

*Reasons humbly offered against the passing of a Bill, Intituled, A
Bill for Regulating and Encouraging the Art of Weaving.*

IT is humbly offered that this Sealing of Foreign Silks and Stuffs as proposed, tends to the destruction of Trade, and in itself is Impracticable. For, can it be imagined that the owner of every Ship wherein such Silks or Stuffs are imported (if compell'd to come to *London* to have them Sealed before their going to the Port to which they were bound) shall not receive great damage thereby, inasmuch as Freight-mens Wages and Victuals must be paid for; which with demurrage will necessarily inhanse the price of the Commodity. Besides such Sealing, (considering the great quantities that are commonly imported together, and belonging to several Persons, and bound for several Ports,) must necessarily take up a vast length of time, and tend to the vast prejudice of those which stay last for their Seals.

First, By occasioning the loss of their Market, which will be supplied by those who are first dispatcht.

Secondly, By the great damage that such Silk must necessarily receive by lying at the Custom-house, and being cut open, and unfolding each Piece, without which they cannot come to the ends to Seal them, whereby such Silks and Stuffs will be much creas't, sullied, and tumbled, which will much hinder the Sale.

And Thirdly, It may occasion the losing of the Fabricks, by which the Merchants can only discover the length and quality of his goods, and what they Cost, and thereby judge at what price to Sell.

Fourthly, This may occasion great damage to the Merchant by the loss of several Pieces of Silks and Stuffs, which may amount to more than the advantage he can reasonably expect by the Cargoe Imported.

And Fifthly, The charge of maintaining of Servants, and others who must be employed to attend such Sealing, and the damage the Merchant sustains by his Servants absence (all such time) from his employ at home, must without doubt be great, considering the vast time that the unfolding and folding up every Piece of Silks and Stuffs will take up.

I I. Next consider the inconveniencies that may happen by the making of every Piece forfeited that shall be found unsealed.

Suppose the Merchant shall cause every Piece to be Sealed, such Seal is affixt but at one end, and may by accident be lost off; or the Merchant afterwards sells to the Mercer, whose Customer makes choice to take some Yards from off that end to which the Seal is affixt; or suppose a Countrey Chapman will buy half a Piece of Silk, and make choice of that end which is Sealed, either the Mercer must as often as the Seal is cut off the Piece, carry the remainder to be new Sealed at the Custom-house, or at Weavers-Hall, or else he is liable to have the same seized by any person, who under pretence of Searching for French Ribbons and Laces, by the power in the seventh Paragraph of the Bill desired, shall come into his House, Shop, or Warehouse, and to his great trouble and damage unfold all his Silks and Stuffs, and if he find any Pieces unsealed, seize and carry them away as forfeited (although but Remnants.)

This will beget multiplicity of Suits, occasion vast expences, greatly discourage Trade, hinder the importation of great quantities of those Commodities which are the product of our manufacture of Wool, put the King to a great charge to maintain Officers, to Seal, Stamp and Mark such Silks and Stuffs; and instead of advancing the King's Revenue (which at present he hath) will prejudice the same above 200000*li*. per annum, by hindering the importation of so great quantities of Silks and Stuffs as at present are imported, and consequently the carrying of great quantities of Cloth, Stuffs, Searges, Fish, Lead, and Tin, and other Commodities of the growth of our own Countrey now exported, and which pay the King a duty of Custom upon their going out; the product of which Silks and Stuffs imported as aforesaid, are.

While

Whilst all foreign Princes are contriving to facilitate and encourage Trade, it is humbly hoped, nothing will be done in *England* to render the same burthenom and difficult, if not altogether impossible to be carried on.

III. As to the Weavers desires, That all Silks and Stuffs made in *London*, or within ten Miles, be brought to their Hall, there to be viewed, and Sealed, and to pay for each Seal; and if any Piece be sold before Sealed, the Offerer or Patter to Sale, or the Buyer, (if a Trader in that Commodity,) shall forfeit for each Piece.

This, as is humbly conceived, is, under colour and pretence of doing a publick good, a design of the Weavers to create to themselves a Monopoly by Act of Parliament.

The end proposed by them, is to distinguish between foreign and our home-made Silk and Stuffs, and to encourage the English to make better Work.

Will not every man make it his business to advance his own Interest and Trade, by striving to make his Wares as good as he can, and if possible to exceed the foreign-made, that so they being brought out of repute, he may himself have a greater Trade?

The rather for that if he make not good Ware, he cannot sell, then must the Silk-man never be paid; and what follows, but his Trade is thereby destroyed?

