

THE WEALD AND ITS REFUGEE ANNALS.

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THIS district of Kent from its position, surrounded by outlying towns of importance, and leading to the coast, could not fail to attract settlers, independently of its natural resources.

The chief towns of Cranbrook, Tenterden, Maidstone, Ashford, and Tunbridge, so many centres of activity in the Middle Ages, would alone call forth notice; and a certain difficulty of access in those days tended to retain any trades established within these boundaries. The cloth trade pre-eminently took the lead at the time when Cranbrook was the metropolis of that industry, and many circumstances had tended to encourage this. The settlements of the Flemings in Edward the Third's reign are well known to historical scholars, while the history of the cloth trade has also been specially treated by Mr. Tarbutt in the *Archæologia Cantiana* (Vol. IX.), as well as ably discussed in Mr. Furley's well-known work on the Weald. It would therefore be inappropriate to treat this subject at length, other than by a few remarks with which I cannot forbear to preface this paper, dealing as it will especially with the REFUGEE history of the district, and bringing it down to a later period by the help of many recent materials hitherto unnoticed in Mr. Tarbutt's treatise. These are the publication of parochial records, especially those of Canterbury and the Diocese, by Mr. J. M. Cowper, the *Registers of the French Church at Canterbury*, by Mr. Hovenden, F.S.A., the Wills proved in the "Prerogative Court of Canterbury," as well as the invaluable series of the Historical MSS. Commission Reports, and the "Denization" Lists issued by the Huguenot

Society of London. When we consider these facts, as well as the various measures for the improvement of trade, especially during the reign of Elizabeth, it is not surprising the refugees should seek a district so fertile in resources and employment.

As the wool trade increased, the proprietors of the Weald converted their arable land into pasture, and the opening up of woods and water transit greatly aided commerce. Thus, a statute of Henry VIII. provides "for clearing, deepening, and widening the River Stour from the town of Great Chart to Canterbury, and thence to Sandwich."* Some of the weaving was carried on far away from the Weald, and this improved river passage could not fail to assist in every way.

A wool staple had been set up at Canterbury, and a similar one existed at Calais, so early as the 25th Edward III.; relations could thus be easily maintained between the French-speaking Walloons and their English brethren. The Privy Council Acts of Edward VI. (1552) refer to an Indenture between that King and the merchants of the staple at Calais, sealed and delivered to the King.

The later development of fulling and dyeing mills in and around the Weald led the clothiers to dye their own cloth, instead of sending it away or abroad.

There was much controversy at this time as to the advantages of wrought and unwrought cloth, and several enactments found in the State Papers illustrate this question. The results of the different appeals seem to have been in favour of the dressed cloth, as giving greater employment to native artificers, and increasing their wealth. The Acts themselves tell their own tale, as follows:†

1575. "*Memorial to Lord Cobham*, exhibiting the decay of the cloth trade in Kent, and desiring an emendation of Statute 8 Elizabeth against the exportation of unwrought cloths." That Act regulated that for every nine cloths

* In this connection I may mention Fordwich as a member of the Cinque Ports, whose peculiar trade customs and archives are brought to light in Mr. Woodruff's *History of Fordwich*, 1895.

† *Calendar State Papers* (Elizabeth).

unwrought, a tenth shall be exported dressed, on penalty of £10, "that no person convey any Kentish or Suffolk cloth undressed on penalty of 40 shillings."

It seems that in 1586 a contraband trade had been carried on, and that persons came from Dunkirk into Kent, and under pretence of landing goods and victuals sold Kentish cloths, which were transported at Calais to Liège and other places. No less than 46 Acts had been passed as to raw and manufactured wool, and although severe measures had been enacted against the transport, it still seems to have been carried on. The *Hatfield Papers* (Historical MSS. Commission), dated 23 August [1575], contain the following:

"*Lord Cobham to Lord Burleigh*, begs him (Her Majesty having granted a licence for transmitting 2000 Kentish cloths unwrought a year) to grant him a favourable letter to the Custom House, that he may pass the same, now that our merchants do repair to Antwerp." In 1575 we have an injunction of Lord Cobham (*Lord-Lieutenant of Kent*) to see that the "Queen's duties are paid for carrying unwrought Kentish cloth," as it appears that sundry cloths passed through creeks in Kent and paid no duties!

