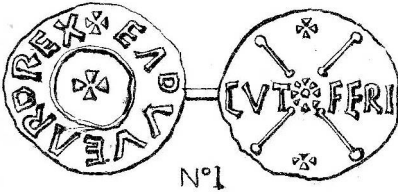


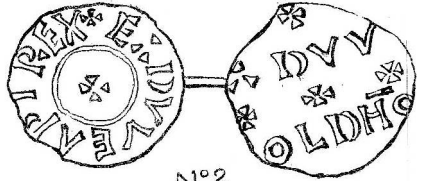
COINS

OF

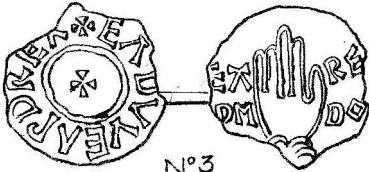
EADWEARD THE ELDER,



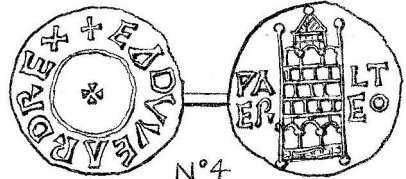
N°1



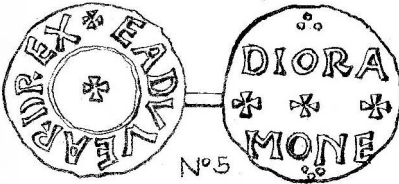
N°2



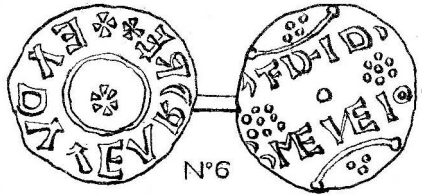
N°3



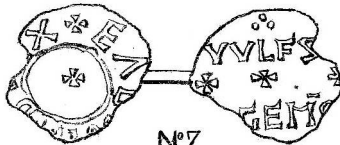
N°4



N°5



N°6



N°7

FOUND IN CHESTER.

1862.

J.

ON SOME
Anglo-Saxon Coins

DISCOVERED IN THE FOUNDATIONS OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, CHESTER.

BY THOMAS HUGHES.

ON Shrove Tuesday afternoon, March 4, 1862, the workmen employed in excavating for the new Vestibule, at the exterior west end of St. John's Church, came upon a series of cruciform slabs, lying side by side, and forming the original west floor of the nave. While carefully displacing the ancient interments beneath, the men discovered a mass of broken stones, under which, at a depth of about 16 feet from the surface, lay a little heap of thin discoloured coins. Taking them for common jettons or Nuremberg tokens, these coins, some forty probably in number, were considered by the contractors, who happened to be present, as of so little importance, that the parish clerk and labourers were allowed to take possession of them. Numbers of the coins, too, that, by careful handling, might have been saved, were broken up by the rough hands of the workmen, and thus probably more than one rare type will have hopelessly perished.

On visiting the church an hour or so afterwards, Mr. Owens, the contractor for St. John's, informed me of the find. Hearing that the coins somewhat resembled the small Tradesmen's Tokens of the 17th century, long a favourite subject of mine, I induced the clerk of the works to obtain three or four from the workmen for inspection. Judge my surprise, when I immediately recognised in the supposed Nuremberg Counters four very valuable and perfect Anglo-Saxon Coins, of a period earlier than that of any we had before met with in Chester! A little closer inspection shewed them to be personal or contemporary silver coins of King Edward the Elder, who reigned over all England from A.D. 901 to 925. He was the son and successor of the most renowned of all our Saxon monarchs—Alfred the Great—and the father of Athelstan, or Æthelstan, another worthy descendant of the great English lawgiver.

In King Edward's history, and that of his contemporaries, there is much of interest to us in a local point of view, and so much that bears upon the facts and theories opened out by these coins, that we may profitably employ ourselves, at the outset, on a quiet consideration of this branch of the subject.

The sway of Rome over these islands had ceased for some 500 years, and England had, in the interval, been buffeted about at the mercy of successive bands of reckless adventurers. Saxons and Danes, Picts and Goths, Christians and Pagans, alternately ravaged and ruled over the land; while between them the Britons, who were the legitimate inheritors of the soil, had more than they could do to hold well their own. Gradually the Saxons consolidated their power, until, in some form or other, the whole of the southern half of England was practically theirs; the Britons retiring either to the wilds of Cornwall or the mountain fastnesses of Wales, whence they continued to wage a profitless warfare with the invaders of their home.

So far as we locally are concerned—almost within sight of our Walls, the Christian religion had been outraged by its professors in the massacre of the Bangor monks by Ethelfred and the Saxon converts of Augustine,—Offa had made his name terrible to the Britons, from Chester to the Wye, building up that Dyke of offence and defence which still exists and bears his name,—Egbert, the Kentish exile at the court of Charlemagne and the protegee of that mighty conqueror, had returned to his native country, and won for himself the title of the *first* King of England.

The Northmen, on the other hand, had established themselves on our coasts, and obtained fitful possession of the city we now dwell in. The four sons of Egbert, Ethelbald, Ethelbert, Ethelred, and Alfred, had all in succession inherited their father's throne. The Danes from the other side the Humber had carried war and devastation into the southern kingdom. In the words of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the piratical hordes "rode across Mercia," leaving carnage and sorrow everywhere around them. For a time their truant star was in the ascendant, and the Saxons strove ineffectually to sweep the rolling torrent back.

But the hour of retribution drew near. Alfred, "the darling of England," as he was fondly termed by early historians, could not and would not endure the thralldom of his race. With one stupendous and sudden effort, in 878, he wrested his own birthright and his people's freedom from the Danish taskmasters, and conquered for the England of his love a permanent and a glorious peace!

In peace as in war, in his family as in the great council of the nation, Alfred was recognised by all alike as the head and patriarch of

his people. His children grew up and were educated on his own model, and they inherited many of their father's virtues. Ethelfleda, his daughter, he had married to Ethelred, who, in the light of a petty sovereign and with the title of Earldorman, ruled over Mercia. Edward, his heir, as we shall presently find, succeeded him on the throne, and in most of those qualities which had rendered his own name famous, while his other children were no disgrace to their kingly parent.

