INTRODUCTION.


BRITISH NUMISMATICS.

How wide an area and how considerable a period are covered by the title of this article will be realised to some extent, when it is remembered that not only Great Britain and Ireland, but the vast Indian Empire and our Dominions and Colonies beyond the seas, and also lands at any time under British rule, come within its scope as regards geographical conditions; whilst as regards time, a period of some two thousand years has passed since our truly British ancestors were sufficiently advanced in the paths of civilisation and trade to be in possession of a well-defined currency, consisting of coined gold, silver, bronze and tin.

The early British coins enable us to ascertain the names of tribes and chieftains whose existence would otherwise be unknown, and in some rarer instances to confirm and explain the references preserved to us in the works of Cæsar and other early writers. Their provenance also, to some extent, aids in the approximate fixing of the territorial spheres of influence of the early British tribes and rulers, and discloses that even at that early period an export and import trade with the Continent and the merchant shippers of Phœnicia was already in being upon our southern coasts.

Coins of Phœnicia and Greece were the prototype of the earliest of the Ancient British coins, and in the first examples the types of obverse and reverse are fairly reproduced whilst, after a series of re-copies, the latest coins became so degraded in type as to be only
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recognisable as descendants of the originals by means of a comparison of the links of the chain constituting the series. Later in date the coins of British chieftains bear the words *rex*, *filivs*, and the like, showing a direct Roman influence. Such are the coins of Tincommius, Verica, Cunobeline (the Cymbeline of Shakespeare) and many others.

The hoards of Roman coins found within these islands throw much light on the period of occupation by the legions of the then Mistress of the known world, whose mints were actually established in this country. The early coins of the Saxon occupants of parts of England, gradually increasing in extent, show how some devices were derived from Roman coins then still current in the land, the busts being copied from those on the coins of Constantine, Magnus Maximus, and other Emperors, while the well-known representations of the Wolf and Twins and the standard of the Roman legionaries served as copies for some of the reverse designs.

These small silver coins, known as Sceattas, disclose by the devices upon them that the earliest examples were issued by a Pagan race, for some bear devices indicative of Scandinavian mythology, including figures that may be intended for the Wolf Fenris and the Midgard serpent; but gradually the cross and other symbols of Christianity appear, and are retained throughout many successive dynasties, even to the present day.

The coins of the kings of the various early Saxon provinces preserve to us, in many instances, the names of rulers otherwise quite unknown, or only barely mentioned in the scanty record of some ancient chronicle. Nay more, they disclose to us the changing fortunes and the increasing or diminishing territories of one or another of the so-called Heptarchic States, and the final triumph of the lords of Wessex as Kings of All England; thus confirming and adding point to the accounts only otherwise evidenced by the pens of the early monastic scribes.

Then, again, coins are occasionally discovered, or newly attributed to kings and potentates well-known to history, but who to the date of such new discovery or attribution have not been accredited with any monetary issue. An instance of this kind is that of the recent
attribution by the writer of a penny to Howel Dda, *i.e.*, Howel the Good, King of Wales, *A.D.* 915–948. Howel is chiefly remembered at the present day by reason of the code of laws framed by him and approved and sanctioned by the Papal Authority, Howel having made a special journey to Rome in or about the year 926 or 928 to obtain this sanction. The name of the moneyer, Gillys, appearing on the reverse of this unique penny shows that it was coined for Howel at Chester in the reign of Eadmund, King of England, as this moneyer coined there for Eadgar, and the name also occurs on coins of Eadred, presumably therefore also minted at Chester. Although we were aware that in the tenth century there was constant strife on the Welsh Marches, no chronicler has led us to believe that the Welsh were ever so firmly seated at Chester as to be able to establish a mint there and issue a coinage bearing the name of a Welsh king, *viz.*, "**H**O**R**L**E**X.···E."

Many of the Saxon and all the Norman coins disclose to us the names not only of the cities or towns where they were struck, but those of the moneyers responsible for their issue, weight, and fineness.

On certain issues of Alfred's coins we find the names of famous cities. London is represented by the monogram of Londonia¹ and the form Londoniensis also appears, the genitive being used in conjunction with the name of the moneyer "ÆDELVE," the extended reading being "Æthelwulf the moneyer of London." Special notice has been directed to this coin, as official numismatists have attributed it to Croydon and Castle Rising. The cities of Bath (Bathan), Canterbury (Dorobernia), Gloucester (Gleawaceaster), Lincoln (Lin-colla), Oxford (Ousnaforda,² etc.), and Winchester (Winceaster), also appear as mint names on Alfred's money.

