

REMARKS ON ROMAN COINS FOUND NEAR WOODBRIDGE,
SUFFOLK.¹

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IN digging for coprolites at Sutton, near Woodbridge, some labourers recently found a vessel, which is said to have contained nearly a bushel of Roman coins. They belong to the period of Constantine, and are for the most part of ordinary types; but as illustrations of history they are interesting, and from this point of view I propose to consider them on the present occasion.

A modern writer,² more remarkable for rhetorical brilliancy than minute accuracy, has said that the series of Greek coins does not yield to the Roman in "historical interest." This statement is not correct: the Greek coins are incomparably superior as works of art; they also afford much curious information with respect to mythology, manners, and customs, and the productions of the animal and vegetable kingdoms; but, as Eckhel observes, "*Facta historica non facile admittunt.*" On the other hand, the Roman series, both consular and imperial, though inferior in execution, are invaluable as records of events.³ Had all the MSS. of the Greek and Latin writers perished in the confusion of the Middle Ages, these coins would still have supplied us with an outline of the principal facts and personages. This remark applies to that glorious era in Roman history when, according to Gibbon, the human race enjoyed the greatest happiness, under Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines; it is equally true with respect to the period with which we are now immediately concerned, the commencement of the Lower

¹ Read before the Archaeological Institute at Leicester, July 29th, 1870, the Right Hon. Lord Talbot de Malahide, F.S.A., in the chair.

² Macaulay, Essay on Addison.

³ While from the numerous beautiful and interesting series of Sicilian coins we

can scarcely glean any additional fact, besides the existence of Queen Philistis (ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΑ ΦΙΛΙΣΤΙΣ), we learn from the coins of a single emperor, Trajan, several circumstances otherwise unknown.

Empire, when the decline of art corresponded with the loss of freedom and the decay of political institutions. It has been justly said that art is the reflection of literature; accordingly, as after Trajan and Hadrian we scarcely meet with a single writer of original genius, so, when we descend below their date, we observe that the coins degenerate, exhibit false taste, and sacrifice the objects that should be most prominent to meretricious accessories.

Many of the coins found near Woodbridge belong to the class called votive, and corroborate the accounts given us in the Augustan history of the acclamations and prayers for a happy reign which greeted the new emperor on his accession to the throne.

We find on their reverses the letters *v* and *xx*, &c.; these probably refer to the number of years of the reign, and their origin may be traced to the age of Augustus, who accepted supreme power for periods of ten years—a fact which was commemorated by the institution of the festival of the *Decennalia*. On the coins of Constantine the letters *xxx* sometimes occur, denoting that his reign lasted for thirty years; and similar votive inscriptions are visible in the medallions on the arch of this emperor at Rome.

Amongst these coins we have one that bears the legend *SARMATIA DEVICTA*, and thus confirms the statements of Ammianus, Eutropius, and other historians. But we meet very frequently with the legend *GLORIA EXERCITVS* and *VIRTVS EXERCIT*; and here again we have an illustration of the Gothic, Persian, and civil wars in which the Romans were engaged during this period.

Some of these coins have the abbreviation *AVGG.* for Augusti, and *CAESS.* for Cæsares, thus bearing testimony to the division of the Roman world between two orders of emperors, which began in the time of Diocletian.

All the coins with the legend *BEATA TRANQVILLITAS* on the reverse have the mint-mark *PLON*, and appear to have been struck in London. I cannot help remarking that by a happy coincidence these words, which were first used in a remote antiquity, aptly describe the peaceable population of our capital at the present day.

The legend *CONSTANTINOPOLIS* reminds us of the change of the seat of empire.

The legend *VICTORIAE DD. AVGG. Q. NN.* has been variously

interpreted; some explain it as, *Victoriæ dominorum Augustorum quinque nostrorum*,⁴ the five princes being Constantine II., Constantius, Constans, Delmatius, and Hanniballianus. Others suppose that Q. means *que* (and), as in the abbreviation S. P. Q. R., *i. e.*, *Senatus Populusque Romanus*.

A slight inspection of this series will show the personal advantages which Constantine possessed over his rivals. In the long line of Roman emperors, with the exception of Augustus, we scarcely find a face superior to his "majestic countenance."

