THE CHRONICLES OF JEAN FROISSART

IN LORD BERNS' TRANSLATION
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SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY PRESS
CARBONDALE ILLINOIS
Summary.

THE Black Prince died in 1576 and his father, Edward III the next year. Due to the unceasing efforts of Charles II of France, the great gains of the Treaties of Calais and Breitigny were gradually whittled away. Richard II of England was a minor and there was no strong direction to the English war policy. Then in 1380 Charles II died, also leaving his realm to a minor, Charles VI. England however had its internal problems: the Peasants' Revolt which is described in the following pages. This was due partly to the fact that a new stronger class of peasantry had arisen and partly to the repressive measures passed to keep the peasants in order after the labour shortages caused by the outbreaks of the Black Death.

How the Earl of Cambridge departed out of England to go into Portugal; and how the commons of England rebelled against the noblemen (1381).

.... In the mean season while this treaty was, there fell in England great mischief and rebellion of moving of the common people, by which deed England was at a point to have been lost without recovery. There was never realm nor country in so great adventure as it was in that time, and all because of the ease and riches that the common people were of which moved them to this rebellion; as sometime they did in France, the which did much hurt, for by such incidents the realm of France hath been greatly grieved. It was a marvellous thing and of poor foundation that this mischief began in England, and to give ensample to all manner of people, I will speak thereof as it was done, as I was informed, and of the incidents thereof.

There was a usage in England and yet is in divers countries, that the noblemen hath great franchises over the commons and keepeth them in service, that is to say, their tenants ought by custom to labour the lords' lands, to gather and bring home their corns, and some to thresh and to fan, and by servage to make their hay, and to hew their wood and bring it home. All these things they ought to do by servage, and there be more of these people in England than in any other realm. Thus the noblemen and pretaries are served by them and specially in the counties of Kent, Essex, Sussex and Bedford. These unhappy people of these said countries began to stir, because they said they were kept in great servage, and in the beginning of the world they said there were no bondmen, wherefore they maintained that none ought to be bond, without he did treason to his lord, as Lucifer did to God. But they said they could have no such battle, for they were neither angels nor spirits, but men formed to the similitude of their lords, saying, why should

* Lord Berners' text had 'bataille' instead of 'taille'—nature.
they then be kept so under like beasts, the which they said they would no longer suffer, for they would be all one; and if they laboured or did anything for their lords, they would have wages therefor as well as other. And of this imagination was a foolish priest in the country of Kent, called John Ball, for the which foolish words he had been three times in the Bishop of Canterbury’s prison. For this priest used oftentimes on the Sundays after mass, when the people were going out of the minster, to go into the cloister and preach and made the people to assemble about him, and would say thus, ‘Aha! ye good people, the matters goeth not well to pass in England, nor shall not do till everything be common, and that there be no villains nor gentlemen, but that we may be all united together, and that the lords be no greater masters than we be. What have we deserved, or why should we be kept thus in servage? We be all come from one father and one mother, Adam and Eve: whereby can they say or show that they be greater lords than we be, saying by that they cause us to win and labour for that they dispense? They are clothed in velvet and camlet furred with grise, and we be vestured with poor cloth. They have their wines, spices and good bread, and we have the drawing out of the chaff, and drink water. They dwell in fair houses, and we have the pain and travail, rain and wind in the fields; and by that that cometh of our labours they keep and maintain their estates. We be called their bondmen, and without we do readily them service, we be beaten; and we have no sovereign to whom we may complain, nor that will hear us nor do us right. Let us go to the king, he is young, and show him what servage we be in, and show him how we will have it otherwise, or else we will provide us of some remedy. And if we go together all manner of people that be now in any bondage will follow us, to the intent to be made free, and when the king seeth us we shall have some remedy, either by fairness or otherwise.’ Thus John Ball said on Sundays when the people issued out of the churches in the villages, wherefore many of the mean people loved him, and such as intended to no goodness said how he said truth. And so they would murmur one with another in the fields and in the ways as they went together, affirming how John Ball said truth.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, who was informed of the saying of this John Ball, caused him to be taken and put in prison a two or three months to chastise him. Howbeit it had been much better at the beginning that he had been condemned to perpetual prison, or else to have died, rather than to have suffered him to have been again delivered out of prison: but the bishop had conscience to let him die. And when this John Ball was out of prison, he returned again to his error as he did before. Of his words and deeds there were much people in London informed, such as had great envy at them that were rich and such as were noble. And then they began to speak among them and said how the realm of England was right evil governed, and how that gold and silver was taken from them by them that were named noblemen. So thus these unhappy men of London began
to rebel and assembled together, and sent word to the foresaid countries that they should come to London, and bring their people with them, promising how they should find London open to receive them and the commons of the city to be of the same accord, saying how they would do so much to the king that there should not be one bondman in all England.

