

May it please your honours,

Our being so long confined in prison, and at this season of the year, has almost reduced our families to become a public charge, and we are likely to perish should we be continued here the approaching winter.

We are innocent of the crime laid to our charge, and hope it would appear, were [we to] be tried: and we humbly pray, that if the law will admit of it, we may be delivered to bail, which we can procure, until you shall think proper to try us.

But if the law will not admit us to be bailed, rather than to suffer here, and our wives and children should perish at home, or be burthensome to their neighbours, we are willing to accept of a pardon, to prevent our being further molested on account of the indictment found against us, and to depart this province, and never to make any settlement any more therein; and we humbly pray your honours to procure the same for us, and in such manner that we may be released as soon as possible; and we remain,

Your most obedient, though distressed, humble servants,

Thomas Hughson, Richard Hughson, William Hughson, Nathaniel Hughson, Walter Hughson.

Whereupon, as matters were circumstanced at this time, the judges thought proper so far to comply with the prayer of the petition, as to recommend them to his honour the lieutenant-governor for a pardon, upon condition of their leaving the province. And some days afterwards they were let out upon bail, having entered into recognizance with sureties for their appearance at the supreme court on the first day of the next term.

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### SUPREME COURT.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21.

Present, the chief justice, the third justice.

The king, against Richard Hughson, Thomas Hughson, William Hughson, Nathaniel Hughson, Walter Hughson.

The Hughsons appeared in discharge of their recognizances, and pleaded his majesty's most gracious free pardon; which was read and allowed of; and they were discharged.

The pardon was upon condition of their leaving the province by a day therein limited.

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JANUARY, 1742.

Upon the return of the vessels that had transported the negro conspirators the last summer, to various foreign parts, many

particulars of intelligence concerning the conspiracy, which had dropt from those criminals in their discourse with the captains, passengers and others, were brought hither, from which there was reason to apprehend that this city and people were not yet out of danger from this hellish confederacy, which had been so wickedly and maliciously formed against both; and considering the hints the negroes gave concerning the execrable oath the conspirators had engaged themselves in, it seemed probable that the like attempts would be renewed, notwithstanding the many examples that had been made by executions, and the number of slaves sent out of the province; for the conspirators impiously looked upon the oath to be so sacred, that they thought (as no doubt they were made to believe) that the eternal welfare of their souls depended upon the strict observance and execution of it; for fear (as the cant was, both of whites and blacks) that if they should reveal it, or desist from the execution of the engagements they were laid under by it, they should wrong their own souls.

Many cabals of negroes also had been discovered in diverse parts of the country, since the execution and transportation of the conspirators, which justly caused suspicion that the same villainous scheme was yet in agitation, particularly in Queen's county, on Nassau alias Long-Island; the negroes had there formed themselves into a company about Christmas last, by way of play or diversion (as they would have had it thought) had mustered and trained with the borrowed arms and accoutrements of their masters (or we would rather suppose, surreptitiously obtained) information whereof having been given to his honour the lieutenant governor, he immediately ordered his majesty's attorney general to write to the justices of that county about it, and to expostulate with them upon the occasion, and direct them to inflict due punishment on the offenders.

And the negroes were accordingly chastised for this daring piece of insolence.

There having also been reports about the same time, of several pretended prophecies of negroes, that Charles-Town in South-Carolina, and the city of New-York, were to be burnt down on the twenty-fifth of March next; these circumstances considered, and added to what had been wrote by General Oglethorpe, as before mentioned, that the declared enemies had secretly conspired to burn down and destroy all his majesty's magazines in North America; and considering what a scene of monstrous iniquity had been discovered the last summer, tending to this detestable purpose; there seemed to be too much reason to suspect

that these sort of divinations were founded upon a conspiracy still subsisting, as well as in part executed, both here and in South-Carolina.

The lieutenant governor therefore thought it necessary to put the people upon their guard, by writing circular letters to the magistrates of every city, borough and county within this government.

The following letter was sent directed to the mayor, recorder and aldermen of this city.

26th JANUARY, 1742.

*Gentlemen,* after the providential discovery of the late most execrable conspiracy, and the hellish and barbarous designs of a perverse and blood-thirsty people, for the ruin and destruction of the whole province and the inhabitants thereof, and that even at a time when all things were ripe for execution, and the intended desolation was so nigh at hand, one would think our signal preservation could never be forgot, and that no one could be so blind to himself and regardless of his future safety, as to suffer the negroes to have private or public meetings and callings together; thereby giving them an opportunity of forming new designs, or another conspiracy, knowing them to be a people whom no example can reclaim, no punishment deter, or lenitives appease, yet from the many undoubted informations I have received from diverse parts of the country, the insolence of the negroes is as great, if not greater than ever, and they are not only suffered to have private, but even public meetings, in great numbers, without the least molestation or interruption from the magistrates, and in defiance of those laws they ought to be the protectors of, and see put in due execution; thereby suffering them and themselves to be trampled on and insulted, to the endangering the peace of the province: If this practice continues, what may we not fear? for I doubt there are too many yet remaining among us who were of the late conspiracy, and though we have felled the tree, I fear it is not entirely rooted up. I must therefore require you, as you value the peace and safety of this city and province, and your own preservation; and you are hereby strictly charged and required, to see the laws against negroes duly and punctually executed, suffering no meetings of them within your city and county and several districts: and in order that the same may be more effectually done, I do hereby direct you to charge all the constables and other officers to be diligent in their duty, and that they apprehend and bring before you, or some of you, all and every one so offending; as also all such persons as shall be found to harbour negroes, con-

federate or consort with them, that they may be proceeded against according to law. And in order that every one may have notice hereof, I do direct, that you cause this letter to be read from time to time at your general quarter sessions; and that you give in charge to the grand juries, that they make inquiries concerning the offenders. I doubt not but you will have regard hereto, as it so highly concerns you all, and that you will take such prudent measures as may prevent any future disturbance.

*I am, Gentlemen,*

*Your most humble servant,*

GEO. CLARKE.

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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2.

At the general quarter sessions of the peace, held this day for the city and county of New-York.

The grand jury being called and sworn, the above letter was read; and the recorder after observing upon, and endeavouring to enforce the same by his charge, likewise recommended to them to inquire in general concerning tavern-keepers and inn-holders entertaining of negroes at their houses, as a crime of most pernicious and dangerous tendency; and having received information concerning M—— and Whitefield, two tavern-keepers, that they were much suspected of being guilty of that vile practice (notwithstanding the latter was convicted upon an indictment found against him for the like crime, and fined thereupon the last summer) the recorder gave them particularly in charge.

Hereupon the grand jury, as they were about to be discharged, reported, that they had inquired into the respective neighbourhoods of those two persons, and that they could get no sufficient information concerning this matter whereon to found an accusation against them.

But how well grounded the lieutenant governor's apprehensions were, concerning the danger which still threatened us from the conspirators remaining amongst us, may be conceived from what follows.

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15.

This morning about six o'clock, it was providentially discovered that some fire had been put in the gutter of a shed adjoining to the house where Walter Hyer lived, next the fence of the old Dutch church-yard; the wind blowing very hard at N. and the

gutter lying N. and S. some of the coals were blown into the street, which were accidentally discerned by one Hendricks, a carpenter, who was opening the window shutters of a new house he was about finishing, fronting the end of the street, in order to go to work; whereupon he immediately went to Hyer's house, and called him out of bed; and they found some live coals in the gutter next the shed towards the church-yard, and likewise a brand's end, or the bark of a brand's end, on the other side of the house next Ratsey's. The mayor being acquainted herewith, he summoned the magistrates to meet this morning at the City-Hall, to consult what steps to take in order to discover the incendiaries; and the magistrates being accordingly met, it was proposed by one of them, as no particular person was suspected, that they should all go and view the house, and inquire what negroes were in the neighbourhood, and their characters, whereby the most suspicious might be laid hold of and examined; it was thought most likely that by this method the truth might chance to bolt out: they went accordingly, and it luckily happened that the first person's negro inquired after, was the widow Bradt's. She kept a bake-house near by, and her yard ran along the rear of Hyer's and Ratsey's houses, up to the church yard fence, where were an heap of oyster shells lying so near Hyer's gutter, that a middle-sized man might easily step up and put fire into the gutter, at the North end of it, and from the same yard as easily throw a brand's end on the other side of the house next Ratsey's: upon the inquiry, it was said that the widow Bradt had only one negro, a sort of a simple half-witted boy, but however he was ordered to be brought forth; and he appeared upon view to be a lusty well-set fellow, of man's growth, and was afterwards judged, by those that knew him best, and had brought him into the country, to be one or two and twenty years old; his natural countenance was none of the pleasantest, but his appearance upon this occasion betokened symptoms of guilt: it was thought that Baker's servants, from the nature of their business must be up early, and have always a command of fire, which administered some colour of suspicion, which the looks of the fellow very much heightened; and therefore he was without ceremony committed, in order for examination in the afternoon, and likewise some other negroes of the neighbourhood, who were afterwards discharged.

The magistrates being met at three o'clock in the afternoon, and Tom asked, how he came to put fire to Hyer's house, and who advised and assisted him in it? he directly owned that he put the fire in the gutter himself: and being then very particu-

larly examined, his confession was taken down in writing in the presence of the justices, and by them signed.

*The confession followeth.*

1. Tom confesseth and saith, that the Sunday before last, he being in the yard of captain Jasper Farmar, a playing for pennies with Jack a negro belonging to said Farmar, a negro belonging to Samuel Dunscombe, a negro belonging to John Tudor called Peter, and a negro belonging to Charles Crooke (Rob) Jack told him (Tom) that his mistress was cross to him, he should take fire and throw it upon the shed or offdackye, (Dutch for a shed) and set them on fire ; that if he the said Tom did not do it, he (Jack) would poison him : that Jack told him this in the hearing of Peter.

2. That Jack told him if he fired the shed, that would fire the house of captain Ratsey, and his mistress's house too, and her in it : that Jack told him (Tom) that in firing the shed, that would fire the whole town, and then the negroes in town with the negroes that were to come from Long-Island, would murder the white people ; and that he said this in the presence and hearing of all the negroes above mentioned.

3. That all the negroes above mentioned said, that when the negroes came from Long-Island, they could do it all at once (that is) murder the white people ; and they would assist or help in murdering of the whites, and then they would be rich like the Backarara.(b)

4. That Jack told him (Tom) to throw fire upon the offdackye early on Monday morning come week ; and that he rose very early, about five o'clock, lit a candle, made a fire in the bake-house, heated water to melt the sugar, and then took a lighted coal of fire and threw it upon the roof of the shed.

5. That immediately after his throwing the coal of fire upon the roof, the coal in falling broke into several smaller coals ; that the wind blew the sparks into the little street.

5. That soon after he heard a knocking at Walter Hyer's door ; that he was then still in his mistress's yard, and hearing the knocking, he was afraid to be discovered, and run into his mistress's bake-house, and sat himself down at the fire side ; that being afraid he might be followed, he bolted the side door which leads into the yard.

Taken before the Mayor, Recorder, and several Aldermen.

(b) Negro language, signifies white people.

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16.

At a further meeting of the justices in the afternoon, the negro Tom (Mrs. Bradt's) further confessed and said,

No. 2—1. That being at captain Farmar's house on Sunday afternoon last, with his negro Jack, and going away, Jack followed him to the gate, and then told this Tom, that he should not forget to-morrow morning (meaning to fire the offdackye or shed) says Jack the wind blows hard now, and if it does so to-morrow morning, then you must fire the shed ; but if the wind does not blow hard, then he (Tom) should not do it.

2. That on Monday morning last, about five of the clock, Tom being up, he heard a knocking at his mistress's gate, went and opened it, and found a negro man there whose name he does not well know, unless it be Jack, who told him that Farmar's Jack had sent him to tell him (Tom) to fire the offdackye immediately. That this negro brought with him a piece of wallnut-wood bark which was on fire at one end and not on the other ; and that this negro put that fire between the house of captain Ratsey and Walter Hyer's house ; and that this negro ran away when the knocking was at Hyer's house, over the church-yard fence.

