



LONDON STEREOSCOPIC CO.

A PENNY OF ST. ÆTHELBERHT, KING OF EAST ANGLIA,
—SEE FIGURES 1 AND 3—AND COINS ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE SUBJECT.

A PENNY OF ST. ÆTHELBERHT, KING OF
EAST ANGLIA.

BY P. W. P. CARLYON-BRITTON, F.S.A., *President.*

IN the month of February, 1909, it was my good fortune to obtain, through the kind offices of Messrs. Spink and Son, the remarkably fine and exceedingly rare Anglo-Saxon silver coin, which I have the pleasure of bringing to the notice of the Society.

The following is a description of the readings and types of the obverse and reverse of the piece :—

Obverse : † EÐINBERHT •• NN = † ETHILBERHT •• LUL. Draped bust to right, head diademed ; all within an outer beaded circle.

Reverse : REX. Beaded compartment, within which are the figures of the wolf, to left, and twins ; beneath, dots grouped thus •• : ••, all within an outer beaded circle. Weight, 18·8 grains, Plate, Fig. 1.

It was found in the summer of the year 1908, at the foot of the walls of the city of Tivoli, the ancient Tibur, where are the substructures of the Villa d'Este, in the locality of Colle. A gentleman of Tivoli bought the coin from the peasant who found it, and at the same time acquired from him some other coins, which were said to be of no value.

With reference to the provenance of this piece, it has been remarked that rare coins coming from Rome must be viewed with suspicion ; apparently, because certain clever forgeries of Greek and Roman coins have emanated thence. The suspicion must not, however, assume an unreasonable character, for many hundreds of undoubtedly genuine Saxon coins have been found in that ancient city.

Signor de Rossi in 1884 described a hoard comprising eight

hundred and thirty Anglo-Saxon pennies, found in the house of the Vestals, and they are now in the National Museum at Rome. These coins date from late in the ninth to the middle of the tenth century.

It will be apparent to those who are acquainted with the style of workmanship and lettering appearing on the coinage of Offa, King of Mercia, and on that of his Queen, Cynethryth, that the piece under notice is of the same technique, fabric and general character. The initial cross Calvary, instead of the more usual even-limbed cross, is not infrequently found on the pennies of Offa, but the Runic \mathfrak{f} in the name of the King, Ethilberht, and the name of the moneyer $\mathfrak{m}\mathfrak{n}$, composed entirely of Runic characters, are features which are not disclosed upon the coinage of Offa.

The placing of the name of the moneyer on the obverse of the coinage of Æthelberht, is exactly paralleled in the case of certain coins of Offa, and is in evidence upon all the known specimens bearing the name of his Queen, Cynethryth; but no instance is known to me, other than that of the coins of Æthelberht, wherein the names of both the sovereign and of the moneyer appear together on the obverse of the coin. For an illustration of a penny of Cynethryth, see Plate, Fig. 9.

It is, therefore, possible that an entirely Runic inscription was adopted by LUL to meet the particular circumstances of the case now under consideration, and to thereby establish a marked distinction between the name of the sovereign issuing the coin and that of the moneyer.

It is not unlikely that, at this early date, the moneyer was both the designer and preparer of the dies, as well as the person who was responsible for the proper weight and fineness of the coins struck from them.

In our National Collection there are three pennies of Offa of the class bearing his bust, which disclose the name LULLA as that of the moneyer, and a fourth example, of the class without either head or bust, which bears the name in its shorter form LUL. The first three are illustrated in the *Catalogue of English Coins in the British Museum*, vol. i, Plate VI, Figs. 1, 2 and 3, and the remaining example in Plate VII, Fig. 12. They form Figs. 4, 5, 6 and 7 of our Plate.

