

AN EMERGENCY COINAGE IN IRELAND.

BY HELEN FARQUHAR.

 HE readers of the *British Numismatic Journal* will remember a very interesting paper on "The Coinage of Ireland during the Rebellion, 1641-1652," written by our member, Mr. F. Willson Yeates.¹ They will also recall some "Further Notes on the Irish Coinage, 1641-1652," published after the death of Mr. Yeates.² In the first article the writer dealt in some detail with certain coins roughly copied from the Tower pieces with the mint-mark triangle-in-circle, which he, on strong evidence, attributed to the Confederated Catholics of Kilkenny in the year 1642. He described a square-shaped piece as follows:—"Obverse.—Charles I on horseback to the left within a grained circle. Reverse.—The royal arms in an oval shield garnished, within a grained circle. Struck on a piece of copper .9 of an inch square, which is a little too small to show the whole of the device in the circles. Weight 140 grains."³ He illustrated this curious coin, then in his, and now in my collection, and speculated as to the probability that it was coined in copper as a trial piece.

In that the British Museum and the Winchester Cathedral Library each contain a silver example, weighing 118½ grains and 155 grains, respectively—the latter, evenly struck, and in splendid condition, coming under the notice of Mr. W. J. Andrew after the death of Mr. Yeates—the explanation brought forward by Mr. Yeates appeared likely to be the true solution of the problem. This was the

¹ *British Numismatic Journal*, vol. xv, pp. 185-223.

² *Ibid.*, vol. xvi, pp. 189-93.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. xv, p. 194 and Pl. I, 5.

more particularly the case, because a silver shilling on a similarly shaped flan, and with the crowned head of Charles I to the left and the Royal Arms on the reverse, was also accepted by Mr. Willson Yeates as belonging to the light weight prescribed by the Kilkenny coinage, in that this shilling weighs only 61 grains.¹ After the publication of his first article he was interested in finding yet another coin in my collection, a silver sixpence consonant with and weighing little less than half the above-mentioned shilling. His notes concerning his later discoveries were published after his much-lamented death.²

But it appears possible that the Confederated Catholics may in truth have intended to circulate a copper token coinage, redeemable in silver should the King's cause prosper, just as the gun-money of James II was later intended to be redeemed.

This suggestion is put forward because some curious copper coins found in Ireland have passed into my hands, and are struck with sufficient care and precision to render it unsafe to dismiss them lightly as the work of a contemporary forger.

I have three of these copper coins, and one of the best specimens is illustrated, together with a sixpence of poor silver found with



SILVER SIXPENCE.

them. The obverse of all four coins is copied from the coinage of Charles I, *circa* 1637-8, mint-mark tun, and those which followed it, and the reverse of the silver specimen is consonant with this model, being of Hawkins type 4, and, in fact, just like the sixpence illustrated in "Further Notes on the Irish Coinage," minus the surrounding square flan, and carefully bounded by the beaded circle.

¹ *British Numismatic Journal*, vol. xv, p. 193, and Pl. I, 4.

² *Ibid.*, vol. xvi, pp. 190-1, illustrated on p. 190.

It reached accordingly to just half the weight,¹ and the shape of the harp on the reverse of this silver coin is like that on the anchor coinage of 1638-9.



COPPER SIXPENCE.

The copper coins appear to have been struck from a single pair of dies, though a considerable time seems to have elapsed between the three striking, suggestive of a fairly large issue. But as regards these copper coins a curious anomaly presents itself. Slightly larger than the silver sixpence and struck from a different die from the latter, the obverse still suggests the copy of the ordinary "Tower" sixpence of Charles I; the reverse, however, is, for some reason unknown, taken from a Tudor coin. The die-sinker apparently copied directly an Elizabethan milled sixpence, probably of the date 1571, and looking at the coin set before him turned the dexter to sinister. The large heads and small bodies of the lions, one of the characteristics of Tudor heraldry, are very marked, but the lis in the other quarterings are not visible in two out of the three of the rubbed specimens which have come down to us. The date at first sight reads 1521, but on careful examination it appears that the "2" is really copied from a "7" with a prolonged serif found on some Elizabethan coins. The intention probably was to substitute the figures 1642 or 1643 for the 1571 of the original. The die-sinker misunderstood his instructions. We know not why this design was selected; it may be the desire was in some way connected with the mill-and-screw process used for the Elizabethan prototype, for such is the regularity of the striking that it appears almost safe to assume that these coins are the product of some kind of mill, perhaps operated

¹ The sixpence on the square flan illustrated on p. 190 in vol. xvi weighs 29.3 grains, and that here shown 14.7 grains.

by hand like a Spanish one, discovered at Cordova and described in 1914 by Mr. G. F. Hill.¹ We may also refer our readers to the interesting article published in 1908 by the late Fleet-Surgeon Weightman on the Richmond farthings,² wherein he describes the copper strips passing between engraved cylinders as the method by which these farthings were probably made, and afterwards punched out or carefully trimmed to the required shape. Our copper pieces are as thin and as evenly struck as the Richmond farthings, and, like them, could not, we think, be struck with the hammer, or the design would have gone through and the edge would have buckled. Be this as it may, and whether the Tudor piece was selected for historical, political or other reasons, such as the simplicity of the device or the fact that it was an early example of a dated coin, it is remarkable that another Tudor characteristic presents itself in a lis instead of a cross in the centre of the royal crown, a peculiarity found in some Elizabethan coins. It is, however, possible that here again the die-sinker erred and copied a Scottish coin of Charles I because his "Tower" sixpence was not clear in its details.

The attribution to the Confederated Catholics is somewhat rash, in that the coins were found at Belfast, a far cry from Kilkenny; but it is possible that they were carried north in the tumult of the times, and, perhaps, thrown away by some fugitive as damnatory evidence. The likeness between the poor silver circular sixpence and that twice its weight on the square flan connects, however, this base issue with the Kilkenny coins, and suggests a desire upon the part of the Confederated Catholics, when the light weight, accepted in October, 1642, became too great a strain on their coffers, either to halve that weight and strike a smaller coin in silver, or to replace it altogether by a copper issue. The weight of the copper pieces varies little—the heaviest turns the scale at 20 grains, the lightest at 18 grains, whilst the most corroded of the three weighs 19.2

¹ "A Seventeenth-Century Coining Press," *Numismatic Chronicle*, 1914, Part I, pp. 90-92.

² "The Royal Farthing Tokens," published in the *British Numismatic Journal*, vol. iii, pp. 181-217.

grains. If there was any intention to place a light coating of silver on the copper coins, the final weight is not easy to gauge.

I think we may dismiss the idea which at first occurred to me that the numeral on the obverse was meant to stand for six farthings, a presumption to which the VI on Briot's silver-pattern piece might give rise. It seems most unlikely that an emergency coin should be struck in so unfamiliar a denomination, and the type is not copied from Briot's pattern coin. The weight, moreover, is only about three times that of a "Rose" farthing, Montagu type 5, and four times that of a "Maltravers" farthing, Montagu type 3, or twice the "Richmond" farthing, Montagu type 1. It is, however, fair to say that to judge correctly by the weights of copper farthings of Charles I is difficult, in that the specimens vary greatly. Briot's six-farthing pattern in silver also weighs only half as much as the curious copper coins under discussion. I leave my readers to decide whether I am justified in calling these notes by the title of "An Emergency Coinage in Ireland."



CHARLES EDWARD. BY ANTOINE DAVID.
(IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY.)