

THE COINAGE OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF
ENGLAND.

BY D. A. K.

AFTER the dethronement of Charles I., the commonwealth, under its energetic head, Cromwell, proceeded to effect great changes in its coinage. The Royal Arms and Latin mottoes were thrown aside, and the simple cross of St. George, placed within a palm and an olive branch, with the motto, "The Commonwealth of England," was adopted. The reverse bore two joined shields, one bearing the cross of St. George, and the other the harp of Ireland; with the motto "God with us." One noticeable feature of this change was that both mottoes were in English. Richard Harleigh, who had been master of the mint under Charles I., and who was re-appointed by the Commonwealth, refused to carry into effect this change in type of the coinage; but he being dismissed and Dr. Aaron Guerdain being appointed in his place, under his direction the change was effected.

The new issues were crowns, half crowns, shillings, half shillings, and pieces of two pence, one penny, and one half penny. The larger pieces all bore the same device, with the exception of being marked above the double shields with Roman numerals to denote the value. The two penny and one penny bore no inscription on them, and the half penny had simply the cross on one side and the harp on the other.

On the restoration of peace, Cromwell being determined that the coinage of England should be second to that of no other country, invited to England a French man named Pierre Blondeau who had carried to perfection the most approved modes of stamping by the mill and screw. On his arrival Blondeau produced patterns of half crowns, shillings, and half shillings coined by the new process, and by this means a legend was for the first time produced on the edge; one of the patterns of the half crown bore the inscription "Truth and Peace, Petrus Blondeau, 1651"; another had "In the 3rd year of freedom restored." The shilling and half shilling were beautifully grained on the edges, and were brought to their weight with great

exactness. None of these devices were ever adopted however, and an engagement was entered into with Blondeau to work the new process with the usual devices of the Commonwealth; but as they were never issued, can only be considered as patterns, and are accordingly rare. The officials of the mint were very jealous of Blondeau, and tried to destroy his credit with Cromwell. Their opposition at length frustrated his schemes, and he was prevented from carrying into effect his reform. The screw process was, however, in the end adopted, though without the aid of Blondeau, who was undoubtedly illused in the matter. The gold coins bore the same devices and mottoes as the silver ones, and were simply 20, 10, and 5 shilling pieces.

The coinage made more progress under Cromwell's rule than ever it had done before. These coins were the best that up to that period had been issued by the English, or perhaps any other mint. The issues being, comparatively speaking, not rare, can be easily procured from dealers. The only rarities are those of the dates 1658 and 1660, they being scarce, especially the half crown of the latter date.

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