

The Roman Imperial Coinage, edited by H. Mattingly, C. H. V. Sutherland, R. A. G. Carson. Vol. IX, by J. W. E. Pearce, *Valentinian I to Theodosius I*. London, Spink & Son Ltd., 1951. Pp. xliv+334, 16 Plates (Price £3. 10s.)

It is a sad thought that J. W. E. Pearce did not live to see the publication of his last great work and the admiration with which it has been universally received. It is no exaggeration to say that the very special period of late Roman numismatics, which begins with the death of Julian the Apostate in 363, found in Pearce its own particular exponent. At a time when no one was interested in this series with its tedious types, meagre documentation, and artistic poverty, it was Pearce who perceived its importance and the invaluable support it could lend to the other historical sources of the fourth and fifth centuries. I had the good fortune to make his acquaintance some twenty years ago, when he had just published the greater part of his notable work *The Roman Imperial Coinage from A.D. 364-423*, modestly described by him as his "booklet", but in reality a work of such importance as to constitute the framework of his later, massive work. At that time he was already complete master of his material. Nevertheless, he was not content merely to add the finishing touches to his work. He undertook further prolonged research, making long journeys and examining with his expert eye quantities of raw material.

I consider myself highly fortunate to have been able to follow thus closely the research of so eminent a scholar, and honoured to have enjoyed his cordial friendship. It is in virtue of this friendship that I now have the task of reviewing this book, and also because several of the problems touched upon, and some of the solutions offered, have been examined and discussed in the constant letters and numismatic notes which used to pass between us. While we did not always see eye to eye, I always felt it was

a master who opposed my views and that I was sharing the studies of a man of acute perception and steady judgement.

This work deals with the period of thirty-one years from the accession of Valentinian I at Nicaea on 25 February 364 to the death of Theodosius at Milan on 15 January 395. Numismatically, the first of these two limits is well defined. The history of the Constantinian dynasty closes with the death of Julian the Apostate and is separated from that of the Valentinians by the short reign of Jovian (June 363–February 364). This, if nothing else, serves to mark the starting-point of Theodosian numismatics.

Valentinian I, on his accession, reorganized the government, associating his brother Valens with himself and completing the complex of his administrative reforms at the conferences of Mediana near Naissus. His first coinage, with more justification than usual, gives the brothers the title of *Restitutores Reipublicae*. It is a widespread issue in all three metals and clearly indicates the beginning of a new era. It is worth noting how this coinage was introduced into the metrological system already established in the reign of Constantine, and how its development continued in stable fashion throughout the period. Further it should be emphasized that, in face of the steady and inexorable decline in values which nothing could now arrest, the study of the coinage still provides a picture of continuity and homogeneity, which makes it a suitable instrument for amplifying and integrating such scarce documentary sources as have survived to us.

Solidus, *semis*, and *triens* in gold, *miliarensis*, *silibqua*, and its fractions in silver, *folles*, *pecunia maiorina*, *centenionalis*, and *nummus* in bronze constitute the usual range of issues in this short period. To these are added occasionally and exceptionally the showy multiples in gold and silver which bear witness to the way in which coins of high intrinsic worth could become greatly prized as objects of widespread exchange.

The other limit which the author has chosen, and which coincides with the death of Theodosius on 15 January 395, is less clearly defined and much less self-evident. Indeed, the coin-types already in use at that date were to be continued and developed in the course of the fifth century, at first with the names of Honorius and Arcadius, whose earliest issues had appeared while Theodosius I was still alive, and later with the names of their successors. This termination is vague and the line of demarcation shadowy, for one can say that, right up to the death of Honorius in 423, the figure of Theodosius and, in general, the Valentinian tradition continued to dominate the period of Arcadius and Honorius, so lacking in strong political personalities. It is, therefore, logical that the coinage, too, in whatever form, tends to preserve the familiar prerogatives and outlines of the preceding period.

