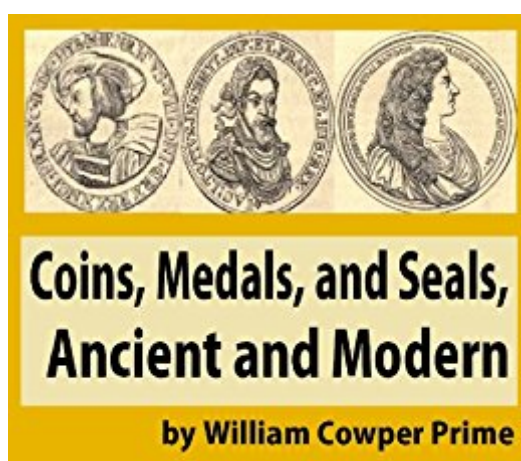


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Coins, Medals, And Seals, Ancient And Modern: Illustrated And Described : With A Sketch Of The History Of Coins And Coinage, Instructions For Young ... And American Coins, Medals And Tokens, &c



Synopsis

PREFACE THIS volume is published without any pretence to novelty, but is intended to give, in a cheap form, information which new collectors could not otherwise obtain except at very great expense. In the mass of illustration which it contains will be found its chief value. When this was placed in my hands to prepare the accompanying historical sketch, I shrank from the work as one which could, however well executed, result in very little credit to myself. The countless works on coins, the mere catalogue of which fills a volume of several hundred pages – the inexhaustible nature of the subject – the obscurity which overhangs even that portion of it that relates to our own country – these and many other considerations operated to induce me to decline the attempt. I have only undertaken it with the idea that I might do something for the benefit and assistance of young collectors in this country, who are in need of such advice as I have endeavored to give them. It has been my desire to encourage in the young a taste for numismatic study, and to discourage the mania for rare and curious, but uninteresting and worthless, pieces of metal which has prevailed extensively in America during the past year. I promised myself that I would prepare a book which every parent may place in the hands of his child, with the assurance that it would not mislead him into collecting coins for the sake of their rarity instead of their historical value. This end I hope this volume may serve. While the illustration is valuable to all collectors, the instructions are specially directed to young students, and not to old scholars. As the young collector advances in his studies, he will be able to appreciate and to use with judgment the learned and elaborate works with which our public libraries abound. That portion of the volume which relates to America and American coins and medals has been prepared with much labor, but is sadly imperfect. I have already hinted at the obscurity which overhangs the history of American coinage. It is remarkable that such facts remain undetermined as whether the Washington coin of 1792 (commonly but erroneously called the cent of 1792) was struck from a die cut in this country, or whether there was any issue of cents from the Mint in 1815, or where or whence the Georgius Triumpho copper first appeared, and many similar questions. It is very easy to give replies to these questions, but difficult to give authorities for the replies. It is also impossible to affirm in this day whether certain coins now very rare will remain so, since every year new specimens of rare coins are found and added to collections. For this reason the price catalogues are of only temporary value. So, too, with the silver of the years preceding 1853. For the present, most of the dates can be readily obtained; but in consequence of the change in weight which took place in 1853, the silver of earlier date than that has almost entirely disappeared from circulation, and is now sold to the melters or returned to the Mint. As this practice continues, the entire early coinage is becoming

scarce; so that within a year from the present time many half dollars, quarters, dimes, and half dimes now common will become of the highest rarity and command the highest prices. Tradesmen's cards, tokens, and medalets of all kinds, have for the same reason no fixed value or steadfast place in any scale of rarity. The mania which during the past year has led to the payment of enormous prices for tradesmen's cards, received a fitting check by the reproduction in immense quantities, from the original dies, of many of the most highly prized. For this reason it is impossible to-day to say that any one card or token will be scarce or specially valuable to-morrow. It is to these and like points that it has been my desire to direct the attention of young collectors. When, by reason of an increase in the number of students, and a more

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