

THE credibility of a witness is the less, as the atrociousness of the crime is greater, from the improbability of its having been committed; as in cases of witchcraft, and acts of wanton cruelty. The writers on penal laws have adopted a contrary principle, *viz.* that the credibility of a witness is greater, as the crime is more atrocious. Behold their inhuman maxim, dictated by the most cruel imbecility. *In atrocissimis, leviores conjecturæ sufficiunt, & licet judici jura transgredi.* Let us translate this sentence, that mankind may see one of the many unreasonable principles to which they are ignorantly subject. *In the most atrocious crimes the slightest conjectures are sufficient, and the judge is allowed to exceed the limits of the law.* The absurd practices of legislators are often the effect of timidity, which is a principal source of the contradictions of mankind. The legislators, (or rather lawyers, whose opinions, when alive, were interested and venal, but which after their death become of decisive authority, and
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