2. IF words happen to be ſtill dubious, we may eſtabliſh their meaning from the context; with which it may be of ſingular uſe to compare a word, or a ſentence, whenever they are ambiguous, equivocal, or intricate. Thus the proeme, or preamble, is often called in to help the conſtruction of an act of parliament. Of the ſame nature and uſe is the compariſon of a law with other laws, that are made by the ſame legiſlator, that have ſome affinity with the ſubject, or that expreſſly relate to the ſame point. Thus, when the law of England declares murder to be felony without benefit of clergy, we muſt reſort to the ſame law of England to learn what the benefit of clergy is: and, when the common law cenſures ſimoniacal contracts, it affords great light to the ſubject to conſider what the canon law has adjudged to be ſimony.

3. AS to the ſubject matter, words are always to be underſtood as having a regard thereto; for that is always ſuppoſed to be in the eye of the legiſlator, and all his expreſſions directed to that end. Thus, when a law of our Edward III forbids all eccleſiaſtical perſons to purchaſe *proviſions* at Rome, it might ſeem to prohibit the buying of grain and other victual; but when we conſider that the ſtatute was made to repreſs the uſurpations of the papal ſee, and that the nominations to benefices by the pope were called *proviſions*, we ſhall ſee that the reſtraint is intended to be laid upon ſuch proviſions only.

4. As to the effects and conſequence, the rule is, where words bear either none, or a very abſurd ſignification, if literally underſtood, we muſt a little deviate from the received ſenſe of them. Therefore the Bolognian law, mentioned by Puffendorf [m], which enacted "that whoever drew blood in the ſtreets ſhould be puniſh-"ed with the utmoſt ſeverity," was held after long debate not to extend to the ſurgeon, who opened the vein of a perſon that fell down in the ſtreet with a fit.

[m] *l.* 5. *c.* 12. §. 8.

5. BUT,