

A PROCLAMATION concerning the Carrying and Re-carrying of Letters, as well within his Majesty's Realms and Dominions as into and from Foreign Parts.

WHEREAS heretofore, by direction of his Majesty, an agreement was made betwixt Thomas Witherings, Esquire, his Majesty's Postmaster for Foreign Parts, and Monsieur Denoveau, Postmaster to the French King and his Commisseees, bearing date at Calais, on the 11th day of May, A.D. 1636;—That as well all letters or packets which should be exported out of this realm into the kingdom of France, and all such letters as should be imported out of the same kingdom into the realm of England, should pass by the way of Dovor, Calais, Bulleyne, Abbeville, and Amiens, and by no other way or road whatsoever; and that all private posts, messengers, carriers, and letter carriers, other than such posts, carriers, and messengers as should be nominated and appointed by the said Thomas Witherings and Monsieur Denoveau, should be prohibited to carry or re-carry any letter or letters between either of the said kingdoms; which agreement, being afterwards conceived to be beneficial to both States and advantageous in their commerce, was both by his Majesty and the French King reciprocally allowed of, and in pursuit whereof the French King did, by a proclamation dated at Paris the 13th day of April, A.D. 1637, prohibit all the said posts and carriers accordingly: Now his Majesty, likewise, in pursuance of the said agreement, and taking into his princely consideration how much it imports the state and this whole realm, that the secrets thereof be not disclosed to foreign nations; which cannot be prevented if promiscuous use of transmitting or taking up of foreign letters by these private posts and carriers aforesaid should be suffered, which will also be no small prejudice to his merchants in their trading: And forasmuch as there hath lately been complaint made to his Majesty's ambassadors in France, that the said carriers or letter carriers do continually pass by the way of Rye and Diepe, as formerly they did, to the great prejudice of correspondences: his Majesty doth therefore straightly charge and command, and hereby declare his royal will and pleasure to be, that from henceforth no letters or packets whatsoever shall pass by the way of Rye and Diepe, but all shall be transmitted by the way of Dover, Calais, Bulleyne, Abbeville, and Amiens, according to the said agreement; and his Majesty doth hereby prohibit all the said messengers and French posts, and all other posts and letter carriers whatsoever, that have formerly gone by the way of Rye and Diepe, or any other posts, carriers, or messengers, except such as shall be appointed by the said Thomas Witherings, that they do not presume to take up, transmit, carry, or re-carry any letters or packets whatsoever into or from any foreign parts, by the said way of Rye and Diepe, or by any other way or road whatsoever, upon pain of his Majesty's high displeasure, and the pains and penalties which may ensue:

And his Majesty, taking further into his consideration that the mutual commerce and correspondency of his subjects within his Majesty's own dominions will be as advantageous and beneficial as the trade with foreign nations, and that nothing will more increase and advance the same than the safe and speedy conveying, carrying, and re-carrying of letters from one place to another, and for the settling and confirming of a letter-office, to that end and purpose erected and constituted by his Majesty's letters patent, bearing date the 22d day of June, in the 13th year of his Majesty's reign:

Now for avoiding of all questions and scruples which might hereafter arise in disturbing of the said officer in the said service, and for restraining of several and sundry abuses and miscarriages which have been and daily are committed, to the prejudice of the said officer, and in contempt of his Majesty's royal grant and proclamation in that behalf, his Majesty's royal will and pleasure therefore is, and he doth hereby straightly charge and command, that no post or carrier whatsoever within his Majesty's dominions, other than such as shall be nominated and appointed by the said Thomas Witherings, shall presume to take up, carry receive and deliver any letter or letters, packet or packets whatsoever, to any such place or places where the said Thomas Witherings shall have settled posts, according to the said grant, except a particular messenger sent on purpose with letters by any man for his own occasions, or letters by a friend, or by common known carriers, who are hereby permitted to carry any letters, above eight hours, after their carts, waggons and packhorses travelling with the same, the ordinary known journeys that common carriers use to travel; provided always that they, nor any of their servants, at no time stay at the place from whence

they carry any letters, above eight hours after their carts, waggons, or packhorses are departed, nor bring any letters to London or elsewhere above eight hours before the said carts, waggons, or packhorses shall come there; and if any post, messenger, or letter carrier whatsoever shall offend contrary to his Majesty's Proclamation, upon complaint thereof made, his Majesty will cause a severe and exemplary punishment to be inflicted upon the offenders therein. And his Majesty's further pleasure is, that it shall and may be lawful to and for the said Thomas Witherings and his deputies that do or shall execute the said office, to have, receive, and take for the postage and conveyance of all letters that he or they shall receive, carry and re-carry in England as aforesaid, 2*d.* a single letter, and 4*d.* a double, and for bigger 6*d.* the ounce, if under 80 miles; and from 80 miles to 140 miles 4*d.* the single and 8*d.* the double letter, and for bigger 9*d.* the ounce, and for 140 miles above 6*d.* the single letter, 12*d.* the double letter, and if bigger 12*d.* the ounce; and for letters of Ireland, he or they shall take, according to a Proclamation published by the Lord Deputy and Council there, 9*d.* the single letter, and if bigger, after two ounces, 6*d.* the ounce, according as the same are limited in his Majesty's letters patents aforesaid: and if any post-boy or other servant to the master of the said letter office, his deputies or assigns, shall receive or take any post or postage twice for any letter or packet which he or they shall carry or re-carry as aforesaid, contrary to the true meaning hereof, then his Majesty doth hereby authorise, will and require, that the next justices of the peace, upon complaint thereof made to him or them, do punish the parties so offending according to their deserts in an exemplary way, that others may be deterred from abusing his subjects in like kind and manner. And his Majesty doth further require and command all his subjects, as well aliens as denizens and others, that they shall not deliver, or cause to be delivered any letters or packets to any of the said French posts, or other foreign or inland post messengers or letter carriers whatsoever, to be carried from any of the places where the said Thomas Witherings shall have settled posts within his Majesty's dominions, or to be carried out of his Majesty's realms into any foreign parts, upon pain of his high indignation, and such punishment as may be further inflicted.

And lastly, his Majesty doth hereby charge and command the mayors of Rye, Dover, Canterbury, Ipswich, Yarmouth, Norwich, Berwick, Newcastle, York, Chester, Exeter, Plymouth, Salisbury, Bristol, and all other justices of peace, mayors, sheriffs, bailiffs, constables, headboroughs, and all other his Majesty's officers, ministers, and loving subjects whatsoever, to be aiding and assisting to the said Thomas Witherings, and to take care to see the due execution of his said Majesty's proclamation, and that they suffer none within their liberties to offend against the same, as they will answer the contrary at their uttermost perils.

Witness Ourselves at Westminster, the 11th day of February.

Per ipsum Regem.

Royal Proclamation of Charles I (11th February 1638)