It seems difficult to reconcile these inconsistent enactments, sometimes for protective, at another for free trade, measures, but it cannot be denied that the industry had taken full hold, whatever the changing policy of the time.

Guilds had been established and were most helpful to those not wealthy or numerous enough to begin a separate trade, for by combination they effected a great deal. Enquiries into the state of the ports and keeping them in repair were also made, and in 1565 a Royal Commission was issued on this subject. In 1571 returns of the trades carried on by the "strangers" provided against undue encroachments, as well as promoted a generous rivalry and competition. Personal action was, however, of stronger importance, and we hear of Sir Thomas White of St. John's College, Oxford, Master of the Merchant Taylors' Company, giving to Canterbury £100 to be laid out in spinning and weaving of woollen goods; and Archbishop *Grindal* left to the same

city £100 to be kept for ever for the use of the poor traders and dealers of wool there.

The Corporation of Canterbury encouraged the manufacture, and we find several entries in the city records transcribed into the Historical MSS. Commission Reports (vol. ix.) (*Burghmote Records*).

1577. "Paid to the Walloons for their allowance of the xxs. given them towards their halls." "Loom money" is mentioned in these documents, whether it was a tax on each loom, or a gradual payment of a loan granted to buy looms, does not appear; it sufficiently indicates, however, a growing interest in the foreign workmen. The correct sealing, stamping, and registering of cloths and other stuffs were systematically maintained at Canterbury, Sandwich, Maidstone, and other central towns.

The way was thus fully prepared for the advent of the refugees into Kent, and this immigration may be divided into three distinct historical epochs, viz., (1) *after the expulsion of the Protestants* from the Low Countries by the Duke of Alva; (2) *before and after the massacre of St. Bartholomew* (1572); and (3) *on the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes* (1685). Though naturally most found their way to the large towns, it cannot be disputed that several settled in the Weald, though I think more as artizans than as master workers, the owners and principals of the trade seeming to have been English born.

The Registers of the Wealden Churches occasionally include foreign names, and, if the Christian name is not stated, the appellation "*Frenchman*" or "*stranger*" leads to a similar conclusion.

I am kindly indebted to Mr. Haskett Smith (one of our Members) for a few names from Goudhurst Register sufficient to establish a foreign occupation. They are :

De Goyes.	Gomabesse, 1561.
Dypres, 1711.	Gotier (Gautier), 1702.
Cordelyon, 1641.	Hassherd (Achard).
Durcken, 1561.	Morline, 1559.
Furneaux (17th cent.).	

At Maidstone, in Elizabeth's reign, we find undisputed evidence of a foreign settlement (chiefly Flemish), and the

Corporation granted them the use of St. Faith's Chapel and burial-ground. The "Guilds," which had been formed long ere this, were very active in this town, especially that of the "Drapers." So early as 1474 one Stephen Norton of *Chart Sutton* belonged to the Maidstone Guild of Artificers. "Each Guild had its own rules and customs; its wares were exhibited at markets and fairs, and fees for stalls paid over by its officers to the Corporation" (James's *Maidstone*).

Other trades were pursued here by the refugees. In the *Naturalization Acts*, edited for the Huguenot Society, we read of one "*Peter de Lillo*," a "capper" at Maidstone in 1544. Mention of hammer-makers, cannon-founders, copper-smiths, leads to the conclusion that some of these may have settled in the Weald, where the resources of the iron and other industries, especially on the Sussex border, would have tempted them to reside. Fuller's-earth was found at Leeds, and that would assist the industries. After the decline of the cloth trade here, thread-making flourished, as shewn by the returns of the Mayor and Town Clerk of Maidstone in the "State Papers" (James I., 1622), transcribed into the volumes of the Camden Society, and entitled *Foreigners Resident in England* (1618—88). The names are mostly Flemish, but an interesting note at the end states, that "the thread-making trade was much decayed by the importation of thread from Flanders, as the strangers of Maidstone affirm."