Taken before the Mayor, Recorder, and several Aldermen.

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18.

Further examination of Bradt's Tom before the justices.

No. 3—Tom being confronted with Farmar's Jack, charged him with what he had said against him in the two former confessions, and says,

1. That Michael,<sup>(c)</sup> Dunscomb's negro, was at Farmer's gate last Sunday, and heard Farmar's Jack tell him, Tom, to remember what he had told him the Sunday before, that is to say, to put fire to the offdackye, &c. and that Dunscomb's negro said thereupon, oh ! fie, why do you put such a little boy upon putting fire ? oh ! says Jack he is big enough.

2. That his mistress called him up last Monday morning early, about five of the clock, to make fire, and melt sugar to make cookies, and that he put fire to the offdackye next the church-yard first ; that he had fire in the tongs in one hand, and bark of nut wood on fire in the other, and the fire in the tongs he

(c) Dunscomb's negro was afterwards proved to have been nine miles out of town, from Saturday until Monday afternoon ; so that Tom was at least mistaken as to the Sunday, which is no uncommon thing for negroes to mistake in point of time.

threw in the gutter next the church-yard, and threw the lighted bark afterwards on the side of Hyer's house next Ratsey's; and this he says was between five and six o'clock in the morning: the coal he had in the tongs he got out of the bake-house, the nut-wood bark he had out of the parlour.

3. That he put this fire all alone, and nobody was with him or helped him.

4. That there was a negro came for fire that morning, and took it, having knocked at the gate for that purpose, and then went out at the gate again, and does not know who he was.

Taken as the former.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25.

The justices being met a fourth time, in order to endeavour to pry further into this mystery of iniquity, by examining Tom once more; for as to what had been drawn from him hitherto one could not give entire credit, as the reader may conclude, excepting as to his being the instrument of putting the fire; and it being intimated by one of the magistrates that Tom's mistress had a strong imagination (one might venture to say a strange one) that she and her son, if the magistrates would permit their attendance, could prevail upon their negro to speak the whole truth. As there were many of us, there was difference in opinions upon this matter. However, at length it was ruled that they should be admitted, and were sent for accordingly. Upon their appearance, Tom was admonished to tell the whole truth, how it was concerning this matter; and he declared himself at first to the same purpose as to the negroes he before accused, and as to the same matter and substance with his examination before set forth; but in the close, as there was great doubt made of his veracity, being strenuously urged by some of the magistratas, and his master and mistress, to be sure that he spoke nothing but the truth, and being asked whether he was sure that what he had said as to these negroes was the truth? he thereupon recanted, and declared what he had before related concerning the negroes he had accused, were all lies; and took the whole upon himself. And being asked why he did it, and how he came to do so? he answered, he could not help doing it.

This fellow having thus prevaricated, no use could be proposed to be made of him as an evidence to convict others, however he might have chanced to change his note afterwards; and it was therefore determined to bring him upon his trial. But it may be proper to observe that in the interval between Tom's first and



last examination, the negroes accused by him, were several times closely examined, both separately and face to face, but they all along positively denied every thing alleged against them by Tom concerning the fire, &c. but owned their being together at Farmer's playing at pennies; though it could scarce be imagined that Tom (who was really no fool, nor any of the wisest) had framed this scheme, and made this attempt merely on his own bottom, which should so correspond with the villainous confederacy of the last year. His recantation was not taken down in writing, but what is above set forth contains the substance of it.

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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27.

The justices, pursuant to the direction of an act of general assembly, issued their summons to James Alexander, esq. Mr. David Clarkson, Mr. Robert Livingston, sen. merchants, Paul Richard, esq. and Peter Van Brugh Livingston, merchant, as some of the principal freeholders within this city, thereby, summoning and requiring them to appear at the city-hall on Tuesday the second day of March next ensuing, at three of the clock in the afternoon of the same day, to hear and determine, in conjunction with the justices, whether Tom, a negro man slave, be guilty of conspiring or attempting to kill his majesty's liege people, or of burning the houses of Baffie Vandewater, or of Andrew Bradford and Cornelia his wife, within this city, whereof he stood accused.

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TUESDAY, MARCH 2.

City of New-York, ss.

At a meeting this day of the justices and five principal freeholders of this city, pursuant to the summons and directions of an act of general assembly of this colony, made in the fourth year of his present majesty's reign, entitled, an act for the more effectual preventing and punishing the conspiracy and insurrection of negro and other slaves; for the better regulating them, and for repealing the other acts therein mentioned relating thereto.

Present, John Cruger, esq. mayor, the recorder, justices of the quorum.

William Romme, Simon Johnson, John Moore, Christopher Banker, John Pintard, John Marshall, esqrs. aldermen, and justices of the peace.

Mr. Peter Van Brugh Livingston having been summoned upon

this occasion, appeared, and excused himself from serving, as not being a freeholder, and Mr. James Searle was summoned in his room, and appeared.

James Alexander, esq. Mr. David Clarkson, Mr. Robert Livingston, sen. Paul Richard, esq. Mr. James Searle, merchants, principal freeholders of this city.

Tom (*d*) a negro man slave brought to the bar. And William Smith, esq. having been appointed by the justices, council and prosecutor for the king, he delivered into court articles of accusation against the prisoner.

Before the articles were read, the freeholders were sworn, well and truly to try and judge as directed by the act of assembly; and the recorder warned the prisoner in favour of life, that he need not plead guilty to any of the articles, but, nevertheless, that his several confessions being read to the court, would amount to full proof, so far as they affected himself.

Then the articles were read, and were as followeth;

Tom, a negro man slave belonging to Divertie Bradt of the said city, widow, stands charged and accused,

First, For that he the said Tom, on Sunday the seventh day of February last past, at the dock ward of this city, did conspire with Jack, a negro man slave belonging to Jasper Farmar, Michael, a negro man slave belonging to Samuel Dunscomb, Peter, a negro man slave belonging to John Tudor, and Rob, a negro man slave belonging to Charles Crooke, of this city, and divers other negro slaves unknown, to kill and murder the said Divertie Bradt, Baffie Vandewater, and other his majesty's liege people within the city of New-York.

Secondly, For that he the said Tom, on Monday the fifteenth day of February last past, did wilfully put fire to and burn the shed or outhouse of Baffie Vandewater, and the house of Andrew Bradford and Cornelia his wife, in the dock ward of the same city.

Thirdly, For that he the said Tom, did on the fifteenth day of February last past, at the city and ward aforesaid, attempt to kill and murder Divertie Bradt and Baffie Vandewater, of this city, by setting fire to their houses, and burning them in the same.

Fourthly, That he the said Tom, on the fifteenth day of February last past, at the city and ward aforesaid, did attempt to burn the outhouse of the said Divertie Bradt and the dwelling-

(*d*) By this act the owners of slaves have it in their choice to try them by a jury, which is attended with some small charge; but this upon the question proposed, Mrs. Bradt declined.

houses of Baffie Vandewater, and Andrew Bradford and Cornelia his wife, situate in the same ward, and to burn the whole town and city of New-York.

To the first article the prisoner pleaded, not guilty. To the second, guilty. To the third, not guilty.

As the prisoner had pleaded guilty to the second article, the court were of opinion to proceed to judgment upon that; but Mr. Smith moved, that before they proceeded, some witnesses might be sworn, and the criminal's several examinations and confessions taken by the justices, as before set forth, might be read for their further information concerning his guilt, and for the greater satisfaction of the court and audience.

And here it may not be improper to observe, that the prisoner distinguished and pleaded to the three several articles directly, without hesitation; which seems to be a further argument that he had more sense than some people were willing to allow him.

Proclamations for silence and witnesses.

Witnesses for the king sworn, Hendricks and Hyer.

Hendricks said, he discovered the fire to fall out of the gutter as he was looking from a window into the street; and that thereupon he went and knocked at Hyer's door, and called him out of bed, and they searched and found coals on each side of the house; some in the gutter next the shed, towards the church-yard, and some on the side next Ratsey's house.

Hyer said, that the gutter next the church-yard was burnt black in the spot, or part of the gutter, where he found the coals lying.

The criminal's confessions read as before set forth.

And the judges further informed the court, that the criminal at his last examination, though he at the beginning of it persisted in the same story as to his accusation of Jack (Farmer's) prompting and proposing to him to put the fire, &c. and as to the other negroes present at the two meetings at Farmer's house, advising and threatening him if he did not, &c. yet in the close he declared for truth, that all he had said relating to them, were lies, and that he put the fire of his own head; and being asked why he did it, and how he came to do so? he answered, he could not help doing it. And being asked by the court whether he did not make such confessions as had been then just read? he answered, yes. He was then bid to tell the same story over again as he had told to the justices at the three first examinations, and likewise at the first part of the fourth and last; and he repeated the same over again, as it were in the same words; and when he had done, being asked whether what he had then said as to the

other negroes was true? he answered, no, it was all lies; and took all again upon himself, and owned his recantation to be the truth.

The audience being ordered to withdraw, the prisoner taken from the bar, and the court-room cleared; the recorder advised with the justices and freeholders; and having taken their opinions, which were unanimous upon that occasion, the doors were ordered to be opened, and the prisoner brought back; and being accordingly brought back, the recorder proceeded to admonition and sentence, as followeth:

You, Tom, the criminal at the bar, hearken to what is now to be said to you.

You stand convicted of wilfully putting fire to and burning the shed or outhouse of Baffie Vandewater (e) within this city. The evidence of your guilt has stood principally upon your own confession before your trial; which you now confirm by your plea: and indeed this is the strongest proof, the highest conviction that can be: for this single fact you deserve death: and though the court proceeds to give judgment against you upon this article, yet your offence is of a complicated nature, *i. e.* consists of many particulars, all tending to one and the same monstrous and execrable purpose; the murdering the inhabitants of this city.

The hellish scheme you have engaged in, as you have confessed before the magistrates over and over again (I think no less than four several times) was, to set Walter Hyer's house on fire, and (as you concluded and proposed) that would consequently set the next house (Ratsey's) on fire, and that would set your mistress's on fire, and burn your mistress in it; and then that would burn the whole town: then the Long-Island negroes were to come over to the assistance of the negroes here; and they, in conjunction, were to murder all the white people of this city: and, in order that your malicious, hellish purposes might effectually take place, the fire was to be put, as it actually was, when the wind blew hard, that in all probability, any attempts made to extinguish the flames, might be in vain.

And such a trusty agent have you been in the devil's service, that in prosecution of this infernal conspiracy, you did actually take the first step proposed, in order to accomplish this diabolical purpose, by putting fire to Hyer's house on both sides of it.

All this that I have said, you have confessed over and over again; and in this we must take your word. It was a merciful

(e) Laid in her name in the articles of accusation, being owner of the house; Walter Hyer tenant.

act of Providence that your designs were timely prevented, that you were committed upon suspicion only, and that thereupon the truth has thus bolted out from you.

It was rumoured without doors, that you were an half-witted fellow (boy I think they called you, though you are said to be two or three and twenty years old) and indeed one would think hardly any body but arrant fools, or mad folks, would engage in such chimerical, wicked, villainous and dangerous projects, which must most probably end in the confusion and destruction of the wretches concerned; as you found by woeful experience in the many examples of those miserable creatures of your colour that expired in flames, and at the gallows, the last summer, for the like detestable offences: and yet so hardened and stupified are ye in villainy, that no examples though ever so severe, no terrors of punishment can affright ye; but ye will even defy the gallows and commit your bodies to the flames, rather than not risk the chance of gratifying your savage, cruel, and insatiable thirst for blood.

