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Wat Tyler

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WAT TYLER.

By PROFESSOR DE VERICOUR.

It is singular and instructive to mark how close is the resemblance between the popular discontents of different times and the spring as well as the progress of their action. During the fourteenth century the great body of the people, especially in England, was gradually rising in the scale of civilisation, and, at the same time that the pressure on them was increased, the simplest civic rights were denied them. During the age we are referring to, there was a contemporaneous movement of the lower classes—of the body of the people—in various countries. The stern slavery under the feudal system was relaxing. The voice of the serf, who so long in silence had endured his bondage, was at length more or less heard. The spirit of freedom, which heretofore had animated only the noble and the high-born, was now inflaming the hearts of those who, under the bonds of villain-service, had been part of the ownership of the soil. There was an almost simultaneous rising of the lower orders of the people, and its not being confined to any one country, can only be explained by general, and, doubtless, various causes affecting European society and governments at large.

It is a well-known and great truth in history, that the great and hardest problem of political wisdom is, to prevent any part of society from being so socially degraded by poverty, that their political enfranchisement becomes dangerous or even mischievous. This danger was encountered by the young King Richard II. in the early part of his reign. The oppression of the serfs, and the exactions under which the common people were suffering, had produced a high state of popular exasperation. Little was needed to cause an outbreak against the government. It was Richard's fate to live

in times when his pomp and pride became doubly dangerous. We have stated that a change was coming over the spirit of the people of Europe. There were indications, in the greater part of Europe, that government was no longer to be an affair of kings and nobles only, and the popular element was beginning to manifest itself, as soon as it ceased to be crushed and stifled by military glory and brute force.

Richard II. succeeded to a reign which, during the long term of fifty years, had been triumphant abroad and unresisted at home, and the strength and glory of that reign were well fitted to fill the mind of the boy-king—for he was but 16 years of age—with the belief that his throne was impregnable, and that his sceptre had a superhuman might. This pride may well have been heightened, moreover, by the ancestral feeling inspired by the heroic character and the martial prowess of his father, Edward the Black Prince, who, unhappily for his son, had died before the succession reached him. There was every thing in Richard's thoughts of the past to fire his pride; and when he succeeded to the crown, he naturally felt that his throne was upheld, not only by the moral influence of a nation's love for the memory of his forefathers, but also by the counsel and the power of the surviving sons of Edward III.

The war with France had cost England large sums of money. The nation was harassed by taxation, and often by the way in which taxes were levied. In the last year of the reign of Edward III., a capitation tax had been imposed on the nation; it was now passed again by Parliament with slight modifications, but such as to make it fall less heavily on the poor. Every male and female of fifteen years of age was to pay three groats; but in cities and towns the aggregate amount was to be divided among the inhabitants according to their abilities, or in such a way that no individual should pay less than one groat. Where there was little or no registration, the fixing of the age was sure to lead to disputes; the collectors might easily take a boy or girl of 14 to be 15, and poverty would induce many of the poor knowingly to make a misstatement of

the opposite kind. Nevertheless, the levying of this obnoxious tax might have passed over with nothing more serious than a few riots between the people and the tax-gatherers, had it not been for other circumstances involved in the mighty change which had gradually been taking place in the whole body of European society. The peasantry had gradually been emerging from slavery to comparative freedom; they began to feel their own right to be treated as men by their superiors in the accidental circumstances of rank and wealth. The peasants were in a state of transition, during which blunders and crimes were committed by both parties. But in this insurrection, as well as in the Jacquerie, ignorance may be pleaded in exculpation of the people, whilst the upper classes were guilty of crime in keeping them in that brutalising state of ignorance. The real motive of the revolutionary movement was the enfranchisement of the peasantry; the rest was an after-thought, begotten in the madness of success and the frenzy inspired in unenlightened minds by the first consciousness of power; and such an object is so legitimate, and sacred as it were, that nothing can disgrace it nor eventually defeat it. "Their masters," says Sir James Mackintosh, "in some places pulled them back too violently; they were impatient of the time which such an operation requires. Accidental provocations—malignant incendiaries—frequently excited them to violence; but in general the commotions of that age will be found to be near that point in the progress of slaves towards emancipation, when their hopes are roused and their wrongs not yet redressed."