But all this time it must not be supposed that their hereditary foe had been by any means idle. On the contrary, in 893-4, the Northmen appeared in force upon our coast, and once more engaged in a trial of strength with Alfred. But again the blood of the Saxon king was aroused, and whether it was in the battle field of Farnham, in 893, or later still in the beleaguered Isle of Mersey, in the troubled city of Exeter, or beneath the walls of our own old city of Chester, Alfred was ever at their heels, driving them before him like chaff before the wind. Of the splendid career, whether upon sea or land, of England's first great King, it needs not that we here speak more at large: every schoolboy should know that from his energetic reign we may fairly date much of that solidity of character, much of that inbred jealousy of our national honour, which has made the English name famous from pole to pole.

At length, in 901, Alfred, the darling of his people, passed away to his rest; and Edward *the Elder*, (as his oldest son is usually called in history) succeeded to the throne. We have now arrived at the period to which the coins found at St. John's more immediately belong.

The 10th century had but just dawned, the courageous Edward was on his father's throne, and a fruitless rebellion of his cousin Ethelwold's had been crushed in the bud. The Danes, though seriously humbled by Alfred's victories, still proved troublesome to his son; and, in another direction, the Welsh chieftains renewed their guerilla warfare with the Saxon conquerors.

But Edward was not left altogether, as had been Alfred, to his own resources. The blood of the great king flowed also in other veins; and in none more purely than in the breast of Alfred's firstborn child and Ethelred the Mercian's wife, the glorious Ethelfleda. Inheriting all her father's energy of character, yielding to him nothing in love for her native land and hatred of the invader, this Amazonian Countess has left an indelible mark on the page of English history. What Boadicea was to the Britons at the first Roman invasion, what Joan of Arc was to *her* people in more mediæval times,—what our own Elizabeth was when the armaments of Spain bore down upon our coast,—such, in every brave sense was Ethelfleda, the daughter of Alfred the “darling of England.”

She had in her father's lifetime become the wife of Earl Ethelred who from what we can gather from him at this remote period, was no unworthy of her, or of the high position he held as Alfred's earldorman or lieutenant in Mercia, to which province Chester then belonged. For twenty years they lived together in the bonds of wedlock, consolidating year by year the Saxon power in that great province over which they ruled.

For some time after the defeat of the Danes before Chester by Alfred, this city seems to have been comparatively deserted; but the Earl and his Countess, having paid a visit to the place, were not slow to perceive that the dismantled fortifications before them were capable of once more becoming what they were of old—the key to the province on its mid-western boundary. Accordingly, Chester appears to have been the first Mercian city fortified and restored by Ethelred. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* says, under date 907,—“This year Chester was repaired;” while *Florence of Worcester* tells us that in the following year, 908, the city called in the British tongue Karlegion, and in the Saxon, Legeceaster (or Chester) was rebuilt by order of Ethelred the earldorman, and Ethelfleda. Doubtless, then, Ethelred and his Countess were actually located here in and during the years 907-8, attending to the repairs of the Walls and of the city, and, like faithful Christians, restoring or rebuilding that Saxon Church, which afterwards gave place to the Norman Abbey of St. Werburgh. What else they effected while resident here, we will give our opinion upon by and bye.

In 910, the Danes, uneasy with so long a truce, made a raid on their ancient foes;—again the hosts of the raven “rode across Mercia,” and Ethelred and Ethelfleda were for a time in considerable strait. But Edward their brother mustered his forces, and, at the battle of Wodnesfield near Wolverhampton, they together drove the Northman once more to his lair, and at once set about, like discreet warriors, to secure what they had won, by the erection of fortresses at all the important points in the great Mercian province. In the words of Speed, our own Cheshire chronicler, “King Edward's monarchy now ascended the horizon, and the sunne of his power beganne to shine very bright; therefore he, seeking to hold what he had got, set his thoughts to secure his towns with castles and walles of defence.”

For the last few years of his life, Earl Ethelred had been a great invalid, and probably deputed much of his earldormanic rule to his spirited Countess; whose name we find often recorded as leader of the Mercian troops, even during her husband's lifetime. While *she* on the one side was inspiriting her warriors and leading them forth to battle, the Earl seems to have devoted his crippled energies to the building of fortresses and churches, and the sterner exercises of religion.

In or about the years 910—12, (for chroniclers differ as to the precise date) Ethelred, Earl of Mercia, departed this life, and was buried at Gloucester. *Florence of Worcester* says—"Ethelred, earldorman and patrician, lord and sub-king of the Mercians, a man of distinguished excellence, and not deficient in deeds of merit, died this year."

His widow, Ethelfleda, was suffered by her brother to remain in charge of the Mercian province, which she governed solely for 10 or 12 years, and in such a manner as to entitle her in history to the name of "the Saxon Amazon." London and Oxford alone of the Mercian cities were at this time reserved by King Edward for his own.

In 910 or 911, she built a fortress and monastery at Brimsbury, a place which antiquaries generally have identified with Bromborough, in this county. In 912, she seems to have been conducting similar works on the banks of the River Thames. In 914, says the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle*, "she went with all her people of Mercia to Tamworth, and there built the fortress, early in the summer; and after this, before Lammas, that at Stafford."

In the summer of the following year (915), says *Florence of Worcester*, "Ethelfleda, lady of the Mercians, built the town called Eddisbury, and, at the close of autumn, another called Warwick." Thus, in 914, she was protecting the county of Stafford, while the next year found her establishing a city and fortress on the edge of Delamere Forest in Cheshire. What once was Eddisbury has been for centuries extinct either as a fortress or city; but tradition avers that what is now called *The Chamber in the Forest* is the site of the town which the Mercian princess planted in Cheshire to overawe the Danes. Although all trace, however, of this Saxon camp has disappeared, a Hundred of the county still bears its name, and is a testimony to the truth of the ancient chronicles.

From Eddisbury it would seem that her attention was directed to the erection of castles at Runcorn and Warburton,* both in this county. It will be noticed that these Cheshire fortresses of Warburton, Runcorn, and Bromborough, were all situate on the Mersey banks; and that their erection had been apparently forced upon her by the continued inroads upon her territories from the Danish settlements in Wirral. The Scandinavian names of places still extant all over Wirral are evidences of the hold the Danes had obtained in that north-western point of Cheshire.

