

BEAUWORTH.

(Read May 30th, 1912.)

Amongst the many fascinating stories connected with the subject of treasure trove there are few more attractive than the one which is associated with Beauworth. If we could imagine a prelate or nobleman of the present day taking a leaden box and carefully placing in it, wrapped in rolls, some 8,600 brand new half-sovereigns, then carefully burying that box in his garden without confiding his secret to anyone, and dying somewhat suddenly, carrying the secret with him to the grave ; and, further, if we can imagine the hoard lying in the ground undisturbed until 700 years hence, we should have a very close parallel to the romance attached to the plot of ground at which you are looking.

May I, in the first place, say a word about the coinage of the middle ages ? The silver penny made its first appearance under Offa, King of Mercia. For 600 years it remained the chief and almost only denomination. Its weight was 24 grains, viz. : one pennyweight the 20th part of an ounce troy. Pennies of William the Conqueror have been identified from some 70 different mints, and it is needless to say that Winchester was an important one. At a church near Rouen is a carving of the 11th century which represents a Moneyer at his work, and gives a good idea of what must have taken place in the City in which so many of you live. The Moneyer is standing by a large wooden block or pile, on the surface of which is fixed the obverse of the coin. In his left hand he holds a wooden trussel or cylinder which has the reverse die fixed to it, and in his right hand the wooden mallet with which he strikes. This method of coining was not finally superseded by the screw press until the time of Charles II. and we still speak of coins and medals as

“ struck.” The purchasing power of the penny in the middle ages has been variously estimated. By some it has been put in Norman times as high as 14s. Henry I. accepted 12d. as substitute for bread for 100 men for one night when on a Royal progress, and 4d. as substitute for oats for 20 horses. In 1300 the price of a sheep was 12d. and we are probably not far wrong in estimating the value of the Conqueror’s penny at 10s. How the poor fared is a mystery, for at that time there was no other coin, and to obtain lower values there was no other course than to halve and quarter the coin, which was actually done. Along the Eastern coast of England, the botany of which has been so beautifully described by Canon Vaughan, stands the remains of Dunwich, once the capital of East Anglia, and here, ever and again, the sea washes up fragments of silver pennies, halves, quarters, and even eighths, portions of the hoard of a religious house at Dunwich, and these fragments represent the offerings of the poor to the church of that day, people who literally had not a “ penny to bless themselves with,” but gave what they could.

On Sunday afternoon, 30th June, 1833, four boys, all under 10 years of age, were playing at marbles in what was then a small piece of pasture land, when one of them discovered in the track where a wagon wheel had passed, a piece of lead sticking out above the surface. On stooping down to take hold of it he discovered a small hole into which he thrust his hand and brought out a number of coins. His companions followed his example. Though they did not consider their treasure to be more than old buttons, they concealed a part of them in an adjoining potato field and others they took into the village, but treating them as of no value some they flung into a pond and others they flung about the road. Half-a-dozen villagers were soon attracted to the spot and commenced a regular scramble for the booty. As some obtained more than others the parents of the boys were dissatisfied and appealed to Mr. Dunn, of Alresford, the owner of the land. This gentleman claimed from the parties the delivery of the coins to him, which was in a measure complied with, and the same evening Mr. Dunn received about 6,500 coins. The

leaden box was much mutilated by the eagerness of the people to possess the coins. Apparently it was enclosed in a wooden box, which had all perished except its iron handle. According to the account the coins were packed in regular layers, but the box was not full. About 100 are known to have been sold by a woman to a person in Southampton. The owner distributed the amount he received for them amongst various charities and rewarded the finders.

Such is the version of the story given by the late Mr. Hawkins, of the British Museum, in February, 1834. He examined, he tells us, 6,500 of the coins and found them all except about 100 to be specimens of the "Paxs" type of the Conqueror's pennies which were his last issue, a coin previously almost unknown. He tells us the ground was dug over, subsequently to the find, for pennies which the boys scattered—but that the work was not done very carefully is proved by the fact that the Vicar will show you to-day a "Paxs" penny, which he saw disinterred himself. No



Paxe Penny from Beauworth Hoard—
PILLEM REX. GODPINE ON PINC.

mention is made of search in the pond, and if this should prove a dry summer the writer would strongly recommend its being cleaned out. The estimate that the box contained between 8,000 and 9,000 pennies is probably correct. Mr. Hawkins mentions that the existence of a church at Beauworth rests only on tradition, but that the Manor was the property of the See of Winchester. Many architectural fragments, however, have been found here and carried to Cheriton and other places, and a spot always known as the "Old Litten" could not have been anything else than a churchyard. I do not purpose to trouble you by enumerating

the various mints from which the coins came, but I will say a word upon the "Paxs" coinage. It is not placed beyond controversy what is meant by these letters, but the following is the generally accepted view. The "Paxs" coins were struck just after the completion of the Domesday survey. Just previous to their issue we read in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*—"The King had a great council and very deep speech with his Witan about this land, how it was peopled or by what men, then sent his men all over England into every shire and caused to be ascertained how many hundred hides were in the shire, or what land the King himself had, and cattle within the land, or what dues he ought to have in 12 months from the shire and what or how much each man had who was a holder of land in England, in land or in cattle, and how much money it might be worth." By Lammas, 1086, the King was at Sarum, and we read again—"And all the landowners that were of account over all England, were they the vassals of what Lord so-ever, all submitted to him and were his men and swore to him oaths of fealty that they would be faithful to him against all other men."

