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**THE PEASANTS' REVOLTS FROM 1358 AS A BACKGROUND
FOR THE PEASANTS' REVOLT OF 1524**

**A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of Historical Theology**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity**

**by
W. Theophil Janzow
May 1944**

Approved by

Thos. Stoyer.

Robert P. Cameron

Introduction

The causes have been the

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Introduction

The Peasants' Revolt of 1524 and its causes have been the subject of widespread controversy ever since the days of the revolt itself. Accusations against Dr. Martin Luther as the prime mover of the revolt have been prevalent especially in the literature of those who were otherwise displeased, yes, angered by Luther's success as a religious reformer. But even historians whom one would judge to be unprejudiced by training or religious bias have pictured the Peasants' Revolt of 1524 as the natural result of Luther's sermons and books, though they may not be willing to accuse him personally of being the active instigator of the insurrection against the nobles.

As an example of the manner in which this subject is often treated, one might mention the opening paragraph of a chapter entitled "The Social Revolution and Catholic Reaction," by A. F. Pollard, as found in the Cambridge Modern History (Vol. II, p. 174):

The most frequent and damaging charge levelled at Luther between 1520 and 1525 reproached him with being the apostle of revolution and anarchy, and predicted that his attacks on spiritual authority would develop into a campaign against civil order unless he were promptly suppressed. The indictment had been preferred in the Edict of Worms; it was echoed by the Nuncio two years later at Nurnberg, and it was the ground of the humanist revolt from his ranks. By his denunciations of Princes in 1523 and 1524 as being for the most part the greatest fools or the greatest rogues on earth, by his application of the text, "He hath put down the mighty from their seats," and by his assertion of the principle that human authority might be resisted when its mandates conflicted with the Word of God, Luther had confirmed the suspicion. There was enough truth in it to give point to Murner's satire of Luther as the champion of the Bundschuh, the leader of those who proclaimed that, as Christ had freed them all, and all were children and heirs of one father, all should share alike, all be priests and gentlemen, and pay rents and respect to no man. The outbreak of the Peasants' War appeared to be an invincible corroboration of the charge, and from that day to this it has been almost commonplace with Catholic historians that the Reformation was the parent of the revolt.

It is not the purpose of this monograph to refute directly the contentions of historians such as the one cited above. Not will an attempt be made to prove that Luther's part in the Peasants'

War of 1524 was nil, that there was absolutely no connection between the religious reformer and the social revolution. The object of the following chapters is, rather, to place before the reader the development and the causes of peasant reaction to feudal serfdom and oppression as this reaction takes place successively in the major countries of Medieval Europe. Beginning with the revolt of the French Jacquerie in 1358 and ending with that long list of uprisings and attempted rebellions by the peasants in Germany which were repeated over and over again for a whole century preceding the Peasants' Revolt of 1524, an attempt shall be made to bring out the leading factors and the essential causes of the principal revolts of this period of history.

After this purpose has been accomplished, certain conclusions will be drawn, whose bearing upon the Peasants' Revolt of 1524 the reader will readily be able to appreciate.

I

The Revolt of the French Jacquerie in 1358

On September 17, 1356, King John II of France fought the important battle of Poitiers against the forces of Edward III of England led by the Prince of Wales and lost. (1) The far-reaching effects of this battle had not a little bearing on the revolt of the peasantry which was to become such a pitiable chapter of the history of France two years later.

The defeat of the French army at Poitiers took on a special significance because during that battle King John II together with Prince Philip, his youngest son, became a prisoner of the English. King John II, who had been known as John the Good (2), was taken first to Bordeaux and later was transferred to England, where he languished for more than three years in a semi-imprisonment which permitted him, nevertheless, to engage in his favorite sports of hunting and jousting.

Now the nineteen-year-old Prince Charles, heir-apparent to the French throne, who had managed to escape being captured, took over the rule of the French kingdom under the title of "lieutenant of the king." (3) Upon Charles' return to Paris, the States-General

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1. M Guizot, *The History of France*, vol.II, p.109.
 2. A. Coville, *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol.VII, p.350.
 3. M. Guizot, *The History of France*, vol.II, p.110. This office was given to Prince Charles in spite of the popular opinion that he and other nobles had not fought valiantly, had, indeed, deserted their king in the hour of utmost need.

was summoned for October 15. The disatisfactory outcome of the battle of Poitiers resolved itself among the French populace in the form of a general clamor for reform of the government. (4) The States-General elected a committee made up of representatives of the three classes, clergy, nobles, and tradesmen, who were to deliberate on their common grievances and then present their proposals to the mass assembly.