In Flanders many sanguinary excesses had been committed upon the aristocracy, although many respectable burghers had taken a share in the insurrection. In France, the recent Jacquerie, had left deep traces of terror mingled with horror. If the attempt of the French peasantry offered a discouraging example to their neighbours of England, on the other hand the democratic party had had a long triumph in Flanders; and at this very moment the son of Jacques Van Artevelde, with Peter du Bois, was waging a successful war against this

court, their nobles, and the whole aristocracy of France. From the close intercourse between the two countries, many of the English must have been perfectly acquainted with all that was passing in Flanders, and may have derived encouragement therefrom. A new revolt had also commenced in France, headed by the burghers and the inhabitants of the towns; it began at Rouen, where the collectors of taxes and duties on provisions were massacred, and it soon spread to Paris and other great cities. Many historians have attributed part of the storm which was now gathering in England to the preaching of Wycliffe's disciples, but their original authorities seem to have been prejudiced witnesses against the Church reformer. The convulsion is sufficiently accounted for by the actual condition of the people of England at this period, considered in connection with the particular point in its progress at which society had arrived, as observed by Sir James Mackintosh. That condition, though far superior to the state of the French people, was sufficiently wretched and galling. A considerable portion of the peasants were still serfs or villains, bound to the soil, and sold or transmitted with the estates of the nobles and other land proprietors. With the exception of some of the lower order of the secular clergy, there were but few persons disposed to consider or treat them as fellow-creatures.

The discontents and sufferings of the classes immediately above these serfs—the poor townspeople on the coast more particularly, who had been plundered by the foreign fleets—no doubt contributed to hurry on the sanguinary crisis; but it was the poll-tax that was the proximate cause of the mischief. At first the tax was levied with mildness. Unfortunately, according to the royal custom so long prevalent in Europe, it was afterwards farmed out to some courtiers, who raised money upon it from Flemish and Lombard merchants, when it became exacted by their collectors with great severity; and as it became more and more evident that the receipts could in no case come up to the amount calculated, the collectors had recourse to harsh measures. The obstinacy of

the people kept pace with the severity of the collectors : many of the rural districts refused payment. The recusants met with very rough, cruel treatment, especially in Kent and Essex. A considerable portion of the people became exasperated, held secret meetings, took counsel together, organised themselves, and openly resisted the exactors, whom they attacked and put to flight, killing and wounding some of them. The government began to feel alarmed at these proceedings, and sent commissioners into the disturbed districts. One of these commissioners, Thomas de Bampton, sat at Brentford, in Essex : the people of Fobbing were summoned before him, and in answer to his remonstrances, they declared that they could not pay one penny more than they had done, upon which the commissioner, Thomas de Bampton, sternly and rudely threatened them ; his menaces made matters worse, for, when he ordered his serjeants-at-arms to arrest them, the people offered a stout resistance, and drove him and his men-at-arms to London. The insurrection was fairly commenced. The government sent down into Essex Sir Robert Belknap, chief-justice of the common pleas, to try the offenders, and he met with a still more serious resistance ; the peasants surrounded him, called him traitor to the king and realm ; they forced him to fly, and cut off the heads of the jurors and clerks of the commission. They stuck these heads upon poles, and carried them through all the neighbouring townships and villages, calling upon all the poor to rise and join them.

