

**An excellent example of one of the most sumptuous festival books ever created: Francis Sandford's *History of the Coronation of James II***

Francis Sandford, *The History of the Coronation of James II*. London: Thomas Newcomb, 1687. 19 3/4 inches x 12 inches (502 x 305 mm), 280 pages, 1 full-page and 29 double-page plates.

Many a “splendid occasion” in European history — coronation, royal wedding, funeral, beatification, embassy, or triumphal entry — has been commemorated in an illustrated “festival book.” Such books record memorable events in every detail, from their traditional orders of ceremony down to their most fleeting aspects: the food and the fireworks. *The History of the Coronation of James II* is one of the most splendid illustrated books of the seventeenth century, and has served as a visual touchstone for subsequent coronations and festivals.

James II enjoyed one of the most sumptuous coronations (and one of the shortest reigns) in the history of English monarchy. Francis Sandford's festival book describes its ceremonies and sites — from the intricate descriptions of habit, ornament, and regalia through the delectably detailed catalogues of meats and confections drawn up for the coronation feast, to the procession, installation, and magnificent closing fireworks.

The coronation was designed to make the king as welcome to the heart as to the eye; nothing was spared in Sandford's book, no ornament or expense, that “could do to the making of the Spectacle, Dazling and Stupendous.” The chief instrument of Sandford's spectacle was the suite of engraved plates that recorded the events of the procession, coronation, and celebrations.

Sandford's *History of the Coronation* was a major publishing endeavor. Indeed, it was nearly two years in the making; the book finally appeared just in time for the Glorious Revolution, the palace coup that sent James into exile and installed William III. Sandford and his collaborator, Gregory King, were barely able to recoup the costs of its production. As a result, the book is quite rare.

This copy from Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University, has a

handsome binding of brown sheepskin over pasteboard. The covers have blind triple rules enclosing a blind-impressed palm-leaf roll border. The spine, which has been rebacked, is divided into eight panels with the title in gold on a green leather label. The only owner to have left his mark in this copy of Sandford's *Coronation of James II* is Edward William Harcourt (1825–1891).

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