LET us next proceed to the *leges ſcriptae*, the written laws of the kingdom, which are ſtatutes, acts, or edicts, made by the king's majeſty by and with the advice and conſent of the lords ſpiritual and temporal and commons in parliament aſſembled [b]. The oldeſt of theſe now extant, and printed in our ſtatute books, is the famous *magna carta*, as confirmed in parliament 9 Hen. III: though doubtleſs there were many acts before that time, the records of which are now loſt, and the determinations of them perhaps at preſent currently received for the maxims of the old common law.

THE manner of making theſe ſtatutes will be better conſidered hereafter, when we examine the conſtitution of parliaments. At preſent we will only take notice of the different kinds of ſtatutes; and of ſome general rules with regard to their conſtruction [c].

FIRST, as to their ſeveral kinds. Statutes are either *general* or *ſpecial*, *public* or *private*. A general or public act is an uni-

[b] 8 Rep. 20.

[c] The method of citing theſe acts of parliament is various. Many of our antient ſtatutes are called after the name of the place, where the parliament was held that made them; as the ſtatutes of Merton and Marlbridge, of Weſtminſter, Glociſter, and Winchester. Others are denominated entirely from their ſubject; as the ſtatutes of Wales and Ireland, the *articuli cleri*, and the *prerogativa regis*. Some are diſtinguiſhed by their initial words; a method of citing very antient, being uſed by the Jews in denominating the books of the pentateuch; by the chriſtian church in diſtinguiſhing their hymns and divine offices; by the Romaniſts in deſcribing their papal bulles; and in ſhort by the whole body of antient civilians and canoniſts, among whom this method of citation generally prevailed, not only with regard to chapters, but inferior ſections alſo: in imitation of all which we ſtill call ſome of our old ſtatutes by their initial words, as the ſtatute of *quia emptores*, and that of *circumſpecte agatis*. But the moſt uſual method of citing them, eſpecially ſince the time of Edward the ſecond, is by naming the year of the king's reign in which the ſtatute was made, together with the chapter, or particular act, according to it's numeral order; as, 9 Geo. II. c. 4. For all the acts of one ſeſſion of parliament taken together make properly but one ſtatute; and therefore when two ſeſſions have been held in one year; we uſually mention ſtat. 1. or 2. Thus the bill of rights is cited, as 1 W. & M. ſt. 2. c. 2. ſignifying that it is the ſecond chapter or act, of the ſecond ſtatute or the laws made in the ſecond ſeſſions of parliament, held in the firſt year of king William and queen Mary.

verſal