Two of these coins indicate the deification of the emperors Constantius and Constantine the Great: in the latter case the emperor stands in a chariot and extends his arm to grasp a celestial hand which is raising him to the skies. At an earlier period the apotheosis was represented by a different symbol: the emperor was borne aloft by an eagle, the bird of Jove; and the empress had for her device a peacock, which was similarly appropriated to Juno, as is seen on the coins of Samos, the seat of her worship. The epithet *Divus* in the legend often occurs in Tacitus and Suetonius, and has been adopted by the Christian Church as the title of canonization. The letters DV., the abbreviation of this word, may be seen on the Roman milestone in the town Museum at Leicester.

In several cases we find on the reverse a gate with ornaments at the top, that seem to be trophies, where we have the letters PTR (*percussa Treviris*). Some antiquaries have endeavoured to identify it with the Porta Nigra at Trèves, which is described by Wytttenbach in his *Treatise on the Antiquities of that city*; but, perhaps, we have here only the representation of the gate of a camp.

It remains for me to say a few words on mint-marks, a branch of the subject which presents many difficulties, and has not yet been fully elucidated by any writer on numismatics. These marks are letters in the exergue of the reverse, *i. e.*, in the lower part of the field of the coin, separated from the rest by a line. The following occur amongst others on these coins, and may be thus explained:—

sis—Siscia, now Sissek, the chief town in Pannonia.

⁴ Cohen, vol. vi. p. 270.

CONST—Constantinople.

PLON—struck at London (*percutsa Londinii*).

TRS—struck at Trèves (*Treviris signata*).

SMANTB—struck at Antioch (*signata moneta Antiochiæ* ;
B, second issue).

TRP—struck at Trèves (*Treviris percutsa*).

STR—struck at Trèves (*signata Treviris*).

After the exergual letters denoting the mint, we often find another letter, A, B, r, Δ, &c., which seems to signify the issue, first, second, third, fourth, &c. Besides the mint-marks we frequently meet with letters on the field of the coin which are hard to explain; *e. g.*, on one of Crispus we have $\frac{x}{iii}$, which some have read $\frac{x}{ii}$. We can hardly suppose that these letters denote the issue, because this is expressed in the exergual letters SMKA, *i. e.* (*signata Moneta Karthagine*), money struck at Carthage, fourth issue. This is an enigma which I must leave to some more learned numismatist to solve.⁵

These coins vary in execution: some exhibit considerable skill in portraiture; others are comparatively rude; but on the whole they represent the decline of art corresponding with the debasement of literature. So, on the Arch of Constantine, we find the sculptural decorations borrowed from a monument of Trajan, as if there were no competent artists living at the time when it was erected. If we may judge from the ruins of Diocletian's Palace at Spalatro, architecture appears to have survived longer than the sister arts.

The following are the principal authorities for the numismatics of this period:—

Agostini of Tarragona, whose great work, first published in Spanish, is generally quoted by the Latin title—*Augustinus Tarraconensis, Dialogi de Nummis Veterum*.

Ezechiel Spanheim—*De præstantia et usu Numismatum*; folio.

Banduri—*Numismata Imperatorum Romanorum*; folio.

⁵ Since these remarks were written the Rev. C. W. King has suggested to me that the letters $\frac{x}{iii}$ (so they should probably be read,) indicate the number of copper coins contained in the silver denarius, just as we find XII. on the obverse of Edward the Sixth's shillings. With the number 13, which may seem strange at first sight, compare the subdivision of the shilling into 13 pence at

Jersey. The final letters A, B, r, &c., may perhaps denote distinct officinæ of the same mint. On the subject of mint-marks I must refer the reader to the valuable memoir "On Roman Coins struck in Britain," by Mr. De Salis, communicated at the meeting of the Archaeological Institute, held in London, July, 1866. See *Arch. Journ.* vol. xxiv. p. 149.

This work treats of the later Roman emperors, from Trajanus Decius downwards.

Eckhel—*Doctrina Numorum Veterum*, especially vol. viii. For the *Numi Votorum*, *vide* vol. viii. p. 473.

Cohen—*Les Monnaies frappées sous l'Empire Romain*, vols. v., vi., and vii. This work, being the last on the subject, and containing the most copious list of coins, is very useful to the collector; but the earlier numismatists must be consulted for the sake of references to ancient authors and other collateral information.

Sabatier—*Production de l'Or, de l'Argent, et du Cuivre chez les Anciens, et hôtels monétaires des empires Romain et Byzantin*. This work gives a list of the Roman mints, but is very defective in the explanation of the mint-marks.

