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State Papers relating to the Cloth Trade, 1622.

by F. H. Clutterbuck
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APPENDIX B.

STATE PAPERS RELATING TO THE CLOTH TRADE, 1622.

Communicated by the Rev. R. H. CLUTTERBUCK.

THE original documents printed in this Appendix have been selected with the intention of illustrating the depression which overtook the cloth trade in 1622. An incident not only of local interest, but of considerable importance, on account of the legislation and restrictions it gave rise to.

In the State Papers the causes which led up to this "decay in trade" are fully discussed, and the effect of the consequent enactments are very apparent. The "Papers" nearly tell their own tale, but a few words are added to shew their connection with each other. And the contents of the more important documents bearing on this particular subject, which could not be printed here, are given in as few words as possible.—R.H.C.

1621. Mr. Edward Misselden having been commissioned to draw up a report on the reasons for the decay in trade, presented it 17th April. An Act was prepared to carry out his suggestions. In June of the same year petitions were presented by the Merchant Adventurers from Pembroke-shire, Bristol, and other places, drawing attention to the condition of the trade.

Oct. 24th. An Order in Council was made appointing a Committee to take into consideration the reports delivered by merchants as to the cause of decay in the trade.

1622. Feb. 9. The Council issued the following to the Justices of the Peace in the "Clothing counties,"¹

After or hartie Comendaõns wee have taken notice by Irs written vnto this Boord of the decay of Cloathing trade the great distresse thereby fallen vpon the weavers, Spinners, and fullers in diuerse Countiees for want of worke & consequentlie of that means of reliefe for themselves and families, wch formerly they have earned by their labor, and although complaints of this kind are considered to proceede in pt out of a clamorous disposition of some idle psons (in the repressing of whom wee require and expect your best care and vigilance), and that so great a business as the misterie of Cloathing having relation to so many psons, Trades, & circumstances, can not be expected to proceede at all times after one and the same manner, wth like benefit, to each ptie interested therein, yet bycause it hath bin represented vnto vs, as a matter whereopen the livelyhood of many poor workmen and their families dependeth especiallie wee have therefore made this addresse vnto you to let you knowe, That as vpon calling of the marchants heere before us, and due examinaõn of the State of their Trade at this present wee have taken order on the behalfe of the clothiers for the

¹ S. P. Domestic Series, James I., vol. 127, 76, 1622.

taking off (as farre as may bee) of such Cloathes as now lieth upon the Clothiers, and will as occasion shall give us leave make further way for vent of cloth in forraigne pts and at home. So wee do hereby require you to call before you such Clothiers as you shall think fitting and to deale effectually wth them for the employment of such weavers, Spinners, and other psons as are now out of work, where wee may not omitt to lett you knowe that as we have employed our best indeavors in favour of the Clothiers both for the vent of their cloath, and for moderation in the price of wooll (of wch wee hope they shall speedilie find the effects). So may wee not indure that the Clothiers in that or any other countie should at their pleasure and without giving knowledge thereof vnto this Boord dismisse their work folks who being many in number and most of them of the poore sort, are in such cases likely by their clamours to disturb the quiet and Government of those pts whercin they liue. And if there shalbe found greater numbers of poor people then the Clothiers can receive and employe, wee thinke it fitt and accordingly require you to take order for putting the Statute in operation, whereby there is provision made in that behalf, by raising of publike Stocks, for the employment of such in that Trade as want worke, wherein if any clothier shall after sufficient warning refuse or neglect to appear before you or otherwise shall obstinatelic deny to yielde to such overtures in this case as shalbe reasonable & iust, you shall take good bonds of them so refusing to appear before vs and imediatlic certifie their names vnto this Boorde and for the better settlement of this business and the further encouragement of the Clothiers we lett you knowe, that wee will by no means indure that the woll-growers shall ingrosse their woolls, and keep them in their hands, two, three or more years together to increase the price thereof, or expect such high rates at all tymes for their wooll, as are sometimes given vpon occasion of death of Sheepe or other accident raising the price, but that they moderate their demands according to the changes of the markt, and as other psons may thrive upon the prizes, who must ether buy of them or want work and consequentlic mcate This being the rule, by wch both the wool-growers, the clothiers, and marchant, must be governed That whosoever had a part of the gayne in profittable times since his maties happy rayne must now in the decay of Trade (till that may bee remedied) beare a part of the publike losses, as may best conduce to the good of the publike and the maintenance of the generall Trade. And so we bid you hartilie farewell ffrom White hall, the 9th of February, 1621.

