XXXVIII. *A Dissertation on an antient Jewel of the Anglo-Saxons.*

Read at the SOCIETY of ANTIQUARIES, March 5, 1752.

THERE is a well-known and curious piece of gold in the Bodleian library, of which I must here take some notice, though it be not properly a coin. It has been no less than four times engraved; first by Dr. Plot, then in Camden, after that by Sir Andrew Fountaine (by which means it obtains an alliance with this work), and lastly by Mr. Wife. And all the gentlemen concerned, to whom I may add Mr. Thwaites, have respectively given their opinions of it, but are so discordant among themselves, that there is indeed great room, and great occasion, for a Moderator, to compose differences between them, and, if one may be so happy, to give the true explication of it.

Dr. Plot, in his Nat. Hist. of Oxfordshire, p. 352.

“BEFORE they (the Kings of England) touch for this distemper
 “ (the King’s evil), they have always prayers read suitable to the occa-
 “ sion; both which when performed, the King forthwith bestows
 “ on every Patient, a piece of Angel-Gold purposely coined, and
 “ put upon a White Ribbon, to be hung about the neck; which as
 “ long as worn, preserves the virtue of the Touch
 “ However it be, that this was the custom *ab initio*, I take to be
 “ plain, from that piece of gold of King Edward the Confessor,
 “ Tab. XVI. Fig. 5. found in S. Giles’s field, in the suburbs of Oxon,
 “ having the initial letters of his name over the hinder part of the
 “ head, and two small holes through it, as if designed to be hung
 “ on a ribbon, for the purpose above mentioned, the holes being
 VOL. I. Y “ strengthened

“ strengthened with gold wire fastened round them, and to the
 “ piece itself, much after the fashion of the eye of a man’s doublet,
 “ as exactly described in the figure, *ut supra* ; which piece was lent
 “ me by that courteous gentleman, Sir John Holeman, Baronet,
 “ in whose possession it now remains, at his house near North-
 “ ampton.”

Mr. Walker, in Camden, Tab. iv. N°. 40.

“ THE fortieth is taken out of Dr. Plot’s History of Oxford-
 “ shire ; it was found in digging the works at Oxford, and is, or
 “ not long since was, in the possession of Sir John Holman. It
 “ is supposed to be the gold given by Saint Edward the Confessor,
 “ at his curing the Scrophulae, or the King’s-Evil. It is worth
 “ noting, that it hath upon it the figure of a woman veiled (not
 “ unlike a Nun) whether of the Bleffed Virgin, or some other holy
 “ woman, I cannot determine. But it seems much more proper
 “ for that function, than that now used of an angel ; which was
 “ taken from the French.”

Mr. Thoresby, in Camden, ibidem.

“ THAT Edward the Confessor was the first of our Kings who
 “ cured the Struma, is acknowledged by all, and that it was called
 “ the King’s-Evil upon that account, is probable enough ; but,
 “ that he and the succeeding Kings gave pieces of gold in this form,
 “ may, I think, be justly scrupled, and can never be proved from
 “ E. C. the supposed Initials of his name, who is never stiled
 “ Confessor upon any monies or medals of undoubted antiquity ;
 “ and if gold had been coined and distributed upon this or any other
 “ occasion in those ages, a greater number of them, no doubt, would
 “ have been found in the cabinets of the curious, as well as their
 “ current monies ; whereas nothing of that metal appears till
 “ Edw. the III’d’s time ; and that, perhaps, no other than the current
 “ silver money of each prince, except gilded for distinction. Such an
 “ one,

“ one, with a hole for the ribbon to be hung about the neck, was
 “ amongst the curiosities in the old Lord Fairfax’s Museum, and is
 “ yet preserved in this. It has the full face (as he is represented
 “ upon his great seal, Speed’s history) with the arched crown, and
 “ may possibly be one of the same numerical pieces given upon
 “ that occasion. As for the curiosity described by the ingenious
 “ Dr. Plot, in his History of Oxfordshire, and from him transmitted
 “ to N^o. 40. in this table, I look upon it as a sort of Amulet (for
 “ which those darker superstitious ages had an extraordinary vene-
 “ ration), like that noble one of King Alfred, described by the
 “ learned Dr. Hickes [g] ; and do conclude with Dr. Wotton, that
 “ those pieces inscribed Saint Edmond were of the like nature.”

Sir A. Fountaine, Dissert. Epist. ad Comit. Penbrochiae.

