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THE
Grand-Jury-Man's
OATH and OFFICE
EXPLAINED:
AND THE
Rights of English-Men
ASSERTED.

A
DIALOGUE
BETWEEN
A Barrister at Law,
AND
A Grand-Jury-Man.

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THE
Grand Jury-Man's
OATH and **OFFICE**
 EXPLAINED:
 AND THE
Rights of English-Men
 ASSERTED.

Grand Jury- **S**ir! I am Summon'd to be one of
man. the *Grand Inquest*, and I would will-
 ingly beg some Information from you touching
 the nature of that Service by Law.

Barrister. I shall readily gratifie so Just a Re-
 quest,

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quest, being glad to hear you solicitous to *understand* fully your duty: For that shews your Resolution to *perform* it Conscientiously. Therefore to come to the matter.

By the Law of *England* no person (except in a few extraordinary Cases needless to trouble you with) can be *Convicted* of any Crime, but there must first *two Juries* pass upon him.

1. The *Grand Jury*, who Presents the offence on the behalf of the King.

2. The *Petty Jury* [in Cases Capital, call'd the *Jury of Life and Death*] who are to try the matter of such Presentment between the King and the Party accused.

The first of these is properly call'd, *The Grand* [or *Great*] *Jury* in a threefold respect.

1. For their *Number*, other Juries consist but of 12 men; This of more, as 17, 19, 23, or the like.

2. For their *Quality*, because they generally are and ought to be Persons of more than ordinary Account, Estates, Understanding, &c.

3. For the *Extent of their Office or Duty*, being Jurors

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Jurors for the King for the whole Body of that County for which they serve; And have power to Present all offences whatsoever committed therein, That are against the Kings Peace, Crown and Dignity.

Gr. Jury-man. Well then, The Grand Jury is the *Great Spring*, or *Primum Mobile* of the Court, that gives motion to all the other Wheels in Prosecutions Criminal, Their Presentment being the *Key* that either opens or shuts the proceedings of the Court in every Offence.

Barr. You take it right, and therefore the Law provides, That they be *probi & legales Homines*, good and lawful Men.

1. Each of them must be *probus* (*quasi probatus*) an approved honest Man, faithful and skilful.

2. He must be *Legalis* too, a lawful Person, that is not outlaw'd, of good Fame and Credit, No Alien, but a Leige Subject of England; For the Free People of England by Law can only be Presented and Tryed *per Pares* by their Equals, and fellow-Subjects.

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Gr. Jury-man. I perceive then the Law Reposes a great Trust in a Grand-Jury for the discovery of Offences, and that in their hands the Reputation and Peace of their Neighbours and fellow-subjects does much Consist. Therefore to understand their Duty the better, I desire you to recite unto me the Oath that is usually Administred unto them.

Barr. Very opportunely thought on, I was Just coming to it; Here it is, read it your self deliberately.

The Oath of a Grand Juror.

YOU shall diligently Inquire, and true Presentment make of all such things and matters as shall be given you in Charge, or shall come to your Knowledge concerning this present Service. The Kings Counsel, your Fellows, and your own, you shall well and truly keep secret. You shall Present nothing for Malice, or Evil Will that you bear to any Person; Neither shall you leave any thing Unpresented for Love, Favour, Affection, Reward, or any hopes thereof. But in all things that shall Concern this present service, you shall Present the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth, according to your best skill and knowledge; So help you God.

Gr. Jury-

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Gr. Jury-man. But I would gladly hear the particulars of this Oath a little explained.

Barr. Observe then its several Branches.