Yor loving friends,

Signed by the

Lo: Treasurer	Lo: Carew
Lo: President	Lo: Digbie
Lo: Privy Seale	Mr. Treasurer
Lo: Steward	Mr. Secret. Calvert
E. Marshall	Mr. Chancellr Excheqr
Lo: Chamberl.	Mr of the Rolls
E. of Kellie	
Lo: Visc. Falkland	

In the margin :

Wilts.
Gloucest.
Somst.
Worcst.
Norfk.
Dorstsh.
Oxfords.
Kent.
Suffk.
Berksh.
Yorksh.

Endorsed :

9 Feb., 1621

Minutes touching the
Cloathing to be entered.

The replies to this letter of the Council are numerous That from Gloucestershire is contained in the following.¹

Right honble our very good Lords,

The complants of many poore people heretofore sett to worke by Clothiers in the counties of Oxford and Gloucester moued vs to call before vs and the Justices of the Peace for those counties the Clothiers which before times had employed those Poore, and earnestly moued and pswaded them (for the stay of the present mutinous assemblies) to continue those poore in worke for A monthes space But we could not obtayne of them to continue them in worke longer then a fortnight Wee then vrged them to shewe vs their reasons why they refused soe to doe. They gave us diuerse reasons wch they expressed in writing subscribed wth their names then deliuered to the Justices of the Peace : wch are sent to your Lopps by these bearers. We obserue the Clothiers are generally grieved as well as the poore workemen and that they cannot continue their trade wthout vente of Clothes and returne of their stocks Craueing pdon for or bouldness wee humbly leave this greate and weighty cause to your grave and Judicious consideraçon.

Gloucester this

13th March.

Your Lopps to Command,

Humphrey Wyrche,
Will Jones.

To the right honble
our very good Lords
and others of his maties
most humble priuie
Councill.²

Endorsed

March 13th, 1621.

A tre from the Justices of Assize
for the Counties of Gloucester and
Oxon

Concerning the decay of Cloathing
there.

¹ State Papers, Domestic, James I., vol. 128. 49. 1622.

² State Papers, Domestic, 1622, James I., Vol. 128., 49, 1.

The allegations and advertisements of ye Clothiers within ye countie of Gloucester & citie to ye Right Hon^{ble} Sr Humfry winch & Sr William Jones Knightes his Maties Justices of Assize & others his Maties Justices of ye peace concerning & touching their trade & mysteric of Cloth makinge within that County ye xijth daie of March in ye yere of ye Raigne of or Sovereaigne Lord James King of England ye xixth 1621.