In comparing these examples of Lul's handicraft with the coin of Æthelberht bearing the same name, it is interesting to note that the head on the penny figured in Plate VI, No. 2, and in our Plate, No. 6, is, most unusually, placed within a lozenge-shaped compartment, and that the reverse of the piece illustrated in Plate VII, No. 12, in our Plate, No. 7, has the name Lul placed within the beaded compartments of a quartered quatrefoil, methods of treatment which are to a certain extent cognate with the beaded quadrilateral compartment on the reverse of the penny of Æthelberht, wherein the device of the wolf and twins is enclosed. Further, it should also be noted that on both obverse and reverse of the last mentioned penny of Offa by the moneyer LUL, the initial cross is of the Calvary form.

Lul continued to coin for Offa's successor, Coenwulf, and reference to Plate VIII, No. 9, of the *Museum Catalogue*, discloses an example of reverse very similar to that shown in Plate VII, Fig. 12, just described. See also, Ruding, Plate VI, Figs. 16, 17 and 18.¹ Of these the reverse of Fig. 18 very closely resembles that of the coin struck by Lul under Offa. A specimen from my collection is illustrated in our Plate, Fig. 7A.

The name LVLLA reappears on coins of Burgred, but, as Offa died in A.D. 796, and Burgred began his reign in A.D. 853, it is very improbable that reference is made to the same person.

The Runic characters on the coin of Æthelberht have been considered to show a connection with East Anglia, because the rare sceatta-like pennies, bearing the name and title BEONNA REX, assigned to Beonna, or Beorna, King of East Anglia, have the inscription partly in Runic letters, viz., in one instance + ÆOXXÆ REX and in another example + ÆEXXÆ NEXS. These coins are tentatively assigned to about the year A.D. 760, and the specimens illustrated in our Plate, Figs. 10 and 11, are in the National Collection.

As regards the type of the reverse of Æthelberht's coins, the wolf suckling the twins, Romulus and Remus, there can be no doubt that it was directly derived from the small brass coins of the period of

¹ Of this type another example is described in "A Find of Anglo-Saxon Coins," *Num. Chron.*, 1894, p. 33, No. 23.

Constantine the Great. These bear on the obverse a helmeted bust to left with the inscription URBS ROMA and on the reverse, occupying the greater part of the field, the wolf, also to left, suckling the twins; in the exergue are abbreviations denoting the place of mintage, and above the back of the wolf are small emblems, which vary in different specimens. See Plate, Fig. 2. Coins of this type are very frequently found in this country at the present day, and there is no difficulty in assuming that the artist who engraved the dies for Æthelberht's coinage had ready access to such examples. The same type of reverse occurs on certain silver and bronze coins of Carausius, Emperor in Britain, A.D. 287 to 293, but in this instance the wolf is represented with its head to the right, see Plate, Fig. 12, instead of to the left. It is, therefore, probable that the Anglo-Saxon sceattas bearing the type with the wolf to right, were copied from a coin of Carausius rather than from a specimen of the *Urbs Roma* type of Constantine the Great. A sceatta of this kind is illustrated in *British Museum Catalogue*, vol. i, Plate II, Fig. 9, and in our Plate, Fig. 13. Another specimen, found at Bitterne, in Hampshire, the site of Clausentum, was exhibited to the Society of Antiquaries, by Mr. William Dale, F.S.A., on February 4th, 1909.

The derivation of the types of early Anglo-Saxon coins from those of the Romans is not confined to the above cited instances of the adoption of that of the wolf and twins. Many of the sceattas bear a quadrilateral and beaded compartment, some having the letters $\begin{smallmatrix} T & T \\ O \\ / \backslash \end{smallmatrix}$ within it, Plate, Figs. 14, 15 and 16, and these are clearly copied from the common coins of Constantine and his family, $\epsilon 3$, bearing on the reverse a standard inscribed $\begin{smallmatrix} VOT \\ XX \end{smallmatrix}$, or an altar similarly inscribed, Plate, Figs. 17 and 18.

