

SOME UNDESCRIBED MEXICAN PIECES.

COLLECTORS of Spanish-American pieces, whether coins or medals, recall, no doubt, the interesting paper contributed to the *Journal* by Mr. Benjamin Betts on the Proclamation pieces struck in the Spanish-American possessions from time to time, and in most of the larger cities, to commemorate the accession of a new ruler to the throne of "Spain and the Indies," as the successors of Ferdinand and Isabella began to style themselves, a half-century or so after the discovery of the New World. Mr. Betts brought down the list of descriptions of these Medals to a comparatively recent date, and perhaps there were few if any having reference to America struck later than the period at which he rested. The Fonrobert Catalogue contained quite a number of them, but I believe none relating to America which have not been mentioned by Mr. Benjamin Betts, the late C. Wyllys Betts, in his *American Colonial Medals*, or in the well known Fischer Catalogue, so carefully prepared by Mr. Lyman H. Low, one of the editors of the *Journal*, and a work to which collectors of these pieces have frequent recourse. With this brief reference to former studies in this direction I am pleased to be able to send to the *Journal* notes on five pieces which relate to Mexico. Though none of these are of remote date, they all seemed to have escaped the notice of Betts, Fonrobert, or Fischer; some of them, and it may be all, were purchased in a sale held by Mr. Low about three years ago, when they formed a part of the collection of the late Dr. J. W. Bastow, whose long residence in Guadalajara, Mexico, and

whose familiarity with Mexican numismatics enabled him to gather many rare pieces, for which he had unusual opportunities. It is greatly to be regretted that his untimely death prevented the completion of a work on the Mints, Mint-marks and Money of Mexico, which he had planned, and towards which he had accumulated much valuable material.

The first to be mentioned was struck in Zamora, a market town in the State of Michoacan; on the obverse is a bust of Charles IV in profile to right; he is in uniform, his head bare; he wears a peruke, the ribbon bow appearing behind the collar; across his breast is a broad Order ribbon. Under the truncation CARLOS IIII * On the reverse, in three lines * ANO * 1791 * | ZAMORA | D. N : C. The rims are reeded and the edge plain. This is a cast piece of silver. Size, 35 mm. Charles IV succeeded to the throne in 1789, having been crowned at Madrid on the 23d September of that year: for some reason that does not appear, the cities in his American possessions were slow in issuing the usual Proclamation pieces. One was coined in Valladolid, the capital of Michoacan, in 1791, and described by Herrera.

Ferdinand VII succeeded his father, Charles IV, on the 19th March, 1808, when the latter abdicated; just six weeks later he was himself forced to resign the throne by Napoleon, and did not "come to his own again" until March, 1814; but the following piece, struck in 1809, in Santander — one of many Mexican Proclamation pieces in honor of this monarch, shows that he was still recognized as the King of Spain and the Indies by loyal followers on this side of the ocean. Santander, or more properly Nuevo Santander as it was called to distinguish it from the city of the same name in the mother country, was a prosperous town in the State of Tamaulipas. The obverse has the arms of Spain as borne by the Bourbons — Castile and Leon quarterly, with the pomegranate of Granada separating the base of the lower quarters, and the Bourbon lilies on an escutcheon of pretence. The shield is surmounted by the large crown displayed on Spanish coins, and stands between the familiar pillars which are also crowned and about which are entwined the customary scrolls. Legend, beginning to read at the top instead of the left, as is more commonly the case, FERNANDO * VII * REY * DE * ESPANA Y * DE * LAS * INDIAS * Reverse, Within a wreath of two branches of laurel, slightly open at the top and the stems surmounted by a small lily at the base, the inscription in six lines, PROCLAMADO | EN LA CAPITAL | DEL NUEBO SAN | TANDER EN 8 DE | ABRIL DEL ** | ANO · DE 1809 (Proclaimed in the capital of New Santander April 8, 1809.) Between each set of leaves on the reverse are two berries. The edge has alternate oblongs and circles. The n's on this and the preceding have the "tilde." Silver. Size, 39 mm.

