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Edmund Lodge's misadventure. *Clive Cheesman writes:* The trial records of the Central Criminal Court, now digitized and available at oldbaileyonline.org where they are well established as one of the most fruitful internet resources available for the social, economic and criminal history of the early modern and modern Metropolis, have yet to be mined for what they tell us about heralds, herald painters and their world. They undoubtedly have much to tell. Even a cursory search throws up items of interest, like the theft of the tabard (valued at 10s.) of Thomas Browne, Norroy King of Arms, in 1765 (ref. t17650116-36), or a trial for perjury, with John Garrow as counsel for the defendant, involving *inter alia* the painting of arms on the side of a phaeton in 1786 (ref. t17861025-133). And on such matters as lay understanding and opinions of heraldry and those who purveyed it, the records would surely repay methodical research and sensitive analysis.

One of the most intriguing trials is that of John Hodges, Edward Mahon and John Rumball for assault and theft of £15, in 1805 (ref. t18050220-32). The victim was Edmund Lodge, Lancaster Herald, who gave evidence that Hodges had accosted him in Bedford Square as he walked back to his house in Southampton Row; it was 9:45pm on the Tuesday after Whitsun. As they walked together across the square, Hodges (Lodge testified) 'fell against my side' as if he had slipped; at that moment, the other two defendants had appeared from nowhere and seized them both, claiming to be members of a Bow Street Patrol posted there to catch 'such men as you'. Hodges had put on a tremendous performance of incapacitating agitation and fear, while Lodge (he said) stoutly protested his innocence. As they were escorting them away, however, the bogus patrolmen offered to let them off for a payment of £20 each. Hodges had only a pocket watch to offer, which the men took; but Lodge went back to his house and, finding a note for £30, handed that over. Needless to say, this was not the end of it and the defendants and other associates continued to pester Lodge on subsequent dates. He protested, but paid. It was only in September that he finally denounced the defendants to Sir Richard Ford, chief Bow Street magistrate. In order to facilitate their arrest he arranged to meet them again, at the College of Arms, and let them accompany him home where he paid £15 towards a much larger sum they were demanding; this was the sum they were prosecuted for stealing. All three were convicted and sentenced to death.

Any modern reader of the case will wonder whether Lodge was fully innocent of what the men threatened to denounce him for. His apparently docile payment of the money demanded of him, until the sums escalated beyond reason, may be explained, as he said, by 'an extreme dread of the unnatural accusation these people held out to me'; or it may be because the act between him and Hodges had in fact gone rather further than his testimony suggested. This was a period of very harsh penal treatment of homosexual activity; in 1806 there were in fact more executions for sodomy than for murder. See A. D. Harvey, 'Prosecutions for sodomy in England at the beginning of thenineteenth century', *Historical Journal* 21 (1978), pp. 939-48. The social disapproval had also never been more vitriolic; see R. J. Corber, 'Representing the "unspeakable": William Godwin and the politics of homophobia', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1 (1990), pp. 85-101, with further references. Lodge had every reason to be fearful, whatever the truth of the matter.