- 1 Imprimis ye Clothiers in excuse of holding on their Trades doe alleadge that they have wasted their stocks and estate in Clothmaking since ye deadnes thereof being more then a yere past, and thereby some have given over allreadye in all, & some others in parte: & that one William Benett a very auicient & good Clothier doth offer to live by browne bread & water rather then his great number of poore people should want work, yf he had meanes to keep them in worke, & that some of his clothes were bought to his great losse by a Merchant Adventurer in ye presence of ye LL^{ds} of his Mats most Hon^{ble} privie Counsell & turned vpon him againe.
- 2 Item. ye Clothiers doe also in excuse of themselves alleadge that their Stocks & credits are out in Cloth Iying upon their hands vnsold & that albeit they have bought their woolles at very moderate prices being such as doe very much impoverish the grower, yet they cannot sell ye cloth made thereof but to their intollerable losses, and are inforc'd to pawne their clothes to keep their people in work, w^{ch} they are not able longer to endure.
- 3 Item. ye clothiers doe alleadge that there are at ye least (1500) Loomes within ye County of Gloucester, & in ye County of ye Citie & that xx^s in money and sixteene working persons & upwards doe but weeklie mainteyne one Looome, w^{ch} doe require 1500^{ll} in money by ye weeke to mainteyne in that Trade (2400) working people, besides all others that are releved thereby & so ye wages of a labouring person is little aboute xijd. ye week being much too litle.
4. Item ye Clothiers doe alleadge that ye Merchants Adventurers are not sufficient to take off ye bulk of cloth made within ye Kingdome because many of them have left off trading, & therefore doe humble praie that more buyers may be admitted thereunto w^{ch} will enlarge ye trade, improve ye Comoditie, advance manufactures, increase ye number of Merchants, Navigaçons, & his Maties customes, prevent privat combinatons & practizes & tend to the wealth & honor of their King & his Subjects.
- 5 Item: ye Merchant Adventurers doe prohibit the stranger to carry white cloth paying double custome who was never forbidden untill about 5 yeares past being a great hindrance to the sale of Cloth.
- 6 Item: no other Merchants are admitted into ye Merchants Adventurers companie upon such reasonable fines as other Companies are in London whereby is a great Stand of Cloth.
- 7 Item: vnreasonable impositions are lay^d here vpon cloth by Merchants Adventurers, for the maintenance of their officers & for repayment of great somes of money payed by them to procure newe priviledges &

restraints, as by their owne Charter and confessions will appeare whereby manie of their owne companie are discouraged from trading therein.

- 8 Item. ye Merchants Adventurers doe order y^t no English man living beyond Sea shall buy any cloth there of them : whereby such buyers are now enforced to buy cloth and sell it there againe w^{ch} causeth a stand there of our cloth,
- 9 Item. ye Merchants adventurers doe not appoint their shipping of cloth above two tymes in ye yeare contrary to their ancient course which makes a stand of cloth and doth damnifie much ye Clothier & wool grower & ye Merchant doth make above two retournes in the yeare.
- 10 Item. ye Merchant Adventurers doe restraine those of their owne companie not to exceed ye buying of a limited number of clothes whereby much more cloth is vnought & vnshipt then otherwise would be.
- 11 Item. ye Merchants Adventurers doe alleadge in excuse of their not buying of Cloth that there is store of Cloth made beyond sea & that our fullers-carth and wooll also is sent thither broken vnder colour of fell wool (without which their cloth cannot be well made there) and that ye impositions vpon cloaths here is great as namely xx^s upon a cloth of viii^{li} pric^d and thereby the cloth made beyond Sea coming to the same markt with ours, is made & sold much better & cheaper then our Cloth and that our Cloth must yet come to a Lower rate, & therefore in policie doe not nor will not buy cloth but at such prices as best please themselves, of purpose to beat them out of their manufactures beyond Sea, which in meane while tendeth to ye subversion of ye wool growers, Clothiers, and their dependent people In witness whereof ye said clothiers have subscribed their names ye daie and year above written.

Thomas Puric	Edward Adams	Tobic Chapman
James Wood	Charles wright	Richard King
Thomas Tayler	William veyzey	Gyles Mason
William Warner	Thomas Cooke	Phillip wathen
William Witeombe	Thomas Norton	Jasper Cole
Nathaniell fowler	Michaell Holiday	William King
William Duckett	Henry Gardner	Arthur Tanner
John Jesson	John Churches	Richard wood
Edward Knight	Gyles Bennett	Gyles Mason
William Selwyne	Ansell Baylie	Thomas Guy
Thomas Goodale	Richard Webb	Jasper wyer
	George wood	

The papers that come next in order of date, are chiefly returns of the quantity of cloth and the clothiers to whom it belonged, drawn up with the view of its being purchased off their hands, as mentioned in the letter from the Council. The Merchant Adventurers refused to purchase.

May 3. The following order in Council was made;—

At the Court of Whitehall, the 3rd of May, 1622¹

Present

The Prince his Highness.

