

**BRITISH MUSEUM. DEPARTMENT
OF COINS AND MEDALS. A GUIDE
TO THE PRINCIPAL GOLD AND
SILVER COINS OF THE ANCIENTS:
FROM CIRC. B.C. 700 TO A.D. 1**

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Coins of the Ancients: From Circ. B.C. 700 to A.D. 1 by Barclay V. Head

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A GUIDE
TO THE PRINCIPAL GOLD AND SILVER
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FOURTH EDITION.

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PREFACE.

THE want of a general chronological view of the coinage of the ancients has long been felt by all who have devoted any study to this branch of archæology. It is this want which I have here made a first attempt to supply.

In the choice and classification of the coins described in the following pages, I have throughout endeavoured to keep simultaneously in view the historic, artistic, and strictly numismatic interest of the coins selected. Thus, and thus alone, have I found it possible to present to the spectator a tolerably complete representative series of the gold and silver money current throughout the ancient world in approximate chronological order.

This series gives at the same time a view of the finest and most interesting Greek coins in the National Collection. Putting aside all theoretical æsthetic methods of classification according to styles and schools of art, my endeavour has been to arrive at one which is mainly historical. With this object in view I began by erecting as many definitely fixed points of comparison as possible, that is to say, I chose a certain number of dated coins, or coins about the precise dates of which numismatists are generally agreed. Working by analogy, I next proceeded to group around these fixed points all such other coins as seemed to me, on various grounds—numismatic, historical, or artistic—to belong, as nearly as possible, to the same

periods. The divisions into periods do not, it will be seen, exactly correspond with those of the history of art, but are rather those of the political history of the times.

If, then, the result of thus grouping together from a historical standpoint specimens of the chief monetary issues of all parts of the ancient world prove to be also a commentary on the history of the growth, development, and decline of Greek art, it will be none the less valuable for being a thoroughly independent commentary.

As an aid to those who may not be intimately acquainted with the well-known handbooks of Greek art, a few slight indications have been given, at the head of each period, of the chief characteristics of the art of that period, as exemplified by the most notable extant sculptures.

The artistic side is, however, but one of many from which it is possible to approach the science of numismatics, and I hope that it will be found that undue importance has not been attached to any one aspect of interest to the neglect of the others.

In the very compressed form in which alone the dimensions of this little Guide permit of explanations of the coins described, prominence has been given to the time and circumstance of the striking, and to such information as is not generally accessible to the public in the dictionaries of classical archaeology.

The wall-cases 32-42 on the left of the entrance to the Department of Coins and Medals contain electrotypes of the finest ancient coins in the National Collection, arranged in such a manner as to afford a synoptical view at once historical and geographical of the gold and silver coinage of the ancient world, from the invention of the art of coining, about B.C. 700, down to the Christian era.

The cases of Greek coins are divided *vertically* into seven historical compartments. These compartments, numbered I. to VII., contain the principal coins current during the following periods:—

PREFACE

- I.—Circa B.C. 700-480. *Period of Archaic Art, ending with the Persian wars.*
- II.—Circa B.C. 480-400. *Period of Transitional and Early Fine Art, to the end of the Athenian supremacy.*
- III.—Circa B.C. 400-336. *Period of Finest Art. Age of the Spartan and Theban supremacies.*
- IV.—Circa B.C. 336-280. *Period of Later Fine Art. Age of Alexander and the Diadochi.*
- V.—Circa B.C. 280-190. *Period of the Decline of Art. Age of the Epigoni, &c.*
- VI.—Circa B.C. 190-100. *Period of continued Decline of Art. Age of the Attalids.*
- VII.—Circa B.C. 100-1. *Period of late Decline of Art. Age of Mithridates the Great and of Roman dominion.*

Each of the above seven compartments is divided *horizontally* into three geographical sections, the upper one (A) containing the coins of Asia Minor, Phœnicia, Syria, &c., and Egypt; the middle one (B) those of Northern and Central Greece, the Peloponnesus, and the islands of the Ægean; and the lowest (C) those of Italy, Sicily, the southern shores of the Mediterranean, and Western Europe.

Each of the seven historical compartments thus offers in its three geographical sections a complete view of the coins current throughout the civilised world during that particular century or period, the whole forming a series of historically successive tableaux.

The individual specimens are separately labelled and numbered in each of the twenty-one sections, the numbers referring to the following Guide, where sufficient descriptions and explanations are given.

BARCLAY V. HEAD,
Keeper of Coins.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS
OF TERMS.

A, *aurum* (gold); *EL*, *electrum*, an alloy of gold and silver; *A*,
argentum (silver).

Obv. *obverse*, the face of a coin.

Rev. *reverse*, the back.

Type, the principal device upon the obverse or reverse.

Field, the area between the type and the circumference.

Ex. exergue, the lower portion of the area of a coin separated from
the rest by a straight line.

Symbol, an accessory device in the field or exergue.

N.B.—On the plates the metals *A* and *EL* are alone indicated; all
the rest are *A*.

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

SINCE the publication of the second edition of this Guide (1881), I have had occasion, during the preparation of my larger work *Historia Numorum* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1887), to re-examine tray by tray the entire collection of Greek coins in the British Museum. This revision has enabled me to make some material improvements in the text of the Guide. Numerous and important articles have also appeared in various Numismatic publications both at home and abroad, some of which involve re-attributions of whole series of coins. The arrangement adopted in this Guide is fortunately very slightly affected by these new discoveries, as they for the most part merely call for an occasional change of local attribution *within the periods* to which the coins were previously assigned. The most important re-attributions are the following: I. A. 10 from Lesbos(?) to old Smyrna; I. A. 21 from Clazomenae to Cyrene; I. A. 22 from Colophon to Delos; II. A. 21, 22, Ancore to Apollonia ad Rhyndacum; V. B. 28, Allaria to Lacedaemon; VI. C. 30-32, and VII. C. 39, Numidia, Mauretania, to Carthago-Nova(?), the capital of the Barcoide dynasty in Spain. In the few instances in which a change of period as well as of locality is necessitated, the fact has been noted in the revised text; but, as complete sets of electrotypes have already been widely distributed among British and Foreign Museums, I have not thought it advisable to make changes in the arrangement of the Plates, which are consequently identical with those of the previous editions, for any alteration in the numbering of the specimens might lead to much confusion in cases where this Guide has been quoted as a work of reference. On the seven representative Plates of the half-crown edition, references are given to the fully illustrated edition containing seventy Plates.

BARCLAY V. HEAD.

June, 1895.

