

*THE GRAND JURY.*

The grand jury is a very ancient institution, and, when it rightly discharges its duties, plays a very important part in the administration of justice. It is selected from the men of substance of the county, and presumably from the most intelligent class of the community. Among its most important duties is the preliminary investigation of criminal cases for the purpose of seeing whether or not a fair *primâ facie* case exists for putting an accused person upon his or her trial.

A certain amount of odium necessarily attaches to any one from the bare fact that he has to stand a trial for an alleged criminal offence, even though it should result in his acquittal, and though the Court should declare that he leaves the dock "without a stain upon his character." For on the man himself who has passed through such an ordeal, if he is of a sensitive nature, an indelible injury has been inflicted. This just and merciful barrier which the law so rightly interposes against hasty and unwarranted accusations, it is needless to say, may be used for the purpose of shielding the guilty. It is, therefore, necessary that those who are called to the responsible position of grand jurors, should have a high sense of their duty, not only to the individual, but also to the public, and realize that while it is a solemn duty to shield the individual from the odium of an unjust prosecution, it is equally their duty to the public to be careful that no one against whom a *primâ facie* case of guilt is made out, escapes trial by his peers.

In order that justice may be duly administered it is desirable that grand jurors should appreciate their limitations, and should be ready to avail themselves of all the help which is necessary for the proper discharge of their duties. It cannot be expected that men even of the calibre of the average grand juror, can be skilful lawyers any more than it is to be expected that the average lawyer will be a skilful merchant or farmer, or mechanician; and for grand jurors deliberately and ostentatiously to disregard the directions of the judge holding the court to which they are