

III.

NOTICE OF OLD SCOTTISH COINS, FOUND NEAR PRESTONPANS IN
MARCH 1869. BY THE REV. JOHN STRUTHERS, F.S.A. SCOT., PRES-
TONPANS.

In the course of ploughing operations in a field on Birseley Brae, to the south-west of Colonel Gardiner's ancient residence of Bankton, near Prestonpans, a pretty extensive deposit of old Scottish coins was recently brought to light. The plough had been driven deeper and nearer to an old fence than usual, and thereby had brought to the surface of the furrow a few of the coins, which, from their corroded condition, were not observed by the ploughman, and by some girls who stumbled against them were taken for iron or brass. One of the pieces, however, seeming brighter and heavier than the others, was thought to be possibly of some value ;

¹ Military Antiquities, p. 67, Plate xiv.

and after having narrowly escaped being cut in two by a blacksmith's chisel, it was entrusted to a carter for private disposal in Edinburgh, where, fortunately, it ultimately reached the Society's Museum, and was found to be an interesting example of Queen Mary's gold mintage, with the date 1555.

Meanwhile, the minister of Prestonpans having heard of what the girls had accidentally stumbled on, visited the locality, and, procuring help, got the ground carefully turned over for several feet, in different directions. He succeeded in picking up above a hundred additional coins. These were chiefly in more or less detached clusters of from three to ten pieces, as if the ploughshare had been driven through the centre of the deposit, and had pushed portions before it without turning them fully up to view. None of these pieces were of gold, a few were of silver, much alloyed, and the most of them of billon. Three-fourths of the whole were of Queen Mary's reign, of various years previous to 1560; and the others, of the reign of James III., James IV., and James V. respectively. Among those that were picked up by the girls, along with the gold coin above referred to, one or two specimens of French billon have been noticed.

So far as an opinion can now be formed, the deposit had originally been made simply in the earth, or in some bag or friable vessel, of which no traces remain. Not even a stone seemed to mark the spot. From the neighbourhood having repeatedly, during the latter half of the sixteenth century, and especially in connection with the advance of Bothwell and Mary's adherents from Seton to Carberry-hill, been the skirmishing ground of hostile troops, a variety of conjectures might be offered as to the probable occasion of the deposit. It might be mentioned, that the site of the ancient house of Upper Olivestob, which was for some time owned and occupied by a son of Lord Seton, is understood to have been in the near vicinity, although all traces of it have long since disappeared; and likewise that the packhorse path from the old harbour of Prestonpans, which has its charter of construction in 1525, and from the ancient chapman's cross at Preston to Lauderdale *via* Ormiston and Soutra hill, passes within a few yards of the spot; as did Sir John Cope, too, in his retreat or flight to Berwick, at a subsequent period. But obviously, from such circumstances, nothing but the most vague conjectures can be formed.

The coins were carefully examined by Mr W. F. Miller, who has kindly sent the annexed note:—

The following is a list of the Scottish coins, so far as can be ascertained. The majority of them are in poor condition: those of James III. much worn; most of the others very much corroded:—

Gold.	Mary, Ryal, ordinary type, the Queen's bust to the right, 1555,	1
Silver.	Mary, half testoon, 1558 (Lindsay's "View of the Coinage of Scotland," No. 483),	1
"	Francis and Mary, "NON SUNT," 1559,	1
		— 2
Billon.	James III., placks, ordinary type (one has, on the reverse, pellets in the angles of the saltire),	14
"	James III., plack (fine billon as in Lindsay's Suppl., No. 24),	1
"	James IV., placks, ordinary type, with numeral,	6
"	" " " without numeral,	7
"	James V., placks (Lindsay, No. 51),	12
"	Mary, Edinburgh placks (about 20 have the St Andrew Cross, on reverse plain, the rest fluted),	53
"	Mary, Edinburgh half plack (a fragment),	1
"	" placks, "SERVIO ET USC," 1557,	5
"	Francis and Mary, "JAM NON SUNT," 1559 (fine billon),	10
		—109
	Total number of coins,	112

A hardhead of James VI., together with three other small copper coins, illegible, have been recently (September 1869) found in pulling down an old house in Prestonpans.

These four coins were forwarded by the Rev. Mr Struthers, along with the Scottish coins described above.