

Volume I
The Rise of the Gold Standard, 1660-1819

1667 June 12-13, 19-20, October 10-12

Excerpt from the diary of Samuel Pepys concerning his efforts to safeguard his gold as fears of a Dutch invasion were spreading through London during the Second Anglo-Dutch War of 1665-1667. This and the following passages recount a scene that must have been replayed countless times throughout history as men and women of means scrambled to protect their most liquid assets in times of uncertainty. Pepys was dissatisfied with the manner in which his wife and father had interred his gold for safekeeping.

12. [...] the news is true, that the Dutch have broke the Chain and burned our ships, perticularly the *Royall Charles*; other perticulars I know not, but most sad to be sure. And the truth is, I do fear so much that the whole kingdom is undone, that I do this night resolve to study with my father and wife what to do with what little that I have in money by me, for I give all the rest that I have in the King's hands for Tanger for lost. [...] The manner of my advising with my father and wife this night was: I took him and my wife up to her chamber, and shut the door and there told them the sad state of the times; how we are like to be all undone - that I do fear some violence will be offered to this office, where all I have in the world is. And resolved upon sending it away - sometimes into the country, sometimes my father to lie in town and have the gold with him at Sarah Giles's; and with that resolution went to bed - full of fear and fright; hardly slept all night.

13. No sooner up but hear the sad news confirmed, of the *Royall Charles* being taken by them and now in fitting by them (which Pett should have carried up by our order, and deserves therefore to be hanged for not doing it) and burning several others, and that another fleet is come up into the Hope; upon which news the King and Duke of York have been below [i.e., downstream from London Bridge] since 4 a-clock in the morning, to command the sinking of ships at Barking Creeke and other places, to stope their coming up higher; which put me into such a fear that I presently resolved of my father's and wife's going into the country; and at two hours' warning they did go by the coach this day - with about 1300/. in gold in their night-bag; pray God give them good passage and good care to hide it when they come home, but my heart is full of fear. They gone, I continued in frights and fear what to do with the rest. W. Hewer [i.e., Will Hewer, a clerk to Pepys at the Navy Office] hath been at the banquiers and hath got 500/. out of Backwell's hands of his own money; but they are so called upon that they will be all broke, hundreds coming to them for money - and their answer is, "It is payable at twenty days; when the days are out, we will pay you;" and those that are not so, they make tell over their money, and make their bags false on purpose to give cause to retell it and so spend time; I cannot have my 200 pieces of gold again for silver, all being bought up last night that were to be had - and sold for 24 and 25s. a-piece. So I must keep the silver by me, which sometimes I think to fling in the house of office - and then again, know not how I shall come by it if we be made to leave the office. Every minute some[one] or other calls for this order or that order; and so I forced to be at the office most of the day about fireships which are to be suddenly fitted out; and it's a most strange thing that we hear nothing from any of my Brethren at Chatham; so that we are wholly in the dark, various being the reports of what