This great peace is commemorated by the "Paxs" coinage. Within the last few years Mr. W. J. Andrews, F.S.A., of the British Numismatical Society, has carefully examined all the evidence concerning the Beauworth hoard, and his conclusions are summarized as follows:—

The field known as the Old Litten was attached to the Manor House at Beauworth belonging to the Bishops of Winchester. The leaden chest contained between 8,000 and 9,000 silver pennies of William the Conqueror. Internal evidence disclosed that although the coinages represented extended over a period of about 12 years, ceasing with the death of the King in 1087, the money was as fresh as when it came from the die. Specimens from the mints of nearly every County in England were present, all of full weight and pure silver. Hence we may infer that the money came from the Royal Treasury at Winchester, and had passed the Exchequer tests held half-yearly in that City. This

would account for the extended sphere of its gathering ground, as the Sheriffs brought the currency of every County to the Exchequer, and Malmesbury incidentally mentions that the coin in the Treasury was of the best quality.

We have but to refer to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* under the year of William the Conqueror's death to find a very natural explanation of their disbursement from the Treasury.

1087—"William II. went to Winchester and inspected the Treasury and the riches which his Father had before gathered. It was not to be estimated by any man how much was there gathered in gold and in silver and in vessels and robes and in gems and in many other precious things which are difficult to recount. The King then did as his father had commanded him before he died. He distributed the treasures for his father's soul to every monastery that was in England; to some he gave 10 marks of gold and to others 6."

Presumably the Archbishoprics of Canterbury and York received the 10 marks and each of the Bishoprics and Abbeys the 6. But the mark of silver or gold was only a denomination represented by so many silver pennies, the only coin in existence. Now 6 marks of gold were 8,640 silver pennies, which would exactly tally with the amount found at Beauworth. The See of Winchester, as one of the principal Bishoprics, would receive its share and entries in the "Annales de Wintonia" raise more than a suspicion that the treasure found was the Conqueror's actual bequest intact.

1088—"On the death of Ralph, Abbot of Winchester, the King assigned the Abbey to Ralph Flambard, his chaplain, but the aforesaid Ralph, a man who exceeded all others in evil, rifled the churches that had been entrusted to him of all their property and reduced both rich and poor to such a state of penury that they deemed death itself preferable to life under his despotism."

1090—"The King carried off a large treasure from the Church of Winchester."

1098—"Death of Walkelin, Bishop of Winchester. The King had given orders on the day of the Nativity of our Lord that he should send him without a moment's delay £200. But he, well knowing that he could not do that at the moment without plundering the poor or rifling the treasury of the church, was rendered weary of life by this and other things of the like sort, and having offered up a prayer, begged that he might be delivered from his unhappy existence, and this actually took place 10 days afterwards. One thing occasioned him exceeding pain, namely: that he had deprived the monks of land to the value of £300, which he had appropriated to himself and his successors in the Bishopric."

From the foregoing nothing is more likely than that the Bishop, to save it from the extortionate grasp of Ralph Flambard, removed the Conqueror's bequest in a chest, made for the purpose, to his own residence outside the City and buried it in secret. Probably, in the year 1090, the King had demanded a loan for the purpose of his great bribes to Philip of France in that year, and the Bishop took the Conqueror's bequest from the treasury into his own custody, ostensibly for the King, but really with the intention of preserving it for the church. This would account for the entry in the Annals that the King carried off a large treasure from the Church of Winchester, for so it would be believed by the body of the Clergy and the writer of the Annals. Even the greed of Rufus could not extort a confession of the hiding-place from a Bishop. In 1098 the King's patience was exhausted, and after "other things of the like sort" his orders became peremptory that the Bishop should personally pay £200 without delay. It is significant that he should pray for death rather than rifle the treasury of the Church. His own end was sudden, and he may not have had the opportunity of divulging his secret. Nevertheless the story that one thing occasioned him exceeding pain, namely: that he had deprived the monks of land to the value of £300 which he had "appropriated to himself and his successors" is so foreign to his general character that it raises a suspicion that he was endeavouring to reveal this

treasure in his last moments, but was misunderstood. The expression "appropriated to himself and his successors" would certainly tally with the deposit of the hoard within the precincts of his official residence.

Such is the pathetic story attached to the memory of the great prelate, much of whose work in the Cathedral still remains to us, and which the present generation have taken such pious care in preserving. I venture to think it would be wiping away a certain reproach from Winchester, if, by the side of the leaden coffer, rifled and torn by the villagers of Beauworth 79 years ago, we could place at least two of the "Paxs" pence which so troubled the last hours of the dying Bishop. For comparison with the full weighted coins from the Treasury of Winchester I have brought some pennies of the later middle ages and some of the fragments from Dunwich.

Not long after the reading of this paper the writer received a letter from Mr. John Grover, of Anerley, saying that he possessed one of the "Paxs" pennies and was willing to give it to the Winchester Museum. During the previous winter the writer was lecturing at Anerley on "The Story of the British Coinage," and Mr. Grover, who was at the lecture, explained that his aunt, Miss Elizabeth Grover, who was born in 1816, lived at Cheriton all her life and remembered the finding of the hoard. She had several of the coins and gave them away to various relatives. Mr. Grover's offer was gratefully accepted and the penny is now placed by the side of the coffer in the Museum over the West Gate. The moneyer's name is Osmund, and it is from the Southwark Mint.