Lo. Archbishop of Canterburie

Lo: Keeper Lo: Vi. Falklande

Lo: Treasurer Lo: Carew

Lo: President Lo: Brooke

Lo: Prue Seale Mr. Treasurer

Lo: Stewarde Mr. Secretairie Caluert

M: Hamilton Mr. of the Roles

Lo: Chamberlein Sr. John Sucklinge

whereas Sr George More, Sr Dudley Diggs, Sr Thomas Wentworth, Sr Thomas Lowe, Sr Philip Carew, Sr William Stroude, Sr Samuell Sandes, Sr Athur Ingram, Sr John Wolstenholme, knights. Mr. Alford, Mr. Hackwell, Mr. Bartlett, Esqrs, Mr. Aldermann Holliday, Mr. Abbott, Mr. Leate, Mr. Towerson, Mr. Ralphe Freeman, Mr. Bateman, and Mr. Jacob, marchants should take into consideration the great decay of Marchandize within the Kingdom and the manie insufferable inconveniencs arrisinge from the inequalitye of Trade and otherwise and hereupon make report to the Board of their opiunions what wilbe the best and fittest meanes to encrease the Trade of the realme wch they were required to doe wth all convenient expedicion But forasmuch as there hath not as yet any report ben returned from them and that the great importance of the business cannot admitt of annie vnnesessarie delay wthout extreame pjudice to the publicke Their ilps hauing meete to receiue their foresaid direccons and ordered that the Committee aboue named or annie Scaven or more of them doe forthwth proccede herein wth such dilligence and care as a cause of such consequence may annie way require

Ext. Edmund Lee.

Endorsed.

Order concerning trade

3 May 1622

Meanwhile the following referred to ante page 20 was received by the Council shewing the climax of the distress in Gloucestershire.²

A Letter from the Justices of Gloucestershire to the Council—

Right honorable

Our humble duties remembered pleaseth yo hono^{rs} to bee advertised that the complainte of the weavers and other poore workfolkes depending on the trade of clothing (in this dead time thereof) do daylie increase, in that their worke and meanes of relief doe more and more decay, And in that their Masters for the most part doe still alleadge that their trade growes worse and worse our countye is thereby, And through want of money and means, in these late tymes growne poore, and unable to releve the infynite number of poore people residing within the same (drawne hither by means of clothing) butt by that trade wherein they have been broughte vpp and exercised and thereby very many of them doe wander begg and steale and are in case

¹ State Papers, Domestic Series, James I., Vol. 130, 1622. (May) No. 14.

² Domestic Series, James I., Vol. 131, 4. 1622. June.

to starve as their faces (to o^r great grefes) doe manifest and they doe so farr oppresse these parts wherein they live that o^r abler sort of people there are nott able much longer to conteyne the same Letting yo^r honor further to vnderstand that wee much feare that the peace thereof wilbe very shortly endangered notwithstanding all the vigilance wee use or can use to the contrary, and for the manifestaçon thereof wee in discharge o^r dutyes and by reason of our neare dwelling amonge those poore people doe emboulden o^r selves to acquaint yo^r hon^{rs} wth an exminaçon taken by us of one Richard Webbe weaver committed to o^r Gaole to receive order in justice according to his offence a true copy whereof is herein inclosed intending to discover and further matter as we shalbe able and thus humbly praying yo^r honors to take these things into yo^r consideraçon and that some present remedye (out of o^r powers to yeild them) may be provided otherwise the fate of o^r county (in o^r oppinions) wilbee most miserable, do very humbly take o^r leaves alwaies resting

Att yo^r Lpps commandments.

Minchinhampton, Glouc.

1^o Junii 1622

Geo Hnntley
W. Guyse
Tho Esconrte
George Hnntlie

Richard Webb of King Stanley weaver came lately vnto mee and desired to speake with mee in private whereupon going aside he towld mee hee was come to mee to informe mee that there were at least 500 persons that were comyng vnto mee such as were in want with their staves readye at their dores which he came privately before to give me notice of I asked him what they intended he answered mee to doe mee no harme but to make their wants knowne and further tould mee that there was an intençon that the last spring tyde which was about a fortnight past, that some should have come to the water side of Seavern to make staye of the Troughes that were goinge downe the River of Seavern with manlt from the cittye of Glouc' which had been done yf some had not stayed it meaninge some of his company and beinge asked by mee who they were by name that intended so to come answered they were many poore men but refused to mençon their names.