Sceattas attributed to Peada, King of Mercia, A.D. 655-656 or 657, and Æthelred, of Mercia, A.D. 675-704, are similarly devised. These sceattas bear the names of Peada (Pada) and Æthelred (Æthilræd) entirely in Runic characters. See *British Museum Catalogue*, vol. i, Plate IV, Figs. 21-25, and our Plate, Figs. 19 and 20.

Coming to the time of Offa, certain pennies bear an oblong and beaded compartment, with his name therein, representing a standard, the staff of which is in the form of a long cross Calvary. See *British Museum Catalogue*, vol. i, Plate VII, Figs. 5 and 6, and our Plate, Fig. 21.

Another instance of the derivation of the type of Anglo-Saxon coins from a Roman original is afforded in the case of certain gold sceattas, or *trientes*, bearing on the reverse two busts, with traces of hands supporting an orb between them; above, a head and two wings; on either side of the head, three dots.

There can be no doubt as to this type having been copied either from a *solidus* of Magnus Maximus struck in London, see *British Museum Catalogue*, vol. i, Plate I, or from a *solidus* of similar type of Valentinian I., struck at Treves.

In later times the same model was adopted for the reverse type of a penny, believed to be unique, of Ælfred the Great, A.D. 871-900, see the Montagu Sale Catalogue, Plate V, No. 545, and for that of a penny of Ceolwulf II., King of Mercia, A.D. 874. This latter was comprised in the great Cuerdale find and is also believed to be unique, for the piece resembling it sold at the Montagu sale for £50, was merely an exceedingly good cast of the original. See *Numismatic Chronicle*, v, p. 10, and Hawkins, Fig. 580, for illustrations of the original.

The same device forms the obverse type of a third unique piece, viz., a penny of Halfdan, or Alfdene, King of Northumbria. This was also found at Cuerdale. It formed Lot 400 at the Montagu Sale and is illustrated, Plate IV, No. 400, of the catalogue.

It may perhaps be thought that too much has been said in regard to the adoption of Roman types by the designers of dies for Anglo-Saxon coins, but the want of a proper appreciation of this well-known fact seems to have been in a large degree responsible for the opinion expressed by the late Mr. Hawkins, and some other numismatists of the earlier half of the nineteenth century, that the coin of Æthelberht of East Anglia, now in the British Museum, was the work of a forger.

Until the discovery of the specimen now in my collection, the coin in the British Museum, Plate, Fig. 3, was the only known example of

Æthelberht's coinage, and it may, therefore, be well to set out the history of that piece so far as the same is now ascertainable.

Mr. D. H. Haigh, in *An Essay on the Numismatic History of the Ancient Kingdom of the East Angles*, published in 1845, wrote as follows :—

This coin first appeared in the collection of Mr. Lindegren, and was eventually purchased by the Trustees of the British Museum at the sale of Mr. Barker's coins for £1 8s.

The price was very low for a unique coin, but, unfortunately, doubts were entertained of its genuineness, arising, very probably, not so much from the peculiarity of its type and workmanship, as from the fact that its original possessor was a friend of the notorious forger, John White; and that the attention of Dr. Pegge, who first published it, was drawn to it by White himself.

Mr. Haigh then states that his own conviction was that this piece is perfectly genuine, and proceeds to give his reasons.

It is not requisite to repeat these here, as Mr. C. F. Keary, the compiler, and Dr. Reginald Stuart Poole, the editor of vol. i of the *Catalogue of English Coins in the British Museum*, writing in 1887, accept the piece as genuine, as also does Mr. H. A. Grueber in his *Handbook of the Coins of Great Britain and Ireland in the British Museum*, published in 1899. To this testimony may be added the opinion of the best judges of Anglo-Saxon coins of the present day, who entirely concur with the opinion entertained by Mr. Haigh and those of the experienced numismatists named above.

