

## LEATHER CURRENCY.

BY WILLIAM CHARLTON.

**T**HE old saying "There is nothing like leather," implying its superiority and adaptability, is scarcely applicable when it is used for the purpose of currency. Leather is a most important and useful article of commerce, and takes high rank as one of our principal manufactures, being extensively used in a variety of ways to supply our necessities in clothing, furniture, bookbinding, husbandry, and other conveniences of domestic life. It is also universally serviceable in all kinds of mechanical trades, but it is quite unsuitable as a means of currency amongst commercial nations in modern times.

Although far removed from actual leather currency, it may be well to remember that at different periods of the world's history and in various countries, hides, skins or furs have been used as a measure of value in the purchase or exchange of commodities.

The skins of animals formed the first clothing worn by man, and hides were no doubt one of the earliest materials used as a medium of exchange, or, in other words, as a substitute for money, and were generally employed as such in ancient times. According to the books of Genesis and Job, a man's wealth was estimated in patriarchal days by the number of oxen, sheep, etc., that he possessed, and the hides or skins of these animals being used for clothing would naturally be a most useful and convenient material for the purpose of bartering one commodity for another. Indeed, it is said that rolls of parchment and leather were used as money by the ancient Egyptians, 1500 B.C.

According to Book IX of the *Iliad*, "many ships came from Lemnos during the siege of Troy bringing wine, and the Greeks bought thereof, some with bronze, some with iron, and some with ox hides." Ox hides, on which was laid the bronze armour, formed the

principal clothing of the Greek soldiers, and Homer frequently speaks of the shield as "seven-hided."

It is stated by Pausanias, the Greek historian and prose writer, that the house of Polyclethus, the sculptor, was paid for in hides or skins, because at that time the people were not familiar with gold or silver money, and what was then bought was purchased in that manner. Pausanias flourished in the second century A.D., and would himself, therefore, be well acquainted with the metallic currency of his own day ; but the statement he makes refers to an early period in Greek history, for he is writing of the fifth century B.C., when hides or skins were still a customary medium of exchange.

Isidore, a writer of the first century A.D.,<sup>1</sup> relates that the Lacedæmonians used leather for currency. This remark would probably refer to the fifth century B.C., or earlier. Plato, who was born in the year 427 B.C., speaks of leather money as being used by the Carthaginians in his day, and it would appear to have formed the earliest currency of that people. The City of Carthage was founded by the Phœnicians in the middle of the ninth century B.C., or about one hundred years before Rome, and the Carthaginians, like the Phœnicians, were renowned for their commercial enterprise and political progress.

Mr. A. del Mar, in the *History of Money*, Ed. 1885, ascribes to the fifth century B.C. the use of that peculiar money mentioned in the *Socratic Dialogues* imputed to Æschines, and quotes the following from the *Dialogue on Riches* :—

"The Carthaginians made use of the following kind (of money) : in a small piece of leather, a substance is wrapped of the size of a piece of four-drachmæ ; but what this substance is, no one knows except the maker. After this, it is sealed (by the state) and issued for circulation." The era of Æschines is fixed at 430–350 B.C. ; the "leather" money may be reasonably conjectured to have been parchment, and the mysterious substance either tin or a compound of tin and copper. The size of a four-drachmæ piece was about the same size as that of an English penny.

There can be little doubt that this was a numerical money, one whose value arose from a specifically limited number of pieces in use ;

<sup>1</sup> Some authorities assign him to the third century.

because the substance of which it was made was concealed from view and could only be ascertained—if at all—by perforating or removing the parchment enclosure, and thus rendering the pieces worthless. It is evident that their value did not arise from that of the substance which composed them.

How long and under what circumstances this peculiar money lasted, we have no means of determining; but it probably went out of use within half a century after the gold and silver mines of Spain were opened, about 408 B.C., and regular supplies of these metals began to make their appearance in Carthage.

The Roman writer Seneca, who died A.D. 65, mentions that amongst the old Romans stamped leather was used for money, and this is corroborated by a similar statement in the writings of Eusebius, who flourished in the fourth century A.D., to the effect that, amongst other materials, leather was used for money in the reign of Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome, about the year 715 B.C. John Evelyn in his *Discourse of Medals*, 1697, accepts this statement as a fact, namely, that Numa used leather money; and Camden quotes the statement of Seneca. Several other early writers agree in stating that leather was the material used by the Romans for money, before King Numa introduced copper.

Evelyn says that Ænobarbus was forced to pay his soldiers with *scorteis nummis*, i.e., leather money. Ænobarbus, or Domitius, was the Roman general of Diocletian's army in Egypt, and afterwards emperor, at Alexandria, A.D. 288–290.

The Chinese employed the skins of animals for currency before the Christian era. It is recorded that ram skins were used for this purpose in the seventh, and pieces of the skins of white stags in the second century B.C.