Occasionally, also, it is the fortune of the numismatologist to discover coins of mints hitherto unrecognised, and in this connection the writer has been able to first attribute coins of Henry I. to Pembroke and certain Saxon and Norman coins to Twynham, now generally known as Christchurch, in Hampshire.

In Saxon times, after the introduction of the silver penny, the

¹ See Nos. 7–12 of the plate of types found at Cuerdale, facing p. 16.
² See No. 14 of same.
earliest known examples of which are those of Offa, King of Mercia, that coin was practically the only current piece. It is true that north of the Humber there was a smaller coinage, and that halfpennies of Alfred and of the contemporary rulers of Northumbria and the Danish Settlers in East Anglia exist, as do rare examples of such coins of Alfred's immediate successors. There are also certain large pieces of Alfred that have been termed "offering pennies," but which in my judgment were intended as shillings. Of the two specimens in the British Museum the perfect example weighs 162.4 grains, while the other specimen, which appears to be an intentionally cut half coin, weighs only 53 grains and would give the full weight of 106 grains or approximately five pence, the then value of the Wessex shilling, 48 of which went to the £1 of 240 pence. The cutting of the one piece into two halves stamps it as a coin for circulation. The heavier specimen may be a pattern only, as the metal extends considerably beyond the outer circle of the design, whereas the cut piece has no metal beyond the outer circle. The silver penny then remained, with the few exceptions noted, the only English piece from Offa's time till that of Edward I., a period of 500 years or so, but the inconvenience was, to some extent, remedied by the practice of issuing from the mints cut halves of pennies and fourthings, hence our present term of farthings, the latter being formed by again dividing the halfpenny through the central radius of the original circle. The cut half of the large coin of Alfred above referred to represents a half shilling, or 2½d.

The late issues of Edward the Confessor, the coins of Harold II., and those of the four succeeding Norman kings bear what are doubtless intended as actual portraits of the monarchs issuing them. The throne and robes of Edward the Confessor on the coins of what is called the Sovereign type correspond with those outlined on the famous tapestry of Bayeux, while the device appearing on the reverse of the same issue, namely, four birds in the angles of a cross, formed the model for the arms assigned to that King by the heralds of Richard II.'s time.

Even if the representation of the King's bust on the first issue of Henry II.¹ be intended for a portrait, it is certain that with his next

¹ See plate of the early coinage of Henry II. facing p. 96.
issue and onward to the reign of Henry VII., the heads of the Sovereigns became merely conventional drawings. Valuable contributions to our earliest heraldry, and information as to costume and armour and regal insignia, are also obtainable from our later coins.

The series of Anglo-Gallic coins exhibits in a marked degree the different phases of the possessions of our Plantagenet and later Sovereigns in France, the spread of these territories through marriage alliances and conquest, till their greatest extent in the reign of Henry V., and their continuance, diminution and almost total loss in the reign of his immediate successor. Though Henry V. was the only English King who could with any justice be termed also King of France, the title was continued in use by all our Sovereigns until the reign of George III., and duly appears upon their coins.

Henry VIII. preserves a record of some of his many matrimonial ventures on his coins, for his golden crowns and half crowns bear the initials, on either side of the Tudor rose and Royal shield, of his own name in conjunction with his consorts Katharine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, and Jane Seymour.

The beautiful coins of Charles I. trace the history of his struggle with the Parliament. His presence at Shrewsbury,¹ Oxford,² Bristol, and elsewhere is evidenced by their coins, and the siege pieces issued at Beeston Castle, Carlisle, Colchester, Newark, Pontefract, and Scarborough all bear witness to the pleasant and uniform tale of Royalist devotion, continued at Pontefract until, after his tragic end, the sceptre had passed to the younger Charles. The coins of the Commonwealth³ betoken the simple tenets of the time, whilst the beautiful pattern series of Cromwell, the work of Thomas Simon, clearly shows the intention of that strong ruler of men to be a monarch de facto under the style of Protector. His bust adorned with a laurel wreath suggests rather the Imperator of Roman days than the simple patriot of Huntingdon, but it was a grim irony of fate which caused the die of his crown-piece to crack in the striking, and so raise a great weal across the neck of his portrait!

¹ See No. 16 of plate facing p. 378.
² See illustration on p. 165.
³ See illustration on p. 166.
An intelligent and careful study of the coins themselves, taken in conjunction with the association in different finds of certain types only, and aided where such exist by the evidences of early records, enables the numismatologist to ascertain the successive issues of the types, and to add materially to our historical knowledge of the Saxon and Norman periods of our national being, the progress of the Nation, and the vicissitudes of its trade and fortunes.

