

An ACT for the more effectual punishing of negroes and other slaves, and for taking away the benefit of clergy from certain offenders.

Preamble.

WHEREAS several petit treasons, and cruel and horrid murders, have been lately committed by negroes, which cruelties they were instigated to commit, and hereafter may be instigated to commit with the like inhumanity, because they have no sense of shame, or apprehension of future rewards or punishments; and that the manner of executing offenders, prescribed by the laws of England, is not sufficient to deter a people from committing the greatest cruelties, who only consider the rigour and severity of punishment;

Punishment on slaves for petit treason, murder and arson

II. BE IT THEREFORE ENACTED, by the right honourable the Lord Proprietary, by and with the advice and consent of his lordship's Governor, and the Upper and Lower Houses of Assembly, and the authority of the same, That when any negro, or other slave, shall be convict, by confession, or verdict of a jury, of any petit treason or murder, or wilfully burning of dwelling-houses, it shall and may be lawful for the justices before whom such conviction shall be, to give judgment against such negro; or other slave, to have the right hand cut off, to be hanged in the usual manner, the head severed from the body, the body divided into four quarters, and head and quarters set up in the most public places of the county where such fact was committed.

Punishment of persons breaking in to any house, &c.

III. AND, whereas several felons have feloniously broke and entered several shops, store-houses or warehouses, not contiguous to or used with any mansion-house, and stolen from thence several goods and merchandizes, and that it hath been doubted whether such offenders are, by any law now in force, excluded the benefit of clergy; **BE IT ENACTED AND DECLARED**, by the authority, advice and consent aforesaid, That if any person or persons shall, after the end of this session of

assembly, break into any shop, store-house or warehouse, although such shop, store-house or warehouse, be not contiguous to or used with any mansion-house, and steal from thence any goods, to the value of five shillings, and be thereof convicted, by confession, or verdict of a jury, such offender or offenders shall suffer death as felons, without benefit of clergy, any law, usage or custom to the contrary notwithstanding.

July,
1729.



Vide 1692, ch. 16. for list of acts relating to crimes and punishments.