In the fourteenth century A.D., leather notes were issued by the Ming or "Bright" dynasty during a period of rebellion. The Ming dynasty commenced with the reign of Hung-Wu, in 1368, on the overthrow of the Mongol rulers, and continued until 1644, when it was succeeded by the Manchoo dynasty, which is now the imperial family of China.

In connection with Chinese leather currency, it is interesting to

read the following extract from the mediæval journal<sup>1</sup> of Sir John Mandeville, the celebrated English traveller, to prove that leather money existed in Tartary during the fourteenth century :—

The emperor maketh no money but of leather imprinted, or of paper. And of that money is some of greater price and some of lesser price, after the diversity of his statutes. And when the money hath run so long that it beginneth to waste (wear out), then men bring it to the emperor's treasury, and there they take new money for the old. And that money goeth throughout all the country and throughout all his provinces. For there and (even) beyond them they make no money neither of gold nor silver.

Sir John Mandeville left England in 1322, and spent thirty-four years in visiting various countries. He appears to have been in China about the year 1327, and remained three years at Pekin. As Mandeville's visit was about forty years before the reign of Hung-Wu, it is evident that leather money was in circulation under the Mongol rulers before the Ming dynasty was established, so that the latter would appear to have followed the practice of its predecessors in this respect. It is impossible to ascertain for what length of time this leather currency circulated in the provinces of the Celestial Empire.

Records exist showing that in early times, cattle, hides, and furs served the purpose of money in all the countries now known to us as the Russian Empire, Germany, Prussia, Poland, Bohemia, Bulgaria, and other European states, and also in Siberia, Tartary, Persia, and other Asiatic countries. Our own monetary term "pecuniary" comes to us from the Latin *pecunia*, money, which, in turn, is derived from *pecus*, signifying cattle.

Ibsen Foszlán, in his travels in the tenth century, states that the Bulgarians on the Volga paid a tax of one ox hide for each house. In Poland, during the reign of Casimir the Great in the fourteenth century, the plaintiff in a court of justice was ordered to deposit with the judge three skins of martens or sables, which were returned to him if he gained his cause, but were forfeited if he lost it. This king also received payment of taxes in skins from the people of Novgorod and other tributary states.

<sup>1</sup> *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, Ed. 1839, p. 239.

Amongst the early customs of our country, Domesday records the rent of Chester as £45 and three marten skins. This entry is peculiar to Chester, but in Normandy the marten or weasel skin was not an unusual tribute in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

In France, during the reign of Philip the First, 1060 to 1108, pieces of leather with a small silver nail fixed in the centre were issued as currency, and similar money was again issued by Louis IX., 1226 to 1270; by John the Good in 1360, and by his son Charles the Wise from 1364 to 1380. The two last-mentioned issues were probably necessitated in consequence of the country being greatly impoverished and denuded of its metallic currency, in order to pay the large ransom demanded by England for the release of its king, John II., who had been taken prisoner at the battle of Poitiers, 19th September, 1356. The French King was released 25th October, 1360, after four years of captivity. John Evelyn, in his *Discourse of Medals*, 1697, p. 11, makes the following reference to this issue of leather money :—

Philip Comines says that money was so exceedingly scarce in France after the ransom of King John, son of Phil. de Valois, that they did use leather money, through which a small boss-nail of silver was struck in the middle, as we now find a little piece of copper in our tin farthings to give them strength and value. The sum of the ransom, it seems, was so vast (as money then was precious) that their own historians tell us, that besides several lands, territories and seignories, etc., homage done by great persons (retaining the titles of sovereignty both of sea and land), there was paid no less than three millions of crowns, which is one and twenty millions, four hundred and twelve thousand, five hundred livres of their money at this day.

Anderson, in *Origin of Commerce*, 1787, says :—

King John agreed to pay for the ransom of his person three million gold crowns, worth three shillings and four pence sterling each, or, as the treaty expresses it, two of which were equal to an English noble, *i.e.*, six shillings and eight pence, so that this ransom was almost equal to £500,000 sterling of the money of that period, which, having very near thrice the quantity of silver that our modern pound contains, was nearly equal to one million and an half of our present (1787) money.

Of these three millions of crowns, the first payment was to be six hundred thousand crowns, which sum Voltaire in his *General History of Europe* says “that France exhausted with the wars could not



furnish, so that they were obliged to recall the Jews, and to sell to them the privilege of living and trading in France. The King himself was reduced to the necessity of paying for the necessities of his household in leather money, in the middle of which there was a little nail of silver."

*A Life of Anne of Brittany*, by Constance Countess de la Warr, 1906, states that :—

In 1490, Anne of Brittany was in grave distress for money, so much so, that the Maréchal [de Dreux, her guardian] caused a rough piece of money called black money to be issued. This was of little value in itself, being made of leather with a small piece of silver in the centre.