This promise moved so them of Kent, of Essex, of Sussex, of Bedford, and of the countries about, that they rose and came towards London to the number of sixty thousand. And they had a captain called Water Tyler and with him in company was Jack Straw and John Ball. These three were chief sovereign captains, but the head of all was Water Tyler and he was indeed a tiler of houses, an ungracious patron.

When these unhappy men began thus to stir, they of London, except such as were of their band, were greatly afraid. Then the Mayor of London and the rich men of the city took counsel together, and when they saw the people thus coming on every side, they caused the gates of the city to be closed and would suffer no man to enter into the city. But when they had well imagined, they advised not so to do, for they thought they should thereby put their suburbs in great peril to be burnt, and so they opened again the city; and there entered in at the gates in some place a hundred, two hundred, by twenty and by thirty. And so when they came to London they entered and lodged, and yet of truth the third part* of these people could not tell what to ask or demand, but followed each other like beasts, as the shepherds did of old time, saying how they would go conquer the Holy Land, and at last all came to nothing.† In likewise these villains and poor people came to London a hundred mile off, sixty mile, fifty mile, forty mile and twenty mile off, and from all countries about London, but the most part came from the countries before named. And as they came they demanded ever for the king. The gentlemen of the countries, knights and squires, began to doubt, when they saw the people began to rebel, and though they were in doubt, it was good reason: for a less occasion they might have been afraid. So the gentlemen drew together as well as they might.

The same day that these unhappy people of Kent were coming to London, there returned from Canterbury the king’s mother, Princess of Wales, coming from her pilgrimage. She was in great jeopardy to have been lost, for these people came to her carriage and dealt rudely with her, whereof the good lady was in great doubt lest they would have done some villainy to her or to her damosels. Howbeit, God kept her, and she came in one day from Canterbury to London, for she never durst tarry by the way. The same time King Richard her son was at the Tower of London. There his mother found him, and with him there was the Earl of Salisbury, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sir Robert of Namur, the

* 'three-fourths' in the original.
† A reference to the Pastoureaux of 1320, destroyed at Aigues-Mortes on their way to the Holy Land.
Lord of Gommegnius and divers other, who were in doubt of these people that thus gathered together and wist not what they demanded. This rebellion was well-known in the king’s court or any of these people began to stir out of their houses, but the king nor his council did provide no remedy therefor, which was great marvel. And to the intent that all lords and good people, and such as would nothing but good, should take example to correct them that be evil and rebellious, I shall show you plainly all the matter as it was.

The evil deeds that these commons of England did to the king’s officers, and how they sent a knight to speak with the king (1381). [Ch. 382]

THE Monday before the feast of Corpus Christi, the year of our Lord God a thousand three hundred and eighty-one, these people issued out of their houses to come to London to speak with the king to be made free, for they would have had no bondman in England. And so first they came to Saint Thomas of Canterbury, and there John Ball had thought to have found the Bishop of Canterbury, but he was at London with the king. When Wat Tyler and Jack Straw entered into Canterbury, all the common people made great feast for all the town was of their ascent. And there they took counsel to go to London to the king, and to send some of their company over the river of Thames into Essex, into Sussex, and into the counties of Stafford and Bedford, to speak to the people that they should all come to the farther side of London, and thereby to close London round about so that the king should not stop their passages, and that they should all meet together on Corpus Christi day. They that were at Canterbury entered into Saint Thomas’ church and did there much hurt, and robbed and brake up the bishop’s chamber. And in robbing and bearing out their pillage they said, ‘Ah! this Chancellor of England hath had a good market to get together all this riches. He shall give us now account of the revenues of England and of the great profits that he hath gathered since the king’s coronation.’

When they had this Monday thus broken the abbey of Saint Vincent, they departed in the morning and all the people of Canterbury with them, and so took the way to Rochester and sent their people to the villages about. And in their going they beat down and robbed houses of advocates and of the procurors of the king’s court and of the archbishop, and had mercy of none. And when they were come to Rochester, they had there good cheer, for the people of that town tarried for them, for they were of the same sect. And then they went to the castle there and took the knight that had the rule thereof: he was called Sir John Newton. And they said to him, ‘Sir, it behoveth you to go with us and you shall be our sovereign captain, and to do what we will have you.’ The knight excused himself honestly and showed them divers considerations and excuses, but all availed him
nothing, for they said unto him, 'Sir John, if ye do not as we will have you, ye are but dead.' The knight seeing these people in that fury and ready to slay him, he then doubted death and agreed to them, and so they took him with them against his inward will. And in likewise did they of other countries in England, as Essex, Sussex, Stafford, Bedford, and Norfolk even to Lynn, for they brought the knights and gentlemen into such obeisance that they caused them to go with them whether they would or not, as the Lord Morley, a great baron, Sir Stephen of Hales and Sir Thomas of Cosington and other.

