PETITION "FOR THE RESTORING OF FARTHING TOKENS: 1644."

By Professor F. P. Barnard, M.A., F.S.A.

RUDING\(^1\) gives a full account of the contents of the pamphlet published in 1644 entitled *A Remedie against the Losse of the Subject by Farthing Tokens*. These were, of course, the "Harringtons" and their successors. In opposition to that manifesto there was printed in the same year a pamphlet in support of those pieces. The latter publication is dismissed by Ruding in a few words,\(^2\) but as it contains some interesting features, and is now scarce, it appears to deserve reproduction. Apparently, too, it is the only extant expression of the views of those who favoured the "Harringtons": for otherwise, so far as we know, only their enemies seem to have spoken. The petition referred to on page 2 of the pamphlet is presumably that of September 24th, 1642.\(^3\)

The pamphlet here given will tell its own story, but a few points in it may be noted. Its actual size is 7 inches by 5\(\frac{1}{2}\) inches, and it contains ten pages in all.

It argues\(^4\) that one reason for the opposition to the "Harringtons" was based upon the selfish interests of the private issuers of small change, which may well have been the fact. Conversely, this paper was doubtless inspired by similar motives on the other side. Complaint is made\(^5\) that the circulation of each private token was confined to the business of its issuer, for it was refused by rivals who struck their own pieces, and the holders of these coins were thus forced to deal with their utterers. Hence the buyer was denied the lower prices and

\(^{1}\) Edition of 1840, i, 402-3, note.

\(^{2}\) Ibid., 403, note.

\(^{3}\) Commons Journal, ii, 780.

\(^{4}\) Page 3.

\(^{5}\) Page 5.
better goods that would result from competition unhampered in this way, as would be the case when there was a common currency such as that provided by the "Harringtons." Moreover, in the event of the failure, absconding, or death of a tradesman who stamped his own coin, the customers were left with money on their hands which no one else would honour.

On page 6 are named certain unusual materials of which private tokens were sometimes made at that time: leather, horn and wax. Specimens of the first named are in the British Museum, one of which is dated 1650.

In connection with the denial of the charge that some of the "Harringtons" were imported from abroad, attention may, on the other hand, be called to the private farthing-token of William Hall, which was obviously made at Nuremberg. The obverse is of the Reichsapfel type, and closely resembles the rechenpfennige struck there by Hans Krauwincel, the Laufers, and others.

The pamphlet, while offering, as a reply to the objection of the difference between the nominal and the intrinsic value of the "Harringtons," the plea that the makers deserved some profit for their trouble, does not attempt to explain why that difference need have been so vast as it was.

On page 8 it is conceded that the "Harringtons" ought not to be compulsory tender above 12d. in 10s. or £1. This is an admission of an abuse which had crept in; since it had been expressly stated that acceptance of them was to be voluntary, and by a proclamation of 1634 it was particularly forbidden that, even when accepted, more than two pence should be paid in them at one time.

1 It would be interesting to know, however, whether in any neighbourhoods a "clearing-house" system, or a mutual acceptance of one another's coins, was agreed upon by private issuers in the same locality. This, we know, existed to some extent among the circulators of the eighteenth-century token-money.


3 Page 6.

4 Williamson's Boyne, ii, p. 1423, No. 38.

5 I notice this in my forthcoming book, The Casting-Counter and the Counting-Board, a Chapter in the History of Numismatics and Early Arithmetic, Oxford University Press, under German Jetton No. 92.

6 Pages 7, 8.
The final argument\(^1\) is noteworthy. It is urged that the "Harrington" coins would be useful as money of necessity during the Civil War, especially as they had recently been approved by both parties.

The following is the transcript\(^2\):—

---

The Humble

PETITION

AND

REMONSTRANCE

OF SOME HUNDREDS

of Retaylers, who have Sparkes

of Charity, and Reason in them.

And of Country Chap-men of the

Associated Counties, and of thousands of

poore people besides: For the Restoring of

Farthing Tokens; who are extreme-

ly damnified, and are like to perish

by the suppression

of them.

Printed in the yeare 1644.

---

This petition and Remonstrance of some hundreds of

Retaylers, who have sparkes of Charity, and reason in them;

and of Countrey Chap-men of the Associated Counties, and of

---

\(^{1}\) Page 9.

\(^{2}\) The pamphlet is reproduced in full and as printed, save that the long s used throughout the smaller print, except, as usual, for the final letter of words, is printed as s; and, of course, the then form of the capital F, which is so often mistaken for, and erroneously reproduced as, ff, is here rendered F.—Editor.
Thousands of Poore people besides, for the Restoring of Farthing-Tokens, who are extreamly Damnified, and are like to perish by the suppression of them.

