

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

1717 December 22

Royal proclamation of King George I forbidding the exchange of guineas for more than 21s. each and effectively putting England on a bimetallic standard. The proclamation was issued in response to the recommendation for such a valuation of the guinea put forward by Sir Isaac Newton in his report of the 17th of September of the same year.

G. R. Whereas the value of the Gold, compared with the value of the Silver in the current coins of this realm, as paid and received, is greater in proportion than the value of gold is to the value of silver in neighbouring nations; and the over-valuation of Gold in the current coins of this realm, hath been a great cause of carrying out and lessening the species of the Silver coins thereof, which is highly prejudicial to the trade of this kingdom: And whereas the Commons in parliament have, by their Address, humbly besought us, That we would be graciously pleased to issue our royal Proclamation, to forbid all persons to utter or receive any of the pieces of Gold, called Guineas, at any greater or higher rate than one and twenty shillings for each guinea, and so proportionably for any greater or lesser pieces of coined gold, which we have graciously condescended unto. Now, for, and towards remedying the said evil, we have thought fit, with the advice of our privy Council, to issue this our Proclamation, hereby strictly prohibiting all and every person and persons whatsoever, to utter or receive any of the pieces of Gold Coin of this Kingdom, commonly called Guineas, (which in our mint were coined only at twenty shillings each, but have been by our subjects paid and received at the rate of one and twenty shillings and six pence each) at any greater or higher rate or value than one and twenty shillings for each guinea, and so proportionably for the pieces of gold called half-guineas, double-guineas, and five pound pieces; and the other pieces of ancient Gold Coin of this Kingdom, which by their wearing may be diminished in their weight, at any greater or higher rate or value than as followeth, That is to say, the piece of gold now received and paid for three and twenty shillings and six pence, to be hereafter received and paid for three and twenty shillings, and no more. The piece of gold now received and paid for five and twenty shillings and six pence, to be hereafter received and paid for five and twenty shillings, and no more; and so proportionably for smaller pieces of the like gold coin; at which Rates and Values we do hereby declare the said respective pieces of coined gold to be current. And we do hereby strictly charge and command all our loving subjects whatsoever, that they do not presume to receive or pay the gold coins of this realm, at any greater rates or values than the rates or values aforesaid, upon of our highest displeasure and upon pain of the greatest punishment that by law may be inflicted upon them for their default, negligence and contempt in this behalf.

Source: Cobbett's Parliamentary history 7, cols. 524-526; Li, 1963, pp. 156-157; Calendar of Treasury Books 31, pt. 3, p. 730.