But, nevertheless, to convince one that you are not that half-witted fellow, as some would represent you, you showed some cunning (as it should seem you thought) after your commitment, in providing for your own safety and preservation, by laying this scheme upon and accusing others, as having prompted you to this mischief, hoping thereby, as it must be supposed, to be admitted an evidence against them, and so save your own life. This was a thought too deep for a fool, or half-witted fellow: and indeed, from my observation of you, during the course of your several examinations, I could discover no reason for an insinuation, that you had less sense than those of the common rank of negroes, but that your qualifications for mischief are inferior to none of them: that you have sense enough to distinguish between good and evil; that your own conscience could direct you what was fit and proper to be done, and what not, you yourself, by your own confessions, have given most convincing proofs; for, when (as you all along said, till the last time, when you recanted and declared that what you had told concerning the other negroes was all lies, I say, as you told the story) Jack (Farmer's) in order to try whether you were fit for the undertaking, said to you, Tom, your mistress is cross to you, you must set fire to the off-dackye, then that will burn Hyer's house, that will burn Ralsey's house, then that will burn your mistress's house, and burn your mistress in it: your answer to Jack upon this proposal was, No, my mistress no cross to me, my mistress good enough, what should I set fire for? you may do it yourself; or words to that

effect: that thereupon Jack insisted that you should set fire, and the reason why you at last agreed to do it, was because, you said Jack threatened he would poison you if you did not. This is what we call natural reason, and shows such a measure of it, or there is such a chain of consequence drawn by it, that supposing it to be your own scheme (as you now take all upon yourself) you can be no fool, or half-witted fellow; and if it was the scheme of others proposed to yourself, your very repetition of it, your telling that story as you have done so often over and over again, almost in the same words, shows that you do not want understanding; but that you have made a very bad use of it, and acted against that light which God Almighty has given you to employ to better purposes: so that here, I say, in these instances of the very proposal and answer, you give convincing proof that you were conscious, *i. e.* that you yourself was sensible and knew, that what you was going to attempt was wrong, was wicked, and what you ought not to do: whether Jack (Farmer's) was the person that proposed the thing to you, we cannot tell; but that somebody did, and that you did not do it altogether of your own head, I am fully persuaded. But if no one but the devil and you contrived it: then so much must be drawn from it as is sufficient to show that you acted against the light of your own conscience, your own reason, by your own way of arguing, and out of your own mouth you are judged. How you came at last to withdraw your accusation against those negroes, you for four examinations running, charged with advising you, and being concerned with you, in this villainous project, I know not; nor can I account for it, without the devil had a mind to leave you in the lurch at last.

You negroes are treated here with great humanity and tenderness; ye have no hard task-masters, ye are not laden with too heavy burthens; but your work is moderate and easy: you say, your mistress no cross to you, she very good, or she good enough; and yet with small persuasion you were prevailed upon to destroy her in flames; such worthless, detestable wretches are many, it may be said most, of your complexion, that no kindnesses can oblige ye; there is such an untowardness, as it should seem, in the very nature and temper of ye, that ye grow cruel by too much indulgence: so much are ye degenerated and debased below the dignity of human species, that even the brute animals may upbraid you; for the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; even the very dogs also will, by their actions express their gratitude to the hand that feeds them, their thankfulness for kindnesses; they will fawn and fondle upon their

masters ; nay, if any one should attempt to assault them, they will defend them from injury, to the utmost of their power. Such is the fidelity of these dumb beasts ; but ye, the beasts of the people, though ye are clothed and fed, and provided with all necessaries of life, without care ; in requital of your benefactors, in return for blessings ye give curses, and would scatter fire-brands, death and destruction around them, destroy their estates and butcher their persons. Thus monstrous is your ingratitude ! But thanks be to Almighty God, that through his wondrous and merciful providence, your hellish devices are discovered, and you are now to reap the just reward of your labours.

And since justice has at last overtaken you, I shall in compassion to your poor soul, which is in the utmost, the greatest danger of being forever miserable, give you a word of advice, in order to prevail upon you to make use of those few moments you have to remain in this world, to the best advantage ; for be not deceived, there is another world after this, and there is a God above who has a clear view of all your actions, and knows the very secrets of your hearts, and will require at your hands according to that degree of reason which he has given you : and though your body be consumed in the flames here on earth (a punishment of short continuance) yet your soul will never die ; that must survive the body, either to be forever happy or forever miserable, according to your actions here.

What a horrible expectation must yours be then ! you that would murder and destroy without mercy, nay without provocation ; what reasonable hopes can you entertain of mercy from the hands of the God of justice, who will reward every man according to his works ? they that have done good shall be forever happy ; they that have done evil shall be cast into a sea of fire and brimstone, to be forever tormented with the devil and his accursed spirits, from whence there will be no returning, no coming out again, but there will be bitter weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, time without end.

Now to avoid this dreadful everlasting punishment, the only method for you to take, is to make the best use of the time allowed you between this and your execution, by bringing yourself to a due sense of your guilt, your heinous crying sins ; truly to repent you of, and be heartily sorry for your wickedness, and earnestly to pray to God Almighty for forgiveness : and this is not all ; but that your repentance may be sincere, you must make that little amends which is in your power, towards us you have designed, and conspired to murder and destroy, by discovering all those persons whom you know to be any ways engaged or concerned in

this hellish plot, that you may thereby prevent all further mischief. Upon these conditions only can you have any reasonable or well-grounded hope or expectation of the salvation of your soul, and avoiding that dreadful eternal punishment against which I have forewarned you.

And now it were but just, that the same mischief which you intended for others should fall upon your own pate; but the court has had some regard to your confession, as you acknowledged your guilt upon your first examination, they have adjudged you to be hanged, otherwise you would have been burnt.

And therefore the sentence which I am to pronounce against you is, that &c.

The court then ordered the execution to be on Friday next between the hours of ten and one.

But his honour the lieutenant governor, by advice of his majesty's council, thought proper to reprieve him to the Friday sevensnight.

Tom after this condemnation returned to his old story as to Jack (Farmer's) advising him to set fire, &c. and brought in Duyckink's Philip as joining with Jack therein, and in the threatenings to poison or kill him if he did not, but Jack and Philip were several times examined after Tom's condemnation, and confronted with him, and he charged them to their faces, but they could not be brought to a confession. Their examinations follow.

#### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4.

Duyckink's Philip, negro, being examined, says,

1. That he was at Jack (Farmer's) on Sunday about a month ago; in the afternoon, in church time, he was going by Farmer's house to church, and Jack called him in, and he found in the yard Kingston, Tudor's Peter, Debrosse's York in the square, Bradt's Tom, called amongst them Monkey, to the number of six with Jack and himself: they all played at pennies, and the examinant lost two pence, and then went away just before church out, in order to fetch his mistress's stove from church, and left all the others in the yard.

2. That he never was at Jack (Farmer's) any other time, and says he did not hear any talk from any of those negroes about setting fire to the houses, or the Long-Island negroes coming over to assist the New-York negroes in killing the white people.



3. That there was looking on upon the negroes playing at pennies, a white boy (f) Tudor's apprentice, when he came into the yard, and he left him there when he came away.

4. The examinant at last remembers that Mr. Marston's negro Oronoko, was also at Jack (Farmer's) at the same time.

Jack (Farmer's) though he denied it at first, now owns, that Duyckink's Philip and Marston's Oronoko, were at his mistress's in the yard one Sunday, but did not see them play at pennies, but each of them once on different Sundays; and that Oronoko came to his house frequently on a week day.

Both Philip and Oronoko own, they were playing at pennies at Jack (Farmer's) on Sunday three weeks ago.

Bradt's Tom confronted with Jack (Farmer's) and charged him with telling him, that Philip said, he (Tom) should put the fire; that Philip was by and heard Jack tell him so, and said if he did not he would lick him; and Farmer's Jack said he would poison him if he did not. Tom was likewise at the same time confronted with Philip, and declared to the same purpose to his face.

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#### SATURDAY, MARCH 15.

The negro Tom was executed. At the gallows he declared, that now he was sure he must die, he would tell the truth, and said that Farmer's Jack, Duyckink's Philip, William Gilbert's Cuffee, and David Van Horne's Corah, were the persons that put him upon setting the fire.

Immediately after Tom's execution, Cuffee, Corah and Philip, were apprehended and strictly examined by the mayor and recorder, but nothing could be got out of them.

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#### MONDAY, MARCH 15.

A tanner's barkhouse, belonging to one Stevens' was set on fire, in the swamp at the east end of this city, the wind blowing exceeding hard at N. W. The alarm of fire was between 12 and 1 o'clock, which put the people into great consternation; but the tan pit being detached some distance from any dwelling houses, it did no other damage than the burning a few wooden work and bark houses belonging to the tanners there.

(f) Abraham. He was examined, and said the several negroes mentioned by Tom were at Farmer's, but he heard no such talk amongst them relating to the conspiracy.

Upon inquiry it was found, that two of Stevens' negroes, Sam and Tom, and also his white servant boy, John, had been at work there in the morning, and it being cold, they had made some fire under the window near the work-house, and had inclosed the fire on both sides with two doors or boards, to prevent the eddy wind from blowing the fire about.

At 12 o'clock these servants all left off work, in order to go home to dinner. Negro Sam sends Tom to fetch tea-water at a little distance from the place where they had been at work, and afterwards sends the white boy after him; and Sam undertakes to put out the fire and fasten the doors of the bark house and stable; which done, and Tom and the white boy returned with tea-water, they all go home together to dinner, and towards 1 o'clock this fire was discovered.

The bark house was a new close boarded building, adjoining to a stable and mill house, on the side of the yard opposite to the work house, under the side of which the fire was made by the servants in the yard, and the bark house was at the end of those buildings first mentioned, farthest out of the course of the wind; so that it was most improbable that any coals could have blown thither; and it seemed to be agreed on all hands, that the fire must have been put there on purpose.

#### TUESDAY, MARCH 16.

*Examinations* taken this day, and several other succeeding days, before the mayor, recorder, and several of the aldermen, concerning the fire at the tan yard in the swamp.

Paul Romme saith, that being at the tan yards in Beekman's swamp, on Monday, near 1 o'clock, he heard the cracking as of cedar or boards on fire; that looking around him he soon heard the cry of fire, fire, and immediately thereupon perceived a great flame and blaze breaking through the upper part of the roof of the bark house of Mr. John Stevens; that the blaze, fire, and smoke spread in a surprizing manner, and took to the stable, mill house, &c. in a very short time; that when he came to the fire, he found there Hendrick Vandewater, a young man belonging to Dobson, &c. that he does not believe that the fire which broke out of the roof did proceed from the fire that was made in the yard at the side of the work house; believes that it was set on fire on purpose, but does not know by whom.

Hendrick Vandewater said, that standing at his father-in-law's house with Daniel Van Dursen, he perceived a smoke go out from one of the houses at the tan yards at Beekman's

swamp ; upon which he desired Van Dursen to look at the place, and said he believed it was on fire ; that continuing to look, he found the smoke increase, upon which he ran towards it, and Van Dursen after him ; that when he came to the bark house of John Stevens, he saw a great blaze and fire strike through the upper part of the roof ; that this was near 1 o'clock yesterday afternoon ; that this fire could not, as he apprehends and believes, proceed from the fire that was in the yard at the side of the work house ; but believes it was set on fire by hand.

John Bass, Stevens' white boy, said that Sam told him to go and help Tom to fill the jug (this John denied this morning, and Sam just now says, that he and Sam shut all the doors together) that when he and Tom did return with the water, they did not find Sam near the place where the fire had been, nor did they stand there with him ; that he did not see Sam till he passed the work house, and then Sam stood within five yards of Mr. Bonnett's lime house.

Tom said when he went for tea water, he left Sam and the white boy at the fire by the work house, and that it was not then put out, nor did he see it put out but that Sam said he had put it out with water ; that he did not see Sam stand at the water-hole, nor did he see him till he came to the lime house of Mr. Bonnett, when he saw him stand at the little gate waiting for Tom and the white boy ; that the white boy came to Tom after he had filled his jug with tea-water ; that he did not stand at the side of the work house with Sam and the white boy, after his return with the tea-water.