From a glance at the Marriage Licences in Canterbury Diocese (*circ.* 1568—1660), "*edited*" by Mr. J. M. Cowper, I give a brief synopsis to shew what trades were most prevalent in those periods, and find them to be :

Broadweavers (Smarden),	1606,	Bayweavers,
Cordwainers (Faversham),		Glovers,
Hempdressers,		Mercers;

the localities, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst; and among names apparently of foreign origin are those of

Bachelor,	Geffraye,
Benison,	Meriall,
Ferrall,	and others.

It is well known that Queen Elizabeth's policy, though one of expediency, gave, on the whole, distinct encouragement for foreign craftsmen, and I now hasten on to see how far this policy was carried out by her successors—James I. and Charles I.

The first-named King certainly followed his predecessor's action; but of Charles I. we notice several statutes and edicts passed, at first of a favourable, then of a prohibitive nature, without doubt instigated by that King's great adviser and friend, Archbishop Laud.

The Weald equally with the Kentish districts now lost many of its refugee inhabitants, who, rather than conform to a religious system they could not tolerate, left for Holland, America, and other countries. Even before that time, in 1616, some of the restrictive measures of the Stuarts affected trade, and it is stated that 2000 Kentish clothworkers went to the Palatinate. In 1622 the State Papers (James I.) mention the Kentish clothiers' petition, "praying that notwithstanding proclamations against export of wool and fuller's-earth, they are still sent out of the country;" and in 1634 the Merchant Adventurers prevailed on Charles I. to restrict the export of cloths, baizes, and English woollen commodities.

At this period (1634) occurred a smaller but important exodus from France, which again revived the fluctuating industries, further protected by a measure of some importance, recorded among the Rye Corporation MSS., "that the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports should charge his officers respectively not to permit the said strangers to reside in any of the said ports, *but to repair to the inland towns* more remote from the sea." The consequences of this order would be at once palpable.

Although enactments like this last had a favourable influence, yet followed by the harsh ecclesiastical policy of Laud they brought about much more serious results, by the withdrawal of hundreds of craftsmen, and a complete stagnation of the Kentish trade. Of this movement, Canon Jenkins, whose critical learning is a by-word to this Society, thus writes: "It would be ill to forget at how dear a price the forced uniformity of Laud was obtained, and the immense

injury it inflicted upon the Diocese, and the Archbishop's treatment of the foreign Churches was a direct contravention of the Orders in Council by which the foreign Churches were protected, and which in every case permitted their members, though born in the kingdom, to belong to their congregations."

This proceeding is also set forth in the famous "*Kentish Petition*," printed in the Camden Society's volumes, entitled *Proceedings in Kent*, 1640, which alleges the results to have been "discouragement and distraction of all good subjects, of whom multitudes, both clothiers, merchants, and others, being deprived of their ministers, and overwhelmed with their pressures, have departed the kingdom to Holland and other parts, and have drawn with them a great part of the manufacture of cloth and trading out of the land."

Canon Jenkins further remarks that "the principal complaints against the Laudian charges came from the Weald and the places adjacent, where these industries were specially established."

The greater liberty of opinion under the Commonwealth caused a transient revival in Kent and other places, but the years preceding the Revocation of the "Edict of Nantes" clearly foreshadowed that event which occasioned the exodus of thousands from France, and even before that time, the unjust measures forced on the Protestants by Louis XIV. and his Jesuit emissaries, produced a total disruption.

Beneficial Acts were passed in England about 1678; one called the "Protestant Strangers' Bill" empowered foreigners to exercise their trades, provided they shewed certificates of conformity either to the Church of England or the several Reformed Churches.

Admission of freedom to the city of Canterbury was now much increased by foreign applicants, and it is possible that though this privilege was restricted to citizens of that metropolis, it may have included some Wealden inhabitants.