1. *You shall diligently Inquire and true Presentment make; Hereby they are oblig'd to Enquire, and that diligently, not to be slothful, or negligent, not to take things upon Trust, or hurry them over carelessly; but to proceed on a mature and strict Examination, and then to make true Presentment.*

2. *Of all such things and matters as shall be given you in Charge, or shall come to your knowledge. Here is laid down the Subject-matter of their Inquiry. By Matters and Things, must be understood, All offences against the Law by them Inquirable of, As Treasons, Murders, Felonies, Perjuries, Forgeries, Misdemeanours, &c. Which are commonly summ'd up to them in the Speech [or Charge] of the Judge. All and every such offences which either they know of their own knowledge, or which shall appear to them by the Testimonies of others, they are to Present.*

3. *The Kings Counsel, your Fellows, and your own, you shall well and truly keep secret. By the Kings Counsel*

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fel (I conceive) is to be understood, the *Evidence of Witnesses* that shall be produced to them on the Kings behalf; This must not be Revealed or Discovered by the Grand Jurors, but kept secret from the Person concern'd, his Friends and all others, the Reason whereof seems to be this; Their Presentment is but of the Nature of an *Accusation*, or Charge. Now if they, having heard and Examined the Witnesses should divulge the Particulars, and wherein the Force of the Evidence lies; Then might the Party prosecuted (perhaps a Traitor, Murderer or Felon) take an opportunity to *Fly* from Justice; (For many times the Criminal is not apprehended, or is out upon *Bail* till after the Bill found by the Grand Inquest,) or at least there might thereupon be some *Tampering* or Indirect Practises used to take off, or *Sweeten* the Evidence when it comes to be Tryed by the Petty Jury.

Nor are they to discover what any *one* or more amongst themselves have together Counsell'd, advised, or debated in the Business before them. Because the same might *discourage* particular Members of such Juries from giving freely their Opinions in discharge of their Consciences, and render them liable to Malice, Reflections, &c. And therefore if

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if a Jury be agreed, and the Court perhaps not pleased with their Verdict, should take upon them to ask, *Which of the Jury-men were first or most earnest for finding it thus or thus?* I conceive the same and all other Inquiries of that kind to be utterly unlawful; That the Jurors are not bound by Law to answer thereunto, but oblig'd by their Oath to the contrary.

4. *You shall Present nothing for malice &c.* Having set forth what they are to doe, the Oath next prescribes with what *Integrity* and Impartiality they are to do it, excluding all Malice and Revenge on the one hand, and all Favour and Affection on the other.

5. *But in all things you shall Present the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth.* The Truth; that is, Truth sufficient to make a just Accusation against a nocent Person. *The whole Truth;* not concealing wilfully any Crime that appears to them. *And nothing but the Truth;* That is, no known falsity, no false Accusation against any Person must be Presented, to bring an Innocent Person into disgrace and Jeopardy, so as to force him to take a Tryal where it does not appear, That he hath committed any Crime, or where there is not any sufficient Accusation, or where the Fact charged

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(If in it self Criminal) is yet not so fixt upon him by any probable Evidence, as deservedly to expose him to a Tryal for it.

Grand-Jury-man. But since the Grand-Jurors are thus sworn to present Truth, and nothing but the Truth; And yet Experience shows, That very frequently the Party prosecuted is really *not Guilty*, and so found by the Petty Jury, though the former have presented the Indictment against him to be *Billa Vera*, a *True Bill*, I demand how these Oaths of the Two can consist together, and with a safe Conscience?

Barrister. Though there may seem (*prima facie* on first thoughts) some *Contradiction* between the two Verdicts, yet really there is none; But both may be true in their several proper *Respects*, and safely, that is, honestly given. I may (for certain weighty Reasons and Proofs that I have considered) *verily believe*, That *A. B.* is Guilty of such a Murder or Robbery, and therefore for the Execution of Justice (that Glory and Safety of a Kingdom) I may *swear* that I believe so, and judge it my Duty to Present him, That he may be Legally Tryed for such Crime; And yet It may be possible that

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that he is all this while *Innocent*, And perhaps when I come to hear his *Defence*, I may think so too; Yet have I not herein done him, or my own Conscience any wrong.