We have just noticed with some surprise that, except only in name, we have no positive trace of the Saxon city of Eddisbury. Local historians of a future day will have a similar fate in store for them

* St. Werburgh's Town; spelt *Warburgetone* in the *Domesday Survey*.

with regard to another of Ethelfleda's fortresses in this county. The Bridgwater Trustees, with a view to improve the channel of the Mersey at this point, are about immediately (for the contract is actually signed), to remove the rocky promontory near Runcorn church as being a manifest hindrance to the navigation. In doing this, they will wholly obliterate the Saxon earthworks at Runcorn; and thus an historical position we can actually *prove* to-day, will in a future generation be a matter of simple faith and tradition, just as is, to us, the site of the contemporary city of Eddisbury.

About the time of which we have now been speaking, the Welsh were harassing Ethelfleda on the west side, and Cherbury Castle was accordingly built by her as a menace to the mountaineers. In 917, says *Florence of Worcester*, "Ethelfleda, the lady of Mercia, sent an army into the territory of the Britons to take the castle of Brecknock; and having stormed it, they carried the wife of the British king captive to Mercia, and thirty-four men with her." In August of this year, also, she went in person to Derby, and captured that city by assault, after a determined resistance, in which several of her chief officers were slain. The men of York, too, learning that she was on her way thither, met her with a treaty of peace, and threw open their gates at her approach.

And thus, at all points of her brother's Mercian dominions, wherever danger threatened either his throne or his subjects' safety, there was Ethelfleda to be seen leading on her forces to glory and victory. Defeat was unknown to her arms,—her presence sufficed at all times to clothe her troops with both valour and success.

The year following, viz., on June 12th, 918, says the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle*, (or 919, according to *Florence of Worcester*.) "while King Edward was with his army at Stamford, his sister Ethelfleda, Lady of the Mercians, a woman of incomparable prudence, and eminent for her just and virtuous life, died at Tamworth, eight years after the sole government of the Mercians fell to her by the death of her husband, Earl Ethelred, during which period she ruled them with firmness and equity." Her body was carried in great state to Gloucester; where it was laid, amid much sorrow, by the side of her husband in the east porch of St. Peter's Church, an edifice they had themselves founded a few years before.

King Edward now took Mercia into his own hands, and was perpetually engaged in consolidating his conquests and extending his power. Between 920 and 923, says the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle*, "he repaired after harvest with his army to Thelwall (in this county), and commanded the town to be built, and occupied, and manned; and commanded another force also of Mercians, the while he sat there, to

take possession of Manchester in North-humbria, and repair and man it.—This year died Archbishop Plegmund.”

About this time, for the Chronicles extant vary as to date, the Danes had again made their appearance, by way of Davenport, in this neighbourhood, and, in alliance with the Welsh, took forcible possession of Chester. Leofrid commanded the Danes, and Griffin, brother-in-law of Owen, Prince of West Wales, the Welsh. According to Lapenberg's *History of the Anglo Saxons*, “they succeeded in making themselves masters of Chester and the neighbouring lands, and the presence of Edward was necessary for the recovery of that important city. Having reached the enemy in the forest of Sherwood, he divided his army into two bodies, one of which he entrusted to his son Æthelstan, the other to his sons Eadmund and Eadred. Æthelstan, being personally assailed by Leofrid, wounded him with his spear and compelled him to yield. Griffith fell by his younger brothers, and the heads of both leaders were displayed as trophies over the gates of Chester.”

This exploit performed, and having received (it may be in this city, for the place is not recorded,) the fealty of three Welsh kings, as well as those of Scotland, Northumbria, &c., he was suddenly seized with illness, and, as the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle* says, “a few days afterwards died among the Mercians at Fearndun,” which modern historians have identified with Farringdon in Berkshire. Were it not that *Florence of Worcester* states that this Fearndun was “a royal vill,” I should be inclined to believe that our own Cheshire Farndon, on the Dee beyond Eaton, was the place where Edward died. The mortal disease attacked him immediately after, if not indeed before, his departure from Chester; and as Farndon on the Dee is on the line of Roman road, there would be nothing improbable in the suggestion. His body was conveyed to Worcester, and there interred in the new minster with becoming formalities. Æthelstan his eldest son, who had been reared and educated in the court of his uncle and aunt, Ethelred and Ethelfleda, succeeded him.

And now to a consideration of those coins so strangely brought to light, and then a few words more for the story which, to my mind, they silently but eloquently teach.

Coins of Edward the Elder are of acknowledged rarity. They are but seldom met with in excavations of the present day, and when they do occur are eagerly bought up by collectors. The find at St. John's, Chester, therefore, is not without interest to the numismatic world, as one or two of the rare types of Edward's coins have been thereby secured to us.

So far as can be gleaned from conflicting statements, there would appear to have been altogether about 40 coins discovered at St. John's. Many of them, however, were broken in pieces by the workmen upon the spot; as, until I saw them, they were supposed to be merely German counters, and of no interest or value. Of the wreck, not more than 20 at the utmost can be traced, and these in many different hands. Five were secured at the time by the Rev. W. B. Marsden, Vicar of the parish. The industry of Mr. John Peacock enabled me to exhibit before the Society, from the various holders, 10 of the more important coins, ingeniously framed between two sheets of glass, by means of which both sides of the coins might be readily seen, without subjecting them to the risk of breakage. Mr. Peacock has also generously come to my aid in another direction, having with great care and fidelity, and, I think it will be acknowledged, with some artistic ability made fac-simile drawings of the coins, as accompanying illustrations to this paper.

Dividing them into three distinct classes, the first to enlist our attention are six which bear on the obverse the name and style of the reigning monarch, EADVVEARD REX,—Edward the King. (Plate 1, Nos. 1 to 6.)

The first coin of this royal series is a very interesting one. The cross in the field of the obverse is larger than is usual upon Edward's coins, and the two Ds in EADVVEARD are considerably diminished in height so as to make room within the circle for the concluding title, REX. The reverse is particularly worth notice, from the gracefully designed cross, arranged *en saltire* across the field, terminating in the centre with a sort of eight-petalled rose. Two wedge shaped crosses, one in chief and the other in base, with the name CVTFERI (for *Cuthbert*) arranged fess-wise across the field, complete the description of this interesting coin. Now, it should be noted here that Cuthbert was a moneyer not only in the reign of Edward, but in the yet more stirring times of Alfred his father. In the celebrated hoard of coins brought to light at Cuerdale, Lancashire, in May, 1840, some 130 of Alfred's coins alone occurred with the name of this mint-master, variously spelt, upon the reverse. From these Cuerdale pennies, too, we learn that Canterbury was the city where Cuthbert's mint was situated in the reign of Alfred: doubtless therefore the specimen now under review, bearing the name of King Edward, came from the same Kentish mint. The Cuerdale find also included several varieties of Edward's coins, struck by Cuthbert, bearing upon the obverse the scarce portrait of the king; but of this type none occurred in the discovery now under notice.

