

A N D whereas also the Sheriffs of this Province, whose Duty it is to convey Letters for Her Majesty's Service, are very much complain'd of for their Negligence therein, Be it Enacted by the Authority, Advice and Consent aforesaid, That if any High Sheriff, or his Deputies, receive any Publick Letter, he shall (if required) give Receipt for the same, shewing the Day and Hour when he received the same; and when he delivers the same Letter to the next Sheriff, or Party to whom directed, the Party that receives the same, shall likewise, if required, give such like Receipt to the Sheriff that first received it; and if any High Sheriff, or his Deputy or Deputies, for whom the High Sheriff shall be answerable, shall refuse to give such Receipt, to be proved by the Oath of the Person demanding such Receipt, or, having received such Letter, shall wilfully neglect immediately to forward such Letter as directed, so that such Letter is stopt Twenty four Hours longer than it reasonably need be (Respect being had to the Wind and Weather) the High Sheriff shall forfeit the Sum of Two thousand Pounds of Tobacco in Cask; the One Moiety thereof to our Sovereign Lady the Queen, Her Heirs and Successors, for the Support of the Government of this Province, the other Moiety to him or them that will sue for the same, to be recovered by Action of Debt in any Court of Record of this Province; and such Neglect of such Sheriffs shall be evidenced by the Dates of the Receipts.

A N D whereas the Trade and Commerce of this Province is in great Measure confined to *England*, and the Inhabitants of this Province of Necessity are obliged to lodge their Effects, and wholly correspond with the Merchants in *England*, by which Means we may have great Dependance upon their Advice in Trade, and often Protested Bills of Exchange are remitted hither to the several Persons interested therein, which are sometimes of considerable Value, and for want of due Care of such Letters, in which the same are inclosed, no settled Post Houses being appointed for the Reception of them, many times sundry Evil minded Persons find Occasion clandestinely to take such Letters out of the Publick Houses, where they are generally left, and break open and conceal the same, to the great Detriment of sundry of the Inhabitants, Merchants and Traders; and many Ill designing Persons, who have drawn Bills of Exchange, not having any Bottom in *England* to answer the same, well knowing and observing to what Merchant or Merchants such Bills are remitted, do diligently watch the Returns of such Bills from the Merchants, and guessing at some Letters to be the Coverts of their Protested Bills, get them into their Hands, and destroy the same, to the great Detriment of many honest Traders and Dealers, and others concerned; and many times others, out of a Dishonest and Inquisitive Temper, secretly take and break open Publick and Private Country Letters, to the great Dissatisfaction and Prejudice of several the Inhabitants, Her Majesty's good Subjects, and great Delay of Publick Business: For the Prevention thereof for the future, Be it Enacted by the Authority, Advice and Consent aforesaid, That if any Person or Persons whatsoever shall hereafter presume to take and break open the Seal or Seals of any Letter or Letters whatsoever, not being unto him or them directed, or not having especial Licence from the Persons, to whom the same are directed, their Executors or Administrators so to do, shall, upon due Conviction thereof, either in the Provincial or County Courts of this Province, suffer Imprisonment of his, her, or their Bodies, for and during the Space of Six Days without Bail or Mainprize, and forfeit the Sum of Five Pounds *Sterling*; the One Moiety to Her Majesty, Her Heirs and Successors, for the Support of Government, the other Moiety to him or them that shall inform or sue for the same, to be recovered in any Court of Record within this Province, by Action of Debt, Bill, Plaint, or Information, wherein no Essoign, Protection, or Wager of Law to be allowed. And in Case any Person or Persons shall break open any Letter or Letters directed to his Excellency Her Majesty's Governor, or any of Her Majesty's Council of this Province, for the