During this session of the States-General a personality emerges as the leader of the popular movement of reform. He is Etienne (Stephen) Marcel, the Provost of the tradesmen of Paris. As the dominant figure on the committee of the States-General, Marcel led the committee to bring accusations of governmental profiteering and dishonest reporting of state affairs, to the king against the king's counsellors, and he urged immediate removal from office of the royal counsellors. (5) The second demand of the committee was that deputies, called Reformers, should travel through the land and check on the administration of all royal officials. The third demand, most irksome of all to Charles, asked for a constant representation of the States-General at the side of Charles with powers which would make them virtual rulers of the land. This last was too much for Charles and he began to work for delay, finally managing an extended delay by announcing his departure for Metz. (6)

4. A. Coville, *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol.VII, p.352. The demand for reform was directed especially against the councilors of the crown who were accused of dishonesty in administering the affairs of the kingdom.

5. M. Guizot, *The History of France*, vol.II, p. 111. Guizot claims these charges were fundamentally legitimate, though excessive and violent.

6. A. Coville, *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol.VII, p.352. His trip was made under the pretext of seeking an alliance with the Emperor Charles IV.

The young prince's trip to Metz would, perhaps, have accomplished his purpose of allaying the agitation against him. But one action nullified any such possibility even before he left. This action was the debasing of coinage which Prince Charles ordered in order to obtain money for his mounting debts. This action also gave Marcel the opportunity to increase his popularity among the people. For he made such a persistent demand for the withdrawal of the decree that it was finally suspended until the Prince should return from Metz.

Upon Charles' return to Paris, it was necessary that the States-General be reassembled in order that some kind of order might be re-established. For the lack of any definite authority was causing the kingdom to fall into a state perilously close to anarchy. Uncontrollable bands were roving the countryside, ravaging and plundering wherever they went. (7) On top of the already heavy burdens of the peasants and serfs were heaped the insults and injuries of lawless bands.

The States-General met in February of 1357. The Dauphin tried to regain his authority and reestablish some kind of order. But he was halted in this attempt by a condition which had harassed also many French kings before him, the lack of adequate funds to subsidize an army which could enforce his decrees and injunctions. Effective central control necessitated a system of regular taxation. This the French people had never had and, at all costs, wanted to avoid. Therefore the French king had to depend for control and authority upon the wholly undependable system of temporary subsidies and repeated debasing of coinage. (8) And both of these measures were so irksome to the

7. M. Guizot, *The History of France*, vol.II, p.115.

8. A. Coville, *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol.VII, p.353.

tax-free consciences of the French people that the king, with no army to carry out his decrees, very rarely had any measure of success in collecting even these temporary dues. About the only times that the king could count on any amount of financial cooperation from the States-General was when the country was evidently threatened by foreign invasion. (9)

When the Dauphin saw that he could not reestablish order and regain authority because of the lack of cooperation on the part of the States-General, he, in March, 1357, gave in to all the demands of Marcel. (10) On March 3, Robert Lecocq, the Bishop of Leon and leader of the ecclesiastical party in the States-General, repeated all of Marcel's grievances against the throne. In the same month sixty-one articles were drawn up which reiterated these grievances and demanded redress for them. Then thirty-six members of the assembly were appointed to order all the affairs of the kingdom while the Estates-General was not in session. The Estates General adjourned on April 25, 1357.

In order to reinforce this newly formed oligarchy, Stephen Marcel, its leader, carried out on the eighth of November a plot by which Charles the Bad, King of Navarre, was freed from his imprisonment in the Castle of Arleux in Cambresis. (11) The King Of Navarre immediately came to Paris to arouse the people of the popular party against Prince Charles, who had, even, to put on a show of mock reconciliation with his antagonist. But this pretense did not last

9. M. Guizot, The History of France, vol.II, p. 108. A minor insurrection had occurred at Arras on March 5, 1356, when King John II and the States-General had agreed to substitute a salt tax and a sales duty for the unpopular debasing of coinage. Both were equally unpopular.

10. M. Guizot, The History of France, vol.II, p.115.

11. M. Guizot, The History of France, vol.II, p.118. Charles, King of Navarre, had been imprisoned by King John II for an attempted plot to place Prince Charles, the Dauphin, upon the throne.

long. At the end of November, the Dauphin himself began to make public speeches, placing the blame for the muddle of French affairs on the shoulders of Stephen Marcel.

