
* THE CANADA STAMP AND COIN JOURNAL. *

DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF PHILATELY AND NUMISMATICS.

VOL. I.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, NOVEMBER, 1888.

NO. 5.

Continued from last month

HISTORY OF THE DOLLAR.

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THE public debt, the requisitions and the apportionment, were invariably expressed, not in pounds, but in dollars. No decisive action was taken in the matter till after the adoption of the constitution. In 1791 Alexander Hamilton introduced a bill, which was passed by Congress and became a law, making the "dollar" the unit of value. It was to be of the value of the Spanish milled dollar, and was to contain 371.4-16 grains of pure silver. It is not entirely clear why the Spanish milled dollar was mentioned in the Act, when the precise amount of pure silver was fixed at 371.4-16 grains. That was probably about the size of the Spanish piece at that time, and may have been mentioned because it was in general circulation and the people were familiar with its value.

Why was this piece called a dollar? Dollar is surely not a Spanish word. The Spaniards called it a "peso." In the Spanish and English dictionary the corresponding English terms for this word are—Spanish coin, dollar, weighing an ounce; piastre, piece of eight. The Germans, Danes, and Swedes used the term in their coinage, but the Spanish never used it. In the Spanish dictionary the word "dalera" is given, but only as a term applied to a foreign coin. It does not appear to have been adopted into their language. Yet the coin must have been generally known as the Spanish dollar, otherwise it would not have been used in a legislative enactment by so distinguished a lawyer and statesman as Alexander Hamilton. There is other testimony to this fact. In Kelly's "Cambist" (1821) it is mentioned as the coin universally circulated under the name Spanish dollar. The "real vellon," he says, "is the basis of the Spanish coinage or the money

unit, which is the twentieth part of the hard dollar (peso duro) universally known by the name Spanish dollar." Speaking of exchange, he says, "Bills on England on Gibraltar are drawn in current dollars of 8 reals, and in all transactions in which dollars are mentioned, they are understood to be payable in gold at the rate of 16 to the doubloon." McLeod, on Banking, also says, "Between London and Spain the exchange is always reckoned by the variable sum in pence given for the fixed dollar. London gives Spain so many pence for the dollar." There are English authors who tell us that the name dollar is universally applied to the Spanish peso, or piece of eight, as it is sometimes called. How it became so known is not easy to determine. Perhaps a reference to the origin of the word will throw some light upon it.

Etymologists are not agreed as to the origin of the word "dollar." Richardson, in his dictionary (1837) after mentioning its derivation from "thal," the German word for dale or valley, refers to Skinner, who published a dictionary in 1671. He says it may be derived from "dal," division, "dael," a portion, because it is half of the ducat; and in this opinion Cooke (another lexicographer, 1786) coincides with him. Fawcett, in his "Hand-book of Finance" (Chicago, 1879) says the word "dollar" is derived from the Gaelic "dal," a valley, and "ard," a hill, signifying a valley shut in by hills. In this derivation the latter part of the word seems superfluous, as valleys are usually enclosed by hills. It is always more or less a process of reasoning by which we arrive at the derivation of a word, and there is a reasonable amount of testimony in support of its derivation from the word "thal" (pronounced tahl). From this source its origin would date back about three centuries and a half, to the time when Charles V., Emperor of Germany, Henry VIII., of England, and Francis I., of France, were the three