Sir Robert Hales, Prior of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem, who had recently been created Lord Treasurer of England, was an especial object of the popular fury. He had a sumptuous manor in Essex, "wherein," says the chronicle, "were ordained victuals and other necessities for the use of a chapter-general, with great abundance of fair stuff, of wines, arras, cloths, and other provisions for the knights brethren." The peasants surrounded the manor, took possession of all the provisions, drank all the wine, and then destroyed the house. These peasants always called themselves the Commons of England, and were generally called so by others ; what they

now wanted most was a leader, and they found one in the person of "a riotous priest," who took the name of Jack Straw. This man displayed the greatest activity; messages and letters were sent in all directions; and, in a few days, not only the whole agricultural population of Essex was up in arms, but their neighbours in Kent, Suffolk, and Norfolk, were following the example. In Kent, an act of brutality on the part of a tax-gatherer, and an act of great imprudence, considering the prevailing excitement, on the part of a knight, fanned the flames of revolt. One of the collectors of the poll-money went to the house of one Walter the Tyler, in the town of Dartford, and demanded the tax for a young maiden, the daughter of Walter. The mother maintained that she was but a child, and not of the womanly age set down by the act of Parliament; the collector said he would ascertain the fact, and he offered an intolerable insult to the girl. The maiden and her mother cried out, and the father, who was tiling a house in the town, ran to the spot, and knocked out the tax-gatherer's brains. All who beheld the deed applauded it enthusiastically, and prepared to support the Tyler. About the same time, Sir Simon Barley went to Gravesend with an armed force, and claimed an industrious man living in that town as his escaped bondsman. According to the law, a villain acquired his freedom by a residence of a year and a day in a town; but in this case Barley demanded the large sum of three hundred pounds of silver for the surrender of his claim to the man, and when this was refused, he carried him off a prisoner to Rochester Castle. The Commons of Kent now rose as one man, and being joined by a strong body of the men of Essex, who crossed the Thames, they fell upon Rochester Castle, and either took it, or compelled the garrison to deliver up Sir Simon's serf, with other prisoners. In the town of Maidstone, the insurgents appointed Wat the Tyler their captain, and then took out of prison, and had for their chaplain or preacher, a priest called John Ball, who had been several times in confinement for his having preached rebellion, and who was now

under persecution by the Archbishop for irregularity of doctrine.

On the Monday after Trinity Sunday, 1381, Wat Tyler entered Canterbury, denouncing death to the Archbishop, who, however, was absent. After terrifying the monks and the clergy of the Cathedral, he forced the Mayor, Aldermen, and Commons, to swear to be true to Richard and to the lawful Commons of England, and ordering subsequently three rich men of Canterbury to be beheaded, he marched away towards London, followed by five hundred of the poor town folk. On his march recruits came to him from all quarters of Kent and Sussex, and by the time he reached Blackheath, there were, it is said, one hundred thousand desperate men obeying the orders of Wat Tyler. It does not seem precisely known how it happened that while at Blackheath the widow of the Black Prince, the young king's mother, fell into their hands; but, however furious these rough men may have been, they respected her; she was merely exposed to the necessity of granting a few kisses to some of those dirty, rough-bearded men, and allowed to continue quietly her journey to London with her retinue and maids of honour, the leaders engaging to protect her and her son. While their followers were encamped about Blackheath and Greenwich, the priest of Kent, John Ball, kept up their rebellious spirit by long sermons and orations, explaining to them how all men were equal before God, and how they had also the right to be so before the laws of the land. However, he did not confine himself to these very fair principles; it appears that he went on to recommend an equality of property and a destruction of all the upper classes. But it has been suspected, with great probability, that Ball's real view may have been considerably misrepresented by his enemies. His popular eloquence had a magical effect on the multitude, whose enthusiasm roused his vanity and ambition to such a degree, that, forgetting his own doctrines of equality, he listened with complacency to the people vowing that they would make him Primate and Chancellor of England. Meanwhile the in-

surgeons occupied all the roads, killed all the judges and lawyers that fell into their hands, and made all the rest of the passengers swear to be true to King Richard and the Commons—to accept no king whose name was John—and to pay no tax except the 15th, which had been paid by their forefathers. With reference to the antipathy of the insurgents to the name of John, it must be stated that John was an unhappy name in English history, besides which, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, the king's uncle, was held guilty of all the oppression the people had lately suffered, and, above all, the notion of his having designs on the crown was as prevalent as ever.