Another of the same King is a premium or reward medal, recognized as of Mexican origin by the engraver's signature. The obverse has a well executed bust in military uniform and in profile to right, the head bare, and an

Order ribbon on his shoulder. On the truncation at the left, the name of the engraver, *F. Gordillo F. Me* Legend, FERNANDO · VII · REY DE ESPAÑA · Y DE LAS INDIAS Reverse, A wreath of palm branches on the left and of olive on the right, tied with a large ribbon-bow at the base, and enclosing the inscription in four lines, EN | PREMIO | DE LA | FIDELIDAD (In reward of fidelity, — or better perhaps in view of the conditions when granted — In recognition of loyalty.) There is a very large loop of unusual form, a part of the planchet, at the top. The edge is plain. Bronze, gilt. Size (elliptical), 41 x 47, or including the loop at the top, 62, nearly. From the metal used, it is thought that this was probably designed to be given to the army.

Another medal of elliptical form, and from its inscription evidently designed, like the preceding, to be given to the troops, was struck in 1852. The period after the evacuation of Mexico by the United States forces in February, 1848, was followed by internal dissensions, and by the attempts of General Santa Anna to make himself dictator once more, as he had done in 1835; his supporters were opposed by the "friends of Liberty," and though the General had been badly defeated in the war with the United States and lost much of his popularity, he succeeded in 1853, in regaining by force a second dictatorship, and for two years ruled with despotic power, but was then again compelled to abdicate, and once more went into exile. These years of revolution have several interesting medals struck by the leaders of the opposite parties, and one of those issued by the State of Zacatecas, or its capital city of the same name, will next be mentioned. The obverse has a military trophy, consisting of a lance, erect on the field, crossed by a sword to left, its hilt above, and by a staff to right on which is a flag so draped that it forms a triangle with the staff for its longer side; on the top of the staff is a Liberty-cap, from which we infer that this was issued by the adversaries of Santa Anna. Legend, EN 21 DE LA SETIEMBRE DE 1852 The writer has not learned to what special conflict this date alludes. Reverse, A wreath of laurel extends its branches half way up the sides; the stems crossed at the base. Inscription in four lines, LAS | ZACATECA- | NAS AL | VALOR (The Zacatecans to valor.) The laurel branches terminate at the ends of the second line. Plain edge. A long loop at the top of the planchet. Silver. Size, 28 mm. in height, by 23 in width.

The description of one more medal struck by the capital city of the same State will complete this article. This also has an elliptical planchet, and the metal was from the famous vein of silver of almost fabulous richness, over which that city was built. On the obverse field is an open book having LEY (Law) on the top of its left page; over this is a Liberty-cap in the midst of rays which are dispersed over the entire upper field: branches of olive or laurel fall beside the edge from the upper part of the planchet, and just within them is the legend LA ASAMBLEA MUNICIPAL DE ZACATECAS (Municipal Assembly,

etc.) Reverse, On the field, the inscription in eight lines, AL C^o | BENEM^{to} | DEL ESTADO | J. G. ORTEGA | VENCEDOR | DE LA | TIRANIA | 1861 This, with the abbreviations, may perhaps be read: "To Commander J. G. Ortega, well deserving honor from the State and the conqueror of tyranny, 1861." This inscription is separated from the field by a line parallel with the border, outside of which is a branch of laurel on either side. A "die-projecting loop" at the top. Edge plain. Silver. Size, 41 mm., height, 32 width.

The great variety of types on Mexican coins and medals, with the fact that they are the earliest examples of the numismatic art in America, should attract the study of the entire series to a far greater extent than seems to have been the case hitherto. While many of them are rude in execution, often roughly cast and to be classed with "Necessity pieces," there are also many of excellent workmanship, tastefully and artistically designed, and full of historic interest. As the silver standard has passed away, giving place to gold, in our sister Republic, it is evident that the destiny of many rare coins, and especially the Proclamation pieces which were so freely issued when Mexico was a Spanish dependency, is not to be the drawer of the collector but the melting pot of the Mexican Mint. Many have already found it. Whatever is to be done to rescue from utter oblivion those which remain must be done speedily, or it will be impossible to preserve even their memory.

F. G. K.