

From 1166 down to the year of grace 1917 it has been a recognized principle unaffected even by statute, that no man shall even be put on his trial for any grave offence unless there is a *prima facie* case against him. Of the question whether there is such a *prima facie* case the Grand Jurors have been the sole judges. At each assize or Court of Quarter Sessions they have been summoned to attend to present indictments, and scarcely a Session goes by without one or more bills being ignored by the Grand Jury.

The exigencies of the war, however, have brought about a change. In future (to use the language of s. 1 (2) of the new Act) :—

In any case where a person has been committed for trial, or where the consent or direction in writing of a Judge of the High Court or of the Attorney-General or Solicitor-General for the presentment of an indictment against any person has been given, but in no other case, an indictment against that person may be presented in the appropriate Court without having been found by a Grand Jury, but in other respects as heretofore.

It is thus that in a few lines of cold print an institution hallowed through the centuries has been swept away. It will be for a Judge of the High Court or one of the Law Officers of the Crown to exercise the function of the Grand Jury.

THE OBJECT GAINED.

There can be no doubt that this reform will save an immense amount of time at assizes and other criminal Courts. The stately ceremony of charging the Grand Jury will no longer occupy the Judge's time; while the whilom Grand Jurors who are generally busy men will not be called upon to waste the greater part of a day. The writer has heard but few objections to this reform. In time of peace the voice of controversy would have been uplifted. We should have read much of "a bulwark of British Liberty," of "a barrier between the Crown (represented by the Public Prosecutor) and the British Public." But the