Now behold the great fortune. If they might have come to their intents, they would have destroyed all the noblemen of England, and thereafter all other nations would have followed the same and have taken foot and ensample by them and by them of Ghent and Flanders, who rebelled against their lord. The same year the Parisians rebelled in likewise and found out the mallets of iron, of whom there were more than twenty thousand, as ye shall hear after in this history, but first we will speak of them of England.

When these people thus lodged at Rochester departed and passed the river and came to Dartford, alway keeping still their opinions, beating down before them and all about the places and houses of advocates and procurors, and striking off the heads of divers persons; and so long they went forward until they came within a four mile of London, and there lodged on a hill called Blackheath. And as they went, they said ever they were the king's men and the noble commons of England. And when they of London knew that they were come so near to them, the mayor, as ye have heard before, closed the gates and kept straitly all the passages: this order caused the mayor, who was called William Walworth, and divers other rich burgesses of the city who were not of their sect, but there were in London of their unhappy opinions more than thirty thousand. Then these people thus being lodged on Blackheath determined to send their knight to speak with the king, and to show him how all that they have done or will do is for him and his honour, and how the realm of England hath not been well governed a great space for the honour of the realm nor for the common profit by his uncles and by the clergy, and specially by the Archbishop of Canterbury his chancellor, whereof they would have account. This knight durst do none otherwise but so came by the river of Thames to the Tower. The king and they that were with him in the Tower, desiring to hear tidings, seeing this knight coming, made him way, and was brought before the king into a chamber. And with the knight was the princess his mother and his two brethren, the Earl of Kent and the Lord John Holland, the Earl of Salisbury, the Earl of Warwick, the Earl of Oxford, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord of Saint John's, Sir Robert of Namur, the Lord of Vertaing, the Lord of Gommegnies, Sir Henry of Senzeille, the Mayor of London and divers other notable burgesses. This knight Sir John Newton, who was well known among them for he was one of the king's officers, he kneeled down before the king and
said, 'My right redoubted lord, let it not displease your Grace the message that I must needs show you, for, dear sir, it is by force and against my will.' 'Sir John,' said the king, 'say what ye will, I hold you excused.' 'Sir, the commons of this your realm hath sent me to you to desire you to come and speak with them on Blackheath, for they desire to have none but you. And, sir, ye need not to have any doubt of your person, for they will do you no hurt, for they hold and will hold you for their king; but, sir, they say they will show you divers things the which shall be right necessary for you to take heed of when they speak with you, of the which things, sir, I have no charge to show you. But, sir, an it may please you to give me an answer such as may appease them, and that they may know for truth that I have spoken with you, for they have my children in hostage till I return again to them and without I return again they will slay my children incontinent.' Then the king made him an answer and said, 'Sir, ye shall have an answer shortly.' Then the king took counsel what was best for him to do, and it was anon determined that the next morning the king should go down the river by water, and without fail to speak with them. And when Sir John Newton heard that answer he desired nothing else, and so took his leave of the king and of the lords and returned again into his vessel, and passed the Thames and went to Blackheath where he had left more than threescore thousand men. And there he answered them that the next morning they should send some of their council to the Thames, and there the king would come and speak with them. This answer greatly pleased them, and so passed that night as well as they might. And the fourth part* of them fasted for lack of victual, for they had none, wherewith they were sore displeased, which was good reason.

All this season the Earl of Buckingham was in Wales, for there he had fair heritages by reason of his wife, who was daughter to the Earl of Northumberland and Hereford; but the voice was all through London how he was among these people, and some said certainly how they had seen him there among them. And all was because there was one Thomas in their company, a man of the county of Cambridge, that was very like the earl. Also the lords that lay at Plymouth to go into Portugal were well informed of this rebellion, and of the people that thus began to rise, wherefore they doubted lest their viage should have been broken, or else they feared lest the commons about Southampton, Winchester, and Arundel would have come on them. Wherefore they weighed up their anchors and issued out of the haven with great pain, for the wind was sore against them, and so took the sea and there cast anchor abiding for the wind. And the Duke of Lancaster, who was in the marches of Scotland between Moorlane and Roxburgh entreating with the Scots, where it was showed him of the rebellion, whereof he was in doubt, for he knew well that he was but little beloved with the commons of England. Howbeit, for all those tidings yet he did sagely demean himself as touching the treaty with the Scots.

* 'Four-fifths of them'.
The Earl Douglas, the Earl of Moray, the Earl of Sutherland and the Earl Thomas Erakine, and the Scots that were there for the treaty knew right well the rebellion in England, how the common people in every part began to rebel against the noblemen; wherefore the Scots thought that England was in great danger to be lost, and therefore in their treaties they were the more stiffer against the Duke of Lancaster and his council.