Passing to a more detailed examination of the book, I should like first to emphasize the admirable printing, clear illustrations, exact descriptive text without serious errors, and balanced development of every part. On p. v Pearce writes, "It is safe to say, of the few but all undoubtedly earnest students of this coinage, no two would be in complete agreement either

on its exact arrangement or its historical implications, either because they have different evidence before them or because they interpret the same evidence differently. It is well to remember that our study is comparatively young and that dogmatism is dangerous." This far-seeing and broad-minded attitude justifies and, at the same time, demands some criticism of a formal nature that I have to make.

For example, in the general arrangement of the material, I should have preferred the coinage catalogued by emperors, as in Wroth's *Imperial Byzantine Coins in the British Museum*. Despite the fact that these two volumes were published in 1908 and that the field of Byzantine numismatics has been continually enriched by new acquisitions, they still have pride of place as a practical work in constant use.

I maintain that, in numismatic method, the time factor in final analysis should take precedence over the place factor. The former follows the course of events and in its wide sweep presents the historical picture as a whole, while the latter may be influenced, if not determined, by casual elements, mere caprices of destiny. Trivial reasons may cause a ruler to make a short or longer stay in a province, or may unexpectedly move him hundreds of miles away; and, in consequence, coinages are issued which, for fortuitous reasons, bear the marks now of one, now of another mint.

Mr. Pearce adopts a geographical classification and has brought to perfection the interlacing system of his previous work. The series are catalogued according to the mint of issue in geographical order from west to east (Gaul, Italy, Illyricum, the East). In the West the mints are Londinium, Treveri, Lugdunum, Arelate; in Italy, Mediolanum, Aquileia, Roma. Each chapter corresponds to a mint, and the issues are arranged by periods in chronological order. In substance he has aimed at the plan already adopted by Maurice for his *Numismatique Constantinienne* and followed by Voetter in his arrangement of several collections, notably the excellent catalogue of the Gerin collection.

This general arrangement certainly makes for clarity and ease of consultation when one wishes to follow, in isolation, the activity of one mint. This will recommend it, undoubtedly, to those who, following the trend of the day, prefer to study late Roman numismatics under separate mints on the same lines as medieval and modern numismatics. This method, however, tends to obscure the full sweep of the coinage of the Roman world; for, at the end of the fourth century, the empire had not yet broken up into large and small provinces; and, indeed, one might say that the location of the mints was still independent of any specifically territorial factor, and owed much to accident. A catalogue on such lines becomes reasonable only in the fifth century, when, under the pressure of the first barbarian invaders of Gaul and Italy, it was seen to be wise to withdraw the mints as far as possible from the threat of plunder by their destructive hordes.

A geographical classification makes it more difficult to realize at first glance the limits of the usurpations of the period. For example, the

usurpation of Procopius which was confined to the eastern provinces provides several notable problems in the exceptional silver issues of Cyzicus and, perhaps, of Heraclea. The usurpations of Magnus Maximus with Flavius Victor and subsequently of Eugenius only concern Gaul and Italy. Similarly, the geographical classification does not clearly show that the issues struck in the name of Aelia Flaccilla, wife of Theodosius I, on the birth of Arcadius, were confined to the mints of Illyricum and the East. Neither does it show up the singular lack of any Theodosian silver issues from the mint of Milan while Aquileia was at full stretch to maintain the circulation. In substance, I believe that the geographical method lends emphasis to the event itself rather than to the chronological relation between one event and another. But having said this, one must grant Pearce the merit of having developed his chosen method with great clearness and efficiency.

Another factor in the arrangement of the book, which has caused me some perplexity, is the system of enumeration used to cite a particular coin. In homage to the author I should have liked to see, from now on, every coin of this period cited by his name and a number (Pearce, no. so-and-so). It might be objected that this is the old system of Cohen and Sabatier tied to an alphabetical list of reverses, and is an empirical and, in many ways, irrational system. The difficulty, however, is in fact largely created by the geographical arrangement, and this is yet another reason for preferring one based on chronology. It is the fact that, to cite a coin of this period according to *RIC.*, IX, it is necessary to indicate (a) the mint, especially when the type is common to several mints, as the types have separate numbers in each, (b) the serial number, (c) a letter in brackets to indicate the emperor. The question is, how is one to cite a coin when, for example, it does not have a clear exergual mark? I must add that the abundant indexes help somewhat to mitigate the difficulties of the search, which is, in itself, worth while because of the excellent opportunity it affords of ransacking every page for the matter in hand. This is a point of no small importance, when one considers the deplorable lack of such an aid in so great a work as the *Corpus Nummorum Italicorum*.

