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JUNE.

BY MRS. A. MAC GILLIS, WINNIPEG.

O leafy month of June, how sweet thou art:
Each added year but makes thee seem
more fair.
With all thy wealth of greenness in the trees,
And all thy scent of roses in the air.
And murmuring sounds of water, lowing
And birds in tree-tops singing loud and clear.
Telling their gladness to the sunny world.
That once again the month of June is here.
O golden days, almost without a night,
So long the lovely twilight scarce the moon
With silver glory, bathes the earth in light.
Till banished by the roseate hues of dawn.
And so the bright days come and go, and bring
To many hearts a joy unknown before:
For in the month of roses love is king
And youthful lovers feel his wondrous power.
And wish sweet June would last fore evermore.

THE GOLD WULFRIC.

There are only two gold coins of Wulfric of Mercia in existence anywhere. One of them is in the British Museum and the other is in my possession.

The most terrible incident in the whole course of my career is intimately connected with my first discovery of that gold Wulfric. It is not too much to say that my entire life has been deeply colored by it; and I shall make an apology, therefore, for narrating the story in some little detail. I was stopping down at Lichfield for my summer holiday in July, 1879, when I happened one day accidentally to meet an old ploughman who told me he had got a lot of coins at home that he had ploughed up on what he called 'the field of battle'—a place I had already recognized as the site of the old Mercian kings, wooden palace.

I went home with him at once in high glee; for I have been a collector of old English gold and silver coinage for several years, and I was in hopes that my friendly ploughman's find might contain something good in the way of Anglo-Saxon pennies or shillings considering the very promising place in which he had unearthed it.

As it turned out, I was not mistaken. The little hoard, concealed within a rude piece of Anglo-Saxon pottery (now No. 127 in case LIX at the South Kensington Museum), comprised a large number of common Frankish Merovingian coins (I beg Mr. Freeman's pardon for not calling them Merwings), together with two or three Kentish pennies of some rarity from the mints of Ethelbert at Canterbury and Dover. Amongst those minor treasures, however, my eye at once fell upon one single gold piece, obviously imitated from the imperial Roman aureus of the Pretender Carausius, which I saw immediately must be an almost unique bit of money of the very greatest numismatic interest. I took it up and examined it carefully. A minute's inspection fully satisfied me that it was, indeed, a genuine mintage of Wulfric of Mercia, the like of which I had never before, to my knowledge, set eyes upon.

I immediately offered the old man five pounds down for the whole collection. He closed with the offer forthwith in the most contented fashion, and I bought them and paid for them all upon the spot without parley.

When I got back to my lodgings that evening I could do nothing but look at my gold Wulfric. I was charmed and delighted at the actual possession of so great a treasure, and was burning to take it up at once to the British Museum to see whether even in the national collection they had got another like it. So, being by nature of an enthusiastic and impulsive disposition, I determined to go up to town the very next day, and try to track down the history of my Wulfric.

'It'll be a good opportunity,' I said to myself, 'to kill two birds with one stone. Emily's people haven't got out of town yet, I can call there in the morning, arrange to go to the theatre with them at night, and then drive at once to the museum and see how much my find is worth.'

Next morning I was of to town by an early train, and before one o'clock I had got to Emily's.

'Why, Harold,' she cried, running down to meet me and kiss me in the passage (for she had seen me get out of my hansom from the drawing, room window), 'how on earth is it that you're up in town to-day? I thought you were down at Lichfield still with your Oxford reading party.'

'So I am,' I answered, 'officially at Lichfield; but I've come up to-day partly to see you, and partly on a piece of business about a new coin I've just got hold of.'

'A coin!' Emily answered, pretending to pout. 'Me and a coin! That's how you link us together mentally, is it? I declare, Harold, I shall be getting jealous of those coins of yours some day I'm certain. You can't even come up to see me for a day, it seems, unless you've got some matter of a coin as well to bring you to London. Moral—never get engaged to a man with a fancy for collecting coins and medals.'

'Oh, but this is really such a beauty, Emily,' I cried enthusiastically. 'Just look at it now. Isn't lovely! Do you notice the inscription—Wulfric Rex! I've never yet seen one anywhere else at all like it.'

Emily took it in her hands carelessly. 'I don't see any points about that coin in particular,' she answered in her bantering fashion, 'more than any other old coin you'd pick up anywhere.'

That was all we said then about the matter. Subsequent events engrained the very words of that conversation into the inmost substance of my brain with indelible fidelity. I shall never forget them to my dying moment.

