

ON SILVER COINS DISCOVERED AT HARMONDS- WORTH, MIDDLESEX.

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I am enabled to lay before the Society an account of the discovery of coins in the burial-ground of Harmondsworth Church, Middlesex, from particulars kindly furnished by the vicar, Rev. J. Percy Arnold, B.D. A. Chantler, Esq. and Frederick Hunt, Esq. The churchyard has been recently enlarged by an addition on its north side, and many inequalities in the ground were then reduced. A grave was dug in the spring of 1870 to the north-west of the church close to the boundary of the old churchyard, and at a depth of about three feet (the soil removed from this part would have made the original depth six feet) several coins were found. They appeared as if arranged in fours upon the arm of the skeleton of a full-grown man; some of them were inclosed in what might have been a purse or (as the sexton described it) a sort of leather piping, around which were traces of metal, probably brass. This receptacle was very much decayed, so that no part of it could be preserved. About one half of the skeleton was removed, but no remains of a coffin were visible. The coins are of silver, and are all half-shillings; twenty-two are of Elizabeth, with the rose at the back of her head, and three of James I. with a VI. to indicate its value in pence. The dates range from 1564 to 1604. The body from which these coins were taken was buried in his clothes, and it would appear as if the money was concealed in the sleeve of his coat. Had the body been found in the open fields instead of in a churchyard we could have supposed this person had been robbed and murdered by the highwaymen who infested the adjacent open country at Hounslow and other places on the Windsor Road, and that the victim had been only partially deprived of the valuables about him. This theory seems to be destroyed by the deposit of the body in a churchyard, which would have led to the immediate discovery of the murder. Let us look to the coins for help in our investigation. They belong to a large part of the reign of Elizabeth, and the beginning of James I. They are all

in fair preservation, but have evidently seen much but unequal wear, just such as would have occurred in a circulation of from thirty to sixty years; and history will inform us that about this number of years from the earliest and latest dates on the coins will bring us to a time of great troubles in England. Charles I. and his Parliament were at war, and this neighbourhood was not exempt from the horrors of this conflict. Brentford was the locality of an engagement in 1642, and the fighting was within a mile or two of Harmondsworth. In 1647 the battle was on Hounslow Heath, part of which is in this parish. At either of these encounters a wounded soldier or officer might have fled in this direction and died here, or one of the slain on the field may have been brought here for burial, put into the grave with his clothes, and the money have been overlooked and buried with him. Leaving these conjectures we will proceed to notice some interesting features in the coins. They bear the dates of seventeen different years, and have as many as eleven varieties of mint marks. The marks are represented in the accompanying woodcut, and occur on the coins in the



following order with regard to their dates. 1564 a pheon; 1565 a rose; 1568 and 1569 a crown; 1570 and 1571 a tower; one of 1574 a flower of four petals; another of 1574 and four of 1575 a flower of five petals; 1578 and 1582 a plain cross; 1583 a bell; 1590 and 1591 a hand; 1594 a woolpack; and 1603 a thistle. The mark on the coin of 1604 is obliterated. At all times the process of coinage appears to have been carried out by license given by the sovereign power to bodies, officers, or other individuals. It therefore became necessary to identify each parcel of money produced under the several licences, and to ascertain if any error or fraud in weight or fineness had been committed by the contractor before he received his discharge from liability for the parcel of gold or silver which had been given to him. The earliest mint-mark of the kind described above on English money is believed to be the crown at the beginning of the legend on gold pieces of Edward III. Before that time the cross is very generally found in this place, but it does not appear as a mint-mark; indeed they sometimes occur together on the same coin. Certain parcels of silver are identified at various times to show their origin: thus the silver

produced from the Welsh lead mines in the reign of James I. had the Prince's feathers as a mint mark; and in the reign of George II. the silver taken at Lima and Vigo when coined was stamped with the names of these places. The name of the artist who executed the die is frequently found on the money made by it. The names of Blondeau, Simon, and Roeter in the time of Cromwell and Charles II. and of Pistrucci on the crown pieces of George III. are in full. On most modern coinage we find the initials of the die-sinker, and on the money of Victoria since 1864 each piece has the number of the die with which it was struck. On the coins of many of our kings the name of the place where they were struck is found very conspicuously on the reverse, as "Civitas London," "Civitas Cantor." "Civitas Eboraci," "Villa Calisie," for London, Canterbury, York, and Calais. On the copper money of George III. struck by Bolton and Watt, the name of their works "Soho," near Birmingham, may be seen in small capitals on the reverse.
