

REVIEWS

Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles. Hunterian and Coats Collections, University of Glasgow. Part I. Anglo-Saxon Coins. By ANNE S. ROBERTSON. London. Published for the British Academy 1961. xviii+88, 42 plates.

THIS volume brings into a single series the Anglo-Saxon portion of two collections. The famous Hunterian Cabinet is represented here by 888 pieces, of which 783 have a recorded history going back to William Hunter's own time. The second collection, represented by 350 pieces, was formed by Mr. Thomas Coats of Ferguslie, mainly between 1871 and 1882. In accordance with the wishes of Mr. Coats's family, it is preserved as a separate collection, of which the serial numbers are given in this volume, but the remarkable way in which it supplements the Hunterian coins fully justifies its incorporation with the Hunterian series in a single edition. It will always be overshadowed by its great Hunterian neighbour, but it includes a number of important rarities, and it provides valuable material, even for the periods with which the name of William Hunter is especially associated. Of the five coins of Berhtwulf of Mercia described in this volume (355-9), four are in the Coats collection.

The volume is appropriately dedicated to the memory of Mr. R. C. Lockett, the greatest collector of this generation. The coins are described with meticulous care by Miss A. S. Robertson, Curator of the Hunter Coin Cabinet in Glasgow University. The casts and, where necessary, the direct photographs of the coins are the work of Mr. Hugh Forbes, University Technician in the Hunterian Museum. A brilliant set of 42 plates by the Cotswold Press provides what amounts to a conspectus of the whole development of the Anglo-Saxon currency from the eighth to the eleventh century. Miss Robertson tells the history of the Hunterian collection, largely from documents in the museum, and explains the way in which knowledge of its contents was transmitted to later numismatists through Hunter's executor Charles Combe and his son, the great Taylor Combe of the British Museum. It is interesting to know that the publication of the Hunterian collection was desired, and even planned, by William Hunter himself.

Now and then the transliteration of names might be criticized as almost too precise, OFFŪ (309), IBBŪ (313), BEAXNEARÐ (326), and CFNEÐRFÐ (329) come as closely as print will allow to the actual letter-forms on the coins. But they give an impression of inaccuracy to the inscriptions on which they occur. It is really unjustified, for the epigraphy of the eighth-century currency has not yet been studied in sufficient detail to show in all cases whether a particular aberrant form represents the idiosyncrasy of an artist or metal-worker, a survival from the runic alphabet, or a craftsman's failure to hold a graving-tool at a correct angle. Moreover, the ingenuity with which the names of moneys are often arranged across the reverse field of ninth-century coins defeats reproduction in modern type. Miss Robertson wisely abandons the attempt to reproduce the perverse acrostics in which the names of moneys are set out on many coins of Æthelwulf and on nearly all coins of Æthelberht (548-55), though she copies the arrangement of the lunette-divided inscriptions of this period, printing, for example MON+MAN+ETA from a penny of Æthelred I of Wessex (559) and DMON VVLFEAR ETA from a penny of Burgred of Mercia (380). The problem of reproducing pre-Conquest inscriptions in modern capitals is really insoluble, nor, with the plates at hand for reference, does it seriously complicate the study of the coins. The important point is that neither these peculiarities of lettering and arrangement nor the downright mistakes which occur in all periods affect the authority of the Anglo-Saxon coinage as

a principal source of information about Old English personal names and sound-changes. One of the conclusions brought out most clearly by this, as by the Fitzwilliam Sylloge is the obvious intention of every settled government in all periods that the name of the responsible moneyer should appear on every coin in a form which would enable him to be identified.

The space which Miss Robertson has given to the transliteration of obverse legends means that the plates and the description of the coins rarely face each other with exact precision. This is sometimes inconvenient. But it is a minor inconvenience, for which there is ample compensation in the amount of detail which is given about the representation of the royal styles. One of the remarkable features of the late Old English currency is the contrast between the care of the die-cutters when dealing with the names of moneyers and their casual treatment of the sovereign's name. The sequence of styles in the reformed coinage of 973, in which the hyper-correct ÆDELRAED frequently appears at the end of Æthelred's reign, breaks down into a curious variety of careless spellings in the early types of Edward the Confessor. On no. 988, for example, put out by Ælfhere of York, the king's name is firmly written ED:PINE . The question must arise, however, whether, in this case, so deliberate a substitution of another personal name for that of the reigning king does not result from an alteration by a forger. A coin of the same type, no. 1014, has, as Miss Robertson points out, been altered from the common mint of York to the rarer mint of Dover by the simple change of one letter: EOFR to DOFR . In the case of no. 988 the possibility is increased by two considerations: in the Reading University collection is a coin from the same dies on which the king's name clearly reads +ED:/DRE+A ; this and the Hunter coin are illustrated here for comparison (Pl. XXIII, 19 and 20). Secondly, there was in Thoresby's collection a 'famous unic' of similar type and mint and with the alleged reading EDPIN , which had generally been regarded as a coin of Edwin, king of Northumbria, 616-32, until Samuel Pegge in his *Assemblage*, pub. 1772, correctly attributed it to Edward the Confessor. An ingenious forger, such as John White, might well have thought it worth while to produce another 'Edwin' by altering an Edward. It is very helpful to have Miss Robertson's readings of these anomalous obverse inscriptions, for not even the best of plates will answer to the varieties of light and shade which are sometimes necessary to bring out the exact lettering of a badly worn coin.

