

**ROMAN COINS:
ELEMENTARY
MANUAL**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649695164

Roman Coins: Elementary Manual by Francesco Gnechi & Alfred Watson Hands

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

FRANCESCO GNECCHI & ALFRED WATSON HANDS

**ROMAN COINS:
ELEMENTARY
MANUAL**

ROMAN COINS

ELEMENTARY MANUAL

ROMAN COINS

— *grecchi* —
ELEMENTARY MANUAL

COMPILED BY

CAV. FRANCESCO GNECCHI

VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE ITALIAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY,
HONORARY MEMBER OF THE LONDON, BELGIAN AND SWISS NUMISMATIC SOCIETIES.

—
2nd EDITION

REVISED, CORRECTED AND AMPLIFIED

Translated by the Rev^d Alfred Watson HANDS

MEMBER OF THE LONDON NUMISMATIC SOCIETY



LONDON

SPINK & SON

17 & 18 PICCADILLY W. — 1 & 2 GRACECHURCH ST. E.C.

—
1903

(ALL RIGHTS RESERVED)



ROMAN COINS

ELEMENTARY MANUAL

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

In the month of July 1898 the Rev. A. W. Hands, with whom I had become acquainted through our common interests and studies, wrote to me asking whether it would be agreeable to me and reasonable to translate and publish in English my little manual of the Roman Coinage, and most kindly offering to assist me, if my knowledge of the English language was not sufficient.

Feeling honoured by the request, and happy indeed to give any assistance I could in rendering this science popular in other countries as well as my own, I suggested that it would be probably less trouble if he would undertake the translation himself; and it was with much pleasure and thankfulness that I found this proposal was accepted.

It happened that the first edition of my Manual was then nearly exhausted, and by waiting a short time I should be able to offer to the English reader the translation of the second edition, which was being rapidly prepared with additions and improvements. It was then proposed to print the translation in the *Numismatic Circular*, at the same time that it was being printed in Italian. It now only remains for me to again express my gratitude to my worthy collaborator the Rev^d A. W. Hands, who has offered to assist my work by presenting it to the English reader, and to Mess^{rs} Spink and Son who have undertaken to print it; and to express my hope that this attempt to spread the knowledge of Roman coins may meet with a kind reception.

F. GNECCHI.

PART I.

A. *Introduction.* — B. *General information.*

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

COLLECTIONS AND COLLECTORS

On collectors in general.

1. Considering that this little work is meant for the use of those who are taking their first steps in the field of Numismatics, I have thought that before entering properly into the subject some observations may be useful concerning the history, the aim, and the various kinds of collections, and that perhaps it may be necessary to give some general information to young readers on the value and rarity of coins, on deposits, on false coins, and in fact on various matters which may be considered introductory, not only to this, but to any other elementary Manual of Numismatics.

2. As an encouragement to those who may read my work, I hasten to say most decidedly that the collector is a most fortunate person! He who is born with the bump of collecting has the inestimable advantage of being able to exclude ennui from his life; and ought to be grateful to Providence for having accorded to him an inexhaustible fountain of satisfaction absolutely free from remorse or regret.

The pleasures of society, friendship, or gaiety may be at times desirable if taken in due measure and order, but are often on the contrary full of disappointments, and are sure to fail some day or other. The collector on the other hand possessing in himself the germ and continual source of his own happiness is dependent on no one, solitude has no terror for him, and he can exclaim with the philosopher “*me interdum taedet societatis hominum, nunquam solitudinis*”.

When, tired of work, weary of society, worried by business, the collector withdraws into his own room; he finds there the most pleasant rest in his favourite occupation which he prefers to idleness. Never is the collector short of employment, to whatever kind of collection he may be given.

First there is the work of arrangement which is infinite, then of classification, and again of cataloguing, and last of all the more serious but yet most delightful work, the most useful and durable (when one reaches it) *that of study and of making notes for others*, with a view to publishing in due season the results of one's own researches.

The enthusiasm of the Collector is among the most reasonable, strong and lasting emotions. Sir Henry Holland, the friend of Marco Minghetti, towards the close of his long life regretted that he had not been a collector from his youth, expressing his thoughts in these words: "The interest of a collector grows with continual increase and brings satisfaction, and there is no danger lest it should cease through satiety; very often it survives when the tumultuous vicissitudes of life, stirring business affairs or pleasures have ceased to exist." He who is not a collector in his youth will repent in his old age. Just as the unmarried man feels in his old age the want of a good wife who renders him in the last days of his life the comfort of affection and of old memories, so he who was not a collector in his youth cannot experience in his old age the satisfaction of reviving the memories of a life-time among these old and faithful friends, or of having this infinite and unspeakable comfort to accompany him even to the extreme limit of his life. And in this also the collector has the advantage over the married man whose wife may die before he does, whilst the collection always survives the collector.

