

An Æthelstan Penny, (925-941).

By J. O. MANTON.

THE writer has recently become possessed of a unique Æthelstan penny of Derby mintage—unique by reason of its being an unpublished specimen hitherto.

The coin has the usual small cross in the centre of the field on both obverse and reverse.

The inscriptions are:—

Obverse: TIRBTOT ✠ ERNATSIDE ✠ = ÆDISTAN REX TOT
BRIT.

Reverse: ✠ IOIAIMOTEDERYBVI = ✠ IOIAI MOTE DERYBUL.
(The Saxon D=TH and V=U).

The dies were obviously fabricated by an illiterate Dane when the Northumbrians were in occupation of Derby as one of their outposts in their intended conquest of the county southwards. The Northumbrians were compelled to purchase supplies locally for the subsistence of their forces in occupation and, as the surrounding native people would only accept the regal coinage to which they were accustomed, it was necessary to continue the Saxon mintage; however, the Northumbrians, who refused to recognize Æthelstan's title REX TOT(ius) BRIT(annia), (King of all Britain), usually substituted the title REX SAXORVM (King of the Saxons), or an abbreviation of this.

The prototype of the coin now under notice doubtless was a coin of Saxon mintage. The illiteracy of the Dane who attempted to copy it, is shown by the fact that when cutting the obverse die he overlooked that its impress would be retrograde, also, evidently he was not sufficiently instructed as he continued the Saxon title "Rex Tot

Brit:” Further, when cutting the reverse die, according to our present knowledge, he must have misread, or blundered, the moneyer’s name. IOIAI may possibly be intended for IOHA, the usual contraction then for IOHANNES in which case the second stroke of H is misplaced. Alternatively the name may be another form of the moneyer “IVA.” These suggested readings of the moneyer’s name are given by Mr. W. J. Andrew, ex-president of the British Numismatic Society, who concludes with “however, for all numismatic purposes IOIAI must be read as it is and treated as the intended name.”

Æthelstan established, or confirmed, mints in various towns in his Kingdom and enacted that one kind of money only should be circulated throughout the realm, and that the striking of money was to be confined to boroughs. These prohibitions put a stop to the coinage and issue by ecclesiastics of money of their own.

Æthelstan’s coins were all pennies of sterling silver of 22-24 grains in weight. He was King of the West Saxons by inheritance, of the Mercians by election, and of the greater part of Britain by conquest. The title “Rex Totius Britanniae” was an arrogant one as he never actually possessed the whole Kingdom.

Moneyers were the principal officers of the mints and responsible for the integrity of the money.