

C H A P. II. Debt, in any Court of Record of this Province. And such Neglect of such Sheriffs shall be evidenced by the Dates of the Receipts.

Abuses in opening, concealing, and destroying Letters enumerated.

VII. **And 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 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 Public 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 public and private Country Letters, to the great Dissatisfaction and Prejudice of several the Inhabitants, her Majesty's good Subjects, and great Delay of Public Business: For the Prevention thereof for the future;

Persons breaking open private Letters without Leave, shall suffer 6 Days Imprisonment, and forfeit 5 ^{l.} Sterling.

VIII. **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, Complaint or Information, wherein no Effoin, Protection or Wager of Law to be allowed.

Persons breaking open Public Letters, to suffer 2 Months Imprisonment, and forfeit 20 ^{l.} Sterling.

IX. **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 Time being, or other Public Letter superscribed, 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 Act of 1707, ch. 2, repealed.

X. **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, entitled, *An Act to prevent the Abuse of breaking open, and concealing public and private Letters*; and every Article, Clause and Thing therein contained, be and is hereby repealed, and made null and void.

Examined and Compared with the Original Act, REVERDY GHISELIN,
THOMAS BACON.

C H A P.