This sort of money was common in France when King John le Bon was a captive in England after the battle of Poitiers. "Because there was no money they made a very small coin of silver and attached it to a piece of leather, in order that it should not be lost and also be more convenient for handling."—*Godefroi de Langlet du Tresney*.

The last passage has probably suffered by translation, as the words "attached it to" should probably be rendered "encircled by" to convey the true description.

In Italian history we read of leather money existing in 1122, when it was issued by the Doge Michiele of Venice. The Venetians at that time were the premier naval and commercial power in the Mediterranean, and the Doge, who contracted with the other European nations engaged in the Crusades to transport their soldiers to the Holy Land, struck leather money for the subsidy of his fleet. These pieces, which were stamped with the Doge's own seal, were of different values and various shapes, but mostly square in form. The Doge himself also engaged in the Crusades, and in person conducted the siege of Tyre, when, to satisfy the clamour of his troops, he also paid them in leather pieces.

The Emperor Frederick II., in 1237, used leather money at the sieges of Milan and Faventia, but this he afterwards recalled and exchanged for silver money; and again, in 1248, he issued similar leather currency at the siege of Parma.

During the great struggle in the sixteenth century between Spain and the Netherlands, the city of Leyden sustained a long siege by the Spaniards in 1573 and 1574, and in its emergency issued leather,

carton or pasteboard, and other similar currency. The leather pieces were stamped with the arms of the city and represented five, ten, twenty and thirty stuivers. Some of the money, it is said, was cut from the bindings and leaves of missals.

At the sale of Colonel Mailliet's *Monnaies Obsidionales et de Nécessité*, in December, 1886, at Paris, a leather siege piece of Leyden realised twenty francs, and was described in the catalogue as—

No. 692. Armes de Leide, et sans légende et sans revers.—Cuir.

In the preface to the catalogue it is stated:—"When lead failed they made money with leather, but the starving inhabitants eat the leather, as at Middlebourg. It was necessary to have recourse to other means, and, as at Leyden, several leaves of missals were glued together and cut, becoming cardboard money. Such is the origin of these curious<sup>1</sup> pieces of the greatest historical interest."

At the same sale another leather piece was disposed of for thirteen francs, which was stated to have been issued in America by Lady Mary Herbert during the war of the seventeenth century. It was described as follows:—

*Amérique.*

Monnaie de nécessité XVII siècle No. 26 MH. liés ensemble, dans un entourage dentelé. Monnaie émise par Lady Marie Herbert, pendant la guerre du XVII siècle.—Cuir.

The latest use of leather for regal currency in Europe appears to be that of Russia. From about the eighth century onwards, as the commerce of that country expanded, and the supply of hides for exchange or barter purposes failed to keep pace with the monetary requirements of the people, the use of whole skins was discontinued, and skin snouts, ears and claws were substituted. These, in turn, gave place to pieces of skin or leather, which at first were of irregular shape about an inch square in size, but were afterwards issued in a circular form, and impressed with the government stamp. They continued in use until the reform of the currency in the latter part of the reign of Peter the Great, who died in 1725.

<sup>1</sup> *Innombrable*, but probably used in its sense of indefinite, as leather money is rare.

Baron Chandois, in *Aperçu sur les Monnaies Russes*, 1836, p. 7, says the stamping of leather money appeared to have been general in different provinces, and to have been adopted by the sovereign on certain occasions for regal currency, as was proved by an authenticated stamp of the Czar Ivan IV., who died in 1584 after a reign of fifty-one years. He adds that the stamp above-named was kept in the arsenal of Veronage, and at the same place was also preserved some leather money, showing on one side the equestrian figure of St. George, and on the other an inscription "Czar and Grand Duke Ivan"; but he was unable to ascertain where these particular pieces circulated.

We find, however, the figure of a horseman, armed sometimes with a sword and sometimes with a spear or lance, on the old Polish currency of the Baltic province of Lithuania, of the time of Alexander I. of Poland, 1501-1506, and of later dates.

This equestrian figure is sometimes described as a Lithuanian horseman, but it eventually developed into St. George and the Dragon on kopecks struck by Peter the Great. The kopeck was a new denomination issued in 1711, and the name implies a lance. The leather pieces of the horseman type may, therefore, have been used in Lithuania. Chandois also tells us :—

