THE HENRY VIII. MEDAL OR PATTERN CROWN.

By John E. T. Loveday.

His curious silver piece realized £128 at the Murdoch Sale, March 31st to April 4th, 1903, and is thus described in the catalogue, p. 67:

(Lot) 454. Pattern Crown, m. m. lis on both sides, obverse: HENRIC : 8. DEI • GRACIA : ANGLI : FRONCI : Z • HIBERN : RE*; half-length figure of the King crowned facing, holding sword and orb; rev. ANGLICE1 : Z • HIBERNICE : ECCLESIE : SVPREMVM : CAPVT, the royal arms with lion and dragon supporters, crown above, H.R. (in mon.) beneath; wt. 415 grs. (Snelling, Patt. pl. 5. 2.), exceedingly fine and of supreme rarity.

** This extraordinary pattern (whether coin or medal being a disputed point) is one of the rarest in the English series and the finest of the only two specimens which are known, the other being purchased at the Cuff sale (£140) for the British Museum. This is from the Thomas (Lot 271, £130), Wigan (£165), Brice, Montagu (1888, Lot 186, £106), and Moon (Lot 104, £107) collections.

The history of another, the Bodleian specimen, see plate, fig. 1, and illustration on the next page, is as follows:—I found in Numismata Bodleiana, Oxon. Fol. m.d.c.c.l., by Francis Wise, the following passage, p. 239:

Henrico etiam in animo erat novam monetæ argentææ speciem percutere, ponderis scilicet uncialis, quam hodie Coronam, a Crown, vocamus. Cujus unicum superest exemplar.

1 Sic in Catalogue, but unlike the others the A in ANGLICE has no lower cross bar and should be A.
Singularis iste nummus hodie extat in Nummorum Anglicorum Thesauro à Cl. Browne Willis Arm: collecto; quem etiam, pro incomparabili sua munificentia, in publicum commodum Bibliotheca Bodleiana se vivente depositum esse voluit Vir patriæ et Academïæ amantissimus.

Anglicized.

It was the intention of Henry to strike a new form of silver money, of an ounce weight, which we call a Crown. An unique example of this coin exists—(Here follows a description of the coin)—This singular coin is to-day in the collection of English coins formed by C. Browne Willis, Esq., which indeed this man, so deeply attached to his country and his University, was, of his incomparable munificence, willing should be deposited even during his lifetime in the Bodleian for the convenience of the public.

On Table XX. p. 289 of the same work is a plate of the Crown with the description “HEN. VIII., Corona argentea.” On casually coming across this passage I asked permission of the Bodleian authorities to inspect their collection of English coins, and Mr. Nicholson, the Chief Librarian, courteously gave me much of his valuable time and assistance whilst so doing. The coin in question is docketed with a query (?) It is a much worn specimen with a small hole drilled through it.

Martin Folkes, in his Table of English Silver Coins, Lond. 1745, published for the Society of Antiquaries, at p. 26 says:—

I apprehend a very curious piece, in the collection of my worthy friend Browne Willis, Esq. to have been a proof for a quadruple teston,
or a four shilling piece of this money: whose full weight should have been an ounce, and to which it sufficiently approaches.

This piece has been published by the Society of Antiquaries in one of their plates. It bears on one side the king's figure crowned, full-faced, and half-bodied, with his sword in one hand and the orb in the other.

HENRIC' • 8. DEI. GRACIA. ANGEL' • FRANG' • Z • Hibenn' • Re*, and on the reverse the royal shield crowned and supported by a lion and a dragon, Anglice • Z • Hibernice. Ecclésie • Supremvm • Capvt. mark a fleur de lis: it now weighs only 464 grains, but has lost considerably by wear, and a small hole bored through it that has taken away some of the silver.¹


The sale of his collections in 1756 lasted fifty-six days. The reference to the Plate is "Book of Plates, folio, Table VI, i," no date or title. In A Series of English Medals, by Francis Perry, Lond. 1762, Plate 1., 5, this coin again appears, and in a note, p. 3, we are told, "This was presented to the University of Oxford by Browne Willis, LL.D., F.S.A."

The above notes sufficiently established the identity of the coin in the Bodleian. There is, however, yet another specimen, viz.: that described in the Numismata Pembroccana, unless this is the Murdoch specimen. In Twelve Plates of English Silver Coins printed for R. Withy and J. Ryall, 1756, there is an illustration of a coin of the same description on Plate 12, No. 31, and a note, p. [a.a.] as follows:—

No. 31 is a very curious and scarce coin, called by some a Crown of this King, the weight nearly approaches four Testons (viz.: 480 grains); there is one in the Bodleian Collection, but much worn, that of Lord Pembroke's, and one other that we have seen, is much better preserved.

It is unfortunate that no note is given as to the whereabouts of the figured example.

¹ This paragraph is printed as a footnote to the preceding.
Again, in the *Numismata Pembroccana*, 1746, referred to above, there is an engraving of the Earl of Pembroke's specimen. This is one of those books (happily rare) with its pages unnumbered, but at the end you are politely told,

To the Gentlemen who have Lord Pembroke's Book. N.B. Number your encreasing leaves with a Pencil or Ink, from 1 to 308 inclusive; then you will readily find the printed parts, and Tables answer to it.