Volume I

The Rise of the Gold Standard, 1660-1819

is done there - insomuch, that I sent Mr. Clapham [i.e., John Clapham of the Ticket Office] express thither to see how matters go. I did about noon resolve to send Mr. Gibson [i.e., Richard Gibson, another clerk to Pepys at the Navy Office] away after my wife with another 1000 pieces, under colour of an express to Sir Jer: Smith, who is, as I hear, with some ships at Newcastle; which I really did send to him, and may possibly prove of good use to the King; for it is possible, in the hurry of business they may not think of it at Court, and the charge for the express is not considerable to the King. So though I entend Gibson no further then to Hunington, yet I direct him to send the packet forward. [...] In the evening I sent for my cousin Sarah and her husband; who came and I did deliver them my chest of writings about Brampton, and my brother Tom's papers and my Journalls, which I value much - and did send my two silver flagons to Kate Joyce's: that so, being scattered what I have, something might be saved. I have also made a girdle, by which with some trouble I do carry about me 300*l.* in gold about my body, and that I may not be without something in case I should be surprized; for I think, in any nation but ours, people that appear (for we are not ended so) so faulty as we would have their throats cut. In the evening comes Mr. Pelling [i.e., probably Walter Pelling, apothecary] and several others to the office, and tell me that never were people so dejected as they are in the City all over at this day, and do talk most loudly, even treason; as, that we are bought and sold, that we are betrayed by the papists and others about the King - cry out that the Office of the Ordinance hath been so backward as no powder to have been at Chatham nor Upner Castle till such a time, and the carriages all broken - that Legg [i.e., William Legge, Lieutenant-General of the Ordinance] is a papsit - that Upner, the old good castle built be Queen Elizabeth, should be lately slighted - that the ships at Chatham should not be carried up higher. They look upon us as lost; and remove their families and rich goods in the City and do think verily that the French, being come down with his army to Dunkirke, it is to invade us - and that we shall be invaded. [...] Late at night comes Mr. Hudson, the cooper, my neighbour, and tells me that he came from Chatham this evening at 5 a clock and saw this afternoon the *Royall James*, *Oake*, and *London* burnt by the enemy with their fireships; that two or three men-of-war came up with them, and made no more of Upner castle's shooting then of a fly - that these ships lay below Upner Castle (but therein I conceive he is in an error) - that the Dutch are fitting out the *Royall Charles* - that we shot so far as from the yard thither, so that the shot did no good, for the bullets grazed on the water - that Upner played hard with their guns at first, but slowly afterward, either from the being beat off or their powder spent. But we hear that the fleet in the Hope is not come up any higher the last flood. And Sir W. Batten [i.e., Sir William Batten, Surveyor of the Navy] tells me that ships are provided to sink in the River about Woolwich, that will prevent their coming up higher if they should attempt it. I made my will also this day, and did give all I had equally between my father and wife - and left copies of it in each of Mr. Hater [i.e., Tom Hayter, another of Pepys's clerks at the Navy Office] and W. Hewer's hands, who both witnesses the will; and so to supper and then to bed; and slept pretty, but yet often waking.

1667 June 19-20

19. [...] I and my wife to talk; who did give me so bad an account of her and my father's method in burying our gold, that made me mad - and she herself is not pleased with it, she believing that my sister knows of it. My father and she did it on Sunday when they were gone to church, in open daylight in the midst of the garden, where for aught they knew, many eyes might see them; which put me into such trouble, that I was almost

Volume I

The Rise of the Gold Standard, 1660-1819

mad about it, and presently cast about how to have it back again to secure it here, the times being a little better now; at least, at White-hall they seem as if they were - but one way or another, I am resolved to free them from the place if I can get them. Such was my trouble at this, that I fell out with my wife; that though new come to town, I did not sup with her nor speak to her tonight, but to bed and sleep.

20. [...] At night, my wife and I to walk and talk again about our gold, which I am not quiet in my mind to be safe; and therefore will think of some way to remove it, it troubling me very much. So home with my wife to supper and to bed - miserable hot weather all night it was.