The next coin to be described is one of those secured by the Rev.

REVERSES OF EADVVEARD'S COINS

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THOSE FOUND AT

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, CHESTER.



N°1



N°2



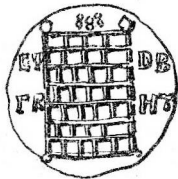
N°3



N°4



N°5



N°6



N°7



N°8



N°9



N°10

NO. 1. OBVERSE FROM SNELLING.

NO. 2. IDENTICAL WITH NO. 4, FOUND AT ST. JOHN'S.

NOS. 2, 3, 8. FROM MR. J. RASHLEIGH'S COLLECTION.

NOS. 4, 6, 9. FROM CAPTAIN MURCHISON'S COLLECTION.

NOS. 5, 7, 10. FROM MR. BERGNE'S COLLECTION.

Vicar of St. John's, but unfortunately so chipped at the edge as to have lost the first letter of the moneyer's name. It reads thus :—

EADVVEARI REX=(E)ADVVOLD HO

Eadwold or Eadwald, as his name is indifferently spelt, occurs along with Cuthbert as a moneyer at Canterbury on several of Alfred's coins in the Cuerdale hoard; and in the same deposit we find him again figuring, contemporaneously with Cuthbert, as a mint-master for Edward, but without any named place of mintage. It is worthy of remark *en passant*, that with the exception of two pennies of this Chester find, to be noticed by and bye, and one single instance, Bath, from the Cuerdale collection, the place of mintage has, so far as I can ascertain, never been traced upon any of Edward's coins.

The third coin of our royal series reads EADVVEARD on the obverse; but on the reverse we find an uplift hand, possibly the symbol of Providence in the act of blessing;* for on another type of Edward's, not belonging to the Chester find, the two middle fingers of the hand are depressed, just as is the hand of the Jewish rabbi even in the present day when, standing up in the synagogue, he gives his blessing to the people. The letters on either side of the hand, which seems to be just emerging from the clouds, run thus :—

EA RE
DM DO.

Now *Dorovernia* was the ancient name of Canterbury, and occurs as such on numberless Saxon and early English coins. This legend extended, therefore, will give us both the coiner's name and place of mintage, viz :—EARED MONETARIUS DOROVERNIÆ, or "Eared moneyer at Canterbury."

The fourth to demand our attention is still more interesting. The obverse is again in effect the same; but in the field of the reverse we are introduced to a Saxon house of some pretensions, from which also we can glean a notion of the then prevailing style of domestic architecture. It appears to be a house of three or four stories, the second bearing to my mind a notable resemblance to our Chester Rows, with

* With respect to this coin of the "hand" type, I have been favoured with an interesting communication from J. Rashleigh, Esq., of London, a gentleman who has long made Saxon coins his especial study. He considers that the "hand" on the Chester coin, which has all the fingers extended, is emblematical of Providence, specially as the God of *Peace*; while those which show the two forefingers only extended, and the rest closed, indicate the God of *Blessing*. Another form appearing on Edward's coins, with the hand entirely open, and holding a shield, he believes to be symbolical of the God of *Protection*. (See *Supplementary Plate*.) It will be observed that in the Chester example the fingers are pointed *upwards*, whereas all other varieties known to me exhibit the hand, more appropriately, pointed *downwards*, or as if descending out of the clouds.

the front to the street supported upon arches, as is still the case in several instances around us. But be that as it may, we have here the ornamental timber gable of the 17th century plainly shewn upon a coin of at least the beginning of the 10th century, a fact worthy the attention of our architectural secretary, Mr. Harrison, and palpably bearing out the words of Solomon that "there is nothing new under the sun."* The legend runs as follows, arranged upon either side of the house:—PALTER EO—the Saxon P being frequently, as in this case, synonymous with W. It was at first thought the final EO might stand for *episcopo*, but there was no English bishop named Walter living in the reign of Edward. I am now satisfied that the EO represents the first and last letters of *Eboraco*, and that to Walter, the royal mintmaster at York, we owe the very beautiful coin I have attempted to describe.†

The fifth and sixth of the series fell also to the lot of the Vicar of St. John's, the Rev. W. B. Marsden. The obverse of the former resembles those already described, but on the reverse we have the moneyer's name and title in two lines across the field,—DIORA MONE. Now, unless this is a contraction for *Diorvald Monetarius*, this specimen, like No 3 and 6 of the Chester series, gives us the name of a mintmaster, who had not previously occurred upon any known coins of this period.

Number 6, which is unfortunately broken into three pieces, is altogether a peculiar variety. In the first place the engraver, who was apparently a novice at his work, forgot to reverse the king's name and title upon the die, owing to which blunder the inscription on the obverse is made to read the contrary way of the coin. The letters upon the reverse are still more tantalizing, it being next to impossible to make anything out of them. "Our artist" has reproduced them as

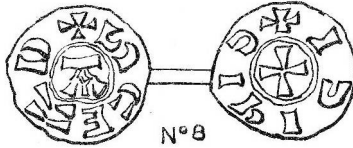
* The same friendly correspondent is of opinion that the "house" in question may be more properly described as the "tower of a Saxon cathedral." Other authorities, Mr. Bergne for instance, consider it to represent "a castle." Mr. Rashleigh possesses two varieties of this type; one shewing the end and transepts of a religious edifice, and the other almost identical with the Chester found specimen, and bearing the same moneyer's name. I am indebted for this highly valued correspondence to a report of the Chester Archæological Society's Meeting at which my paper was read, published at the time in the columns of the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

† In the belief that the reader will be interested to see and compare other specimens of the "house" and "hand" types, side by side with those discovered at St. John's church, I have, with the aid of Mr. Rashleigh, Captain Murchison, Mr. Bergne, and other eminent collectors, obtained actual casts of several important varieties, one or two of which are up to this moment, I believe, unedited. Mr. Peacock's friendly pencil again serves me in good stead, by reproducing these kindred examples on a supplementary plate.