William Rogers said, that on the 5th inst. being Friday, in the afternoon about 5 o'clock, being at the tan yards in Beekman's swamp, at work for Mr. Bonnett, Sam, a negro belonging to John Stevens, delivered to this Rogers, a piece of gold called a double doubleloon, which was very black, and desired him to get it changed for him into smaller money ; that Rogers delivered this gold to Mr. Stevens, who took his negro up stairs and whipped him ; that afterwards, being Saturday, said Sam came again to the tan yards, where finding said Rogers, Sam said, well, William, you have occasioned my master's whipping of me, who said he would whip me again, but I will be even with you for it ; that said Rogers afterwards acquainted Mr. Stevens with those threatening speeches of his negro, who answered him, don't fear him, he will not hurt you, he is a harmless fellow.

Mr. Bonnet said, that Mr. Stevens told him he would or had whipped his negro ; but understood that he said he had whipped

him ; that the negro told him that his master had whipped him : this was touching the doubleloon spoken of by William Rogers.

Sam said, that he shut the back door, that nobody was then with him ; that he then came out at the stable door, and shut it, nobody being then with him ; that at these times Tom and the white boy were gone for tea-water : that when Tom and the white boy returned, Sam stood where the fire had been, under the side of the work-house ; that Tom and the white boy came to him where the fire had been, and stood a little while ; that they could see that the fire was put out ; that the white boy then said come Sam, let us go home : that Tom and the white boy were gone for tea-water about ten minutes ; that after putting out the fire he put the shovel into the stable ; that after putting out the fire, and before putting the shovel into the stable, he put the shovel into the water of one of the coops ; that Tom did not ask him whether he had put out the fire, nor did he tell him that he had, nor the white boy either.

This fire at the tan-pits just brought the year round to St. Patrick's day, the evening whereof the last year (as the reader may have observed from the course of the evidence) was calculated by the conspirators for burning the fort ; a place, no doubt, most likely to give them the greatest annoyance ; which, though accordingly attempted, was not however affected till the next day. Why that particular time was fixed upon, from what afterwards appeared in evidence concerning the conspiracy, was no difficult matter to conjecture : for as that was an evening of national rejoicing, according to the custom of some, it were most likely that many would then be incapacitated for giving that assistance which the nature of their duty might require, in time of extraordinary emergency ; and therefore it seems to have been a principal aim of the conspirators, to attempt the destruction of the fort at all events, and at that particular time, especially as some of the soldiers themselves were proved afterwards to be of that villainous confederacy, who also knew of what consequence it might be to their diabolical scheme, to have that place demolished ; and no doubt, these miscreants were engaged and accordingly endeavoured to cheer up their innocent comrades as well as their wicked confederates to such a pitch, under colour of this national festival, as might render the former useless, and the latter desperate : for as the secrets of this infernal confederacy were afterwards unfolded, it is scarce to be doubted, that had the fire at the fort taken effect on St. Patrick's night, there would then have been a general insurrection of the negroes, and the whites their abettors ; and much more mis-

chief done, probably many persons, nay families butchered, had not the providence of God most remarkably interposed in our favour, by preventing the fires taking effect that night, as the conspirators purposed it should.(g) But the fire breaking out there the next day about noon, the buildings in the fort were all down to the ground long before night, which was the most suitable season for these assassins to act their intended tragedy; but as was observed in the introduction, a company of militia being under arms in the evening, and continuing so all night, the conspirator's hearts failed them, and thus a stop was happily put to their career, and their wicked machinations afterwards as providentially detected. But soon after the examples had been made of many of the conspirators, by executions and transportations, it seemed as if the people had almost generally composed themselves into a tranquil security; some by discrediting, others (as one would imagine) forgetting that there had been a real conspiracy; though from reiterated accounts still daily arriving by masters of vessels, to this time, of what the transported negroes had in their passages declared concerning it, there seemed too much reason to apprehend there were yet remaining among us, many of the associates in that execrable confederacy, who might yet be hardy enough to persist in the same wicked purposes, and make new attempts; and as an earnest of it, two fresh alarms we have already passed over; and had but the last taken effect, when a strong wind favoured the design, perhaps St. Patrick's day might have been an anniversary in our calendar, to have been commemorated by the colony with fasting, weeping and mourning.

But notwithstanding those signal providential disappointments, neither did the malice of the conspirators subside, nor their courage abate.

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#### TUESDAY, MARCH 23.

In the dusk of the evening, a bundle of linen, set on fire, was thrown into the gutter adjoining to Benson's brew house, at the east end of the town, and was by the wind blown out thence upon the adjoining shed; which was discovered by a neighbour accidentally coming into the yard; when it came down, as the man declared, it was like a round lighted coal, but burnt to tinder, and upon examination of it, he judged that there had been tow stuffed in the middle of it.

(g) See negro Quack's confession, § 3. McDonald's evidence.

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24.

The magistrates met at the City-Hall, and sent for several of Mr. Benson's servants, and others, and examined them; but no particular person being suspected of the fact, nothing could be made of it.

## TUESDAY, APRIL 20.

Being the first day of the term, the judges of the supreme court recommended it to the grand jury to inquire concerning the fire at Stevens' tan-pits; but nothing further being discovered, they did not think there was sufficient cause to present the negro Sam, upon the evidence before mentioned, but indicted him for a felony and robbery committed some time before, of which he was now impeached.

No discovery was made about the attempt at Benson's.

But the informations of the transported negroes before hinted at, and these fresh instances of fires confirming them, seemed at length to gain attention, and were by many thought sufficient to awaken every one from a supine security, and put them upon their guard against these latent enemies.

## TUESDAY, AUGUST 3.

The daring insolence of negroes, observed by many even at this time, and the countenance and encouragement given by dram shops, was still every day complained of; and yet the difficulty was to detect them, so as to convict the aggressors: however, the magistrates thought it their duty to use all the means in their power towards bringing them to condign punishment. And therefore,

At a general quarter sessions of the peace, held this day for the city and county of New-York, before the mayor, recorder, and aldermen—

The grand jury being sworn, his honour the lieutenant governor's circular letter of the 26th January last, directed to the magistrates of the city, before set forth, being read again; the recorder proceeded to his charge as followeth.

*Gentlemen of the grand jury,* In order for you to pursue the good intention of his honour's letter, it is necessary that you make diligent inquiry into the economy and behaviour of all the mean ale-houses and tipling houses within this city, and to mark out all such to this court, who make it a practice (and a most wicked and pernicious one it is) of entertaining negroes, and the scum

and dregs of white people in conjunction; who to support such expense, are tempted and abetted to pilfer and steal, that they may debauch each other upon the plunder and spoils of their masters and neighbours: this gives opportunities for the most loose, debased and abandoned wretches amongst us to cabal and confederate together, and ripen themselves in these schools of mischief, for the execution of the most daring and detestable enterprizes; I fear there are yet<sup>(k)</sup> many of these houses amongst us, and they are the bane and pest of the city; it was such that gave the opportunity of brooding this most horrid and execrable conspiracy, the effects of which infernal combination, his honour is thus anxious to prevent.

And notwithstanding the great pains and industry (as it should seem) has been taken to bring the notion of a plot into contempt and ridicule, by some people amongst us of phlegmatic tempers, who have endeavoured to make light of it, dozed themselves into a lethargic security, and have set at naught the evidence of their own senses; for they have seen and heard, and methinks they might have felt too: nevertheless, I shall not forbear expressing my fears and apprehensions also, that the enemy is still at work within our bowels; for surely it would be of little avail, if the same execrable and horrible scheme of villainy is still carrying on among us, and should at length break out again in flames about our ears, and proceed to the murdering and butchering our families; I say it will be of no avail for such stupid, thoughtless and incredulous folk as these to stand aghast at their dreadful conviction, and cry out, Lord! who would have thought it? it will be too late then to call upon God, when the affrontive contumacious behaviour of some among us, who spurn at the mercy of providence, our great and signal deliverance out of the jaws of our enemies; when our own irreverent, impious demeanor may have filled up the measure of our iniquities, fitted us for divine vengeance, and drawn down such a heavy and sore judgment upon us, as delivers us over for a prey unto their teeth.

Let us therefore, gentlemen, think seriously, and take better heed to these things; acknowledge the divine goodness in our deliverance and preservation hitherto, by a suitable deportment, and make proper use of the warning that has been given us, by providing for our own safety and security.

(k) Nine persons were indicted and fined for keeping such disorderly houses.

And besides what I have already pointed out for your consideration, it will be necessary for you also, and highly becoming in you, to inquire concerning all lodgers that are strangers within this city; obscure people that have no visible way of subsistence; for that the popish emissaries have been despatched from abroad to steal in among us, under several disguises, such as dancing-masters, school-masters, physicians, and such like; whereby, as it is calculated, they may easily gain admittance into families, work under ground like a mole in the dark, and accomplish the works of the devil, and other our declared enemies; if any such obscure persons as I have hinted at, you can discover in the course of your inquiries (and that there have been such, we have had very creditable information) it is your duty to present them to the court, that they may be apprehended, and examined by the magistracy, and dealt with according to law.

*Gentlemen*, I doubt not but you will remember, that you are sworn, diligently to inquire, and true presentment make of all such matters and things as shall be given you in charge.

I give his honour's letter to you in charge; and these things I have before mentioned, I give you expressly, and particularly in charge also; and persuade myself of your conscientious discharge of your duty.

In general, you are charged to present all crimes and offences which shall come to your knowledge, from treasons, down to trespasses.

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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2.  
AT A COMMON COUNCIL.

Mary Burton, the evidence who detected the conspirators, having applied to the board for the reward offered by the proclamation, issued pursuant to an order of the common council of the 11th of April, 1741, promising the sum of one hundred pounds to any white person that should discover any person or persons concerned in setting fire to any dwelling houses, store-houses, or other buildings within this city: It was ordered, that the mayor should issue his warrant to the treasurer to pay to Mr. Moore, for Mary Burton's use and benefit, the sum of eighty-one pounds, which with the sum of nineteen pounds before paid by the corporation for the freedom and other necessities to and for the use of the said Mary, made in the whole the sum of one hundred pounds, in full of the reward offered.

The mayor accordingly issued his warrant, and the money was paid to Mary Burton.



## CONCLUSION.

BY the course of the evidence, it appears, that a design was conceived to destroy this city by fire, and massacre the inhabitants: that fire was to be put to several quarters of the town, at one and the same time; that the English church was to be set on fire at a time when it was most likely there would be the fullest congregation, and the avenues from the church were to be guarded by these ruffians, in order to butcher those that should attempt to escape the flames; this part of the scheme, it seems, Ury, the priest, had particularly at heart. The winds were consulted which would be most proper to attempt the fires with. They were to begin at the east end of the town with a strong easterly wind, which (as it was projected) according to the course of its situation, would probably destroy the whole town; but the king's fort was first to be burnt, because most likely to annoy these furies when their hellish devices were putting in execution. The negro confederates were each of them to set fire to his master's house, and proceed to the assassinating their respective masters and families; and these fires were calculated for the night. St. Patrick's night was the time appointed. Accordingly we find, as a proof that they were in earnest, the attempt upon the fort was made on St. Patrick's night, though, through the providence of God, the fire did not take effect until the next day at noon, when the villain who first put it, had renewed his effort, by blowing up the same brand that he had placed for the purpose the night before. (a)

If it be considered, that many of the Irish catholics, unknown to the captains, runagates, or perhaps purposely sent over, had been enlisted in some of the independent companies posted here, some whereof were detected of being confederated with the conspirators; they could not have pitched upon a fitter season for perpetrating their bloody purposes; for on this night, according to custom, their commemoration of their saint might be most likely to excite in those of the infernal league, boldness and resolution, for the execution of this horrible enterprize, and others innocently partaking of their jollity, might in such an event, be thereby incapacitated for service; so that, according to this device, all (it might seem probable to them) would lie at their

(a) See the note upon Quack's confession at the stake.

mercy. But the fire at the fort happening in the day, contrary to the purpose of the conspirators, and the town having been much alarmed at the misfortune, though not apprehending the treachery; yet, a military watch being kept all the night following, the villains were thereat somewhat intimidated, and stopt their progress for a while: nevertheless, from the nightly cabals of the conspirators, at Hughson's, and the encouragement given by Ury the priest, the night after the fort burnt, who told them, now God had prospered them in the beginning, in burning the fort, they need not fear; we must be resolute and proceed in the work, and no doubt God will prosper us in all; execrable wretch! From hence they took courage again, and it was resolved amongst them, that they should proceed. Accordingly after one week had passed, they did, we see, set fire to several houses within the compass of a fortnight, sometimes many in a day, undiscovered; and made several other attempts, in which they were frustrated, till at length some Spanish prize negroes having been seized and committed upon suspicion, a stop was put to their career. But more than a fortnight passed after the last of these fires, before the least intimation was given touching the occasion of them, that they were the effects of a diabolical conspiracy; till Mary Burton, servant to John Hughson, was brought before the grand jury, as a witness to a different matter, concerning which she had testified before the magistrates; she at first refusing to be sworn to give her evidence in that case to the grand jury, at length rather than go to jail, submitted, but withal bolted out, that she would give no evidence concerning the fires: this hint afforded sufficient handle to the gentlemen of the grand jury, to exert their diligence in sifting out her meaning, and to prevail with her to disclose the secret; which, after much entreaty and persuasion, they effected, though at the same time, the girl disburthened herself with apparent dread and great unwillingness, from the apprehension of the danger she should be in of being murdered by the conspirators for the discovery, as she afterwards declared.

