

own Commissions. By this Means, a Man, whose Misfortune it is to have his Tobacco sold to a Bankrupt, will be brought in Debt to the Merchant Eighteen or Nineteen Pounds a Hoghead, besides losing the net Produce; which is so terrible a Circumstance, that some are obliged to make a further Allowance to the Merchant to make good all Debts; and those that will not submit to these Terms are continually exposed to Ruin, and he that has the best Estate is most in Danger.

The Tret and Clough, which is an Allowance to the Freemen of London upon all waisting Commodities, is another heavy Article upon us: It is deducted out of the net Tobacco which pays the Duty upon every Sale to any Retailer, and amounts to above Twenty Shillings upon a Hoghead. We are allowed at the Custom House Eight Pounds upon a Hoghead by Act of Parliament for Draught, and Two Pounds for Sample; but this the Merchant in most Cases converts to his own Use, and thereby deprives the Planter of about Seven Shillings upon every Hoghead, and very often more. And whereas formerly all the petty Charges upon Tobacco did amount to little more than Five Shillings per Hoghead, which we conceive did exceed considerably what was really paid, the present Set of Merchants have of late contrived to raise that Article to upwards of Ten Shillings in all their Accounts, and very frequently to more than Fifteen Shillings. One extraordinary Charge, among others, is Three Pence a Hoghead, amounting to between Four and Five Hundred Pounds a Year from Virginia, and as much from Maryland, lately imposed upon us, without our Consent, to defray their Expences in applying to the Parliament upon any Occasion to relieve us from the Hardships we groan under: How well they deserve this Money, will best appear from the Records of Parliament.

We do admit the Act of Parliament which last settled the Abatements upon prompt Payment of the Duties, was designed for the Good of the Planters, and is so on Account of reducing the Duties to what they are at present; but the Merchants have so determin'd by their own Decrees, as to ingross, in great Measure, the Advantage of this Discount to themselves. For it is the Misfortune of the greatest Part of the Shippers of Tobacco, not to be able to remit Money to pay down the Duties, though some are; but they are obliged by the mysterious Rules of Trade, to lodge in the Hands of their Correspondents double the Sum that would be sufficient for that Purpose, or at least a very great Overplus; whereby the Merchant is manifestly in a much better Condition when he allows his Correspondent here the Advantage of the Discount, than when he takes it to himself, and makes it not worth any Man's while to keep Money to make the prompt Payment of the Duties upon his Tobacco, seeing upon the Merchants Terms of allowing the Discount, and their unreasonable Delays in bringing the Money back to our Credit, no body can make Four per Cent Interest, and very seldom so much. Besides, the Planter without Money, must, in a fair way of paying, be very frequently, if not always, entitled to the Discount of Seven per Cent per Annum, allowed by the 9th of the late King, upon the Payment of the Duties within Eighteen Months: For it is a very great Abuse in the Trade, that the Merchants are too hasty on many Occasions in selling Tobacco, in order to raise ready Money for their own Purposes; and though they keep their Accounts back several Years from their Correspondents, none of them will say that they never receive any Money upon the Sales of Tobacco within Eighteen Months from the Importation. Yet we know not one Instance of any Allowance being made upon this Article by any Merchant in London, though it has been made by some few in the Out-Ports.

This is only an Examine of some of our Grievances, and there are many other that cannot be properly mentioned upon this Occasion. But lest these should not be sufficient by their own Weights to undoe us, we are informed the Merchants have lately obtained an Act of Parliament whereby an Affidavit before the chief Magistrate of any Town or Borough, is made equal to *viva voce* Evidence, for the Proof of their Accounts, however unjust or mistaken; and the Nature of our Estates (which have from our first Settlement been under the same Circumstances that the like Estates are in England) are altered by making our Lands subject to the Payment of their Book Debts, in order to enable them to give us larger Credit. It will not become us, nor do we presume to dispute with the Wisdom of the Parliament; but we are justly alarmed with the Consequences of the additional Power the Merchants will have now to oppress us more than they have ever done before; and are apprehensive they cannot be restrained but by the Laws of their own Consciences, from making themselves Masters of the Estates in both the Tobacco Colonies, unless we can be assisted by the Parliament. And we persuade ourselves, that these Colonies who employ above Four Hundred Sail of Ships, maintain more than Four Thousand Seamen, consume of the Manufactures of Great Britain to the Value of near half a Million yearly, have so considerable a Share in supporting the Balance of Trade with Foreign Nations, and raise so great a Revenue to the Crown, without being one Farthing Expence to our Mother Country, will be thought worthy the Consideration of a British Parliament.