TWO TRAGEDIES, A MEDLÆVAL CHARM, AND A NOTE ON THE MINT OF RHUDDLAN.

BY W. J. ANDREW, F.S.A.

THERE is always a pathetic interest attached to coins and other personal possessions found with the bones of their owner, and it is a coincidence that the relics of two such tragedies should have been submitted to me; for each case concerned a man who carried money of Henry III, wore a talisman hung round his neck, and came to a sudden death; yet so far apart were they discovered that the one was at Winchester and the other at Dyserth Castle in Flintshire.

THE WINCHESTER TRAGEDY.

Mr. G. E. Slim, of The Briars, Fordington Road, Winchester, forwarded the silver penny of Henry III and bronze medallion illustrated above to me with the following report:

In March, 1918, whilst removing soil for the foundation of a wall at the foot of my garden, my attention was attracted by a layer of small but uniform flints, and just under this I found the
Two Tragedies, a Mediaeval Charm, etc.

... bronze medallion. Below the flints and medallion I discovered fragments of rib bones, and beneath these the vertebrae of a human skeleton. I followed the line of the vertebrae towards where the head should be, but the skull with the vertebrae of the neck was missing. In the opposite direction, where the legs would lie, I am unable to excavate.

The vertebrae indicated the remains of a large boned person lying on the back with feet towards the south. The flint floor only covered the chest and abdomen, and the only other relics actually with the remains were two small fragments of unglazed earthenware, but the silver coin was found only a little distance away, and the ground had been much cultivated for many years.

The last remark implies that in Mr. Slim's opinion the coin had been separated from the remains in the ordinary course of ground-disturbance incident to gardens, and he has since confirmed this inference. The identity in date of the two relics should, however, set at rest any doubt as to their common origin.

The coin is a silver penny of the last type of Henry III—the long-cross type with sceptre—

Obverse: _HENRICVS REX_

Reverse: _ROBERT ON GANT_ Canterbury.

This is the minor variety classed by Mr. L. A. Lawrence, F.S.A.,¹ as Vc and attributed approximately to the year 1257. The coin is clipped and shows signs of wear, which are indications that it was in circulation for some years.

The talisman is a disc of thin bronze, unifacial, of the size of a halfcrown, well patinated and pierced with a tiny rivet-hole in the centre for attachment to a mounting at the back, the marks of which are visible. From Mr. Slim's description of the discovery, it was evidently slung by a cord round the neck and worn on the breast. Being very thin and deeply struck from a die, one-third of the legend

¹ _British Numismatic Journal_, ix, pp. 145-179; x, pp. 69-93.
The Talisman.

has been broken off where, perhaps, it was almost cut through by the pressure of the die, and is gone, leaving a space for eight letters.

*Jesusvshn . . . . . . Rex* between double concentric inner and outer circles of cable pattern, surrounding the central device of a geometric rose of six petals.

Although somewhat cryptic at first glance, if we eliminate the duplication of the *us* of Jesus it is not difficult to complete the legend with certainty, for I hope to prove by comparisons of the period that when so corrected it is

*Iesus Nazarenus Rex*

and this exactly supplies the eight missing letters. The central design is familiar to us as the rose windows in our churches and that, for example, in St. Wulfran’s, Grantham, compares with it very closely in both date and detail.

In the year 1270, Prince Edward, afterwards Edward I, fresh from suppressing the protracted Wars of the Barons, joined the seventh and last Crusade which, under his command, succeeded in recovering Nazareth. Peace followed, and his father, Henry III, having died meanwhile, the Prince returned to England as King in 1274.

The recapture of Nazareth was intensely popular throughout Christendom, and especially so in England, where it was reflected in many ways, not the least interesting of which was the general revival of the title “Jesus of Nazareth,” and its invocation against danger, evil, and sickness. Thus we find it as Iesus Nazarenus on rings, brooches, and purses of this period; as Iesus Nazarius on the bronze chape of a scabbard in the Guildhall Museum; as Ihs Nazaren on the helm of the effigy of Sir Thomas Wendesley who fell in the battle of Shrewsbury; and in full as Ihesus Nazarenus Rex Iudeorum on a fifteenth-century breastplate in the Wallace Collection.