But they do not propose that the Seals shall not be affixed to any Pieces of Stuffs or Silks that do not hold out the true length and breadth, or that is otherwise deceitfully made; No, be they as false made, as slight, as short, as narrow as they will, bring them but to Weavers-Hall and pay for a Seal, and then a Stamp shall be put upon them equal to the best.

And it is to be feared, that in a short time the Weavers Seals and Marks, if set up, will be sold by the like measures, and at as easie rates as the Aulnagers Seals are, which at this day give a greater disturbance unto Countrey people, and discouragement to the Woollen Manufacture, then any thing that is on foot in *England*.

It is to be observed, That least the Weavers designs should be discovered, and their intended Monopoly prevented, they have subtilly taken off the Merchants Objections by providing that all Foreign Stuffs and Silks shall be Sealed at the Kings charge; but the home-made Silk, made by poor men that can hardly earn bread for their Families, the sealing of these must be paid out of their labour. which design they had on foot in 1640. and having then got a Patent, demanded six-pence a Piece for Seals; but that soon came to nothing.

It is humbly offered, that the inconveniency, charge and loss of time in coming to the Hall with every Piece to be Sealed, will be great, and tend to the poor Weavers utter Ruine.

For if this be granted, then let their Customer (as frequently now they are forced to do) come to them for a Remnant of Stuff or Silk before the Piece be fully wrought off, to match with any old Silk or Stuffs, or to Sell a pattern for a Suit or Gown, he must not sell this before he goes to the Hall, and waits (no man knows how long) there for a Seal; by means whereof he is hindred in his work, and before he can return, the Mercer or his Customer is gone to some other Shop; by which both Weaver and Mercer are greatly prejudiced, besides the prejudice that a man shall sustain in discovering his inventions and patterns too early.

III. As to the pains and penalties upon Counterfeiters of Seals and Stamps, and Sealing of Foreign Commodities as Home-made, if the Seal be not established, the penalties fall; if the Seals be established, the Law ought to be obeyed. But it is prayed, that consideration may be taken of the severity of the penalty imposed.

V. As to the desire that all Merchants in *London*, or within Miles thereof, having any Silks or Stuffs by them, should before day of bring in each Piece containing ten Yards, or above, to the Custom-house, or to Weaver-Hall, to be Sealed; without paying any thing for Sealing.

This is the most mischievous and unreasonable thing that can be imagined, very hazardous and chargeable, and the greatest inconveniency that can be invented to fall upon Tradesmen.

For every man pays with a witness for Sealing, who shall be forced to send his

his goods out of his Shop to Weavers-Hall, or the Custom-house, and pay for carrying of them and bringing them back, and for Servants attending there till they can be Sealed; besides the hazard and (which will be almost impossible to prevent) the loss of many Odd Remnants, and disturnishing his Shop, losing his Trade for the time the goods are out of his possession, and perhaps his Customers, for not having goods at home to furnish them with when they have occasion; besides the damage that will come to their Wares by tumbling, dirtying, fallying, and otherwise as aforesaid, it may prove greatly prejudicial to the Creditors of such Tradesman who may of late have had great losses, and are ready to fail; for how glad would such be of having an opportunity, under colour of carrying their Wares to be Sealed, to carry them and themselves where they shall be out of their Creditors reach?

VI. The next thing desired, which relates to *Canterbury, Norwich, Exeter, Manchester, &c.* their sealing their Wares, and Workmen that live far distant in the Countries to bring their Wares to the next Corporation to be sealed.

How unreasonable and impracticable this will be, is left to Consideration. And further, it is humbly offered, that it is utterly to destroy the poor Weaver who lives remote from a Corporation; for now the Merchant or his Factor come to their houses, take their Silks or Stuffs from them as they make them, and bring their money home to their doors; but for the future, either the Weaver must be without money till he hath made a good number of pieces, or else ride to a Corporation-Town with each piece he makes, there to be sealed; which may cost him a days journey forward, and another backward, the Consequence is his ruine by the loss of time from Work, the expence and charges of horse and man, and the danger of fighting into Company, (which such poor men are too much addicted unto,) and spending his money before he come home, to the impoverishing of his Family, which by such means may at last come to be maintained by the Parish.

VII. As to the prohibition desired from the use of the broad great Tape-loom, on pretence it hinders many people from Working which used to be employed in single Loom, and make the Work the slighter, to the abusing and defrauding of the Buyer.

