might serve as a representation of an anchor.

Keys of the type of that carried by Richelieu were very common in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Indeed, square or oblong castle-shaped bows were among those in use as far back as the time of the Crusaders. There are at least three of the great Cardinal's keys extant—or alleged to be so. The writer remembers having seen one exhibited in the shop-window of a wine-merchant in Paris, together with the lock of the chest wherein the Cardinal kept his State papers; but upon what authority the assertion was made, or the final disposition of the afore-named chest, no explanation was vouchsafed. The bit of

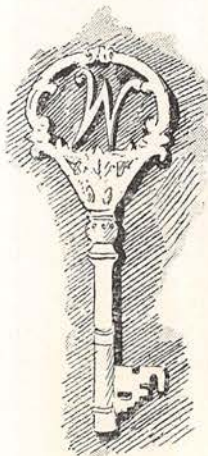


KEY OF LORD BURLEIGH, ANCESTOR OF LORD SALISBURY.



the present key is curious, although there are elsewhere specimens having as many as thirty teeth in place of the fourteen which the key of Richelieu boasts.

Oliver Cromwell's key is of English workmanship, steel, and about two and a half inches long. It was formerly strung through a band of ribbon, and, being the key of a private letter and deed closet in Whitehall, was probably kept strung about the Lord Protector's neck. Walpole mentions Pitt as carrying a key strung by a ribbon in such a manner. Lord Rosebery, however, carries his most important key, we believe, in his waistcoat pocket.

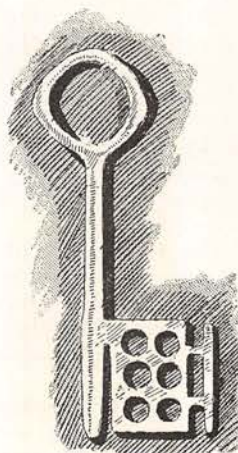


SIR ROBERT WALPOLE'S KEY.

A curious key is that in the appended engraving, formerly belonging to the lock of the chapel door at Holyrood Palace. It is fitted with a movable bow of circular pattern, in which the letters I.H.S. have been chiselled out.

A singular and valuable key is that of the Castle of Wurtzemberg.

In the centre of the bow, framed by two chimeras, *adossée*, is a medallion portrait of Prince Frederick Charles of Schoenborn, at whose induction as 78th Bishop of Wurtzemberg the key was made in 1734.

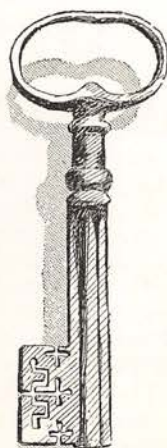


CHARTREUSE.

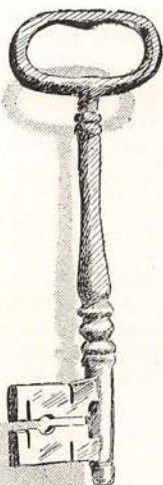
Another key with chimeras, *adossée*, was formerly, it is said, carried by Lord Burleigh, Queen Elizabeth's favourite, and, after passing through several private collections, is now the property of the nation.

A key important to students of English history with an imaginative turn is sketched herewith. It was formerly the property of Sir Robert Walpole.

Not least in interest will be found the key of the old Chartreuse Monastery, in use for several centuries, and invariably borne, together with the keys of the several out-houses, by a monk, constituted key-keeper for



THE BASTION TOWER (GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE).

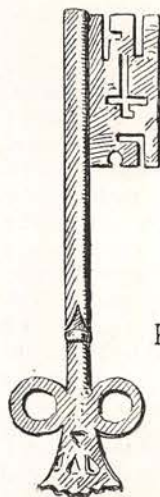


THE AUBRIOT DUNGEON.

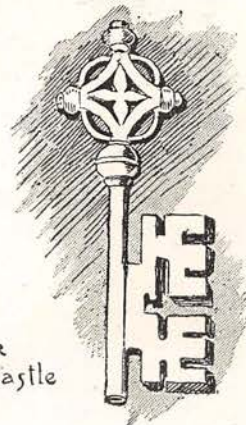
KEYS OF THE BASTILLE.

that day, surrendering them on the morrow to his successor.