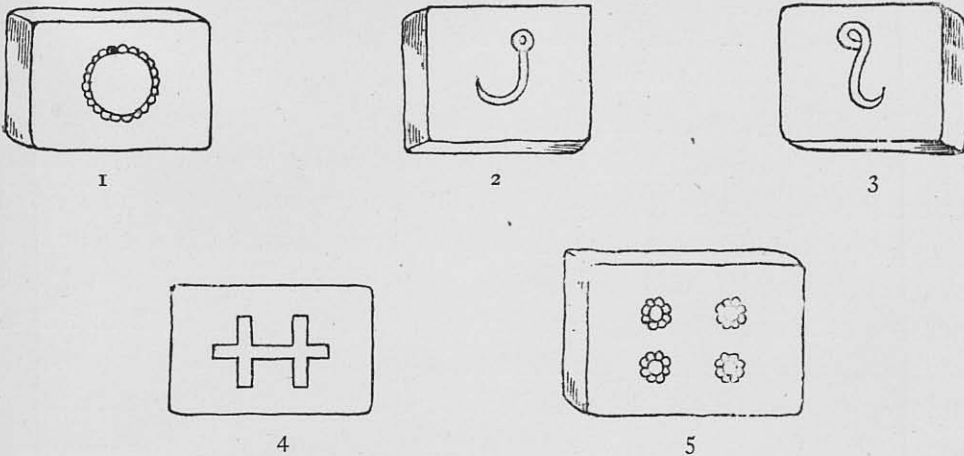
In the Monastery of St. Alexandre, in the province of Vladimir they have kept entire a small cask full of leather coupons; they are square in form, some with the imprint or stamp of a small hook, others smaller, showing a star, another with the word "*Koudma*" stamped on, which is the name of a river in the province of Novgorod, and flows into the Dwina not far from Archangel.

Chandois had one in his own possession marked "oudma," which was evidently one of these, on which the first letter "k" had failed to receive the stamping. This he considered confirmed his opinion that different provinces, towns or districts had particular marks for local circulation, although for large purchases entire skins were still used.

He gives sketches of five types of the coupons, which are here reproduced, and remarks that two specimens had been sent to the Russian Society of History and Antiquities at Moscow.



He quotes Svignan in the catalogue of the Russian Museum as mentioning two *mordki* and two *krioutchki* of leather which he



RUSSIAN LEATHER MONEY FROM DRAWINGS BY CHANDOIS.

had received from the old monasteries of Alexandrof and Sviajski, but gives no description of them. The word *mordki* means head or snout, and is evidently derived from the latest form of hide-barter previously quoted. Roussof, another Russian writer, says that there were leather pieces in many of the museums, but does not name them.

When the commercial relations of Russia were established with the Hanseatic towns towards the close of the fourteenth century, the necessary articles of commerce were paid for by the Russians in skins of martens, squirrels, sables and ermine, and these skins acquired a fixed comparative value. Hence from these the names of the first metallic currency of Russia were derived :—

- Grivna* = The value of a horse or of twenty marten skins.<sup>1</sup>
- Nogata* = An Esthonian local term for skins or hides.
- Skoury* = Leather; used also for furs in general.
- Mordki* = Head or snout.
- Lobki* = Head or face.
- Ouchki* = Ears.
- Dolgui* = Long, hence, a long strip.
- Zouby* = Toothed.

<sup>1</sup> The etymology is uncertain, but this is the meaning usually assigned.

- Skot* = Cattle, whence *skotary*, a Polish monetary term.  
*Kouny* = Sable, marten.  
*Riezainy* = Coupon.  
*Bielki* = Ermine.  
*Rouble* — From the verb *roobit*, to chop or cut off; e.g., strips of leather.

The North American Indian hunters or trappers, in the vast regions formerly controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company, in Labrador and the North-West Territories, and also in British Columbia, and in the American state of Alaska, use skins for money at the present day, and any article they want is valued at a given number of skins. In 1857 the Hudson's Bay Company attempted to supersede this custom by the issue of brass tokens, called Beaver Skin money, representing 1,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{8}$  beaver skins, the beaver skin being the unit of value, which would entitle the hunter to be supplied with goods at the Company's depôts to the values indicated; but they were neither popular nor long current.

*Obverse.*—The arms of the Hudson's Bay Company.

*Reverse.*—*H. B. E. M. I. N. B.* in four lines, meaning "Hudson's Bay East Maine" (East Maine being the principal trading depôt of the Company in Labrador); 1,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ , or  $\frac{1}{8}$  representing the value in beaver skins.

The N in NB. was said to be an error for M, intended for "Made beaver," a made skin being that which is dressed, and the Secretary of the Company has now kindly written confirming this.

Previous, however, to this issue a metallic token had been struck by the North West Company in 1820.

*Obverse.*—Head of George III.; above, the word *TOKEN*; below, the date, 1820.

*Reverse.*—A beaver on a rock, encircled by the legend *NORTH WEST COMPANY*.

The value of this token was, what its device indicated, one beaver skin.

The North West Company was for many years a competitor of the powerful Hudson's Bay Company, but in 1821 the two companies were amalgamated and continued as the Hudson's Bay Company, so that the

tokens issued by the North West Company in 1820 would then be called in, and this would explain their rarity to-day, for only five or six specimens are known to be in existence.

Professor J. Laurence Loughlin, of Chicago University, writing in 1903, says :—

In the Arctic regions the inhabitants naturally find in skins the satisfaction of their chief need, and therefore skins have remained the unit of value to them. . . . Coon, rabbit and squirrel skins (in that order of precedence in value) are yet freely used by the mountaineers of Kentucky as currency.

