

A FOURTEENTH-CENTURY COIN WEIGHT

By DEREK ALLEN

A SPECIMEN of a rare coin weight has recently appeared in the British Museum. The type is already known from the specimen in the Cabinet de Médailles, which has been published by M. Dieudonné in his *Manuel des Poids Monétaires*, p. 92, no. 14 c; Pl. I, 28. There is also a third specimen, in a private collection. M. Dieudonné describes it as French, and believes it to have been made for a franc d'or of Charles V. Though the weight of the Paris specimen and of that in private hands would agree with this, the example in the British Museum is too heavy. Both the weight and the design of these pieces are consistent with the suggestion that they are English.

The weights are triangular; no other weights of this shape are known. In the centre of each there is stamped with a circular punch the head of a king, facing. In each angle of the triangle is stamped, with a small diamond-shaped punch, a fleur-de-lis. The reverse is plain. The Paris specimen and that in the private collection are from the same punches, but the British Museum specimen is from different and inferior punches. The Paris weight, which is somewhat worn, weighs 58.3 gr. (3.78 gm.); that in the private collection, even more worn, weighs 54.2 gr. (3.51 gm.); the London example, in mint state, weighs 59.7 gr. (3.87 gm.).

The weight of the English half-noble from 1351 to 1412 is theoretically 60 gr. (3.88 gm.). The weight of the franc d'or is 58.9 gr. (3.82 gm.). It is therefore more probable that the three weights, which must have been for the same coin, were intended for the English half-noble than for the franc d'or. The portrait on the weights closely resembles that of the king on the English coins during the latter part of the reign of Edward III or during that of Richard II. In the case of the Paris specimen it may conceivably be from the same irons, though the portrait on the British Museum weight could not have come from them. This portrait resembles more closely than anything else the head on the wardrobe counter, *Medallic Illustrations*, vol. i, p. 7, no. 3. Mr. Lawrence has recently shown that these counters were

officially issued by the mint.¹ It is not impossible that these weights were also produced by the English mint.

English coin weights for the noble from 1412 to 1464 and its fractions are well known (see V. B. Crowther-Beynon,



1. BRITISH MUSEUM. 2. CABINET DE MEDAILLES.
3. PRIVATE COLLECTION.

Brit. Num. Journ., 3rd Ser., vol. i, p. 94; Dieudonné, *op. cit.*, p. 113, Pl. VI, 35, 39-43). None earlier than this have been recorded. Messrs. Sheppard and Musham, in their book *Money Scales and Weights*, mention weights of Edward III (p. 175, no. 1). Mr. Sheppard has kindly shown me the weights, and it is certain that they are all weights either for the noble from 1412 to 1464 or for the rose noble of Edward IV. Although no weights are known earlier than 1412, there is documentary evidence for coin weights as early as the reign of John (L. A. Lawrence, *Brit. Num. Journ.*, 1st Ser., vol. vi, p. 288). It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the three weights in question are the earliest English coin weights as yet known, and belong to the latter part of the fourteenth century.

¹ In a paper read before the Royal Numismatic Society in October 1936.