

THE C A S E

OF THE

Clothiers, Weavers, Hofiers, Merchants, Drapers, Mercers, and other Dealers in the Woollen Manufactures; with Relation to the Bill now depending, for the Transferring the Collection of the Duty of Aulnage to the Custome-houfe, and giving a Recompence to the Crown for the same.

The Office of Aulnage was Constituted for the Measuring, Weighing, and Searching of Cloth; And to the intent that the Dealers therein might not be deceived, the Seal was put on, to signifie the Goodness thereof, and the Duty paid in Consideration of the performance of that Service.

The Subsidy of Aulnage was granted to the Crown, in consideration of the Releasing Forfeitures, that were grievous to the Dealers in Cloath.

The Office of the Aulnager is now become altogether unnecessary, and no ways Answering the End of its first Constitution, and is only continued for the Collecting the Duties due as aforesaid, and the Seal now only signifies, (as a Coquet at the Custom-house) that the Duty is paid.

The manner of Collecting these Duties, is not only very chargeable to the Crown, but Extremely Oppressive and Burthen-
some to the Subject, and a great hindrance to the Trade of the Woollen Manufactures.

These Duties are very Chargeable in the Collecting, as appears by Accounts delivered by the Farmers of the said Duties, (to the Committee appointed by the House of Commons) by which Accounts they set forth, That they Collected in one year, from the 25 of December, 87, to the 25 December 88,

12344 £

Besides the Duty on Stockings, Blankets, and Rugs.

By Accounts likewise delivered by the Farmers to the said Committee, it doth appear, that they made clear of all Charges, from the 25 of March 86, to 25 March 89, (taking the mean proportion) per annum

7350 £

So that the Charge in Collecting, comes to per annum, above

5000 "

The Rent that is now paid by the Farmers to the Dutcheffs of Richmond, who has the Grant from the Crown, is

3138 £

The Fine that was paid for a Lease of Twenty one years, was 9000 £ which being reduced to a Yearly Rent

900 £

comes to per annum

4038 £

Rent and Fine comes to per annum

200 £

Out of which a Small Rent (by the Patent) is Reserved to the Crown, not exceeding per annum

The manner of Collecting these Duties is very Grievous to all the Dealers in the Woollen Manufactures. For,

That in many places for the Payment of a Half penny or Penny Duty, they are forced to carry their Goods to several Offices, at great distance from their Habitations to be Sealed, by which means their Goods are much damaged, their Inventions Exposed their Markets oft times lost, which is much more Grievous than the payment of the Duty.

That in other places they are forced to send for Seals many Miles, and many times the Aulnagers not having Seals, the Clothes for want thereof, have been sent up to London, or other places, where they have been Seized, and the Clothiers put to great Charge and Trouble to have them again.

That they make frequent Searches at the Dressers, Dyers, Pressers, &c. And if by any accident the Seals be dropped off, as it will oft times happen they Seize and carry away what they find Unsealed.

That they make frequent Searches at Inns, Search Waggons, or Horse Packs upon the Road, Search Fairs, Markets, Blackwell-Hall, Custom-house Keys, Merchants and Factors, Shops and Warehouses, and where else they please, Seize and carry away what they find Unsealed.

That they enter into and Search all Retailers Shops, and Warehouses, rifle all their Goods, disturb their Markets, Seize and carry away either whole Pieces or Remnants if Unsealed, although they have been Sealed; this being such an Extraordinary Grievance, the Retailers have been forced to Yearly Contributions to be freed from so great an Inconvenience.

That all Goods Seized are presently Compounded for, or else carried to the Aulnagers Houses or Offices, where the Owners are forced to attend and Compound, at what Rates these Aulnagers please: Or if they refuse, then are their Goods returned into the Exchequer, as Forfeited to the Crown, where they must Sue for them; which Remedy being in most cases worse than the Disease, forceth the Complainants to suffer the loss of their Goods, (many times unjustly) rather than be at so great a Charge and Trouble to obtain them again.

That although it has been made appear that the Goods have been Seized wrongfully, yet have they refused to deliver them again, until certain Fees, as they pretend is due, for Porteridge, Warehouse Room, &c. be allowed.

Thus are all the Dealers in the Woollen Manufactures oppressed, and all this for a Small and Inconsiderable Duty, not amounting to Five Shillings for a hundred pound value.

Thus are the Wheels of Trade clogged with an unnecessary Office, and Unreasonable Officers, who under the specious pretences of Collecting and Increasing the Revenue of the Crown, have been, and still are very Industrious, to Collect and Increase their own Profits and Gain, to loss, discouragement and vexation of many Thousand Laborious Subjects.

For Remedy of all which Mischiefs it has been proposed, That the Office and Seal should be wholly taken away, and that the Duties should be made payable at the Custom-house, for such Manufactures only as are Exported.

For which purpose a Bill has been Four several times before the Parliament in former Sessions.

A Bill for the same purpose is now depending, and if the Rates that are now incerted in this Bill, had been Collected at the Custom-house in those years in which the Aulnagers set forth, That they made clear of all Charges 7350 £. they would have produced near 8000 £. per annum, as by Accounts abstracted out of the Custom-house Books is most plainly to be demonstrated.

The Rates that are incerted in this Bill, amounts unto about 2000 £. per annum, more then the Rates that were incerted in the Bill that was depending in the last Sessions, and comes to about 5000 £. per annum more than the Aulnagers made clear of all Charges in those years when their Exactions were very great.

It is therefore humbly hoped this Bill will soon be passed into a Law, and the Dealers in the Woollen Manufacture thereby delivered from the Burdens and Oppressions they have for a long time laboured under.