I stopped about an hour altogether at Emily's had lunch, and arranged that she and her mother should accompany me that evening to the Lyceum. Then I drove off to the British Museum, and asked for leave to examine the Anglo-Saxon coins of the Mercian period.

The superintendent, who knew me well enough by sight and repute as a responsible amateur collector, readily gave me permission to look at a drawerful of the earliest Mercian gold and silver coinage. I had brought one or two numismatic books with me, and I sat down to have a good look at those delightful cases.

After thoroughly examining the entire series and the documentary evidence, I came to the conclusion that there was just one other gold Wulfric in existence besides the one I kept in my pocket, and that was the beautiful and well preserved example in the case before me. It was described in the last edition of Sir Theophilus Warton's 'Northumbrian and Mercian Numismatist' as an absolutely unique gold coin of Wulfric of Mercia, in imitation of the well known aureus of the false emperor Carausius. I turned to the catalogue to see the price at which it had been purchased by the nation. To my intense surprise I saw it entered at 150!

I was perfectly delighted at my magnificent acquisition.

On comparing the two examples, however, I observed that, though both struck from the same die and apparently at the same mint (to judge by the letter), they differed slightly from one another in two minute accidental particulars. My coin, being, of course, merely stamped with a hammer and then cut to shape, after the fashion of the time, was rather more closely clipped around the edge than the museum specimen; and it had also a slight dent on the obverse side, just below the W of Wulfric. In all other respects the two examples were of necessity absolutely identical.

I stood for a long time gazing at the case and examining the two duplicates with the deepest interest, while the museum keeper (a man of the name of Mactavish, whom I had often seen before on previous visits) walked about within sight, as is the rule on such occasions and kept a sharp lookout that I did not attempt to meddle with any of the remaining coins or cases.

Unfortunately, as it turned out, I had not mentioned to the superintendent my own possession of a duplicate Wulfric, nor had I called Mactavish's attention to the fact that I had pulled a coin of my own for purpose of comparison out of my waistcoat pocket. To say the truth,

I was inclined to be a little secretive as yet about my gold Wulfric, because until I had found out all that was known to me, I did not want anybody else to be told of my discovery.

But last I had fully satisfied all my curiosity, and was just about return the museum Wulfric to its little round compartment in the neat case (having already replaced my own duplicate in my waistcoat pocket), when, all at once, I can't say how, I gave a sudden turn, and dropped the coin with a jerk unexpected upon the floor of the museum.

It rolled away out of sight in a second, and I stood appalled in an agony of distress and terror in the midst of the gallery. Next moment I had hastily called Mactavish to my side, and got him to lock up the open drawer while we two went down on hands and knees and hunted through the length and breadth of the gallery for the lost Wulfric.

It was absolutely hopeless. Plain sailing as the thing seemed, we could see no trace of the missing coin from one end of the room to the other.

At last I leaned in a cold perspiration against the edge of one of the glass cabinets, and gave it up in despair with a sinking heart.

'It's no use, Mactavish,' I murmured desperately; 'the thing's lost, and we shall never find it.'

Mactavish looked me quietly in the face. 'In that case, sir,' he answered firmly, 'by the rules of the museum I must call the superintendent.'

He put his hand, with no undue violence but in a strictly official manner, upon my right shoulder. Then he blew a little whistle.

'I'm sorry to be rude to you, sir,' he went on apologetically, 'but by the rules of the museum I can't take my hand off you till the superintendent gives me leave to release you.'

Another keeper answered the whistle, 'Send the superintendent,' Mactavish said quietly. 'A coin missing.'

In a minute the superintendent was upon the spot. When Mactavish told him I had dropped the Gold Wulfric of Mercia he shook his head very ominously.

'This is a bad business, Mr. Tait,' he said gloomily, 'A unique coin, as you know, and one of the most valuable in the whole of our large Anglo-Saxon collection.'

'Is there a mouse-hole anywhere?' I cried in agony; 'any place where it might have rolled down and got mislaid or concealed for the moment?'

The superintendent went down instantly on his own hands and knees, pulled up every piece of the cocoa nut matting with minute deliberation, searched the whole place thoroughly from end to end, but found nothing. He spent nearly an hour on that thorough search; meanwhile, Mactavish never for a moment relaxed his hold upon me.

At last the superintendent desisted from the search as quite hopeless, and approached me very politely.