In order to meet this unexpected opposition, Marcel, whose favor with the populace began to wane when the States-General on January 2, 1358, had to take recourse to debasement of the coinage, the very thing for which they had reproached the Dauphin, and the King of Navarre marched with a number of their followers to the palace of Prince Charles and murdered the marshalls of Normandy and Champagne before his very eyes. This massacre took place on the twenty-second of February, 1358. (12)

Marcel became temporarily the dictator of Paris, and making Prince Charles regent, he thought he now had the throne permanently under his power. But a month later the Dauphin found reason to leave Paris and went immediately to the estates of Champagne, which he knew were friendly to him. On May 4, 1358, he called together the entire States-General of Compiegne and received such a favorable response that he at once gathered an army and marched toward Paris. Meanwhile Marcel began to fortify the city of Paris. (13) The King of Navarre was recalled to defend the city, but he was soon suspected of treasonable action, was stripped of his office, and left Paris.

While eventful things were taking place in the city of Paris, while the cause of the laborer and tradesman was being championed by one doubtfully sincere Stephen Marcel, while government of any kind was falling into dismal disrepute and near anarchy was reign-

12. M. Guizot, The History of France, vol.II, p.120.

13. M. Guizot, The History of France, vol.II, p.121. Marcel, realizing the danger, had pleaded humility and attempted reconciliation, but when he was asked to surrender those guilty of the murders, the negotiations failed.

ing in the districts outside of Paris, the lowly peasant was being thrown into ever deeper suffering and heavier oppression. With no representation on the States-General, his grievances were heard by none except his fellow-oppressed. With courts virtually non-existent, he had no place to turn for justice. With financial chaos threatening the entire kingdom as the result of wars and feudal strife, accompanied by debasing of coinage and more frequent taxation, his economic status was at a new low. With lords and nobles overrunning, ravaging, and plundering his land, the peasant finally became desperate.

The first uprising took place on May 28, 1358. (14) In this uprising several gentry were killed. Then bands of peasants began roaming the countryside, especially in the territories of Picardy and north of the Ile de France and were supported by the towns Senlis, Beauvais, and Clermont.

The peasants had been known generally by the name "Jacques Bonhomme" (Jack Goodfellow), the exact derivation of the name not being known, Froissart, the contemporary chronicler, claiming it referred to an individual leader of the peasants:

They made among them a king, one of Clermont in Beauvoisin: They chose him that was the most ungraciousest of all other and they called him king Jaques Goodman, and so thereby they were called companions of the Jaquery. (15)

The Jacquerie now chose a leader named William Karle (16) and began to terrorize the knights and nobles. On the actual extent of this terrorization, historians differ, but the chronicler Froissart

14. A. Coville, The Cambridge Medieval History, vol.VII, p.354.

15. A. Coville, The Cambridge Medieval History, vol.VII, p.354, claims it is "from the garment of that name worn by the peasants." M. Guizot, The History of France, vol.II, p.124, claims they were called this because "they bore and would bear anything." Froissart's quotation is from The Chronicles of Froissart, p.137, ch.182.

16. Alternate spellings: Callet or Guillaume Cale.

indulges in picturesque descriptions while narrating the events of the insurrection. Following are two excerpts:

And then they went to another castle, and took the knight thereof and bound him fast to a stake, and then violated his wife and his daughter before his face and then slew the lady and his daughter and all his other children and then slew the knight by great torment and brent and beat down the castle. And so they did to divers other castles and good houses. (17)

I dare not write the horrible deeds that they did to ladies and damosels: among other they slew a knight and after did put him on a broach and roasted him at the fire in the sight of the lady his wife and childred; and after the lady had been enforced and ravished with a ten or twelve, they made her perforce to eat of her husband and after made her to die an evil death and all her children. (18)

The chief attack of the Jacquerie took place in the Meaux where the Dauphiness and a part of the royal court had taken refuge. But before a large-scale massacre could begin, Gaston de Foix arrived with a small army and the peasants were immediately overpowered.

Now began a massacre concerning whose historicity there is no doubt. The Dauphin, the King of Navarre, and the nobles joined together in a common cause against the Jacquerie. Charles, King of Navarre, treacherously turned his back on the cause of the common people, which he had purportedly championed in the city of Paris, captured William Karle in Beauvais, and had him beheaded. He then attacked a camp of peasants near Montdidier, slaughtered a great many of them, dispersing the rest. (19) Thus was the Jacquerie cut down and dispersed wherever they had gathered. The report of the contemporary chronicler, Froissart is perhaps greatly exaggerated, but interesting:

17. The Chronicles of Froissart, ch.182, p.136.

18. The Chronicles of Froissart, ch.182. p.137. Coville in the New Cambridge History, p.354, thinks Froissart's accounts are perhaps greatly exaggerated.

