

SUMMARY: This undated memorandum appears to date from the same day in April 1598 as EL 2344, which contains this comment by Oxford:

That which I sent this morning did err in the halfpenny, for there I did set down for every halfpenny, five thousand, where I should have set down but two thousand five hundred, so that both halfpennies come but to five thousand pound.

The memorandum below contains just such an error in two places, and a correction to '2500' written beneath in each case. In the memorandum, Oxford sets out very clearly the three branches of the suit to the Queen and explains why she should reject all three branches of the suit, purchase the tin by pre-emption herself, and impose an additional five groats [=20d] custom on every 100 lbs. of tin and an additional penny on every pound of tin. The recipient of the letter was likely Sir Edmund Anderson, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas (see EL 2337).

A brief note concerning her Majesty's commodity of tin

There is transported out of the realm, one year with another, twelve hundred thousand pound weight of tin.

The merchant that buys at the beam is allowed twenty ounces to the pound. He sells after sixteen ounces to the pound. He pays custom five groats upon every hundred. So that in every pound he gains four ounces, which gain dischargeth his custom. The rest he hath liberty to make his own profit.

To make this her own commodity, as her Majesty may, it would be a great increase, and not less than ten thousand pound a year to her coffers which, being neglected, is gotten from her by mean persons which greatly enrich themselves.

But forso much as this great matter is condemned to obscurity sith there hath been too much revealed already, there is a device to draw the same, under titles and mean shows, into the hands of other private persons which, seeing the gain these merchants make, mean either to share with them or to translate it from them to themselves, both, notwithstanding, concurring in this, to discourage her Majesty from looking into it & (rather than her Majesty should, by knowing the true profit thereof and the right way to raise it) share it among them. To bring which to pass, it hath been cunningly plotted to distinguish the whole suit into three branches, making every branch seem another suit and of another nature, although tending to one purpose, to distribute among themselves the commodity which of right is due and fittest to her Majesty. These branches, then, are only to be set afoot masked and visored, so that they in no wise seem children of the first whereof I have spoken.

The first branch is, and thought fittest to begin withal, is this suit now moved in the behalf of the Pewterers, which is this, that it will please her Majesty, to the benefit of that Company, to restrain that no tin should be carried away out of the land but that it should first by the Pewterers be cast into bars and lingots and, for that, to be allowed a halfpenny in every pound.

Now then, this suit, made so little, is to be considered if it be so or no. Twelve hundred thousand pound weight carried out of the land pays twelve hundred thousand halfpennies to the Pewterers. This comes to five thousand pound a year. [NOTE: '2500' written beneath the underlined words]

Then is induced the second branch that, sith her Majesty hath been so beneficial to her subjects for their relief, she hath reason also to remember herself, & therefore, if it shall please her to take the other halfpenny, and impose a penny on the pound, which is not gathered from her subjects but from strangers & foreigners, a small thing, then he that moves it (or for himself, or friend) will give her Majesty for the same some three or four hundred pound, which is something to her coffers. She hath nothing of the other halfpenny. This small suit is in equal proportion with the former, and importeth also other five thousand pound, by the same reckoning. [NOTE: '2500' written beneath the underlined words]

This induceth another of the consort to his part and branch, and that must be thus, that whereas her Majesty hath raised her customs upon every other commodity through the realm except this of tin and lead, sith it is one of the greatest commodities that she hath, and that tin bears but the same price now which it did forty years ago, she may with great reason, whereas she is paid but five groats custom for every hundred pound weight of tin, raise it to ten groats, and he will be, if it please her, her farmer for it, giving her as it shall please him to offer (more for his own commodity than her Majesty's), as they before in the other two branches, fellows to this. And this is two thousand and one hundred pound.

The reasons why her Majesty should pass these three branches, I confess, are to be allowed, but yet not in that manner, for by this her Majesty is brought to give that she knows not, to enrich others and defraud herself. Now, therefore, I do affirm it that this suit, thus branched (being every one allowable by themselves) to the commodity of private persons, retired to the first suit again which hath been laid asleep, it were much more reasonable for her Majesty to wake it herself and to take the whole commodity of tin into her own hands having now, by these small suits, discovered how to raise the great, for it is no more but, as they divided the great into parts to shadow the profit, so for her to gather the parts into the whole and, by their means, to raise it to the full and entire commodity of herself.

So if her Majesty imposeth the ten groats upon the hundred pound weight, the penny on every pound, she sees how then he had reason that proffered ten thousand pound a year. And if these, her subjects, may so reasonably do it, why should it be made so difficult and obscure for her Majesty? And this which they disjointed into parts is no more than the whole commodity of the tin which, by these blinders, they would rob it

from her Majesty, for her assigns (whosoever she shall please to appoint) must have authority to impose the ten groats on every hundred, and the penny on every pound weight of tin that shall be transported. So th' effect is all one, but not the manner & purpose, for their intent is to profit themselves, and this which I do is to advance it to her Majesty, without any respect (but if any, by reward, not deceit). And therefore in duty I do inform her Majesty, that she may see how she doth utterly maim the great matter to herself (if ever she shall hereafter have intention to make it her own commodity) by giving passage unto these inferior suits.

Endorsed: A brief information concerning the matter of tin