As soon as the Court became aware of the gravity of the popular outbreak, the young King Richard with his mother, with his cousin, Henry of Bolinbrooke, with Simon, Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor, Sir Robert Hales, Treasurer, and other members of the government, threw himself into the tower of London. The Duke of Lancaster was in Scotland negotiating a peace, and Gloucester and York, the other uncles of the king, were absent. The king's council discussed the most effective means of crushing the insurrection; some were of opinion that Richard should go and speak with the insurgents; but the Archbishop and the Treasurer vehemently opposed this measure, and maintained that nothing should be used but the sword "to abate the pride of such vile rascals." The King, however, either following his own impulse, or listening to more humane advice, got into his barge on the 12th of June, and descended the river as far as Rotherhithe, where he found a vast multitude drawn up along the shore, with two banners of St George and many pennons. "When they perceived the King's barge," says Froissard, "they set up cries and shouts as if all the devils from hell had come into their company." All the persons who accompanied the King were so startled and terrified that they turned the boat, and, taking advantage of the rising tide, rowed back with all speed to the Tower. The Commons, who had always professed the greatest attachment to Richard's person, felt bitterly disappointed; they now called aloud for

the heads of all the ministers ; they commenced their march along the right bank of the river to Southwark, and then to Lambeth ; they destroyed the Marshalsea and king's bench, and burnt the furniture as well as all the records and books in the palace of the Primate. At the same time the men of Essex advanced along the left bank of the river, and after destroying a mansion of the Lord Treasurer's at Highbury, they threatened the north-eastern part of London. Walworth, the Mayor, caused the moveable part of London bridge to be drawn up to prevent the men of Kent from crossing the river, but on the following day a passage was yielded to them through fear, and the insurgents now entered the city, where they were presently joined by all the rabble.

The consternation and terror of London was indescribable. At first, the demeanour of the insurgents was most moderate ; they took nothing, offered no violence, paid for all they wanted. But the rich citizens, hoping to conciliate the mob, opened their cellars, invited them to enter, and when the peasants had once tasted the rare luxurious beverages, they could not be satiated ; they seized them all by force wherever they could find them, and the madness of drunkenness was soon added to political fury. In this state, the multitude rushed to the Savoy, the beautiful and stately house of the Duke of Lancaster ; they broke into it and set fire to it. The insurgents, however, were not bent upon plunder ; their leaders had published a proclamation, ordering that none, on pain of death, should secrete or convert to his own use anything that might be found there, but that plate, gold, and jewels should all be destroyed ; and they certainly proved themselves as good as their words, for, one of them being found hiding a silver cup under his clothes, was thrown into the Thames along with the cup. It appears clearly that the leaders' prohibition did not apply to the Duke of Lancaster's wines ; the insurgents, more probably the city rabble, must have drunk immoderately, as thirty-two of them engaged in the cellars of the Savoy, were too drunk to remove in time, and were buried under the smoking ruins of the house. The work of destruction con-

tinued fiercer and fiercer. Newgate was demolished, and the prisoners who had been confined there, and in the Fleet, joined in the work of havoc. The Temple was also burnt, with all the ancient and valuable records it contained, as well as the books; another party, at about the same time, set fire to the Priory of St John of Jerusalem, in Clerkenwell, which had recently been built by Sir Thomas Hales, the prior of the order, and treasurer of the kingdom. After this frenzy of destruction, the insurgents proceeded to the shedding of blood. They established a systematic slaughter; they adopted a watchword, "For whom holdest thou?" the answer to which was, "With King Richard and the true Commons." They put the question to every man they met, and whosoever knew not the answer to it, was instantly put to death. The people of England at all times, and especially the uneducated people, have felt a strong antipathy to foreigners. At that time the English people bore a deadly rancour against the Flemings established in London; it was popularly said that they fattened on their miseries. Thirty of these unfortunate foreigners had taken refuge in a church, but the sanctuary of the church was disregarded; they were dragged from the altar into the street, and beheaded amidst shouts of triumph and savage joy; thirty-two others were seized in the vintry and underwent the same fate. Many of the rich citizens were massacred in attempting to escape; those who remained did nothing for the defence of the city, and all that night London was involved in fire, murder, and debauchery.