Now let us speak of the commons of England and how they persevered.

How the commons of England entered into London, and of the great evil that they did, and of the death of the Bishop of Canterbury and divers other (1381). [Ch. 383]

IN the morning on Corpus Christi day King Richard heard mass in the Tower of London, and all his lords, and then he took his barge with the Earl of Salisbury, the Earl of Warwick, the Earl of Oxford, and certain knights, and so rowed down along Thames to Rotherhithe, whereas was descended down the hill a ten thousand men to see the king and to speak with him. And when they saw the king's barge coming they began to shout and made such a cry as though all the devils in hell had been among them. And they had brought with them Sir John Newton, to the intent that if the king had not come they would have stricken him all to pieces, and so they had promised him. And when the king and his lords saw the demeanour of the people, the best assured of them were in dread, and so the king counselled by his barons not to take any landing there, but so rowed up and down the river. And the king demanded of them what they would, and said how he was come thither to speak with them. And they said all with one voice, 'We would that ye should come a-land, and then we shall show you what we lack.' Then the Earl of Salisbury answered for the king and said, 'Sirs, ye be not in such order nor array that the king ought to speak with you'; and so with those words no more said. And then the king was counselled to return again to the Tower of London, and so he did. And when these people saw that, they were inflamed with ire and returned to the hill where the great band was, and there showed them what answer they had and how the king was returned to the Tower of London.

Then they cried all with one voice, 'Let us go to London,' and so they took their way thither. And in their going they beat down abbeys and houses of advocates and of men of the court, and so came into the suburbs of London, which were great and fair, and there beat down divers fair houses, and specially they brake up the king's prisons, as the Marshalsea and other, and delivered out all the prisoners that were within and there they did much hurt. And at the bridge foot they threat them of London because the gates of the bridge were closed, saying how they would burn all the suburbs and so conquer London by force, and to
slay and burn all the commons of the city. There were many within the city of their accord, and so they drew together and said, 'Why do we not let these good people enter into the city? They are our fellows and that that they do is for us.' So therewith the gates were opened, and then these people entered into the city and went into houses and sat down to eat and drink. They desired nothing but it was incontinent brought to them, for every man was ready to make them good cheer and to give them meat and drink to appease them.

Then the captains, as John Ball, Jack Straw and Wat Tyler, went throughout London, and a twenty thousand with them, and so came to the Savoy in the way to Westminster, which was a goodly house and it pertained to the Duke of Lancaster. And when they entered they slew the keepers thereof and robbed and pilled the house, and when they had so done, then they set fire on it and clean destroyed and burnt it. And when they had done that outrage, they left not therewith but went straight to the fair hospital of the Rhodes called Saint John's, and there they burnt house, hospital, minster and all. Then they went from street to street and slew all the Flemings that they could find, in church or in any other place: there was none respite from death. And they brake up divers houses of the Lombards and robbed them and took their goods at their pleasure, for there was none that durst say them nay. And they slew in the city a rich merchant called Richard Lyon, to whom before that time Wat Tyler had done service in France; and on a time this Richard Lyon had beaten him while he was his valet, the which Wat Tyler then remembered, and so came to his house and struck off his head and caused it to be borne on a spear-point before him all about the city. Thus these ungracious people demeaned themselves, like people enraged and wood, and so that day they did much sorrow in London.

And so against night they went to lodge at Saint Katherine's before the Tower of London, saying how they would never depart thence till they had the king at their pleasure, and till he had accorded to them all that they would ask accounts of the Chancellor of England, to know where all the good was become that he had levied through the realm; and without he made a good account to them thereof, it should not be for his profit. And so when they had done all these evils to the strangers all the day, at night they lodged before the Tower.

Ye may well know and believe that it was great pity for the danger that the king and such as were with him were in. For some time these unhappy people shouted and cried so loud, as though all the devils of hell had been among them.

In this evening the king was counselled by his brethren and lords, and by Sir William Walworth, Mayor of London, and divers other notable and rich burgesses, that in the night-time they should issue out of the Tower and enter into the city, and so to slay all these unhappy people while they were at their rest and asleep, for it was thought that many of them were drunken, whereby they should be slain like flies; also of twenty of them there was scant one in harness. And surely the
good men of London might well have done this at their ease, for they had in their houses secretly their friends and servants ready in harness. And also Sir Robert Knowles was in his lodging, keeping his treasure, with a sixscore ready at his commandment. In likewise was Sir Perducas d’Albret, who was as then in London, insomuch that there might well [have] assembled together an eight thousand men ready in harness. Howbeit there was nothing done, for the residue of the commons of the city were sore doubted, lest they should rise also, and the commons before were a threescore thousand or more. Then the Earl of Salisbury and the wise men about the king said, ‘Sir, if ye can appease them with fairness, it were best and most profitable, and to grant them everything that they desire: for if we should begin a thing which we could not achieve, we should never recover it again, but we and our heirs ever to be disherited.’ So this counsel was taken and the mayor countermanded, and so commanded that he should not stir; and he did as he was commanded, as reason was. And in the city with the major there were twelve aldermen, whereof nine of them held with the king and the other three took part with these ungracious people, as it was after well-known, the which they full dearly bought.