LAMENTABLY shewing: That these dismall dayes, (as it seemes) surpasse other destructive times. For now the Axe is laid to the rootes of Shrubs, whereas heretofore tall Cedars bare off the Stroake: And doubtlesse all the Engineers on both sides since these Warres began, have not by their Stratagems finished the dayes of more men; Then a very few Retayling Tradesmen by their gilded sinister suggestions (being meere covetous Earth-wormes) are like to doe; not only of men, but of women and children also: If consideration be not had of the Petitioners present complaint: Wherein the pretended Grievance, and Objections to these handfull of Retaylers (the poores adversaries, though their best customers) are really answered, and truly /set forth: For the shadow of him that rides on the Pale Horse hath already made an impression in the faces of your Petitioners: And the vacuity of their Bowels by their inward contraction, sounds shrill, and loud in the eares of such as passe by them; and say, Woe betide them that were the cause thereof, &c.

For as much therefore, as all their temporall Hopes of present Reliefe concerning this their most urgent Cause, and best outward Piller that supports their very Being; depends wholly upon these two capitall Houses, or chiefe Courts of the Kingdome. They therefore humbly beseech, That your Honours commiseration of their deplored Estates may be answerable to your Greatnesse, and that the same may not be referred to any other Court; but that these ensuing Objections and Reasons may be here deliberately considered of, and according unto equity granted; That so your poore Petitioners fainting soules may be revived, and maintained to pray heartily for your Honours prosperity.
The complaining Retaylers maine Objections against Farthings in their Petition printed, and presented to the Parliament two yeares since, are these, in their owne words;

**Viz.**

*Object.* That the allowance of one and twenty shillings in Farthing-Tokens, for twenty shillings in money, hath been the chiefest cause of their great Burthen; For many covetous persons have usually fetched out great quantities of Farthings, and forcing them upon poore labouring people.

*Answ.* 1 They that complaine most of their losse, are (though it seeme a Paradox) the greatest gainers, because they are the chiefest Retaylers, and principall venters of their commodities to the poore. For certaine it is, that all such that in a Retayling way sels by Peny, halfe-peny, and Farthings worth, gain more by twelve pence in the pound at least, then other Shop-keepers do, that sell by greater quantities, &c.

2 The poorest people are these Retaylers best customers, and constant frequenters. If therefore the current of the poore Farthing Revenue be stopt; These complainants will lose by the decay, and ebbe of their custome, more then the losse of twelve pence in the pound; and then wish they had not leap't out of the Frying-pan into the fire, as some of them already doe.

3 If there were as many silver pence, and halfe-pences coynd as now there are Farthings; Yet those will not by a fourth part as much availe the poore as Tokens will; Partly in regard that it is the hereditary use, and inclination of men to delight
in, and retaine Silver more warily then Brasse, and partly
because, he that can, or will give a Farthing, either cannot,
or will not bestow a halfe-peny, or peny: And therefore that
old saying, Many a little makes a mickle, is now a maine plea
for the poore, and consequently for these few Silver-thirsty
Retaylers, if they well understood it.

4 If the apprehension of these Retaylers had been well composed
together, and their minds freed from extreame covetousnesse,
they would never have lifted up their voice against Farthings,
if they had conceived but these two Reasons only.

1 In regard of the setled Excize, which turnes to their accompl,
and cleare benefit twelve pence in each Barrell, which is two
shillings in the pound gaine to them more then ever they
had: For the Excize is but two shillings upon the Barrell;
and they, when they sell cheapest, have peny farthing for
each quart, which Farthing upon the quart, is just three
shillings in the Barrell.

2 To suppresse Farthings at such a time, when a quart of that
liquor which refreshes the spirit of the poore, is raised a
Farthing higher then ever it was; doth cause such a peevish
continued trouble in their small distracted rules of Areth-
metick; and is such a fretting whet-stone to sharpen the
edge of their groanes, that it will endanger the renting of the
clouds. Besides, it is most unseasonable (as it is humbly
conceived) that this mighty storm of the losse of three-score
or foure-score thousand pounds at least should /fall upon the
distressed subject, when they are already in a languishing
condition, through the decay of Trade, contraction of mens
hearts, and the absence of people; that there is as much
elbow-roome now in this City, as in some remote Corporation
Townes. Therefore a Reformation in this at present, is (as
it were) a new piece of cloth stitched to an old ragged garment, which will make the rent far worse.