The Grand Jurors work, I told you, is no more in its own Nature, than to Present Offences which they find *fit for a Tryal*. They hear only one side, *viz.* The witnesses *against the Prisoner*, and do not, nay cannot, hear any thing in his *Defence*; Nor to Confront or weaken the Evidence brought against him, and so cannot be intended to give in more than a *verisimilary* or *probable* Charge; which by what they have heard, they do aver upon their Oaths, does seem to them to be *Just and true*, and fit for Justice to take Cognizance of. And therefore by their Oath you see, they are oblig'd to make true Presentments *concerning this present service* [that is, according as the nature of their present Service in the Capacity of a Grand Jury requires] and also their Oath in the End is qualified, [According to their best skill and knowledge] which denotes not an absolute Certainty, but so as things appear.

And for the same Reason it is, That in the Record, The Grand Juries finding a Bill is Entred *Juratones pro domino Rege presentant, The Jurors for our*
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Lord the King do **PRESENT**; [that is, Inform, Charge or by way of Accusation on Just and Reasonable Grounds urge and put to Answer] But the Verdict of the Petty Jury is Recorded thus, *Juratores dicunt*, The Jurors positively *SAY* or *Affirm*. And when afterwards on Tryal any man is Acquitted or Convicted, The Record runs thus, The Jurors say, That *A. B.* is Guilty [or not Guilty] of the Felony aforesaid in the Indictment aforesaid specified, which *Ei superius imponitur*, is above laid or Charg'd upon him in manner and form as by the Indictment aforesaid, *superius versus eum supponitur*, Is above against him supposed. So that you see here, the Law it self Construes the Bill found by the Grand Jury to be only a laying on, or probable Charging of a Crime, and speaks of it but as a supposition; so that by *Billa vera*, can only be understood a Bill that appears to have Truth in it, necessary to be tryed, and fit for the Enquiry of another Jury; The Adjective, *Vera*, in this place not so strictly signifying *True*, as meet, fit, or reasonable; And so 'tis used sometimes by Authors, as *verum est* in Terence, which Grammarians render, it is fit, or you speak Reason.

And therefore on the other side, they never endorse upon those Bills they do not find [*Billa Falsa*

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Falsa, that is, a false Bill,] but modestly write, *Ignoramus*, which signifies, They are Ignorant of the matter in the Bill, and that they find *no Cause* either from what they have heard from the Witnesses, or know of their own knowledge to Commend it to a further Inquiry, or to put the party on any Tryal.

Grand Jury-man. If this be all, it seems Grand Jurors need not much scruple the finding of most Bills brought before them.

Barrister. Not too fast, you have heard by their Oath they are *diligently to Inquire*; And these words, *Truth and nothing but the Truth*, have great weight and Obligation. They must therefore have some knowledge or good probable proof on Oath, on which they verily believe the matter *deserving Tryal*, and the Party *Guilty*, or else they cannot in Conscience Endorse a *Billa vera*. For if they should do it without such just and lawful Inducements, they apparently violate their Oath, and withall are highly Guilty of Injustice towards their Neighbour in preferring a *causeless Accusation* against him, whereby his Credit is impaired, his Life Liberty or Estate exposed unnecessarily to the *hazard*, trouble,

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ble, and charge of a Tryal, &c. Wherein if by any Ill practice with, or the Ignorance of the Petty Jury, he should be *Convicted* (when Innocent) though such Petty Jury would be most Immediately concern'd, yet the Grand Jurors too cannot be Excused from a *sad share* in the Guilt of the *Blood*, or Ruine of such an Innocent Person and his Family; For, *Qui non prohibet cum potest, jubet, He that doth not hinder Injustice when it lies in his Power, Commits it*; And it was by reason of their inconsiderate groundless Presentment, and finding *Billa vera* where they had no Just Cause so to do, that occasion'd the mischief; For without *That*, it could never have happen'd.

Grand-Jury-man. You have very well satisfied me in these Particulars; But suppose a Bill should be brought before the Grand-Jury, wherein a man is accused for doing *some Act that is* in it self no Crime; Only in the Indictment it is called *Treason, Sediton, or Misdemeanor*, and said to be done *falsly and maliciously*, with an Intent to raise Sediton, bring the Government into Contempt, &c. Now if it happen that the particular and *Naked Fact* be proved, But that the same is *Treason, Sediton or Misdemeanour* is not declared by any Law, nor yet

yet does it appear by any proof that it was done with any such *ill mind, or criminal Intention*, what must the Grand Jury do in this Case?

