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Society of Antiquaries
of **Scotland**

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Charity No SC 010440

III.

NOTICE OF THE DISCOVERY OF A BEAUTIFUL ENAMELLED GOLD RING, BELIEVED TO HAVE BELONGED TO KING JAMES V., FOUND IN THE RUINS OF TANTALLAN CASTLE. BY CAPTAIN HENRY JAMES, R.E.

This ring was found at Tantallan Castle last summer by one of the surveyors employed upon the Ordnance Survey of the kingdom, from whom I purchased it, and now present it to the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

The ring is of a small size, and has in the centre two conjoined elliptical shields or facets, with diverging rays or a glory round them. On the right shield is engraved the effigy of a female figure; and on the left, that of a male figure, with a sword (?) in his right hand. On the strap on each side of the shields there are "Forget-me-not" flowers, very elegantly engraved, which were enamelled with transparent colours; a portion of the enamel still adheres on one side. At the end of each "Forget-me-not," the initials J. R. are engraved in Old English character.



If we suppose the female figure to represent the Virgin Mary, and the male figure our Saviour, the interpretation might be put in the form of a prayer—

Mary, forget not J. R.

Jesus, forget not J. R.

The initials may be for James Rex, but to which of the kings of that name it might have belonged we can only conjecture from the character of the writing and of the workmanship. The elegant design of the flowers might lead to the conjecture that the ring was of foreign workmanship; and we know that “the Queen of France, a young and beautiful princess, flattered James the Fourth’s taste for romantic gallantry, by calling herself his mistress and lady-love, and conjuring him to march three miles upon English ground for her sake. She sent him, at the same time, *a ring from her own finger*; and her intercession was so powerful, that James thought he could not in honour dispense with her request.” And we know that in the same year, 1513, he lost his life at the battle of Flodden, leaving his son, James the Fifth, only two years old, who was detained in custody by the Earl of Angus till he made his escape, at the age of seventeen, from the Castle of Falkland. Now, as Tantallan Castle was one of the principal castles of the Earl of Angus, it is certain that the young king was frequently there, and it is possible that this is the identical ring which was presented to his father by the Queen of France, and lost by the young king at Tantallan. This is of course mere conjecture; but the small size of the ring, the character of the workmanship, and the place where it was found, lend at least an air of probability to it.

It is also possible that the two figures may be intended to represent Queen Margaret, the mother of James the Fifth, who was married to the Earl of Angus, and that it was a joint present from them to the young king; but whichever may be considered the most probable explanation as regards the figures, I think it highly probable that this ring did belong to James the Fifth.

[This interesting relic being exhibited to the Meeting, an opinion was expressed that the initials might be read “I. K.” And from the style of its design and workmanship, it may be considered to belong to an earlier period than the commencement of the sixteenth century.]