And on the Friday in the morning, the people being at Saint Katherine’s near to the Tower, began to apparel themselves and to cry and to shout and said, without the king would come out and speak with them, they would assail the Tower and take it by force and slay all them that were within. Then the king doubted these words, and so was counselled that he should issue out to speak with them. And then the king sent to them that they should all draw to a fair plain place, called Mile End, whereas the people in the city did sport them in the summer season, and there the king to grant them that they desired. And there it was cried in the king’s name that whosoever would speak with the king, let him go to the said place, and there he should not fail to find the king.

Then the people began to depart, specially the commons of the villages, and went to the same place. But all went not thither, for they were not all of one condition; for there were some that desired nothing but riches and the utter destruction of the noblemen, and to have London robbed and pill’d: that was the principal matter of their beginning, the which they well showed, for as soon as the Tower gate opened and that the king was issued out with his two brethren and the Earl of Salisbury, the Earl of Warwick, the Earl of Oxford, Sir Robert of Namur, the Lord of Vertaing, the Lord Gommagneus and divers other, then Wat Tyler, Jack Straw, and John Ball and more than four hundred, entered into the Tower and brake up chamber after chamber; and at last found the Archbishop of Canterbury, called Simon, a valiant man and a wise, and chief Chancellor of England, and a little before he had said mass before the king. These gluttons took him and struck off his head, and also they beheaded the Lord of Saint John’s, and a friar minor, master in medicine pertaining to the Duke of Lancaster. They
slew him in despite of his master and a sergeant-at-arms, called John Leg. And these four heads were set on four long spears and they made them to be borne before them through the streets of London and at last set them a-high on London Bridge, as though they had been traitors to the king and to the realm. Also these gluttons entered into the princess’ chamber and brake her bed, whereby she was so sore afraid that she swooned, and there she was taken up and borne to the waterside and put into a barge and covered, and so conveyed to a place called the Queen’s Wardrobe. And there she was all that day and night, like a woman half dead, till she was comforted with the king her son, as ye shall hear after.

How the nobles of England were in great peril to have been destroyed, and how these rebels were punished and sent home to their own houses (1381).

[Ch. 384]

WHEN the king came to the said place of Mile End without London, he put out of his company his two brethren, the Earl of Kent and Sir John Holland, and the Lord of Gommegnies, for they durst not appear before the people. And when the king and his other lords were there, he found there a threescore thousand men of divers villages and of sundry countries in England. So the king entered in among them and said to them sweetly, ‘Ah! ye good people, I am your king. What lack ye? What will ye say?’ Then such as understood him said, ‘We will that ye make us free for ever, ourselves, our heirs and our lands, and that we be called no more bond, nor so reputed.’ ‘Sirs,’ said the king ‘I am well agreed thereto. Withdraw ye home into your own houses and into such villages as ye came from, and leave behind you of every village two or three, and I shall cause writings to be made and seal them with my seal, the which they shall have with them, containing everything that ye demand. And to the intent that ye shall be the better assured, I shall cause my banners to be delivered into every bailiwick, shire, and counties.’

These words appeased well the common people, such as were simple and good plain men, that were come thither and wist not why. They said, ‘It was well said, we desire no better.’ Thus these people began to be appeased and began to withdraw them into the city of London. And the king also said a word, the which greatly contented them. He said, ‘Sirs, among you good men of Kent, ye shall have one of my banners with you, and ye of Essex another, and ye of Sussex, of Bedford, of Cambridge, of Yarmouth, of Stafford, and of Lynn, each of you one; and also I pardon everything that ye have done hitherto, so that ye follow my banners and return home to your houses.’ They all answered how they would do so. Thus these people departed and went into London.

Then the king ordained more than thirty clerks the same Friday to write with all diligence letters patent, and sealed with the king’s seal, and delivered them to
these people. And when they had received the writing they departed and returned to their own countries. But the great venom remained still behind, for Wat Tyler, Jack Straw and John Ball said, for all that these people were thus appeased, yet they would not depart so, and they had of their accord more than thirty thousand. So they abode still and made no press to have the king's writing nor seal, for all their intents was to put the city to trouble in such wise as to slay all the rich and honest persons and to rob and pill their houses. They of London were in great fear of this, wherefore they kept their houses privily with their friends and such servants as they had, every man according to his puissance. And when these said people were this Friday thus somewhat appeased, and that they should depart as soon as they had their writings, every man home into his own country, then King Richard came into the Royal* where the queen his mother was, right sore afraid. So he comforted her as well as he could and tarried there with her all that night.