In South America also, hides or skins were employed as a measure of value, and in remote districts the same conditions, probably, to some extent exist at the present time.

In our own country we find several instances of the employment of leather for currency. We may, however, dismiss without comment the statement by Fabian Philip that Julius Cæsar coined leather money in Britain, but Camden in *Remaines concerning Britain*, 1614, p. 198, mentions a tradition existing in his day, that in the confused state of the Barons' Wars in the reign of King John stamped leather money was issued, but that he had never seen any.

Ruding, writing of the coinage of Edward I., says :—

I have met with an account of money struck by this monarch upon a material very different from those which are usually selected for coinage, but which the writer represents as still existing in his memory: I cannot, therefore, withhold it from my reader's notice. He says, "King Edward I., his leather money, bearing his name, stamp, and picture, which he used in the building of Carnarvon, Beaumarish, and Conway Castles, to spare better bullion, were since I can remember preserved and kept in one of the towers of Carnarvon Castle." (See *History of Allchester*, written in 1622, and printed at the end of *Kennett's Parochial Antiquities*, p. 696.)

If the statement of this anonymous author be correct, the above must have been rather tokens, or a kind of promissory notes, than money. Nothing further is, I believe, known concerning them.

It may be observed that as Conway Castle was founded in 1283, Carnarvon in 1284, and Beaumaris in 1295, the period would comprise but twelve years, and it is therefore not improbable that Edward might issue a token currency of that description "to spare better bullion," as

the anonymous author quaintly observes. He was certainly the first sovereign since the Norman Conquest to reduce the weight of the silver penny.

In the State letters and papers of Henry VIII., No. 2958, there is the draft of a speech delivered in Parliament by Thomas Cromwell in the year 1523, on the occasion of the declaration of war against France and Scotland. After explaining the difficulty of finding coin or bullion enough to feed the army of 40,000 men, he says :—" Thus we should soon be made incapable of hurting anyone, and be compelled, as we once did, to coin leather." Then, probably turning to Henry who was present, he added : - " This, for my part, I could be content with ; but if the King *will* go over in person, and should happen to fall into the hands of the enemy—which God forbid—how should we be able to redeem him ? If they will nought for their wines but gold, they would think great scorn to take leather for our Prince. And of the inhabitants of the archdukedom, how desirous they are to have much of our money for little of their victuals."

John Evelyn, in speaking of the various materials which have been used for money, and, possibly, with Cromwell's remark in mind, says of King Henry VIII. : " Whether this magnificent prince, after those extravagant sums he luxuriously lavished and consumed, descended to make use of leather, it has not been my hap to see any of it."

The *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1832 contains a communication from J. Y. Akerman upon several leathern jettons, found some time previously on the site of the ancient town of Terouenne in France (the *Morinorum Civitas* of the Romans) which was razed to the ground by Henry VIII. He describes the pieces as of leather and varying but little in thickness, which in the largest did not exceed that of our penny piece. The reverses were blank and the leather was not dressed on that side as it was on the other.

A plate accompanied the article containing thirteen illustrations of these tokens or jettons. The subjects of Nos. 1, 2 and 5 are female heads, and the costume certainly bears some resemblance to that of the time of Henry VIII., whilst the armour on the bust on No. 10 is very like that seen on the portraits of the Emperor Maximilian who

assisted Henry in this war, but the helmet is unlike those of the period, and more resembles the fanciful figures of Holbein and Van Leyden, who in some of their designs mingled Roman and Greek costume with that of the fourteenth century. No. 13 is remarkable in being a copy of the obverse side of a Roman denarius. "Some," says the writer, "may be inclined to consider them as siege-pieces, but there are no numerals or other marks indicating their value."

Akerman observed that all had heard of leather money, and yet he was unable to explain or even guess at the origin of the pieces described, but whether intended as money, or its representative, or jettons, they were worthy of the attention of the curious; and he invited the readers of the *Magazine* to give their opinion respecting them; but no further information seems to have been elicited.

In the reign of Elizabeth, owing to the want of regal halfpence and farthings, private tradesmen's tokens, made in leather, tin, lead, and other materials, were largely issued and used for the small change necessary in daily transactions. Whilst leaden tokens are frequently to be met with, no specimens in leather of this period are now known to exist.

During the seventeenth century when the currency of tradesmen's tokens became more general, there must have been a considerable issue of such money in leather, for, notwithstanding its perishable nature when compared to metal and the total absence of intrinsic value, a fairly representative series still remains to us.