My specimen is far finer in condition than the earlier known example. It is clear that the obverses of both are from the same die, but it is also clear that the reverses are not from the same die. The number of the pellets forming the beaded compartment vary, and there are other differences apparent to those comparing the two reverses, see Plate, Figs. 1 and 3. My friends, Lord Grantley, Mr. W. J. Andrew, Mons. L. E. Brunn and Mr. L. A. Lawrence are entirely in accord with my own belief that the genuineness of my coin is absolutely beyond question, and I feel confident that this view will be endorsed by any competent expert who may inspect the piece.

As regards the important factor of weight. The British Museum

specimen weighs 16·8 grains, whereas mine is 2 grains heavier, but this is easily accounted for by reason of its much finer condition. The specimens of Offa's pennies, of the class with busts, in the National Collection, vary from 14 to 20·2 grains, the nearest in weight to my coin of Æthelberht being No. 25 in the catalogue, 18·5 grains. The coins of Cynethryth in the same collection weigh respectively 17·4, 15·9 and 19·7 grains.

It is now proposed to turn to what, perhaps, is the most important point connected with these two most interesting coins, and that is the consideration of the question of the identity of the king whose name they bear, and the circumstances in which pieces of this type were struck and issued.

The possible claimants are—

1. Æthelberht, King of East Anglia, killed by Offa, King of Mercia, in A.D. 793.
2. Æthelberht II., King of Kent, A.D. 748–762.
3. Æthelberht, King of Sussex, *circa* A.D. 774.

Taking them in the inverse order, it is in the highest degree improbable that the coins under discussion belong to Æthelberht of Sussex, as no coins have ever been attributed to any king of that Anglo-Saxon state.

As regards Æthelberht II., of Kent, the one example then known of this type of coin seems to have been assigned to this king on the ground that the wolf suckling Romulus and Remus was a device particularly applicable to the reign of two brothers; it being then supposed that Æthelberht II. had for several years reigned conjointly with his brother Eadberht I., see Lindsay's *View of the Coinage of the Heptarchy*, 1842, p. 59. But it does not now appear that this was a fact, as Eadberht I. reigned from A.D. 725 to 748, when he was *succeeded* by his brother Æthelberht II.

We now turn to Æthelberht of East Anglia, and, as the credit of the attribution is due to Mr. Haigh, I cannot do better than, in the first instance, quote his reasons for it, reserving my own remarks for the conclusion to a paper that I fear may have already wearied many of my readers by reason of its recital of detail.

Mr. Haigh's reasons for the attribution of the coin to Æthelberht, of East Anglia, may be summarised as under :—

1. The workmanship resembled that of Offa's earliest and most beautiful coins.
2. The coin exactly corresponds with those of Offa in weight.
3. The portrait resembles that of Offa in treatment.
4. The Runic letters on the obverse represent the name of a moneyer, LVL, which occurs on the coins of Offa and Coenwulf.

There seems to be no good reason for doubting the conclusion arrived at by Mr. Haigh that Æthelberht, King of East Anglia, is the rightful owner of the coins under discussion.

Offa, the great King of Mercia, began his reign in the year 757, while Æthelberht II. of Kent died in A.D. 762. It is therefore unlikely, though not impossible, that a coin resembling the best of those of Offa in style and workmanship could have been issued by a king of Kent prior to so early a date as A.D. 762.

Of the date of the succession of Æthelberht to the throne of East Anglia we have no definite knowledge, but a king, termed by Symeon, of Durham, Hunbeanna, is supposed to have reigned in East Anglia about 749, and Florence of Worcester mentions a King Beorna, who is assigned to about 758. It is conjectured that these names are equivalent to the Beonna whose name and title of king appear on the sceatta-like pennies referred to earlier in this paper. To him Mr. C. F. Keary tentatively assigns the date about A.D. 760.

Beorna, according to the genealogical table appended to *Florence of Worcester*, was succeeded by Æthelred, who, by his queen, Léofrûn, was the father of Æthelberht.

