

AN UNPUBLISHED VARIETY OF GROAT OF THE FIRST
COINAGE OF HENRY VIII.

BY RAYMOND CARLYON-BRITTON.

THE groat to which I would draw the attention of the members of the Society, may be described as follows :—

Obverse.—Mint-mark Portcullis crowned over τ crowned,
hENRICO^o * VIII^o * DI^o * GRAN * REX * ANGL^o * Z * RR^o, usual
profile-type bust.

Reverse.—Mint-mark Portcullis crowned. **POSVI**, etc.
Ornamented slipped trefoils in the forks of the cross.



This groat is in my collection. Mr. H. A. Parsons has also a groat with obverse from the same die as my coin, but with the reverse of the ordinary Tower type without the ornamented trefoils in the forks of the cross. Mr. J. Shirley-Fox also has a groat exactly similar to that of Mr. Parsons.

I think the alteration of the mint-mark on the obverse of these three groats and the feature of the slipped trefoils in the forks of the

cross on the reverse of my coin—the latter, I believe, a feature quite unknown to coins of the period—may possibly be accounted for by assuming that the dies from which my groat was struck were originally prepared for Henry's "English type" of coinage at Tournai. I suggest as a possibility that this pattern may have been approved, and even a number of dies prepared, before it was decided to adopt another pattern. This other pattern to which the Tournai groats belong, as also the half-groat of the "English type" from the same mint of which we know, has the French title preceding the English in the obverse legend, as upon the earlier Tournai coinages of Henry VIII of "French type" and probably workmanship, and the mint name on the reverse. Upon such a change of design being decided upon, the obverse dies already prepared of the discarded type were, I suggest, impressed with the current mint-mark in use at the Tower and made for economy's sake to serve for the English coinage. I believe that my groat is a true coin and that the mint-mark, portcullis crowned on the reverse, which is unaltered, was originally intended to appear in conjunction with the mint-mark τ crowned. The unique feature of the decorated trefoils in the forks of the reverse cross shows that the die was prepared for some special coinage. The τ crowned was, no doubt, a badge assumed by Henry VIII subsequently to his capture of Tournai in 1513.

It may be that the combination of these two marks, the portcullis crowned and τ crowned, was to show that the coin was of Tournai, and that it was struck actually at the Tower, the portcullis crowned being the current mint-mark there.

The use of the latter mark would have had a secondary purpose also for purposes of the pyx trials. For at that date it could not be known how long Tournai was to remain in the king's hands as security for the indemnity fixed by the treaty of 1514 with France, and perhaps the proposal was, that with the assumption of each new mint-mark at the Tower, it was to be used on the reverse with the τ crowned mint-mark on the obverse, on Tournai coins. Without some such conjectures as the above it is difficult to account for the peculiar features occurring on this coin.

The reason for subsequently changing the pattern to that finally adopted for the Tournai coins of "English type" may have been that the  crowned badge was but little known, and that it was thought desirable to make the place of emanation of these pieces more generally understandable by employing the mint-name on the reverse, as had been formerly the practice upon the two earlier issues of "French type."

