



V.—THE THOMAS JAMES BELL COLLECTION OF COINS, WITH SOME NOTES ON POINTS OF INTEREST.

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This collection was made by the late T. J. Bell, and was presented to the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, after his death in 1929, by his family and executors. This was in accordance with his expressed wish, as the collection, which would have constituted a valuable gift to any society interested in Roman coins, has the special interest for us that many of the coins in it were found locally.

When the coins actually reached the society, they were all jumbled together without any sort of arrangement, labels, or other marks of identification, and there was no list of what the collection comprised. Colonel Spain took it in hand and worked all through the coins, putting them in separate envelopes as he identified them. He then arranged them in chronological order, rendering, as far as possible, unto each Cæsar that which was his. He then handed them over to me, and I went through them again, making a detailed card index as I went along. We managed to differ over some of the more worn specimens, but after a meeting or two we reached complete agreement.

The result shows us a collection of 355 coins, of which only eight are not Roman. Of the Roman ones forty-five are completely illegible, being tiny, debased pieces of metal dating from Constantine onwards.

Leaving the non-Roman coins on one side for the present, I would like to give you an idea of the period covered by the Roman ones, the number of emperors represented, and so on.

The first nine coins are of republican times, dating from about 268 B.C. to 31 B.C. Six of these are silver coins.

The Julio-Claudian house is represented by fourteen bronzes which include all the emperors of that house.

For the year of the three emperors we have two bronze coins of Galba and a *denarius* of Otho, but Vitellius is not represented.

The Flavian house shows twenty silver coins and twenty-seven bronze, and the Antonines, as far as the end of the reign of Heliogabalus, twenty-six silver and forty-one bronze.

Taking the next group from Alexander Severus to Philip II, A.D. 235-A.D. 249, we have two silver and nine bronze, which brings the total for the Upper Empire up to 142 coins, something over a third of the collection.

In the Lower Empire a group from Herrenius Etruscus to Maxentius gives sixty silver and twelve bronze coins. It may be as well to remark here that in the case of this group and the following ones the title silver is generally a courtesy one for coins that should be silver but are in fact of base metal.

The Constantinian emperors, if I may so designate them, show one silver and fifty-five bronze coins.

From Magnentius to Magnus Maximus in A.D. 388 there are four silver and twelve bronze coins, and that takes us to the division of the empire, after which we have four bronzes of Honorius and three of Arcadius.

That is the end of the list, and it is a most comprehensive one. There are eighty-six emperors and empresses represented; and some of them are sufficiently out of the way. At least I, for one, should not like to be faced with a paper asking: "What do you know of Clodius Pupienus, Herrenius Etruscus, and Trebonianus Gallus?"



I fear my answer would be but brief. (Plate XI, nos. 9, 11, 12.) I must refer you, however, to the card index for a more detailed study of the names and dates than I can give here.

I am not proposing to enter into any detailed numismatic consideration of the coins as regards their weights, sizes, types, denominations, and so on. I shall go on, instead, to the question of which of the coins were found at local sites.

The largest group comprises those found during excavations and other work, on the site of the camp at South Shields. Sixteen coins which are legible and the forty-five illegibles were actually labelled by Mr. Bell himself as having come from the camp. They include the following :

Trajan	2 <i>denarii</i> .
Helena	<i>centenionalis</i> .
Constantine II	2 <i>centenionales</i> .
Constantius II	5 <i>centenionales</i> .
Constantinople	1 <i>centenionalis</i> .
Urbs Roma	1 <i>centenionalis</i> .
Magnentius	1 <i>follis</i> .
Valentinianus II	1 <i>centenionalis</i> .
Arcadius	2 <i>centenionales</i> .

It is known, however, that many more of the collection must actually have come from this site, and I have endeavoured to trace them by working through the late Robert Blair's list of South Shields coins which appeared in *Archæologia Aeliana*, 2nd ser., vol. X. As a result, I have noted a further seventy-eight coins which may belong to the South Shields group. Out of these I regard about fifty as more certain than the others, but even in their case the fact that they agree with coins in Robert Blair's list cannot be taken as absolute proof of their provenance. For this reason I will not give a detailed list of them, but will content myself with saying that they give us coins of about twenty-five more emperors between

Trajan and Constantine. In order to be quite sure of the coins we should have needed most minute descriptions of each one, and Mr. Robert Blair's catalogue in *Archæologia Aeliana* was intended, I imagine, as a guide to those studying the date and history of the fort, for whom a general list of coins is most valuable, and not as a means whereby the individual coins themselves might be identified in the future.

A further series of five coins were marked by T. J. Bell as having been found on the beach at South Shields, and to these must be added six more which Colonel Spain has found described in the *Proceedings* (3rd ser., vol. I, pp. 102, 118, and *ibid.*, vol. VII, pp. 6, 34) as having been found on the Herd Sands or on the Trow Rocks. They include coins of Hadrian, Trajan, and the Antonines as far as Verus. I am very greatly indebted to Colonel Spain for taking such trouble in looking these up for me.

I must note one of the above group of coins, however, a *sestertius* of Clodius Albinus, which appears in the *Proceedings* as having come from the Trow Rocks, whereas T. J. Bell has marked it with a *sestertius* of Antoninus Pius as having been found during dredging operations on the site of the old bridge at Newcastle.

