

P R O P O S A L

To prevent the *Beginnings of Theft,*

V I Z.

The Picking Pockets of Handkerchiefs.

IT is a much more desirable Thing to obviate and prevent the committing of Crimes, than to punish the Criminals; and the Proverb testifies, *That if there were no Receivers there would be no Thieves.*

And, as most of our common Thieves and Robbers may be suppos'd to arise, and be train'd up, from the *Picking of Pockets*, as the general School and first Education in and for the *Art of Thieving*; and their ready Way of getting Money for their Handkerchiefs, by selling them to Brokers of old Goods, (of whom there are many in all the Out-Parts of the Town) being the Original and grand Temptation, whereby Children are drawn young into the Crime, and very often by the Perswasion of their own evil Parents; it might be a good Means to save great Numbers from the Gallows and Transportation, and the committing innumerable most flagitious Crimes, both against God and Man, if the Opportunities of selling such their stolen Goods were effectually prevented.

And as there is a very good Law already against the buying of stolen Goods, knowing them to be stolen; but which is of little or no Use in Respect to Handkerchiefs, they being (generally) so much alike, that 'tis impossible for the Proprietors to own them; so that the Brokers expose them, publickly, in their Shops to Sale, without Danger from that Law. And the House having lately been pleas'd to order the bringing in of a Bill for the farther preventing of Robbery, &c.

It is hereby humbly propos'd, that (towards such good End) a Clause be inserted therein, to this, or the like Effect, *viz. That if any Person shall thereafter buy or sell, or offer or expose for or to Sale, any second-hand Handkerchief, (or that shall appear so to be, or to have been worn or used) made of or mix'd with Silk, and being of any mix'd Colours whatsoever, or of any sole or entire Colour, wholly Black, or wholly White, only excepted, and be thereof duly convicted, He or She, so offending, shall be adjudg'd and declar'd to be Guilty of the said Crime of buying stolen Goods, knowing them to be stolen; and shall suffer according to the late Statute, in such Case made and provided.*

N. B. That, inasmuch as it is usual for Women of Substance to buy considerable Numbers of Handkerchiefs, and Neck-Handkerchiefs made of Cambrick, Muslin, and other Linnen Cloth; and of Crape of divers Colours; as also of Sattin and other Silks, wholly Black, or wholly White, many of which may happen, (after being worn) to be sold at the second-hand, and oftener, to Brokers, amongst other second-hand Goods; and it might seem severe to make a Law to restrain People from selling their old Goods under so great a Penalty: The Proposer has therefore made the particular Distinctions, as above, to obviate any Objections of that Nature.

But few of any of the particular Sorts last mention'd can be suppos'd ever to fall to the *Pick-Pockets* Lot, their most general and usual Prizes being Mens Pocket-Handkerchiefs of Silk, who seldom (how rich soever) buy any great Numbers of them at a Time; and, as to rich Men, they can be under but little Necessity to sell their old Pocket-Handkerchiefs; and poor Men have seldom any to spare.

And the Broker buying (therein) great Pennyworths of the *Pick-Pockets*, who (yet) get something for what cost them nothing but their Crime; the chief Inconvenience of such a Clause must center upon the *Thieves* and their Customers; so that they (if any) must be the Petitioners against it: For little or no Benefit doth ever arise to Persons of honest Minds, by the buying and selling those second-hand Handkerchiefs; very few such Men ever caring to lay out their Money in a Commodity that carries Theft in the very Countenance of it.

These Matters (for the publick Good) being most humbly offer'd to the wise Consideration of the Honourable House,

By J. D. Gent.