Yet I shall show you of an adventure that fell by these ungracious people, before the city of Norwich, by a captain among them called William Lister of Stafford. The same day of Corpus Christi that these people entered into London and burnt the Duke of Lancaster's house, called the Savoy, and the Hospital of Saint John's and brake up the king's prisons and did all this hurt, as ye have heard before, the same time there assembled together they of Stafford, of Lynn, of Cambridge, of Bedford and of Yarmouth, and as they were coming towards London, they had a captain among them called Lister. And as they came they rested them before Norwich, and in their coming they caused every man to rise with them, so that they left no villeins behind them. The cause why they rested before Norwich I shall show you.

There was a knight, captain of the town, called Sir Robert Sale. He was no gentlemen born, but he had the grace to be reputed sage and valiant in arms, and for his valiantness King Edward made him knight. He was of his body one of the biggest knights in all England. Lister and his company thought to have had this knight with them and to make him their chief captain, to the intent to be the more feared and beloved. So they sent to him that he should come and speak with them in the field, or else they would burn the town. The knight considered that it was better for him to go and speak with them rather than they should do that outrage to the town. Then he mounted on his horse and issued out of the town all alone, and so came to speak with them. And when they saw him, they made him great cheer and honoured him much, desiring him to alight off his horse and to speak with them. And so he did, wherein he did great folly, for when he was alighted they came round about him and began to speak fair to him and said, 'Sir Robert, ye are a knight and a man greatly beloved in this country, and renowned a valiant man. And though ye be thus, yet we know you well: ye be no gentleman born, but son to a villein such as we be. Therefore come you

* A palace near Blackfriars where the Queen's Wardrobe was.
with us and be our master, and we shall make you so great a lord that one quarter of England shall be under your obeisance.' When the knight heard them speak thus it was greatly contrary to his mind, for he thought never to make any such bargain, and answered them with a felonous regard, 'Fly away, ye ungracious people, false and evil traitors that ye be. Would you that I should forsake my natural lord for such a company of knaves as ye be, to my dishonour for ever? I had rather ye were all hanged, as ye shall be, for that shall be your end.' And with those words he had thought to have leapt again upon his horse, but he failed of the stirrup and the horse started away. Then they cried all at him, and said, 'Slay him without mercy.'

When he heard those words he let his horse go and drew out a good sword and began to skirmish with them, and made a great place about him, that it was pleasure to behold him. There was none that durst approach near him. There were some that approached near him but at every stroke that he gave he cut off either leg, head or arm; there was none so hardy but that they feared him. He did there such deeds of arms that it was marvel to regard, but there were more than forty thousand of these unhappy people. They shot and cast at him, and he was unarmed. To say truth, if he had been of iron or steel, yet he must needs have been slain; but yet, or he died, he slew twelve out of hand, beside them that he hurt. Finally he was stricken to the earth, and they cut off his arms and legs and then struck his body all to pieces. This was the end of Sir Robert Sale, which was great damage, for which deed afterward all the knights and squires of England were angry and sore displeased when they heard thereof.

Now let us return to the king. The Saturday the king departed from the Wardrobe in the Royal, and went to Westminster and heard mass in the church there, and all his lords with him. And beside the church there was a little chapel with an image of our Lady, which did great miracles and in whom the Kings of England had ever great trust and confidence. The king made his orisons before this image and did there his offering, and then he leapt on his horse and all his lords, and so the king rode toward London. And when he had ridden a little way, on the left hand there was a way to pass without London.

The same proper morning Wat Tyler, Jack Straw and John Ball had assembled their company to commune together in a place called Smithfield, whereas every Friday there is a market of horses. And there were together all of affinity more than twenty thousand, and yet there were many still in the town, drinking and making merry in the taverns, and paid nothing, for they were happy that made them best cheer. And these people in Smithfield had with them the king's banners which were delivered them the day before, and all these gluttons were in mind to overrun and to rob London the same day, for their captains said how they had done nothing as yet: 'These liberties that the king hath given us is to us but a small profit: therefore let us be all of one accord, and let us overrun this rich and
puissant city or they of Essex, of Sussex, of Cambridge, of Bed ford, of Arundel, of Warwick, of Reading, of Oxford, of Guildford, of Lynn, of Stafford, of Yarmouth, of Lincoln, of York and of Durham do come hither, for all these will come hither; Baker and Lister will bring them hither. And if we be first lords of London and have the possession of the riches that is therein, we shall not repent us, for if we leave it, they that come after will have it from us.'

