

## NOTES FROM THE LIBRARY

### *One Cent Pieces*

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY possesses a noteworthy collection of coins and medals, and this fact was remembered by at least one alumnus last commencement. As a result, the holdings of coins housed in the Library have been increased by a practically complete group of the small cents and by 22 pieces of paper money, the generous gift of the Rev. J. H. S. Putnam, of the Class of 1913.

The coins in this gift admirably supplement the earlier holdings, which contain a great many exceptional pieces. The more important part of these came as the bequest of James B. Laing of Kinderhook, New York, having been received as long ago as 1868. Most of the issues after this date were wanting so far as the cents were concerned—consequently Mr. Putnam's gift fills many gaps.

The information which may be derived from a collection such as this seems almost obvious—so much so that the observations which follow are offered rather apologetically. Some of them will doubtless have been made by those who have examined this group of cents as it lies in the coin-case under the rotunda of the Library.

In 1857 the United States cent was reduced to seventy-two grains, with a consequent shrinkage in diameter—the earlier and larger form is abundantly represented in the cabinet. In addition to the alterations in size and weight there was a change in the design and alloy. The pattern for the flying-eagle type, which first ap-

peared in 1856, as well as the regular issues (with the same type) struck between 1857 and 1859, were composed of 88% of copper and 12% of nickel. It is the presence of the nickel which gives these pieces their lighter color; the greater hardness of the planchets because of the nickel brought many problems and not a few sorrows to the mint officials. The difficulty in securing a sufficient supply of nickel during the latter part of the Civil War resulted in the law of 1864 whereby the weight of the cent was reduced to 48 grains of an alloy consisting of 95% copper and 5% tin and zinc. The design for the flying-eagle cent is excellent—dignified and appropriate; the reverse shows simplicity rather than distinction.

The collection shows that in 1859 the Indian-head type was introduced and that it continued in use until replaced by Lincoln's bust. The Indian head was designed by J. B. Longacre, and although it possessed little more distinction than the cigar-store Indians which most of us can still remember, it continued in use until 1909. In recent years an unfounded idea that these Indian-head cents will some day become scarce has caused certain unthinking people to hoard them. The fact that the yearly coinage ran into the millions should show the fallacy in the belief they can ever command a premium.

The name of the artist to whom we owe Lincoln's beautifully modelled portrait, Victor D. Brenner, is known to most of us because of the agitation which resulted in the re-

removal of his initials from the dies. This was an unnecessary yielding to expediency which we must hope has been outgrown. The type first appeared in 1909 and the variety showing the artist's initials is not rare.

In the collection which the College already possessed, there is an excellent selection of the tokens issued during the Civil War in great numbers and by many agencies. Although these fall outside the scope of Mr. Putnam's collection, they have a bearing as we shall see. These pieces, usually of copper or bronze and smaller than the cents, were put forth to counteract the shortage of the cents which prevailed for several years. Those issued by the merchants usually bore their name and the address at which it was understood they would be redeemed. Others had for their captions 'Army and Navy' or some patriotic slogan. Some, to evade the coinage laws read, 'Not One Cent.' The Government winked at the practice, and there are well over five thousand varieties of these tokens. Some of them have data of value for local history. As we shall see, it was the use of the fractional currency which brought about their discontinuance.

One further observation might be made before passing to the paper money. Some who begin a collection of cents with little more than a desire to round out a series, especially if they rely on coinage in circulation for their supply, discover that the issues for certain years (e.g. 1922) are difficult to obtain. The reason becomes apparent on consulting the mint reports. There it will be found that the Denver Mint is the only one which issued cents in 1922. The choice of this mint was probably dictated

by a demand for cents in the West and a satiety or lack of a definite need for them in the eastern centers. Consequently the 1922 cents are not found in circulation here with the frequency which marks the issues of the Philadelphia Mint for years in which cents were struck by that mint.

As we have seen, Mr. Putnam's gift also included a selection of the Fractional Currency which played so interesting a part in the solution of the currency problems raised during the Civil War. These bills, in denominations of three, five, ten, fifteen, twenty-five, and fifty cents, relieved the shortage of metallic currency very quickly. The tale of the postage currency (of which there are also specimens) and of the fractional currency which replaced it provided an excellent demonstration of economic problems and of their solution. It hardly seems possible that shortage of small change could have played such havoc with trade. I wonder whether our students of political economy know what an excellent example of the theories they study is to be found in this display case in the Library.

