

this was the promulgation of strict municipal laws and regulations, and their rigorous execution by an impartial and firm distribution of justice. He was sensible however that he could not by himself personally every where be the dispenser of that justice, and the difficulty, nay the impossibility of meeting within his dominions many, duly qualified to represent him in his distant provinces, he was compelled to adopt the plan of sending the small number of people of that description about him, to see to the due execution of the laws and to punish their transgression.

These laws are equally remarkable by their simplicity and their wisdom.

The whole kingdom was divided and subdivided in regard to territory and population, and each of these subdivisions contained one hundred heads of families, which were under the authority of a public officer; the territory took the denomination of the hundred and the officer that of High Constable or Head borough.

The whole population of each subdivision was responsible for all the damages that might accrue from the commission of crimes within its respective limits, and to prevent negligence in repressing disorder, another regulation was this, that not one individual could settle in any other hundred, besides his own, without the consent of the inhabitants of that hundred where he wished to remove himself. The heavy responsibility laid upon them made them very cautious how they gave that consent: it was preceded by the strictest enquiry about the conduct and the reputation of the applicant for it, and thus they obtained as complete a knowledge of his character as if he had been all his life settled among them.

Success attended completely the wisdom of these regulations, and the reign of Alfred subsequent to their enactment was remarkable for its tranquillity. Nevertheless man is always man, too often led astray by the violence of his passions. It was necessary to protect society and punish criminals, and this was the duty of those ambulatory judges, to each of whom was assigned a certain circuit and the places where they were to hold their assizes.

The commission of crimes shuns always the broad day; the perpetrator of deeds of wickedness seldom chooses his theatre where the eyes of man can witness them. It is therefore often difficult to convince him on positive evidence: It is true that in many cases mere presumptive is equally satisfactory to justify his condemnation. But it may likewise happen that presumptive evidence as to facts is not sufficiently strong to satisfy the conscience of the judge who is to pass sentence on the accused. What ever be besides his internal conviction of his guilt.

If the judge had had the opportunity of being acquainted with the general tenor of the conduct of the accused then before him, he might have added the moral presumption accruing from