ECCLESIASTICAL COINS

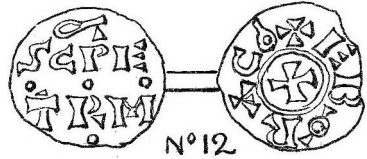
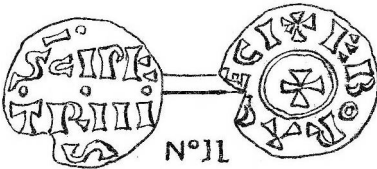
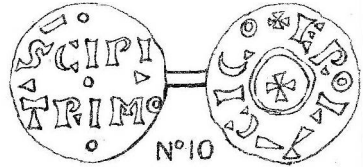
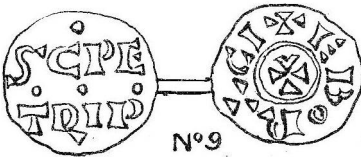
SE EDMUND.

— OF EDMUNDSBURY. —



ST PETER

OF YORK.



FOUND IN CHESTER.

1862

‡

faithfully as the strictest fac-similist could desire, and to his drawing I would refer all who may wish to try their hand at this numismatic puzzle. Divested of certain ornaments or flourishes, it would seem to read TDID ME VEIO, being possibly intended for TEDID ME FECIT, (Tethid made me.)

Upon the reverse of the 7th and last of these royal coins, which has been struck on an imperfect circle of silver, we have the mint-master's name in two parallel lines—VVLFSIGE MO—*Wulfsige monetarius*. Even if numismatists had not already clearly shewn to which of the two Saxon Edwards these types were assignable, this coin and those of Cuthbert and Eadwold, already described, would have established the fact; for whereas the two former coined for Alfred his father, as well as for Edward, this same Wulfsig in like manner occurs also as a moneyer on a coin of Æthelstan, son of Edward the Elder, figured in Snelling's *View of the Saxon Coinage of England*; and I am inclined to think, after a comparison of the two, that the same die was used by Wulfsig for the reverse of both Kings' coins (father and son) struck at his mint.

Not the least important feature in Edward's coins is their average weight,—24 grains. Two of the more perfect specimens from this Chester find have been tested in the scales, and found in each case to weigh exactly one pennyweight Troy,—thus pointing at once to the primary application and remote use of that now almost unmeaning term. A few only of Alfred's later coins, nearly the whole of Edward's, and a large proportion of the pennies of Æthelstan, Edmund, and Edred, his three sons and successors, weigh 24 grains, or one pennyweight: whereas the pence of all previous and later reigns fall considerably short of that standard, thus tending to shew that the origin of the term penny-weight is to be traced to the reign of King Edward the Elder.

Of the second of the three classes of coins, into which we have divided this Chester deposit, we have only one specimen, but that a very perfect and curious one. (No. 8, plate.) It reads upon the obverse, SCEAD, which, when first submitted to me, I conceived was a coin of St. Ceadda (or St. Chad), Bishop of Lichfield, to which diocese Chester once belonged. But as St. Chad died two centuries previously, and no coins bearing his name have ever been known to exist, I turned to my friend Mr. Hawkins' work on the *Silver Coinage of England*. It there appeared that the letters in debate were a contraction of *Sanctus Eadmundus* (St. Edmund, King and Martyr), who, having been murdered by the Danes in 870, just before Alfred succeeded to the throne, was afterwards canonized, coins being struck in his honour in the next generation, it may be at his royal

vill of Edmundsbury (now called Bury St. Edmunds). The peculiarly shaped A in the field is, I believe, only found on these coins of St. Edmund, and had probably some special signification, unknown to us of the present day. The legend on the reverse reads, the contrary way of the coin, CIPICI, the two first or last letters being possibly intended for *civitas*; but, if so, what city the remainder of the legend refers to I have not at present the most remote idea.

I have designated this find of coins, in general terms, as "Edward the Elder's;" but fully half of those preserved are, strictly speaking, not coins of that monarch at all. His name does not occur on any of the specimens of this latter or third class, of which we have in all nine varieties in the St. John's deposit. Six of these, and I think, by intention, the other three also, have on one side, in words and letters more or less contracted, the following legend in two parallel lines: "*Sancti Petri Episcopo.*" One type, (No. 12) and the only one in the collection belonging to me personally, reads SCT. PETR. M.—the final M standing for *Monetario*, instead of *Episcopo*. The O's on this coin are particularly worthy of attention. On seven of these types the reverse of each contains in effect the one uniform word in a circle, EBORACC. Two or more have also, as will be seen by referring to the plates, the additional letters CI for *civitas*; while others seem to read DEI. V. DEAI, the signification of which is obscure.

The following is a complete list of the readings on these coins as far as their distorted legends will admit of a description.

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| 9. SCPETRIP | = | EBORACI |
| 10. SCIPITRIMO | = | ERORACICO |
| 11. SCIPETRIIIS | = | EBORACECI |
| 12. SCTPERM ^T | = | EBORACECI |
| 13. PE.....IOEP | = | DEI. V. DEAI (retrograde) |
| 14. SCPETRIP | = | EBORACECI |
| 15. SCIPET ^{TE} *R | = | IBRACI* |
| 16. SCIITHIR | = | EBORACEC |
| 17. IIEIEIOEP | = | DEI. V. DEAI (retrograde) |

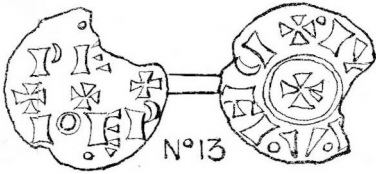
What then are these latter coins, found side by side with those of the great Edward? They belong, like that of St. Edmund, to the rare class usually termed Ecclesiastical or Sanctal Coins, from their bearing the name of some saint, such as Peter, Martin, &c., on the obverse of the coin. The St. Peter's Coins, to which series the six

* The obverse of this coin is perhaps the most curious of the nine here grouped together. Compare the T above the line with a similar letter on No. 12: note also the resemblance between the wedge-like ornament in the base with that on the reverse of Edward's coin No. 1, from Cuthbert's mint.

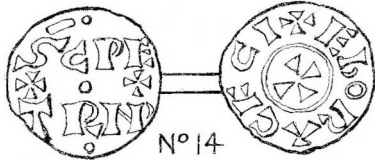
ECCLESIASTICAL COINS.

