

Archbishop Laud and the University Collection of Coins

By J. G. MILNE

THIS year is the tercentenary of the inauguration of the University collection of coins, the oldest in England: it was on June 16th, 1636, that Archbishop Laud wrote a letter announcing the despatch of five cabinets of coins to the Bodleian Library: a few earlier donations of coins had been recorded, but nothing worth calling a collection, so that Laud may fairly be called the founder. The actual donor of the cabinets and their contents, however, was not Laud, but John Barcham of Corpus, Dean of Bocking, as appears from Hearne's statement,¹ 'Dr. Barcham gave his coins to the Archbishop and drew up also a book about them which is in MS. in Bodley.' This manuscript, now Laud misc. 554, is a fair copy of a manuscript at Lambeth numbered 225: the latter is in Barcham's hand, and was doubtless retained by Laud: and both have entries of subsequent additions, which suggests that Laud intended the record of the collection to be kept in duplicate. It is probable that Barcham was responsible for these additions, as there is a list of 137 coins, in the same hand as the Lambeth MS., pasted at the end of the Laud MS. in Bodley. Anthony Wood states that Barcham had the best collection of coins of any clergyman in England, and the catalogue bears out this statement.

In this connexion it is interesting to note that a few of Barcham's coins seem not to have been included in his gift through Laud: a group of mediæval gold and silver coins belonging to Corpus, the history of which is given elsewhere,² has been shown to have been most probably due to Barcham;³ and we may assume that either Barcham or Laud did not consider these as likely to be of interest to the University, and so Barcham found a home for them at his old College. They have now been deposited by the College at the Ashmolean and rest side by side with their old comrades after a separation of three centuries.

A few years later a notable addition was made to the collection by the receipt of 244 coins given by Sir Thomas Roe: though they came after Laud's

¹ Hearne, *Collections* x (O.H.S. vol. 67), 372.

² *Numismatic Chronicle* 1927, p. 187.

³ *Essex Review* 1933, p. 124.

death, they can certainly be ascribed to his influence, and as it appears from Garrard's letter (see p. 153) that Laud was staying at Roe's house on his way to Oxford only a few days after the despatch of the first consignment of coins to the Bodleian, it may well be that it was then that the gift was suggested. The terms of the gift, as recorded in a note at the end of the Laud MS., are worth copying:—

'All these medalls of silver, & all my brass medalls in ye press at London, I haue giuen to ye librarrye in ye uniuersitye of Oxford: wch I desire may be sent thither, when safely they may, and if these tymes doe not euyue¹ both ye uniuersitye & librarrye. Tho. Rowe. July 6. 1644.'

All coins added in the next half century were incorporated in the original cabinets, and no note of the donors seems to have been made: when Thomas Hearne catalogued the Greek coins about 1702 he was unable to separate the various collections which went under the name of Laud in virtue of their being in these cabinets. But it is fairly clear from the list of gifts that little of importance had come in, and the coins to which Hearne gave the label of 'Laud' can be ascribed without much doubt to Barcham or Roe. Practically all of these can be identified from Hearne's careful description with specimens still in the collection, the only question being in deciding between two examples of the same type: and we can claim that the University possesses all the Greek coins that Laud secured for it. The same is probably true of the other series, except the English, which suffered a serious loss under circumstances set forth in the *Bodleian Quarterly Record*²: the best of them were lent to Sir Simonds D'Ewes on February 13th, 1649, and he gave a bond for £500 to return them before the end of the following October: but he died less than two months later, and the University never recovered the coins.

¹ Roe seems to have used 'euyue' in the sense of 'destroy.'

² *B.Q.R.*, VII, 422.