From the scientific point of view, Pearce's work constitutes the basis on which all future students of the coinage of this period must build. It stands to his exclusive and incomparable credit to have created order out of chaos. If only he had adopted a system of continuous enumeration for all the types catalogued, the sheer impressiveness of their numbers would have enabled us to appreciate the immensity of his work—the fruit of continual and extended research on a mass of material which has been examined and compared in style and fabric, then elaborated and coordinated into this complex mosaic to form a numismatic instrument such as no one before him had attempted to shape. The tables which list schematically the mint-marks in the field of the reverses of many bronze coins (e.g. the mint of Siscia, pp. 140 ff.) comprise a synthesis of much laborious research based on personal examination of thousands of pieces.

But this patient labour aims at more than a mere alphabetical list of variants. It provides the basis for an intensive attempt, still to be undertaken, to interpret the meaning of these letters; while, on the other hand, it has the important advantage of facilitating the chronological reconstruction of the issue of a given mint. Indeed, arguing from parallelism and concordance (and occasionally, too, from significant lacunae), the work helps to complete a comprehensive picture of the monetary activity of this period before the final crisis of the Roman world.

The bronze coinage, though the most neglected because least attractive to connoisseurs, lies nearest to the daily life of the masses, and its methodical and rigorous classification is, I think, the greatest of our author's merits. It becomes clear that this coinage is the skeleton of the whole numismatic apparatus. In it the gold and silver series stand out as touches of colour, and the most precious ornaments are the medallions in all metals, which, as we move towards the fifth century, become rarer and farther removed from the coinage in circulation. In view of a work at once so consistent and so convincing, it is a matter of the greatest regret that Pearce is no longer with us to supervise the heavy task which lies before the man who one day must take up the responsibility of following in his earlier footsteps into the field of post-Theodosian numismatics.

After this general survey, let us examine a few particular points. Pearce preferred criticism to undiscerning praise and realized that only criticism could advance knowledge. I should, therefore, be doing him an injustice if I did not discuss certain questions on which we differ. I maintained in *Moneta Mediolanensis* (p. 136) that reverse die identity of coins of the same denomination, struck in the name of two or three *Augusti* reigning at the same time, serves to indicate issues that were successive and not contemporary, for the mints producing them were rigidly subdivided and, as a rule, there was no internal interchange of material. Pearce, on the other hand, always maintained that reverse die identity was synonymous with contemporaneity and, indeed, dilating on this thesis on p. xxv, he produces some solid arguments in its favour. In view of them I feel compelled to revise my point of view partially and to admit that both hypotheses are equally possible. The same reverse dies can sometimes be used contemporaneously for two or more *Augusti*, as Pearce has demonstrated beyond a doubt; or they can be used successively in different cycles of production, as I have concluded from the way that the work of the officinae was departmentalized in every mint, which is an established fact. I should maintain that identity of reverse die is a not uncommon phenomenon of the period and should certainly be stressed, but that it has no decisive value for determining the chronological framework of the coins which exhibit it.

The second point is more important and, unlike the preceding, admits no compromise solution. Pearce attributes to the mint of Sirmium the *solidi* struck in the name of Theodosius I, Arcadius and Honorius from 393 to 395 with reverse VICTORIA AVGG or VICTORIA AVGGG and a

