

TWO ANCIENT DIES.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLATE.



IN the accompanying plate the larger die represented was found in the Thames, and exhibited at a meeting of the Society by Mr. W. C. Wells. It is the lower or standard die for the first coinage of Henry II., and its date would therefore be between A.D. 1156 and 1180, and, from certain peculiarities in its legend, probably one of the earliest years within that period. A full account of this coinage will be found in the paper by Mr. Heywood on pp. 97-111 of this volume. It will be noticed that the face of the die and its design are much larger than the actual coins preserved to us, as a comparison with the plate to Mr. Heywood's paper will show. Some criticism upon this die has arisen because of this fact, but it may, perhaps, be explained by the methods of coining then in vogue. This, the standard die, and as usual of the obverse for the coin, was firmly set in a block of wood, the piece of metal, which had been previously cut to weight in the very irregular manner shown in Mr. Heywood's plate, was placed upon it, and the trussell, or upper die, held in the hand, or more probably in a willow thong, was then struck with a hammer whilst upon it. By using a larger die than the average size of the coin thinner pieces of metal could be struck to weight.

The last-mentioned plate, however, being composed of selected specimens, does not give many examples of these very angular coins, which really compose the bulk of the money of the period. It might have been questioned whether the coins were not clipped to weight *after* being struck, but in Mr. Roth's collection is a coin of the

previous reign which has been similarly cut, and several of the irregular angles left by the moneyer have been folded over in the striking, and bear the impress of the die upon them, thus proving that they existed before that operation.

Below this die are illustrated in the plate (1) a facsimile of the matrix, (2) its impression in wax, (3) and (4) impressions in lead clipped in the manner of the coins. The legend upon it is **HENR : R* ANO**, and it will be observed on again referring to Mr. Heywood's paper, that no coins of this variety of reading, in omitting the initial cross *and* the E in REX, have been recorded.

The smaller die belongs to Mr. W. Talbot Ready and is a trussell, or upper die, for the reverse of a penny of the "short cross" series, which coinage is described by Mr. Andrew in his paper, *Buried Treasure*, on pp. 32-46 of this volume, where examples are illustrated on Plate IV, Nos. 1-9. Although perhaps less than half-a-century separated the two dies in point of date, for this may be assigned to Class III of the short cross series, which class is believed to have commenced during King John's reign in 1205, there is a marked difference in their workmanship. In 1180 foreign artists had introduced a general neatness in the design and an improvement in the method of coining. The latter was effected by the use of a close "collar" encircling the disc of metal during the striking to prevent its spreading, hence the face of the die should correspond in size with that of the coin. It is true that collars had been used in earlier reigns, but they seem to have been gradually increased in diameter until in the first half of the twelfth century they have rarely left anything more than a trace of their edge here and there upon the coins, and in the reigns of Stephen and Henry II. it is very doubtful whether many moneyers had not entirely dispensed with them. The illustrations below this die represent (1) an impression in lead made as nearly as possible to resemble an actual coin; (2) an impression in wax; (3) a facsimile of the matrix. The legend is **✠ NICHOLA ON LV** for the moneyer, Nicholas of London, and precisely the same reading occurred on a coin contained in the Colchester hoard.