

THE CHARTER OF KING JOHN;

THAT ECCLESIASTICAL ELECTIONS SHALL BE FREE
THROUGHOUT ENGLAND.

JOH^N, by the Grace of God, King of England, Lord of Ireland, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, and Earl of Anjou, to the Archbishops, Bishops, Earls, Barons, Knights, Bailiffs, and all who shall see or hear these letters: Greeting. For as much as between us and our reverend fathers, Stephen (Langton), Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of all England, and Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, William (de St. Maria), of London, Eustace of Ely, Giles (de Braose), of Hereford, Joceline of Bath and Glastonbury, and Hugh (Wallys) of Lincoln, Bishops; at the time of their taking off the Sentence of Interdict, it was by the grace of God fully, purely, and spontaneously, covenanted on both sides, that we should not only make them satisfaction as far as we might according to God; but also that we should forever provide for the health and benefit of the Church of England. From henceforth, therefore, it shall be, that whatever customs have been observed in the Church of England, in the time of us and our predecessors until now, and

whatever rights we unto this time have claimed in the elections in any of her Prelates soever, we at their petitions, for the health of our own soul, and for the souls of our predecessors and successors of this kingdom of England, have freely, truly, and voluntarily granted and ordained, by the common consent of our Barons, and by this our present Charter we have confirmed, that for the future, in all and every of the churches and monasteries, cathedrals and convents, throughout our kingdom of England, there shall be freedom in all elections whatsoever, both or greater and lesser Prelates; saving to us and our heirs the custody of those vacant churches and monasteries which are belonging to us. We promise, also, that none shall hinder them, nor shall any impediment be permitted by us nor will we procure any question; but in all and every of the said churches and monasteries, after that they have become vacant of Prelates the electors shall be free to set apart their pastors whensoever they will: so that they first petition us and our heirs for leave to elect, which we will neither deny nor defer. And if, perchance, we should depart from this, or deny or defer our license, the electors shall nevertheless proceed to make their canonical election; and in the same

manner after making their election, they shall require our consent to it, which, in like manner, we will not refuse, unless we have any reasonable purpose or lawful proof, by reason of which we ought not to consent. Wherefore we will and do strictly command, that nothing shall be presumed to be made or done against the vacant churches and monasteries contrary to this our grant and ordinance in anything; and if anything should ever be so brought by the course of time, it shall incur the malediction of Almighty God, and of ourselves. Witnesses to this, P(eter de Rupibus,) Bishop of Winchester, William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, William, Earl of Warren, R(anulph de Meschines,) Earl of Chester, S(aher de Quincy,) Earl of Winchester, Geoffrey de Mandeville, Earl of Essex and Gloucester, William Earl of Ferrars, William Brewere, Warine Fitz Gerald, William de Cantilupe, Hugh de Nevile, Roger de Vere, William de Huntingfield. Given at the New Temple, by the hand of Master Robert de Marsh, our Chancellor, the fifteenth day of January, in the sixteenth year of our reign.