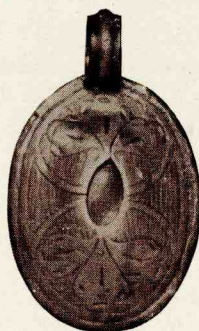


FRONT



BACK

AN ENGLISH MEDIEVAL PENDANT

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AN ENGLISH MEDIEVAL PENDANT.

Contributed by Philip Nelson, Ph.D., F.R.S.E.

THOUGH rock-crystal pendants of the fifteenth and succeeding century are of somewhat frequent occurrence, the existence of so early an example as the present is a circumstance worthy of being placed on record.

This pendant, which was dug up beside the Thames, between Richmond and Kingston, about the year 1900, is of silver-gilt, set with an oval cabochon crystal, and is 2 inches long. The band which encircles the stone has an invected edge and is engraved with groups of divergent lines upon a cross-hatched ground, and where it is attached to the back-plate it is reinforced by a band of twisted wire, from which sprang four strong claws, which assisted in retaining the rock-crystal in position. In the convex back-plate there is an oval fenestration, above and below which is engraved a group of three trefoil-like leaves, confined within plain circles, the whole design being thrown into relief by hatching the background with lightly incised zigzag lines.

I would suggest that this jewel may be dated at least as early as 1250 by the following evidences. Its large moulded ring is in contour like that on the seal-matrix of William de Luda, circa 1250, whilst the twisted-wire ornament also appears on the reverse of a thirteenth-century gem-mounted seal found in Wallbrook in 1820.¹ The engraved leaf-work is such as we find on the painted-glass of the Early English period and the presence of the four claws is yet another early feature.

That jewelled pendants were worn in England in the

¹ *The Archaeological Journal*, vol. xciii, Pl. II, 12 and 9.

thirteenth century is evidenced by the following entries in *Liber Quotidianus contrarotulatoris Garderobae anno regni regis Edwardi primi Vicesimo octavo* [1299-1300],¹ where among the jewels preserved in the wardrobe were :

“ Unum pendulum auri cum saphiro magno ad pendendum circa collum unius hominis.

Pendulum auri cum camahuto [Cameo].

Pendulum auri cum amatista.

Unus lapis pendens per argentum.”

The opening at the back of this jewel may have been provided, either to light up the crystal or to permit its presumed properties to be transmitted to the wearer by direct contact. It would appear that the rock-crystal possessed the virtue of staunching the flow of blood, as is shown by the following extract from a twelfth-century *Lapidary* :

“ Cristallus lapis vires habet stipticas.”²

Again, the Moorish pharmacist, Ibnu 'l Baitar, circa 1220, in his *Treatise on Simples*, states that rock-crystal protects the wearer from night-terrors.³

In conclusion one may remark on the fact that crystal cabochons were commonly employed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries for the enrichment of such sacred objects as Textus-covers, Crosses and Reliquaries, and this circumstance may have popularised the belief that similar gems would be possessed of prophylactic properties beneficent to their wearers.

¹ Ed. Nichols, pp. 348 and 351.

² Joan Evans, *Magical Jewels*, p. 206, from Bodleian Hatton MS. 76, fo. 136.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.