

freest of his vassals to his dungeon, or hang him up at his castle-door. But the rebellion showed that more might be involved in this despotism of the chiefs and proprietors of the country than the oppression of individuals, and that the power which they possessed, through its means of calling out their vassals on their own behalf, to-day, might be employed in precipitating them against the government on the morrow. In the year 1747, therefore, hereditary jurisdictions were abolished all over Scotland, and the power of judging in matters of life and death restricted to judges appointed and paid by the crown. To decide on such matters of minor importance as are furnished by every locality, justices were appointed; and Mr. Forsyth's name was placed on the commission of the peace; a small matter, it may be thought, in the present day, but by no means an unimportant one ninety years ago, to either his townspeople or himself.

Justices of the peace had been instituted about a century and a half before. But the hereditary jurisdictions of the kingdom leaving them scarce any room for the exercise of their limited authority, the order fell into desuetude; and previous to its re-appointment, on the suppression of the rebellion, the administration of the law seems to have been divided, in at least the remoter provinces, between the hereditary judges and the church. The session records of Cromarty during the establishment of Episcopacy are still extant, and they curiously exemplify the class of offences specially cognizable by the ecclesiastical courts. They serve, too, to illustrate, in a manner sufficiently striking, the low tone of morals which obtained among the people. Our great-great-grandfathers were not a whit wiser nor better nor happier than ourselves; and our great-great-grandmothers seem to have had quite the same pas-