

My Lord

That your Lordship may know what progress I am making in the important object, I have in hand, I shall take the liberty of troubling your Lordship with a sort of Report, in a short way, of what I am doing.

Your Lordship remembers, that I proposed a district should be carved out of the counties of Middlesex, & Kent, containing the whole Metropolis except the city of London; and then, that a separate Comf. of the peace should issue for that district, out of which the County justices should be excluded, tho' the Justices for the district should be in the Comf. for those counties. It was then proposed that seven Offices should be appointed on this side the water, & one on the other; in each to be three Justices, to be paid by government on the plan of Bow street; and that the Comf. for this district should contain 24 Justices, and about 30, or 40 more, who should be chosen from the most respectable persons, who would assist voluntarily, & gratis, & might be trained, perhaps, to succeed to any vacancies among the 24.

This was the first idea of a plan for getting

rid of all exceptionable magistrates, and preventing Justice any longer being made a low, & dirty traffic. But, on consideration, it was seen, that much odium & opposition might be excited by so material a change in the Comptrol of the peace, for three Comptrols and it was wished to compass the same end, in some different way. Now it has been suggested, that the same effect would be produced, more easily, & quite as completely, in this way: To enact, that no Justice within the above district should take any fee; then to put a stamp-duty upon summonses, warrants, recognizances &c. amounting to the sum which, in the present practice is paid in fees, for issuing &c. of those papers; let a separate account be kept of the produce of these stamps, and then a grant made to each of the eight offices, of that produce. Thus, as no Justices would make any gain, but those in these offices, the business of the magistracy would necessarily remain in those hands, where the government, and of course, where the public had confidence.

In this regulation, your Lordship will see, that I admit these two positions; first, that no check should be put on the access to a Justice's office, but, secondly, that the access to it should still be paid for. Therefore, my Lord, while we

wish to remove such persons as abuse the power of a justice by
giving encouragement to brawls, & squabbles among the lower sort
of people, it is highly necessary that the doors of magistrates should
be still open to complainants, and that when all reasonable pains
have been taken to compose, & restrain the litigious, without effect,
they should have their warrants, their bail &c. as heretofore.
For we must be assured, that the revenge which the law puts into
a man's hands, in this country, prevents those bloody retaliations
we see in others. Again, it seems reasonable, that the access
to a magistrate should ^{not} be open without a fee. It is a com-
mon saying, that the expence of law suits is the price we
pay for our liberty; and it may be truly said, that the fees
of a justice of peace are the price the vulgar pay for their
licentiousness. In short, without mentioning that these people would
hardly have an opinion of the law, which cost them nothing, it
would be cruelty to let them loose, without this check on their
fury; and still more so to the magistrate, who would not have
a moments peace the whole day.

It is for these reasons, that I think the intire abo-
lition of fees, as some gentlemen propose, would be ~~an~~ impolitic,
hurtful, & visionary.

I have had several conversations with S^r Sampson ^{are} ~~long~~ ^{upon} upon the whole of this subject, and am obliged to him for the above plan about the fees, in the place of the separate ^{of the} ~~confm~~ ^{of the} we had in view. I spent three hours, the other morning with the Recorder, who expressed great satisfaction, that government were so ^{of} ~~renewing~~ ^{renewing} upon this subject. He has it very much at heart himself, and has, for some time, been pouring down such hints as were furnished by his experience in this part of his office. I talked very fully with him about Receivers, which seem to have engaged much of his attention; some of these ^{hints} I have minuted down, & others we are to talk further upon. These I shall have the honor of communicating to your Lordship in my next. I mentioned the subject to Mr. Mainwaring, the Chairman, whose assistance I have great reliance upon, but I have not yet had any conversation with him. Another gentleman, who readily contributes his assistance is Mr. Trestler, the Counsel, who has long been in great practice at the Old Bailey; as I have more opportunities of seeing this gentleman, I oftener confer with him than ^{with} any one.

Other gentlemen, whom I have expectations from,

are Mr. Syley, deputy Clerk of the peace to Mr. Selby & Mr. Reginald,
Clerk of the arraigns at the Old Bailey; with these two gentlemen
I have appointments to meet, at an early day. To all these, I
should add, "the last, not least," a Mr. John Clarke, one of the
officers belonging to Bow Street; who is a very old servant to the
Public, and is considered in a very respectable light, in his station;
Mr. Bond, who is more known in the world, than the other, has
not yet fallen in my way; but I have say, I shall, under the
sanction of Mr. Sampson, have the like confidential communications
from him, that I have already had, from Mr. Clarke.

