

Jersey Independent and Daily Telegraph - Tuesday 22 June 1875

TUESDAY MORNING, June 22, 1875.

The Custom

The custom in course of being established in this island, of dealing according to the British standard of currency, to the disuse of the Jersey method of computation, is not without opponents; and a correspondent in our columns today points out that a local Branch contemporary goes so far as to deny in some respects the legality of the change. Of course, the denial must be taken as meant in limited sense. To deny altogether the legality British currency in Jersey is hardly possible. It is expressly legalized as the currency of the island; and by an Act of the States, which received the sanction of the Privy Council, English currency was established from the 1st of October, 1834, an Act which has never been repealed. Nor was it established merely as one currency among others. It was decreed as the sole currency; and remains the sole legal currency to this day.

But, then, it is said, by the local French journal quoted from, that the money of the States of Jersey, though it is not according to British currency, is still lawful coin; and no one can dare to refuse money which has been decreed by the States, nor yet to treat it as different from the apparent value. Dare he not? Then, he must be very timid. How long have the States enjoyed the prerogative of decreeing the currency? Nay, have they ever possessed it at all? No doubt, if they chose to pass a bill in regulation of the currency, which the Queen in Council formally sanctioned, their act would become law. But so far from the States having special power in the matter, their act is not essential for any such thing; and the Queen in Council is competent to make such orders therein as with the advice of her councilors she may deem expedient. The States have really no necessary connection with the currency of the Island; nor are we aware that apart from the Privy Council they have ever made any decrees on the subject. The copper money bearing the States arms, and of different value to the copper money of England, is presumably a remnant of former state of things existing before English currency was established here; and it has been tolerated perhaps for the purpose of harmonizing with familiar local values, such as the French sous piece, with which English currency does not harmonize. We take it to be, in effect, an illegality allowed by custom, but repudiated by the statute; for, if English money, as is formally declared, is the sole legal currency of the island, how can Jersey coppers, which are certainly not English money, be legal?

It happens, however, that the legality of Jersey coppers as a tender is not likely to be called in question. In reforming the practice of making accounts in what is called Jersey currency, a fanciful computation which, inasmuch as a corresponding coinage never existed, has not the merit of being antiquated, the local traders not take advantage of the to law to refuse Jersey coppers. They accept and pay them out again as of the value of British; and the money of the States, therefore, is not threatened with refusal. The existence, however, of copper coinage of different value side by side with the only lawful coinage is a source of embarrassment. The reputed pence which one may receive at a tradesman's shop are rejected at the Post-office; and for certain articles, such as English penny newspapers, three-halfpence must be given, in order to indemnify the vendor from the loss of taking Jersey money of thirteen-pence to the shilling. The embarrassment may not be great; but it ought, in the interests of public order and the credit of local government to be got rid of. The peculiar copper money of Jersey is, any rate, certainly very much in the way; and we doubt whether it will much longer be borne with. Several branches of local trade have already adopted British

currency exclusively in their dealings; and, after the 1st of next month, when the grocers, tea dealers and wine merchants are going to follow the example, it will be more in the way than ever. Hardly any considerable or even respectable place of business will be left outside the pale of British currency which has already been adopted by the local railways, and is about to be followed by the newspapers, or at least by those printed in the English language. Of course, the States would do well under these circumstances to withdraw their peculiar coppers, which they can do without illegality. can they not

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do them considerable harm in loss of prestige, to act persistently in defiance of the united trade of the Island on the subject of currency; for a legislative body, though in some part of its constituents independent of public opinion, cannot go on living "up in a balloon" without danger of coming down at some time with a run. But we much fear that the States are not wise enough to move with public opinion; and, after all, that the task of getting the Jersey coppers out of the way will devolve upon the trading classes themselves.