

SUMMARY: This memorandum of Oxford's appears, from its discussion of the revival of the 'suit of bars' of the Pewterers, to date from sometime after 1595, and to have been intended for the Queen's perusal, although not directly addressed to her. Oxford says that a million pounds of tin are exported annually, and that the imposition of a halfpenny a pound for casting the tin into bars will thus yield £10,000 a year. Whoever obtains this suit on behalf of the Pewterers will be able to extract a substantial cash benefit from the Company, and in fact Oxford says that he has seen agreements whereby Sir John Fortescue, Lord Buckhurst's son, one Carmarden, and Sir George Gifford and others were to be given yearly payments by the Pewterers for obtaining the suit. Moreover, those urging the granting of the Pewterers' suit are also urging the Queen to impose another halfpenny in customs tax, which she will then grant in farm to some nobleman who will give her only a few hundred pounds a year for it, whereas it will be worth £10,000 a year to him. As Oxford points out, all this is not only detrimental to the Queen's financial interests, but is also prejudicial to the tin merchants, who will lose time while their blocks of tin are being cast into bars by the Pewterers, and will be unwilling to provide the large cash reserves needed to buy up the tin when so much of their potential profit has already been skimmed off by others. Moreover, although one pretext for the suit is that 500 poor people will be set to work, Oxford points out that those employed by the Pewterers in the casting of the tin into bars will receive only day-wages, while the Warden and a few Masters of the Company, likely only five or six persons, will receive enormous sums.

The effect of the Pewterers' suit, with what loss & hindrance to her Majesty concerning her commodity which she may make of her tin mines.

The Suit

That her Majesty would bestow upon some person, to the benefit of 500 poor people which shall be thereby set a-work, a halfpenny upon every pound, which halfpenny is not raised of the subject but the stranger, and therefore her Majesty may the rather give it.

Another reason, that all the strangers of foreign parts have raised their commodities to us, & therefore good reason that her Majesty should raise her commodities also, and especially of this, which being one of the richest in her realm, yet hath none other price than it had forty years ago.

How these reasons make for her Majesty, and in not-advisedly granting the suit, how prejudicial.

It is well known that her Majesty's custom groweth by the commodities which are carried out of her land, and such as are brought in. Of the commodities which goeth out, there is not a more richer than this of tin, if it shall please her Majesty to look with good

consideration and advice of faithful counsel therein. Which thing hath been amply and in sundry particularities set down to her Majesty, yet as it seems not so considered of and examined as were fit in a matter of such importance, for that those were the arbiters & judges that sought to themselves the commodity, and had authority so to confound it with counterfeit objections that her Majesty should not understand it, or so to suppress it that at their opportunity and best advantage, when her Majesty least thinks thereon or looks into it or hath forgotten the very substance thereof, they may carry it away which, at this time in this suit of bars they have done, for having suppress [sic] it till they thought her Majesty had forgotten it and that there was none ready to put her in mind, now they have revived the same and urged it to her with all haste that may be. But now I will show how unfit it is that her Majesty should yield unto this matter.

First, that her Majesty should raise a halfpenny on the pound, the reasons are set down before (& very good), so that it be known what this halfpenny amounteth, what it induceth, & wherein it may prejudice.

If the memories be looked into what quantity of tin is yearly transported out of this land, at the least there appear ten hundred thousand blocks. A block by ancient custom oft to be 250 lb. weight (wherein also is to be remembered that the pound there is 20 oz. to the pound), but now by use there are few blocks cast under 300 and 400 lb. weight commonly, and so mounting to 500, 600, and 700 lb. weight. These blocks, being transported by the merchant, when he hath bought his blocks, howsoever the wind serves or his provision of shipping requireth haste, yet must he stay the casting of these blocks into bars, for which also he must pay a halfpenny in the pound.

Now then, it is to be considered what her Majesty hath given (this suit cannot be less worth than ten thousand pound, by that time I have disclosed every particular), and to consider what it induceth.

This halfpenny thus raised to the benefit (as it appears, to the benefit) of the Company of Pewterers, sith her Majesty hath had so good a consideration of her poor subjects, it is reason also that she benefits herself, and therefore if she will (as she may without any reason to the contrary) raise the other halfpenny, then some one nobleman or other whom it shall please her Majesty to bestow it on may yield her some £300, £500, or perhaps a £1000 a year for the same, to have it in farm, which is very much for so small a matter, and it is better for her Majesty to have something than nothing.