In each of these instances there is, I think, evidence of pure religious sentiment; but it was not always so, for at no time were religion, necromancy and the black art so curiously interwoven as
under the eastern influences of the last Crusades. Of this heterodox order is the following very human document, a mediæval charm which, whilst it invokes the legend we are considering, and after a manner of its own is ostensibly an appeal to the Powers of Light, does not quite neglect the precaution of propitiating the powers of darkness also, in which it follows the advice of the old Yorkshire proverb that “it is better to be in with the Adonnet than out.” My apology for printing it in full is that it is worth preserving for general reference on many varied subjects. It discloses a condition of society which had its influence even in the selection of the legends upon the coinage. For instance, that on the early gold issues, *Jesus autem transiens per medium illorum ibat*, had long been in use on rings and brooches—as was later the coin itself—as a traveller’s charm against robbers; just as the motto on the groat was the soldier’s prayer. I knew it years ago in a private collection, and it is written in red and black ink on a strip of parchment, two and a half inches wide and three feet long; but I reproduce the text from an interesting paper by F. A. Luddington in *The Antiquary* of September, 1903. The notes, however, are mine.

Although written in the late fourteenth, or early fifteenth century, and the survival, copied, recopied and amended to date, of a far more ancient script, it is not difficult to follow, if one reads by the sound rather than by the spelling, for that in both languages is very corrupt. The preamble is written in red ink, but the general form is that of an early Anglo-Saxon deed, for the “hundred names of power” follow with the sign of the Cross to each as if they were the witnesses:

Here begynneth the copy of the wryth that the Angel brought from Heuene on-to Saint Leo, the Pope of Rome, he to deliuer it to kynge Charlys,² that tyme he went to the bataly

¹ Literally, the arch-one. The name, probably in its orthodox sense, is ninth in the charm as Adonay, the Jewish Adonai, and occurs also in such words as Adonizedec, *Joshua x, i*. Compare Virgil’s *Flectere si nequeo Superos, Acheronta movebo*.

² Charlemagne entered into alliance with Pope Leo III, who crowned him Emperor in A.D. 800.
ayens goddys enmiis. Ande he seyd tha it wolde saue hym that beryth thys lett ere vp-on hym from alle his enmiis, bothe bodili and gostly & from fir & water, & from thunder & leuenyng, & from alle wykkyd spiritys, & from false fyndys, & from drechyng & dremynge in a bodiis slepyng & from alle maner of perelles bothe on londe & and on water. Ande also he xalle not deye with-owtyn schryft & hoysl, nor he xalle nuer haue the syknes of the feuer nor of the meselryl nor of the fallyng euyle. Nor he xalle neuere be falsly dampnyde before no luge. Ande thow he were put in fir to be brend or on a galow-tre to be hangyd, he xalle not deye that day if he haue thys lett ere vp-on hym; nor he xalle neur haue wrath of lorde nor of ladye withoutyn gylt gret, nor he xalle neur mysfare in no nede. And also if a woman trauayl of chylde, do thys lett ere on hyr & sche xalle be delyuerid, & the chylde xalle haue ryth schape name ande Cristendam, & the mothyr gudde Puryficaciun throw the vertu of these holy & blysful namys of owre lorde Ihesu Crist that folwyn.

1 Leprosy, unknown in Charlemagne's time.
2 That the name of God can be spelt by four letters in every language was evidently known even then.
To return to the interment. The circumstances tell their own tale, for the skeleton was headless, it was buried in unconsecrated ground on the hill outside and overlooking the West Gate, the principal gate of Winchester; it lay on its back due north and south, shards had been cast upon it; and over it, hand-laid with care, was a floor of selected flints. In the strict thirteenth century such a burial could mean but one thing—that of an executed felon. In the presence of the shards and flints we have a reminder that “shards, flints and pebbles should be thrown on her,” at Ophelia’s burial, but the still older form of the same idea, the “flint floor” over the felon’s breast, was a folk-lore superstitution that it materially kept

1 For Ananizapta, the charm against the falling sickness, of Egyptian origin.
down the evil spirit of the deceased. In it we trace the origin of stake and burial beneath the cross-roads; of the provision in the Leges Ripuariorum for the interment of criminals under the high road; of the "heap of stones" piled upon the graves of Achan, the King of Ai, and Absalom; and of the great stone that closed the chambered barrow in archaic times. Truly here the flints were a strange corollary to belief in the talisman below them.

The legend on the talisman suggests a date for the interment later, probably, than Edward's return from the Crusade in 1274, and the condition of the coin seems to justify this inference. When, therefore, we notice that the penny is clipped all round and light in weight, we wonder whether the "large boned person" may possibly have been one of those malefactors who were "hanged without the walls of the city and their heads set up upon the gate" at the house-to-house search of the Jews, some Christians, goldsmiths and moneyers, for evidence of clipping, clipping tools and debasing the money, on the morrow of St. Nicholas, 1278.

It is pleasant to add that Mr. Slim at once accepted my suggestion that he should present the relics to the Museum at Winchester.

The Dyserth Castle Tragedy.