The Hunterian collection has long been famous for the great rarities which it contains. Familiar as isolated pieces, they are still more impressive when, as here, they can be seen in their proper place in a long series. The single coin of Ceolwulf II of Mercia (381) looks fragile and is of light weight, but in craftsmanship it obviously belongs to another class than the twenty pennies of Burgred that come immediately before it. To many numismatists the chief interest of the collection will lie in outstanding pieces like this, and more generally in the coins which show the designer free to indulge his faculty of invention without the necessity of conforming closely to a prescribed succession of types. But to others, the present volume will be of primary importance for the astonishing amount of material which it provides for the managed currency of the period from *circa* 973 to 1066. It includes 71 examples of the first type of the reformed coinage instituted by Edgar. Most of them are in a brilliant state of preservation, and show at a glance both the die-cutters' general skill in execution and their tendency to lapse from time to time into barbarism. There are 41 examples of the 'First Hand' type of Æthelred II, though, curiously enough, only 2 examples showing the hand in benediction. After this, although every type in common circulation is well represented—it is noteworthy that Hunter seems never to have acquired an Agnus Dei penny of Æthelred—the next remarkable concentration of examples occurs in the 'sovereign-martlets' type of the

Confessor, of which there are 30 specimens. Here, the fine condition of most of the coins is particularly valuable, for it brings out the competence with which an Anglo-Saxon craftsman at his best could translate an elaborate miniature design into metal-work (e.g. 1100, 1110, 1112). The volume ends with 50 fine coins of Harold II, culminating in three Bristol pennies (1226, 1227, 1228) which show the king's head in almost medallic relief. The exceptional relief probably accounts for the flaw in the die which disfigures each of these pieces. It is sad to note that one of them (1228) has been mutilated by an owner who has wantonly altered the original BRVECE of the reverse inscription into BVEIN—presumably in order to give the coin the rarity of a coin from Buckingham. The crudity of his lettering would disgrace any professional forger.

The collections described in this volume are published at an opportune moment. The history of the Old English coinage is coming to greater precision each year through intensive work on details once thought of little account. The rate of progress in this work must largely depend on the extent to which coins in different collections can be brought into easy comparison with one another. The periods of greatest intrinsic interest, such, preeminently, as the reign of Offa, are already covered by a good photographic record. More illustration is urgently needed for the phases of the coinage which produced few pieces of outstanding merit or historical interest. From one of these phases, the present volume illustrates more than a hundred of the conventional representations of symbolized authority which preceded the mid-eleventh-century experiments in portraiture. More generally, it makes one of the largest collections in Britain immediately available everywhere for these studies. And as a massive demonstration of the process by which the Anglo-Saxon state came to the best ordered currency in western Europe it deserves a place among the primary materials for English history.

FRANK M. STENTON

Anglo-Saxon Coins. Studies presented to F. M. Stenton on the occasion of his 80th Birthday, 17 May 1960. Edited by R. H. M. DOLLEY. London, Methuen, 1961.

THIS handsome volume has a twofold purpose. In the first place it is a tribute to Sir Frank Stenton on his eightieth birthday from a number of contributors of articles and a larger number of subscribers. It is Sir Frank's second such birthday present. *Sir Christopher Hatton's Book of Seals* marked his seventieth birthday, and nothing would rejoice his friends better than to be able to pay a like tribute on his ninetieth. Meanwhile they wish him many happy returns of the day.

His greatest achievement has been to rediscover and rewrite the history of Anglo-Saxon England. In the process he has shown the value of two sources of evidence which had largely been neglected by students and left in the hands of amateur antiquaries and collectors. With the late Sir Allen Mawer he put upon a serious footing in this country the study of place-names, and the work they started goes on in the volumes of the Place-name Society. What more concerns this review is that he has brought numismatists into partnership, and taught them that coins are documents of great historical value. As Mr. Dolley says in the preface to this book:

The last decade has witnessed the emergence of a new school of Anglo-Saxon numismatists, and only those who have borne the heat of the day can appreciate to the full what Sir Frank's discerning encouragement has meant to a younger generation struggling to create academic standards in a discipline too long the preserve of the mere collector.