Harrison Ainsworth, in his two absorbing chronicles connected with the Tower, has frequent occasion to mention the keys of the several towers and dungeons. Wherever they are, they seem to be rarely left idle at the wings, constantly appearing to enact a principal part in the tragedy, or occasional tragi-comedy, that is going forward. Through the kindness of General Milman, the Deputy-Lieutenant of the Tower, the ensuing sketches of the Tower keys were made. The older is battered and cracked, and the pipe shows signs of repeated repairs. During the present century it has, happily, not been



Keys of DOVER Castle





the custom to open the Traitors' Gate, and therefore to employ the appended key very often, so the wear and tear of this key is inconsiderable.

Vieing, perhaps rivalling, in interest are the Bastille keys. For over four centuries the Bastille was the most renowned State prison in Europe, notorious for the cruelty and callousness of its governors and gaolers. When, on the 14th July, 1789, the mob attacked the fortress and compelled its surrender, amongst them was a man named Carrier Le Chastel. Being one of the first to enter the courtyard of the Bastille when the drawbridge fell, he snatched the keys from one of the fleeing gaolers. These he subsequently carried through the streets stuck on the end of his pike. The possession of the keys made Le Chastel a great hero at the time, and they remained as trophies in his family until 1859. In that year a descendant

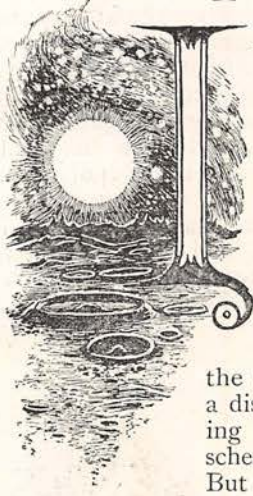
emigrated to America, taking with him the precious keys. A year or two afterwards reduced circumstances compelled him to part with them to an amateur collector, who allowed them to be publicly exhibited from time to time. They are now in the possession of Mr. H. S. Howell, of Galt, Ontario. The larger key is nearly twelve inches long, is very heavy, and is certainly sufficiently old and rusty enough in appearance to have been used by Hugues Aubriot, the Bastille's first governor. The smaller key is of different workmanship, and dates from the fifteenth century. It is about six inches long.

Quaint, and indeed unique, are the keys of Dover Castle, that treasure-house of so much that is quaint and beautiful of bygone centuries. They are, perhaps, the oldest of any keys given in this article, and are well worth all the attention from antiquarians they have commanded.



## "KING O' THE GATES."

BY G. B. BURGIN, AUTHOR OF "HIS LORDSHIP," ETC.



**I**N these days of dynamite it is a perilous thing to be king of anywhere, for there be certain base malcontents abroad who have studied the monstrous art of compounding various chemicals which, on being hurled at anything or anybody in the shape of bombs, have a distressful way of bringing to naught all human schemes and sovereignties. But "King o' the Gates" was not a foreign potentate,

and feared neither dynamite nor deposition. He lived at the entrance to Bloughty Street, one end of which opens out of the Gray's Inn Road, and which, in certain days not so very long since passed into oblivion, was the haunt of every London pickpocket. The other end of Bloughty Street faces a large London square, much patronised by theatrical folk, on account of its accessibility from the theatres, it being within half an hour's walk of most places of amusement. Many a time in the chill winter nights poor half-starved, half-clad, stage-stricken boys may be seen

walking back through the pouring rain to Bloughty Street (they cannot afford to live in Bloughty Square, because rents are expensive), supping sumptuously on a penny baked potato, and drenched to the skin, yet afire from head to foot with the glorious majesty of Shakespeare, and utterly unconscious of their own deplorable plight. Josiah Blake, "King o' the Gates," lived in a little two-roomed, one-storied house by the left side of the big iron gates which cut off Bloughty Street from the gutter *gamins* of the Gray's Inn Road.

"What ho, 'King o' the Gates'!" one young Roscius was accustomed to cry, as Josiah snoozed before the fire in his snug little tenement. "What ho, your Majesty! Fare forth—swing down the drawbridge, and let us enter!"

And Josiah, tickled by the novelty of being called a king—for most of us would fain be monarchs if we had so moving a chance at Fortune's hands—unvaryingly "fared forth," and swung back the ponderous gates without one sinful word to emphasise his displeasure at being aroused from dreams of plenty. Times were hard, and the penny toll for opening the gates did not go into Josiah's pocket to remain there, but was reluctantly drawn forth again to be forwarded to his employer, the owner of the Bloughty estate—Josiah receiving a pound a week, one gold-