On the morning of the 14th of June, the Court resolved to try the effect of concession, and of promises which there was no intention of keeping, nor probably would it have been in the power of the Court of so doing, had the will been ever so strong. A proclamation was issued to a multitude that crowded Tower Hill, in order to prevent the introduction of provisions into the fortress, and clamouring for the heads of the chancellor and treasurer; they were told in this proclamation that if they would retire quietly to Mile-End, the king would meet them there and grant all their requests. The gates were im-

mediately flung open, the drawbridge was lowered, and the young King Richard rode forth, with a few attendants, and without arms. The commonalty from the country followed the king. On the way, Richard's half-brother, the Earl of Kent and Sir John Holland, alarmed for their own safety, put spurs to their horses and left him. On arriving at Mile-End the young king saw himself surrounded by upwards of sixty thousand peasants; but their demeanour was by no means menacing; it was, on the contrary, mild and respectful. They at once stated their object and expectations; they presented no more than four demands, three of which must be admitted as being wise and moderate, and the one which was found exceptionable went to fix a maximum for the price of land, which was not more absurd than an act of their rulers in the preceding reign, which fixed the maximum price of agricultural labour. These four demands of the peasants, were: 1st, The total abolition of slavery for themselves and their children for ever; 2d, The reduction of the rent of good land to fourpence the acre; 3d, The full liberty of buying and selling, like other men, in all fairs and markets; 4th, A general pardon for all past offences. The king, with a gracious countenance, assured them that all these demands were granted, and, returning to London, he employed upwards of thirty clerks to make copies of the charter containing the four clauses. In the morning these copies were sealed and delivered, and then an immense body of the insurgents, consisting chiefly of the men of Essex and Hertfordshire, quietly withdrew from the capital; a vast number of more dangerous men, however, remained behind. On the preceding day, while the king was on his way to Mile-End, the people of Kent, who had been joined by a motley rabble of miscreants, had committed some ferocious deeds. Almost as soon as the king had taken his departure, they got into the Tower, and with a facility which excites a suspicion of treachery or disaffection on the part of the garrison, once in possession of it, they cut off the heads of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the chancellor; of Sir Robert Hales, the treasurer; of the king's confessor; and of four

farmers of the tax. The Princess of Wales and the king's mother were in the Tower, and completely at the mercy of the bloodthirsty insurgents ; but they were unmolested, and only subjected to some rough proceedings. Nevertheless, the scene of horror overpowered the king's mother ; she was carried in a senseless state to a covered boat, in which she was rowed across the river ; the king joined her as soon as he could, and had her conveyed to a house called the Royal Wardrobe, in Carter Lane, Bernard's Castle Ward.

We have now come to the climax of this popular insurrection of the fourteenth century. Wat Tyler, and the leaders with him, rejected the charter which the men of Essex had so gladly accepted. Another charter was drawn up, but it equally failed to please, and even a third with still larger concessions was rejected with contempt. The next morning the king left the Wardrobe and went to Westminster, where he heard mass, and paid his devotions before a statue of "Our Lady" in the Abbey, which had the reputation of performing many miracles, particularly in favour of English kings. After this the young king mounted his horse, and with a retinue of barons and knights rode along "the Causeway" towards London. As he was approaching, he beheld at a distance the great multitude ; he came into West Smithfield, and met Wat Tyler, who was at the head of the insurgents. The king had been joined by the mayor, and some other city magistrates, but his whole company, it is said, did not exceed sixty persons, who were all on horseback. In the front of the Abbey of St Bartholomew, Richard drew rein, and said that he would not go thence until he had appeased the rioters. Wat Tyler, on seeing him, said to his men : "Here is the king ! I will go and speak with him ; move not hand or foot unless I give you a signal." Wat Tyler was on horseback, and armed ; he boldly rode up to the king, and went so near that his horse's head touched the flank of Richard's steed ; he then addressed the king, exclaiming : "King, dost thou see all those men there ?" "I see them," replied Richard. "Why dost thou ask ?" "Because they are at my will, and