Barrister. If the matter charg'd be (as you put it) no Crime in it self by Law, then though it be never so much branded with such aggravating terms, yet since the same do in no kind appear to the Jury to be deserved, they must undoubtedly return an *Ignoramus*; For you have heard, That their work and the main Scope of their Oath, is to Present such matters as appear to them *fit for Justice to take Cognizance of*; But where they are satisfied, that there is no such Crime, if they should Endorse a *Billa vera*, and so put a person, whom in their Consciences they think Innocent, (because nothing appears to them to the contrary,) to the hazard, charge and trouble of a Tryal, It were a plain violation of their Oath, and unjust as aforesaid.

Grand-Jury-man. But this were for them to take upon themselves the *knowledge of the Law*; Now I have heard people say, Juries are only to Judge of *matter of Fact*.

Barrister. Jurors are to consider *both Law and Fact*,

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or else they will never deliver just and lawful Verdicts. To what purpose does the Law provide, that Jurors should be so well qualified as to Estate, Understanding, and Sufficiency; And so strictly sworn, but only to detect Offenders, and preserve the Innocent from needless vexation and trouble? How far Juries are Judges of Law as well as of Fact, is pretty well set forth in a small Treatise lately published, Intituled, *The Englishmans Right*, To which (as well worth every true Englishmans Reading) I refer you for further Information. Only to satisfy you at present, I shall desire you but to consider of the sad Consequences that would follow, this conceit, That Juries must necessarily find every Indictment where the bare matter of Fact (be it what it will) is proved, without Inquiring into, and weighing the Nature of that Fact, or returning *Ignoramus* where they find the same *Not Criminal*.

Suppose a Bill were exhibited against *A. B.* for *Treason*, for looking on the *Tombs at Westminster*, or of high *Misdemeanour* for *taking a Pipe of Tobacco, falsely wickedly and maliciously, with an Intent to Infect the Air, and destroy his Majesties Leige-Subjects with pernicious Vapors*; And it were very fully prov'd, That he indeed lookt upon the *Royal Tombs*, or did whiff the
Pipe;

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Pipe; but nothing of any such design of *Poysoning* the People thereby, appears in Proof; Now would you, or any Grand-Jury-man that wears five Senses and a Soul about him, return a *Billa vera* on these Indictments? And yet here the matter of Fact is prov'd, and by these mens unreasonable Reasonings you should be bound to find it.

Again, Imagine an Indictment brought against a Person setting forth, *That he falsely and maliciously and with an Intent to create and foment Rebellion, Sedition, Divisions and Distractions amongst the People of England, did cause to be printed and Published in the English Tongue, a certain Book called, The BIBLE*; And it be proved by an Hundred and Fifty Witnesses, that he did indeed Print and publish the *Holy Book*, yet would not you rather have your hand Rot off, than with it to Subscribe *Billa vera* here? But if this opinion were true, you should be bound to do it, or else be Clamour'd and Hector'd at, as if you were Guilty of the blackest Perjury.

Nor is this any Extravagant Supposal, If (which God forbid) *Poperie* should prevail amongst us; For tis not above 150 years since, a poor honest *Bookseller* was burnt to death at *Avignon in France*, for no other Crime but selling *Bibles in French*; and to denote his Crime, two *Bibles* were fixt about his Neck,
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and burnt with him, [See *Foxes Acts* and *Monuments*, fol. 861.] And here in *England* K.H. the 8th. on the 8th of *July* 1546. Issued a Proclamation requiring all *English* New Testaments to be brought in by such a day to the Constables in every Precinct, and so to the Sheriff to be *Burnt*; And that if after such day, any Person should be found to have any such Testament, or any part thereof in his Custody, he should not only suffer *Imprisonment* and punishment of his body at the Kings Will and Pleasure, but also be *Fined* at the discretion of any 4 of his Majesties Council.

