

PREFACE.

the acquisition of any particular knowledge of the Laws. Moreover, with most of them, the means for obtaining that knowledge are extremely limited. The English Works on the office of a Justice of the Peace, are in general voluminous and expensive, and can but rarely be procured in this country; and, comparatively, but a small part of them are of any practical use to our Magistrates, especially with reference to any Provincial enactments. No publication for their general information and guidance has yet been afforded in the colony. The work by Mr. Murdoch, although valuable and generally useful, has, evidently, not been designed to be one of that description. It is chiefly an exhibition of our Statutes in general. Now, as a very considerable part of the authority and duties of Justices of the Peace arises out of the Common and Statute Law of England, and as Precedents or Forms for their use, are of essential importance, it follows, that a work of that nature cannot form a complete and universal guide for the discharge of the almost endless variety of their duties. Then, as to the Provincial Statutes, but few of our Magistrates possess all the volumes containing them. Some have but one volume, others two, but are deficient of the rest; and indeed, as to the first volume, it can but rarely be procured. Besides, it must candidly be admitted, that on several subjects, in which the duties of Justices are involved, our Statutes are in such a defective, or intricate state, that it requires the close application of a person skilled and exercised in legal investigations, to reconcile or rightly understand them. It cannot, therefore, reasonably be expected, that plain persons, of ordinary attainments, and actively engaged in private pursuits, should either be fitted, or will afford time, for such an unprofitable and unpleasant occupation.

Owing to these unfavorable circumstances, many of our Magistrates remain generally uninformed as to the nature and