

**MEDIEVAL RELICS
FROM A MYSTERIOUS INTERMENT
AT WINCHESTER.**

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THE relics submitted to me by Dr. Williams-Freeman, and referred to in his Report on page 354, were found with the remains of a human skeleton by Mr. G. E. Slim at the end of his garden at "The Briars," Fordington Road, Winchester. The site may be described as the centre of the quadrangle formed by Fordington Road, Stockbridge Road, and Western Road, a little more than half a mile to the north-west from the West Gate of the city.

Mr. Slim describes his discovery as follows :—

" In March, 1918, whilst removing the surface soil for the foundations of a wall, my attention was attracted by a layer of small, but uniform, flints, and just under this flooring, so far as I could judge, I found the medallion. I continued to dig very carefully, examining every handful of soil, and below the medallion and flints I discovered fragments of rib-bones, and beneath these the vertebræ of a human skeleton. I followed the line of the vertebræ towards where the head should be, but the skull, with some of the vertebræ, was missing, or had completely perished; and in the opposite direction, where the legs would lie, I have been unable to excavate the ground.

" All the bones were in a very decayed and brittle condition, but the vertebræ indicated the remains of a large-boned person lying with feet towards the south. The flint flooring only covered the chest and abdomen, and the only other relics found with the remains were two very small fragments of unglazed earthenware. The silver coin was

found a few yards away, but the ground has been much cultivated for many years."

The last remark seems to imply that Mr. Slim believes that the coin was merely separated from the remains in the course of surface disturbance. With this explanation of what would otherwise be a very unlikely coincidence I agree, because in "*Archæologia Cambrensis*," 1915, I described the discovery of similar coins from the wallet of one of the English garrison who had been buried by the fall of the wall when the Welsh stormed Dyserth Castle in 1263, and he also wore a medallion, or talisman, on his breast—a leaden disc bearing the Cross. The coin is a silver penny of the last issue of Henry III, struck at the Canterbury mint by a moneyer named Robert de Cantuaria, who is recorded as having received his warrant to coin in the year 1256 and died in 1257.

Obverse: HENRICUS REX III. Crowned bust of the King, facing, with sceptre in his right hand.

Reverse: ROBERT ON CANT=Robert of Canterbury. A long voided cross with three pellets in each angle.

England had then no other money at all than the silver penny, but the long voided cross on the reverse was to facilitate its being cut with shears into halfpennies and farthings—or four things—whence their names. This penny was coined, therefore, in the year 1256-7; but, as the issue was not called in until 1279, and the piece shows signs of wear and has lost nearly half its legend by clipping, probably it was not buried until towards the latter date. For evidence of this offence of clipping, both Florence of Worcester's continuator and Matthew of Westminster record that in 1278 a house-to-house search was made throughout the cities in England, which resulted in the hanging of two hundred and eighty Jews in London alone, and a great multitude, with many Christians, in the other cities, of which Winchester was one. Possibly in this crude burial we have the remains of one of these malefactors "hanged without the walls of the city"; for in the strict thirteenth century such an interment in unconse-

crated ground almost implies execution, tragedy, excommunication, or plague. The absence of the head, the northern lie of the body, and the appeal to folk-lore superstition, that flints kept down evil spirits, all hint at a felon's grave:

The medallion, or talisman as I believe it to be, is a disc of thin bronze one and a quarter inches in diameter, and well patinated; but, unfortunately, so thin is the metal and so deep the impression that nearly half the legend has been broken off and is missing, although the rest shows no signs of wear. It is impressed by a die, and bears in the centre a geometric flower, or rose, of six oval petals, surrounded by the legend + IESVSVSN [space for eight letters showing traces of s for the last] REX between concentric circles of cable pattern. The central design is familiar to us in the rose windows of our churches, and that, for example, at St. Wulfran's, Grantham, compares very closely with it both in date and detail; but here, I think, it may be symbolic of the rose of Sharon.

In 1270 Prince Edward, after suppressing the protracted Wars of the Barons, joined the seventh and last Crusade, which, under his command, succeeded in recovering Nazareth from the Sultan, and peace followed. Henry III having died in 1272, Edward returned to England for his coronation in 1274. The recapture of Nazareth was intensely popular throughout Christendom, and it is reflected in many ways, not the least of which was the general revival of the title "Jesus of Nazareth." We find it as *Iesus Nazarenus* on rings, brooches, and purses of this period in the British Museum; as *Iesus Nazarius* on the bronze chape of a scabbard in the Guildhall Museum; as *Ihs Nazaren* on the helm of the effigy in Bakewell Church of Sir Thomas de Wendesley, who fell at the Battle of Shrewsbury; and, in full, as *Ihesus Nazarenus Rex Iudeorum* on a fifteenth-century breastplate in the Wallace Collection.

So here, on this little talisman, if we correct the obvious error of the diesinker in repeating the vs of *Iesus*, it is not difficult to fill in, with certainty, the missing eight letters of the legend and evolve—

+ IESVS N[AZARENVS] REX.

A tiny hole through the centre, with the marks of an attachment behind, suggests a mounting, perhaps upon leather, and from Mr. Slim's details of its position when discovered, it seems likely that it was hung round the neck as a charm against peril and pestilence; for at no time were religion and necromancy so curiously intermingled as during the era of the later Crusades.

It is pleasant to add that Mr. Slim is willing to present the relics to the Winchester Museum.