
T O T H E
R E A D E R.

IT is a complaint, as ancient as the Reign of *Henry* the Seventh; The Office of a Justice of Peace was a great burthen, in regard they were charged with the Execution of so many Statute Laws; whereas the Statutes touching Riots, Forcible Entries, Laborers and Liveries were then the greatest part of their work and business: More justly and reasonably may the Complaint be made at this day, when as the Execution of most Statutes is by express words made the duty of the Justice of Peace, and the Conviction of Offenders against the same put into the power and trust of one or two Justices of Peace, and that out of Sessions. A moderate referring of things to their Cognizance by Statutes, is as ancient as their Constitution, which is thought not to go higher than the time of *Edward* the Third. And things then Cognizable by them, were for the most part determinable in their Sessions, and that by that ancient and legal course of Indictment. But their being inabled to hear and determine, and punish upon View, or by Witnesses, or by Discretion, was rare and unusual, unless in case of Riots and Force, which threatened the Government, until the time of *Henry* the Seventh, in whose Reign it grew common first, and afterwards general; in the Eleventh year of whose Reign, was a Statute made for Justices of Peace by information to hear and determine all offences against penal Statutes, except Treason, Murder and Felony: and what the effects were thereof, the very naming *Empson* and *Dudley* will suggest to any ones Memory, who is in any measure acquainted with the History of that Kings Reign; in the latter part of whose Reign it grew common to intrust the Justices of Peace with such overgreat Authority; nay, at length they shared not only of the power, but the benefit too. By the Statute of the 19 *H. 7. c. 11.* they have not only power to Convict upon, and by Examination, such as offend in taking Deer and Herons, but are also to have a part of the forfeiture for their pains. Since the Reign of which wise, but covetous Prince, that absolute discretionary, and extra-curial power hath been enlarged by many Statutes; the growth and increase of whose Authority