By the evidence of this girl, it appears, that her master Hughson was a principal engine, agent and instigator of these deeds of darkness amongst the slaves here, ever since she came into his service; and by the evidence of others, whites and blacks, it also appears, that he having kept a public house for some years, had long since made it a practice to entertain numbers of negroes, often 20, 30, 40 or 50 at a time, and by degrees deluded them to engage in the conspiracy, upon his promises that they should all be freemen, and that other fine things should be done for

them ; that upon their consenting, Hughson always bound them to their engagements by horrible oaths, not only to perform what they undertook to do, viz. to burn and massacre, but also to keep all secret, though they were to die for it ; that these oaths were reiterated at all future meetings, in order to confirm them ; and for their encouragement, Hughson often swore himself over again, and had sworn his wife and daughter into the confederacy also. That Hughson provided arms and gunpowder, further to convince these deluded wretches how much he was in earnest ; but the butchery to be executed by the negroes after they had set fire to their master's houses, was calculated to be done with knives ; for those weapons, it seems, they judged would make no noise : this the whole current of negro evidence agrees in, and it is corroborated by whites. That a knife designed for this purpose was actually found in the chest of one of the negro conspirators, and most others of them were provided with knives.

That Hughson employed some of the head negroes as agents under him, to decoy other negroes, and their instructions were, not to open the conspiracy to any but those that were of their own country (as they are brought from different parts of Africa, and might be supposed best to know the temper and disposition of each other) and when they brought a convert to Hughson, or one likely to become such, Hughson always gave them drams till they were intoxicated, and then the conspiracy was proposed to them ; and they generally consented without much difficulty, upon his specious promises, and sometimes upon the bare proposal ; but if they were unwilling to engage, they were terrified by threats of being murdered, till they complied ; then all such were constantly sworn, invited to Hughson's feasts, and these commissioned to seduce others. Many, before they knew any thing of the secret, were invited to Hughson's by himself or others : for, by way of introduction, as well as confirmation, Hughson, it seems, kept open house for the negroes, and entertained them at all times, those that had no money at free cost ; he assured them, they should be always welcome to him : these compliments he artfully placed as he judged most proper ; for as to such as were his special agents and dexterous fellows, they were to pay in money if they had it, or money's worth, by pilfering and stealing as they could, to raise supplies for carrying on the common cause ; and they were to bring all to him : more especially upon the grand catastrophe, when the town should be all in flames, and the negroes had butchered their respective families, the most valuable things easiest to be removed (particular plate) were to be brought to Hughson's, and it seems they

had already carried on so successful a trade, and Hughson's house was become a mart of so great note amongst the negroes, that with them it had obtained the name of Oswego, after the province trading-house. They were likewise enjoined to steal their master's arms, powder, &c. and lodge all in Hughson's custody: he had many barrels of gunpowder at a time. It appears that this hellish project was set on foot here, by agent Hughson, four or five years before it was ripened for execution; and it must needs have been a work of time to seduce so many slaves as have been detected.

The white conspirators were sworn by Ury the priest in chief, and the negroes sometimes by Hughson, and sometimes by Ury in a ring surrounded by them, and he, while the oath administering, holding a crucifix over their heads. They were persuaded that the French and Spaniards were soon to come and join them; and if they did not come in a set time, they were to begin and do all themselves. Further to encourage the town negroes, they were told the confederates had many whites and blacks to come out of the country to their assistance, particularly from Long-Island, and Hughson was to give the word when they were to begin. The negroes were flattered they were to be formed into companies, several officers of them were named for the purpose, captains, &c. and the town was divided into districts. Thus all was to be their own; and if any of them were squeamish, Ury the priest could forgive sins, and did forgive them all they had committed, or should commit, provided they performed what they had engaged in, and kept all secret to their last breath.

But however true these matters have been found to be, so chimerical, wicked, abominable and inhuman was the device, that those at a distance might have been apt to think it all a dream, or a fiction, were it not for the last proof of a reality, which cannot be withstood, the several fires which did happen in the manner we saw; which consideration was a great motive to this publication. The witnesses, whites and blacks, that gave any evidence, or made any confession at all, agree in the most considerable article concerning it; the design of burning the town, and murdering the inhabitants; and that popish priests were concerned in it; which verifies, what is sarcastically cited in Ury's defence as proverbial, that there can be no mischief in a country, but a Roman priest (if there) must be in it; but we may venture to go one step further, and say, if such priests had not been here (and some of capacities much superior to Ury's) there would have been no such plot; for upon this and no other

footing can it be accounted for. Let us suppose then (and we shall find just grounds for the supposal) that such priests or monks &c. call them what you please, had conceived a design for such a horrible, detestable purpose, as the devastation of this city, and the massacre of its inhabitants, to be perpetrated by the hands of our own slaves, in conjunction with the most abandoned whites, the dregs and disgrace of their complexion; and that at a critical time, when their successful wickedness would have frustrated the supply of provisions and necessaries to his majesty's fleet, then upon an expedition against his enemies in the West-Indies, upon which perhaps their subsistence was in some measure to rely; and that for the purpose, emissaries of these kind of gentry were despatched into his majesty's colonies in several different disguises, as those of dancing-masters, school-masters, physicians, &c. who under these colourable appearances, might be most likely to gain admittance and confidence in private families, and thereby have opportunities of debauching their slaves, and acquainting themselves of such white people as might be most likely to be seduced to their detestable purposes: who then so seemingly proper instruments to be pitched upon amongst us, by such infernal agents, as John Hughson and such like? for as the way to hell must be trod by gradual steps, and no one commences consummate villain in an instant; so Hughson had already taken some hopeful degrees in the school of wickedness; he had for many years entertained negroes at his house in all hours of darkness; and to support that expense, and promote his own lucre, encouraged them to pilfer and steal what they could from their masters, and he readily received their spoils: this might be thought a promising earnest of his qualifications: sure such a one must be judged by these craftsmen, a hopeful tool to make experiments upon; for he that could consort with slaves in one kind of villainy, would probably make the less difficulty of going some steps further. But then his religion! why truly, from what has already been observed, it might be thought to little purpose to talk about that: but his wife (good woman!) was already a professed papist, as common fame has it; so the business might be near half done; for her persuasion joined to a Roman priest's assistance, artifice and dainty-fine promises, free and full remission, pardons, indulgences, and absolution for sins past, present, and to come, and a passport for heaven on the condition of performing engagements (to do the devil's business) bound with the sanction of reiterated oaths, to keep all secret to the last breath; he might perhaps (as others before him have been) be buoyed up in full expectation of becoming rich and great

here, and of a fool's paradise hereafter, and thus be seduced to enter into their abominable measures.

There are some passages of history in a French author or two, which may serve to add light to our own case and are therefore thought proper to insert here.

Mr. Jurieu, in the VI. chapter of his History of Popery,<sup>(a)</sup> treating of the intrigues of the popes and papists against Elizabeth, queen of England, and William and Maurice of Nassau, princes of Orange, and the league of France, the product of popery; have the following remarkable pieces translated from the French thus,

“Pope Gregory XIII. who succeeded Pious the V.<sup>(b)</sup> entered also into all the schemes and designs of his predecessor; which were to oppress the queen of England, by causing her subjects to revolt; and he had pitched upon one Stukely, an English rebel and fugitive, whom he had created a count and a marquis, and he was to go to Ireland, and cause all the papists of that island to revolt; but this Stukely perished in Africa, in that battle against the Moors<sup>(c)</sup> (where died also Sebastian, king of Portugal.) His death only put the design in suspence a little: soon after the pope sent to Ireland one James Fitz Morice, with Saunders an Irish priest, (author of the history of schism) in the quality of legate, charged with a banner consecrated by the pope, and plenty of indulgences, to solicit the Irish to revolt. Accordingly Saunders set on foot an army of rebels, who were dispersed by the first shock by the queen's troops, and this legate perished wretchedly with hunger and misery in the woods, whither he was chased with the rest of the rebels, at the head of whom he had put himself. It was about the same time, that the pope established English seminaries, one at Douay, another at Rheims, a third at Rome, and some time after a fourth at Valladolid in Spain, for an inexhaustible store of assassins, conspirators, and traitors; for it is in these seminaries that they breed up English papists in these detestable maxims, that every heretical prince is not a legal sovereign, and that people ought, when occasion offers, to do their utmost endeavour for re-establishing the catholic religion, where it has been abolished, without sparing the life of any one whatsoever. It was out of these seminaries that they afterwards draughted those parricides, which they scattered throughout all England: for instance, one Somervil, (Anno. 1583) with Hall

(a) Quarto edition of his works printed at Amsterdam, Anno 1683, page 352 to 354.

(b) Anno 1572.

(c) Anno 1578.

the priest, and other accomplices: this Somervil was found strangled in prison ; which was likely to have been done by his companions, that he should not discover any thing further of the conspiracy.

Amongst these enormous popish conspiracies against the life of this queen, that which they designed to execute by William Parry, is remarkable ; wherefore we will report it a little more at large :(f) We have all the pieces of his process in the first volume of the memoirs of the league :(g) In short, this William Parry being affected towards popery (which they call in the Roman stile, zeal for the catholic religion) conceived a design to assassinate the queen of England, and he opened the matter at Venice to a jesuit named father Beneditto Palmio, and to the pope's nuncio, named Campeggio ; they both much approved of his design, and by their advice he wrote about it to the pope. This parricide returning to Paris, was confirmed in his intention by Thomas Morgan, and many other English papists. Hannibal Codret, a jesuit, strenuously confirmed him also, confessed him and gave him the sacrament, to fix him in this great undertaking. The pope's nuncio who was at Paris, named Ragazoni, was let into the secret, and took upon him to send William Parry's letter to the pope, whereby he requested to be authorised in this action, and that full and entire remission of his sins might be granted him. The pope answered according to his purpose, as favourably as William Parry could have wished.

The cardinal Como, who had commission to answer him, wrote him in plain terms, that his holiness could not but commend and approve the good resolution he had taken for the good of his service, and that of the public ; that his holiness begged him to persevere ; and to the end that he might be the better assisted by the good spirit, which had brought him to it, his holiness granted him full indulgence and remission of all his sins ; and moreover promised him great rewards.

The same author in his 8th chapter, treating of the papist's conspiracies in England, amongst other, of those in the reigns of king Charles the 1st and 2d, and that in Ireland in the year 1642, makes general reflections upon the means made use of by the author of the apology for the catholicks, to invalidate the proofs of the truth of them, and accordingly proceeds, page 400.

(f) Anno 1584-5. Rapin, 2 vol. folio, page 120.

(g) In France.

