Once set in a ring belonging to Edward the Confessor (King of England, 1043-1066), St. Edward’s Sapphire was known to cure scrofula, a form of tuberculosis that manifests in the neck. King Edward, who was known as a gentle Christian man of humility and prayer, customarily touched and healed many who were ill with scrofula. So effective were his healing services, that the French monarchs soon followed suit. Eventually, it came to be known that touching even the ring of a Royal family member would heal a person.

Even after he died, King Edward’s sapphire ring was buried with him in 1066. However, after his body’s last exhumation in 1163, it appears that King Henry II removed the ring and claimed it for the Crown. The ring continued to hold the power to heal. Subsequently, many other rings, known as cramprings, were prayed over by successive Royals and sent throughout the land for the healing of scrofula and other such wasting diseases.

As one historian, George Younghusband, relates, “It was held in the old days to have the magic powers of curing the cramp, and no doubt did so, assisted by implicit faith and when applied by the King himself. Faith has performed more wonderful miracles.”

Later, this endowment from God to the reigning monarch would be called the Royal Touch, and the blessing of cramprings as well as Royal healing services were routine customs in England until 1868, and in France until 1825.

A change in religious doctrine led by Calvinists, who believed that healing and other spiritual gifts were reserved only for the apostles of the early church, led to the cessation of healing services in England after the reign of Queen Anne.
St Edward's Sapphire is an octagonal, rose-cut sapphire that forms part of the British Crown Jewels. Its history stretches further back in time than any other gemstone in the royal collection. The stone is thought to have been in the coronation ring of Edward the Confessor, known later as St Edward, who ascended the throne of England in 1042, twenty-four years before the Norman conquest. Edward, one of the last Anglo-Saxon kings of England, was buried with the ring at Westminster Abbey in 1066. The “Sapphire of St. Edward” now resides in the Crown of the British Empire next to another famous sapphire, the one of Charles II.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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