A king of England is not king in his own right, or by hereditary right. The nation is not a patrimony. He is not king by his own power; but in right of, and by the power of the law. He is not king above the law; but by, or under, the law. All the authority that he has, is given to him by law; and he can only rule according to law: for were he to rule against the law, he would be king against the law, and depose himself. The law is the Sovereign, or paramount authority; hence, a king of England is a subject; and in this respect, he and all the people are upon a level before the law—they are all his fellow-subjects; though, as chief magistrate, he is the first subject of the law.

A king of England who regards the happiness of the people, and his own safety, would not wish to be stronger than the law founded on the public will, makes him. More strength would be unnecessary to his welfare, and hurtful to theirs. All power over others, from the watch-box to the throne, tends to injure the understanding, and corrupt the heart. A good King would not desire unlimited power; a bad one would abuse it. He would become mad; and drive the people mad. A despot is a demon. Artillery and fetters with the royal robe flung over them - a cannon ball capped with the royal crown - animated by the royal will - crushing; burning, and butchering liberty, property, and human life - personify the power of an unlimited King.

The ensuing satire shows the folly and danger of such power. It is a partial revival of the Jure Divino, written by Daniel De Foe in 1706. After the lapse of a century, nearly the same reason exists for the publication as the author adduced on its first appearance. It had never appeared, he says; ‘had not the world seemed to be going mad a second time with the error of passive obedience and non-resistance.’ It is not precisely so now: the people have not gone mad, but a bishop has, who may bite his brethren; and there is a slavish party of High Church zealots and pulpit casuists in the country who virtually support the doctrine - although if they attempt reducing it to practice, they may dig a pit beneath the throne, and engulf the dynasty. To expose this destructive doctrine, and disentangle the threads so artfully twisted into snares for the unwary by priestcraft, De Foe composed his Satire. He was the ablest politician of his day, an energetic writer, and, better than all, an honest man; but not much of a poet. The Jure Divino is defective in arrangement and versification. It is likewise disfigured by injudicious repetition; a large portion is devoted to the politics of the time, and it is otherwise unfit for republication entire; but it abounds with energetic thoughts, forcible touches, and happy illustrations. The present is an attempt to separate the gold from the dross. The selection is carefully made; from the parts rejected the best passages are preserved, the rhyme and metre are somewhat bettered, the extracts are improved and transposed, and many additions of my own are introduced. The production scornfully rejects the slavish folly, senseless jargon, and venal hypocrisy, which pretend that power is from God and not from the People. It defies those who draw upon scripture in support of Divine Right to show that scripture lays down any rules of political government, or enjoins any political duties; or that it does not leave the people to determine by their own reason what government and what governors are best for themselves. It is a forcible and argumentative satire against the nonsense from hole-and-corner and lawn-sleeve men; and presents a series of peculiarly strong and quotable lines, to engrat on the common sense of the
free-minded, honest, and open-hearted of my countrymen. If it aids them in the occasional illustration and emphatic expression of their opinions, the pains I have taken will be rewarded.

There is another reason for publishing this satire, besides the revival of Priestcraft. Its twin brother is alive. Kingcraft rears up its terrific mass, muffled in the mantle of Legitimacy; its head cowled and crowned, and dripping with the holy oil of Divine Right; its eyes glaring deadly hate to human happiness; its lips demanding worship for itself. Denouncing dreadful curses against the free, and yelling forth threatenings and slaughter, it stamps with its hoof, and coils together its frightful force to fall on young Liberty and squelch it. Its red right-arm is bared for the butchery of the brave who love Freedom and dare contend for it. It has prepared its chains and dug its dungeons, erected its scaffolds, and sharpened its axes for the wise and excellent of the earth; and its bloody banners are unfurled in insolent anticipation of unholy triumph!