

city of jurors have done credit to this country; and who will, the defendants trust, do credit to it this day.

The plain and literal meaning of a libel is a satire, a lampoon, or a *defamatory writing* generally printed; according to one of the ablest english Lawyers (Sir William Blackstone), it is a malicious defamation of any person made public by printing, or writing. This great Author in commenting on libels, says,

"The tendency which they have to create animosities, and to disturb the public peace, is what the law considers, and therefore in such prosecutions the points to be enquired into are: First, if the fact of printing and publishing be true, and Secondly, if the matter thereof be *criminal*."

Great deference and respect is due to Sir William Blackstone; yet he has been and will continue to be commented upon; He has in his most excellent book of Commentaries leaned to a doctrine that was practised only by the Stuart race, and died with them; it is a doctrine that lay dormant from the Revolution, till revived by another great Lawyer, Lord Mansfield: These two authorities may be adduced on the present occasion to sustain the strange and unintelligible doctrine of libels, and you may be told that one man is not wantonly and unprovokedly, to write, or print any matter, or thing to make his neighbour angry; or publish any thing of, or concerning his vices or follies, lest you should provoke him, to wrath and urge him to an act of desperation, in which he may break the peace, infract the law, and disturb the tranquility of society; you may be told also, that though he is very deservedly exposed, and in a very true light, yet they that expose him are not justifiable in the eye of the law, but the more guilty; for the truth of the vice or folly which they exhibit to public view, is an aggravation of the crime, and makes the *libel* more *libellous*. I shall endeavour to show you that all this (which may be told you in the prosecution) is a farrago of nonsense, unintelligible, and unworthy of your notice.

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