Grand-Jury-man. God defend us from such times. But I pray let us return to our Discourse; I have observ'd, That in Indictments, Informations, &c. There are certain words used which are seldom proved; As *Vi & Armis*, *Contra pacem*, *false*, *malitiosè*, &c. *With Force and Arms against the Peace*, *falsly*, *maliciously*, and the like; Pray therefore Inform me, Is it a sufficient Cause not to find a Bill, If the Jury have not Proof of These?

Barrister. Here lies the Knot, the pinch of the Business, which rightly understood, would silence this Controversie for ever. You must note therefore,

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fore, that sometimes these words are only of *Course*, or *matter of Form*, rais'd by a Just and reasonable Implication of Law; but sometimes they may be thrust in to raise a pretence or colour of *Crime*, where there is really none.

The *Distinction* therefore to be observ'd, is this; Where the Act, or matter of Fact charged, is in it self a *Crime* or offence against Law, there the Law does necessarily in Pleadings require and Imply those words; and If the Jury do find and are satisfied, That the substance of the Charge is such a *Crime*, and the Person guilty thereof, They are bound to find it, though no direct proof be made of those *Circumstantials*.

But where the Act, or matter of Fact is in it self *Innocent* or *Indifferent*, there the purport of these words is necessarily to be proved, for else there is *no Crime*, and consequently no fit matter to be put to a Tryal; In which Case the Grand Jury is bound in Conscience and Law to return an *Ignoramus*, and a Petty Jury, *Not Guilty*.

For though some Gentlemen of the long Robe are pleas'd to call these words only, *Pepper and Vinegar*, harmless sawce; yet if meerly for them, a Jury should pronounce a *Billa vera* or a *Guilty*, where the *main dish* is good and *wholsome*, they

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would become rank poyson, and destroy all the Vital Liberties of the Nation.

Gr. Jury-man. What then may be the design, That yet some People plead a Necessity of the Juries finding all Bills, however worded or aggravated, where the matter of Fact (as they call it) is proved?

Barrister. I do not care whether there be any such People, or any such design. But this I know, That in the 11th year of K. Henry the 7th there was an Act of Parliament obtain'd on very specious Pretences, That Justices of Assize, and of the Peace should have full Power or Information for the King, without any Presentment of a Grand Jury, or Tryal by a Petty Jury, To hear and determine at their Discretion, all offences &c. By pretext of which Law (saith the Learned Lord Cook, 4 part Institutes, fol. 41.) Empson and Dudley (Two Judges, or Justices, for the latter is the Legal Title) and their followers, did commit upon the Subject unsufferable Pressures and Oppressions. And thereby brought infinite Treasures to the Kings Coffers, whereof the King himself (saith the same Reverend Author) in the end repented with great Grief and Compunction; And the Statute was repealed, and

and the said False Justices, notwithstanding such their pretended Authority, (even of an Act of Parliament, yet the same being against Magna Charta and the Fundamental Laws of the Land) were both fairly Beheaded, and no less than Seven of their little Instruments, Promoters, Informers, or what you please to call them, viz. Canby, Page, Smith, Derby, Wight, Sympson and Stockton, were set on the Pillory, and afterwards ordered to ride through London-Streets with their Faces towards the Horse Tail. With the same whereof the Rogues within 7 days after all dyed in Newgate. See Baker's Chronicle, fol. 254.

Now if there should be any such Design as you talk of, (which I neither know, nor can beleive) It must be to do the same thing in Effect by Colour of the Common-Law, which these Villains Empson and Dudley did by Pretence of a Statute-Law; For what real Difference is there between getting an Information or Indictment drawn by order of certain Justices against a Person, and Condemning and Fining him at their pleasure without any Jury at all, (which was the Empson and Dudley-way.) And causing and Indictment or Information stuff'd with hideous terms on an innocent indifferent matter of Fact, to be Presented to two Juries successively;

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but *withall telling them*, they are bound not to consider whether such matter of Fact be indeed *any Legal Crime*, And so *Trepanning* (for I can call it no better, whether it be done by *Wheadling* or *Menacing* and *huffing*;) the said Juries, to find the Party *Gilty*; When in their own Consciencs they do not believe he has committed any such Crime. And then shall come the said Justices, and upon such his Conviction, Sentence him to be *Hang'd*, or to *stand in the Pillory*, or be *Fined* so many Hundred Pounds (much more perhaps than the poor Creature is worth; so that it amounts to an Imprisonment from which only *Death* can Bail him:) And all this for that which is no *real Breach* of any Law either of God or his Native Countrey.

