REVIEWS

Tradesman's Tickets and Private Tokens 1795-1819,
by R. C. Bell, M.B., F.R.C.S. Published by Corbitt & Hunter Ltd., Newcastle-upon-Tyne. 315 pp. 45s.

Mr. Bell has produced a worthy successor to his two previous works on 18th and 19th century tokens. The improvement in the lay-out of the book, and particularly in the quality of the illustrations noticeable in the second volume of the trilogy, has been maintained.

In the two previous books, Mr. Bell laid down standards for the acceptance of tokens as genuine commercial coins. Few token specialists will quarrel with these. The position here is more difficult. The author is perfectly honest, and admits that in many cases we cannot say whether a token can be included as a tradesmen's advertising token, or a private token. It must be admitted that his choice is most wise. However, it may be questioned if it is wise to include pieces inscribed as medals. It seems a pity that tokens that have always been associated together, such as the Edinburgh halfpennies and farthings of Hutchinson are now separated in different volumes. In particular, it would have been better to leave the famous Wilkinson 3s. 6d. silver token in the first volume, especially as the author admits that it may have circulated as a commercial coin.

Many of the pieces described as private tokens bear all the marks of a commercial coin, but do not qualify as such, because they were struck in very small numbers. Were these tokens originally intended for commercial use? The issue might have been suspended for some reason. Dr. Bell does not say if this was the case. It would be interesting to know the smallest number of tokens that he would admit as a genuine commercial coin.

Among the most remarkable tokens described are those for which the dies were cut by I. G. Hancock at the age of 9 years. Such skill hardly seems credible at that age, but there seems little doubt about the facts.

On page 131 it is stated that both the die sinker and the manufacturer of Wilkinson's 3s. 6d. token is Hancock. As Boulton made the corresponding halfpenny token with the reverse of the barge, it seems more likely that he made the silver token also, the die being cut by Hancock, who at times worked for Boulton. The statement on page 163 'There are specimens, however, which have been countermarked with a w on one or both sides, and others with and Sixpence obliterated' is rather misleading. In fact, tokens are found which combine both varieties. These are minor points, and do not at all detract from the great value of the book.

In an appendix, the author deals with private tokens issued after 1819. These are of great interest, being quite unknown to most collectors of tokens. They include the issues of famous numismatists as W. J. Davis and S. H. Hamer. The facile optimism expressed on the reverses of some of Hamer's tokens is worthy of Samuel Smiles. While we are a learned numismatic society, it is important to remember that many others besides numismatists are interested in 18th and 19th century tokens, such as local historians. Mr. Bell's work will particularly appeal to such people. In the reviewer's opinion, not the least important feature of the book is the vivid picture that is given of the social and political life of the late 18th and the early 19th centuries.

w. s.

Matthew Young and his Numismatic Correspondents a Century and a Half Ago, by A. Porritt. Minerva Numismatic Handbooks, no. 1. 10s.

This little book places on record in a most readable form a parcel of letters, mostly addressed to Matthew Young, the leading coin-dealer of his time, and dated in the main between 1814 and 1830. The letters were formerly in the possession of Mr. S. H. Hamer of Halifax from whom they passed to his friend and colleague Mr. G. Dent. They now belong to the Halifax Antiquarian Society.

Mr. Porritt has made extracts from the more interesting letters—there are some 150 in all—and has presented them in a manner that reflects vividly both the interests of collectors at this time and the problems that a dealer then had to tackle. Among the more entertaining (and in some cases undoubtedly the more exasperating) of Young's correspondents were several parsons: the Rev. J. W. Martin writes engagingly, 'Take compassion on a poor fellow who has been confined to the house these five weeks' and asks for news and for coins; the Rev. Marmaduke Trattle, described by another correspondent as 'that Gentlemanly Old Humourist', writes voluminously and urgently to Young begging him to help in the 'Aggrandisement' of his collection,
in which he must have been successful, since its dispersal in 1832 took 29 days. These are only two of a number of clergies whose letters figure in these pages. But other familiar names are found among the writers: four members of the Wyon family; Edward Hawkins; C. W. Loscombe (who sends Young 18 medals asking him to mark those that are false); T. W. Thomas; to mention but a few.

