

The Epistle.

I speak not this without acknowledging it to be both just and meet, that the actions and proceedings of the Justices of Peace should be well and duly looked into, and themselves worthy to be punished, when through malice, or other corruption, they shall do unjustly: But if through unwilling ignorance they happen to err and do amiss, they are rather to be better informed than ill intreated. *Nemo nascitur sapiens; & humanum est errare.*

I am bold to write unto you, my worthy Masters and Worsbipful Friends, and the rest of this Honourable Fellowship, knowing that there be many among you daily rising to great Places, whose Honour it will be to maintain the life of the Law and Justice of the Realm, with the excellency thereof, in causing due Execution thereof to be had and done; redressing the abuses and defects thereof, and encouraging such as shall carry themselves juste, fideliter, & singere: Again, that there be many among you of great Learning and Judgment, by whom this my unperfect Work may, yea, and I hope shall be more published and perfected. And seeing some others amongst you whose Fortunes prove (as mine doth) to withdraw themselves into their Countries, I would gladly encourage them to employ their better Talents to the common good.

I acknowledge there be divers other Books in this kind more Learned and Methodical; but withal I observe the business of the Justices of Peace to consist partly in things to be done by them out of their Sessions, (and sometimes privately, and peradventure upon the sudden, without the advice or association of any other) and partly at their Sessions of the Peace. Of things of this last kind I purpose not in this Treatise to meddle, for that at such publick Meetings and Assemblies they are far more able to direct themselves: but for the private and sudden help of such Justices of Peace, who peradventure have not read over the former Writers, and if they have, yet the multiplicity of Statutes (whereupon the Office and private Practice of Justices of Peace doth principally consist) is such, and at every Parliament so altered, by Expiration, Discontinuance, and otherwise, as that it is a Work very hard and laborious for Gentlemen not Conversant in the study of the Laws (although otherwise very industrious) to proceed as by the Commission they ought and are prescribed, *sc. secundum Leges & Statuta Regni*; upon these considerations, and for their ease principally, I have published this Work; knowing that there be divers, both Honourable and Worthy Persons in the Country, some of whom for want of knowledge of the many particular Statutes in force, and tediousness of the study of them, do seek to be exempt out of the Commission of the Peace; others being in, do forbear to meddle,

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