ST PETER
OF YORK

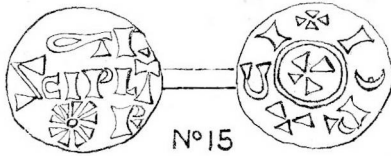
— Continued. —



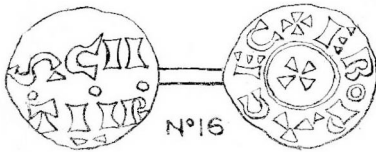
N°13



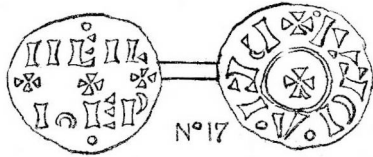
N°14



N°15



N°16



N°17

FOUND
IN CHESTER.
1862.

⚪_x.

found at St. John's uniformly belong, were all struck, under state sanction, at the Abbey or Minster of York, either by the bishop of that see, or his authorised moneyer, as the legends on these coins collectively declare.

Numismatists have hitherto been unable to say positively in what reign these St. Peter's Pence, as they are sometimes, but erroneously, called, were struck. Our honorary associate, Mr. E. Hawkins, in his valuable work on *The Silver Coinage of England*, already alluded to, conceives them to have been contemporary with the reign of Eric,* King of Northumbria, from their general resemblance to the coins of that prince, who ascended his feudal throne in 927. And that this conclusion was within 20 years of the truth, this find at St. John's seems to me satisfactorily to prove. These Chester coins, no two of which are from the same die, have evidently never been in circulation, for the letters, &c., upon them are as sharp and fresh as when they were first struck. They are found here side by side with the money of *one* King only, and that King, Edward the elder, who died in 925. The only other variety is the half-penny of St. Edmund, who died in 870, and in honor of whom money bearing his canonized name was issued either in the latter days of Alfred, or the beginning of Edward's reign.

Place these facts together, and what is the result? What but that the coins of St. Edmund and St. Peter were manifestly contemporaneous with those of Edward the Elder, and that they were all struck prior to 925, the date of Edward's death? The premises admit of no other conclusion; and this is one of the historic doubts, the solving of which we owe to the coins discovered at St. John's. It will be seen, ere we conclude, that I presume to fix their date at least 15 years earlier than 925, and for reasons which will then appear.

Let us now proceed. As the 10th century dawned, the condition of Chester appears to have been pretty much as follows. The Roman walls were standing in more or less their original condition, saving the wear and tear, and the warlike ravages of some 400 years. The Abbey of St. Werburgh, or rather the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, probably a wooden or simply "wattle" structure, had existed, for say 200 years, as the mother church of the city, and a spare population of Saxon soldiers and civilians lived within its Walls. Ethelred and Ethelfleda find their way to the place; and, struck with its natural position, and perhaps also with its antiquarian beauty, set their hearts

* Bradshaw, the Chester poet-monk of the 15th century, assures us that the "noble kyng Offa" who

"Of Englande first toke the hole monarchie,
Gave *Peter pens* vnto the court of Rome."

on its restoration. With commendable religious zeal, their first task seems to have been to repair or rebuild the sanctuary which was lying waste, or at least exhibiting signs of age and decay. This renewed foundation of theirs was dedicated to St. Werburgh, the remains of that saint having but a few years before been removed thither from Hambury, from fear of spoliation by the Danes; and in after ages it became a sharer in the miracles which were boldly affirmed to have been done at her shrine.*

The City Walls, we may presume, are now put into a satisfactory state; the garrison is strengthened, and the city itself is enlarged by one third upon its southern side, so as to take in the Castle, which had stood before that time out-side the Walls. Ethelred and Ethelfleda are specifically connected in history with the extension of the City Walls; and there is altogether little doubt that Ethelred's home and court, if anywhere in Mercia, was in his favorite city of Chester. In that case his nephew Æthelstan must have in his youth resided here also; and this will account for the honor he, when king, afterwards conferred upon Chester, by making it one of the few cities privileged to coin money, †—a privilege that never entirely ceased until the reign of William and Mary. One other city, Gloucester, seems to have enjoyed the special favor of Earl Ethelred: *there* he founded the great Church of St. Peter, and there, as founder, his body and that of his countess in the fulness of time rested from their labours.

My own opinion,—and it is comforting to find that Bishop Tanner, the Church historian, shares the same view, ‡—is, *that to Earl Ethelred we owe the foundation of St. John's Church!* “Oh! but,” we shall be told, “it was *King* Ethelred, who reigned from 675 to 704, and *not* this tenth century Earl of the same name, who, by the concurrent testimony of early and later historians, first raised a Church upon this spot.” Let us, however, see what history and tradition may have to say upon the point.

* Ethelfleda seems to have acquired a special veneration for Sts. Werburgh and Oswald. Besides dedicating to the former the great Abbey at Chester, she named also the new town of Warburton in her honor. To St. Oswald again, whose body she had translated to Gloucester, she dedicated an oratory at Chester, now the parish church of St. Oswald, as well as a Priory in the first named city.

† The Assay Office, which has for several centuries been an appanage of the Chester Goldsmith's Company, is believed to be an existing relic of this monarch's regard for the city of his boyhood.

‡ Noticed also by the Rev. F. Grosvenor, at pp. 5-7 of his *Historical Account of the Collegiate Church of St. John*, a paper read at the Archaeological Institute's Meeting at Chester, in 1857.

I have examined every early historian within my reach, but have utterly failed to find one single notice which would connect Ethelred the *King* personally with Chester. He was indeed King of Mercia, in which state Chester was included; and he may possibly have visited the place, especially if his niece, St. Werburgh, ever really resided here. Even this, however, is more than doubtful; for from the incidents of her life that have come down to us, it is not at all clear that the saint herself was ever during her lifetime personally associated with Chester. Beyond this, there is really nothing of a local character in relation to King Ethelred to be gathered from any historian living within 500 years of his time.