Neither (says he) do I find these gentlemen have said any thing upon the affair of Elizabeth Oxley, Nicholas Stubb, and the priest Maurice Gifford, which however is a matter of no small importance. We find by the deposition of oaths, that the great fire of London happened by a horrible conspiracy of the priests and English papists. The deposition of Bedlow proves also, that in the year 1676, when he was at Paris, the confederates in the conspiracy, among others, a Benedictine would have engaged him to set fire to Westminster, Limehouse, and other places, and that father Gifford had joined himself in the design; in the execution whereof they had actually hired cellars in diverse parts of the city, which they filled with wood, charcoal, and all other sorts of cumbustibles. The story of Elizabeth Oxford, strongly confirms that deposition.<sup>(h)</sup> This Elizabeth Oxley was in service at the house of one Mr. Bird, a noted attorney in Fetter-Lane; this girl having dwelt there about six weeks, on the 10th April, 1679, when all the family were asleep, put fire in her master's cabinet, where there were a great many papers, and when she thought that the fire was got beyond extinguishing, she cried out fire, and waked her master and mistress. They happily found means to extinguish the fire; when that was done, it was discovered that this creature had made up a bundle of her own clothes, which appeared to have been packed up at leisure, in very good order; this, added to many other circumstances, caused a suspicion that this servant had put the fire on purpose; she was sent to prison, and upon examination owned all. She said that about Michaelmas, in the year 1678, she became acquainted with one Nicholas Stubb, an English papist, who had taken a great deal of pains to pervert her and make her change her religion; when he thought he had persuaded her, to fix her and make her sensible that she had chosen the good part as well for this world as the other, he several times said to her, that she would see all the protestants in England destroyed before the end of the month of June, the next year;<sup>(i)</sup> and that all those who would turn catholics, should live much more happily than otherwise they could, if they remained protestants; that after all it was a meritorious action to kill an heretic; and that all the catholics would have a mark upon their hats to distinguish them, to the end they might not be massacred with the others. After many such like discourses, this Nicholas Stubb having learnt that she lodged at this attorney's house, had often advised her

(h) See Rapin, Folio Vol. 2. page 705.

(i) See Judy Petham's affidavit concerning Plummer.



to put fire to her master's house, to burn that quarter, promising her for this action five pounds, that is to say 50 of 60 livres, and gave her half a crown earnest; he assured her also, that they would at the same time set fire in several other quarters of the town. This girl being gained by these promises, promised herself, and did all that they desired.

“ Upon this confession of Elizabeth Oxley, the justice caused Nicholas Stubb to be taken into custody; at first he denied all with a brazen front, but when he was confronted with the girl, he could not resist the force of the truth; he acknowledged all that Elizabeth Oxley had advanced concerning their dealings and conspiracies. He added he had done it at the persuasion of father Gifford, his confessor, who assured him there was no crime in setting fire to the houses of heretics. He said further, that there were two Irishmen concerned with him, the one named Flower, a barber, and the other Roger Clayton; that they all three usually met in the dusk of the evening at St. James' in the fields, to consult means for putting their design into execution; and that father Gifford had promised to the accused one hundred pounds for this deed. Afterwards this Nicholas Stubb related a thousand extravagances wherewith Gifford buoyed up their hopes, and supported the promises he made them of a sudden change in England, he told them they would levy a great army in England, there were catholics enough there for that, and they would draw over a succour of sixty thousand men from foreign countries: he added, lastly, that this priest made them take horrible oaths to keep the secret, and threatened to have them murdered, if they discovered what they knew.

“ I own I cannot conceive what they can say to invalidate facts so important, and so well proved: here are persons taken in the fact, and persons that confess, what would you have more? There is nothing of which the hardness and impudence of these false devotees is not capable; wherefore there is no doubt but they will devise some new cheat, and suborn fresh witnesses to support some new romance about these frequent combustions. It is a matter beyond example, that a town should be set on fire as it were every year; for since the great fire of London, scarce a year has passed but there has been a hundred fires, of two hundred and six hundred houses: one cannot be persuaded that this was natural. Before we leave this story of Elizabeth Oxley and Nicholas Stubb, I wish it may be observed, that this Nicholas Stubb, taken up upon the fact, and committed as an incendiary, confessed exactly what Bedlow had deposed concerning father Gifford, to wit, that it was he that was the

instigator of these fires, that they had made preparation for.— Nicholas Stubb, the prisoner accused, convicted, confessing; could he have taken his confession from the mouth of Bedlow, whom probably he had never seen.

“ The author of the apology for the catholics, makes great shew of advantage, because the lord viscount Stafford, and the other conspirators who were executed, persisted to maintain their innocence to the last, and denied there had been any conspiracy; wherefore it may be proper to call to mind what Mr. Mezeray says upon the gun-powder plot, in 1606. It is customary in these conspiracies to bind the consciences of those that know these affairs, with horrible oaths. You may read in [the book entitled] *Les derniers effort de l'innocence affigee,*<sup>(k)</sup> the form of an oath which they oblige the conspirators to take.

[The following translation from the book itself, is thus introduced by way of dialogue.]

“ It having been objected, as an argument of great weight, that persons executed for these popish conspiracies, persisted to maintain their innocence with their last breath; the protestant lawyer answers.

“ I am surprised, sir, that you make such a difficulty about this obstinate silence; we see, every day, criminals who, to salve their honour, and to have the pleasure of saying they die innocent, resist the most violent tortures; and you do not conceive, that people who have hardened their courage a long while before, for an enterprize the most hazardous in the world, should have resolution to keep, till death, a secret whereon depends not only their honours, but the preservation of all the Roman catholics in England! If they confess themselves guilty, they must name their accomplices; and in doing so, they would destroy an infinite number of people, and render their religion abominable in the world, by shewing it is capable of inspiring such frightful sentiments, and to cause such frantic designs to be hatched. These considerations are of such force, that they alone are capable of supporting the weakest of men, to prevent their revealing a secret of such importance. When the powder-plot was discovered, in 1605, not one of the confederates would confess; and they had known nothing from their mouths, without the industry of the judges, who placed Garnet and Hall in two dungeons from whence they could communicate, and in the thickness of the wall there was a place wherein they put two witnesses, who

(k) Printed at the Hague, anno 1682. *Deuxieme Entretien*, 12mo. beginning page 119.

could hear every thing the prisoners said ; by which means they were forced to own all. Lastly, would you know the principal reason why these secrets are so well guarded ? It is a horrible oath wherewith they bind all those who enter into the like conspiracies. Read Mezeray, in the place where we have just left him open.

“ The last day of January, eight of these principal conspirators were executed at London, for high-treason. Not one of them accused either the priests or the monks ; for they were engaged to secrecy by horrible oaths.

“ To give you full satisfaction in this matter, I will show you the form of the oath, which they administered to all those who were entered into this conspiracy.

“ The oath for the conspiracy in England.

“ I, the underwritten, being in the presence of Almighty God, and of the blessed Virgin Mary, of the blessed Michael the archangel, of the most happy St. John the baptist, of the holy apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, and of all the other saints in heaven, and of you, my spiritual father,<sup>(1)</sup> declare, from the bottom of my heart, that I believe the Pope, the vicar-general of Jesus Christ, to be the only and sole head of the church upon earth ; and that by virtue of the keys, and the power given to his holiness by our Lord Jesus Christ, to bind and to loose, he hath authority to depose all heretical kings and princes, to oblige them to relinquish their thrones, or to kill them ; wherefore I will defend this doctrine with all my heart, and the rights of his holiness against all sorts of usurpers, especially against him that they pretend to be king of England ; because he has broken his oath made to the agents of his holiness, in not fulfilling the promise made to them for establishing in England the holy Roman catholic religion. I renounce and disavow all sort of promise and submission to the said present king of England, and all obedience to his officers and inferior magistrates. And I do believe, on the contrary, that the protestant doctrine is heretical and damnable, and that all those who do not forsake it, are damned. I will also, with all my might, assist the agents of his holiness here in England, to extirpate and root out the said protestant doctrine, and to destroy the said pretended king of England, and all those his subjects which will not adhere to the holy see of Rome, and the religion which they there profess. Moreover, I promise and declare, that I will keep secret, and will not divulge, directly nor indirectly, by word or writing, nor any other circumstance whatsoever, that which you, my spiritual father, or others en-

(1) The pious priest or confessor administering this execrable oath !

gaged in the advancement of this holy and pious design, will propose to me, or give me in charge; and that I will be diligent and not cease to advance it; and there shall be no hope of recompence, nor threats of punishment, that shall make me discover any thing concerning it; and that if I am discovered, I will never confess one circumstance about it: I swear all these things by the holy trinity, and by the blessed body of God, which I propose presently to receive; and I call to witness all the angels and all the saints in heaven, that this is my true intention. In witness whereof I do receive the holy and blessed sacrament of the eucharist."

The author of the History of Popery goes on, (see page 402.)

"Prance informs us in his deposition, that the priests confessed such miserable wretches often, and gave them absolution; but never gave it them till after they had made them reiterate their oaths, adding always, that there would be no mercy nor paradise for them if they ever discovered the conspiracy. Is it then any thing surprizing, that people (who on the one hand can hope nothing from their making confession, since they are condemned to death, and who fear on the other hand with the ruin of their religion their eternal damnation) have had the hardiness to suppress and deny the truth to the last moment! We find every day, that criminals who for the pleasure of saying they die innocent, deny their guilt at the gallows; and here they would give us proof from the silence and denial of these people, to which they had persuaded them, that they would be damned eternally if they let the least word escape them. All the world knows that Garnet and Oldcorne, who were convicted of the gunpowder-plot in 1606, persisted in the denial of it; and if it had not been that they deceived them by the means above recited, the jesuits would to this day have had the pleasure of proving their innocence by the same argument by which they prove that of the viscount Stafford, and the other persons executed. It must be observed also, that according to the laws of England, they cannot put criminals to the rack; so that the conspirators did not suffer the least torture. It is then a great marvel, indeed, that the jesuits, priests, and people who had hardened themselves in the resolution of denying all, whatsoever they made them suffer, should have had the power to do that which they had resolved, when we see every day criminals condemned, and who have no hopes at all of life, resist the most cruel tortures, and persist till death, to maintain their innocence. It is the conscience which is to criminals a torture of the greatest efficacy to force them to a confession: so far from the conscience bringing these English conspirators to a confession, on the contrary, it was that that kept

them from it ; for they had been persuaded that they should commit an unpardonable crime in confessing, and that they would do a good deed by denying the truth to their deaths. It is material to know upon this, certain considerable facts : for example, that the confessors and directors of the consciences of these wretched prisoners and accused, took care to harden them, either in person themselves or by some others ; that they supplied with set forms of speeches and protestations of innocence for the gallows, those that were not capable of composing any for themselves. There was one found in the pocket of Lawrence Hill, who was executed for having assassinated Godfrey. The executioner, after Hill was hanged, amongst many other papers, pulled out one from his pocket wherein was written the dying speech, whereof he had recited almost the whole substance. You will find it a studied piece, expressed in handsome and strong terms, whereof Hill was not at all capable ; for he was illiterate, and besides of low genius.

“ It is proper to shew it you entire, that you may judge whether it be the stile and sentiments of a vulgar person, or the studied production of a priest and a jesuit.

“ I come now to the fatal place where I must end my life ; and I hope I shall finish it with a courage becoming mine innocence. I am going presently to appear before the great judge who knows all things, and judges justly of every thing. I hope it will be happy for me a sinner to suffer so unjust a death. I call God, men and angels to witness, that I am utterly ignorant of the manner, the authors, and time of the murder of justice Godfrey. It is nevertheless for this pretended crime, that by the malice of some wicked people I am brought to this shameful death, which I hope will be a ready passage for me to eternal life. In this hope I die with joy, because of mine innocence, and the benefit flowing from the precious wounds of my blessed Saviour, by whose merits I hope to obtain salvation. I die a Roman catholic, and I desire all those who are of the same religion to pray to God for my soul : and I beseech God in his justice, that he will please to detect the authors of this horrible murder, in order that my innocence may appear ; though I heartily forgive my accusers, I summon them notwithstanding to appear before the great tribunal of Divine Justice, as well as those who have put their hands to this bloody plot, to answer for the wrong they have done to an innocent man : I summon particularly the Lord Chief Justice who presided in this judgment, and the brothers of Edmondbury Godfrey, with the jury, the witnesses, and all those who have been concerned in this affair. O Lord, bless and preserve the king ; have pity on this poor nation, and lay

not innocent blood to their charge. I bid you all farewell in Christ Jesus, into whose hands I resign my spirit."

