

months after the king's demise, unless sooner displaced by the successor. We may farther observe, that by statute 1 Ric. II. c. 11. no man, that has served the office of sheriff for one year, can be compelled to serve the same again within three years after.

We shall find it is of the utmost importance to have the sheriff appointed according to law, when we consider his power and duty. These are either as a judge, as the keeper of the king's peace, as a ministerial officer of the superior courts of justice, or as the king's bailiff.

IN his judicial capacity he is to hear and determine all causes of forty shillings value and under, in his county court, of which more in it's proper place: and he has also judicial power in divers other civil cases^o. He is likewise to decide the elections of knights of the shire, (subject to the control of the house of commons) of coroners, and of verderors; to judge of the qualification of voters, and to return such as he shall determine to be duly elected.

As the keeper of the king's peace, both by common law and special commission, he is the first man in the county, and superior in rank to any nobleman therein, during his office^p. He may apprehend, and commit to prison, all persons who break the peace, or attempt to break it: and may bind any one in a recognizance to keep the king's peace. He may, and is bound *ex officio* to, pursue and take all traitors, murderers, felons, and other misdoers, and commit them to gaol for safe custody. He is also to defend his county against any of the king's enemies when they come into the land: and for this purpose, as well as for keeping the peace and pursuing felons, he may command all the people of his county to attend him; which is called the *posse comitatus*, or power of the county^q: which summons every person above fifteen years old, and under the degree of a peer, is bound to at-

^o Dalt. c. 4.

^p 1 Roll. Rep. 237.

^q Dalt. c. 95.