The British Museum possesses seven specimens—

1. *Obverse*.—CHAPTER COFFE HOVSE; 2 = a mitre; the letters of the legend have been gilded.  
*Reverse*.—Blank.
2. *Obverse*.—Similar, but the figure 4 instead of 2.  
*Reverse*.—Blank.
3. *Obverse*.—D.I.W. ELLIS, 1650, in four lines.  
*Reverse*.—A wyvern.
4. *Obverse*.—*Union in Cornhill* in four lines; across the field, a horizontal figure 4.  
*Reverse*.—Blank.
5. *Obverse*.—ROBINS IN OLD IEWRY; the figure 3 indented above.  
*Reverse*.—Blank.



6. *Obverse*.—Similar, but the figure 4 instead of 3.

*Reverse*.—Blank.

7. *Obverse*.—SAM TOWERS · BEHIND THE ROY · EXCHA ;  
across the field, HIS TOKEN FOR 2 PEN-

*Reverse*.—Blank.

In the Guildhall Museum there are six leather tokens from the Beaufoy collection of London tradesmen's tokens of the seventeenth century. This extensive collection was presented to the Corporation of London by H. B. H. Beaufoy, and a descriptive catalogue prepared by Jacob Henry Burn—second edition, 1885—gives the following description of five of the leather tokens :—

No. 441. *Obverse*.—*Union in Cornhill*. In small compartment, the figure 3.

*Reverse*.—Blank.

Struck on leather one inch and three-eighths in diameter.

The Union established in Exchange Alley, although designated "in Cornhill," was a coffee-house in high vogue with the mercantile world, and frequently a place of meeting for their discussing matters of general import—see advertisements in the *Tatler*, August 2nd, 1709, and elsewhere.

On March 25th, 1748, the Union Coffee House, with eighty other buildings, including many coffee houses and taverns of considerable celebrity, were wholly destroyed by fire.

The plan inserted in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for April, in that year, denotes the site.

"A leather three pence, Union in Cornhill," occurs in the sale catalogue of the coins and other articles of vertu, the property of Peter Birkhead, goldsmith and antiquary, deceased, sold in January, 1743, at his house, the Queen's Head, in Grafton Street, Soho ; but no other has been discovered in any sale catalogue.

No. 676. *Obverse*.—ROBINS IN OLD IEWRY, the figure 3 in indentation.

*Reverse*.—Blank.

Struck on leather, one inch and two-eighths diameter.

A leather three pence of excessive rarity ; formerly in the collection of Dr. Samuel Pegge, at whose sale in 1797 it was purchased by the late David Alves Rebello<sup>1</sup> of Hackney, for £2 4s. 0d.

The idea of leather money appears to have struck the fancy of Sir William Davenant, who, in his comedy of *The Wits*, 1636, 4to,

<sup>1</sup> See *British Numismatic Journal*, vol. i, p. 301.

thus alludes to it: "Bury her gold with her! 'Tis strange her old shoes were not interr'd too, for fear the days of Edgar should return, when they coin'd leather." Act V, I.

Play-writers rarely adhere to facts; and this flourish is a whimsy of the poet.

Robin's, at a later date, is mentioned by Macky, as one of the three celebrated coffee-houses in Change Alley—Garraway's, Robin's and Jonathan's. That writer speaks of Robin's being the resort of the foreign bankers, and often even of foreign ministers—*Journey Through England*, edit. 1724, 8vo, vol. i, p. 169.

No. 883. *Obverse*.—CHAPTER COFFE HOVSE; 4. In the field, a mitre.

*Reverse*.—Blank, struck on leather. A leather groat. The letters in the legend are reversed, and the figure (4) is distinct on lower verge.

M. C. Tutet, whose collections were dispersed in 1786, possessed a similar piece struck on leather, but his had the figure 2, or half groat.

No. 884. *Obverse*.—CHAPTER COFFE HOVSE. In the field a mitre.

*Reverse*.—Blank, struck on leather. Different, and smaller in size. The leather appears to have been gilded.

The Chapter Coffee-House, at the north-west corner of Paul's Alley, long the resort of eminent literary characters, was, it is stated, finally closed on the death of Mr. Charles Faithfull, the proprietor, in November, 1853.

No. 1161. *Obverse*.—SAM TOWERS · BEHIND THE ROY · EXCHA-  
(in a circle). In the field HIS TOKEN FOR 2 PEN ·

*Reverse*.—Blank. Struck on leather.

In addition to the five specimens described by Burn, there is also in the same collection a leather disc stamped I.R. and the reverse blank, which is stated by Williamson in his appendix to Boyne's *Tokens of the Seventeenth Century*, to be for Robin's, Old Jewry. According to the same authority, a specimen of the SAM TOWERS token was in the private collection of Mr. J. Elliot Hodgkin. Another was exhibited by Mr. N. Kevan at the meeting of the British Numismatic Society on July 17th, 1907.

In Boyne's *Silver Tokens of Great Britain*, 1866, it is stated that in the early part of last century, when numerous private tokens were circulated, the overseers of Birmingham in 1808 issued leather and cardboard notes—the leather token was of the value of five shillings.

