

Statutes of William The Conqueror

Here is shown what William the king of the English, together With his princes, has established since the Conquest of England.

1. Firstly that, above all things, he wishes one God to lie venerated throughout his whole kingdom, one faith of Christ always to be kept inviolate, peace and security to be observed between the English and the Normans.

2. We decree also that every free man shall affirm by compact and an oath that, within and without England, he desires to be faithful to king William, to preserve with him his lands and his honour with all fidelity, and first to defend him against his enemies.

3. I will, moreover, that all the men whom I have brought with me, or who have come after me, shall be in my peace and quiet. And if one of them shall be slain, the lord of his murderer shall seize him within five days, if he can; but if not, he shall begin to pay to me forty six marks of silver as long as his possessions shall hold out. But when the possessions of the lord of that man are at an end the whole hundred in which the slaying took place shall pay in common what remains.

4. And every Frenchman who, in the time of my relative king Edward, was a sharer in England of the customs of the English, shall pay according to the law of the English what they themselves call "onhlote" and "anscote." This decree has been confirmed in the city of Gloucester.

5. We forbid also that any live cattle be sold or bought for money except within the cities, and this before three faithful witnesses; nor even anything old without a surety and warrant. But if he do otherwise he shall pay, and shall afterwards pay a fine.

6. It was also decreed there that if a Frenchman summon an Englishman for perjury or murder, theft, homicide, or "ran"-as the English call evident rape which can not be denied-the Englishman shall defend himself as he prefers, either through the ordeal of iron, or through wager of battle. But if the Englishman be infirm he shall find another who will do it for him. If one of them shall be vanquished he shall pay a fine of forty shillings to the king. If an Englishman summon a Frenchman, and be unwilling to prove his charge by judgment or by wager of battle, I will, nevertheless, that the Frenchman purge himself by an informal oath.

7. This also I command and will, that all shall hold and keep the law of Edward the king with regard to their lands, and with regard to all their possessions, those provisions being added which I have made for the utility of the English people.

8. Every man who wishes to be considered a freeman shall have a surety, that his surety may hold him and hand him over to justice if he offend in any way. And if any such one escape, his sureties shall see to it that, without making difficulties, they pay what is charged against him, and that they clear themselves of having known of any fraud in the matter of his escape. The hundred and county shall be made to answer as our predecessors decreed. And those that ought of right to come, and are unwilling to appear, shall be summoned once; and if a second time they are unwilling to appear, one ox shall be taken from them and they shall be summoned a third time. And if they do not come the third time, another ox shall be taken: but if they do not come the fourth time there shall be forfeited from the goods of that man who was unwilling to come, the extent of the charge against him,-" ceapgeld" as it is called,- and besides this a fine to the king.

9. I forbid any one to sell a man beyond the limits of the country, under penalty of a fine in full to me.

10. I forbid that anyone be killed or hung for any fault but his eyes shall be torn out or his testicles cut off. And this command shall not be violated under penalty of a fine in full to me.