

THE
MARYLAND GAZETTE,

Containing the freshest Advices foreign and domestic.

THURSDAY, April 5, 1753.

Mr. GREN,

IT HAPPENED the other Day to go to a Public House, where were two Gentlemen who have been several Years Factors, and bought a great deal of Tobacco for their Employers (who reside in Great Britain), and some Planters, talking about the Inspection Law.

As I was known to the Company, I sat down with them, and soon became surprized; when I heard those Gentlemen expressing their Dislike of that Law, and wishing it was expired; and I was the more so, because I had myself, before then, often heard them declare it to be, in their Opinion, a very advantageous one for the Country.

I spoke what I could in it's Favour, and begged they would give some Reasons for the Change of their Sentiments, and was candidly answered, "That the late Prices they, and others, had given for Tobacco, was owing to the Law, and if that ceased, they could buy it as cheap, as they used to do, before the making of it."

I was struck with this Answer; and as I have had no better an Education than what this Country afforded, a great many Years ago, I left off discoursing on a Subject I did not think myself able to defend against those Gentlemen.

But, Mr. Gren, altho' I can't talk, I can think; and therefore, on my going home, and reflecting on what passed, I determined to put my Thoughts in Writing, and by your Means lay them before my Countrymen, the People of Maryland; the Subject being, as I think, the most interesting they can have in their Consideration.

And first, considered, and found, That all the Expenses and Hardships attending the Execution of a new Law, were borne and overcome; and the great Difficulties, which we imagined would attend it, removed; and that now every Planter knew how to order his Tobacco, so that it would certainly pass Inspection. I looked over my Sheriff's Accounts, compared them with what I used formerly to pay, and found my present Disbursement far short of what I was wont to pay for the County Levy; and as this is true in my Case, it must be so in that of every Master of a Family in Maryland. I observed, in particular, that I saved Two hundred Pounds of Tobacco each Year in my Payment to the Minister of the Parish; for I have yearly paid for twenty Taxables; and that for what Lawyers Fees I have been charged with, instead of paying One hundred Pounds of Tobacco, I have paid but Seventy two; and that in the same Proportion I have discharged the Clerk, Sheriffs, and several other Officers, the Fees which they had a Right to demand of me.

These I think considerable Savings, and worthy to be looked on as such, by every Man among us. I then considered the Advantage of having Tobacco Notes in my Pocket, as giving me Credit for the Quantity mentioned in them wherever I went, and that I was thereby at large to dispose of them when, to whom, and where I pleased; whereas, before this Act, my Credit could not be expected to go beyond my own Neighbourhood, or, at farthest, where I might be known. And, on looking into the Act, I found (which greatly pleased me) that the Legislature had taken a particular Care of the poorest People among us, by allowing the Commissary General no Fees on small Estates; and whereas, by the old Act, none but those under Ten Pounds were deemed small Estates, yet, at present, by the Inspection Law, every one under Thirty Pounds is looked on as such; and that the Deputy Commissary, instead of being restrained from passing Accounts, as they then were, without a special Commission if the Estate exceeded Fifty Pounds, they may now pass them without such Commission, if they do not exceed One hundred and fifty.

These surely are great Benefits derived to those Persons, whom every Country should particularly favour, the Widow and the Orphan.

These Advantages are evident to me, and it will be observed quite distinct from any Relation to the Motive which influenced the Merchants; but when I came to consider the Reasons they gave, then it was the Utility, and even Necessity, of that Law, appeared in a yet stronger Light; for, altho' it should be true, that the Prices for which Tobacco has lately sold be not wholly owing to the Inspection Law, yet if that has been one Cause of it (and that it has been the principal one is, I think, evident to all, but especially to those who live near to, or are conversant in Virginia; because in the several Years our Law has been in Force, the Price for their Tobacco has not, but for ours has advanced; a Demonstration that the Peace did not procure it; for if it had, it must have risen as well there as here), ought it not, when added to the other already mentioned, to make it eligible to us: And if the Merchants, when it is expired, buy it cheaper (and that they will, I fear we shall most sadly feel) than they can if it continues, Pray who must the Loss fall upon? Must it not be on us Planters? And do we not know, is it not plain, that the greatest Loss of all must be borne by the Poorest, altho' every one must inevitably suffer in some Proportion?