3. But to bring these reflections to an end, if my own words should prove to be ("Esser den seme che frutti") "seed bearing the fruit" of a new collector, if they should be as the little spark destined "to promote a great flame"... , stirring and fertilizing, I shall consider my time has been well occupied in having done good to some one, and I shall dare to hope from this that some day the apostle may be blessed by the neophyte.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY AND AIM OF COLLECTIONS

4. The enthusiasm for collections arises in all countries with the advance of general culture.

From the dawn of the historical period — not to go back too far into the past — every civilisation has found another which preceded it, which has furnished to the later the materials for a collection. Hence it happened that the Mediaeval culture arose from the ruins of the Roman Empire and collected from it its inheritance, and we find the first collectors of Roman antiquities, and moreover of coins, among the first learned men of the new civilization. We learn that Petrarch was an enthusiastic collector, and possessed a splendid collection of Roman gold coins. Such a one indeed we should like to regard as the first great master among collectors of coins.

5. Amusement and curiosity were the first causes of collecting, but these were soon united with ambition, and the pleasure of possessing rarities. The luxury of a collection of coins became at length a sort of obligation among the great, and in the small Mediaeval courts; most of which up to the fourteenth century were furnished with cabinets chiefly devoted to Roman coins, among which preference was always given to the Imperial series, as these were both the best known, and therefore most interesting, and also the most easy to classify. Thus we have had in Italy the cabinets of the Este, the Farnese, the Medici, and many others, of which some remain to our day intact, of others the memory only is preserved by the monumental catalogues printed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The enthusiasm for collections of coins passed in the course of time from the courts and principal castles to the lesser gentry, and spread among the common people, until in our own day we do not count collections by hundreds, but by thousands.

6. Our ancestors have fortunately taken care to place in security coins enough to satisfy the desires of all. Every year new treasures come to light, and certainly in the rich bosom of the earth there are still enough to satisfy even the desires of our grandchildren.

7. If indeed the original cause of collections was pleasure or curiosity, ambition or luxury, it was not long before a nobler aim was added to these. Very soon the coins awoke interest in study, and the dilettante collector saw that these small relics of Roman antiquity were evidences from which we might learn the history of that wonderful people who for so many ages held the empire of the world. Let us then examine their coins attentively, classify and catalogue them; then comparing our own specimens with those of other collections or with those already published, if we find we possess new specimens we shall be eager to make them known, and thus to take part in advancing numismatic knowledge. We shall then undertake some special or general work, give lectures, or

write dissertations, or pamphlets. Among collectors there will arise discussions on this or that point not yet cleared up, the ingenious will be incited to examine historical, economic, and artistic problems of past ages, and then our collections will attain their true scope, that of being not an end in themselves, but rather a means by which knowledge may be advanced. The Emperors and Empresses, the Tyrants, the Generals, represented by their coins no longer seeming dead men buried in a silent and useless cemetery, will rise to new life and speech telling us themselves the story of their own times and throwing new light on points unknown or disputed, confirming or correcting what historians have handed down to us in their narratives; in short shewing the evidences of the history of human civilization.

8. No doubt it is not all collectors who will get beyond the first step, that of simply collecting as best they can. Many will there linger and even come to a standstill.

It happens indeed rarely enough that anyone begins to collect with the determined object of serious study; but many pass on to this without having intended to do so.

Circumstances, information, unexpected opportunities, emulation, or true enthusiasm, will sometimes unconsciously lead on the simple collector to rise gradually to scientific study.

Let us then encourage beginners in this natural desire to collect and study coins.

CHAPTER III

ANCIENT AND MODERN COLLECTIONS

9. The first collectors did not lay much stress on the state of preservation of their specimens, to which in the present day very great, and I might say excessive importance, is attached.

All the old collections were rich enough in specimens, but their condition left much to be desired. Every fresh coin found, whatever might be its state of preservation, was included as part of the Collection, hence it happens that coins in mint condition are found only as exceptions, while coins in a second, or third rate state of preservation are the rule. Modern collections on the other hand — I speak of those in the first class — come before us with an entirely different aspect. The specimens are much less numerous, because none but perfect coins, or those at least in very fine condition are admitted. This means that our artistic sense has become so refined that what sufficed to content our ancestors no longer satisfies modern collectors, but I should add that to-day there is available a