THE MEDIEVAL MONEYERS.

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Many years have now passed since attention was concentrated, whether in this Journal or in the Numismatic Chronicle, upon the personality of the Moneyer. It was half-a-century ago, in the eighties, that argument was rife about the conditions under which the moneyer worked and the social status which he held; in the years 1880 and 1881 Mr. Willett and Archdeacon Pownall were engaged in controversy whether the moneyers were stationary or itinerant; in 1885 Mr. Robertson produced in the Numismatic Chronicle an excellent monograph showing, by reference to Gloucester registers, the status of Gloucester moneyers of Henry III, and fourteen years later the same service was performed by Dr. Lloyd Kenyon for the Shrewsbury mint. The list of names in the Chronicle of John de Oxenedes focussed attention on the reign of Henry III, and I think there has been a tendency to assume that conditions which were found to exist then were similar in earlier times.

It cannot be too forcibly stated that the condition of the coinage, and, parallel with it, the position of the men responsible for it, developed progressively throughout the ages, and it may well be that the moneyer of the thirteenth century differed from the Anglo-Saxon moneyer no less than he differed from the Deputy-Master of the Royal Mint of to-day.

Unfortunately, we can offer no evidence of the social status of the moneyer in early Anglo-Saxon times, nor of the conditions under which he worked. Before the tenth century no mention is made of the moneyer in the Laws or the Chronicles; we know him only as a name appearing on our coins, and we can only conjecture that, when the penny coinage of Offa appeared with its infinite variety of style and design, then at least the English moneyer, like his predecessor in Merovingian France, was a skilled craftsman who made not only his coins but also his dies. That the moneyer still struck the coin with his own hands in the tenth century may, I think, be inferred from the clause in the
Greatley Laws of Æthelstan, promulgated between 925 and 935, which provided as the penalty for forgery the amputation of the moneyer’s hand and its exposure over his mint-smithy. Such a law would hardly be made if the moneyer, whose hand was to be cut off, were not doing the handiwork himself. The penalty might well survive after moneyers ceased to do the manual labour, but would hardly be instituted in such circumstances. Further, in Aethelred’s Laws (attributed doubtfully to the year 987) the death penalty was attached to moneyers found guilty of working secretly in woods or elsewhere; such a practice, or the possibility of it occurring, implies that the moneyer himself struck the coins whether he made the dies or not. On the other hand the order issued in 1205, a couple of centuries later, for moneyers, assayers, keepers of dies, and others, to attend at Westminster for an inquiry into the coinage, mentions specifically “operatores” who were presumably labourers performing the manual work for the moneyers; and, indeed, we know from the researches of Robertson and Kenyon that before the close of the thirteenth century moneyers were men of substance holding position as bailiffs and busy traders, who would have had neither the time nor the inclination to apply themselves to the manual work of striking coins. At some time, then, approximately between the years 1000 and 1200 the moneyers had improved their position sufficiently to delegate the manual labour to subordinates. Perhaps we may trace the change to Aethelred’s London Laws (991–1002), where it was ordered that there should be fewer moneyers, three in every large town and one in every other, and that the moneyers should have workers under them for whom they should be responsible. So far as we can judge from the coins, the clause reducing moneyers to three at most in one mint was not enforced at all mints, nevertheless the introduction of workmen under the moneyers may have come in at this time.

Were the moneyers still the makers of their dies? *Domesday Book* makes it quite clear that this duty was the privilege of the Graver at London, but leaves us wondering at what period the die-engraving was taken out of the hands of the moneyers. This is a point on which the coins themselves should tell their own story. We are all familiar with the curious feature of the rarity of some and the commonness of other types of the tenth century, from Edward the Elder to Edgar. The famous artistic designs

1 II AS, (14–14, 2) (Liebermann I, p. 158–9).
of Edward the Elder are the work of a few moneyers who must surely have been engraving their own dies; and, if I may put forward my own somewhat conjectural view, it appears that moneyers, while working at a coinage of the conventional design which appears on the common coins, were also experimenting in the cutting of dies with artistic designs; and at the same time they were experimenting in portraiture. It was not till towards the end of the reign of Edgar (959-975) that the coinage fell into the groove in which we find it at the time of the Conquest, and even in the reign of Aethelred II we find, as previously, the earliest type of the reign still being struck throughout the reign concurrently with a succession of other types.¹

At some time in the tenth century, I think, the privilege of engraving the dies was taken out of the hands of the moneyers; possibly this was a gradual process, it may be that a central authority issued dies of the ordinary type in the reigns of Edward the Elder to Edgar, while moneyers were experimenting on dies of varied designs and on portraiture. But, be that as it may, it is quite clear that the engraving of dies at London was not a new institution introduced by William the Conqueror; at least in the reigns of the last few Anglo-Saxon kings the moneyers were no longer engraving their dies.