19. M. Guizot, loc.cit., II, p.125.

The king of Navarre on a day slew of them more than three thousand beside Clermont in Beauvoisin. It was time to take them up, for as they had been all together assembled, they were more than a hundred thousand; and when they were demanded why they did so evil deeds, they would answer and say they could not tell, but that they did as they saw other do, thinking thereby to have destroyed all the nobles and gentlemen of the world. (20)

By June 24, 1358, the revolt of the Jacquerie had been suppressed, and the only result they had achieved by it was a bloody massacre and a crushing fine which was levied upon all the villages who had taken part in or assisted the rebels.

For the sake of completeness, the probable part of Marcel in the insurrection of the French peasants should be mentioned. There is no doubt that he aided the revolt after it had begun, seeing in it an opportunity to crush the king's party and to strengthen his own hold on the government of France. When the peasants were besieging the castle of Ermonville, the desperate dictator sent three hundred men to aid them. Whether Marcel was actually guilty of having provoked the bloody insurrection is a matter which must remain forever speculation. Some historians believe there is a strong presumption against him. (21)

Regardless of Marcel's part in the insurrection itself, its outcome did help to decide his future. His popularity began to wane. His position became daily more precarious. When, in desperation, he attempted to turn Paris over to the King of Navarre, he was branded as a traitor by one of his own former comrades (22) and was put to death. This happened during the night of July 31, 1358. On August 2,

20. The Chronicles of Froissart, ch.183, p.137.

21. M. Guizot, loc.cit., II, p.124: Guizot records that Prince Charles himself, in a letter written on August 30, 1359, charges that Marcel and his partisans incited the people of the open country to revolt against the nobles of France.

22. M. Guizot, Loc.cit., II, p.127.

the Dauphin entered Paris and again took over the reigns of government, thus definitely putting an end to a premature attempt to limit and control the royal government. (23)

The revolt of the French Jacquerie in 1358 must be placed into the category of those uprisings which grow out of extreme, lengthy suffering and oppression. The definite causes of the insurrection cannot be fully understood until a careful study of the connection between French history and French peasant history in the years preceding 1358 has been made.

During this period there was almost continuous warfare on the soil of France. (24) It is true, all France suffered. But it is also true, none suffered as severely as did the peasants. They suffered economically, politically, and socially. Economically, the ravages of war had left them destitute. Both French and English armies passed over their lands, taking what they needed for the support of these armies and destroying much of what remained. Upon these hardships were heaped frequent governmental demands for financial aid to carry on the war, e.g. the hearth-tax, the salt-tax, the sales-tax, the changes and debasings of the coinage. (25) Increasing in proportion to the decreasing success of French armies, these economic demands upon the peasantry became unbearable burdens.

Politically the peasants were suffering just as severely. The loss of the battle of Poitiers had thrown the governmental system of all France into near chaos. The struggle for supremacy between the

23. A Coville, loc.cit., VII, p.355.

24. Ibid, VII, p.340.

25. Ibid, VII, p.349.

king's party and Marcel's party left the nobles outside of Paris to their own devices, who now went about trying to settle their own disputes and personal animosities by petty warfare. They lived on pillage. They increased their exaction from the peasants, both of service and of money. (26) All injustices the peasant had to bear, for any legal rights which he formerly might have had, any appeals for justice, any rights for a fair trial had been lost in the confusion which resulted from the governmental contest between the Dauphin and his antagonists from the Estates-General. Socially the peasants had been degraded to an informal slavery.

So it was that the peasants, having watched their economic condition become increasingly unbearable, their political rights gradually disintegrate, and their social status gradually descend into slavery, rose up against the class which appeared most responsible for their suffering, the nobility. It is important to note, however, that the economic complaint runs through and is the basis of all other complaints voiced by the peasants. It therefore must be considered the major cause of the Peasants' Revolt of 1358. And thus began the long series of revolts which characterized the ambitions of Medieval peasantry to throw off the yoke which the feudal system had placed upon them.