Florence of Worcester under the year 793, writes :—

Æthelberht, the most glorious and holy King of the East Angles, whose eminent virtues rendered him acceptable to Christ, the true King, and who was courteous and affable to all men, lost at once both his kingdom and his life, being beheaded by the detestable command of Offa, the mighty King of Mercia, at the infamous suggestion of his wife, Queen Cynethryth; but though iniquitously

slain and deprived of his kingdom, the king and martyr entered the courts of the blessed spirits, while the angels rejoiced in triumph.

The same chronicler under the heading, *The Origin of the East Anglian Kings*, adds the further information:—

During the reign of Offa, King of the Mercians:—Beorna reigned in East Anglia, and after him Ethelred, whose son, the holy Ethelberht, was born of his queen, Leofrunu. He held the kingdom of East Anglia for a short time only after his father, for he was slain without cause by Offa, King of Mercia, in the time of peace.

Matthew of Westminster gives a more enlightening account of the same matter. Under the annal 793 he narrates:—

The same year, Ethelred, King of Northumberland, married Elfleda, daughter of King Offa. About the same time, Ethelberht, King of the East Angles, son of King Ethelred, quitted his own kingdom, in spite of the strong remonstrances of his mother, and came to Offa, the most mighty King of Mercia, and begged of him that he would give him one of his daughters in marriage. And Offa, that most noble and most illustrious and most high-born king, when he had learnt the object of the arrival of King Ethelberht, received him with great honour in the royal palace, and showed him all the attention and kindness that lay in his power, not only to the king himself, but to all his comrades who had come with him. But when King Offa consulted his queen, Quendritha (Cynethryth) and asked her advice on the subject, she, being urged by the promptings of the Devil, is said to have made answer to her husband, "Behold, God has this day given your enemy into your hands, whose kingdom you have so long coveted with daily desire, so that now you can extinguish him secretly, and so his kingdom will pass under the power of you and your successors for ever."

But the king was greatly agitated at the advice of his wife, and reproving her with indignation, made answer to her, "You have spoken like one of the foolish women; far from me, far from me may so detestable an action be, which, if it were perpetrated, would be an everlasting reproach to me and my successors." And, having said this, the king departed from her. Afterwards, when his agitation had become gradually calmed, both the kings sat down at table, where, having refreshed themselves with royal food, they spent the whole day with music, and dancing, and harp-playing to their great delight. But in the meantime, the wicked queen, not abandoning her foul design, treacherously ordered a bed-chamber to be adorned in royal fashion with silk mattresses and curtains, for King Ethelbert to pass the night

upon ; and near the royal bed she caused a chair to be made ready, furnished with the most princely decorations, and surrounded on all sides by curtains, beneath which, wretch that she was, she caused a deep hole to be dug in order to effect her wicked purpose. Accordingly, when King Ethelbert, after a day of pleasure, wished to give up his limbs to sleep, he was conducted into this bed-chamber, and, as soon as he sat down in the chair which I have described, he was suddenly precipitated into the deep hole, chair and all, and strangled by the executioners whom the queen had concealed there. In the moment that the king had fallen into the pit, the wicked traitors threw over him pillows, and garments, and curtains, that his cries might not be heard. And thus that king and martyr, being murdered, though innocent, received the crown of life which God has promised to those that love Him.

But when this detestable action which the queen had done to the suitor of her daughter became known to the comrades of the murdered king, they departed from the palace before daylight, fearing lest they themselves might be subjected to similar treatment. And the noble King Offa, when he had received information of the crime that had been committed, mourned, and shut himself up in a chamber, and for three days would not taste food. But, although he was quite innocent of all participation in the king's death, he nevertheless sent a powerful expedition and annexed the kingdom of the East Angles to his own dominions. And the holy Ethelbert was buried without any honour, and the place was known to no one, till his body, having been pointed out by light from heaven, was found by the faithful, and was conveyed to the city of Hereford, where it now adorns with its miracles, and glorifies with its virtues, that episcopal see.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, under *annal* 792, contents itself with the brief statement,

In this year Offa, King of the Mercians, commanded the head of King Æthelbryht to be struck off.