Another circumstance which caused the influx of "strangers" was the destruction of the Protestant Church at Guines, near Calais, by order of Louis XIV., and the flight of its numerous adherents, many to England, and some

certainly to Kent. At this time collections were made for those who came over in poverty and distress, and at *Smarden* in 1699 occurs an entry, "Collection for relief of Vaudois," £1 11s. 8d.; and in 1794, for the Protestants of the Principality of Orange, £1 12s. 4d. The *History of Smarden*, by Rev. F. Haslewood, F.S.A., contains elaborate extracts from the Churchwardens' Books as to the price of wool, flax, wages for weaving, etc., from 1554—1816, proving the extent of the cloth trade there. Of the cultivation of flax, which was doubtless increased by the refugees, mention is made both at Smarden and Headcorn, at which latter place was the "*Flax Garden Field*." In 1697 an Act was passed to encourage the linen trade, and William III. specially invited over a Huguenot gentleman to superintend that industry.

It was not unusual at this time for foreign ministers to officiate in the Church of England, and in the "Tanner MSS. at the Bodleian Library" we find a petition of the inhabitants of Hollingbourne to Archbishop Sancroft to allow Monsieur Rondeau to preach in the church there; and the same MS. states that the Primate gave him leave to hold a service at Leeds and Broomfield.

Archbishop Sancroft stands out with true liberality of thought to others out of the Church of England, and by his efforts contributions for the fugitives were made through the Province of Canterbury; an example afterwards followed by Archbishops Tillotson, Tenison, Secker, and Wake.

It now appears from the "Act Books" at Lambeth that Boughton Malherbe, almost the centre of the Weald, became the headquarters of refugee interest, chiefly owing to the settlement of the Marquis de Venours and his friends, as told in the following extract:

Act Book, No. 4, p. 180.

Whereas the bearer hereof, Monsieur the Marquiss of Venours, a Noble and Honourable Gentleman of Poictou in France, hath been by the extreme Rigours of the Persecution mov'd lately in that Province, against those of the Reformed Religion (and against him in particular), forc'd to leave that His native Country: from whence being escapéd he hath chosen to put himself under the

protection of Our Gracious Sovereigne, and to seeke his repose here, and in order thereunto, hath hired and taken of the Rt. Honorable the Earl of Chesterfield a House and Land within your Parish, intending to settle himself there, together with a little Colonie of his Countrey men, who are not only professors of the Protestant Religion, but Confessors and sufferers for the same, and all desirous to serve God and to performe the publick Offices of our most Holy Religion according to the use of the Church of England (to the Government and Discipline whereof they do also entirely submitt themselves), I do therefore require you and the rest of the Inhabitants of your Parish, and your Neighbours, both Ministers and others, to receive and assist them as occasion shall be offered, with all the expressions and instances of Christian Charitie, and Brotherly kindness due to afflicted strangers of the same Faith and Communion with ourselves. And because they understand not the English Language, and are therefore permitted to performe divine Offices in the French-tongue (as they are and have been for severall years performed in the French Church att the Savoye), I have therefore appointed and doe hereby appoint *Mr. Jaques Rondeau* a Presbyter of the Church of England, to officiate and preach to them in your Parish *Church of Bocton Malherb*, and do hereby require you to give them to that purpose, free access into, and use of the same, at such Houres and times of the day as may not hinder your Ordinary publick Assemblies in the same. And so commending you, and all under your care to the Grace and blessing of God,

I remayn,

Lambeth House,
Feb. 21, 1681.

Your very loving Friend,

W. S.

(WILLIAM SANCROFT.)

For Mr. Stanhope, Rector,
Bocton Malherb in Kent.

William the Third's exertions in behalf of the refugees are well known, and his encouragement of them brought down Defoe's celebrated lines in the *True-born Englishman* :

" We blame the King that he relies too much
On strangers, Germans, Huguenots, and Dutch,
That foreigners have faithfully obeyed him,
And none but Englishmen betray'd him."

The first fifty years of the eighteenth century witnessed

a revival of industrial handicrafts, in which Kentish towns and the Weald shared, and during that period, wealthy families had been established, as the Desbouveries, Huguessens, Minets, and others.

In 1708 we read that "Chart Place" was erected by Sir Christopher Desbouverie (from whom Lord Radnor descends).