II

The English Peasants' Revolt of 1381

The Peasants' Revolt of 1381 is in one aspect entirely different from the revolt of the Jacquerie in 1358. The French serfs had seen a depressing servility grow into an unbearable burden of suffering and misery. The condition of the English peasants had, on the other hand, been steadily improving during the thirteenth century. Labor services had been lessened, having been replaced in many cases by money rents. (1) Yet, in spite of this difference, it will be seen that the immediate and compelling causes of both revolts were essentially the same.

At the beginning of the 14th century, the "Manorial" system which was based on serfdom, held sway in England. (2) The lord, who owned a large section of land, kept a portion of it for his personal needs and divided the rest among a group of peasants who were then obligated to spend a certain amount of days each year working on the land from which the lord supported himself. The rigid feudal system had set up many rules and regulations by which the serf's personal life was constantly being interrupted by services which had to be rendered to his lord. Nor could a serf avoid this irksome life of forced servitude by leaving his lord's manor and adopting a different method of livelihood, for, having been born to the soil, he had to remain a lifelong tiller of the soil.

1. Henri Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, p.200.

2. G. M. Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe*, p.184.

The long-standing feudal customs were, however, beginning to undergo a marked change as early as a century before the Rising of 1381. (3) It was a gradual change which finally resulted in the break-up of the whole Manorial system, but whose immediate effect was perhaps little more than the opening of an avenue of escape from the unpleasant services of labor which had for so long been the heritage of every peasant generation.

The change in the system of feudal obligations began when the lord of the manor recognized that the forced work of his serfs was far less satisfactory than the work of his hired laborers. (4) The more satisfactory arrangement which evolved out of this discovery was that serfs give cash payments in place of service, while the lord hire laborers to do the work which had formerly been done by serfs.

When the Black Death descended upon England and in the first half of the 14th century took a tremendous toll of lives, the changing conditions of the peasantry were accelerated beyond control. (5) The peasant did not hesitate to take advantage of the situation which had caused an acute shortage of farm laborers. The free laborer had become an indispensable part of the manor since the feudal services of the villein had been exchanged for money payments. And seeing the advantageous position into which the national calamity had placed him, he began to demand wages far in excess of those he had received

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3. G. M. Trevelyan, *loc.cit.*, p.185.
 4. The free laborer was a former villein who had worked his own land to such advantage that he had been able to purchase his freedom. (Sometimes he was an escaped villein who had gone from outlawry to a career as free laborer). *Ibid*, p.186.
 5. *Ibid*, p.186. The estimated loss of lives in the Black Death is given sometimes at a third, sometimes at a half, of the whole population of England.

prior to the Black Death.

The nobility saw the necessity for some kind of control, and in 1350 Parliament passed the Statute of Labourers, a law which tried to control both wages and prices. (6) The attempt proved unsuccessful in both respects because the landlord was in no position to refuse the demands of the peasant, and with wages continuing on the ascendancy, prices had to follow suit. The one effect which the Statute did have was decidedly unfavorable to those who most wanted it enforced. It taught the free laborers the ways of lawlessness and of opposition to constituted authority. It bred in him the sentiments and attitudes of sedition and rebellion. In contrast to the resigned attitude which he displayed in former days of poverty his new-found fortune finds him fondling the idea of more rights, more liberty, and, especially, more money. Trevelyan has reproduced a portion of the contemporary satirist, Langland, who accurately pictures this seeming contradiction:

But whilst hunger was their master there would none of them chide, nor strive against the the statute however sternly he looked. But I warn you, workmen, win money while you may, for hunger hitherward hasteth him fast; He shall awake with the water floods to chastise the wasteful. (7)

The Black Death had not given the villein, who by immemorial custom and ancient law was "bound" to the soil, as much of an advantage as it afforded to the free laborer. But when he saw the condition of the free laborer improving so rapidly, many a villein decided to share that fortune. Fleeing from his landlord's estate did not entail nearly as many difficulties as it had in former

6. G. M. Trevelyan, loc.cit., p.187. Trevelyan describes this act as a "grand experiment" but a complete failure. Besides attempting to check the rise of wages and prices, it forbade the free laborer to leave one estate for an estate in another part of the country.p.191.

7. Ibid., p.190.

times. Laborers were in demand. So when the escaped villein offered his services to some distant landlord, few questions were asked. (8)

The English serf enjoyed another advantage during this period of his history. Since the lord was often not able, for lack of laborers, to cultivate all of his personal portions of land, he would rent it out to serfs and villeins. The serfs would naturally accept this offer only if given their own terms, and the old feudal customs were broken down still further.

