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AN
ESSAY
ON
MEDALS:

OR,
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF
ANCIENT AND MODERN
COINS AND MEDALS;

ESPECIALLY THOSE OF
GREECE, ROME, AND BRITAIN.

BY
JOHN PINKERTON.

THE THIRD EDITION, WITH CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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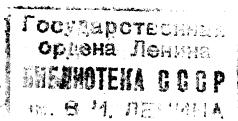
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AN ESSAY ON MEDALS.

VOLUME THE FIRST.

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Poppin's Court, Fleet Street.*

P R E F A C E.

As soon as the study of medals, attending the other arts and sciences upon their revival in Europe, became in any degree prevalent, books aiming, like this, to contain general principles of that branch of knowledge likewise appeared. In Italy, where collections of ancient coins were first formed, it was natural that works of this kind should arise. Accordingly, in 1548*, Enea Vico published his Discourses on the Medals of the Ancients; a treatise of very considerable intelligence for that period. He therein treats of the me-

* Others say 1555: they had not seen the first edition of the Giolito. Vinegia, 1548, 4to.

tals employed in ancient coinage; of portraits to be found on coins; of the types on their reverses; of their legends; of medallions; of false medals, and rules for discerning them; dates of history; forms of edifices; names of magistrates, &c. His example was imitated in France by Antoine le Pois, who in 1579 gave his Discourse on the Coins and Seals of the Ancients; of which the dry and verbose manner is compensated by the most exquisite plates which perhaps ever attended a medallic work.

Though these productions had merit, yet they had a confused method, and pedantic formality of erudition. These faults became the more striking as science advanced; and pedantry, of consequence, began to disappear; for the latter is only the school-master of the former, and as science attains to maturity, their acquaintance ceases of course. When a man is in the rudiments of any knowledge, how full he is of it! how importantly he talks of it!

but, as he advances, it becomes familiar, and he wears it easily about him. In like manner, countries have their pedantry, as well as individuals; it being the necessary attendant of the introduction of science.

A small work therefore, which should display brief and easy instructions for the intelligence of coins, being still very much wanted, in 1665 Charles Patin, son of the celebrated Guy Patin, physician to the French king, and a very skilful medallist, published his History of Medals, or Introduction to that Science. This treatise, of which the last edition, 1695, is, in my opinion, much superior to the work of Jobert, next to be mentioned, ran through many editions, and was translated into all the languages of Europe.

Notwithstanding the high merit of this work, in 1692 Pere Jobert presented to the public his *Science des Medailles*. It is proper to observe, that the first edition of Jobert is the

best of those published by himself; for that of 1715, which he published in two volumes, is only swelled with impertinence, and the crude reveries of Pere Hardouin, whom the author wished to flatter. The edition of 1739 is doubtless the very best; but this we owe to the editor*, and not to the author; and even of this edition the second volume is a mere farrago of useless lumber.

In the very year that Jobert published his book, one, something similar, first appeared in the English language†. Its title is, “ The

* M. le Baron Bimard de la Bastie; the *Bimardus*, *Baro Bimardus*, and *Bimardus de la Bastie*, of Frœlich’s *Notitia*.

Mangeart’s *Introduction a la Science des Medailles*, &c. Paris, 1763, *fol.* is a dry compilation concerning antiquities found on medals; and the author shows no knowledge of the medals themselves. It is a kind of supplement to Montfaucon’s *Antiquities*.

† There is a Latin bauble, *De Nummis*, ascribed to our great Selden, of which he is quite innocent. It was written by Alexander Sardo, of Ferrara, and published at Mentz,

“ Greek and Roman History illustrated by
“ Coins and Medals, representing their Reli-
“ gions, Rites, &c. &c. By O. W. [Obadiah
Walker.] “ London, 1692.” 12mo. The
work answers to the title in one respect; that,
of 360 pages, not 60 are medallic; the rest are
all made up of Roman antiquities and his-
tory: but how it illustrates Greek history can-
not be discovered. Its plan is so very con-
fused and bad, and the whole work so feeble,
that it is no wonder that it never had any suc-
cess. In 1695, a translation of Jobert’s work
appeared, intituled, “ The Knowledge of Me-
dals,” which is ascribed to Walker.

The “ Numismata, or Discourse of Medals,
“ ancient and modern,” by Mr. Evelyn, was
printed in 1697. The size is folio, and the

1575, 4to, though re-published at London, about 1676, by
some artful editor, under the name of *Seldenus de Nummis*.
Labbe’s *Bibliotheca Nummaria* is annexed to it, and they are
both of a piece.

plan and writing are likewise in folio. None of his observations are new, but all tacitly taken from Vico, Le Pois, Patin, and Jobert. The plates of English medals are of little use, now that those of Snelling have appeared. Even they would have been better understood, had he not added explanations. There is, in the British Museum, a copy of this work, corrected by the author, with an original letter prefixed, complaining that the printer had utterly mangled and spoiled his work, so that it is necessary to give corrections. The corrections are for the worse.