have sworn by their faith and loyalty to do whatsoever I should bid them," responded Wat Tyler. During this parley, the rebel chief was handling or playing with his dagger ; and it is stated by some that he laid hold of Richard's bridle. It is very probable that Wat Tyler, a common uneducated man, was so far intoxicated by his position and brief authority as to behave with a coarse insolence ; but it is absurd to suppose that he intended to kill the king. It has been stated by some that the king ordered his arrest ; it is affirmed by others that John Walworth, the Lord Mayor, thinking that he intended to stab the king, rode up, and plunged a short sword into his throat without any order. But all accounts agree in stating that, whether with sword, dagger, or mace, it was the mayor that struck the first blow. Wat Tyler turned his horse's head to rejoin his men, when Ralph Standish, one of the king's esquires, thrust his sword through his side, "so that he fell flat on his back to the ground, and, beating with his hands to and fro for a while, he gave up his unhappy ghost."

When the men of Kent saw Wat Tyler fall, they cried out furiously that they were betrayed—that their captain and guide had been basely murdered ; the foremost among them began to put their arrows on the string. It was a moment in which the life or death of the king and his retinue were at stake. The personal intrepidity of the royal boy saved his life. He rode gallantly up to the insurgents and exclaimed, "What are ye doing, my lieges ? Tyler was a traitor ! I am your king, and I will be your captain and guide." On hearing these words a great confusion and uncertainty ensued among the insurgents ; many slipped away, others remained, but being without a leader they knew not what to do. The king rode back to his lords and suite and asked them what step they should advise him to take next. The Lord Mayor exclaimed that they should make for the fields, as if they attempted to retreat or flee their ruin was certain, whilst by gaining a little time, they would be assisted by their good friends in the city, who were preparing and arming with all

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their servants. The king and his party bent their way towards the northern road, and the mob, wavering and uncertain, followed him to the open fields about Islington. Here one thousand men-at-arms (Froissard, with his usual inaccuracy, says from 7000 to 8000), joined the king, under the command of Sir Robert Knowles. The insurgents now, in presence of these regular troops, considered their case hopeless; they either ran away through the corn-fields, or, throwing their bows on the ground, knelt and implored for mercy. Sir Robert Knowles now urged vehemently that the rebels should be attacked and slain in a heap, but the king would not consent to it, adding that he would have his full revenge on them in another way, and afterwards he kept true to his word.

While these events were taking place in London and its neighbourhood, the servile war had spread over a great part of England—on the southern coast, as far as Winchester; on the eastern coast, as far north as Scarborough. The nobles had shut themselves up in their strong castles, and consequently little blood was shed. There was, however, one conspicuous exception to this general conduct of the nobility. Henry Spencer, Bishop of Norwich, scorned to flee and shelter himself from the attacks of the vile peasantry; he armed his retainers, collected his friends, and kept the field against the insurgents of Norfolk, Cambridge, and Huntingdon. He surprised several bodies of the peasants, and cut them to pieces; others he took prisoners. After the campaign, the Bishop would put off the complete armour which he wore, and laying down the sword, take up the crucifix, he would confess his captives, give them absolution most fervently, and send them straight to the gibbet or the block.—(Walsingham, Stow, Holinshed).

Soon after the death of Wat Tyler, King Richard found himself at the head of forty thousand horse, it is said, which appears somewhat exaggerated, and now commenced the reaction and the work of vengeance. The King let at once the villains know that all his royal charters meant nothing,

and that they must return to their old bondage. The men of Essex, whose conduct had been the most moderate and rational, felt indignant; they made a stand, but were defeated with great loss. Afterwards Courts of Commission were opened in different towns, nominally to try the chief offenders, but in reality to condemn them. Jack Straw and John Ball, the strolling preachers; Lister and Westbroom, who had taken to themselves the titles of kings of the Commons in Norfolk and Suffolk, with several hundreds more, were executed. At first they were beheaded; afterwards they were hanged and left on the gibbet to excite horror and terror; but their friends cut down the bodies and carried them off; and in order to prevent his purpose being thus baffled, the King ordered that they should be hanged in strong iron chains. According to Holinshed, the whole number of executions amounted to fifteen hundred.