To this counsel they all agreed. And therewith the king came the same way unaware of them, for he had thought to have passed that way without London, and with him a forty horse. And when he came before the abbey of Saint Bartholomew and beheld all these people, then the king rested and said how he would go no farther till he knew what these people ailed, saying if they were in any trouble how he would re-appease them again. The lords that were with him tarried also, as reason was when they saw the king tarry. And when Wat Tyler saw the king tarry he said to his people, ‘Sirs, yonder is the king, I will go and speak with him. Stir not from hence without I make you a sign, and when I make you that sign come on and slay all them except the king. But do the king no hurt, he is young, we shall do with him what we list and shall lead him with us all about England, and so shall we be lords of all the realm without doubt.’

And there was a doublet-maker of London called John Tyle, and he had brought to these gluttons a sixty doublets, the which they wore. Then he demanded of these captains who should pay him for his doublets: he demanded thirty mark. Wat Tyler answered him and said, ‘Friend, appease yourself, thou shalt be well paid or this day be ended. Keep thee near me, I shall be your creditor.’ And therewith he spurred his horse and departed from his company, and came to the king, so near him that his horse’s head touched the croup of the king’s horse. And the first word that he said was this, ‘Sir king, seest thou all yonder people?’ ‘Yea, truly,’ said the king, ‘wherefore sayest thou?’ ‘Because’, said he, ‘they be all at my commandment, and have sworn to me faith and troth to do all that I will have them.’ ‘In a good time,’ said the king ‘I will well it be so.’ Then Wat Tyler said, as he that nothing demanded but riot, ‘What believest thou, king, that these people, and as many more as be in London at my commandment, that they will depart from the thus without having thy letters?’ ‘No,’ said the king, ‘ye shall have them; they be ordained for you, and shall be delivered every one each after other. Wherefore, good fellows, withdraw fair and easily to your people and cause them to depart out of London, for it is our intent that each of you by villages and townships shall have letters patent as I have promised you.’ With these words Wat Tyler cast his eyes on a squire that was there with the king bearing the king’s sword, and Wat Tyler hated greatly the same squire, for the same squire had displeased him before for words between them. ‘What!’ said Tyler, ‘art thou there? Give me thy dagger.’ ‘Nay,’ said the squire, ‘that will I not do. Wherefore should I give it thee?’ The king beheld the squire and said, ‘Give it him,
let him have it.' And so the squire took it him sore against his will. And when this Wat Tyler had it he began to play therewith and turned it in his hand, and said again to the squire, 'Give me also that sword.' 'Nay,' said the squire, 'it is the king's sword. Thou art not worthy to have it, for thou art but a knave, and if there were no more here but thou and I, thou durst not speak those words for as much gold in quantity as all yonder abbey!' 'By my faith,' said Wat Tyler, 'I shall never eat meat till I have thy head!' And with those words the Mayor of London came to the king with a twelve horses well armed under their coats, and so he brake the press, and saw and heard how Wat Tyler demeaned himself, and said to him, 'Ha! thou knave, how art thou so hardy in the king's presence to speak such words? It is too much for thee so to do.' Then the king began to chafe and said to the mayor, 'Set hands on him.' And while the king said so, Tyler said to the mayor, 'A God's name, what have I said to displease thee?' 'Yes, truly' quoth the mayor, 'thou false stinking knave, shalt thou speak thus in the presence of the king my natural lord? I commit never to live, without thou shalt dearly abyne it.' And with those words the mayor drew out his sword and struck Tyler so great a stroke on the head that he fell down at the feet of his horse. And as soon as he was fallen, they environed him all about, whereby he was not seen of his company. Then a squire of the king's alighted, called John Standish, and he drew out his sword and put it into Wat Tyler's belly, and so he died. Then the ungracious people there assembled, perceiving their captain slain, began to murmur among themselves and said, 'Ah! Our captain is slain, let us go and slay them all.' And therewith they arranged themselves on the place in manner of battle, and their bows before them.

Thus the king began a great outrage; howbeit all turned to the best, for as soon as Tyler was on the earth, the king departed from all his company and all alone he rode to these people, and said to his own men, 'Sirs, none of you follow me; let me alone.' And so when he came before these ungracious people, who put themselves in ordinance to revenge their captain then the king said to them, 'Sirs, what aileth you? Ye shall have no captain but me. I am your king. Be all in rest and peace.' And so the most part of the people that heard the king speak and saw him among them, were shamefaced and began to wax peaceable and to depart. But some, such as were malicious and evil, would not depart, but made semblance as though they would do somewhat. Then the king returned to his own company and demanded of them, what was best to be done Then he was counselled to draw into the field, for to fly away was no boot. Then said the mayor, 'It is good that we do so, for I think surely we shall have shortly some comfort of them of London and of such good men as be of our part, who are purveyed and have their friends and men ready armed in their houses.' And in this meantime, voice and bruit ran through London how these unhappy people were likely to slay the king and the mayor in Smithfield, through the which noise all manner of good men of
the king's party issued out of their houses and lodgings well armed, and so came all to Smithfield and to the field where the king was; and they were anon to the number of seven or eight thousand men well armed. And first thither same Sir Robert Knowles and Sir Perducas d'Albret, well accompanied, and divers of the aldermen of London, and with them a six hundred men in harness, and a puissant man of the city who was the king's draper called Nicholas Bramber, and he brought with him a great company. And ever as they came they ranged them afoot in order of battle, and on the other part these unhappy people were ready ranged, making semblance to give battle, and they had with them divers of the king's banners.

