

may not advance further, they will not be so plentiful nor so easily obtained as they are to-day. Two years ago times were good and low grade movements were selling at a premium, and we do not think that we would lose anything by returning again to a similar condition of things.

Selected Matter.

ANNALS OF THE FINGER RING.

JOHN W. MILES, IN "JEWELERS' JOURNAL."

As a pledge of betrothal and marriage it is known that the ring has been employed from the most ancient times, but the significations of it are somewhat obscure. That the Egyptians used rings of gold as money is manifest from their monuments, and it is supposed that one of these rings was placed upon the bride's finger, as a token that her husband's possessions had become hers also by the ceremony of marriage. The selection of the left hand was in accordance with the theory that the left hand was inferior to the right, and hence symbolized the subjection of a wife to her husband. Still, again, the finger next the little finger, which has always been the recipient of this emblem, signified not only an affair of the heart, by reason of the anatomical fallacy previously mentioned, but also gave an additional security to the golden hoop, since this finger is the least used of any, and cannot be extended except in the company of another, which, in a measure protects it. All these explanations are very ingenious but extremely difficult of proof.

That the early Jews used the wedding ring is undoubted, although Selden claims that it was after they saw it in use by others. Hebrew marriage rings of the sixteenth century are still extant. These are of large size, and known as "tower" rings. It may readily be supposed that rings of this character were often very fine specimens of art, and even the architectural ornament served as a receptacle for perfumes or souvenirs, a portion of the roof opening upon a hinge and being looked with a key.

With the Romans the ceremony of betrothal before marriage prevailed as at the present day, and rings were passed as earnest in the same manner as at the conclusion of any other bargain. At

the completion of the marriage settlement rings bearing the names of the contracting parties were presented to the guests. Sometimes the *annulus nuptialis sponsalitiis* bore inscriptions like "May you live long," or, if a stone was inserted, it bore an intaglio like a hand pulling the lobe of an ear with the motto, "Remember me,"—a promise of conjugal punishment in case of forgetfulness.

Among the Christians the use of marriage rings prevailed as early as 860. There is a queer legend of a wedding ring which was given by Joseph to the Virgin Mary. It occurs in "Patrick's Devotions of the Roman Church," and though somewhat lengthy, it appears sufficiently interesting to be quoted in full. "It was discovered in the year 996 in this way: Judith, the wife of Hugo, Marquis of Etruria, being a great lover of jewels, employed one Ranerius, a skillful jeweler and lapidary of Clusium, to go to Rome to make purchases for her. There he formed an intimacy with a jeweler from Jerusalem, who, when Ranerius was about to return home, professed great affection, and offered him a ring as a pledge of friendship. Ranerius, looking upon it as of little value, declined it with a slight compliment; but the jeweler from the Holy Land bade him not contain it, for it was the wedding ring of Joseph and the blessed Virgin, and made him take it with a special charge that it should not fall into the hands of a wicked person. Ranerius, still careless of what he said, threw it into a chest with articles of inferior value, where it remained until his forgetfulness cost him dear, for when his son was only ten years old (the number of years that his father disregarded the Virgin's ring) the boy died and was carried to his burial. But, behold, as the hearse went forward, on a sudden the dead child rose from the coffin, ordered the bearers to stop, and calling to his father, told him that by the favor of the blessed Virgin he was come from Heaven to tell him that as he had contemned religion by concealing her most holy ring in a common heap, he must immediately send for it and publicly produce it that it might be openly venerated. The chest being brought and delivered into the son's hand, he presently found the ring although he had never seen it before; then, most reverently kissing it, and showing it to the spectators, they religiously adored it, during the joyful pealing of bells, which rang of

their own accord, whereupon, ordering himself to be carried to the place where he desired to be buried, he delivered the ring to the curate of the parish and then laying himself down in his coffin was interred. This ring wrought many miracles; ivory ones touched with it, worn by women in difficult labor, relieved them; an impression of it in wax, applied to the hip, removed the sciatica; it cured diseases of the eyes, reconciled married people that quarreled, and drove out devils.

"Five centuries afterward, in 1478, the church of Musthiola, where it effected these wonders, becoming ruinous, the ring was deposited with a religious community of Franciscans at Clusium. One of the brethren of the order, named Wintherus, a crafty German, and very wicked, having obtained from the magistrates an appointment to show the ring on a certain occasion, after exhibiting it at the end of his sermon, stooped down as if he were putting it into the place provided for it, but instead of doing so he slipped it up his sleeve, and privily conveyed himself and the ring from the city across the water. All was well so far, but when he got into a neighboring field it suddenly became dark, so that, not knowing which way to go, but well knowing what was the matter, he hung the ring on a tree and falling to the ground penitently confessed his sin to it and promised to return to Clusium if it would dispel the darkness. On taking it down it emitted a great light, which he took advantage of to travel to Perugia, where he sojourned with the Augustin friars till he determined on making another effort to carry it into Germany. He was again hindered by the darkness returning. It infested him and the whole city for twenty days. Still he resolved not to return to Clusium but tell his story in great confidence to his landlord, one Lucas Jordanus, who with great cunning represented to him his danger from the Clusians and the benefits he would receive from the Perusians if he bestowed the ring on that city. Wintherus followed his advice. As soon as the ring was shown to the people the darkness disappeared, and Wintherus was well provided for in the house of the magistrate. Meanwhile, the Bishop of Clusium coming to Perugia, endeavored in vain to obtain the relic. The city of Sena sent an ambassador to resist the claims of the Clusians. He was enter-