His encouragement and leadership have culminated in the work of the Sylloge Committee of the British Academy, which has already produced two volumes and will, it is hoped, produce many more.

For frontispiece there is a delightful photograph by Simon Blunt which preserves for present and future generations a vivid impression of a keen and kindly scholar gazing, as it were, across the centuries to the dim past, and weighing the works and divining the thoughts of our Anglo-Saxon forebears.

The volume is admirably edited by Mr. Dolley, and he and Mr. Christopher Blunt are the principal contributors. Mr. Blunt studies the coinage of Offa, dealing with the transition from *sceatta* to penny, and examining and dating the different groups of coins and the hoard evidence. Mr. Dolley and Mr. Blunt attempt a chronology for the coins of Alfred the Great, and Mr. Dolley and Mr. Skaare for those of Æthelwulf of Wessex. Mr. Dolley and Dr. Metcalf together study the reform of the coinage under Edgar. These valuable contributions contain the core of the book, offering a framework of dates within which much other work can be fitted.

Mr. J. P. C. Kent discusses the influence of casual discoveries of late Roman coins upon Anglo-Saxon types, and concludes that nothing of Roman date remained in circulation at the time of the Anglo-Saxon settlements. Mr. P. D. Whitting finds little evidence of Byzantine influence. Mr. C. S. S. Lyon and Mr. B. H. I. H. Stewart have narrowed the field within which solutions may be found of the problems raised by the Northumbrian Viking coins in the Cuerdale hoard. Mr. Dolley and Mr. F. Elmore Jones suggest that the 'Martlets' in the 'Arms of St. Edward' are really eagles; and Mr. Dolley and Miss J. Ingold write on Viking Age coin hoards from Ireland.

Another group of contributors includes Miss G. van der Meer on corrections to and comments on Hildebrand's famous catalogue of the Anglo-Saxon coins in the Swedish Royal Coin Cabinet; Miss V. J. Butler on the results of a systematic weighing of the coins of Æthelred II and Cnut; and Mrs. J. S. Martin on eighteenth century numismatic manuscripts and numismatists. Professor Whitelock has a most interesting short paper on the numismatic interest of an Old English version of the legend of the Seven Sleepers.

Mr. Grierson provides a wider historical setting by discussing the meaning of 'sterling', and Mr. H. R. Loyn reviews the relationship of borough and mint in the later Anglo-Saxon times.

Sixteen magnificent plates, and indexes of persons, modern authorities, places and things complete this work of piety and learning. This mere catalogue of its contents is sufficient to show its range and value to Anglo-Saxon numismatics.

J. W. F. HILL

British Copper Coins and their values—Part II Tokens. Edited by H. A. SEABY.
Seaby's Numismatic Publications, London. 1961. 12s. 6d.

THIS catalogue has been produced on exactly the same lines as the recently published '*Part I Regal Coins*'; in fact the two parts are obtainable cloth bound in one volume, the page numbering of part II being continuous with that of part I.

Part II, which deals with the tokens is inevitably divided into three main sections, viz. tokens of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, each section being prefaced by a short but informative historical introduction. All the entries are numbered according to the standard works—Williamson, Dalton and Hamer, and Davis, respectively.

Considering the enormous number of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century tokens recorded in these works, the task of making a suitable selection for inclusion in this catalogue was, obviously, not an easy one. Every effort seems to have been made to list all the genuine eighteenth-century trade tokens for, although a large proportion of these are relatively common, they are, historically, by far the most important. On the other hand, all the tokens struck specially for sale to collectors, and most of the mules, and tokens with 'wrong' edge readings have been omitted.

Some idea of the number of eighteenth-century tokens listed can be obtained by taking three counties at random; thus there are 21 listed for Cambridgeshire from the 56 varieties recorded in Dalton and Hamer; for Hampshire there are 85 out of 200, and for Sussex 31 out of 64; an average of about 43 per cent., which is more than a first glance at the book would suggest.

The first two sections are illustrated from line blocks, but for the nineteenth-century pieces excellent half-tones are used from photographs by Mr. F. Purvey, the superiority of which is at once apparent. However, as the number of tokens illustrated for each section averages, roughly, only one for each county, one wonders whether so few illustrations serve any really useful purpose, apart from making the catalogue more attractive.

C. W. P.