By the time of the Norman Conquest, then, the moneyer, who three centuries before had been a highly skilled craftsman who with his own hands created his coin from start to finish, had ceased to exercise the craft of die-sinking and the labour of coin-striking. His name still appeared on the coins but he had changed from a craftsman to a responsible officer controlling labourers who were engaged on the mechanical work of alloying metal and cutting flans and striking them; but no doubt he needed to possess considerable technical knowledge and had to exercise rigid control, for it was he who paid the penalty for light or base coin being issued with his name upon it. He made, no doubt, a good living out of the profit of the coinage, and he was frequently not above supplementing it by false coining, that is to say, issuing coins of base metal or light weight. In fact it is not unlikely that many moneyers reckoned on making considerable illicit profits; in the reign of William the Conqueror the coins struck from altered reverse dies are sufficient evidence

¹ An explanation on these lines of the coinage of the tenth century has been suggested in my English Coins, though unfortunately it had to be too compressed for clear exposition. I hope to have an opportunity to deal with this subject more fully at a later date.
of the ingenuity which the moneyer would display in protecting himself from conviction. I have published drawings of such alterations in *British Museum Catalogue of English Coins, Norman Kings*, vol. I, p. cxlix f. They show alterations on the dies of the reverse inscriptions:

- **ELFSIONLIINDE** to **ELPPIONEXEESDE**
- **IELFSONL INDENI (?)** to **IDLFSONEA--ENI**
- **IELPINEONLIINDE** to **IDLPINEONLNEONE**
- **GODPINEONLIINI** to **- - - - - NEOND--NI**
- **GODPINEONLII[DI ?]** to **IELFPINEONCIIFI**

There are also two coins struck from dies reading **IELFSIONLIINDE** and **GODPINEONLIINI** on which the moneyer's name and the first letters of the mint name have been obliterated by a series of additional cuts or punch-marks.

The coins struck from the altered dies are always less in weight, 15 to 18 grains; the alterations are such as to change or obliterate the names of the moneyer and of the mint, while the unimportant letters such as the word **ON** and the last letters of the mint remain untouched. There can therefore be no doubt that the moneyers made the alterations on official dies with the object of using them to strike light coin. I have seen similar alteration on dies of the Short-Cross period, so the practice was not of short duration.

Nor could the severe penalty of mutilation prevent the moneyers from extensive forgery even without the precaution of obliterating their names on the dies. The wholesale punishment of moneyers in 1125 is a familiar story; it is recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and by many of the monastic chroniclers, some say that all the moneyers throughout the country were mutilated (and that with great justice, interpolates the A.S. Chronicler). This is no doubt an exaggeration; one chronicler says that ninety-four were mutilated; another, the Winton annalist, that all the moneyers of England save three of Winchester were mutilated. We know that some of the moneyers were able to get the sentence commuted to a heavy fine, for in the Pipe Roll of 1130 the Chichester moneyer Brand is debited with £20 to escape mutilation with the other moneyers. At any rate the punishment of moneyers was a wholesale affair, and with what result? If we look through the coins of the last type but one of Henry I, which was struck some time between 1130
and 1135, five to ten years after the mutilations, we find a large proportion of pennies of base metal and light weight; in the Catalogue of the B.M. coins, which are selected coins, there are ninety pennies described of this type, of which as many as nine, that is ten per cent., are base and light.

Perhaps one would not be making too hazardous a conjecture in guessing that these malpractices were the cause of a very important change in the conduct of mint affairs, namely, the institution of the king's Cambium or Exchange.

There exists in the British Museum a little printed pamphlet, very rare and very interesting, entitled Cambium Regis, or The Office of His Majestie's Exchange Royall. It was printed in London in 1628, and it seems to have been officially authorized for publication for the purpose of "declaring and justifying his Majestie's Right, and the convenience thereof" in support of King Charles's proclamation, issued in 1627, which appointed the Earl of Holland to the wardenship of the Exchange, and prohibited exchange by other persons. The proclamation was aimed at the goldsmiths, who had usurped the functions of exchanges, and this pamphlet is a reply to their petition in which they claimed that exchange was their traditional and rightful privilege and that their trade would be ruined by the proclamation.

After an introductory note it demonstrates the case that the right of Exchange has always been a "flower of the Crowne." For this purpose it quotes the clause in the Charter of Henry I that none but a king's moneyer may perform exchange, "conjoyning in one person," the writer says, "both the offices of Exchanger and Master worker of his Moneys, which the excellent Kings succeeding preserved, as a flower of the Crowne, though in distinct and divided offices, untill that about the begin­ning of Henry the 6. they came again to bee conjoyned." The date at which the Exchange was established as a separate office is not known; the earliest evidence is the rendering of accounts for its profits in the Pipe Roll of 3 Richard I (1191-2). I was perhaps committing an anachronism when, in a paper on the Coin-Types of the Eleventh Century, I referred to the part played by the Exchange as a watch-dog over the moneyers, seeing that it is evident that the moneyer acted as exchanger in the reign of Henry I and the separate exchange is of a later date. We can hardly suppose that Richard I, in whose third year the first notice of it appears, founded the new office. Perhaps we

may not be wrong in supposing it to be part of the great reforms of Henry II which separated the judicial from the executive and financial duties of the curia regis. It can hardly have been in existence earlier than his reign or, if in existence, it must surely have failed to function in the reign of Stephen. It cannot have been later than his reign since profits of the exchange were returned in Richard’s third year.