SYDNEY P. NOE

#### *The Commons Journals*

FORTY BOUND folio volumes of manuscript, which have been in the possession of the Rutgers Library since 1935, contain a copy of substantial portions of the journals of the House of Commons for the period between 1571 and 1681. A brochure printed by the former owner of the volumes states that they once formed a part of the "Lowndes Manuscripts," and that they were prepared in 1686 at the request of Wil-

liam Lowndes, long in the service of, and finally secretary to, the treasury. There are sizable gaps in the record. The beginnings and the endings of some of the sessions have been omitted, either deliberately or through carelessness. It is possible also that some of the volumes in the original collection have been lost. The books are executed in a variety of hands, but all apparently late seventeenth century and not inconsistent with the date of compilation given in the brochure. The writing is for the most part clear and regular, typical of the professional copyist.

The variations which these volumes show from the printed version are worth mentioning. They are of two types; first, minor variations, and second, additional material not found in the printed version.

1. Minor variations.

Marginal notations of little consequence, which are usually omitted from the printed text are often included in the MS. copy. The spelling, especially of proper nouns, usually follows the older form in the MS. copy, whereas for the printed version it was revised in accordance with late eighteenth century usage. For example, *Eastgreenstead* in the printed version is *Estgrensted* in the MS.; *D'Ewes* is *Dewis*; *Townsend* is *Townesend*; *coin* is *coyne*; *he* is *bee*.

There are occasional variations in words and even phrases, sometimes affecting the meaning. It is possible that in some instances the MS. copy is the more correct, for example where it supplies the name of a committee member lacking in the printed text. Not every case of this nature could be determined except by comparison with the original journal in the clerk's custody, and few of the

differences are significant enough to warrant such pains.

Although the MS. copy was made about one hundred years earlier than the printed version, the latter actually conveys in places a more accurate impression of the original journal. Words that have been marked out of the original may be supplied in a footnote in the printed edition, while they are disregarded in the MS. copy. The MS. often fails even to indicate a blank or obscured passage, marked by asterisks in the later version. Certainly there is no internal evidence to support the claim advanced in the brochure that this MS. was "used to correct the transcripts made for the printing of the journals." A comparison of the two versions impresses one favorably with the editorial standards which were maintained in the preparation of the printed edition.

2. Material in the MS. volumes not found in the printed *Journals*.

The first 37 pages of the third MS. volume consist of independent material. This is a list of bills, without dates and with no indication of the action taken upon them. It thus appears to be in the nature of memoranda in the clerk's keeping, rather than part of the journal itself.

In contrast to the general practice followed in the journals and in contrast to the printed text, the MS. records the prayer which preceded the deliberations of the Commons on 13 April, 1640. This was the opening of the Short Parliament, after the eleven years of Charles I's personal government. The prayer, which occupies more than a page, includes thanks for deliverance "from the Spanish Invasion in the dayes of Blessed Queen Elizabeth, and from

the powder Treason in the time of our late gracious Sovereigne King James."

The most extensive and by far the most interesting group of additional items supplied by the MS. copy is the record of the action of the Commons in the case of *Thomas Skinner v. the East India Company*. Entries dealing with this case are scattered through the two volumes which cover the period from 9 March, 1667/8 to 11 December, 1669. Unfortunately the MS. record is lacking for the following year and thus breaks off in the climax of the controversy. The dispute was terminated without definite settlement in accordance with the king's suggestion of 22 February, 1669/70, by expunging from the journals of both houses all references to the affair. How conscientiously the order was carried out is testified by the silence upon the dispute in the printed *Lords Journals* and *Commons Journals*. The entries in the MS. copy, however, although some of them have been duly crossed out, are still perfectly legible.