Grand-Jury-man. This indeed were the grossest Injustice, the most horrid scandal that would be cast on the *Laws of England*; which have been ever Celebrated for the most Equal, Just, and Merciful in the World; and so much worse than the Practice of *Empson* and *Dudley*, because by this means, *JURIES* would be made use of as *Stales* and *Properties* of oppression. But it is not to be *supposed*, That any Justices should offer, or suffer any such *Indictments* or *Informations* to be offered, to any Juries,
or

or attempt to perswade Juries to find them, where the matter thereof is not *warranted by Law*.

Barrister. I know not what you can suppose, nor do I complain, That any such thing *has been attempted*, much less do I speak to discourage any *Just Prosecutions* of real Crimes and Misdemeanors; But I must tell you, That there are very wise men that *suppose* such things as we have been talking of, may possibly fall out, at least in *another Age*; For we are not Assured, That in all Generations there shall never be any *Ill men* put into Office; There may one day perhaps happen a little peevish Justice, or a *Blustering* Magistrate in some Village or other, that may be no *mighty Witch* at Law, and so ignorantly may promote *odd Fantastick* Indictments; or may be a *Creature of Ambition*, and so willing to serve a Turn for *Preferment*, and may Endeavour to *Hector* Juries out of their *Rights* and their *Wits*, or a thousand other Accidents. And therefore why should it be left upon a fallible supposal, a meer *Hap-hazard*, or why must Ill Precedents be given? The Institution and very End of Juries is to preserve *our Liberties* from the wily Encroachments of oppression; And therefore 'tis the Right and Priviledge; nay I will add, 'tis the indispenfable *Duty* of

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of *Grand* and other *Juries*, to Act like men of Judgment, Conscience and Courage in such Cases. For otherwise they *Forswear* themselves, grievously injure their Fellow-Subjects, betray the Freedomes of their Countrey, and open a *Gap* for Slavery even in that very *Hedge*, which was purposely first *planted*, and has time out of mind been so carefully preserved by our Ancestors, to keep it out.

Grand Jury-man. Well, but if *Juries* do not give their Verdicts as the Court think fit, though the Jurors proceed uprightly according to the best of their Understanding and Consciences, yet may not the Court *Fine* or *Imprison* them.

Barrister. No. The Law utterly Condemns any such Practice, as you may see undeniably proved in the before mentioned Treatise, call'd, *The English man's Right*, p. 24. Nay, if any should presume to *Menace* or *Reproach* a Jury for giving their Verdict uprightly according to their Consciences, It would be an High *Misdemeanor*; and such Insolence ought to be Corrected with *Exemplary* punishment.

Grand Jury-man. Since *Juries* are so essential to our *English* Liberties, and of so great Use to the Nation,

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tion, Is it not great Pitty, That men best qualify'd both for *Estates* and *Understandings* for that Service, should oft-times use little under-hand Practises or small Bribes to the *Officer* that Summons them, to avoid it.

Barr. 'Tis both a pittty and a *shame* if any such thing be done, and ought likewise to be punished; For thereby Persons every way *unfit* may at last come to serve turn, and so Verdicts may become *Mercinary*, and People set up to *make a Trade* of being Jury-men; Whereas 'tis an Office that the *best Commoner* in *England*, is neither too good nor too great to serve his King and Countrey in; Which I wish all *Gentlemen* would Consider, and readily dispose themselves to accept the same, when ever they shall legally be call'd unto it.

Gr. Jury-man. I thank you, Sir heartily for the Information and good Advice you have given me in this matter, and shall Endeavour to discharge my Duty accordingly, As becomes a Christian, a *Loyal Subject*, and an upright *Protestant Englishman*.

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