1667 October 10-12

10. [...] my father and I with a dark lantern, it now being night, into the garden with my wife and there went about the great work to dig up my gold. But Lord, what a tosse I was for some time in, that they could not justly tell where it was, that I begun heartily to sweat and be angry that they should not agree better upon the place, and at last to fear that it was gone; but by and by, poking with a spit, we found it, and then begun with a spudd to lift up the ground, but good God, to see how sillily they did it, not half a foot under ground and in sight of the world from a hundred places if anybody by accident were near-hand, and within sight of a neighbour's window and their hearing also, being close by; only, my father says that he saw them all gone to church before he begun the work when he laid the money, but that doth not excuse it to me; but I was out of my wits almost, and the more from that upon lifting up the earth with the spud, I did discern that I scattered the pieces of gold round about the ground among the grass and loose earth; and taking up the Iron head-pieces wherein they were put, I perceive the earth was got among the gold and wet, so that the bags were all rotten, all the notes, that I could not tell what in the world to say to it, not knowing how to judge what was wanting or what had been lost by Gibson in his coming down, which, all put together, did make me mad; and at last was forced to take up the head-pieces, dirt and all, and as many of the scattered pieces as I could with the dirt discern by the candlelight, and carry them up into my brother's chamber and there lock them up till I had eat a little supper; and then all people going to bed, W. Hewer and I did all alone, with several pales of water and basins, at last wash the dirt off the pieces and parted the pieces and the dirt, and then begun to tell;* [the asterisk is Pepys's own] and by a note which I had of the value of the whole (in my pocket) do I find that there was short above 100 pieces, which did make me mad; and considering that the neighbour's house was so near, that we could not suppose we could speak to one another in the garden at the place where the gold lay (especially by my father being deaf) but they must know what we had been doing on, I feared that they might in the night come and gather some pieces and prevent us the next morning; so W. Hewer and I out again about midnight (for it was now grown so late) and there by candlelight did make shift to gather 45 pieces more - and so in and to cleanse them, and by this time it was past 2 in the morning; and so to bed, with my mind pretty quiet to think that I have recovered so many. And then to bed, and I lay in the trundle-bed, the girl being gone to bed to my wife.

[11.] And I lay there in some disquiet all night, telling the clock till it was daylight; and then rose and called Mr. Hewer, and he and I, with pails and a Sive, did lock ourselves into the garden and there gather all the earth about the place into pails, and then Sive those pails in one of the summer-houses (just as they do for Dyamonds in other parts of the

Volume I

The Rise of the Gold Standard, 1660-1819

world); and there to our great content did with much trouble by 9 a-clock, and by that time we emptied several pails and could not find one, we did make the last night's 45 up 79; so that we are come to about 20 or 30 of what I think the true number should be, and perhaps within less; and of them I may reasonably think that Mr. Gibson might lose some, so that I am pretty well satisfied that my loss is not great and do bless God that it is so well; and do leave my father to make a second examination of the dirt - which he promises he will do; and poor man, is mightily troubled for this accident which is unusual; and so gives me some kind of content to remember how painful it is sometimes to keep money, as well as to get it, and how doubtful I was how to keep it all night and how to secure it in London. And so got all my gold put up in bags; and so having the last night wrote to my Lady Sandwich [i.e., Jemima, the wife of the 1st Earl of Sandwich] to lend me John Bowles to go along with me my Journy, not telling her the reason, but it was only to secure my gold, we to breakfast; and then about 10 a-clock took coach, my wife and I, and Willett and W. Hewer, and Murford and Bolwes (whom my Lady lent me), and my brother John on horseback; with these four I thought myself pretty safe. [...] My gold, I put into a basket and set under one of the seats; and so my work every quarter of an hour was to look to see whether all was well, and did ride in great fear all the day; but it was a pleasant day and good company, and I mightily contented. Mr. Sheply saw me beyond St. Neotts and there parted, and we straight to Stevenage, through Baldock lanes, which are already very bad. And at Stevenage we came well before night, and all safe; and there with great care I got the gold up to the chamber, my wife carrying one bag and the girl another and W. Hewer the rest in the basket, and set it all under a bed in our chamber; and then sat down to talk and were very pleasant, satisfying myself, among other things from Jo. Bowles, in some terms of Hunting and about deere, bucks, and does; and so anon to supper, and very merry we were and a good supper; and after supper to bed. Brecocke alive still, and the best Host I know almost.

12. Up, and eat our breakfast and set out about 9 a-clock; and so to Barnett, where we stayed and baited (the weather very good all day and yesterday) and by 5 a-clock got home, where I find all well; and did bring my gold, to my heart's content, very safe home, having not this day carried it in a basket but in our hands: the girl took care of one and my wife the other bag, and I the rest - and being afeared of the bottom of the coach, lest it should break; and therefore was at more ease in my mind then I was yesterday.

Source: Latham and Matthews, eds., 1974, pp. . 260-266, 278-281, 471-476, esp. 262-266, 280, 472-475.