Forced service had for years been the most irksome obligation of the peasant to his landlord. But when he was released from forced service, the serf became just as vexed over the other rights which the lord possessed over his person and family. (9) These rights, incompatible with his new trend of thought, became ever more exasperating and humiliating.

It is not difficult to see that, when Richard II ascended the throne of England in 1377 at the age of ten, the internal affairs of the kingdom were extremely unsettled. The whole economic structure of the nation was undergoing a change as the result of the Black Death. At the same time the social structure was being severely shaken. And now the foreign position of the nation was being endangered by a depleted national treasury. (10) The condition of

8. G. M. Trevelyan, loc.cit., p.191. "The 'flights' of villeins form as marked a feature in the later fourteenth century, as the 'flights' of negroes from the slave States of America in the early nineteenth."

9. Ibid. p.195. These smaller obligations of serf to lord included such things as paying a fine to the lord when the daughter was given in marriage, having his grain ground only at the lord's mill, not being able to plead against his lord in court.

the treasury finally became so desperate that Parliament in the winter of 1380 found it necessary to impose a heretofore unheard of tax upon the English people, a poll tax. (11) The tax was a shilling a head for every person above the age of fifteen, but the stipulation was made that the rich should help the poor in paying their amount. (12)

The immediate result of the poll-tax was resistance on the part of the peasants. (13) This resistance crystalized into an organization called "the Great Society." Agitators had been criss-crossing the nation throughout the spring and summer of 1381, preaching the message of resistance and rebellion. Their leaders met in London to plan and organize the rebellion. And the result of their work was the formation of this union of the lower classes, "the Great Society."

One of the most fervent agitators was a preacher, John Ball, who excited the people with his attacks against the iniquity of serfage. (14) It is also likely that some of the poorer parish priests, with grievances against both Church and State, helped to popularize the ditti which became the slogan of the classes,

When Adam delv'd and Eve Span,
Where was then the gentleman? (15)

10. David Hume, *The History of England*, vol.II, p.150. The expensive raids of the Dukes of Lancaster and Gloucester on French soil were the main causes of the depleted treasury.

11. *Ibid.* II, p.150.

12. *Ibid.* II, p.151. This equalization of taxation was, however, not carried out fairly, a factor which helped to arouse the anger of the peasants against the government.

13. G. M. Trevelyan, *loc.cit.*, p.203. Trevelyan says that heavy taxation had long been a complaint of the common people.

14. *Ibid.*, p.196. John Ball attacked Church and State alike, but he laid most stress on the iniquity of serfage.

Though John Ball was an important factor in arousing the peasants to action against their lord, it should be remembered that the ground work had been laid by laymen who had traversed the nation with their rebellious message, and that the organizational work was being done by the leaders of the "Great Society."

Resistance to the poll-tax collectors apparently broke out spontaneously and almost simultaneously in a number of localities. If any district is to be mentioned as the beginning of open resistance, it would be Essex. The charge of indecent conduct in the course of duty is sometimes made against the tax commissioner of that district. (16) Whether true or not, this much is certain. Thomas Bampton, one of the tax-collectors was driven out of Brentwood. When the Chief Justice of the King's Bench was sent to Essex to restore order, he was likewise driven out.

A few days later, one June 5, 1381, the sparks of rebellion were ignited in the district of Kent. The peasants had become aggravated two days earlier when a knight of the king's household, Simon de Burley, had captured a runaway serf in the town of Gravesend. As a form of reprisal the tax collectors were forcibly prevented from entering Canterbury. On June 5th the rebels began to gather at Dartmouth. (17)

Now the fire of anger was quickly fanned into a blaze of action. The rebellion spread from city to city, from county to county. By June 10th bands of aroused peasants from almost every district in

15. David Hume, loc.cit., II, p.151.

16. Ibid., II, p.152, tells that one of the tax collectors offered to produce a very indecent proof that one blacksmith's daughter was above the poll-tax age of fifteen, in response to which the blacksmith killed the tax-collector. But G. M. Trevelyan, loc.cit., p.210, claims that the source of this story is unreliable.