It is humbly conceived, the Parliament of *England* will never pass an Act to discourage Ingenuity, hinder Invention, or to prohibit a man from making use of such Invention when found out, to confine one man that he shall do no more Work than another, or that if a man can make 16 pieces of Tape or Ribbon together, he shall make but one, whereby a young man that hath no charge shall earn as much as he that hath a Wife and 12 Children to maintain: This seems unreasonable, the rather for that by this Invention the Commodity may be made as good and yet much cheaper, and enable *England* to furnish foreign parts cheaper than they can make them. And with these Looms all Yarn from the *Indies* is wrought off here, which otherwise must be sent into *Holland* to be manufactured, from whence it would be returned at cheaper Rates than without these Engines the same can be manufactured in *England*. These Looms have been used above 60 years, many Families bred up to the use of them, that can use no other.

If now put down, they and their Families are ruined, and great quantities of the Yarn imported must be exported, to the great damage of the King in his Customs. And which is worse, the English cannot transport the Manufactures thereof, by reason they will be underfold by Foreigners.

When Printing was invented, did it not put an end too, or take much from Writers employments; was Printing therefore prohibited?

Doth not the Weaving of Silk-stockings take off from Knitting? is it therefore put down?

VIII. As to what is desired, that a power may be put into any persons hand suspending any French Lace or Ribbon in any House, Shop or Warehouse, that trades in these Commodities by a Warrant from a Justice with a Constable in the day-time, to come into his House, Shop or Warehouse, seize and take away such Goods, deliver them to the Custom-house, there to be detained till the Owner proves them made in *England*; which if he do, he shall have double Costs; if he do not, the Goods to be forfeited.

If this should be granted, it would put a power into every Weaver or other person that hath any prejudice to a Shop-keeper, Mercer, Milliner or Haberdasher, to ruine him at pleasure, come into his House upon suspicion onely, and without proving any thing against them, seise his Goods, carry them out of his Shop, lodge them where it may not be in his power in four or five months to have them back, because the Term may not come sooner; nay, perhaps incapacitate him from ever having them, or being in a condition to prosecute his right, by dis-furnishing his Shop, and thereby occasioning the loss of his Trade and of his Customers for want of them; and when he doth recover them, they may be out of fashion, and so lie dead on his hand. And it may go further, namely to ruine him in his Credit and Reputation, and be the occasion that many a man that lives by his Credit, his having all his Creditors fall upon him, to his and his Families utter ruine.

It will be very hard to put this power into the hands of every Weaver or Handicrafts Tradesman in *London*, and for their encouragement to give them two third parts of the Penalties and Forfeitures, and the King onely one, howbeit it may have formerly been judged meet to be given to the Farmers and Commissioners of His Majesties Customs, persons of Credit and Reputation, that cannot be imagined will do any ill thing out of prejudice to any particular person.

And further this seems the harder, because 'tis put upon the Owner to prove the Goods to be home-made; so that now every Shop-keeper whenever he buys a piece of Tape or Ribbon, must put the Seller to prove and give Security that it is not foreign-made; and if he should do so, that will not serve the turn, unless he prove it so when it is seized. Suppose the Seller and the Buyer dead, and the Commodities come to an Executor, how can they prove it? Milliners and Haberdashers buy their Wares at their doors of the Weavers and Lace-men. Suppose a Merchant employ English Weavers to sell French Goods, the Weaver affirms them to be English Goods, the Shop-keeper buys them, they are afterwards seized, the Shop-keeper proving them to be bought of an English Weaver, will not make them English Goods; the Weaver may be dead, or if alive, he may upon his Oath swear they are French; the Buyer knew not of it, for that he told ~~the Shop-keeper that they were French, and taking this to be the truth of the Case) must the Owner of those Goods swear them to be French; this seems unreasonable, and will tend to the destruction of Trade,~~ so the great inquiet of Tradesmen, and there can no way be found out how a Shop-keeper shall deal safely with any Weaver or Lace-man for any of those Commodities, if the Act desired shall be passed.

The pretence in the preamble of the Bills is, that Weaving is of great use to the Kingdom, and so in truth it is. And that by frequent importation of foreign-wrought Silks and Stuffs, (most of which are conveyed in without paying of duty,) English Artists are impoverished, and the King of his duty defrauded. This is a great mistake, for neither so many pieces of Silk, or so good, or of such sorts as are worn here, can be made in *England*. And that the King is not defrauded, will evidently appear by the Customs-books of *London*, *Dover* and the Out-Ports. If there be any discouragement to the Weavers, they are the occasions of it themselves, in that notwithstanding they neither can make so good Silks or Stuffs, or such sorts as are made beyond the Seas, yet they will live higher and have double the Wages, and after all die poor, whilst Foreigners by living upon hard Fare with half the Wages grows rich; and this is the onely reason that wrought Silk from beyond Seas are afforded cheaper then home-made; So that upon all these Accounts, it is humbly hoped the Bill will not pass.