

At the present day, the form or figure of money in most countries is *round*; formerly its form differed in different countries. In Spain the earlier coins were of a multangular or irregular shape. In some parts of India the coins were formerly square, while in other parts they were nearly globular. The American fifty-dollar piece of the present day, coined in California, is octangular.

After the arrival of the Romans in Great Britain, the Britons imitated them, coining their money with the images of their kings stamped on them. When the Romans had subdued the kings of the Britons, they also suppressed their coins, and brought in their own; which were current then from the time of Claudius to that of Valentinian the younger, or about five hundred years.

Camden says that the most ancient English coin known was that of Ethelbert, King of Kent, the first Christian king in that country, in whose time accounts began to be kept in *pounds, shillings, pence, and mances*. Their coins were coarsely stamped, having the king's image on one side, and either that of the mint-master, or the city where it was coined, on the other. Five pence made one shilling, probably so called from *scillingus*, which the Romans used to denote the fourth part of an ounce. Forty schillings made their pound. Four hundred pounds was the legacy or portion of a king's daughter, as appears by the last will of King Alfred. (The dowry granted to the present princess royal of England, is £40,000, just one hundred times as much, besides £8,000 per annum; while the Princess Charlotte, daughter of George the Third, who married King Leopold of Belgium, received an annual grant of £50,000 sterling, which is still continued to her husband.)

Although the coining of money is a special prerogative of the king, yet the ancient Saxon princes communicated it to their subjects. In every considerable town there was a mint, while in London there were eight. At Canterbury there were four belonging to the king, and two to the archbishop.

It must be observed that neither the ancient Britons nor the Normans coined money of any other denomination than pence, and these they coined of silver as well as copper, the higher denominations being merely used to express large amounts.

The Norman kings continued the same custom of coining only pence, with the prince's image on one side, and that of the city where it was coined on the other, with a deep cross so impressed that it might be easily broken in two halves, which, when so broken, were called half pence, or into four parts, called farthings (four things.)

In the reign of Richard I. money coined in the eastern parts of Germany came into favour in England on account of its purity, and was called *easterling* money, as the people of those parts were called *Easterlings*.

Some German assayers having been brought to England, to bring the coinage of that country to the same perfection, the money coined by them was called *sterling* or *easterling*, a name which the currency of England still retains.

About the year 1320, the European states began to coin gold of various denominations, and among the rest, Edward III. of England. The first pieces he coined were called *florences*, being coined by Florentines: then followed *nobles* and *rose-nobles*, current at 6s. 8d.; half nobles called *half pennies*, at 5s. 4d., of gold; and *quarters*, at 20d., called *farthings* of gold.