Glouc :

W. Guyse.

primo die Junii, 1622, apud Minchinhampton in com. pred :

The examinacon of Richard Webb weaver taken the first daye of June aforesayde before Sr George Huntley, Sr Thomas Estcourt, & Sr William Guyse, Knights, & George Huntley, Esq., his ma^t Justices of the Peace, &c.

This examine saith that he came to Sr William Gyse, Knight, in private to discouer vnto him that fyve hundred psous were comyng to him and that all which is formerly written & subscribed under Sr William Guyse his hande now reade vnto Lim is true and being examined who they were by name that meant to come to Sr William Guyse as aforesaid or to staye Glouc. malte for their reliefe sayth that they were many poore people whose

names he is not willige to mençõn, but doth refuse to make any other or futher answere therevnto or to any of the matters formly cõfessed by him fearinge thereby to bring himself & many others into trouble and dainger.

Geo. Huntley,
W. Guyse Tho. Estcourt
George Huntley

Endorsed

The examination of Rich Webb.

A reference to Sir William Guyse's letter, and to the examination of Richard Webb will be found in Sir John Maclean's Paper on "Elmore and the Family of Guise," in Vol. III., p. 63 of the Society's Transactions.

Then comes the report of the Committee (see above) which is too long to be printed in full. Extracts from it are here given.¹

May it please yo^r Lopps,

Havinge received directions by yo^r honorable tres dated the xxiiijth daye of Aprill last to take into our consideracons what are the true groundes and motives of the great decaye of the sale and vent of o^r English Cloth in forreine parts and what are likely to be the fittest Remidydes for the same And thereof to make report to yo^r Lopps in writinge, wee have wth the best of o^r endeavours applied o^r selves to observe yo^r Lopps commandments and vpon manie Conferences had wth the Merchants Adventurers and the Merchants of other Societies and Companies wth the Gentlemen of qualitie of seuerall clothinge shires wth the officers of his maties Custom-howse in the port of London and the drapers and dyers of London And after manie daies spent in this weightie service for those twoe principall points weh were recommended by yr Lopps to o^r care we humble offer these things followinge in answere.

Some remedyes whereof wee conceave maybe theis

To helpe the expence of cloth within o^r kingdome that there may be the less left to vente abroad and the less vainted in the expense of Silke and florayne Stuffe That the nobilitie and gentrye of the Kingdome might be perswaded to the wearinge of cloth in the winter season by example rather then commandment.

That the meaner sort of people, as Apprentices, Servants, or Mechanicks be enioyned by proclomaçõn to the weare of clothe and stuffe of wooll made in this kingdome weh would be more durable and lesse chargeable.

That when blacks are given at ffuneralls that they be of Cloth or Woollen Stuffe made in this kingdome.

And yett that Huswifes maie not make Cloth to sell againe but for the provision of themselues and their families, that the Clothiers and Drapers e not discouraged.

¹ Domestic Series, James I, vol. 131, 55. 1622. Conway Papers.
Vol. V., part 1. M

And lastlie because manie questions may arise from tyme to time between the Woolgrower, Clothyer and Merchants wee humblie propound to yor Lops That a comission may be granted by his maty to some selected persons w hoe may thereby have authoritye :

To hear, and determine all such difference. To looke into the Statutes of employments by Strangers and denizens :

The Licences and preveliges for wooll and dying wool :

And generallie for all other things which may condee to those ends before propounded whereby trade may be orderlic governed and duly ballanced.

And although matters of greater difficultye maie be ever brought to this honorable Board by your Lops to be determined or directed, yet thus may your Lopps be eased of much trouble and losse of tyme which theis kinde of grevaunces have often caused herctofore And the Suitors be despatched more speedilie wch shall have occasion to attend thereabout.

22 June, 1622.

Jo : Suckling
Thomas Coventrye
R. Heath

Paul Pinder	Geo : Paule
Ri : Sutton	Heneage Finche
Wm : Richardson	William Turnor
Thomas Man.	A. L. Stafford
Abrahā Dawcs. ¹	

1 S. P. Dom. Series, James I., Vol. 131, 53.