5 That in their said printed Petition, they say some five hundred subscribed to it; Whereof, (if so) two parts of them are Victuallers, or victualling Chaundlers, who gaine more by the Tap, then by all their other Trinkets (and so much the more by means of the Excize) and but foure or five of these five hundred were the only Stickles, or Bell-weatheres that tinklet the rest in (as heretofore they have under-hand attempted to doe) and these doe it, but to maintaine some superfluous sauce to their full dishes, having their eyes clos'd up with Sauls persecuting scales, that they cannot behold one glimpse of Providence, but what they find and feele in their owne fingers: Whereas on the other side, here are ten times so many thousand, who are constrained to make hunger their best sauce, and are glad to have wherewithal to sustaine nature, and behold Providence shining each day upon them, as the birds of the ayre doe. Therefore, although Christianity lyes slumbering, yet the Body Politicke is awake; and surely will not esteeme more of a few full-fed, well-lined Retaylers, then a great number of Lean-ribb'd, thin-cloth'd Christians, that nothing makes the difference, but that the sheres went side-ways in the cutting out of the peece; or else say that the Head hath no need of the little Toe, or of the very nayle thereof: But surely that Body will preserve all. For it is said, The poore you shall have always with you; unless now by this means they will be altogether starved: As some report they are, who observe the weekly Bills of Mortality; That many already departs this life by a new kind of Plague, for not having the old Tokens¹ about them, &c.

6 That without all doubt, these few complaining Retaylers know full well, that their said poore customers traficke neither for

Petition for restoring Farthing-tokens, 1644.

Page 5.

The Gold of Opher, nor for the Silver wedge of India, but (for the most part) possesse that mettall that suits most with their low estate, which are Farthings; And therefore these Retaylres (let them say what they please in their petition) knowing what Coine their said Clyants trade most in: Doe oft-times provide such ragged stuffe, and decayed Comodities for them; as withered costive Cheese, twice-bak'd Bread, Butter of a stronger odor, Drinke that stood long out of its proper element, and all other things in their defect; So that if they lost two shillings in twenty in Farthings; Yet, if their large consciences did not hold downe their hands they would lift them up, and lay them upon their mouthes, and say one to another Tace &c.

That this very point is the Gulph of their conceipts, and the mystery of their griping iniquity, mixt with vaine glory (vis) To suppressse these Farthing Tokens, that so they may advance their owne Tokens, Stamps, Seales, Names, Signes, Superscriptions, if not Images, as now appeares (though they be far inferiour in dignity to Caesar) And also altogether oppugnant to divers waighty reasons both in the King, and his Royall Fathers Proclamations issued out for restraint of theirs, but for the allowance, and confirmation of these Farthings: By meanes whereof they rivet, linck, and incorporate their Customers unto them, and seale them up for their owne selves; so that they cannot move an Intch to any other Tradesman, because their Coin is not currant out of that narrow Clymate: Which thing in it selfe is really the greatest oppression that can be imposed upon distressed people; and makes good the last mentioned reason, That their poore customers will now be constrained to accept of their said decayed commodities, and at what prices they please: But these Farthings retaine that vertue in them, which is derived from a superiour Power, and therefore passe through to most places, and at all times.
8 That if these troublesome Retaylers had taken the painses, but to have pluck't out a piece of each of the beames that are in their eyes; they would have seene clearly how small a mote of Inconvenience these Farthings have made; and on the contrary /what a Mountanous fallacy, and deceipt these their Tin, Pewter, Lead, Leather, Horne, and Wax Tokens doe bring to passe: For; when any of these Retaylers that have thus clinch'd in their said customers, either dye, run away, or break (as it is a common accident in these tottering times) Then all these trashie inferiour Tokens are immediately defunct, and choak'd up in the nest, and of no vse at all; So that whosoever possesseth any of them, are subject to a monthly fraud, and mutation; Whereas the other sort is scarce subject unto the like, once in a Coronation.

9 That the foresaid Country Chap-men doe (as it seemes by their froward words) faint under their present Assesments, and wonder that this unexpected, By-Blow should fall so unseasonably upon them, That they begin to Reele about, and say they have as many Farthings in their custody as will beare their charges awhile in the Kings Army, where they will passe: Yet being loath to leave house, and home; they most vigilantly attend the Carriers weekly returne from London to bring them happy Tidings of their Restauration againe; Which if they, and the rest, faile of their Hopes therein, It may (as it is humbly to be feared) beget some Inconvenience, that otherwise may be easily, and requisitely prevented.

10 That upon an Ayry suspition, or a meere invention, which some malignant Retaylers were alwayes prone to conceive for to suppressse Farthings, onely for their owne Ends; It was given out, that Tokens were Imported from foraine parts; upon which Alderman Chambers was desired to make diligent enquiry of the truth thereof; which he accordingly did; and found, that none at all had been at any time imported, vnesse
they should be wafted from beyond seas within the Sculles of their Cunning Contrivings.

