

IV.

NOTE ON SEVEN HIMYARITE SILVER COINS, PRESENTED BY GEORGE HAY, Esq., PORT SURGEON AT ADEN. BY GEORGE SIM, Esq., CURATOR OF COINS.

It is only within the last few years that coins of this class have become known in this country. They belong to a recent find, of about 300 in all, at Saana or San'â, in Arabia, and are described (so far as yet possible) and accompanied by a beautiful autotype plate in the "Numismatic Chronicle," New Series, vol. xviii. p. 273, in a paper by Barclay Vincent Head, Esq., of the British Museum, titled "On Himyarite and other Arabian Imitations of Coins of Athens."

The coins now presented being fully described and illustrated by Mr Head, it is here unnecessary to do more than refer to his instructive paper, from which, and to render the coins more interesting and intelligible, the following may be quoted, viz. :—

"From about B.C. 146, the date of the destruction of Corinth, down to about B.C. 88, when Delos was devastated by Menophanes, one of the admirals of Mithradates, a calamity from which the island never recovered, the issue of these Tetradrachms at Athens must have been on an enormous

scale. Two years afterwards, B.C. 86, Athens herself was besieged and taken by Sulla, and the issue of silver money there, if not altogether prohibited, as Mommsen conjectures, was certainly much restricted. The names of the magistrates hitherto inscribed upon them in full were, as some think, at this time superseded by monograms, and the weight of the coin was slightly reduced. These pieces nevertheless continued to be finished with considerable care, many specimens excelling in beauty of execution those of the flourishing time, B.C. 86.

“These, then, supposing them to have been the latest Athenian issue, were the last coins of Athens which could have found their way into the land of the Sabæans; and when some years later they also failed, the kings of Yemen and Hadhramaut, then at the height of their power and glory, were thrown upon their own resources for current coin, and just as, after the fall of the Athenian supremacy in B.C. 412, the scarcity of genuine Athenian money gave rise to the Eastern imitations of the thick coins of the old style which I have already noticed, so now, when Athens again ceased to coin on a large scale, in B.C. 86, a second series of Arab imitations makes its appearance, though this time the prototype is the flat coinage of the later Athenian issues.”

For the sake of comparison plaster casts from both the early and later tetradrachms of Athens, are presented with the coins, the later coins, as Mr Head has said, being the prototype of these imitations.