17. G. M. Trevelyan, loc.cit., pp. 219 and 210.

England were marching toward London. Their leaders were the men who had been the foremost agitators of the rebellion, men who assumed such pseudonyms as Wat Tyler, Jack Straw, Hob Carter, and Tom Miller as a means of designating their lowly origin. (18)

Marching toward London, the undisciplined bands committed many acts of violence, but there was no indiscriminate massacre of landlords and nobility, such as was characteristic of the earlier revolt of the French Jacquerie. Those of the nobility who were personally unpopular were, it is true, murdered without hesitancy. But many others were permitted to go free after having relinquished hated charters and documents. (19)

Between the 10th and the 12th of June, the rebel bands were gathering outside of London on Blackheath. They first asked for a conference with King Richard II. They apparently expected justice from him, thinking that not he but his advisers, especially John of Gaunt, had been responsible for the poll-tax and previous bad government. Richard II left the safety of the Tower to fulfill their request. But as he approached Blackheath and the multitude of peasants who had gathered there, (20) he began to fear for his life and retreated back to the Tower.

When the peasant army received no answer from the king, they marched into London. The fact that they had no difficulty in entering the city is perhaps best explained by the theory that the mass of Londoners had actually given their sympathy and even their

18. Hence the rebellion is often called Wat Tyler's Rebellion.

19. B. M. Trevelyan, *loc.cit.*, p.215, In this is already seen quite clearly the underlying idea of the rebellion, the aggravation caused by the attempts of the nobility to delay the economic and social betterment which the peasantry had been experiencing in the past decades.

20. David Hume. *loc.cit.*, II, p. 152, estimates the number of peasants on Black heath at one hundred thousand men.

assistance to the revolt. (21) Once in London, the peasants destroyed the palaces of the Duke of Gaunt and Robert Hales, the national treasurer. The Temple, the building in which the legal documents, charters, and the records were kept, was among the other buildings destroyed. One might almost say that the destruction of these three buildings symbolized the three main grievances of the peasants. The destruction of Gaunt's palace was a protest against bad government; the destruction of Robert Hales' palace was a protest against the poll-tax; the destruction of the Temple was a protest against social oppression.

In the meantime Treasurer Hales and Chancellor Sudbury had taken refuge in the Tower, and the rebels were clamoring for their heads. (22) The king now arranged a meeting with the rebels at Mile End, outside of London. At this meeting the demands of the peasants were aired. They wanted a general pardon, the abolition of slavery, commerce in the market towns free from toll or impost, and a fixed rent on their lands instead of the services due according to the feudal system. All these requests the king immediately granted them. (23)

The tragic event which took place during the king's conference at Mile End is another example of the peasants' real grievances. The

21. B. Wilkinson, *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381* (Speculum, vol.XV, No. 1), p. 15.

22. John of Gaunt was fortunately not in London at the time. He was across the border arranging a truce with the Scots.

23. G. M. Trevelyan, *loc.cit.*, p.235. doubts the king's sincerity in the granting of these charters. Trevelyan also mentions, p.220, the report that peasant leaders demanded among their other requests the disendowment of the church and offers as possible proof the number of monasteries assaulted by the peasants. Granting that this is so, the reason is plain. The Rising was aimed especially at landlords, and the Church, being a great landlord, had to suffer with the class.

group of rebels which had remained in London broke into the Tower and murdered Leg, the tax-commissioner, Sudbury, who had introduced the poll-tax, and Hales, the national treasurer. The two last mentioned were seized at the altar of the Tower chapel, taken to Tower Hill, and beheaded.

After the charter of Mile End had been granted, many of the rebels still remained in London. (24) In order to disperse the still-angry mob. King Richard II arranged another meeting, this time at Smithfield. When the king arrived with his retinue, Wat Tyler was at the head of the rebels. He then rode over to the king's party. The conference resulted in blows, and Tyler was killed by a member of the king's party. (25) Before the rebels had a chance to retaliate, the young king with remarkable presence of mind rode up to the leaderless mob, offered himself as their leader and led them out of London into the Clerkenwell fields. Outside of the city, Richard was joined by his own soldiers. He forbade them to commit any violence against the peasants. Then he gave this group of peasants the same charter he had given at Mile End and dismissed them.

Only the first step had, however, been taken in quelling the uprising. But it was the most important step. (26) Now the king gathered a well-equipped army and broke the resistance in Essex.

24. G. M. Trevelyan, loc.cit., p.239, mentions two possible reasons. Perhaps they wanted the redress of still other social grievances. Perhaps they remained to loot. Perhaps both reasons are true.

25. Accurate details concerning the cause of Tyler's death cannot be given. Chroniclers and historians disagree on this matter.

26. G. M. Trevelyan, loc.cit., p.212, attempts to explain why resistance to the rebellion had not begun before the rebels entered London. He mentions three reasons: 1) There was no trained police force, 2. There was no standing army, 3) The leaders of an expedition at France heaved anchor and left because they did not realize the importance of the crises

Meanwhile Bishop Henry Spencer of Norwich had quelled the rising in East Anglia on his own initiative. In the following weeks cruelty and slaughter characterized the attempt to stem the peasant tide.