standing figure of the emperor holding a labarum and cross on globe, and trampling on a captive. In the field are the letters S|M and in exergue, COMOB. Sometimes there is a sequence letter at the end of the legend which may run from A (= 1) to I (= 10). On pp. 156 ff. of my book cited above, I held that these emissions could not be attributed to the mint of Sirmium, but belonged rather to Constantinopolis and, to a lesser extent, to Thessalonica and that the letters S|M do not stand for S(ir) M(ium), but for S(acra) M(oneta). I shall not repeat at length here the various arguments which I adduced in support of my theory. Pearce wrote that he had been unable to take note of this argument, as my book arrived only when he had already revised the final proofs of his work, and so had had no opportunity of re-examining the question. In order to force this emission into the series of Sirmium, the author has been compelled to resort to the supposition that, contrary to general usage, this mint experienced a renewal of activity after a gap of ten years. In any case, I remain convinced that the mint was definitely closed in 382, after Flavius Saturninus had succeeded in concluding his disastrous pact with the Goths, by which they became *foederati* and secured lands in Moesia and Thrace with freedom to spread along the left bank of the Danube towards the north-west. Saturninus was rewarded by the Consulship for 383, but Sirmium was, as a result, cut off from the south and was menaced from across the river by other tribes. Such conditions would explain the continued stoppage of all mint activity. I believe that I can adduce from Pearce's book itself another proof of my theory. I have observed that the practice of marking the mint of issue with letters in the field of the reverse is a phenomenon typical of the mints of the *pars Occidentis*, that is, of Gaul and Italy. My observation is confined by the fact that in the second half of the fifth century under Leo I, when Eastern types spread to the West, the initials in the field of the solidi, even in the remaining Western mints, tend to disappear. The significance of this is underlined by the fact that the last example of this Western usage is seen on the solidi of Romulus Augustulus struck at Rome and Arelate, that is, in the more traditionally conservative mints of the West and the farthest from the East. Conversely, it is evident that on the solidi struck in Eastern mints the letters in the field of the reverse (rare at any time) had a general significance unrelated to the mint of issue; for example, LXXII on the Constantinian solidi, 1/72 of the pound—the new relation of the solidus to the unit of weight; O|B = OBRYZON—pure gold, in the time of Valentinian I and Valens. Now S|M stands for *Sacra Moneta*; the rival money issued in the West in those years for the usurper Eugenius, because it was not “sacra” was not legitimate.

The chronological framework, into which the various issues fit as the work unfolds, is most invaluable, and is, scientifically, one of its most fundamental elements. It is convincing and especially well argued where undeniable difficulties have involved the author in complicated problems of interpretation and history. Henceforward we may regard the great

numismatic apparatus of the period as firmly established in its general lines and for the most part well developed in questions of detail.

New finds may provide material to improve or amplify our ideas, but I am sure that it will not be easy to modify the general conclusions which Pearce has reached. He could not have known of a recent and important silver hoard of the second half of the fourth century; but from what I can discover I can affirm that the new and exceptional types that appear in it fit into and complete the numismatic picture, and necessitate no change in the chronology. This is a notable proof of the great value of this work.

I should draw attention to one point of chronology on which Pearce and I disagree: the dating of the solidi of Valentinian I and Valens with reverse legend **VOTA PUBLICA** (see Treveri, p. 17, n. 18). From my study of the mint of Milan I had dated this issue to 365, while Pearce, with his greater knowledge of Treviri, placed it in 368. A new solidus of Valentinian I, struck at Treviri, presents an unexpected combination of legend and types which may clear up this controversy. At the moment I imagine there were two issues: one in 365 (**VOTA PUBLICA** for the accession of Valentinian I and Valens) and one in 367-8 (**VOTA PUBLICA** for the accession of Gratian). However, this question requires further study.

I am in complete agreement with the dating 394-5 for the large gold multiple of Theodosius, struck at Milan (p. 83, n. 34). I believe that this exceptionally fine piece must have been struck immediately after the death of Theodosius I, by Arcadius and Honorius in memory of their father. On the threshold of the fifth century, when the emperor was no longer the supreme authority in the field of religion, the title *Restitutor Reipublicae* had something of the high sounding significance associated with the now anachronistic ceremonies of deification. In this new spiritual climate, while Bishop Ambrose pronounced his great funeral oration, the military, political, and social virtues of the late conqueror of Eugenius and last unifier of the *respublica* were celebrated on a remarkable coin. In my book I had to leave the critical analysis of this piece to a later time, but I am glad that once again Pearce has shown me the way to a better interpretation, through an exact date based on his high authority.

This is a typical example of the assistance that I have had in my special studies from Pearce's work, and I close my review in affectionate thought of a dear friend.

My thanks are due to Mr. R. A. G. Carson for undertaking the task of translating my review and revising the proofs. O. ULRICH-BANSA