On what foundation, then, does the tradition rest that King Ethelred was the founder of this Church of St. John's? On the sole authority of Monk Henry Bradshaw, who lived in the Monastery at Chester, in the reigns of Henry VII. and VIII., and who wrote a curious, but certainly not always trustworthy "*Lyfe of Saynt Werburge*," "very frutefull" as he modestly assures us, "for all Christen people to rede." But we will quote our monkish poet's own language in support of his theory:—

"The yere of grace syxe hundreth foure score and nyen
As sheweth myne auctour, a Bryton Giraldu,
Kynge Ethelred, myndynge moost the blysse of heuen
Edyfyed a collage chyirche notable and famous
In the subbarbes of Chester pleasaunt and beauteous,
In the honour of god, and the Baptyst saynt Johan,
With helpe of bysshop Uulfryce and good exortacyon."

We here see that Bradshaw gives *Giraldus Cambrensis*, a Welsh historian of the 12th century, as the authority for his statement. But, strange to say, the pages of *Giraldus* have been consulted again and again, the uniform result being that no such record is to be found therein. He does, indeed, recount some particulars of his visit to Chester, naming incidentally St. John's Church and the Hermitage there; but of the presumed date of the foundation of the Church he says, so far as I can learn, absolutely nothing!

It is therefore probable, and something more, that the only Church existing in Chester in the 9th century was that dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul; and that it occupied the site whereon or adjoining which was afterwards to be built, by Ethelred and Ethelfleda, the great Abbey of St. Werburgh.

Passing now from the domain of romance and tradition, we come to a period when the lamp of reliable history lights us on our way. Alfred is gathered to his fathers, Edward reigns in his stead, and over the great province of Mercia, Ethelred and Ethelfleda rule as his lieutenants. Again quoting Monk Bradshaw, we read

That tyme the realme of Merciens was translate
 By the kynge, and gyven to duke Ethelrede
 A noble man of auncetre politicke and fortunate
 Whiche married his syster lady Elffede
 Doughter to the forsaid valiant kynge Alured
 The sayd gentilman was wyse and vertuous,
 Sad and discrete, pacient and famous.

This lady Elffede, duchesse of Merciens,
 Had speciall loue and singular affection
 To blessed Werburge and true confidence
 Wherefore she mynded with great dilectacion
 To edifice a mynstre, a place of deuocion
 To this holy virgin for profite of her soule
 Enlargynge the church of Peter and of Paule.

She moued her husbnde with great mekenes
 To supplie the same dede of his charite
 And diuers other nobles of theyr goodnes
 For aide in that cause after their degree
 Joyfull was the duke of the mocion gostle
 Glad were the nobles within all the shire
 To founde a mynstre after her desire.

They send for masons upon every syde
 Counnyng in geometrie the foundacion to take
 For a large mynstre longe, hie, and wyde
 Substancially wrought the best that they can make
 To the honour of God for saynt Werburge sake
 At the est ende taken theyr sure foundacion
 Of the apostoles church ioynyng both as one.

And the olde church of Peter and of Paule
 By a generall counsell of the spiritualte
 With helpe of the duke moost principall
 Was translate to the myddes of the sayd cite
 Where a pairesse church was edified truele
 In honour of the aforesayd apostoles twayne
 Whiche shall for euer by grace diuine remayne.

Afterwards, referring more particularly to the acts of Princess
 Ethelfleda, the same author proceeds:—

The yere of our lorde IX hundreth and VIII
 This noble duchesse with mycle royalte
 Reedified Chestre and fortified it full ryght
 Church, house, and wall decayed piteousle
 Thus brought unto ruine was Chestre cite
 First by Ethelfride kyng of Northumberlande
 And by Danes, Norwaies vexyng all Englande.

Also she enlarged this sayd olde cite
 With new mighty walles strong all about
 Almost by proporcion double in quantite
 To the forther byldyng brought without dout

She compassed in the castell enemies to hold out
 Within the sayd Walles to defend the towne
 Agaynst Danes and Walshemen to dryve them all downe.

After the deth of her husband Ethelrede
 She ruled the realme of Mercelande manfully
 Buylde churches, and townes repaired in dede
 As Staford, Warwike, Thomwort, and Shirisbury ;
 Of newe she edified Runcorn and Edisbury :
 The body of Saynt Oswald also she translate
 From Bardency to Gloucetur there to be tumulate.

For these statements we have, in the main, positive—we might almost have said contemporary—evidence, as may be seen by reference to the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle*, *Matthew of Westminster*, *Florence of Worcester*, *Hollingshead*, *Fox*, &c.

The works undertaken by Earl Ethelred at Chester were not works completed in a day, or yet a year. It is more than probable, then, that, as warlike leisure served, Chester was long his favourite home : and here, to my mind almost conclusively, after completing St. Werburgh's Abbey and the city walls, he dreamed that pious dream which tradition has handed down to us, and on the outskirts of our city, on the spot where he captured a white hind in the chase, there he founded the proud minster of St. John.

Historians writing three hundred years afterwards, dealing with tradition as they found it, and aided only by written records both meagre and obscure, may well be forgiven for having failed to discriminate between the two Saxon Ethelreds. It has been reserved for us in a later age to apply the antiquarian broom to this historic cobweb, and, thanks to a lucky discovery of high archæological interest, endeavour to give the honour to whom honour is due, by making Ethelred the *Earl*, and not Ethelred *King* of Mercia, founder of the great Church of St. John, at Chester.

We may imagine the formalities which would accompany the ceremony of "laying the foundation stone,"* and may count upon some who were likely to have been present. First, there were Ethelred and Ethelfleda, the joint founders; near them might stand their royal ward, Æthelstan the etheling, heir to his father's throne. Prominent in the group, we may suppose, would be Plegmund, the Archbishop of Canterbury, a native of Mercia, and, but a few years before, a modest recluse at the hermitage of Hoole, that "island of Chester" of which

* It is not improbable that the "mass of broken stone," referred to at the commencement of this Paper as lying upon the coins when found, was once in reality the "foundation stone" itself. In that case it would, had it been perfect, have exhibited to us the "cross" usually cut into the stone by the hand of the bishop officiating at the ceremony.—*Archæologia*, Vol. 26, p. 219.

we of this Society have so lately been reminded. But Chester belonged then, as now, to the arch-diocese of York, and we may well believe that Ethelbald, the northern primate, or some eminent deputy, would be present at the ceremony. In that case, the St. Peter's and St. Edmund's coins, already noticed, would in all probability be deposited under the foundation stone as a freewill offering on behalf of the Church, while those of King Edward the Elder would be laid there in like manner by Earl Ethelred, his kinsman, as the representative of the State.