We know a great deal of the monetary side of mediaeval life. The Exchequer rolls are no trouble to us, and we wax eloquent over monetagium, royal treasuries, and coining irons. We quote to an obol the price of labour, cattle, and corn, at any given time; and the contents of a hoard of money discovered may almost be taken as read; indeed, we have known some so flippant as to attribute the absence of the types they expected to the fault of the hoard, by being buried at twice, or collected at intervals in penny numbers. But what do we know of the contents of the purse in the pocket of the man in the street? Little enough, yet any such information would help to settle questions of sequence and tender, and in all probability it would account for the apparent contradiction between the evidence of the chroniclers who constantly complain of the quantity of base money in circulation, and that of our hoards.
which rarely contain anything of the kind. Even the little story before us would have told us that the sceptred type was the later of the two in the long-cross series, and that the man who hoarded money must have selected it for its purity, for of the four coins the subject of this paper not one is fit for that purpose. True, we know that a man who was hunting in 1126 was expected to have at least a halfpenny upon him, for a mendicant begged an obol of him, and in point of fact he had twopence halfpenny altogether; and that a woman in the crowd at the funeral of Bishop Hugh in Lincoln Cathedral in 1200, had her pocket picked of her purse in quite modern fashion. But now when fate allows us to glance at the money in the pocket of an English soldier who fell in North Wales in the year 1263, we do not find it at all according to rule. But I am anticipating.

In 1914, I was present with Mr. Willoughby Gardner, F.S.A., at the excavations conducted by Colonel T. A. Glenn at Dyserth Castle, near Rhuddlan, Flintshire, and later I was asked to report upon the coins there found in *Archæologia Cambrensis* for January, 1915.

Dyserth Castle was built by Henry III upon an ancient but, as its name tells us, deserted fortified site in 1241, and after a siege it was stormed by the Welsh in 1263; which completes its history. Colonel Glenn's excavations disclosed that the besiegers "drove a mine bringing down a portion of the wall" of the Castle, which fell inwards and buried beneath it at least three of the English garrison. One of these had fallen face downwards and beneath his remains, no doubt originally suspended over his breast, was a small medal, or talisman of lead, unifacial, pierced for suspension, and bearing the design of a simple cross.
Beside the skeleton were the contents of his pocket—three English silver pennies:

1. A penny of Canterbury of the short-cross series, and of the issue which, thirty-four years ago,¹ I attributed to a general recoinage by King John in 1205, recorded by the continuator of Florence of Worcester, and distinguishable by its long narrow face with two curls on each side—Class V of the arrangement by Mr. L. A. Lawrence, F.S.A.²

   Obverse: _HENRICVS REX_
   Reverse: _SAMVEL·ON·CAN_

2. A penny of London of the same series, but of the round-faced class of Henry III, which I thought would be issued about the year 1240.³ Class VII according to Mr. Lawrence.⁴

   Obverse: _HENRICVS REX_
   Reverse: _ILGER·ON·LVNDE_

3. A penny of London of the first type of the long-cross series of Henry III, distinguishable by the absence of the sceptre, which Mr. Lawrence schedules as Class IIIb. He dates the class about 1250, and identifies the name Henry on these coins with Henry Frowik, moneyer of London who received his dies in 1248.⁵

   Obverse: _HENRICVS REX·III_
   Reverse: _HEN RI ON LV ND_

   It will be noticed that of these three coins, buried with their owner in 1263, one had been in circulation for nearly sixty, another for more than twenty, and the third for about a dozen years. If the late Mr. Fox and his brother, Mr. Shirley-Fox, had not already

¹ _Numismatic Chronicle_, 1887.
² _British Numismatic Journal_, vol. xi, p. 64.
³ _Archaeologia Cambrensis_, 1915, p. 85.
⁴ _British Numismatic Journal_, vol. xi, p. 66, and compare his plate II, fig. 42.
⁵ _Ibid._, vol. ix, pp. 149 and 159.
corrected the old order of supposed sequence by transferring the sceptred type to the last of the long-cross series, this dated burial would have suggested that inference. The two short-cross pennies bear out the complaint of the chroniclers, for they show evidence of clipping, and their metal seems to be far from pure. Treating the evidence generally, we have the fact of three coins lying in contact with the soil, unprotected by any vessel, or even the usual compact mass of numerous specimens. The soil was the same, yet its action upon the three pieces seems to have been quite dissimilar. Evidently it was very deleterious to all, for its effect upon the best of them, the long-cross coin, seems to have rendered it brittle; but one of the three is pitted all over and through with tiny holes. This I think is evidence that the coin was originally debased with an excess—a considerable excess—of soft alloy, which has disintegrated. Nor could the other two have been of pure metal.

A Note on the Mint of Rhuddlan.