Many of the letters quoted deal with medals, in the sense in which the term is used today (in Mr. Loscombe’s letter it is perhaps used in the older sense which included coins); fewer mention classical coins; and only occasionally do medieval coins figure in the correspondence. This, no doubt, reflects the tastes of his correspondents rather than the scope of Young’s activities as a dealer for, in the sale of his collection which clearly included (if indeed it did not comprise) his stock, there was a wide range of medieval coins. Outstanding were over 3,000 PAXS pennies of William I (which, sold in large lots, averaged 9d. each!). A few are designated as being from the great Beauworth hoard, found four years before Young’s death, and it is a fair surmise that the greater part of the remainder came from the same source.

For the record it may be noted that Mr. Porritt’s statement that the dispersal of Young’s collection occupied 54 days between 1838 and 1841 is, though large enough in all conscience, in fact a slight under-statement. Following ‘the ninth and last portion’ in November 1841, ‘the remaining portion’ consisting of a further 253 lots was sold in November 1842.

Altogether this little book of Mr. Porritt’s has given this reviewer much pleasure, as it will, he feels sure, other readers.

C. E. B.


In 1954 the Historical Association published Coins and medals: a select bibliography in the series Helps for students of history. It is perhaps a reflection of the increasing numismatic awareness of other historical sciences that an expanded French version of this very helpful work can be published by a numismatic organisation, the Cercle d’Etudes Numismatiques, of the city where Mr. Grierson (one of the most internationally orientated of all working in the field of numismatics) has been professor of numismatics and the history of coinage since 1948. As in 1954, the chapters cover generalities—primitive and emergency money—the ancient world—medieval and modern Europe—western coinage outside Europe—Islam—India—the Far East—coin-weights, jettons and tokens—medals; bibliographical details are reduced to the minimum except for adding place of publication. The bibliography again excludes collecting as such—admitted only where the needs of collectors have produced the most important manuals—and such fields of collecting as tokens other than trade tokens, and decorations, which are of little significance to the historian. That a solely numismatic audience is now envisaged, however, is evident from a very valuable new chapter on sale catalogues (pages 169–208), to the lack of organisation of which Mr. Grierson has himself drawn the attention of the International Numismatic Commission. Other very welcome additions are sections on coining techniques and numismatic methods, and the much-needed indexing (prepared with the help of Miss M. Webb).

It is to be regretted, however, that there is not one index but two: of persons, and of subjects and place names (also titles). This division does not correspond to any real distinction in the needs of enquirers, for neither is the first index composed exclusively of authors, nor does it include references to publications authorised by museums etc., which are entered under place in the second index. Admittedly there are difficulties in inter-filing persons, places and subjects, but codes of rules have been drawn up to meet them.

For a future edition it may be suggested that the less important publications noted in the commentary to another should be indexed completely, and that the index should be more fully cross-referenced. The blind reference under Papadopoli (page 108) needs correcting; the entry for O’Donovan is on page 195. A future edition might also be saved from a few errors perpetuated from 1954: Grierson (page 82) should read ‘The gold solidus . . .’; Bowker (page 151) is N.N.M. 101. One would also like to know the principle of arrangement of entries in each section; neither alphabetical nor chronological, it is not except on occasions obviously systematic.

It is to be hoped that a future English edition will appear in a shorter time than we have had to wait for this; yet it is already out of date to the extent of not covering all publications of 1965. It might also be cheaper, something nearer the price of 1954 (five shillings) which the British Association of Numismatic Societies can continue to offer to schools. One would be willing to dispense with the admittedly personal selection of papers representing trends of research in different fields (a considerable
proportion of the additions which have doubled its size), for which the specialist can turn to the more detailed *Rapports, Relazioni,* and now *Survey of numismatic research 1960–1965* of the international congresses, or to the bibliographical listings of Mrs. Clain-Stefanelli (1965) in favour of greater emphasis on the unique qualities of Grierson’s bibliography: that it approaches, with its critical annotations and scope notes introducing each section, the function of a guide to study. With the addition of a list of significant museums, libraries, societies and coordinating organisations like the International Numismatic Commission, research institutes such as the Naples Centro Internazionale di Studi Numismatici, foundations and awards, and possibly established dealers, with their addresses, scope, resources, publications, and availability of services, it could have a very important influence educationally.

R. H. T.