The same money is mentioned in Davis's *Nineteenth Century*

*Token Coinage*, 1904, where the author tells us that one of these original leather tokens, formerly the property of R. L. Grew, is in his own possession, and is signed by T. Saddington and Jas. Welch. It is in the form of a note, and Mr. Davis has now kindly sent it for inspection with the following description :—



*Birmingham Workhouse.*

*The Overseers of the Poor will pay the Bearer*

**FIVE SHILLINGS.**

*On Acc<sup>t</sup>. of the Parish. }*  
*Entd. T. Saddington. }*

*Jas. Welch, Cashier.*

With it Mr. Davis forwarded two varieties of card notes issued by the Birmingham Overseers for two shillings and sixpence each, and says that probably these were also issued in leather. He further enclosed a leather medal inscribed : BIRMINGHAM AND STAFFORDSHIRE GAS LIGHT COMPANY, 1825, mentioning that the Company was established in 1821, and that this leather medal is the only one he has seen of any company. The medal is circular,  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches in diameter and  $\frac{5}{16}$  of an inch thick.

Scotland also has its traditions of a leather currency, for, according to the "*Historie of Scotland*, written in Latin by Iohne Leslie Bishop of Rosse," translated by Jas. Dalrymple in 1596,<sup>1</sup> Bishop Leslie, referring to the mythical Reutha, King of Scotland, who is alleged to have reigned B.C. 187-173, says :

"This King mairower was the first author vnto his people of merchandise quhairfor gret merkatis, now called faires, he institute in sindrie places, and to the end that the pryce of the waires the mair esilie mycht be payet, the pennie he causet be cuinzet of a buffill hyde, to wit sik kynde of lathir, because afor him in Albion was na vsse for stricken or cuinzet money."

It is traditionally stated that at the old Palace of Linlithgow, which was used as a place of mintage in the days of the Stuarts,

<sup>1</sup> *Scottish Text Society*, 1885.

leather money was issued during Queen Mary's reign and at earlier periods, but no authentic information is obtainable of this currency.

In the Manx Society's *Transactions* for 1864, vol. xi, a reprint is given of a description of the Isle of Man, by George Weldron, first published in 1726, in which it is stated that—

Formerly their current money was leather, which every man of substance was entitled to make, not exceeding a certain quantity limited by a law then in force ; this had no other impression than the maker's name and date of the year.

The editor of the reprint, William Harrison, a member of the House of Keys, adds the following note :—

According to Bishop Merrick's letter to Camden, there appears to have been a coin in circulation peculiar to the Island, and about the time, 1570, leather money was used for local purposes.

In the same *Transactions*, 1869, vol. xvii, the late Dr. Charles Clay, of Manchester, contributed a paper which deals exhaustively with the entire Manx currency, and in it states that "leather money, or leather stamped with the *trie Cassyn*, was said to be in circulation as money from 1570 to 1580, but not very clearly proved, except as marks on hides or skins." This species of money was alluded to by Bishop Merrick and by Train, the Manx historian.

In Ireland, the firm of Malcolmson Brothers, flax spinners, of Mayfield Works, Portlaw, near Waterford, issued leather money in pence and halfpence, which was current amongst their own work-people.

The partners in this firm were all members of the Society of Friends, and in addition to their linen works at Portlaw, were engaged as shipbuilders at Waterford, and were also largely interested in the corn-milling industry in the South of Ireland. The firm enjoyed a reputation for stability and solvency, and their tokens were freely accepted as cash by the tradespeople in the district and for a radius of twenty miles round. Their leather pieces continued in circulation as late as the year 1876. The same firm also issued card money representing several different values, and these tokens were also locally spoken of as leather money.

The larger pieces bear the name of the firm as *M Bros* above the date, surrounded by the denomination and MAYFIELD FACTORY ;

the reverse is similar, but a signature replaces the name. The fourpence omits the outer legend, and the denomination is across the field.

I have been favoured by Mr. C. Morley, of Milfort, Portlaw, with the following specimens for inspection :—

Half-crown, dated 1854 ; circular.

One shilling, „ „ ; „

Fourpence, undated ; octagonal.

In the Science and Art Museum, Dublin, there are four similar examples of this card money, namely :—

Shilling, 1842 ; circular.

Fourpence, 1839 ; octagonal.

