

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

Editor NUMISMATIST:

In reply to the letters of Messrs. Krausz and C. E. Bunnell in the February number, I desire to state that an article was prepared by Joseph Hooper and published in *The Numismatist* on Page 21 for February, 1892, giving twelve specific conditions of coins. A further article appeared in November, 1894. Another article on "Gradation of Coins According to Condition" occurs in *The Numismatist* for May, 1906, on Page 155. The same subject was brought up at the Philadelphia Convention in 1908, and Howland Wood published a report appearing in the Year Book for 1910, which follows:

A SCHEME FOR A UNIFORM STANDARD OF CLASSIFYING THE CONDITION OF COINS.

Since assuming the office of Secretary of this Association many members have asked me to inaugurate some scheme for a uniform standard of classifying the condition of coins. It can be safely said that every member has some standard by which he judges the condition of coins, and it can be safely said that no two of these standards are exactly alike. Now, no two persons can think and see exactly alike in all respects, but if some standard were given the utmost publicity there is no reason why everyone concerned would not think nearer alike. My experience has been that the holder or owner of a coin is inclined to over estimate its condition, and the non-owner of a coin is apt to under estimate its condition. In other words, the condition of the coin varies if you own the coin or some one else owns it. It is human nature. This will be the hardest phase to adjust, but if some descriptive standard was down in black and white, this variance of opinion could be reduced. These remarks apply to collectors as well as to dealers. My experience has been that no two dealers judge condition exactly alike, but I think the dealer holds to his standard more consistently than the collector, who, to bid intelligently has got to learn the standard of each dealer. This learning of many standards I would like to do away with. There is another phase to be taken up. The condition of wear as "fine", "good", "fair", etc., is not enough. Some qualifying word should be employed as well, such as "bright", "scratched", "tarnished", etc. A good many dealers object to calling attention to faults, defects and other imperfections in coins, as the mentioning of these defects in cold type tends to make the coin appear worse than it really is. This is partly true, or rather has become so, for only marked defects are stated, and whenever a coin's bad points are mentioned, the general supposition is that the coin is pretty bad. Another phase also must be borne in mind, the question of expense. Elaborate descriptions are not sought for, but fair descriptions, and a good deal can be said in a few words, if the right words are used. It is these right words in the right place that I want to bring before the meeting. I think it best to put the following suggestions before you for discussion. Possibly it will be best to read the suggestions as a whole and then take up each point by itself, and, if in the opinion of those present the final decision meets with approval, to adopt the same and give it the utmost publicity.

PROOF—Coins struck by a hand press from new and sharp dies that are polished, on flans that are polished. Any defects in striking, or imperfection in the planchet should be noted. If the coin has suffered since striking, the blemish should be mentioned. The word "proof" should be qualified by such word as "brilliant", "dull", "tarnished", "hay-marked", "finger-marked", "scratched", "rubbed", etc.

UNCIRCULATED—Struck for circulation, but not worn in any way. Any defects, such as scratches, nicks, bruises, finger-marks, spots, tarnish, etc. should be mentioned, also poor striking and defects in planchet. Copper coins that have dulled or have changed color but show no signs of wear, may be termed uncirculated, but no corroded coin should be termed uncirculated.

VERY FINE—The condition but little below uncirculated, with imperceptible wear, or showing only under close scrutiny. Lightly tarnished

coins may be placed under this classification, but the fact should be mentioned. Badly tarnished coins should never be called very fine nor should coins marred in any way other than in a slight change of color.

FINE—Showing very slight traces of wear only in the parts in highest relief. Any blemishes should be noted.

VERY GOOD—A worn coin but every part distinct, nothing but very marked defects need be mentioned.

GOOD—Everything distinct but somewhat worn.

FAIR—Much worn but all outlines showing.

POOR—Everything below fair.

Nicks, scratches, corrosion, tarnish, marks, faults in striking and in the planchet, file marks, discoloration, spots, etc., should be stated in the description of every coin above good. These remarks do not necessarily apply to very cheap coins when put in lots, but these coins should not be given a high rating. Holes, partial or complete, solder marks, rings and loops should be stated in all coins above fair.

If coins have been scoured or cleaned or plated (when they should not be) the fact should be mentioned.

The color of the coins, especially copper coins, should be stated if the piece is of any value.

Coins brightened by chemicals should not be called bright, but should be termed "cleaned".

In lots of coins one description for the whole should be avoided, by this is meant such terms as "average very good" or "fine to poor". Rather the classification thus expressed: "Fine (2), good (10), fair (6)," should be the way. Lots of very cheap coins need not be expressed in so many words on account of expense of cataloguing.

Terms, such as "good for piece" should never be used unless the reason why is stated as well.

If obverse and reverse are markedly different in condition, both sides should be described. However, if the coin is a cheap coin, the average of the two sides may be stated.

"Bright" and "brilliant" are terms defining the natural condition of the coins, not an artificial rendering of the surface.

The terms, "evenly struck", "off center", "weak" or "strong impression" should be used in every case where the value of the coin warrants the additional description."

As a member of the Committee on Classification, and as Chairman of the Board of Governors, I suggest that the above classification be adopted by dealers who are members of the American Numismatic Association, and that such additions or alterations as may be found valuable be published from time to time in *The Numismatist*. A nearer approach to a uniformity of classification will come by observing the above descriptions, and such uniformity of description by dealers and a disposition of fairness on the part of buyers should bring about good results.

H. O. GRANBERG.

Oshkosh, Wis., Feb. 4th, 1913.

Editor NUMISMATIST:

The following letters may be of interest to your readers as showing, (a) that none of the old type of nickels will be struck this year; (b), that there is delay in striking the new ones, and (c) that nickels will also be struck at the San Francisco Mint this year.

Treasury Department, Washington, Jan. 10, 1913.

Commodore W. C. Eaton,
Hamilton, N. Y.

Sir:

Replying to your letter of the 3rd inst. I beg to say that the old type of 5ct. piece will not be coined at all in 1913.

The San Francisco Mint as well as the other mints will issue the new 5ct. piece.

Respectfully,

(Signed) Geo. E. Roberts,
Director of the Mint.