This being thus obtained, if the other halfpenny among the Pewterers be worth ten thousand pound, then this halfpenny is as much more.

Now how he gains, and what, to whom her Majesty granteth the suit.

First, upon the first halfpenny.

The first halfpenny is but an inducement, in respect of the getter, to the second halfpenny, yet of this first halfpenny yields him no small profit, for the suit being gotten, he that hath it calls for the Masters and Wardens of the Company and tells them such a suit he hath gotten for their benefit, but yet he doth look also for some commodity to himself. Therefore it is agreed that five of them, or six, of the most substantial whom he pleaseth to nominate shall have this commodity unto them, paying to him quarterly £500 or a £1000 during the time of the grant, yea, besides, shares also they were bound to pay, as to Sir John Fortescue, my Lord of Buckhurst's son, Carmarden, Mr George Gifford, and many more, yearly payments of £100, £50, some £300 during the grant, by which appeareth the commodity, and if they can give thus much out, it is to be thought they have as much or more for themselves. And it is here again to be remembered how they buy tin 20 oz. to the pound and sell after 16 oz. the pound, whereby they raise their gain the easilier, as hereafter in more convenience shall be showed.

Now this commodity drawn from the first halfpenny whereof her Majesty knows not that he hath anything (or, at the least, made believe but some small consideration), then he seeks to bring the other halfpenny on, & carefully puts her Majesty in mind to consider herself and to raise it to another halfpenny, which is but a penny in the pound (which is nothing, sith tin is sold now as it was forty years ago etc.), and for this he will give her some such sum as hath been said before, which obtained, he hath then this halfpenny whole to himself, paying her Majesty a very small matter, and so good a share in the other as may be a good revenue for any baron in England.

To conclude, therefore, I am now come to show what prejudice this is to her Majesty. First, she gives away, under colour of this lesser part, the most part of the commodity which she should make of her muneral matter of tin (which is called the great suit), for these two halfpennies import not less, I am sure, than ten thousand pound a year, which being given away, how will those merchants, or whosoever should farm the commodity, be ready to undertake it when her Majesty beforehand hath clipped ten thousand pound thereof, yea, I believe twenty? They that take it must, at the least, lay out in stock 20 or 30 thousand pound, which they will never do when they shall pay out the custom of the penny. To them that shall farm it, also, it is a great hindrance to their traffic to be driven to stay casting it into bars. By this, in the end, may be seen, under the pretence of the little suit, they have gotten (if her Majesty suffer it to pass) the great, which service to bring only to her Majesty was it I desired to do her.

It is no marvel that they have put her Majesty out of conceit with the great, when under the pretence of this small they can carry it so cunningly that they will juggle it so clean out of her Majesty's fingers as she shall never have any sense or feeling thereof.

And further, which is to be advertised, how much is her Majesty abused in this, that she is made believe she relieves 500 poor people of her subjects, whereas indeed she benefits 5 or 6 of the richest sort and nothing at all the poor. And this is the reason: the workmen, they work under these Masters of the Company and have their day's hire, or week's or month's, accordingly. It is the Master that buys the tin, and after it is wrought into bars &

ligots that makes his advantage thereof; the servant or his labourer hath no more than he had before, his day-wages and allowance.

So, too, a Warden of the Pewterers and a few Masters of the Company (whose faces her Majesty never saw, who never did her or the commonwealth service or are able) shall have the fortune to be infinitely benefited and enriched by her, & I, that only desire to make it known unto her what a ruin and manifest loss unto the great matter of tin it is, how she gives away to others that shall never thank her for it sith they have gotten it by their own cunning and industry, not by her intention or liberality, shall neither have thanks or acceptance. For if she knew it were the great matter (from which herself hath been discouraged by a calling it an innovation and taxation to the subject), and that none would undertake to deal in it, it was so dangerous, now that she should sensibly perceive how themselves have gotten it from her, and make 20 thousand pound a year thereof, and no exclamation or any that grieve or complain, I am sure she will repent and dislike. But thus it is, and so must be, if she let her gift proceed.

Time will not give leave to set down every particularity, wherefore I will refer it to other remembrances if her Majesty shall dispose to hear them.

Endorsed: Remembrances concerning the casting blocks of tin into bars or ligots.