The last local coins are two which were marked as having come from Carrawburgh (*Procolitia*), and one as having been found in the well of Coventina at that fort. They are a *dupondius* of Antoninus Pius, an *antoninianus* of Claudius Gothicus, and an *as* of Antoninus Pius respectively.

We have thus a total of about 150 coins in the collection which probably come from local sources.

Apart from these, eleven coins, all of the Constantinian era, are marked as having been brought to T. J. Bell by Captain Webb of the barque *Africa* of South Shields from a place in North Africa which is given as *Libadiah*. Colonel Spain discovered that there is no such place on the map. However, through Captain E. W. Swan, the Royal Geographical Society came to the rescue with the

suggestion that the place intended must be Lebidah, which is the modern name for the site of the great Roman city of *Leptis Magna*.

Nearly all these coins I have mentioned, whose interest lies to a great extent in their provenance, are in rather bad condition, but I think it would repay anyone who is interested to look at some of the other coins in the collection, especially some of those belonging to the rather more obscure emperors I spoke of before. I think it must have been one of T. J. Bell's final aims to acquire a representative coin of every emperor in good condition, for a number of these rarer coins are in practically mint state.

I should like to point out various coins with an interest of their own. Specimens with the seated figure of Britannia (plate XI, no. 6), for instance, and coins belonging to such interesting people as the empress-saint Helena (plate XI, no. 16), or, to quote a rather different character, the rebel emperor Magnus Maximus, who is so well known to us, as seen through the eyes of his officer Parnesius, by the kindness of *Puck of Pook's Hill* and Mr. Kipling. (Plate XI, no. 17.) There is not time for everything though, and I want to speak a little of the republican and non-Roman coins.

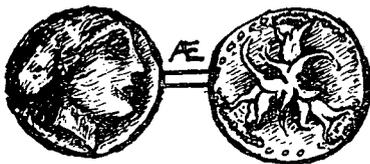
The republican ones include three quite early specimens of the *as*. This coin, which seems to have been minted first at Rome about 335 B.C., originally weighed a pound, but was reduced to half that weight in 286 B.C., and further reduced in 268 B.C. to two ounces, thus reaching only a sixth of its original weight in about sixty years. Our earliest specimen weighs approximately two ounces, so I have dated it, accordingly, *circa* 268 B.C. The other two *asses* weigh only about one ounce each, so I have placed them *circa* 217 B.C., the period of the great stress of the second Punic war when the Romans were obliged to halve the weight once more.

There are four *denarii* belonging to different moneyers, but of two of them, Caius Aburius Geminus and Lucius Julius Bursio, nothing is known beyond their names. Of

the third moneyer, Caius Vibius Pansa, we can say that he came of a south Italian family, and that he was proscribed by Sulla. This may account for the fact that in later days his son was a supporter of Cæsar against Pompey, who had been Sulla's friend. We know nothing of the personal history of the fourth man, Quintus Voconius Vitulus, but his coin leaves us in no doubt as to his political leanings. Coining at a time when the Roman world was taking sides either with Octavian or with Antony and Cleopatra, he gives us for his obverse design a portrait head which may be taken for Octavian or for Cæsar. The reverse is the canting badge of a calf representing his own surname.

The next two coins belong to Antony, and give the numbers of the second and the eighth of his legions. (Plate XI, nos. 4, 5.) They were probably struck at Ephesus in the early part of the year 31 B.C., when Antony was preparing for the campaign which ended in his defeat at Actium on the 2nd September that same year. From the numbers on his coins it would appear that he reckoned on having thirty legions, about 180,000 men.

Lastly we come to the coins which are not Roman. The earliest of all is a bronze coin belonging to the Greek city of Cyrene in North Africa, and dating from about 400 B.C. The obverse shows the head of the nymph Cyrene, while the reverse gives a picture of the top of the famous *silphium* plant whose export brought such



wealth to the city. The plant no longer exists, but it seems to have been an umbellifer of the narthex or fennel variety. The story was that the seeds of it came up in the Cyrenaica first in 637 B.C. after a rain of frogs and fishes. It was worthy of this remarkable arrival, being second to no other plant as a medicinal herb, and unsurpassed as a vegetable and a flavouring. It was very



COINS FROM THE T. J. BELL COLLECTION.

slowly dying out, however, even through the classical era, going from the north first, and Synesius, writing in A.D. 415, says that it was then only to be seen in a few gardens. This Cyrenian coin was found, at a good distance from its home city, near Cape Sunium in Attica.

Next in date we have a silver *didrachm* of Tyre in the year 296 B.C., showing the god Melqarth riding over the waves on a *hippocamp*, and a bronze coin of Carthage, the great Phœnician colony. Owing to the Punic lack of originality, the head on the obverse of this coin is a poor copy of one of the exquisite heads of Persephone which appear on the coins of Syracuse.

The two very lumpy and uninteresting-looking bronze objects which follow are native Spanish coins of the second and third centuries B.C., and they have really a great interest of their own as we know very little of this native coinage and any specimens of it may come in useful when its history comes to be written.

After these in date is an Egyptian bronze of the Ptolemaic period which may belong to any Ptolemy between the first and the eighth.

The last two coins bring us down to modern times. One is a brass of Philip IV of Spain, about 1661. I am indebted to Mr. Cowan for its identification. The other is a little brass Moroccan coin dated in the year 1236 of the Hegira, or A.D. 1871.