That author goes on—"There is a great deal of art in this little speech; but I question whether Hill was in earnest in what he professed. To be more certain that it was not his own performance, the paper was shewn to his wife, who protested it was not his writing; and in truth he had not the use of either pen, ink, or paper, all the time he was in jail. So it is that these gentlemen harden the courage of their people, to lie with their last breath."

The conformity and correspondence our own case bears to the circumstances and practices in those aforecited, is so obvious, that it would be almost needless to remark upon them: but we have a further particular considerable; that to accommodate themselves to our circumstances, these gentry have gone yet one step further; they ransacked ancient Rome, Rome in its state of heathenism, for a fresh instance of barbarity, and have exceeded them in villainy, inasmuch as the meanness of the submission to confederate with negro slaves is the more contemptible.<sup>(n)</sup>

But for this master-piece they must have very well known, they could entertain no hopes of setting on foot any such conspiracy amongst us, from the utter abhorrence the generality of people here have to their principles and practice. Our slaves being numerous, from the hopes of their corruption only must they have flattered themselves with a prospect of their babel: and indeed, through their great artifice, cunning and industry, their expectations had like to have been too successfully answered, had not the providence of God interposed, confounded their devices, and brought them to shame by a detection, whereby many of their confederates have been delivered into the hands of justice, and suffered their condign punishments.

The confessions of criminals of both complexions, which were very many, agreed, we see, minutely in the circumstances of this conspiracy, as well as the principal things aimed at, the burning the town and assassinating the inhabitants, as observed before: It appears by the evidence, that more Romish priests than one had a hand in it. Let us remember general Oglethorpe's letter of intelligence from Georgia, that also of the news-writers, that there were designs brooding in Europe, to excite revolts and disturbances in his majesty's possessions in America, from whence it may be inferred, some politicians had flattered themselves, his majesty would have enough to do to divert his attention from other affairs of importance to his majesty's

(n) See Tarquin's conspiracy, universal history, p. 480.

dominions. Could these be dreams, or is it more rational to conclude, from what has happened amongst us, that they were founded on realities? what have these miscreants to say then? why they will wipe their mouths, and have recourse to their old trite artifice, which they have always practised on such like occasions, and clamour lustily with brazen fronts, that there was no plot at all, and the witnesses were all perjured! for that Hughson, his wife, Kerry, and Ury denied it, and maintained their innocence to their last breath. And so have criminals we see of their communion often done before. But the witnesses, say they, what were they? Why truly generally such as they condescended to confederate with in these deeds of darkness: for who but villains, and the most profligate, debased and abandoned of villains, devoid of all sense of shame, virtue and humanity, would confederate with murderers? and who should discover them but their confederates?

Here were their associates, whites and blacks, detected, confessing their crimes, some before conviction, some afterwards, others in the torments of their conscience, in prospect of flames; some in the anguish and bitterness of their spirits, exclaiming against that accursed oath, which bound them in this detestable confederacy, and destined them to that misery; and yet, as it were, maintaining their innocence to the last, or at least being silent as to their guilt(q) others again under actual sufferings confessing their heinous crimes, attesting the truth of what evidenced against themselves, and accusing others, to that time unimpeached, who likewise afterwards confirmed their testimony by their confessions.

Though so egregiously infatuated were many of these poor deluded wretches, that they were even persuaded they should wrong their own souls if they made discovery;(r) this it seems was the opinion of whites and blacks; so artfully and painfully had they been tutored! so fixed and steady were these black disciples in these bloody purposes, that one of them who was yet at large, and attending at the execution of a confederate at the stake, was so far from being dismayed at that affrightful object, that he proposed the present time to proceed to their execution, upon observing how many white people were present.(s)

(q) This was credibly reported to have slipped from captain Marshall's Ben as he was leading to the stake.

(r) See Margaret Salinburgh alias Kerry's voluntary confession, the only one of the kind sent from jail.

(s) Marschalk's negro, York, afterwards hung in chains by Hughson, proposed this at the execution of Quack and Cuffee, May 30. See Prince's confession.

But we may remember, that the principal witness in this shocking case, and happy instrument of this detection, was Mary Burton, Hughson's indented servant; who (however it was) no one so much as insinuated to have been sworn of the confederacy. As she was the prime cause of the discovery, as before related, their envenomed arrows have been chiefly pointed at her; and no doubt, say they, she must have been the wickedest of mortals, to bring so many innocents to this shameful, miserable and untimely end. And what have they to impute to her, sufficient to invalidate her testimony? Why, one particular, say they, enough to outweigh all: she deposed, in her first examination before the grand jury, that she never saw any white person in company when they (the conspirators) talked of burning the town but her master, her mistress, and Peggy. It is true, she did so; and indeed it was very ill done: but, should that one false step preponderate to invalidate her whole evidence? Much might be said to aggravate this offence, much also in extenuation of it. We cannot expect evidence concerning these deeds of darkness, from witnesses of unblemished characters, free of all exception. Say she was sworn to the conspiracy; though it did not appear that she was so; and if it was true, it were something strange, one would think, that not a criminal under execution, or otherwise, who confessed their own guilt and impeached others, should have declared it; but on the contrary, confirmed her testimony against themselves in the torments of flames, attesting, that "she had spoke the truth, and could name many more," *i. e.* that her account of the conspiracy and conspirators, given at their trial was true; which is the utmost attestation that can be to the credibility of any person, as to the matter treated of. And if they had known she was engaged in the conspiracy, from the resentment they must have borne to her as a principal evidence in their conviction, it might have been expected, it would naturally have bolted out from them; nor did Sarah Hughson, the daughter, so much as insinuate it, whose spleen was very inveterate towards her, as the cause of their detection: but perhaps Hughson's daughter was more artfully instructed; for if it came out that Burton was sworn in a party, that might add strength to her testimony, and fix the guilt more strongly upon the parties she accused, by an implied confession of the most material part of her evidence; and if she were not sworn of the confederacy, it might seem strange to some that the conspirators trusted her so much with their secrets.

There are allowances to be made, with regard to the special circumstances this girl was under in this case, and some passions and qualities which seemed natural to her: she came over young



Into this country, an indented servant, a year or two before : her first master, after some service, assigned over her indenture to John Hughson for the remainder of her term, the midsummer before this iniquity broke out, when she was between fifteen and sixteen years of age : the girl thus becoming under the power of Hughson, a stranger in the country, and not a friend to advise with ; her situation was surely somewhat deplorable ; for, being in the hands and under the influence of so hopeful a family, and held to secrecy by her apprehensions of the danger she was beset with from these assassins, she might think her condition helpless, and that she could only wish for deliverance : she was of a warm hasty spirit, had a remarkable glibness of tongue, and uttered more words than people of her supposed education usually do ; such a temper, one might think, could ill brook the ceremony of attending and serving upon slaves, and such a band of black and white ruffians ; which, it seems, was the service enjoined her, neither could they think themselves safe with her, unless they could seduce her to their wicked purposes, which they might have hopes they should compass at last ; and though at first they might think she was not to be trusted at all adventures ; yet it so happened, that by degrees, it seems, the conspirators (as depending upon a master's influence over one in her circumstances, added to the terrors of their threatenings to murder her if she made discovery) flattered themselves they had her sure, and at length became so familiarized and unreserved towards her, that they heeded not saying or doing any thing before her ; and thus she might be let into their secrets, upon a persuasion that she durst not tell.

The girl, doubtless, must be under terrible apprehensions when her life was thus endangered, both from blacks and whites, if she made discovery ; this must have been matter of great restraint to her, and, in her hurry and confusion of thought, might occasion her to utter that through inadvertency, which, upon calm reflection, she became conscious was wrong, though at the time, it might be an involuntary suppression only of part of the truth, arising from an overhastiness in answering, and want of due reflection : which, therefore perhaps, after making all candid and ingenuous allowance, will not be rigorously construed a wilful and deliberate falsehood.

As to such other white persons as Burton did afterwards accuse, against whom there appeared just or probable grounds of impeachment, viz. Sarah Hughson, the daughter, William Kane, and John Corry the dancing-master ; concerning the two former, her testimony affecting them was confirmed by many negro witnesses separately examined, and far enough apart from each other, who not only agreed in the particulars affecting them,

but the most minute circumstances also relating to the conspiracy : and though it may be objected, that they were not legal witnesses (and therefore had not been admitted to give evidence on the trial of any white person) yet surely their testimony thus considered together, not only adds strength to that of Burton, but does also amount to the utmost moral certainty of the truth of the facts testified of. But to put the matter beyond dispute concerning them, this Sarah and Kane confessed their own guilt, and confirmed (amongst other things) particularly what Burton said affecting themselves.

Kane himself was first impeached by a negro, as well as other soldiers, however they became so fortunate as to escape justice ; and this was nevertheless true for its coming from a negro ; for Kane confessing his guilt, made also some atonement by further material discovery, which squared with the rest of the evidence ; and both Sarah Hughson (the daughter) and Kane confirm Burton's testimony in general, and in particular also that against Ury the priest ; and as to Corry the dancing-master, that he was one of the conspirators, Kane examined apart from Burton, testified likewise ; so that it may be conceded she only kept back or suppressed, upon her first examination, part of that through dread and distraction of thought and want of proper consideration, which at the same time upon due reflection and remembrance she might have known to be the truth, viz. that there were other white persons concerned in the conspiracy, besides her master, her mistress, and Peggy, though perhaps they might not all at that instant have occurred to her memory ; which, as to Hughson's daughter, Burton afterwards declared, she did not think of her at the time.

Thus far then we may venture to infer Burton's testimony affecting the persons by her impeached (whose guilt was manifested by circumstantial and other direct evidence of witnesses, in conjunction with, and corroboration of hers, and by their own conjunction) was deserving of entire credit.

We may have observed by the course of the proceedings, and these poor negro wretches have been deluded by degrees, and cajoled to interest themselves, and become parties in this detestable enterprize, through the artifices of agent Hughson ; who (though a mean illiterate fellow) from his vicious propensity and natural acuteness, had an aptitude for mischief ; which these craftsmen made improvement of, and at length rendered suitable to their abominable purposes. Though we cannot suppose that Hughson really had the folly or vanity to aspire to a kingdom of the conspirators' erecting ; yet the notion might be calculated and propagated, to captivate the negroes, (for with none but fools and negroes could it take :) and further to please them, it seems

they were persuaded, there should be a motley government as well as motley subjects; for Cæsar (Vaarck's) was to be governor over free negroes, who were to marry the gentlewomen, and Cæsar had got his white governess already provided. If these phantasms and delusions could have force sufficient to ensnare these simple creatures (as we find they had) it mattered not how extravagant soever the folly of the means was which seduced them to these bloody purposes, provided they served the turn and designs of our enemies; thereby disappointed the supply of provisions to his majesty's armament in the West Indies; laid waste this city, destroyed the inhabitants, and prepared the way for an invasion of his majesty's enemies, whether secret or declared, and their making an easy prey of the whole province; neither did it signify how illiterate Hughson was, he approved himself sufficiently to his masters, by his dexterous prosecution of their scheme; he did seduce the negroes in the manner we have seen; he tempted them to frequent visits at his house, by his hospitable entertainments, at such an expense as it is incredible he could have supported for such a series of time, as this mischief must have been brooding, merely upon the spoils of a few negroes' pilferings, and without other private assistance. It must be allowed he was trusty in his agency, very industrious, and used no small craft to encompass a disciple: in the first instance, if they were not pre-engaged by a deputy, Hughson attempted to make them swear, by forms of oaths accommodated to their own customs, by thunder and lightning, and such like horrible imprecations, as have appeared in the course of the evidence, without telling them what they were to swear to: if they scrupled swearing without further explanation concerning what; then he intimated they were to swear to secrecy, that in regard he kept a public house, and entertained negroes contrary to law, the intent of the oath was, that they should not discover him therein: if they agreed to swear at all, it was easy to add, (as we find he did) neither should they tell of what they saw going forward at his house: then upon the main matter proposed, if they scrupled to engage in the conspiracy, from any qualm arising either from the inhumanity or wickedness of the design; they were flattered they were all to be free men, and it was a meritorious undertaking: if they thought it would be a sin, there was a priest that could forgive sins: if all this would not do, their lives were threatened if they would not engage, or at least if they discovered any thing about it: but so apt pupils were most of them, that the bare proposal of the scheme was sufficient to engage them immediately, at all adventures.