I should here point out that Thomas Madox in his History of the Exchequer, which was published in 1769, makes the obvious mistake of translating Cambium as Mint. There has been a tendency in recent times, perhaps due to error, to confuse the Cambium with the Mint or at least to suppose that it involved the mint as part of its office. The two were quite distinct, and though, where a mint existed, there was probably always a Cambium, the reverse was not always the case; for example, we know that an exchange existed at Dover long after the Dover mint was abolished.

I am not sure that the writer of the printed pamphlet called "Cambium Regis" is correct in saying that the office of Exchanger was kept distinct from that of Moneyer until about the beginning of the reign of Henry VI. There seems to be evidence in the Pipe Rolls that Henry III occasionally, in 1257 for example, appointed moneyers to control of the Exchange. The statute of Parliament of 1422, by which it was ordained that the Master of the Mint should hold the exchange in the City of London, is well known to us; it is interesting to observe that it contains the clause "although it had been well ordained in time past that he who should be master of the mint should in nowise hold the king’s exchange."

It is of importance to us to obtain as clear a view as possible of the dates at which the exchange functioned as a separate body, for while it was kept separate it certainly served as a control over the work of the mint. Thus, in the reign of Henry III, as the Red Book of the Exchequer tells us, the flans had to be assayed by the assayer in the exchange before they were taken to the dies for striking and again after they had been struck; and the cambitor, or warden of the exchange, was then to pass them into currency.

By this time the position of the moneyer as a supervisor of workmen is fully recognized; and the entry in the Red Book tells us that out of 10d. per lb. which the moneyer receives he is to pay 3d. for the workmen (operariis novam monetam fabri-
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The medieval moneyers’ cantibus) and 3d. for their houses and shops. The moneyer was now a man of considerable substance and social standing; many were local officials, bailiffs, etc.; one was, we know, a mercer, another the king’s tailor, another the king’s surgeon.

I need not go further into the question of the moneyer’s status in the thirteenth century; it has been adequately proved in the papers to which I have already referred, and details concerning individual moneyers have been collected in Mr. Lawrence’s papers on Short-Cross and Long-Cross coins which were published in the 10th, 13th, and 14th volumes of the Journal.

But there is one man whose career is of unusual interest as illustration of the power and wealth enjoyed by moneyers in the middle of the thirteenth century. It is true that entries which I have obtained from Pipe, Patent and Close Rolls, give glimpses only of his career, but even so they are impressive. This moneyer is Nicholas de Sancto Albano, who held the unusual position of moneyer at the two mints of London and Canterbury, and who, at the commencement of the Long-Cross coinage, was the only king’s moneyer at work in the whole country; he held, in fact, for a short time a monopoly of the royal dies, and for this reason our earliest long-cross coins bear for a brief space the name of neither mint nor moneyer and for a short subsequent period that of the mint only and no moneyer.

The first notice is a Pipe Roll entry of 1230 of a debt of this Nicholas of half-a-mark for wine; he is not described as monetarius (a title which the Pipe Roll, I believe, always inserts) and therefore I assume that he had not yet received his die. In 1237 a mandate for a payment to be made by Nicholas to Robert of Canterbury refers to the agreement of this year between the King and Nicholas concerning the dies of London and Canterbury; it was therefore in 1237 that he became moneyer at the two mints. In 1242 he received the farm, i.e. the profits, of the two mints at a rental of £90, and in case of war he was given guarantee upon the Exchange revenues against a deficit; it was in this year, no doubt, that he achieved his monopoly, turning out the other moneyers by virtue of his tenure of the two mints. In the same year he received two ecclesiastical benefices, Wadenho and La Panne. In the following year, 1243, the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of Carlisle were ordered to provide for Nicholas an ecclesiastical benefice of the value of 30 marks (£20) a year. In 1246 the king gave him a grant of £10 a year until he could provide him with a suitable benefice.
1248 he received a gift of timber in the royal forest of Windlesham; he travelled on the king's service, for a protection was issued for him; and in the same year he was appointed King's Remembrancer. In 1250 he was a commissioner for London and Canterbury on an inquiry about the Jews. In 1253 he was dead, for a grant was made in respect of property sold by his executors; two years later his London die was granted to William of Gloucester.

The reforms of Edward I which, after prolonged inquiry, brought into issue the dull Edwardian penny, were at the time said to be caused by the clipping of coin by the Jews, and the Jews came in for much persecution and prosecution on account of the bad state of the money. But we have reason to suppose that all was not well at the mint, for the most important change made in 1278 was the abolition of the moneyers and centralization of authority in a single officer called the Master-worker or Master-worker & Moneyer, the predecessor of the Master of the Mint. He worked under contract with the king and was solely responsible for the whole of the royal coinage. Thus the story of the moneyers comes to an end when the coins no longer bear their names, and our coinage loses a picturesque point of contact between the coin and the coiner.