This, my Lord, is the course I am pursuing;
not to spin out visionary theories, of my own, but by repeat-
ed conversations, and enquiry to bring into one point the experi-
ence of those, who alone are intimately acquainted with
this subject. My intention is, that the fruits of this enquiry
shall be put into a discourse, where the defects of the present
system, and the intended reform of them, should be spoken upon
fully, with the reasons & objections on all sides; that this should

be submitted to the above gentlemen, as well as some others, who have the same sort of experience; so that, what is brought finally before your Lordship should carry with it the concurrence of those who may be thought best able to ~~judge~~ a right judgment of it. And this may be done without waiting till the whole is completed, but as soon as any of the parts are brought to maturity.

In the mean while, I shall take the liberty of communicating to your Lordship, occasionally, the progress I am making, in order that your Lordship may be apprised of the nature of the intended reform, previous to its coming before you finally, in the shape of a formal discourse.

I have the honor to be, with great thanks,
My Lord, your Lordship's
most obliged humble servant.

Thanet Place
4th Nov. 1704.

John Reeves

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W. Reeves Log

REEVES (JOHN)

AUTOGRAPH LETTER TO
LORD SYDNEY.

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be excited by so material a change in the Comss. of the peace, for three counties and it was wished to compass the same end, in some different way. Now it has been suggested, that the same effect would be produced more easily, and quite as completely, in this way: to exact, that no Justice within the above district should take any fee; then to put a stamp-duty upon summons' warrants, recognisances &c. amounting to the sum which, in the present practice, is paid in fees for issuing &c. of those papers, let a separate account be kept of the produce of these stamps, and then a grant made to each of the eight officers, of that produce. Thus, as no Justices would make any gain, but those in these offices, the business of the Magistracy would necessarily remain in those hands, where the government and of course where the public had confidence.

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For we must be assured, that the revenge which the law

puts into a man's hands, in this country, prevents those bloody retaliations we see in others. Again, it seems reasonable, that the access to a magistrate should not be open without a fee. It is a common saying, that the expence of law suits is the price we pay for our liberty; and it may be truly said, that the fees of a justice of peace are the price the vulgar pay for their licentiousness. In short, without mentioning that these people would hardly have an opinion of the law which cost them nothing, it would be cruelty to let them loose, without this check on their fury; and still more so to the magistrates, who would not have a moment's peace the whole day.

It is for these reasons, that I think the entire absolution of fees, as some gentleman propose, would be impolitic, hurtful, and visionary.

I I have had several conversations with Sr. Sampson Wright upon the whole of this subject, and am obliged to him for the above plan about the fees, in the place of the ~~separate~~ Comssn. we had in view. I spent three hours the other morning with the Recorder, who expressed great satisfaction that government were so serious upon the subject. He has it very much at heart himself, and has, for some time, been penning down such hints as were furnished by his experience in this part of his office. I talked very fully with him, about Receivers, which seem to have engaged much of his attention. Some of these hints I have minuted down, and others we are to talk further upon. These I shall have the honor of communicating to your Lordship in my next. I mentioned the subject to Mr. Mainwaring, the Chairman, whose assistance I have

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Other gentlemen whom I have expectations from, are Mr. Eyles deputy Clerk of the peace to Mr. Selby and Mr. Reynolds Clerk of the arraigns at the Old Bailey; with these two gentlemen I have appointments to meet, at an early day. To all these, I should add "tho' last, not least," a Mr. John Clarke, one of the officers belonging to Bow Street; who is a very old servant to the Public, and is considered in a very respectable light in his station; Mr. Bond, who is more known on the world than the other, has not yet fallen in my way; but I dare say I shall, under the sanction of Mr. Sampson, have the like confidential communications from him, that I have already had from Mr. Clarke.

This, my Lord, is the course I am pursuing; not to open out visionary theories, of my own, but by repeated canvass, and enquiry to bring into one point the experience of those, who alone are intimately acquainted with this subject; my intention is, that the fruit of this enquiry shall be put into a discourse, where the defects of all the present system, and the intended reform of them, should be spoken upon fully, with the reasons and objections on all sides; that this should be submitted to the above gentlemen, as well as some others, who have the same sort of experience, so that what is brought finally before your Lordship should carry with it the concurrence of those who may be

thought best able to form a right judgment of it. And this may be done without waiting till the whole is completed, but as soon as any of the parts are brought to maturity.

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I have the honor to be, with great thanks,

My Lord, your Lordship's

Most obliged humble Serv^t

JOHN REEVES.

Thanet Place.

4th Nov^r 84.