“ AT vero mihi haud diffitendum est, ne unum quidem (nummum
 “ aureum) aut a me unquam fuisse visum, aut inter legendum mihi
 “ occurrisset, nisi in dissertatione illa Walkeriana, et Historia Natu-
 “ rali comitatus Oxoniensis a Doctore Plot conscripta. Hic quidem
 “ scriptor, eumque secutus Walkerus, nummum quadragintefimum,
 “ in tabula octava (quam videre est in praedicta editione Britanniae
 “ Camdenianae), autumant esse Saxonicum, et qualem ad curan-
 “ dam Scrophulam, Edvardus cognomento Confessor, hominibus
 “ morbo illo laborantibus, elargiri solitus est. Sed ratiociniis adeo
 “ infirmis innixa est haec opinio, ut in tabulis nostris monetae Sax-
 “ onicae nummus iste nullum obtinuerit locum. Veruntamen Iconem
 “ ejus infra apponere visum est, ut inde judices, Hon. Comes, quam
 “ valido argumento contendat Walkerus nummum hominibus
 “ Scrophula affectis elargiendum, monachae quam Angeli (uti nunc
 “ dierum, in more positum est) imagine rectius esse signandum.”

Mr. Thwaites.

“ IN the 161st page of Sir Andrew Fountaine’s Epistolary
 “ Dissertation, a coin (or piece of money) represents, if I am not
 [g] In his Thesaur. Ling. Vet. Septentr. p. 142.

“ mistaken, the head of Jesus Christ, with these letters, C A Ξ Ω ,
 “ that is, Christus, Alpha et Omega ; Christ, Alpha and Omega,
 “ the beginning and ending, or first and last. His head is adorned
 “ with a triple crown. The little character Ξ ($\mathfrak{C}$, and) is to be
 “ seen now in ancient coins, struck in the same manner. It is taken
 “ from the Anglo-Saxon $\mathfrak{C}$, or $\mathfrak{J}$.”

Mr. Wife, Numm. Bodl. Catalog. p. 232.

“ Supereſt dicendus nummus aureus, ſi nummum vocare fas ſit,
 “ olim prope Oxoniam repertus, et a celeberrimo Johanne Radcliffe,
 “ M. D. ſcriniis Bodleianis donatus. Sane non diſſimilis eſt iſtis,
 “ quos bracteatos et cavaſ vocant Antiquarii Septentrionales, ſcilicet,
 “ tam incuſus quam excuſus. Hunc primus vulgavit Cl. Rob.
 “ Plot, M. D. in Hiſt. Naturali Comitatus Oxoniensis, illumque
 “ autumavit ex iis eſſe, quos infirmis Scrophula laborantibus dedit
 “ Edvardus Confefſor. Quam etiam opinionem calculis ſuis pro-
 “ barunt alii eruditi: immo Cl. Edw. Thwaites literas A et Ω in
 “ epigraphe, ſi qua ſit, videre voluit: vide Not. in Num. Saxon.
 “ Saeculum proculdubio olet, quin et opus forte, Saxonicum; at
 “ an unquam monetae inſervierit, merito dubitatur. Quandoqui-
 “ dem Saxonibus in nummis propriis rarus aut nullus, uti diximus,
 “ auri fuit uſus; a quo vero, in cimeliis diverſi generis fabricandis,
 “ eos neutiquam alienos fuiſſe abunde conſtat. Quare ipſe in alium
 “ uſum iſtud elaborari cenſeo; ad codicis, puta, aliuſve ſupellectilis,
 “ ornamentum; cujus etiam exteriori tegumento affixum fuiſſe, me
 “ maxime perſuaſum habeo.”

As to Dr. Plot's and Mr. Walker's notion of this being one of thoſe pieces diſtributed by Edward the Confefſor amongſt the patients touched by him for the King's-Evil, the later Antiquaries, Sir Andr. Fountaine, Mr. Thoreſby, and Mr. Wife, all agree to reject it, and, I think, very juſtly. In the firſt place, Dr. Plot builds his opinion upon the C, which he thought he diſcerned upon it, and which he imagined might denote Confefſor; but that letter is not

a C,

a C, but a G. Secondly, I esteem the piece to be older than that Prince. Thirdly, I do not take it to be a Coin. Fourthly, the head does not represent a woman veiled, consequently neither the Bleſſed Virgin, nor any other holy woman; in ſhort, it is a perſon of a higher order, as will be ſeen below. To all which you may add, fifthly, the plauſible objections raiſed by Mr. Thoreſby.

MR. THORESBY very rightly judges it to be an Amulet; but he has contributed little to the explanation of it, ſince he adds nothing either concerning the effigies or the letters upon it, but leaves us ſtill entirely in the dark as to them.

SIR ANDREW, in effect, ſays little upon it; contenting himſelf with alledging it to be no coin, and expoſing Mr. Walker's and Dr. Plot's notion of its being a Touch-piece.