The coins of the Danish Kings of Northumbria portray the Raven Standard and the hammer of Thor, soon to be superseded by the Christian emblem of the cross,¹ and when York had passed under the sway of Æthelstan we have its Cathedral Church outlined as a reverse type.

It is interesting to note that the hammer of Thor by a slight change was readily converted into a Mitre-like figure, while the sword on the coins of St. Peter of York was calculated to suit the taste of Christians and Pagans alike, the former regarding it as that of the Apostle, and the latter as the celebrated weapon of Odin.

The mediæval and later coins throw light on art, history, heraldry and commerce alike, while the tokens of the seventeenth century and even later times afford abundant information to the topographer and genealogist.

The coins of our colonies and other provinces constituting the British Empire record its history and expansion, whilst those of the early settlements in the territory of what are now the United States of America throw much light and interest on the first beginnings of that great sister Nation.

The coins of Scotland present a separate series until the date of the union effected under Queen Anne, although a little over a century before the crowns of both Scotland and England had vested by descent in King James VI.

The coins of Ireland throw some light on its partial occupation by the Danes, and its gradual absorption under the English crown, but the base character of the mediæval and later coins meted out to that unfortunate country by its English lords is a sad

¹ See Nos. 17–49 of the plates of types found at Cuerdale, facing pp. 16 and 20.
witness to its former oppression and ill-treatment; a state of things happily altered in the present day, but the evil growth from which is even now not quite extinct.

Within the scope of British Numismatics our series of medals claims careful attention, recording as it does many events of nationally historic importance, preserving the records and portraits of many famous men and the deeds that won them fame, and also giving illustrations of art, heraldry and personal incidents in times both present and gone by. The war medals record not only our national victories, but the personal achievements of our ancestors and living relatives alike.

The above are only a few of the reasons why it is clearly most desirable that our public institutions, universities and schools alike, should encourage the study of British Numismatics by calling the attention of students, young and more mature, to the advantages and aids to knowledge and education that can be obtained by the study and intelligent collection of our British coins, medals and tokens. The mere aggregation and hoarding as specimens of impressed discs of metal without intelligent study or knowledge, are occupations of the same character as, though far more costly than, the collection of buttons by some eccentric.

Yet some anonymous "journalists" of the antiquarian press have pretended, with wanton innocence, to regard numismatologists as being almost entirely composed of this order of person. But the day is not far distant when the advanced students of our subject will almost be justified in saying, "show us the coinage of a nation and we will write its history."

How much is the general want of appreciation of British Numismatics disclosed by the circumstance that a scarce colonial postage stamp of the early years of the reign of Queen Victoria will find a purchaser at £1,000 or more, whereas a unique specimen of the coinage of some Saxon King or Prelate is thought well sold at £50; while ordinary, but in all cases, most interesting specimens of our British, Saxon, Norman, and later coinages are within the reach of those who barter in silver rather than gold.

The explanation must be that the true interest, worth and
significance of British Numismatics have hitherto not been made known to the general public. The science has been tied up in the charge of those who have devoted their energies to the elucidation of the money of any paltry state, rather than face the historical importance of the great coinage of Britain, which in the making of its sovereign, as the standard currency of the world, has made its Empire and its trade of to-day.

But for the efforts of some few private individuals, the pages relating to British Numismatics would be chiefly conspicuous by their absence. This it is confidently trusted will, in course of time, be remedied by the volumes of this Journal, for no other country has hitherto shown such indifference to the knowledge of its own money.

That something can be accomplished towards remedying the defects of lethargy, want of teaching and spreading the knowledge of the manifold interests and advantages attaching to British Numismatics is evidenced by the fact that whereas, prior to the formation of the British Numismatic Society, the highest number of ordinary members ever attained by the longest established numismatic society in London was less than 300, the British Numismatic Society has, within one year of its inauguration, attained its full complement of 500 ordinary members and has many applicants for membership awaiting vacancies to arise.

That the study of Greek, Roman and foreign numismatics is of great importance and interest should be a self-evident proposition, but the need, now supplied, of a society for the special study of British Numismatics is a fact which has been, happily, very abundantly proved by the success attendant on the formation of this Society, and the inclusion within the scope of its work of the coinages of the sister nation of America has effected a numismatic bond between the two great English-speaking nations of the world, which cannot fail to be of mutual interest and advantage to their citizens.

The pages of this Journal are open to all. All are invited to contribute to them, and the interest and importance of the papers received will be the only gauge in their selection for publication.