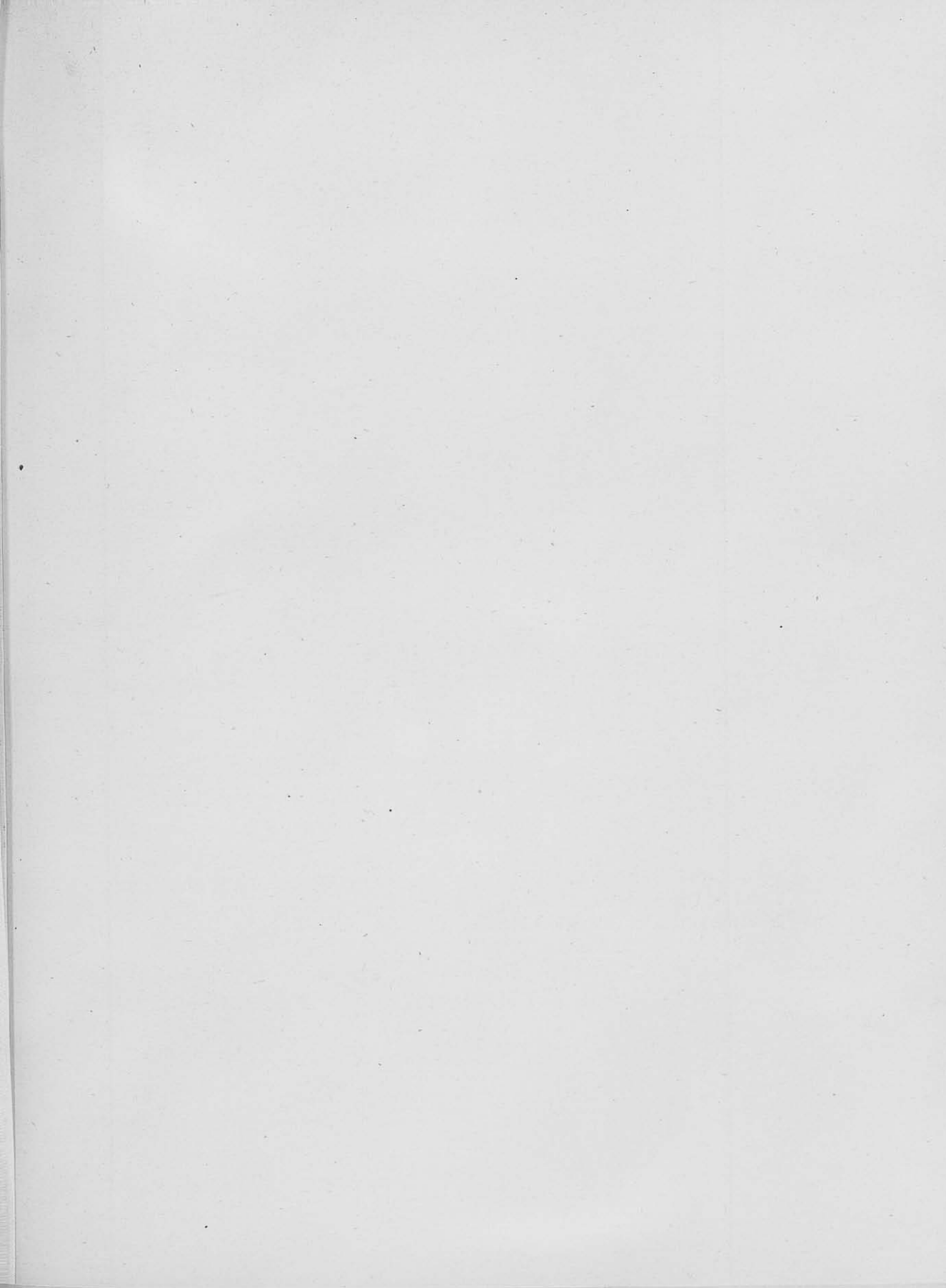
„ undated ; octagonal. Two varieties.

In the mining and manufacturing districts of this country previous to the passing of the Truck Act, 1 and 2 William IV., most employers kept or favoured a warehouse, or shop, at which the workpeople were supplied with food and clothing, and it was customary to give advance notes to the workpeople on account of work done, to enable them to be supplied with the necessaries of life. The method frequently adopted was to give checks or tallies representing money, and made of leather, tin or other material, to be exchanged at these shops, and at the settling or “pay day” very little actual cash was needed to balance accounts.

The shops were usually called “Tommy Shops,” possibly from the old Anglo-Saxon *tom*, meaning void or hungry, and are so named in Lord Beaconsfield’s novel, *Sybil*. The term still remains as applied to provision shops in the North of England, and it is not improbable that the equally common expression “on strap,” for obtaining anything on credit, may also be a survival of the Truck system, when leather checks, usually stamped out of the old straps used to drive the machinery, were the tokens by which the working people obtained their food and clothing without the means of a cash payment.

The specimens of leather tokens which have been preserved to us are but few in number and proportionately rare. This may be explained by the fact of the material of which they were made possessing no intrinsic value, hence, after serving their purpose for the time being, they would soon be thrown away as useless.





1346-1886.



THE BRONZE POT OF ABERDEEN.

Found in Upperkirkgate, Aberdeen, May 31st, 1886, containing 12,267 coins, and now preserved in the Art Gallery and Museum, Aberdeen. From a painting.