MR. THWAITES, who follows next, has come the neareſt the truth; but, as on one hand he takes it for a coin, which it is not, ſo on the other, he ſtill perſiſts in the old track of taking the G for a C, and likewiſe has overlooked two other letters: Moreover his interpretation has been ſo coldly received, ſo flighted by Mr. Wiſe, who ſeems entirely to diſſent from him, that it may be thought neceſſary to do juſtice to Mr. Thwaites in certain particulars.

MR. WISE very juſtly holds it to be a jewel, and not a coin; but then, I think, he miſtakes its uſe, and ſeems to doubt whether there be any inſcription upon it: which I cannot but admire, ſince that is ſo evident in his own type.

WHAT I propoſe therefore to do, in regard to this diſſonance of opinions, will be, firſt, to diſcover and explain the letters; ſecondly, to ſhew whoſe the head is; thirdly, to add a word of the age of the jewel; and fourthly, of the uſe for which it was originally deſigned.

FIRST then, this jewel is chaſed and repaired; for that ſide which is placed for the reverſe in Mr. Wiſe's type (which I make uſe of here, eſteeming it the moſt accurate) is the Intaglio, or the concave ſide,

fide, and the obverse is the convex. But the workman very thoughtlessly (a fault too frequent in these rude and early times) wrought his draught or pattern the right way on the concave side, by which means every thing but one letter, namely the G, is inverted on the other.

THE margin, which is only ornament, seems to be entirely embossed, or the work of the chissel, there being no appearance of the work on the other side.

THE letters then on the convex side, where they are the fairest, are E G O V S U ; all which being inverted, when they are made to stand upright, are, E G O Λ ϱ Ω , Which I interpret “Ego Alpha “et Omega,” the A wanting the cross stroke, as is common, and the reversed S being an usual abbreviation of Et. Mr. Thwaites calls this the *little* character Σ , but I dont know why, since it is of the size of the other letters. The character he deduces from the Anglo-Saxon, which is certainly very unnatural if it is to stand that way he gives it: But if it be reversed, as is alledged above, then it may probably be, that Anglo-Saxon character rounded at the corners, or rather that other mark $\bar{E}$, which he gives us p. 182, so rounded. And it is certain, that upon the English coins, both gold and silver, from Edward III to Edward VI inclusive, the Σ or Et generally stands that way. Mr. Thwaites, moreover, overlooks two of the Letters, the first and third, and takes the G for a C ; but it is evidently a G in Mr. Wise’s plate ; and the letters E G O are very conspicuous upon the jewel on the obverse or convex side, and I cannot but wonder he should miss them, and much more that Mr. Wise should dispute the existence of both of them, and the rest of the letters, which, I think, must be undoubted by every body else.

THESE now are all the letters and characters I can perceive, the strokes preceding the E being intended for another purpose, as will appear hereafter.

THE head therefore, in the second place, is not an Angel, or the Blessed Virgin, or other holy woman, as has been supposed, but
our

our Saviour. The legend plainly alludes to Rev. i. 8. and you may observe the cross placed before his face, and rays of glory (which at first sight some may take for letters), issuing from the dress or ornament of his head; for what Mr. Thwaites above calls a triple crown, is nothing else but an antique head dress, something like what we have on the coins of Burgred, King of Mercia, in whose territory the jewel was found. See Sir Andr. Fountaine's Tab. Burgred, N°. 17—23.

I WOULD willingly therefore, thirdly, refer the piece to the Mercian kingdom, the G being of a form sometimes used in that country (see my Dissertation on the Coin of Apb. Wulfstan) and to the Reign of King Burgred, who was living when King Aelfred came to the crown, and flourished in the middle of the ninth century. But if any gentleman, on account of the inscription A 2 Ω, would chuse to place it an hundred years later, when the allusion to that Apocalyptic description of our Saviour was much in vogue, namely, in the reign of Ethelred II, as appears from his money in Sir Andr. Fountaine's first plate, I will not greatly contest it with him. Whichever of these opinions is true, the jewel can have no relation to Edward the Confessor, and his pretended cures; but nevertheless, as there are certain holes in it for a filken string or small ruban to pass through, I think it highly probable, in the last place, that it was intended to be worn about the neck by way of ornament, or perhaps of an Amulet or charm, according to Mr. Thoresby. And this, I think, much more likely than the conjecture of Mr. Wise, that it was intended for the boss or ornament of a book or some other piece of household furniture, by reason that the said holes are placed near together, and not opposite to one another, in different parts of the margin or border, which surely they would have been, had the jewel been intended to have been fastened to any other substance.

QUERE, whether this be not the oldest piece of chased work at this day extant?

October, 1751.

SAMUEL PEGGE.