There the king made three knights, the one the Mayor of London Sir William Walworth, Sir John Standish, and Sir Nicholas Bramber. Then the lords said among themselves, 'What shall we do? We see here our enemies who would gladly slay us if they might have the better hand of us.' Sir Robert Knowles counselled to go and fight with them and slay them all, yet the king would not consent thereto but said, 'Nay, I will not so. I will send to them commanding them to send me again my banners, and thereby we shall see what they will do. Howbeit, either by fairness or otherwise, I will have them.' 'That is well said, sir,' quoth the Earl of Salisbury. Then these new knights were sent to them, and these knights make token to them not to shoot at them, and when they came so near them that their speech might be heard, they said, 'Sirs, the king commandeth you to send again his banners, and we think he will have mercy on you.' And incontinent they delivered again the banners and sent them to the king. Also they were commanded on pain of their heads, that all such as had letters of the king to bring them forth and to send them again to the king; and so many of them delivered their letters, but not all. Then the king made them to be all torn in their presence. And as soon as the king's banners were delivered again these unhappy people kept none array, but the most part of them did cast down their bows, and so brake their array and returned into London. Sir Robert Knowles was sore displeased in that he might not go to slay them all, but the king would not consent thereto, but said he would be revenged of them well enough, and so he was after.

Thus these foolish people departed, some one way and some another; and the king and his lords and all his company right ordinately entered into London with great joy. And the first journey that the king made he went to the lady princess his mother, who was in a castle in the Royal called the Queen's Wardrobe, and there she had tarried two days and two nights right sore abashed, as she had good reason. And when she saw the king her son, she was greatly rejoiced and said, 'Ah! fair son, what pain and great sorrow that I have suffered for you this day.' Then the king answered and said, 'Certainly, madam, I know it well; but now rejoice yourself and thank God for now it is time. I have this day recovered mine heritage and the realm of England, the which I had near lost.' Thus the king
tarried that day with his mother, and every lord went peaceably to their own lodgings.

Then there was a cry made in every street in the king’s name that all manner of men, not being of the city of London and have not dwelt there the space of one year, to depart; and if any such be found there the Sunday by the sun-rising, that they should be taken as traitors to the king and to lose their heads. This cry thus made, there was none that durst break it, and so all manner of people departed and sparkled abroad every man to their own places.

John Ball and Jack Straw were found in an old house hidden, thinking to have stolen away, but they could not for they were accused by their own men. Of the taking of them the king and his lords were glad, and then struck off their heads, and Wat Tyler’s also, and they were set on London Bridge, and the valiant men’s heads taken down that they had set on the Thursday before. These tidings anon spread abroad, so that the people of the strange countries, which were coming towards London, returned back again to their own houses and durst come no further.

How the Duke of Lancaster kept himself still in Scotland, for fear of this rebellion; and how the king punished of these traitors the chief masters (1381).

[Ch. 385]

NOW let us speak how the Duke of Lancaster in the mean season of this rebellion was in the marches of Scotland, treating for a peace with the Earl Douglas and the other lords of Scotland. The Scots knew right well of this rebellion in England, and in likewise so did the Duke of Lancaster; howbeit, he never made any semblance thereof to the Scots, but was as sore in his treaty as though England had been in good rest and peace. So long this treaty was debated among them that at last a truce was taken to endure three year between England and Scotland. And when this truce was thus accorded, the lords of each party made good cheer each to other.

Then the Earl Douglas said to the Duke of Lancaster, ‘Sir, we know right well of the rebellion of the common people in England, and the peril that the realm of England is in by that incidence. Sir, we repute and take you for right sage and a valiant man, since ye have continued your treaty so freely as ye have done, for ye would never make any semblance thereof. Sir, we say to you that we offer ourselves, if ye have need, to be ready to aid you with five or six hundred spears and to do you service.’ ‘By my faith,’ said the duke, ‘fair lords I thank you, I will not refuse your offer: howbeit I think verily that the king my lord hath so good counsel that the matter shall right well come to pass. Howbeit, I desire you to have a safe-conduct for me and mine to return into your country, if need be, till