

THE
HISTORY

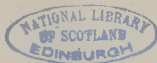
WAS TELLER

JACK STRAW.

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THE
HISTORY
OF
WAT TYLER and JACK STRAW

CHAP. I.

Of the Troubles which happened in the
Reign of King Richard II.



RICHARD II, son to Edward surnam
ed the Black Prince, and Grand
son of Edward III. came to the crown of
England when he was but eleven years of
age. On account of his tender years the
weighty point of government both of
him and his kingdom was put into the
hands of certain Bishops, Earls, Barons

and Justices; who either by fear of discontenting him, or neglect of their duty, or both, every one was more ready to please him with childish and delightful conceits, than assist him with good and profitable council, to qualify him the better for that important office in which he was placed

In the beginning of the King's reign the French on the one side, and the Scots on the other, cruelly infested this land, until John Philpot, Citizen and Alderman of London, lamenting the misery of the times, occasioned by the neglect of securing the coast, and scouring the seas, whereby the merchant durst not traffick abroad for fear of pirates, who hovered every corner; but especially one Merchant, a Scottish Rover, who had got together a great fleet of French, Scotch, and Spaniards, and with them did rob whom they met and did a great deal of mischief, complained thereof to the King's Council, acquainting them with the daily wrongs sustained by the said Merchant, imploring their aid; but receiving from them no relief, he at his own cost fitted out a fleet of ships, and went with

time himself to sea; and in a short time took the said Mercer, and recovered all the prizes which he had formerly taken with fifteen Spanish bottoms, well laden with riches, beside, many French and Scotch ships; for which brave action he incurred the dislike of most of the noblemen from whom they thought he seemed to have snatched, by this hazardous and fortunate attempt, the native cognizance of true nobility. Amongst whom we have Hugh Earl of Stafford, nettled with the general commendations given to Philpot for this gallant exploit, publickly at a council table objected against him the unlawfulness of the act without authority being but a private man. to levy arms. But Philpot with an undaunted resolution, not only justified the act as though not altogether lawful, yet very expedient being done for the honour of God and King, and the safety, profit and security of the public in general; but also rested the object of improvidence and foolish neglect upon the rest of the council so that being greatly ashamed, they knew not what reply to make and he returned with the general applause of the citizens.

and most of the courtiers.—This glorious and ever memorable deed was performed in the Year 1378.

The next year the third of the reign of the King of France, presuming to take the advantage of the King's minority, with some Spanish aid, landed in the South-West part of England, ransacked and burned the towns of Plymouth, Dartmouth, Rye, and other coast towns, and were then marching farther into the main land, until, by the Earl of Cambridge, uncle to the King, and the Earls of Salisbury and Buckingham, and their forces they were encountered, and beat back to their ships, but soon after landed again and did very considerable damage to the towns of Dover, Winchelsea, Hastings, and Gravesend, from whence, uninterrupted they returned to France.

For the prevention of the like injuries for the future, and revenge for those already offered, a parliament was assembled at Westminster; in which a subsidy of four-pence per poll of each sex throughout the whole kingdom, above the age of fourteen years, was granted to the King. The levying of this tax procured much

the hearts of the subjects from the King. With that money preparations were made and eight thousand men went to France under the conduct of Thomas Woodstock the King's uncle, who passing over Soame Oyle and Marne rivers, spoiled and burnt all the country, and ransacked the inhabitants, till he came to Britany; and having taken sufficient satisfaction for the beforementioned insult given to the King his nephew, returned home again.

C H A P. II.

Of the dangerous Rebellion raised by
Wat Tyler and Jack Straw

ABOUT this time one John Ball a factious clergyman, a scholar Wickliff, observing the common people greatly to murmur at the payment of the aforesaid subsidy; in all places where he came used secretly to inform the inferior sort of people, such as were meanly educated, poor and needy That by their original descent from Adam all men were

of one condition ; that the laws of the kingdom were injurious, and hindered us participating of that Christian liberty we are born to possess ; nay, most unjust, by making so great a difference of means estates preferring some to be peers and potentates giving to some large authority, and enlarging others possessions, and taking advantage of the humble and pliable condition and carriage of others kept them in servility and baseness scarcely giving them allowance of subsistence, and not that weither, without sweat and hard labour : when among Christians there should be an equal share of all things in common, taking this for his theme :

When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then a Gentleman ?

