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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURES

The Coinage of Mysore, 1761-1843, <i>by I. C. G. Campbell</i> -----	107
The Danish Coinage Reform of 1960, <i>by John DeMarais</i> -----	116
Is It Spain or Netherlands?, <i>by Paul F. L. DeGroot</i> -----	120
Rare is a Four-Letter Word, <i>by Charles A. Robbins</i> -----	122

DEPARTMENTS

Book News -----	127
Book Reviews -----	128
Contents of the NI Reference Collection -----	126
Member Notice Page -----	132
Tokens Around Us: Costa Rica, <i>by Jerry F. Schimmel</i> -----	115

INSIDE N.I.

"Best Article of the Year" Award to be Presented -----	106
Call for Volunteers for NI Staff Positions -----	105
Donations Report -----	103
Librarian's Report -----	103
Membership Chairman's Report -----	103

OTHER ITEMS

Colombia, 25 Centavos, 1979, <i>by John DeMarais</i> -----	125
From a Shared Die, <i>by Larry Devine</i> -----	106
The 1982 Coinage of Yugoslavia, <i>by John DeMarais</i> -----	119
Numismatics of the Deccan, <i>by R. J. Hébert</i> -----	124
Obituary-the Half-Crown -----	121
Philippines, FAO 10-Sentimo Type, <i>by John DeMarais</i> -----	132
Russian Currency Reform of 1947, <i>by John DeMarais</i> -----	127
Spain, Aluminum 1-Peseta Coin, <i>by John DeMarais</i> -----	123

IS IT SPAIN OR NETHERLANDS?

by Paul F.L. deGroot, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, NI#1786

Not too long ago I became the proud owner of a Spanish real, that was struck in the Netherlands. Behind its striking there is a long story!



Plate Coin from Joseph Lepczyk's Int'l Auction #54, Lot #1465 (Sept 29-Oct 1, 1983). Used with Permission. Now in the Author's Collection.

On the 20th October 1496, a wedding took place in the then Flemish city of Lille (now in France) that would be of much greater importance than its participants realized. It would lead the House of Habsburg to dizzying heights and cause much trouble and misery for the Low Countries and Spain.

The groom was Archduke Philip, born in 1478, son of Maximilian of Habsburg who in 1493 became King of the Romans and then Holy Roman Emperor. From his mother Duchess Maria of Burgundy Philip inherited several empty titles and the real Lordship over most of the Netherlands, probably the richest inheritance in Europe. The bride was Juana (Johanna), born in 1479, third child and second daughter of the Catholic Kings, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, the most celebrated monarchs of their age. (A younger sister was Catherina of Aragon, the first wife of Henry VIII of England, and mother of Queen Mary.) The most celebrated children of this union were Charles, born in 1500, and Ferdinand, both of whom would become Holy Roman Emperors.

Though the marriage was a prestigious one it had at first no territorial consequences. But the picture would change. In 1497 Juana's only brother Juan died; his posthumous child died at birth. Then in 1498 her older sister Isabel, the wife of Manuel of Portugal died and her only son, whose birth cost his mother's life died at the age of two. As he was recognized as heir to Portugal as well as Castile and Aragon history would have been very different if he had lived. As it was Juana now became next in line at least for the throne of Castile, and because her father Ferdinand had no children from a later marriage in the long run she inherited Aragon as well.

On November 26th 1504 Queen Isabella died and though Ferdinand did not like it, his daughter Juana became Queen of Castile, and her husband king in rights of his wife. For the moment they were in the Netherlands and Ferdinand became regent for his daughter. But the royal couple made

plans to go to Spain in 1506. It was decided to mint Spanish coins in the Netherlands to pay for their expenses in Spain. Accordingly several coins were made, chief among them the real, struck in 1505 in Antwerp (a hand mmk.) and in Brugge (fleur-de-lis) during 1505 and 1506. It had the same size and weight (3.43 grams) as its Spanish counterpart, but especially in the coat of arms it showed the Burgundian features not present on the purely Castilian coins. It showed the names of Philip and Juana, King and Queen of Castile.

In June 1506 Philip and Juana left for Spain and on June 27th formally took over the reigns of government. Unfortunately Philip contracted pneumonia and on November 25th 1506, he died in Burgos. Juana became insane over her loss, but she lived to a ripe old age, for she died on April 12th 1555. Ferdinand again became regent for his grandson, who became in due time King of Castile and Aragon and as Charles V Holy Roman Emperor.

As to the Netherlands reals, they were unpopular in Spain for their fineness at 0.895 was much lower than that of the Spanish coins, which were 0.935 fine. But the "travel coins" are the only ones that mention Philip (I) as King of Spain (Castile). In addition there is a good chance that these rare coins actually were handled by the people whose names they bear. And that can be said of very few coins indeed. DOES THIS COIN BELONG TO SPAIN OR TO THE NETHERLANDS?

OBITUARY

COINAGE — On December 31, 1969, the half-crown, after a long and useful life in public service.

THE COINAGE FAMILY. The now lamented half-crown was a good friend of the church and he was frequently found in the collections. What will take his place? If this should be the upstart young 10d. piece, who has recently changed his name from Florin, the church will suffer a twenty per-cent loss every time he appears in his elders place in the bag or plate. He should, therefore, be accompanied by his younger brother Bob, now known as 5d., having changed his name from Shilling. Otherwise the church loses much more than it can afford; if the two coins are used together the church gains a little and overcomes the difficulty caused by half-crown's disappearance.

But the Coinage family now has a new father - the 50d. piece, who used to be known affectionately as Ten-Bob. He is a bit awkward as he is not very popular and tried to pretend he is really a Florin, but his outline gives him away.

Nevertheless, he is very welcome in the collection, and with some people might be the right replacement for the half-crown. Not so very long ago, half-crown was doing Ten-Bob's work so now Ten-Bob should take his place as often as possible, for the work has still to be done.

— from Potters Bar Church Magazine

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