When Parliament assembled it proved itself as hostile as the crown to the conceding any of the demands of the people; both were faithful to all the records of history in similar cases; they would have belied all experience if, being victorious, they had consented to the least concession to the vanquished. The upper classes repudiated the recognition of the rights of the poor to a degree, which in our time would be considered sheer insanity. The king had annulled, by proclamation to the sheriffs, the charters of manumission which he had granted to the insurgents, and this revocation was warmly approved by both Lords and Commons, who, not satisfied with saying that such enfranchisement could not be made without their consent, added, that they would never give that consent, even to save themselves from perishing altogether in one day. There was, it is true, a vague rumour about the propriety and wisdom of abolishing villanage; but the notion was scouted, and the owners of serfs showed that they neither doubted the right by which they held their fellow-creatures in a state of slavery, nor would hesitate to increase the severity of the laws affecting them. They now passed a law by

which "all riots and rumours, and other such things were turned into high treason ;" this law was most vaguely expressed, and would probably involve those who made it in inextricable difficulties. It was self-apparent, that this Parliament acted under the impulses of panic, and of revenge for recent injuries. Subsequently the Commons presented petitions, calling for redress of abuses in the administration ; they attributed the late insurrection to the extortions of purveyors, to the venality and rapacity of the judges, and officers of the Courts of Law, to the horrible doings of a set of robbers called maintainers, and to the heavy weight of recent taxation ; but they said not a word about that desire for liberty, which was in reality the main torrent in that inundation, the others being but as tributary streams swelling its waters. When the king afterwards demanded a supply, the Commons refused, averring that a new tax would provoke a new insurrection. But when the Commons, in their turn, asked for a general pardon, *not* for the insurgents, but for themselves and others, for illegal acts committed by them, *in putting down the rebels*, the king gave them to understand that the Commons must make their grants before he dispensed his favours. A most curious discussion took place on this occasion ; the pressing again and again for money, on the part of the King ; the Commons wavering and stating that they must have time for consideration, and the King retorting that he must also have time to deliberate on their petition of pardon. Finally the Commons gave way ; they voted that the tax upon wool, woolfels, and leather, should be continued for five years. The obnoxious poll-tax was not mentioned. The King then granted the general pardon requested, *for all loyal subjects*, and a few weeks later this grace was extended to the peasantry.

It is a melancholy fact that, in history as well as in war, woe to the vanquished ! An exulting admiration for victory and success, is not confined to those who are the contemporaries of events ; their injustice is but too often shared by posterity and historians. Successful tyranny engenders a

contagion of falsehood, that penetrates deep into the soul. The contemporaries alone are not the flatterers of successful crimes ; the future is often as much so. There often seems to be in the essence of the whole Humanity an immoral or base tendency to justify whatever partakes of triumphant brute-force, and condemn without investigation all that has succumbed. We have a striking instance of it in the history of France, even more so than in the history of England. The serfs of the cities struggled during two centuries of incessant and sanguinary revolts against their lords and bishops to obtain the enfranchisement of their municipalities. Whenever they had an opportunity, they never failed to gratify themselves with a wholesale massacre of the agents and partisans of their masters and tyrants. It might be said that the citizens of the municipalities wrote their charters of enfranchisement with the very blood of their lords and bishops ; yet, during the worst days of oppression, the serfs of the cities had never suffered the cruel excesses of tyranny endured by the country people till the middle of the fifteenth century. And, nevertheless, the long struggles of the townships, despite the bloodshed and cruelties of the citizens, are ever considered and narrated as glorious revolutions, whilst the brief efforts of the peasants for vengeance, which were drowned in their own blood, have remained as a stigma flung in the face of the country populations whenever they utter a word claiming some amelioration in their condition. Whence the injustice ? The bourgeoisie was victorious and successful. The rural populations were vanquished and trampled upon. The bourgeoisie, therefore, has had its poets, historians, and flatterers, whilst the poor peasant, rude, untutored, and ignorant, never had a lyre nor a voice to bewail his lamentable sorrows and sufferings.