they have to perform, with respect to prisoners, is to ascertain whether there are *primâ facie* cases against them, which they should be called upon to answer. It is clear, that all the information which is necessary to enable them to do this can generally be obtained by reading the depositions. Sometimes, however, additional evidence turns up after a prisoner has been committed for trial. In such cases, the additional evidence in question might be taken by a magistrate in the presence of the prisoner, and might be committed to writing, duly signed by the witness and by the magistrate who took it, and attached to the depositions. If this were done Grand Juries would, in all cases, be able to obtain the information which they required, by reading the depositions and the additional evidence, if any, attached to them, together with any documents referred to. We are aware that depositions are not always taken as carefully as they ought to be. There is no reason, however, why they should not be carefully and accurately taken in all cases. We know that it is the duty of the officials concerned to do so, and we cannot admit the fact that a few of them discharge the duty in question in a careless and slovenly manner, as an argument of any weight against the change of procedure which we propose.

Moreover, short-hand writing has now been brought to such perfection, that any possible objection, based upon the inaccuracy of depositions, can easily be surmounted by providing that they shall contain verbatim reports of the evidence given on the committals of prisoners. This would necessitate some simple changes of procedure before the committing magistrates, into the details of which we shall not enter here. It would also cause some extra expense. We do not, however, think this method of taking depositions would be at all necessary; but even if it were, we have no doubt that, after paying the extra expense in question, the State would still be a considerable gainer by changes which we recommend.

We think, therefore, if Grand Juries are not abolished, they should be deprived of the power of calling and examining witnesses, and should be restricted to the consideration of the depositions and other documents, if any, which we have mentioned. In addition to the saving of public money which we contemplate, we think the change of procedure proposed would, in some cases, prevent a failure of justice. The depositions are taken when the facts sworn to by the witnesses are fresh in their memories, and before the friends of the prisoners have had time to tamper with them. Witnesses who have been tampered with sometimes try to twist their evidence in favour of prisoners, even when it is given in open Court, and is bronght out by the questions of counsel whose intellects have been specially trained for the work. Such witnesses are much more likely to attempt to twist their evidence, and to succeed in giving false impressions, when they are examined in grand jury rooms, and have only the untrained intellects of grand jurymen to contend with.

Now, if we either abolish grand juries or restrict them to the consideration of the written evidence bearing upon the cases before them, we can easily avoid the necessity, which now exists, for summoning the witnesses against prisoners who plead *guilty*. In order to do this, we must appoint Commissioners, to receive the pleas of prisoners a day or two before the commencement of the Assizes or Sessions at which they are to be tried. If we abolish Grand Juries, the indictments must be made by virtue of the committals. And if the pleas of prisoners to be tried at Assizes be taken on the Commission Day, there will be time enough to summon the witnesses whose attendance is required. If we retain them, they will have to be charged, and, we think, the Commissioners in question might either be allowed to give the charges themselves, or might read charges which had been written, after reviewing the depositions by the judges, recorders, or chairmen of magistrates, who would preside at the trials. These Commissioners should sit in open Court, and should cause the prisoners to be brought forward and called upon to plead to the principal charges. They should then sit with closed doors to take the pleas to the counts charging previous convictions. They should have power to advise prisoners to plead not guilty, and even to enter pleas of not guilty for them in cases seeming to be involved in doubt or difficulty; and in such cases they should record what they had done. All the pleas should be duly recorded, and the prisoners