I have numbered the Williamscoate copy with much toil, and make the reference p. 290, where it is called "A large silver piece of Henry 8."

In the *Medallic Illustrations of the History of Great Britain and Ireland*, London, 1885, vol. i., pp. 46-47, will be found what is probably the latest information on the pieces under consideration; I quote from it:—

**(No.) 42. HEAD OF THE CHURCH, circa 1545.**

Half-length figure of Henry VIII., three-quarters, r., Crowned and robed, holding sword and orb. Leg. **HENRIC • 8 • DEI • GRACIA • ANELIE • FRANC • Z • HIBERN • RE*.** m. m. **fleur de lis.**

Rev. Arms of France and England, quarterly crowned; supporters a lion and a dragon; on a tablet below, **H.R.** monogram. Leg. **ANELICE • Z • HIBERNICE • ECCLESIE • SVPREMVM • CAPVT** (The supreme head of the Church of England and Ireland) m. m. **fleur de lis.**


Bodley **R** (much worn). Unique?

If the Pembroke collection even contained a specimen, it had been removed many years before the sale.

This piece has been called sometimes a coin, sometimes a medal; it may have been a pattern for a crown, but its worn state is owing to having been suspended as a medal as shown by a hole. At the commencement of this reign the supporters of the royal arms were a Dragon and a Greyhound; afterwards the Lion became the dexter supporter, and the Dragon was removed to the sinister, as upon this piece. The title King of Ireland renders it probable that it was struck
after 23rd Jan., 1542, when the title was proclaimed. Chasings by Stuart of the last century are common, and of no value.

(No.) 43. Head of the Church, 1545.

Half-length figure of Henry VIII., nearly full face, crowned, holding sword and orb; very plain robes fastened with brooch. Leg. HENRIC' • 8 • DEI : ERACIA : ANGLI : FRANS • HIBERN • RE#. m. m. fleur de lis.

Rev. Arms of France and England quarterly, etc.: similar to the last, but H.R. not on tablet, and Leg. reading HIBENICE instead of HIBERNICE.


The execution of this singular piece is very rude, and the details are represented in an unsatisfactory manner; for instance, the King's robes, the sword, which has a small guard, and the heraldic ornaments are all somewhat of a foreign character. The three specimens above noticed are from the same die, and are the only ones known: the first weighs 459½ grains, the second 415 grains. It is presumed to be a pattern for a crown, but the unsatisfactory nature of the workmanship renders it probable that it is a copy, made in the present century on the Continent, from an inaccurate engraving of the last described specimen.

These descriptions are at least more accurate than those which preceded them, but they still leave out of account, amongst other features, the stops between the words, which are all represented by pellets. On No. 43, which is photographed in the Moon Catalogue, the stops really are pellets, but on the specimen in the Bodleian a reference to the accompanying photograph, and to fig. 1 of the plate, and also to the plate in Ruding will show most of them to be little trefoils. There are two after ERACIA, ANGLIE and HIBERN and one after Z and RE# on the obverse, also two after ECCLESIE and SVPREMVM and one after ANGLICE on the reverse.

On the engraving in the Pembroke Catalogue before noted, the same stops are represented in exactly the same places, with the single exception of the omission of a stop after RE#. The example engraved in the Pembroke Plate, after allowing for the different styles of the engravers, accurately agrees with that in Ruding, except that
there is a noticeable difference in the absence of ornamentation of the arches of the crowns on both sides in the former.

The date of the Pembroke catalogue is 1746, and in the previous year Martin Folkes refers to the Bodleian coin as being in the possession of his friend Browne Willis. In 1750 Willis had given his specimen to Oxford. There is of course just the possibility of the two pieces being one and the same, but the probability is small indeed in view of the slight difference in the engravings already mentioned. Moreover, the Earl's collection would scarcely have been allowed to suffer such a loss so soon after the publication of so important a work as his catalogue. The conclusion, therefore, seems to be that another original piece may still be discovered, and Withy and Ryall's remarks also point in that direction.

Having discussed all the references to this numismatic puzzle that I can find, perhaps some remarks about the specimens now known to exist may be expected. The Bodleian piece, fig. 1, with its peculiar stops, its three-quarter bust, and its general style of workmanship throughout agrees in every way with the well-known and common coins of Henry VIII., issued after 1542. Anyone familiar with these pieces will at once feel satisfied as to the authenticity of this example. With regard to the others, the Museum coin, and a like piece now in the cabinet of our member, Mr. R. A. Hoblyn, illustrated on the accompanying plate, as fig. 2, the case is very different. The engraving is bad, the design is weak, the weight is much less, and the whole piece presents that indescribable something which suggests a feeling of insecurity about it. The lettering, for instance, lacks the boldness and the carelessness of the time, it is too regular and laboured. A sight of the piece quite confirms the depreciatory remarks made on it in the medallic illustrations.

