

proposed to them that John be asked to reissue the charter given by Henry I; but nothing was done. The next year, however, the barons met in the church at Bury St. Edmunds, in Suffolk, and one by one they swore at the altar that if the king did not grant their request they would begin war against him. When the charter was presented to the king by a large number of barons, he turned pale and trembled as he looked into the stern and resolute faces before him. "Give me till Easter to think about this," he said. The barons understood him, and when they presented the charter again, at Oxford, they had two thousand armed knights at their back. Langton read aloud the demands of the people, which ended with the sentence, "And if these claims are not immediately granted, our arms shall do us justice."

John angrily refused to sign the charter. The barons at once levied war against him, calling themselves "the army of God and of the Holy Church." Robert FitzWalter was elected commander, and London opened her gates to the army. When John saw that further delay meant the loss of his crown, he asked the leaders to name a day and place where he could meet them.

"Let the day," they replied, "be the 15th of June and the place Runnymede." And there on the Thames near London the barons met the king with a few followers, and compelled him to sign the Magna Carta, or Great Charter, which became the foundation stone of English liberty. It



JOHN SIGNING MAGNA CARTA