With such like seditious and traiterous persuasions this tardy priest did prepare the vulgar, who are always ready to entertain the least proffers of rebellion, and fit them for insurrection upon the slightest occasion. — This doctrine once on foot spread itself from rustic to gentle, and from shire to shire ; that at length it in-

fatuated them, and infested the city of London, the Commons whereof (that is to say, the poorer sort of mechanics and handicrafts) were desperately inclined to mutiny on the reasons afore said incited and invited the multitude, who were also prepared to come thither, promising them their assistance and furtherance.

Hereupon a rude parcel of ruffians, under the leading of Wat Tyler a taylor, who commanded in chief, with a pious minister John Ball, Jack Straw a thresher Jack Shepherd, of the Council of War, under the title of the King's Men, and the Servants of the Common Wealth of England, came to London ransacking by the way, and demolishing from Essex side all the fair structures and buildings of the Nobility and Gentry. They summoned the King to give them a meeting, who accordingly, accompanied with his best counsellors, to his barge, and went to Gravesend; but seeing the rabble so ragged, and rogue like, nothing but a company of black guards, compacted of the off scum of the people, it was had not proper for the King to venture his person amongst them; and so he returned back

to the Tower, from which place he had come.

C H A P. III.

Of the further Villanies committed by Wat Tyler and his dissolute Crew ; and of his being slain by Sir William Walworth.

THE next day these unruly rakes and flames approached London, where they found the gates locked up, and the ring drawn up and well guarded ; upon this they sent a message to William Walworth, then Lord Mayor of London. that they had not admittance into the city immediately, they would destroy all the men, women and children on the Southark side ; plunder their houses and set fire to the Borough and churches there ; and that vowing vengeance on the citizens, they forced their way into the city.— For the prevention of this it was ordered that the gates should be directly opened, and the bridge let down ; whereupon they entered, where their fury, with fair

and smooth words was for that night pacified ; only the commander Wat Tyler sent for his quondam master, one Richard Lyon, an ancient grave citizen, and in thankful requital for a moderate punishment given him in his apprenticeship he caused his head to be struck off and stuck upon a pole, and carried in triumph before him,

The next day he went to the Savoy, a house belonging to John of Gaunt, the King's uncle, which they also rifled and burnt, and inhumanly murdered all the chief officers they found there — They committed sacrilege in all churches and religious houses, robbing the houses of the students in the law, committing to the fire all their books and records, proclaiming death to any that should be found to know Law or Literature. They spoiled all foreigners inhabiting in or near London ; and their numbers increasing to about three score thousand, they came to St. Catherine's and from thence sent the King word to attend on their pleasure at Mile End.

But no sooner was the King gone out of the Tower in the place appointed, but

the Tower Gates, visited the King's lodging, barbarously treated the Queen's mother, both with bad language and hard blows; and apprehended (as he was performing the duties of the church) the reverend Simon, Archbishop of Canterbury, who formerly had punished, though but slightly, their proloquutor John Ball, when he first began to breach his rebellious tenements and struck off his head. They broke open all the prisons, set at liberty the criminals, and then went to meet his

The King demanded what they required in that hostile manner? when with a confused noise they cried Manumission, others Maintenance others to have their land freed from service; and every one calling for what he thought would most be for his own particular interest.

The King promised to call a parliament, and thereby, which he now granted, promised to establish what to that purpose should be set down in writing: and further gave a general pardon and safe conduct for their return every man to his own habitation, whereupon some of the

best of those rebels accepted the King's offer disbanded and went to their respective homes, and the Londoners returned

But Tyler, whose aim was for robbing the city of London, and the extirpation of all who were any ways noted for learning with twenty thousand of the drags and skum of his rake hells, came into Smithfield; to whom the King, guarded by a small strength attended by William Walworth, the Lord Mayor John Philpot the strength, of the mariners, on account of the noble actions mentioned in the beginning of this history Nicholas Bramber, Alderman of London, and Sir John Newton, and some few others, all men of brave and resolute spirits, presented him, and was by the traiterous Tyler received in a most base and scornful manner with many affronts to his followers, insomuch that John Philpot told the King the abuses were insufferable, and if he could but command his Lieutenant, weaning the Lord Mayor, to arrest the traitor, he would lose his own life if it were not accordingly performed.