In 1720 Nicolao Haym, an Italian musician, published at London his *Tesoro Britannico*, or British Treasury, in Italian and English; in which he proposed to engrave and describe, in about twelve quarto volumes, all the coins, statues, gems, &c. to be found in cabinets in England, and not before made public. He has accordingly given two volumes of Greek and Roman coins, with *his* explanations. But what

explanations! If but a letter appears on a coin, he can ascertain to what name that letter belongs: if but a nose, he will find a face to it: if the coin is quite bare, to divine its ancient forms costs him not a thought. Khell, a German medallist of some credit, has even lately re-published Haym's strange mass in Latin, with additions. But had he inspected the original medals, or known the character which that work bears here, where only it can be duly estimated, or indeed been possessed of any judgement, he would not have incurred the imputation of trying to perpetuate the gross errors of that lame production. As Haym pretends to mark the rarity, &c. of many of the coins he produces, his work was entitled to notice here.

Did not my design in this preface induce me to enumerate every English work, in particular, which has appeared of this kind, I should pass in silence that called "An Introduction to the Knowledge of Medals, by the late Reverend David Jennings, D. D." printed by Basker-

ville, 1764: 12mo. But this being the only other attempt in the language, it is necessary to mention it in few words. It consists only of about 60 pages, most of which are occupied with Jewish shekels and divinity, *as in duty bound to pray*. The only apology which can be made for it is, that it was drawn up by the author, as would seem, without the most distant view of publication; but was sent *into the breathing world, not half made up*, by some officious friend. Its innumerable blunders*, and holy verbosity, stamp it the most childish work which ever appeared in any science whatever.

From this deduction the reader will perceive how much a treatise of this kind was wanted, in

*. To instance a few, he tells us that all ancient coins were first cast in moulds, then stamped; that there were sometimes five mint-masters; that S. C. is on all medals; that an altar on a coin of Augustus is a gate; that *Votis XXX. mult. XXXX.* implies a wish that the emperor may live 30 years and 40 more. He seems to say that all the Roman emperors appear with diadems. He certainly had never seen a dozen coins; nor a single medallic writer of this century.

our language in particular; though indeed such a work has been universally known to be needed, and much wished for, during this whole century. How far the present may answer the intention, or expectation, the reader must judge; though if he does not condemn, it will not be owing to the want of previous instructions; for I am well aware that nothing is more provocative of criticism than any attempt of which the author criticises his predecessors. But as this is a work of instruction, it was absolutely necessary to point out the faults of others, that they might be avoided.

The less an author says at any time about his own productions the better; so it shall only be added, that, though this little Essay was begun as a mere amusement and relief from idleness, yet I soon found that infinite labour was required to answer my own expectations. As it is disagreeable to relinquish a design when entered upon, this toil has not been spared. Indeed the reader will hardly believe how much attention is required in a work of this kind, for every page

almost contains a number of minute facts, for each of which considerable information is necessary: insomuch that perhaps in two or three lines the fruit of much research into a dozen or two of authors is presented.

They who wish to proceed in this science may next peruse the most excellent and useful work of Frœlich*, and afterward such books of medals as they please, in chronological order as published, from Goltzius down to Pellerin and Combe. I scruple not to recommend Goltzius, though all his works have many coins not yet found in cabinets, his own being un-

* “ Notitia Elementaris Numismatum antiquorum illorum quæ Urbium Liberarum, Regum et Principum, ac Personarum Illustrium, appellantur. Viennæ, Pragæ, et Tergesti, 1758,” 4to. This work is, however, not without faults: the list of Greek cities of which we have coins is defective in about a third of the number; and the plan of splitting the series of kings of every realm into different epochs is execrable. A more minute fault is, his giving plated coins the title of *bracteati*, a name belonging to a very different kind, as the reader will see in Section XVIII. of this work. *Nummi lamella argentea obducti*, or *Nummi Pelliculati*, was the proper phrase for plated coins.

fortunately lost, because medals which he describes, and which were looked upon as fictitious, are yearly found really existent, and of undoubted antiquity. A French writer compares him to Pliny the natural historian, who was thought to deal much in falsehood, till Time drew his truth out of the well; so that, as knowledge advances, most of his wonders acquire gradual confirmation. Yet it is certain that he was often imposed upon; and his works must be used with great caution. His coins of the Roman Tyrants, for instance, are clearly false; for they bear *PREN.* and *COG.* on the exergue, which marks never occur on the real coins. For modern coins and medals, the authors who have treated those of each particular country must be consulted; the English, in particular, appear, in Snelling's Works and Folkes's Tables, to an advantage which will not be soon surpassed.

As the reader may, however, expect some directions for his medallic studies, I shall beg

leave to offer him a list of what authors have appeared to me the best, after a perusal of almost every work published in this line, from a duodecimo pamphlet to two volumes folio, and from the beginning of the 16th century to the present hour. Perhaps this estimate may be thought too severe, when the shortness of my list is considered; but I will venture to say, that in no science whatever have so many bad books, and so few good ones, been given as in this. At the same time, if the reader wishes to enlarge his studies, he may please his fancy: all that I shall do here is, to give him a short catalogue of the best medallic productions, and the best editions of them.

For the general science, may be recommended Vico's work, *Discorsi sopra le Medaglie de gli antichi*: best editions are, *Vinegia*, 1555, 4to, and *Parigi*, 1622, 4to; and Patin's *Histoire des Medailles, ou Introduction a la Connoissance de cette Science*: best edition is of Paris, 1695, 12mo.