It seems to me that this little story of Dyserth Castle is a factor in the mystery of the coins of Rhuddlan. In volume II, pages 43 to 46 of this Journal, Major P. W. P. Carlyon-Britton, F.S.A., attributed the whole series of the short-cross coinage that bears the mint-name of Rhuddlan to the period between A.D. 1189 and 1214, in the reigns of Richard I and John; and to me the details of the designs always seemed convincing of that conclusion. But in volume XI, pages 87 and 90, Mr. Lawrence includes these coins in his Classes VII and VIII, and assigns them to the period A.D. 1240 to 1247, in the middle of the reign of Henry III. As to Class VIII itself I have grave doubts, and would replace its varied coins where the late Sir John Evans left them.

The Castle of Rhuddlan, in which was the English mint for North Wales—a branch of that of Chester—belonged at the time of Domesday to the Earl of Chester and his cousin, Robert de Rhuddlan. In 1164, as the Brut-y-Tywysogion tells us, Henry II spent three nights here, and declared his intention of building a castle, meaning, I assume, the usual stone keep in addition to or upon the Norman
mount, which is still to be seen. This seems to have aroused the Welsh who, after a siege of three months under Owain and Cadwalader, broke in and burnt the castle in 1166. But from the Pipe Rolls of 1167 we find that the Earl of Chester was again in possession and strengthening it; and so it remained until the dawn of the next century.

In 1211, the castles of Deganwy and Rhuddlan alone stood out in North Wales against the Welsh until King John “with a vast army” came in person to their relief; but in 1213, “Llywelyn, son of Iorwerth, reduced the castle of Deganwy and the castle of Rhuddlan.”

No doubt the Barons’ Wars in England diverted attention from Rhuddlan for a time, and it would seem that the castle remained in the possession of the Welsh until the year 1277, when Edward I invaded North Wales, made Rhuddlan his headquarters, received the submission of Llywelyn, son of Owain, there, and commenced the building of the great castle, which still remains, a work which occupied several years. Deganwy was recovered and refortified, A.D. 1241-45.

Meanwhile, therefore, from A.D. 1213 to 1277, we must assume that Rhuddlan Castle was in Welsh possession, and unless we are prepared to admit that the coins, which bear the title HENRICVS REX, were Welsh, and issued by David, the son of Llywelyn son of Iorweth, Mr. Lawrence’s date, 1240 to 1247, for them must fail.

I had thought² it possible that David surrendered Rhuddlan when he paid his homage to Henry III at Gloucester, as claimant to the succession of North Wales on the death of his father, Llywelyn, in 1240, but I find that it is not mentioned in the charter of treaty between them, and now the story of Dyserth alone will show that Rhuddlan Castle must have remained Welsh throughout the whole of the period, after 1213, during which the short-cross coinage ran.

Rhuddlan was formerly a seaport, and so long as it was open to access to the sea it was a formidable stronghold, for its relief from Chester was assured; but as an inland fortress it was far from impregnable for an English garrison, and no attempt seems to have

¹ darestygawd is the word used.
been made to recover it from the Welsh. But, instead, when Henry III, in 1241, at the very beginning of Mr. Lawrence's suggested date for the coins, retired from Wales after his very questionable successes, he built the "strong castle" of Dyserth and garrisoned it upon the rock two and a half miles only away and five hundred feet high, which commands Rhuddlan, and so hoped to keep the Welsh in check. If, therefore, Rhuddlan had been still the English outpost, there could have been no strategic use for Dyserth. On the other hand, if Rhuddlan Castle was then a stronghold of the Welsh, or even a ruin in their possession, Dyserth Castle on its English side was just that malvoisin of the Normans, or the watch-dog so dear to English strategy ever since Edward the Elder had devised the method of checking the Danes by building a burgh of his own over against theirs. Certainly Dyserth, so long as it lasted, played the part of its predecessor Rhuddlan, for whilst Rhuddlan is never mentioned, we read that in 1256 and 1257, Llywelyn, son of Gruffudd, carried everything before him save the two sorely beleaguered castles of Deganwy and Dyserth, and only by a temporary truce was the latter allowed to be reprovisioned. Early in 1263, Dyserth was again in dire distress, and had to be relieved, and in August of that year it was captured by Llywelyn, as I have already explained, and our own chronicler, Mathew of Westminster, adds that he levelled it with the ground.

It may be a little thing to judge a soldier's pay, even in the year 1263, by three coins in his pocket, but if the mint of Rhuddlan was then, or had been, in operation so recently as from 1240 to 1247, one would not expect to find them represented by a penny from Canterbury of about 1205, and two from London of about 1240 and 1250 respectively. On the other hand, if the Rhuddlan mint had ceased for ever in 1213, no money from it could be expected at Dyserth in 1263, and it seems to me that the latest coins of the short-cross series preserved to us of the Rhuddlan mint exactly tally with the type in issue when King John with his "vast army" made the Castle his headquarters in 1211.