For my own Part, I have sixteen Negro Taxables, and a Tract of good Land on Potomack River, and, happen what will, can live; but, Mr. Gren, what will, what must become of the honest industrious Planter, who has but a small Portion of Property; and the no less honest, but more poor and laborious one, who rents Land, and may have only himself, a Wife, and small Children, to work? What, I say, must become of those, who, to be sure, make a great Part of our People? Why, I will hope, that to prevent so dire a Calamity to them and us, their and our worthy Representatives, at the very next Meeting, will do their utmost, in their Legislative Capacity, to extend the Time of the Continuance; for, pardon the Repetition, I must say again, that if the Merchants can buy Tobacco cheaper without, than with, the Law, they, and we, and all, must work for as much less as we lose by the Fall of Tobacco; and with this cruel Addition, that we must pay much more for the several Services before mentioned, than at present can be taken from us; for, every Body must know, that Tobacco was sold cheaper before the Quality and Convenience were regulated, than it has been since the Law which does regulate them has operated; Must not the same Cause ever produce the same Effect? Will it not be so again? It is evident the Tobacco Buyers wish and desire it: Pray let me ask, is that for their own, or our Sakes? I fear not for ours; therefore, let us do all in our Power to keep it up. Before the making the Law, it is certain, and well known, that some Merchants obliged the Planters to carry the Tobacco they agreed with them for, to Places where they kept Weights and Scales, and would not receive it 'til it had been examined by a Receiver, and weighed in the Scales; this Fact cannot be denied; and pray consider, did not each Tobacco Buyer, who did so, make for himself an Inspection Law; and did any good Consequence to the Planter follow from it?

Did those who took all this Trouble get any more for their Tobacco? I don't know one who did; if there were any, let them speak: This Manner of paying did not indeed relate to the Clergy, Officers, Lawyers, Public, or County Levies; but then the paying those Gentlemen so much as we then did, caused that those, who thus carried their Tobacco, had less to sell even on those Terms.

Have the People more Trouble now, than to carry their Tobacco as those did? No; But since they have been compelled to carry it, they have the many Profits I have already mentioned; all which, when that Compulsion ceases, we shall certainly be without.

Knowing this, can Tobacco Planters be enough infatuated, to consent themselves to the expiring of

a Law, whereby so much Tobacco is saved, and the rest sold for a higher Price?

You, my Friends, who live on or near Potomack, know well how useful such a Law has a long Time been to the Colony of Virginia; it is visible to you all, how much they have increased in Wealth since they enacted one; and, altho' at first many, very many of the Inhabitants there were utterly averse to it, yet how have the Profits arising by it reconciled them to it? Yes, it has so much, that you can scarce find a Man among them, who will not freely own that he looks on it's Continuance as necessary, not only for his own, but his Country's Well-Being; and this, notwithstanding our Law, for the last four Years, has clearly given a better Market than they have had; and shall we ourselves play the Game into their Hands, and use those very Means to make them Rich, whereby only we can become Poor? I will not suppose we can act thus preposterously.

If our Law ceases, must it not be certain that they will have the first Market? For it must be allowed prudent for every Purchaser to go to a Place where he is sure to get a good Commodity.

Can there be false Packing, false Tare, and Delay (by Tobacco not being rolled to certain Houses), to their Flats, in lading there?

May there not, will there not, be all these here? And are not those material and great Discouragements to Trade? And, if we permit a Possibility of such here, can we, ought we, to expect an equal Share of the Trade? It is impossible we should have it; and if we have not, are we not in worse Circumstances than they? And when it is considered, that we are made so by our own Act; the Reflection must surely rather aggravate the Misfortune than console us under it.

It is the Influence which some may have over the engaged, the weak, unwary, but honest, Planters, which I fear, should they become indifferent, or not earnest, for it's Continuance, our Representatives may apprehend that Indifference to proceed from Dislike, and therefore be less solicitous for it's Continuance; but I will oppose to that Fear, this Hope, that there can't be many of those we have delegated to serve us in Assembly, who, after the Experience which has been had of the Benefit of this Law, and knowing it's Enemies, need be excited to espouse a Bill giving it a longer Duration.

I wish I had Words capable of expressing the woeful Distress we must all be under, by a Conduct so injurious to the Country's Interest, as that will be, which suffers the Inspection Law to determine at it's present Period.

I write not for my own Sake; my Circumstances are as I have told, and I have, by my Situation, this great Advantage over many, that if that Law does determine, I can at any Time carry my Tobacco to Virginia; where I shall be sure it will pass Inspection, and thereby save the Price there given.

I don't say I shall, I heartily wish I may not be forced to do so; but, since it will then be in my Power, give me Leave to mention it as a certain Truth, that Tobacco being carried hence thither, must be greatly hurtful to this Province.

Every Hoghead which goes from hence must enlarge their, and lessen our, Quantity of good Tobacco (for none other will be carried over); and what Effect that must have on our Market, every one may easily see; but altho' this Practice will be attended with such a Consequence, I cannot say that I am sure I shall be able to resist the Temptation, if, by doing so, I can certainly get five and twenty per Cent by it.

This will be confessed to be such a Temptation, as I incline to believe some of those who may read this; no more than myself, might have Self-denial enough to overcome; but I most sincerely hope the Occasion will not be given, for if it should, the Way will also thereby be opened for such Tobacco to come from thence, as will not pass their Inspection.