

mitted hither, to the several Persons interested therein, which are some times of considerable Value; and for Want of due Care of such Letters in which the same are enclosed, 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, 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 Distraction and Prejudice of several the Inhabitants, her Majesties 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 open the Seal or Seals of any Letter or Letters whatsoever, not being unto him or them directed, or not having special Licence (from the Person 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 Moyety to Her Majesty, Her Heirs and Successors, for the Support of Government, the other Moyety 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 Esloyn, Protection or Wager of Law to be allowed.

Prohibited

On pain of Imprisonment, &c.

And in case any Person or Persons shall break open any Letter or Letters directed to his Excellency, Her Majesty's Governour, or any of Her Majesty's Council of this Province, for the Time being, or other publick Letter, subscribed or directed for Her Majesty's Service, and signed by any Person having Authority so to do, and shall be thereof legally convicted, he, she or they, so offending, shall suffer Two Months Imprisonment without Bail or Mainprize, and forfeit to our Sovereign Lady the QUEEN, Her Heirs and Successors, the Sum of Twenty Pounds Sterling, to be recovered and divided as aforesaid.

The Punishment for breaking open Publick Letters

And be it further Enacted, by the Authority, Advice and Consent aforesaid, That One Act of Assembly of this Province, made at a Session of Assembly begun and held at the Port of *Annapolis* the Twenty Sixth Day of March, *Anno Domini*, Seventeen Hundred and Seven, entituled *An Act to prevent the Abuse of Breaking open and Concealing publick and private Letters*, and every Article, Clause and Thing therein contained, be and is hereby repealed, and made null and void.

A former Act repealed