

THE
JURYMAN'S LEGAL HAND-BOOK;
AND
MANUAL OF COMMON LAW:

ADAPTED TO THE COMPREHENSION OF JURORS AND OTHERS, AND AFFORDING INFORMATION PECULIARLY USEFUL TO PROFESSIONAL GENTLEMEN, TO THE MAN OF BUSINESS, THE PARISH OFFICERS, ETC. ETC.

the IMPORTANCE OF TRIFLES.

WHY was the refusal of a "private gentleman to pay twenty or thirty shillings to the king's service argued," says Clarendon, "before all the judges in England?" Because in those twenty shillings, one party saw the germ of a tyranny and the other of a rebellion. Why will a lawyer warn you against permitting a neighbour to claim the gathering of even a leaf upon your estate, without contesting his right? Because the gathering the leaf may invalidate your title to the whole estate. Why will a wise politician contest so earnestly for the form of a word, or the wearing of a hat, or the title of a writ? Because each of these will become a precedent; and in precedent is involved principle. Why will an engineer be alarmed at the first drop of water oozing through a dam? Because the rest, he knows, will follow it. Why is the discovery of one little bone in a stratum of a rock enough to overturn a whole theory of geology? Because the little bone, like a pack-thread, will draw after it the whole skeleton like a coil of rope; and the skeleton will imply the power which brought it to its site; and that power will be vast and pregnant with other influences; and thus the whole system of the science will be dragged into peril, as many other systems have been perilled, and have been upset by the merest trifle, by one little fact. Why will a spot of blood betray murder? Why will the print of a nail discover a thief? Why will a whole neighbourhood take flight at the sight of a little boy, with only a little spark of fire going into a magazine of powder; or a crowd disperse upon the ice at the sound of the slightest crack? Because nature, as well as theology, has her Athanasian creed and her damnatory clauses for those who neglect iotas—because nature, as well as theology, does not know what a trifle is.—*Sewell's Christian Morals.*

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