James Huguessen, a native of Dunkirk, died at Linsted in 1637, and the Minet family had long settled in East Kent.

Local newspapers occasionally give an insight into important events, and the *Kentish Post and Canterbury News Letter*, 1715, of whom one Peter Abree (a foreign name) was then publisher, has the following: "At the fair at Maidstone the 1st and 8th of May will be sold by Daniel Lepine, silk weaver, from Canterbury, a very curious parcel of newest fashion brocade, broad and narrow damask, mantua silks, broad and narrow, rich borders, and half tabbies."

Though trade flourished in the Weald and elsewhere in Kent for some fifty years after this date, its days were numbered. Newer inventions and the rivalry of the North, aided by machinery and steam power, affected all the Kentish industries, and the Weald suffered in the decline of its work, as well as its renown.

The furnaces and hammer-ponds once so alive with labour and movement, amid the still woods and recesses of this historic part, are now silent, and the cloth halls no longer are freighted with merchandize and goods. Still memories are with us as we recall the names and occupations of those who have made this part of Kent truly famous—names which, by the aid of recent publications, have been recovered to us from remote archives that become more and more valuable day by day.

Mr. J. M. Cowper's *Canterbury Marriage Licences* in the Diocese from 1619—1660 supply an inexhaustible fund, and I have selected some of the Wealden names bearing on this subject, and presumably of foreign extraction :

BONNYAR, Boughton Malherbe (clothier)	1619
DORMER, of Berstead	1619
DOVESON, of Leeds (brazier)	1638

DUNNINGE, Maidstone (thread-twister)	1635
FLAUNDER (Benenden), weaver	1620
GLASIER (Hawkhurst), clothier	1625
GRUER (Kennington), linen-weaver	1640
LEVETT (Cranbrook), (clothier)	1634
PEBBIN (Challock)	1646
RIVETT, Sheldwich	1638
VALLANCE (Hawkhurst), cordwainer	1623
VAN DALE (Maidstone), thread-maker	1630
VERON (Maidstone)	1635
VIDIAN (Chart next Sutton), kersey-maker	1636

Many an inscription, monumental slab, or stone helps to the collection of such notes which I have endeavoured to place before your learned Society; and I conclude with some names of foreign origin, chiefly in the Weald, from the "Act Books" at Lambeth Library, to which I would call the earnest attention of all Kentish antiquaries who are engaged in genealogical research or parochial history, and also to the general accessibility of that noble collection at Lambeth Palace. Several of the names now quoted are of clerical lineage, and lingered for some time in the district.

BRETON, R., Rector of Boughton Aluph	1752
" Kenardington	1753
BEAUVOIR, OSMUND, Vicar, Milton	1764
DAWNAY, W. H., V. Stalisfield	1748
DE COETLOGON, C. E., Curate (Marden)	1770
DE LA DOVESPE (E. P.), V. East Farleigh	1752
DE LE FIELD, J., Frittenden	1818
DE L'ANGLE, THEOPHILUS, V. Tenterden	1723
DE STARK, G. H. (Curate), Loose	1821
GIRAUD, F. F., V. Preston (near Faversham)	1766
LE GEYT (PHILIP), V. of Chislet	1800
MINET, JOHN, R. Eythorne	1723
POMFRET, VINCENT, High Halden	1711
PERRONET, VINCENT, R. Sundridge	1718
VARENNE, JOSEPH, R. Staplehurst	1824

One can hardly choose a better conclusion to this paper, which admits of so much diversity of treatment, than the words of Canon Jenkins in his Diocesan History, when,

enumerating other causes which facilitated the progress of the Reformation in the Diocese of Canterbury, he says: "The vast numbers of foreign Protestants who were received and tolerated in all the ports and towns of Kent, and who tended to leaven the population with which they intermarried and held daily intercourse—added to the characteristic independence of the Kentish yeomanry, who had established their industries among them, the clothiers of the *Weald*, the iron workers of the district bordering on Sussex, and the gardening population of Sandwich and South-eastern Kent—all contributed to the signal and almost unparalleled success of a movement which brought at the same time temporal prosperity and spiritual freedom."