Madden—*Handbook of Roman Coins*. This small and unpretending book affords much useful information, and the results of recent investigations.

I may take this opportunity of expressing my hope that numismatics and other branches of archæology may be more generally introduced into the higher education of our country. If classical studies are to maintain their ground, they must be pursued in a more realistic manner, and the authors of Greece and Rome illustrated by the remains of ancient art: where originals cannot be procured, they should be copied and reproduced by all the aids and appliances that modern ingenuity can devise. The great writers of antiquity will then cease to be mere lessons in philology; the student, as he peruses their works, will picture to himself the scenes which they describe, and for a time, at least, "live in the life of a bygone age."

These apparently insignificant memorials of the past are seen by the vulgar with indifference, and offer few attractions to the technical artist; but they are viewed by the antiquary with far different eyes. As he handles these pieces of copper that issued from the Roman mints more than fifteen hundred years ago, now coated with the rust of centuries, bearing characters almost illegible, and presenting effigies in the style of a degraded art, he thinks of the persons and events which they symbolize and record,—the close of the long struggle between Paganism and Christianity, the foundation of a new capital, and the establishment of a new

religion. He is reminded of the varied fortunes of the reigning family, of the piety of Helena, the crowning victory of Constantine, and the tragic fate of Crispus. His thoughts are carried away by the subject to lands and times alike remote; but they will revert to our own countryman,⁶ the greatest of all historians, who has used so happily the coins and medals, as well as every other monument within his reach; who has woven the discordant statements of ancient writers into one harmonious narrative, who has shed the light of learning and genius on a period previously as obscure as it was interesting to the philosophical inquirer.⁷

Legends on Coins found near Woodbridge, Suffolk.

Obverse.	Reverse.
1. CONSTANTINVS AVG.	D. N. CONSTANTINI MAZ. AVG.
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	SARMATIA DEVICTA.
5 & 6. _____	PROVIDENTIAE AVGG.
7. _____	VIRTUS AVGG.
8. _____	VIRTUS EXERCIT.
9. CONSTANTINVS P. AVG.	BEATA TRANQVILLITAS.
10. DIVO CONSTANTIO OPT. IMP.	REQVIES OPT. MER.
11 & 12. CONSTANTINOPOLIS.	
13. CONSTANTINVS MAX. AVG.	GLORIA EXERCITVS.
14. CONSTANTINVS IVN. NOB. C.	_____
15. _____	⁸ PROVIDENTIAE CAESS.
16. _____	CAESARVM NOSTRORVM.
17. _____	BEATA TRANQVILLITAS.
18. D. N. FL. IVL. CRISPVS NOB. CAES.	IOVI CONSERVATORI.
19. FL. IVL. CONSTANTIVS NOB. C.	CAESARVM NOSTRORVM.
20. IVL. CRISPVS NOB. C.	_____
21. FL. IVL. CONSTANTIVS NOB. C.	GLORIA EXERCITVS.
22. _____	PROVIDENTIAE CAESS.
23. CONSTANS P. F. AVG.	GLORIA EXERCITVS.
24. _____	VICTORIAE DD. AVGG. Q. NN.

⁶ Gibbon.

⁷ I beg to acknowledge with thanks the kind assistance I have received in preparing these remarks from Mr. Corkran, of the British Museum; Mr. Williams, Assistant Secretary of the Royal Astronomical Society; and my brother, Mr. S. S. Lewis, Fellow and Librarian of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

⁸ This legend appears to refer to the supply of corn provided for the Roman people by the care of the emperors. Compare the words *Annona*, *Ubertas*, *Abundantia*, *Liberalitas*, which often occur on the coins. For this subject, see *Dictionary of Antiquities*, s. v. *Frumentariae Leges*, and *Merivale*, *History of the Romans under the Empire*, ed. 1865, vol. iv. pp. 391, 392.

Obverse.

25. FL. IVL. HELENÆ AVG.

26. FL. MAX. THEODORA AVG.

27. VRBS ROMA.

28. DI. CONSTANTINVS PT. AVGG.

Reverse.

PAX PVBLICA.

⁹ PIETAS ROMANA.

⁹ These words remind us of Virgil's "Pius Æneas," of the Emperor Antoninus Pius, and of Sextus Pompeius, whose denarii are inscribed MAG. PIVS.

IMP. ITER., and bear on the reverse, sometimes, Pietas, sometimes, the Catanzan Brothers—a type of filial devotion.