Hughson artfully engaged in this infamous project, a neighbour's negro, Jack, (Comfort's) a fellow of most remarkable craft

and subtlety for one of his complexion, which qualified him afterwards for a more material witness concerning these deeds of darkness; for Jack had more wit than to be hanged for them. Jack was a dignified man amongst them, a captain of one of these bands of fools, had so well approved his parts and capacity to Hughson and the rest, that he had a deputation for swearing, as it should seem; for he administered oaths, to such converts as he made, either abroad or at home; and in both cases had great opportunities of caballing with negroes; for his master was frequently absent from home for several weeks together, insomuch that captain Jack looked upon the house as his own, and himself as his own master: to his well, every morning and evening resorted negroes from all quarters of the town, for tea-water; which, therefore, afforded him convenient seasons for gaining parties, which he made use of to the utmost; and hereat Jack was so dexterous, that he became the very counterpart of his master Hughson; for when their scheme was grown near ripe for execution, Jack, as well as Hughson, had a list of these black confederates, their devotees; and about a month before the fort was burnt, Jack had as large companies of negroes at his levees, as Hughson usually had at his, and buoyed them up with the same hopes, that at the expiration of that time, the French and Spaniards would be here to join them, and take the place; nevertheless, if they did not come, they were to agree, and did agree, amongst them, to proceed and do all themselves.

We may perceive, that what has been unfolded concerning this mystery of iniquity, came out by slow degrees; the first hint concerning the conspiracy, was given by Mary Burton to the grand jury, on her examination the 22d of April; and for some time after the trial of Hughson, &c. for aught that had appeared, he must have been deemed the projector of it, though it had been whispered that Roman priests had been, and that some were then in town; no one however cared to discover them, so as they might be laid hold of, and dealt with as a salutary law of this province directs.

Ury the priest was looked upon with a very jealous eye, soon after this iniquity began to unfold; but no certain evidence was given concerning him, that he was such a one, and at last it was suspicion only that caused him to be taken into custody: some footsteps of others were likewise traced, but they were too artful and cunning, got out of reach, left Ury the dog to hold, and slipped their necks out of that collar, which was afterwards deservedly placed about his; though he pretended to maintain and protested his innocence with his last breath—they, it seems, were not so fond of this kind of martyrdom.

Ury was indicted upon the evidence of Burton and Kane, who

corroborated the testimony of each other, and Sarah Hughson; the daughter's evidence, establishes the credit of both, as to what they say concerning him; so that the gentlemen of the grand jury which found the bill against him, weighing matters candidly and ingeniously, saw sufficient cause at that time, to credit Burton's testimony; and to do those gentlemen justice, it was owing in great measure, to their good sense, discretion, and indefatigable labours, that this affair was brought to so happy an issue; and their painful service during the course of about three months daily inquiry, ought to be remembered by this city and country, with the utmost gratitude.

But it so happened that for some time before this grand jury was discharged, there arose great clamour against Mary Burton; for so many negroes being daily taken into custody (though not solely through her evidence, but rather principally upon discovery made by the confessions of their black associates already in custody, and their testimony corroborated with her's) some people began to be afraid of loosing their slaves; for, as matters were then likely to turn out, there was no guessing where or when there would be an end of impeachments; every one had reason to fear that their own negro would be sent for next; and indeed all things duly considered, it was most probable there was but few of them that were not in the secret; and the girl had declared, that there were many negroes concerned, whose persons she could or might probably remember, but many whose names she knew not; so that it should seem, at length some masters of these slaves, as well as the conspirators, endeavoured to bring the witnesses, and the notion of a plot, into discredit, if perchance it might put a stop, not only to further prosecution, but further inquiry and discovery also: and these attempts, luckily for some, had such an effect, that several whites, as well as negroes, escaped justice; who, had the same evidence appeared against them a few weeks before, would scarce have been thought objects of mercy; nor, from what we may have observed, would Mary Burton's evidence have stood single against them.

However, when the first grand jury drew near their discharge, they were importunate with Burton, to discover all the persons she knew to be engaged in this villainous design; for about this time she had suggested to some, that there were white people of more than ordinary rank above the vulgar, that were concerned, whom, if she told of they would not believe her. This having been intimated to the grand jury, they were very pressing with her to discover all she knew, whoever they were; but the girl stood mute; nor could the grand jury prevail with her to name any, not with threatenings of imprisonment; at length, being tired with her obstinacy, they delivered her over to two of the judges, re-

questing them to endeavour to sift the matter out ; but they could not prevail with her to be explicit. She complained (as it seems she had before done to the grand jury) that she had been very ill used ; that her life had been threatened by conspirators of both complexions, and frequently insulted by people of the town for bringing their negroes in question, and that people did not believe what she said, so what signified speaking ? or to this purpose she expressed herself. She intimated withal, that there were some people *in ruffles* (a phrase as was understood to mean persons of better fashion than ordinary) that were concerned. At last, having been threatened to be imprisoned in the dungeon, she named several persons which she said she had seen at Hughson's amongst the conspirators, talking of the conspiracy, who were engaged in it ; amongst whom she mentioned several of known credit, fortunes and reputations, and of religious principles superior to a suspicion of being concerned in such detestable practices ; at which the judges were very much astonished ; others again were imperfectly described by her, whose reputed religious profession might square with such wicked designs, concerning whom the girl had long before given broad hints, but said she did not know their names, or what part of the city they lived in ; but it came out at last, that one of them was a doctor (a professed papist, as common fame had it) whom she had seen several times afterwards in the streets, and who upon sight of her, always turned another way, to avoid meeting her : however it was, this person had the discretion to remove himself out of this province soon after ; and it is said, into foreign dominions ; and it were much to be wished, that such others, as were justly liable to impeachment, would act with the same prudence and follow his example, for the sake of their own safety, as well as the peace and security of ourselves. But upon the whole, there was reason to conclude, that this girl had at length been tampered withal ; might it not be suggested to her, that the reward offered by proclamation for the discovery, she was already sure of ; for she was entitled to it ; and might she not be tempted to make further advantage of the affair ? upon this supposition, the conspirators could not have devised a more effectual means (if they could but prevail with her) to put a stop to further inquiry, to procure the names of persons to be called in question at last, concerning this scene of villainy, whose fortunes and characters set them above suspicion : they very well knew (for papists or priests as Ury intimated, are "too wise and too cunning") if they could but prevail in this, they would thereby not only put a stop to further discovery, but likewise have some pretence, according to their usual custom, to clamour loudly, there was no plot at all ; it was a mere dream ! and to serve this turn, they

ney, which she said was a part of Hogg's money which the negro had given her; whereupon they all went with her to Alderman Banker's, and the deponent informing him what she had promised the said Mary, that is to say, to get her freed from her master, the alderman directed that she should that night lodge with the undersheriff, at the City-Hall for safety, and the deponent went with the said Mary, and left her at Mr. Mills's accordingly.

4. That some time after the said Mary Burton was parted from Hughson (to the best of deponent's remembrance, it was after the house in the fort was burnt) she came to the deponent's house, and deponent was talking about the robbery at Hogg's, and about butter, indigo and bees-wax, which had been lately stolen from other persons, and Mary said that Hughson, his wife and family had had them all, it was plain enough, and that she knew enough to hang and burn them all; the deponent then advised her to tell all that she knew, saying it was a pity such people should go on in their wickedness unpunished.

5. That some time after this, the said Mary said to the deponent that she was better than ever her mother was to her, that she had relieved her from the hands of her enemies, by being the means of taking her away from Hughson's, and that if ever it was in her power, she would reward her handsomely for it.

6. That the said Mary Burton further said to this deponent, that if they had not taken her the said Mary from Hughson's the night that they did, she verily believed they (meaning the Hughson's) would either have murdered her, or sent her away in a boat by the next morning.

her

*Anne z Kannady,*

*mark.*

April 13, 1742.—Sworn before the recorder.

The same day and time James Kannady and Mary Goddard (daughter of said James and Anne) wife of Christopher Goddard of New-York, mariner, having severally heard the before mentioned deposition of Anne Kannady taken and read over in their presence, did severally make oath, that that part of the said deposition which relates to what discourse passed between the said Anne Kannady and Mary Burton, did so pass between them when they (the deponents) were respectively present; and that what therein is deposed is the substance and effect of what was so said between them.

Sworn before the recorder.

*Deposition.*—Rebecca Hogg, wife of Robert Hogg of the city of New-York, merchant, deposeth,

1. That one Wilson, a boy belonging to the Flamborough man of war, used to frequent her house, upon pretence of acquaintance with two white boys, servants to two gentlemen that lodged there.

2. That the Thursday before the robbery was committed, the said Wilson came to her house with a man belonging to the aforesaid ship, in order to buy some chequered linen; and the deponent shewed them into the shop, where he (Wilson) bought something of her, and gave her a Spanish nine-penny silver piece in pay, and the deponent unadvisedly opening her desk to weigh it, she pulled out a drawer in view of the said Wilson, wherein were a considerable number of Spanish pieces of eight, whereupon she immediately recollected herself, and shut to the drawer and desk again in haste, thinking she had done imprudently in exposing her money to an idle boy who used to be so often backwards and forwards at her house, and thereupon made an excuse to send the piece of money

had luckily with them some owners of slaves, who happened to humour this artifice, though upon a different view.

It was fit this matter should be stated in its proper light ; that on the one hand the evidence of this witness (but for whom next under the interposition of divine providence, this city would in all probability have been laid waste in ashes, and many families massacred) might have its due weight, so far as deserving of credit ; and on the other hand, that where she may be justly suspected to have exceeded the bounds of truth, there a stop may be made, to consider, and conjecture, how it might have come to pass, that she told some things incredible at the winding up of this affair ; and weigh impartially also, the whole current of the other evidence, remarking how it appears to confirm and establish her testimony, so far as it has been judged proper and fitting to publish it.

The other white people executed, as well as Ury, like true modern Romanists, pretended to maintain (and did protest) their innocence to their last breath ; though Hughson himself, soon after his conviction, seemed to betray strong symptoms of his inclination to confess his guilt, and make discovery ; but if he was in earnest to have done so, in hopes of saving his own life, his mind was soon changed (as it was conjectured) by the persuasion of his wife ; yet Kerry left such proofs behind her of many of the particulars of this conspiracy, and of her own guilt, as add great force to the foregoing accounts of it ; and her recanting afterwards, is another irrefragable instance, how these wretches prevaricate, even in their last moments !

That a plot there was, and as to the parties and bloody purpose of it, we presume there can scarce be a doubt amongst us at this time ; the ruins of his majesty's house in the fort, are the daily evidence and monuments of it, still before our eyes : if the other frights and terrors this city was alarmed with, to their great consternation, are, as to some amongst us, so soon slipped into oblivion ; yet surely others will think we ought once a year at least, to pay our tribute of praise and thanksgiving to the Divine Being, that through his merciful providence and infinite goodness, caused this inhuman horrible enterprize to be detected, and so many of the wicked instruments of it to be brought to justice, whereby a check has been put to the execrable malice, and bloody purposes of our foreign and domestic enemies, though we have not been able entirely to unravel the mystery of this iniquity ; for it was a dark design, and the veil is in some measure still upon it !