Nevertheless, the King doubting the sequel, was rather unwilling to provoke a

mad dog. and with fair speeches and pleasing countenance, he began to expostulate with Tyler and was willing to consent to some dishonourable submissions betwixt sovereign and subject, to content him. but the more he found the King pliable the more unreasonable the insult, and the more unreasonable were his demands, and insolent his behaviour. Among many other villanous as well as unreasonable demands, the following was one, viz To have all law abolished; affirming with an execrable oath Before night all the laws of England should pass through this strait, clapping his hand to his mouth.

In the mean time Philpot had sent into the city to Sir Robert Knowles, who was left behind to keep the multitude quiet, then make known the King's danger and their own: conjuring them by their duty to the King and love to him to make all possible speed to their rescues. And then prompting the Lord Mayor what to do having by Sir John Newton's help drawn close together as many of the King's followers as were absent, he attended to the

sequel.—Tyler persisting in his insupportable arrogance he demanded the King's dagger of the Squire who held it ; which being by the King's order delivered to him he then presumed to command the Squire to give him the sword also ; but the young spark bravely said, A King's sword could not become a knave's hand ; and he would not deliver it him — At this Tyler offering to approach the page, the Lord Mayor of London, who only waited for an occasion to hazard his life in surprising so proud a traitor, snatched the King's dagger out of the sheath in Tyler's hand, and sheathed the same in his body ; whereupon Philpot saluted him with his sword ; and he dropped down dead.

This sudden and unexpected action at first dismayed the King, but being assured of present succour from the citizens, he took courage and being surrounded by his nobles he gave defiance to the headless rout, which wanted neither will nor power to revenge their captain's death but each one expecting when the other should begin, they staid looking upon one another until the news was brought

that the militia of London, under the conduct of Sir Robert Knowles approached in battle array.

At this the rebels flung down their weapons, and every one shifted for himself, Jack Straw escaping with the rest; so that the field was presently cleared of them; at which the King much rejoiced, and in the same place he made William



Walworth, John Philpot, Ralph Stan-
 oish, John Laud, Nicholas Twifield, and
 Nicholas Bramber, Knights — The
 above noble action being executed with
 a 'Dagger' it is said to be the reason of
 that weapon appearing in the Arms of the
 City of London.

C H A P. IV.

Of the many Depredations committed by other Rebels in divers parts of the Kingdom.

WHILE these tumults were thus in agitation by the procurment of John Ball, that pernicious Priest before spoken of, one John Wraw was sent into Norfolk, and the adjacent countries in order to excite the commons to insurrection; on like motives, and to join with Tyler; which took so suddenly, that in Hertfordshire, about St. Alban's; and at Bury St Edmunds, in Suffolk, on Corpus Christi Day to the number of fifty thousand, were assembled under the conduct of one Robert Westborne, an inn-keeper, who outrageously destroyed and demolished all the Noblemen and Gentlemens houses of note using the persons ill they found in them and putting to death all the professors of the Law they could find, as they looked upon them as their greatest enemies.

They took Sir John Cavendish, Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench, cut off his head, and placed the same upon the pillory in St. Edmund's Bury. They beheaded John of Cambridge, the prior thereof and John de Kabinbuith, one of the priors of Commoignes carrying them in triumph. and placing them upon poles of the said pillory.

They caused the convent to surrender up all obligations and writings obligatory in their custody, and all their charters of privilege, which Canutus the founder had bestowed upon that house which the more to endear themselves to their favour, they cancelled and delivered to the townsmen; with many more outrages too tedious to mention in this small book.

In like manner in Norfolk under the command of John Litister a Dyer of Norwich, the like outrages were committed.—From their hor-headed and rebellious fury the Earl of Suffolk but narrowly escaped North Waltham, in Norfolk.

They stiled their Captain King of the Commons, and forced the Scales and Mureley, with divers other Worshipful

Knights to wait on him at table and because Sir Robert Saul refused to do it, they most inhumanly beat out his brains with a great stick.

Hugh Spencer, Bishop of Norwich, to suppress these insults by his noble example drew the Knights and gentlemen residing thereabouts to arm themselves, and take the field, who soon afterwards put the rebels to rout, and took their captain, whose head he soon caused to be struck off. He also took their Chaplain Wraw prisoner, who was sent to London to receive his trial where he was, according to his demerits, hanged, drawn, and quartered.

