

silent upon it, previous to the reign of queen Anne; when an embassador from Peter the great, czar of Muscovy, was actually arrested and taken out of his coach in London^r, for a debt of fifty pounds, which he had there contracted. Instead of applying to be discharged upon his privilege, he gave bail to the action, and the next day complained to the queen. The persons who were concerned in the arrest were examined before the privy council (of which the lord chief justice Holt was at the same time sworn a member^s) and seventeen were committed to prison^t: most of whom were prosecuted by information in the court of queen's bench, at the suit of the attorney general^u, and at their trial before the lord chief justice were convicted of the facts by the jury^w; reserving the question of law, how far those facts were criminal, to be afterwards argued before the judges; which question was never determined. In the mean time the czar repented this affront very highly, and demanded that the sheriff of Middlesex and all others concerned in the arrest should be punished with instant death^x. But the queen (to the amazement of that despotic court) directed her secretary to inform him, "that she could inflict no punishment upon any, the meanest, of her subjects unless warranted by the law of the land, and therefore" "was persuaded that he would not insist upon impossibilities^y." To satisfy however the clamours of the foreign ministers (who made it a common cause) as well as to appease the wrath of Peter, a bill was brought into parliament^z, and afterwards passed into a law^a, to prevent and to punish such outrageous insolence for the future. And with a copy of this act, elegantly engrossed and illuminated, accompanied by a letter from the queen, an embassador extraordinary^b was commissioned to appear at Moscow^c, who declared, "that though her majesty could not in-

^r 21 July 1708. Boyer's annals of queen Anne.

^s 25 July 1708. *Ibid.*

^t 25, 29 Jul. 1708. *Ibid.*

^u 23 Oct. 1708. *Ibid.*

^w 14 Feb. 1708. *Ibid.*

^x 17 Sept. 1708. *Ibid.*

^y 11 Jan. 1708. *Ibid.* Mod. Un. Hist. xxxv. 454.

^z Com. Journ. . 1708.

^a 21 Apr. 1709. Boyer, *ibid.*

^b Mr Whitworth.

^c 8 Jan. 1709. Boyer, *ibid.*