

## SAINT CUTHBERT'S PENNIES.

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FIG. 1.—ÆLFWALD I. OF NORTHUMBRIA.

**I**N *Archæologia Aemiliana*<sup>1</sup> Nicholson and Burns are quoted as having stated that a bushel or so of small silver coins were found called St. Cuthbert's pence such as that Bishop and some of his successors, Bishops of Durham, had the privilege of coining. It would be very interesting if we could trace such coins, even on the strength of such a tradition as is indicated by the above statement, and, whilst I do not suggest that there are any grounds for supposing that St. Cuthbert struck any coins, I incline to the idea that coins commemorative of him may be assigned to kings of Northumbria.

In the *Numismatic Chronicle*, 3rd Series, vol. xvii, p 5, I published a unique sceatta, from my collection, which I acquired among a quantity of ordinary stycas of Eanred and Aethelred II. at the sale of the Bateman heirlooms. At that time I suggested the following reading :—



FIG. 2.—DETAILED DRAWING OF THE COIN ILLUSTRATED AS FIG. 1.

*Obverse*.—F N V A N D V S. Cross.

*Reverse*.—† C V D Æ V R. Cross. Fig. 1.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. vi, New Series, p. 238.

I still hold to the attribution of this sceatta to Aelfwald I., 778–789, owing to the ancient appearance which is unmistakeable, the metal, amount of debasement, and lastly to the survivals of runic letters; but I find that a more careful survey of the reverse legend might seem to warrant a different reading to the above, and to negative the idea that it is the name of a moneyer “Cuthbeart.”

I now believe that the proper reading is

*Reverse*—SCVDÆVRT,

and I suggest that it was struck by Aelfwald I., King of Northumbria, in commemoration of St. Cuthbert, and that the quotation given in the *Archæologia Aemiliana* may refer to this or subsequent commemorative coins. St. Cuthbert, as is well known, was the sixth Bishop of Lindisfarne (685–688), and it was only by the earnest entreaty of King Ecgfrith,<sup>1</sup> on bended knee, and that of the whole synod, that he was prevailed upon to quit his solitude of hermit and discharge his episcopal duties. Ceolwulf,<sup>2</sup> who reigned 731–737, gifted the church with numerous possessions, and, after resigning his crown, became a monk of Lindisfarne, and his head was found in the coffin of St. Cuthbert in 1104.

It is probable that the extreme veneration with which this saint was held by the rulers and people of Northumbria, might have predisposed those in authority to place his name on the coinage at a time when it was not customary for moneyers to do so, and this may account for so unusual a legend replacing the traditional animal by the name of so revered a saint. During the reign of Aelfwald I. the body of St. Cuthbert was still at Lindisfarne, untouched by the heathen Danes, although the latter had stripped the Abbey of all its valuables.<sup>3</sup>

There is also in my collection a remarkable sceatta which formerly belonged to the late Sir John Evans, and of which a variety was sold

<sup>1</sup> *Saint Cuthbert*, Raine, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

in the Rashleigh sale and is now Mr. Bruun's,<sup>1</sup> these two being the only specimens known to exist.



FIG. 3.—ÆTHELRED I. OF NORTHUMBRIA.

*Obverse.*—ED+LRED. Cross.

*Reverse.*—SZCICVD. The shrine of St. Cuthbert sideways? Fig. 3.

I would suggest for this reverse S[epulchrum] S[an] C[t]I CVD [berhti].

Both the S's are Runic survivals, and the C of Sancti may be compared to that on St. Cuthbert's coffin exhumed and examined on May 17th, 1827,<sup>2</sup> and now exhibited at Durham. Professor Stevens pointed out that the letters on the coffin  $\mathfrak{Y}\mathfrak{C}\mathfrak{Y}$  were the Runic equivalents of  $\overline{SCS}$ , and that it was preceded by a short word of not more than three letters, the last of which was clearly an S in the same Runic character, the last but one being apparently an H, making the whole inscription an abbreviation of IESUS SANCTUS.

Mr. Haigh<sup>3</sup> showed that these two characters for S and C seemed to belong to a different futhorc to the majority of the alphabets, and one which was peculiar to Northumbria. The letter "cen" may also be compared with that in the alphabet of Nemnious, which was, I believe, of Northern origin.