Likewise upon the Saturday following Corpus Christi Day the Townsmen of Cambridge by threats enforced on James Granter to be their leader, exacting an oath from him and his brother Thomas to be loyal to the execution of their designs.

Presently after they fell upon Corpus Christi College which they miserable ransacked; by tearing, burning, or spoiling whatsoever writings, charters, and books

they could come at; and took away all the plate, vestment, and treasure they could find enforcing the Seniors and students of that college by oath to renounce and disclaim all, and whatsoever charters grants privileges and franchises had been formerly bestowed on that house subjection to the Mayor and Burgesses of Cambridge.

From thence they went like a torrent to St. Mary's church where they broke open all the chest, and took out all the treasure and church ornaments — Their fury being on foot they left nothing undone that was barbarous and inhumane; and passion having drowned reason, they cared not what mischief they did, nor to whom, only that they could but make their malice sufficiently conspicuous to all the clergy.

From Cambridge they went to the priory of Barnwell, a mile off which they like so many Saracens and detaced, felling down trees, spoiling the walks and setting fire to every thing that remained unharmed — fired with doing, but not in the least sorry for having done to many sad crimes, they retired back again to Cambridge, where in the market place they

consumed with fire all the ordinances, constitutions, and states of the University and all other particular books, rolls, parchments, &c. they could come at, taking up the ashes and flinging them in the air disdainfully crying out, Away with these Clerk Cunning; and then in the night every one shifted for himself and stole away, some on horseback, and some on foot



C H A P. V.

Of the Conclusion of these Rebellions

THE royal power, which had been so long foiled and trod under foot, no longer coule brook such intolerable debasement; but to repair and establish itself, proclamation was madet hat all men who had horse and armour, and loved the King should forthwith come to London in their best manner.—There were never seen so great a number of horsemen in England. The musters were taken upon Black Heath where the King himself, mounted on a goodly courser, amongst the armed men, and havin his standard royal advanced before him, daily rode forth to view his people rejoicing to be seen amongst them, and acknowledged their Lord.—It is recorded that within three days space there appeared upon that Heath for the King's service no less than forty thousand horsemen, bravely accoutered.

The force had been employed against

the Kentish men, who again began : but the King was persuaded by the Nobility and Gentry of that country to proceed by ordinary Justice, which was accordingly done. The King's peace was proclaimed in every place, agreeable to his letters from Loudon, dated June 17 in the 4th year of his reign, to the great encouragement of his good subjects, and confusion of the bad.

There were executed above one thousand five hundred in different places, besides five of a new forlorn company ; who having desperately dared to gather head again in Essex about Bellericai, had tendered to the King certain insolent demands ; which were justly rejected and them slain. The Lord Thomas of Woodstock, Earl of Buckingham, the King's uncle, with Sir Thomas Piercy, brother to the Count of Northumberland, were sent with force against them. — The rebels, though very numerous, were broken at the very first onset, with a charge made upon them by a rank in front of ten men with arms and lances. — There were taken eight hundred horses belonging to the Rebels. — Sir Thomas

Trefilian was principal actor in matters of Justice, which he rightly and severely executed.

The King himself had so great a force of horsemen with him, that as Sir Walter Rye said in his speech to the men at St. Albans there was not a blade of corn or grass left within five miles of the King's person.

Among many hundred others, who were brought before Judge Trefilian, was Jack Straw, who behaved in a most insolent and audacious manner, during the time of his trial; but no sooner was the sentence of death passed on him, than he was encompassed with those horrors of despair which await the guilty conscience and he confessed, that a scheme was plotted for murdering of the King and his chief Nobles, that very day on which Wat Tyler was slain, had not Sir William Walworth killed him as he did. What obligations then must not this kingdom ever be under to this worthy patriot.

And thus ended this monstrous rebellion, which tended to, and must have accomplished the destruction of this kingdom, had it not been for the gallant be-

haviour of the citizens, to reward whom King Richard knew not what to do; but that this glorious action might never be forgotten, he ordered that the bloody Dagger, in reward of Sir William Walworth's killing Tyler with the King's Dagger, as beforemention, should be added to the City Arms, which was only a plain cross before.—And to this day a village between Newington and Camberwell, at which place Sir William had a country house, in remembrance of name, is called Walworth.