The example in Withy and Ryall agrees in some particulars with this latter piece, notably in the omission of the R in the reading HIBENICI, and in the presence of the old Gothic A on both sides, another point not mentioned or described in the medallic illustrations.

This may be the engraving which was copied on the Continent as suggested in the quotations already given, but why the Continent is
suggested rather than nearer home it is difficult to understand, more particularly with reference to this, a British subject.

It only now remains to inquire into the original purpose of the piece—is it a medal or a coin? The arguments in the Medallic Illustrations are weak, for the only factors offered in favour of its medallic origin are the hole and the worn appearance of the Bodleian specimen. It is not easy to feel satisfied with an explanation of this kind, as every old worn groat or penny with a hole in it, could equally well be called a medal on the same grounds. The event supposed to be commemorated was the assumption by Henry of the title of supreme head of the Church. This, however, took place in 1535, and it was not until 1542 that Ireland became a Kingdom. Clearly, therefore, the "Head of the Church" could not have been the event in honour of which the "Medal" was struck seven years after the assumption of the title. The only reason that has ever been suggested for the medallic character of the piece was the reverse legend, but as this is only a continuation of the King's titles from the obverse, the case here also as surely fails as its does when the above dates are considered.

The coin-theory, however, can be upheld by a number of facts. A comparison with the coins of the period shows the same workmanship and style. The arms and supporters and the whole reverse design occur on the sovereigns, fig. 3, and half-sovereigns of the later issues. The continuation of the obverse legend of titles on the reverse is also shown on some late quarter angels. In this connexion Wise's passage relative to Henry's intention to strike a silver piece of an ounce weight should be remembered, as it is most significant.

The conclusions arrived at in this paper therefore are :-

1. The piece is a coin, the ounce-weight crown of Henry VIII.
2. The only known genuine example is the Bodleian specimen.
3. Lord Pembroke's piece was probably genuine.
4. The coin illustrated by Withy and Ryall may have been genuine.
5. The other known specimens, viz. : that in the British Museum, the St. Petersburg coin, the late Murdoch specimen and Mr. Hoblyn's example are forgeries.
With these conclusions as regards the crown piece before us, some reference to another example of numismatic art may not be amiss. The piece in question is described in the Medallic Illustrations before quoted, Vol. I, pp. 44-45:—

Half length figures of Henry VIII., nearly full face, in armour, crowned, holding sword and orb. Leg. HENRIC • 8 DI GRA ANGL : FRANC • Z HIB', mint mark cinquefoil.

Reverse.—The British lion, l., grasping the orb.; below arabesque. Leg. PARCERE • SVBIECTIS • Z • DEBELLA' SVP'BOS (To spare the conquered and subdue the proud. Virg. Æn., VI, 854), stops annulets.


MB. R. From the Pembroke Collection. Unique?

As this medal is without date, its object cannot be ascertained. From the inscription it would seem that the word king has to be understood, a title which, as regards Ireland, was not formally conferred by Parliament before 1541, and was not proclaimed till 23rd January, 1542; and the portrait on this medal indicates that Henry would then be about fifty years of age.

There are modern copies of it, cast and chased and of greater thickness.

The piece is illustrated in the new Atlas now being issued, and another example is illustrated as fig. 5 on the plate accompanying this paper. The weight of this piece is 73 grains, and it is kindly lent by Mr. Ready for reproduction. Its stops are varied from the above description.

Like the crown the piece has the appearance of a coin. It is of the same workmanship as the coins as will be seen by a comparison with the testoon, fig. 4, and the groat, fig. 6, on the same plate. It was evidently issued not earlier than 1542, because up to the time when Ireland was declared a kingdom the word Dominus, or some part thereof, always appeared after the name of France. In later times the names of France and Ireland are always joined by the conjunction and or its Latin form et, or Z.

The weight, 73 grains, of the example under discussion prevents any definite conclusion being formed, and so unfortunately does the
reverse legend; but it is quite possible that a coin of 60 grains intended for a sixpence or half testoon might have been contemplated, and this piece may have been a pattern for it. It must be remembered that a sixpence was in use in Ireland during this reign. Equally it might have been intended as a pattern for an Irish shilling, in which case the weight would have been nearly correct. The absence of any title, though, as before suggested, RE* was clearly intended after HIB, was quite sufficient to prevent its issue, and doubtless, if it had taken place, the legend on the reverse would not have been palatable over the water.

That such a supposition is not quite devoid of reasonable grounds may be shown by a little treatise published in 1886, by Deightin, Bell and Co., Cambridge, entitled—

Nicholas Tyery's proposals to Henry the Eighth for an Irish coinage; inserted in a MS. French handbook of the year 1526.

Tyery gives designs for a gold and silver coinage. The lion figures in many of the drawings, and the king is enthroned in others. Curiously enough, the title of King of Ireland appears in all of them. The letters are Roman as on the example here given. Probably the petition was really of about the time of the assumption of the regal title, 1542, but was bound with other matters of a little earlier date.