'I'm extremely sorry, Mr. Tait,' he said in the most courteous possible manner, 'but by the rules of the museum I am absolutely compelled either to search you for the coin or to give you into custody. It may, you know, have got caught somewhere about your person. No doubt you would prefer, of the two, that I should look in all your pockets and the folds of your clothing.' The position was terrible. I could stand it no longer.

'Mr. Harborne,' I said, breaking out once more from head to foot into a cold sweat, 'I must tell you the truth. I have brought a duplicate gold Wulfric here to-day to compare with the museum specimen, and I have got it this very moment in my waistcoat pocket.'

The superintendent gazed back at me with a mingled look of incredulity and pity.

'My dear sir,' he answered very gently 'this is altogether a most unfortunate business, but I'm afraid I must ask you to let me look at the duplicate you speak of.'

I took it, trembling, out of my waistcoat pocket and handed it across to him with out a word. The superintendent gazed at it for a moment in silence; then, in a tone of the profoundest commiseration, he said slowly:

'Mr. Tait, I grieve to be obliged to con-

tradict you. This is our own specimen of the gold Wulfric.'

The whole museum whirled round me violently, and before I knew anything more I fainted.

When I came I found myself seated in the superintendent's room, with a policeman standing quietly in the background.

As soon as I had fully recovered consciousness, the superintendent motioned the policeman out of the room for a while, and then gently forced me to swallow a brandy and soda.

'Mr. Tait,' he said compassionately, after an awkward pause, 'you are a very young man; indeed; and, I believe, hitherto of blameless character. Now, I should be very sorry to have to proceed to extremities against you, I know to what lengths, in a moment of weakness the desire to possess a rare coin will often lead a connoisseur, under stress of exceptional temptation. I have not the slightest doubt in my own mind that you did really accidentally drop the coin: that you went down on your knees honestly intending to find it, that the accident suggested to you the ease with which you might pocket it, that you yielded temporarily to that unfortunate impulse; and that, by the time I arrived on the scene, you were already over come with remorse and horror. I saw as much already in your very countenance. Nevertheless, I determined to give you the benefit of the doubt; and I searched over the whole place in the most thorough and conscientious manner. . . . As you know I found nothing. . . . Mr. Tait, I cannot bear to have to deal harshly with you. I recognize the temptation and the agony of repentance that instantly followed it. Sir, I give you one chance. If you will retract the obviously false story that you told me, and confess that the coin I found in your pocket was, in fact as I know it to be, the museum specimen, I will forthwith dismiss the constable, and will never say another word to any one about the whole matter. I don't want to ruin you, but I can't of course be put off with a falsehood. Think the matter carefully over with yourself. Do you, or do you not, still adhere to that very improbable and incredible story!'

Horrified and terror stricken as I was, I couldn't avoid feeling grateful to the superintendent for the evident kindness with which he was treating me. The tears rose at once into my eyes.

'Mr. Harborne,' I cried passionately, 'you are very good, generous; but you quite mistake the whole position. The story I told you was true, every word of it was true. I bought the gold Wulfric from a ploughman at Lichfield, and it is not absolutely identical with the museum specimen which I dropped upon the floor. It is closer clipped around the edges and it has a distinct dent upon the obverse side, just below the W of Wulfric.'

'The superintendent paused a second and scanned my face very closely.

'Have you a knife or a file in your pocket?' he asked in a much sterner and more official tone.

'No,' I replied, 'neither—neither.'

'Certain.'

'Shall I search you myself, or shall I give you in custodia?'

'Search me yourself,' I answered confidently.

He put his hand quietly into my left hand breast pocket, and, to my utter horror and dismay, drew forth, what I had up to that moment utterly forgotten a pair of folding pocket nail scissors, in a leather case, of course, with a little file on either side.

My heart stood still within me.

'That is quite sufficient, Mr. Tait,' the superintendent went on severely. 'Had you alleged that the museum coin was smaller than your own imaginary one, you might have been able to put in the facts as good evidence. But, I see, the exact contrary is the case. You have stooped to a disgraceful and unworthy subterfuge. This base deception aggravates your guilt. You have deliberately defaced a valuable specimen in order, if possible, to destroy its identity.'

'What could I say in return? I stammered and hesitated.'

'Mr. Harborne,' I cried piteously, 'the circumstances seem to look terribly against me; but, nevertheless, you are quite mistaken. The missing Wulfric will come to light, sooner or later and prove me innocent.'

TO BE CONTINUED