The small letter, which I take to be an "I," on one of the coins seems to have been placed out of order, perhaps to save space and for symmetry. The design in the field of the reverse is, I suggest, a rude conception of the Saint's shrine seen sideways. If this is the case it is of the usual early shape, and may be compared with that given by Professor Stevens<sup>4</sup> of a similar article.

Concerning, therefore, the appropriation of these two sceattas with the shrine of St. Cuthbert sideways, I propose that they be placed to the second reign of Aethelred I. (790-796), leaving the unique sceatta

<sup>1</sup> Lot 141A.

<sup>2</sup> Stevens, *Runic Monuments*, vol. ii, p. 449.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 476A.

<sup>4</sup> *Num. Chron.*, 3rd Series, vol. xii, p. 87.

of the same king with the animal-reverse, which is in my collection, to the first period of his reign (774-778). It is probable that the latter king would mint his first coins in the style of his predecessors.

I have not seen, nor is the existence known of, two sceattas, one reading ED†LRED, *Reverse* CVDCILZ (ex Brummel<sup>1</sup> collection), and one in the Rich<sup>2</sup> cabinet described as reading CILS EDXLRED REX. The first coin may be one of those described in this paper.



FIG. 4.—PENNY OF ALFRED FOUND AT CUERDALE.

There is also, in connection with the question of St. Cuthbert's pence, a most difficult legend on a penny of Alfred the Great.

*Obverse.*—† EL † FRE DRE. In centre a small cross pattée within a circle.

*Reverse.*—A W R S S C, in two lines, divided by three crosses pattée, with cross pattée above and below. Fig. 4.

There are three of these pennies known, all from the Cuerdale hoard. One is in the National Collection, one was in the Rashleigh sale (ex Bergne); the third is in my collection (ex Montagu). I would suggest, diffidently, that the reading of the reverse may be AUR [UM] S[EPULCHRI] S[ANCTI] C[UDBERHTI], and that these coins may have been struck by the episcopal authorities either at York or Chester-le-Street. It is not until Edward III.'s time that episcopal coins are known of its successor, the mint of Durham, *i.e.*, differenced from the regal coins by a mint-mark, but it is probable that the ecclesiastical authorities had a right of striking in Anglo-Saxon times, but with the same types as those of the king.<sup>3</sup> King Alfred evidently held

<sup>1</sup> Sold at Sotheby's, July 7th, 1828, Lot 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Saxon Conquest of Britain*, Haigh, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> In 1293 Edward I. directed a writ of enquiry as to the privileges, and particularly the rights of coinage, of the Bishops of Durham; and it was found "that they had enjoyed all royal privileges within the liberty of Durham, from the time of the conquest of England

St. Cuthbert in great veneration from the time when, concealed in the marshes of Somersetshire, he dreamed that that saint in bodily shape promised him victory over his enemies.<sup>1</sup>

Somewhat later the monks of Lindisfarne under their abbot Eadred found out the abode of Guthred, son of Hardicanute, and had him placed on the throne of Northumbria,<sup>2</sup> a kingdom then stretching to the Tyne and dependant on Alfred the Great. The patrimony of St. Cuthbert was then being slowly converted into a county palatine, and its bishops exalted to a high station in the later See of Durham, which succeeded that of Chester-le-Street. So venerated a place must have had a continual flow of treasure, gems and bullion in ever increasing quantity.

In this instance it may be that the word *Aurum* means the treasure or *peculium* of the shrine. It can hardly refer to the coin itself, as in the earliest mention of the *ora*,<sup>3</sup> in Edward and Guthorms laws n<sup>o</sup> 7, it appears that 12 ôre = 30 shillings or one ôra = 2½ shillings.

Perhaps these pennies were minted during the seven years that elapsed after the death of Guthred (Cnut) in 894, when Alfred the Great united the sovereignty of Northumbria to the other parts of the Heptarchy, otherwise one might have expected the name of Guthred to be on the obverse.

*and before without any interruption, as of the right and liberty of the Church of St. Cuthbert in Durham."*

<sup>1</sup> *Saint Cuthbert*, Raine, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Saint Cuthbert*, Raine, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> Keary, *B.M. Catalogue*, vol. i, p. xxxvi.