The *Skinner case* and its importance are well known. Its chief significance is that it embodied a conflict between the two Houses of Parliament over their respective spheres of jurisdiction. The Commons objected to the bringing of action for damages by the plaintiff, Skinner, in the House of Lords, and to the giving of judgment by the Lords as if they were a court of first instance. In retaliation the Commons entertained a petition by Sir Samuel Barnardiston, deputy governor of the East India Company, against the Lords' action, and in resolutions upheld the right of every commoner to petition them for a redress of grievances. The

actual merits of the dispute were overshadowed by the determination of each house to make a doubtful issue an excuse for enlarging its area of control. In spite of the deletions from the official journals, sufficient contemporary evidence of the case remains, including at least one book, and accounts in the private journals of members of Parliament. The story is told in its essentials in Cobbett's *Parliamentary History*, where some material not found in the MS. volumes is included, for example, the speech of the Duke of Buckingham at a conference of the Houses, presenting the Lords' side of the case. Still, a perusal of the MS. copy impresses one with the amount of time and energy consumed in this ill favored struggle. The more than a score of pages involved account for the surprising brevity of the entries for the corresponding dates in the printed *Commons Journals*.

In summary, the MS. volumes constitute a copy of a small portion of an original which is still extant. They represent, therefore, a literary curiosity rather than an independent source. However, the variations from the printed *Commons Journals* and the additional textual matter, particularly the record of the *Skinner case*, add to their interest.

PHILIP L. RALPH

#### *The Thoreau Newsletter*

THE LIBRARY has recently received by the gift of a friend a file of the *Thoreau Newsletter*, composed, edited, and published in mimeographed sheets by Professor Raymond Adams of the Department of English of the University of North Carolina. Dr. Adams has been studying the life, writings, and habits of

Henry David Thoreau for upwards of twenty years, and for a large part of this time he has been working towards a collected edition of the letters of Thoreau.

In order to prepare himself adequately for this task, he has bought all the books by or pertaining to Thoreau which have come on the market, and he is now said to have gathered together the finest Thoreau library in private hands. Behaving as a true Thoreau lover should, he has not stayed glued to his professorial desk but has explored Concord, Massachusetts, and hunted out the mysteries of Walden Pond and the upper reaches of the Concord and Merrimack rivers. He has searched out relatives of Thoreau in England, and there too, he has gossiped about Thoreau with such a great scholar as Henry S. Salt, the aged author of *The Life and Writings of Henry David Thoreau* (1896). He has also written various articles and notes on Thoreau for American and English journals. In the course of his wanderings Dr. Adams has made many friends who have desired to keep in touch with him and with his studies of Thoreau. To have kept up a correspondence with all of them would have been to neglect Thoreau himself. Since this was out of the question and since every eager student wants his own medium of communication, Dr. Adams began to write to his friends by means of the mimeographed *Thoreau Newsletter*, the circulation of which when the editor last reported it to me was 75 copies.

The *Newsletter* is a kind of Thoreau "Notes and Queries." It overlooks nothing concerning its hero; indeed its motto might well be,

*Thoreauvi nihil a me alienum puto.*

The last number, March 1939, for instance, discusses the shoes Thoreau probably wore while doing his writing. This point had been raised by a correspondent who had seen a picture of Thoreau clad in boots while another pair of shoes was shown under the cot. The correspondent wondered whether the great nature writer would have written in his boots, or again, whether he could possibly have owned two pairs of footwear at one time. Dr. Adams adduces evidence to show that Thoreau did have two pairs of shoes at one time. He also risks the guess that Thoreau would have written in boots if he had happened to have them on when he wanted to write. Again, Dr. Adams considers the probable truth of the legend that Thoreau "is said to have slept in a barrel buried in a snow drift to ascertain the warmth of that kind of comforter." He doubts its truth, but adds several comments from Thoreau which show that he dabbled with such ideas.

The *Newsletter* contains many personal remarks, too, as is becoming in a letter from one friend to another. In December 1937, he tells of the difficulty he has experienced in getting a copy of *The Letters of Theo. Brown*. And two months before, he gave his Thoreau friends some notes on his trip to England in search of Thoreauviana. At the end of one page of the January, 1939, number, Dr. Adams writes: "And now, because there has been no THOREAU NEWSLETTER in a long time, I'll throw in a second page for good measure." He then proceeds to tell about his Christmas presents of new books containing material on Thoreau.

R. K.