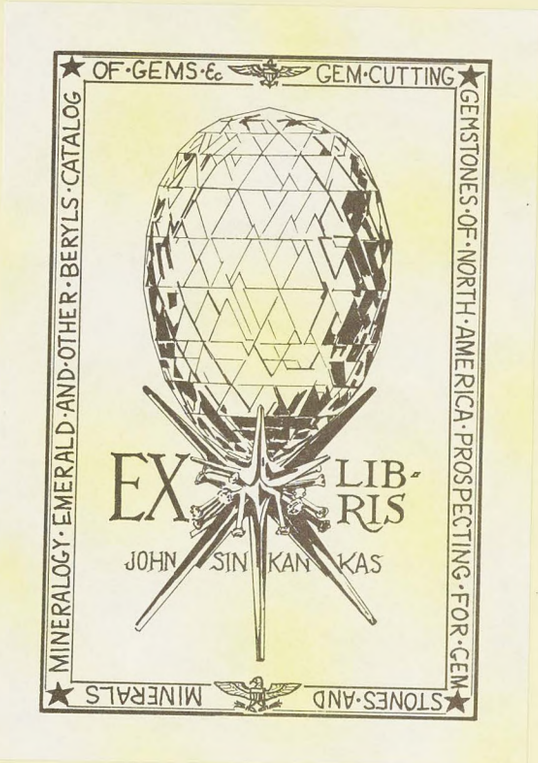
THE 'SANCY' DIAMOND



NOTES UPON THE OWNERS OF THE 'SANCY' DIAMOND COLLECTED BY WILLIAM WALDORF ASTOR

LONDON

1893

CHARLES THE BOLD.

1433—1477.

THE Sancy diamond has been associated with the fortunes of Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, who is said to have worn it in his hat either at the battle of Morat, Nancy, or Granson, in 1476. It was found on the field by a Swiss soldier, who sold it to a priest for a florin, who resold it for three francs. Nicolas Harlai bought it of Don Antonio, Prior of Crats. One of the Fugger family made a drawing of the jewel, with a written description, and these were published by Lambeccius in his "Bibliotheca Cæsarea."

NICOLAS HARLAI.

1546—1629.

NICOLAS HARLAI, Seigneur de Sancy, treasurer of King Henry IV., is said to have advanced it to that monarch under romantic circumstances. The messenger who was conveying it to the King was assassinated, and the gem was afterwards found in his stomach. There is little doubt that Harlai afterwards sold it to the British Crown during his residence in London between 1590 and 1600. Commines in his "Memoirs" describes the diamond as the "largest one then in the world, having an immense pearl attached to it."

ELIZABETH.

1533—1603.

AS the transfer of the jewel was effected during Nicholas Harlai's residence at the English Court, it must have been in the possession of the English Crown during some part of the long and illustrious reign of Elizabeth. We yet seek a record which will point to the use made of the "Sancy" by the Virgin and Scholar Queen.

JAMES I., CHARLES I.

1566—1625. 1600—1649.

SOON after the accession of James I., the "Inventory of the Jewels in the Tower of London," March 22, 1605, thus describes the "Mirror of Great Britain," a famous crown jewel. "A greate and ryche jewell of golde, called the 'Myrror of Greate Brytayne,' conteyninge one verie fayre table dyamonde, one verye fayre table rubye, twoe other lardge dyamondes, cut lozengewyse, the one of them called the 'Stone of the letter H. of Scotlande,' garnyshed wyth smalle dyamondes, twoe rounde perles, fixed, and one fayre dyamonde, cutt in fawcettis, bought of Sauncey."—*Inventories of the Treasury of the Exchequer*, vol. ii., p. 305. The gem remained in the possession of the English Crown during the reign of Charles I. and possibly later.

CARDINAL MAZARIN.

1602—1661.

THE diamond was acquired by Cardinal Mazarin in 1658, and it proved the most important specimen of that famous collection of diamonds known as "The Mazarins." It may be mentioned that to Cardinal Mazarin is attributed the invention of the perfect form of the brilliant, and that he had twelve large diamonds of the French Crown cut into this shape, which has ever since been acknowledged the best possible form for exhibiting the beautiful optical properties of the stone.

QUEEN HENRIETTA MARIA.

1609—1669.

THE Dowager Queen, Henrietta Maria, possessed it, for Robert de Berquem in his work "Les Merveilles des Indes," 1669, speaking of diamonds, says: "There are some of extraordinary size and perfection. The present queen of England has the one brought by the late M. de Sancy from his Embassy in the Levant." It is said that the queen, while in exile, presented the diamond to Somerset, Earl of Worcester, as appears from the following extract from a letter of the Queen Dowager: "We, Henrietta Maria, of Bourbon, Queen of Great Britain, have by command of our much honoured lord and master, the King, caused to be handed to our dear and well-beloved cousin, Edward Somerset, Count and Earl of Worcester, a ruby necklace, containing ten large rubies and 160 pearls set and strung together in gold."

LOUIS XIV.

1638—1715.

OUIS XIV. purchased the Sancy for £25,000 about 1695.

LOUIS XV.

1710—1774.

FROM the "Grande Monarque" the "Sancy" passed to his successor Louis XV., who wore it as a hat ornament at his coronation. It also appears among the French Crown jewels in the Inventory of 1791, but was stolen the following year with other valuables at the robbery of the Garde Meuble.

MARIE LECKZINSKA.

1703—1768.

THE Queen of Louis XV. had a necklace mounted in 1753 to which the Sancy was attached as a pendant, and she wore this ornament at all court ceremonies during the remainder of her life.

MARIE ANTOINETTE.

1755—1793.

THE unfortunate Marie Antoinette, on becoming Dauphine of France, succeeded to this necklace and wore it till she became Queen. About 1789 the Sancy was taken from this necklace, and Marie Antoinette then wore it mounted as a brooch.

CHARLES IV.

1748—1819.

IT is said that the "Sancy" came into the possession of the widow of Charles IV. of Spain, who gave it to the notorious Prince of Peace Godoi.

GODOI, PRINCE DE LA PAIX.

1767—1851.

AFTER forming a part of the treasure of Charles IV., the Sancy was given to Godoi, Prince de la Paix, whose son offered it for sale to Louis XVIII. in 1822, but the King declined the purchase, and he afterwards, in 1828, sold it to Prince Demidoff for 600,000 francs.

PRINCE DEMIDOFF.

1798—1840.

PRINCE DEMIDOFF purchased the "Sancy" about 1828 from a French merchant. M. Levrat, Director of the Society of Mines and Forges of the Grisons, Switzerland, agreed to buy the gem for £24,000, but a dispute having arisen as to its value, led to the celebrated trial between Prince Demidoff and M. Levrat, judgment being given in favour of the former on June 1, 1832.

SIR JAMSETJEE JEEJEEBHOY.

1783—1859.

SIR JAMSETJEE JEEJEEBHOY purchased the "Sancy" from the Demidoff family in February, 1865. Two years later it was exhibited in the case of MM. Bapst at the Paris Universal Exhibition. In the account of the Prince of Wales' Tour in India the Maharajah of Puttiali is said to have worn the "Great Sancy" as a pendant at the Grand Durbar.

MARY ASTOR.

THIS last named owner being dead, this most famous jewel—the eighth in order of weight, but perhaps of all the most historic—came again into the market in 1892, and was purchased for his wife by the Honourable William Waldorf Astor (great grandson of John Jacob Astor). Mr. Astor was United States Minister to Italy from 1882-1885, and served a term in the New York State Senate. He married, June 6, 1878, Mary, daughter of James W. Paul, Esq., of Philadelphia, U.S.A.

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