

James I anti-Jesuit Gunpowder Plot medal

Sold



REF: 7269

Diameter: 29 cm (11.4")

Description

Very attractively designed James I silver anti-Jesuit medal to commemorate the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot in London. 1605. Obverse: A snake gliding among lilies and roses. Legend: DETECTVS . QVI . LATVIT . S . C. (He who concealed himself is detected. By order of the Senate.) m.m. Cinquefoil. Reverse: The name of Jehovah, in Hebrew, radiate within a crown of thorns. Legend: chronogrammatic, NON DORMITASTI ANTISTES IACOBI.. (Thou, the keeper of James, hast not slept. MDCIIII. = 1605.) m.m. Cinquefoil. See *Medallic Illustrations*, vol.I, p.196/19.

The Gunpowder Plot was initiated by a group of British Catholic gentlemen who feared that the newly enthroned King James I would increase the severity of the prevalent anti-Catholic laws. Their plan was to blow up the King and the House of Lords on November 5, 1605, using gunpowder which they had stored in a cellar beneath the House of Lords. However, the plot was foiled because doubts began to creep into the minds of some of the plotters who were concerned about whether fellow Catholics would be hurt in the explosion. An anonymous letter was sent to Lord Monteagle (an apparently reformed Catholic) asking him not to attend the Opening of Parliament on November 5 so that he would not come to any harm. It is thought that the letter was written by Francis Tresham, Lord Monteagles brother-in-law. The letter was shown to Robert Cecil, the Earl of Salisbury and Secretary of State, the cellars were searched very belatedly and the gunpowder was discovered. It is possible that this letter was a ruse by which the plot would be discovered but the conspirators would have time to escape. However, they were all caught and executed with the exception of Francis Tresham who died while still a prisoner in the Tower of London. There is much more to this plot than meets the eye and theories range from the Earl of Salisbury having actually instigated the plot in order to make the King aware of the seriousness of the Catholic threat, to Guy Fawkes being an agent provocateur with Francis Tresham and other plotters acting as double agents. The most likely theory is that the Earl of Salisburys agents infiltrated an existing conspiracy. There is no doubt, however, that this plot and its discovery made a very convenient tool for the government with which to strengthen anti-Catholic feeling throughout the country. This medal was struck in Holland by order of the Senate to commemorate the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot and also the expulsion of the Jesuits from Holland whose covert intrigues in France and England are likened to the snake among the lilies and roses. The legend on the reverse side of the medal is taken from the 121st Psalm, He that keepeth thee will not sleep.