11 That these few Retayling Incendiaries doe at present Boulster up themselves in their hard-hearted Imaginations, and verily beleeeve that the just out-cry of the poore is now hush't, and become but a nine dayes discourse, because they are somewhat /silent, through the feebleness of their bodyes, and contraction of their Lungs, and in regard they suppose some of these poore people have withdrawne themselves from these parts ; If that be so ; O ; but then where are they gone into the Countrie, and what can they hope to have there; but either Pilfer a little to linger out Nature; or otherwise to have scope enough under the Cope of Heaven, and the Covert of a Hedge, or Ditch to surrender up their last Breath into the hand of that Power that challengeth Revenge to belong proper unto himselfe; Who wil impress such a knowing stamp upon them for their full Requitall, as they doe upon their paulytry Tokens for the poore Deceipt.

12 That the State by the suppressing of Garthing lose a very Considerable yeerely summe; which surely would be better had, and reserved, then lost, and cast away like the snuffe of a Candle to offend others;

But howsoever these opposers of freindly Tokens absolutely confesse in their said printed Petition, That to lay downe the office will be inconveinient, for then (say they) all Retayling Trades will want small moneyes, and the poore Relief. Therefore the Remnants of their retayling wares, afford these scraps of Charity for a remedy to support the office.

1 The first is, That the Office be setled onely in the power of the Crowne.

Ans. That was their Conceipt when their Petition was then printed; and may be ordered as the State please; if they be now of the same mind.
2 The second is, That the Extrinsick Denomination, and the Intrinsicsick value of a Farthing may step somewhat neerer in proportion.

Ans. These are fine words that fill their brains to as small purpose, /as such great pieces of Brasse would doe their Boxes: But the cause of their Grievance being removed (which is the supposed losse of twelve pence in the pound) their Complaint being the effect thereof, will vanish away.

3 The third is, That it may be felony either to Import, or Counterfeit them.

Ans. That may be ordered so, if the State please.

4 The last is, That no Advantage be allowed in the Issuing of them out, or returning of them into the Office.

Ans. Surely, this is but a very Close-fisted lumpish motion; To imagine that such extraordinary paines, charges and attendance should be bestowed about Farthings, and that no profit should accrue to the managers thereof: For which of them will take the paines to compasse, and score out a Cheese into so many penny worths, and then receive no benefit by it &c.

But the present case, and remedy humbly proposed, and earnestly implored from the rice of Dejected soules are only these Three.

1 That the State would be pleased so to order it; That all Covetous persons whom these Retaylers complains of in their said Petition; who fetch out great quantities of Farthings, and force them in payments upon poor labouring people: May be enjoyned under a penalty not to force, or pay above twelve pence in ten, or twenty shillings in any such payment &c.
2 That all the benefit, and profits of the said office may always remaine there in safe Custody under two or three Locks; and not hereafter to be transported beyond seas, as it hath been, but reserved constantly for Rechange, and vse of the State; And that the restoring of these Farthing Tokens and Confirming of the said office againe, may be by your Honours Order published in all needfull places.

3 And lastly; That forasmuch as there is now a unhappy Channell cut out in the Kingdome, that is very proper to receive this supposed flowing streame of Farthings (though it were far bigger) that overmuch waters the Meadowes of these few Retaylers Conceipts (viz) This war; That therefore the common souldiers may receive twelve pence or more in each ten shillings of their Pay; Doubtlesse they would then vse such Retorick in all Corporation Townes where they came to, that without any difficulty they would passe current; And surely they would be very necessary for them; because they might then have a pint of Beere for a Farthing; which now they cannot have; And indeed these Tokens are as vsfull in such places, as in this City: Besides there is seldom any civill or vncivell Warres, but it hath its illegitimate Coyne; and verily, that Coyne is most properest to remaine at present, that was approved off on both sides within these few dayes.

By this meanes the floud of these few Retaylers complaint, will be wasted, and dryed up.
And the poores Revenue recovered from a Non-suit, and themselves revived.
And all men will expect that Old Things shall passe away, when a Long-looked-for Peace shall be established in our Israel.

FINIS.
The seventeenth-century private tokens were sometimes known by the name of "Traders," and the following extract, which shows this, has a further interest as early evidence of their being collected: "There are a Species of Coins called Traders, a kind of Half-pence, that were in Use an Age or two ago, and which every Tradesman had Permission to coin for himself, to be of use in Change, only marking them with his Name, and that of the Place he lived in, as a Promise to take them again as Money on Demand. I have with long Application, you are to know, collected Traders of all the principal Places in Berkshire, but, till a Week ago, I never had one of the Town of Maidenhead in that County, when I purchas'd this."—The Adventures of Mr. George Edwards, a Creole, 3rd edition, London, Osborne, 1751, p. 189.