Edward came to the throne in 901, and Ethelred the Earl died in 911; so that, if these coins are actually "foundation coins," as I believe them to be, then St. John's Church must have been in the first instance built somewhere between those years—901 and 911.

It were much to be wished that these now scattered coins, the relics of an age long passed away, should again be united in an available form. If the several holders consent to such an arrangement, the Chester Archæological Society, by their responsible officers, will afford the coins a prominent place in the Museum. All then who felt an interest in the subject might see for themselves these valuable types of the circulating medium of England in its infant days; and either endorse or reject the arguments and theories upon which this memoir has been based.

To sum up, then, in one short, final sentence. I conceive that these coins, which have come to us fresh from their respective mints, and have evidently never been in actual circulation, were, without reasonable doubt, the foundation coins of St. John's, and of the types current either in the Church or the State at the date of the ceremony; that they escaped recognition when the Norman edifice of stone replaced the Saxon one of wood; that the same happy fate awaited them when the nave was cut down in the reign of Elizabeth; and that, after lying dormant in the soil for nearly a thousand years, they have reappeared in this year of grace, 1862, as if purposely to remove a cloud of historic dust from our eyes, while, at the same time, they prove, in language which cannot lie, the remote antiquity—yea, the Saxon origin—of that venerable structure.

It remains to add a few words on the subject of "foundation stones," and on the custom of depositing current coins beneath them. This is the more necessary, as some of my antiquarian brethren who heard this Paper read, or who saw a digest of it, shortly afterwards, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, have questioned the existence of such a religious ceremony in Anglo-Saxon times.

That the Romans, who were pre-eminently a numismatic people, and reckoned time solely by the reigns, long or short, of their emperors, would early employ coins to mark the dates of their public edifices, might fairly enough be assumed, even in the absence of actual proof. But happily we are not left quite to hypothesis in this matter. Tacitus,* the Roman historian, informs us that "the Emperor Vespasian delegated to Lucius Vestinus, a man of high authority, the management of the reconstruction of the Capitol. He first assembled the augurs in consultation, who directed that the materials of the former temple should be previously deposited in the marshes, and the new one erected on the original site, the Gods being also unwilling that the form of the building should be altered. On the 11th of the calends of July, the day being clear and serene, the whole space allotted to the temple was circumscribed with fillets and garlands. Such of the soldiers as bore names of good fortune were admitted into the above space, carrying in their hands what were considered as felicitous branches of trees. Next came the vestal virgins, and a troop of boys accompanied by their parents. These were employed in cleansing the ground with water obtained from the purest sources. The Prætor Helvidius Priscus, preceded by Plautius Ælianus the high priest (the ground being hallowed by the sacrifice of a swine, a sheep, and a bull, and their entrails, laid upon the turf), called first on Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, and then on the Gods who protected the empire, to prosper the undertaking, and preserve by their divine power the Temples which the piety of man had erected in their honour. Helvidius then touched the bands or fillets, to which a stone together with several ropes had been attached. At the same time the other priests, with the magistrates and senators, assisted by the greater portion of the spectators, and with intermingled joy and desire, *drew the large stone to the foundations*, first scattering over them as donations *quantities of gold and silver coins*, with pieces of virgin metal that had not passed through the furnace or received the usual stamp, the augurs having declared that the work was not to be polluted with stone or metal that had been destined to any other purpose." †

Another description from Godwyn ‡ is to the like effect. After describing other ceremonies of dedication he writes:—"This being done, the Prætor touched certain ropes wherewith a great stone, being the first of the foundations, was tyed. Together with that, other

* *Hist. lib. IV.*, cap 53. † *Archæologia*, Vol. 26, pp. 216-7.

‡ *Rom. Ant.* p. 22, ed. of 1633, quoted by the Rev. F. Trench in *Notes and Queries*, 3rd series, Vol. IV, p. 450.

chief magistrates, priests, and all sorts of people did help to pluck that stone, and let it down into its place, casting in wedges of gold and silver, which had never been purified or tried in the fire. These ceremonies ended, the Aruspes pronounced with a loud voice,—‘*Ne temeretur opus saxo aurove in aliud destinato:’ i.e.* Let not this work be unhallowed by converting this stone or gold into any other use.”

This religious ceremony of the Romans, like many others of a similar class, became part and parcel of the ritual of their successors in this as in other countries. The instance now claimed for St. John’s, at Chester, is perhaps the earliest in date which has hitherto been recorded in England. But in Venice, nearly a century before, viz:—in 827, the Doge Justiniano Particiaco bequeathed to his brother and successor John, a sum of money to build a church in honour of St. Mark. This was accordingly accomplished by him in 828 or 829, on which occasion an inscribed stone was placed by him in the foundations, assisted by Orso Badoaro, Bishop of Olivola. In the year 976 the original church was destroyed by fire, and the present one soon afterwards erected under the Doge Peter Urseolo. It is very possible that, in clearing away the rubbish of the old church, the original foundation stone was discovered;* but be that as it may, the stone was certainly exhibited before the Society of Antiquaries, London, in 1834. The stone is of circular form, $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter and half an inch thick, and appears to have been originally inserted in the cavity of a larger stone. In the centre is a rudely designed head, supposed to represent St. Mark, surrounded by a sort of nimbus, and beyond that by an inscription in Latin which runs as follows:—*ECCL(ESIÆ) S(ANCTI) MARCI PRIMAM PETRAM POSVIT DVX IO(HANNES) PARTICI(ACO).*

It is not recorded whether any coins were found beneath this Venetian stone, but it may be pretty safely assumed that there were; and that, as too frequently happens under similar circumstances now, they were abstracted by the workmen, and dispersed. This, indeed, would likely enough have been the fate of those found at St. John’s, had they not been mistaken by the workmen for mere German counters, or, as they themselves termed them, “only little bits of brass!”

* *Archæologia*, Vol. 26, p. 221.

It is but fair to state that the miscellaneous coins of Edward, occupying the 4th Plate attached to this Paper, were sketched by Mr. Peacock from gutta percha or sealing wax casts, and not from the coins themselves: hence alone any slight inaccuracy of detail, should such chance to be discovered on comparison with the originals.

FOUNDATION STONE
 OF THE
 ORIGINAL CHURCH OF ST MARK,
 VENICE.



ACTUAL SIZE,

DIAMETER --- $6\frac{1}{4}$ INCHES

THICKNESS --- $\frac{1}{2}$ AN INCH.