To quote from Mr. J. Charles Wall's *Shrines of British Saints*, p. 215 :

The victim appears to have been quietly buried at Marden, but his body was shortly translated to the chapel of Our Lady at Fernlega, or *Saltus Salicis*, which has since been known as Hereford . . . An elaborate monument was built over his grave, and on the site of the chapel there soon arose the first cathedral of Hereford. The relics of the saint were enclosed in a magnificent shrine by Bishop Athelstan II., 1012-1056, which stood but for a short period ; yet notwithstanding that

the relics are supposed to have been nearly destroyed when the church was burnt in 1055, a shrine of St. Ethelbert continued to draw many pilgrims until the time of the Reformation.

The same author adds, p. 216 :—

In the 1295 great list of relics, jewels, vestments, etc., pertaining to St. Paul's Cathedral, prominent mention is made of the "portable wooden feretory of St. Ethelbert"; it was plated with silver and adorned with precious stones, *coins* and rings. This feretory probably only contained some small relic of the martyred king, for it is stated that many other relics were in the same case.

From these varying accounts it would appear that Æthelberht, afterwards canonised St. Æthelberht, was a man of no mean talents and character, and that he successfully maintained the independence of his ancestral throne against the might of his great neighbour, Offa, King of Mercia.

That he was ambitious is known by the circumstance that he sought the hand of Offa's daughter, Ælfthryth, in marriage. The manner of his death, whether brought about by Offa, or by his determined and resolute consort, Cynethryth, shows the fear in which he was held as a possible rival to Offa and his successors.

These historical facts seem to strengthen the likelihood of the coins before us having really been issued by such a king.

The type of the wolf and twins may have no more special significance than has the device upon the reverse of a coin of Offa, an oblong compartment, within which are two serpents intertwined, see *British Museum Catalogue*, vol. i, Plate VI, Fig. 6, and our Plate, Fig. 8. The unusual design and treatment of this coin, coupled with the use of an oblong beaded compartment to contain the device, constitute a convincing connecting link with the art displayed on the coins of St. Æthelberht, of East Anglia.

My thanks are accorded to Mr. H. A. Grueber, F.S.A., Keeper of Coins and Medals at the British Museum, for having furnished fourteen of the twenty-two pairs of casts used for the production of the illustrations in the plate.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLATE.

Figs. 1 and 3 illustrate the two pennies of St. Æthelberht, whilst Fig. 2 shows the reverse from which the type is derived. Figs. 4, 5, 6 and 7 are coins of Offa, bearing the name of the moneyer LVLLA or LVL, whilst Fig. 7A is a coin of Coenwulf bearing the same name. Attention is directed to the similarity of the types of the reverses of Figs. 7 and 7A. No. 8 is a penny of Offa with a reverse as peculiar as is that of the coins of St. Æthelberht. No. 9 displays a coin of Queen Cynethryth, whereupon the name of the moneyer only appears upon the obverse. Nos. 10 and 11 are coins attributed to Beonna, King of East Anglia, and are illustrated to show the Runic letters on their obverses. No. 12 represents a *denarius* of Carausius with the type of the wolf and twins, whilst No. 13 is a sceatta, with reverse derived from it. Nos. 17 and 18 are coins of Constantine and Crispus, æ3, showing the standard and altar types, from which the reverses of the sceattas shown in Figs. 14, 15, 16 and 19 are derived. Again, Figs. 19 and 20 are sceattas of Peada and Æthelred, kings of Mercia, having Runic inscriptions. The last figure, No. 21, shows a coin of Offa, with an obverse of the *standard* type, which compares with the reverse of Fig. 17.