Unrest continued into the months of autumn. Finally, in November, Parliament met at Westminster. It pardoned all rebels except the principal leaders, many of whom never were captured. The insurrection was over. New charters had been granted to the peasants, but their worthlessness was demonstrated by the king himself. After he had put down the Essex insurrection, he answered the peasants' pleas for liberation from bondage thus: "Serfs you are, and serfs you will remain." (27)

Sometimes Wycliffe is mentioned as an important factor in the Peasants' Rising of 1381. At one time he and the Lollards were even accused of being the prime movers in the rebellion. (28) He is brought into the picture for only one reason. Ten years before the rebellion, he expounded his Theory of Dominion--that everything belongs to God, that possession of a part of what belongs to God depends on service, that if service is not performed, the unfaithful steward must be deprived of the gift. From this theory has been drawn the claim that Wycliffe supported communism, and it has subsequently been said that agitators all over the country used this support as a means to incite the serfs and laborers. (29) But it hardly seems likely that a theory which was buried in a book written

27. G. M. Trevelyan, loc.cit., p.246.

28. H. Maynard Smith, Pre-Reformation England, p.274, records that a generation after the revolt Netter of Walden made this accusation, publishing at the same time a confession of John Ball ("probably spurious") to that effect.

29. G. M. Trevelyan, loc.cit., p.199.

ten years before the rebellion by a man who himself did not accept the poverty which he urged on others should have been used to any great extent to arouse the common people, especially when the public statements of Wycliffe denounced communism, supported the right of temporal lords to hold property, and were directed solely against the excess luxury of the church. (30) For this reason Wycliffe must be omitted as a figure of any substantial importance in the Revolt of 1381.

It may be true that many of the poorer parish priests, like John Ball, had obtained a distorted version of Wycliffe's Theory of Dominion. Or it may be just as likely that they themselves twisted the theory to fit their own capricious doctrines of communism and the equality of all mankind. Perhaps Froissart's record is accurate when he describes the work of John Ball thus:

He was accustomed every Sunday after Mass, as the people were coming out of church, to preach to them in the market-place and assemble a crowd around him, to whom he would say, "My good friends, things cannot go well in England, nor ever will until everything shall be in common; when there shall be neither vassal nor lord and all distinctions levelled, when the lords shall be no more masters than ourselves.....Are we not descended from the same parents, Adam and Eve? And what can they show or what reasons give, why they should be more masters than ourselves? except perhaps in making us labour and work for them to spend. They are clothed in velvet and rich stuffs.....but it is from our labour they have wherewith to support their pomp." (31)

Perhaps, we say, these things are true. But if they are true, we are driven to suppose one of two things. Either the theory of having "everything in common" was not popularized as extensively as

30. G. M. Trevelyan, loc.cit., p.200. Wycliffe's Theory of Dominion was originally written in a Latin work, *De Dominio Civili*. H. Maynard Smith, loc.cit., p.270: "He saw the evils of pluralities and non-residence; but he was himself a pluralist.....He denounced papal provisions, but he accepted one from Gregory XI, and was very angry when Urban VI refused to confirm the grant."

31. G. M. Trevelyan, loc.cit., p.197. quotes from the Chronicles of Froissart, vol.II, ch.135.

has been claimed (32), or its popularity did not reflect the true desires and ambitions of the peasants. For the fact remains that, when the rising actually did take place, no such demands were made. Personal freedom and commutation of services were the demands which were actually put forward.(33)

If we are to diagnose the causes of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 accurately, we must first of all repeat what has been said before. The lot of the English peasant had been steadily improving, both economically and socially, during the century which preceded the revolt itself. Before the Black Death this change had been proceeding slowly through the gradual substitution of money rents for labor services. After the Black Death the condition of the peasant was improving more rapidly because of the sudden rise in prices and wages. The displeasure of the lower classes was aroused when these improvements did not continue along the accelerated pace which they had assumed immediately after the Black Death. This aggravation resolved itself into rebellion and insurrection when the upper classes attempted to delay, yes, even to reverse, that process of social and economic improvement.

The causes of the rebellion might be divided into three classes, political, social, and economic. The political object of the uprising is seen in the rebels' protest against bad government, for which they held Duke John of Gaunt especially responsible. But the rising might very well have taken place even without this political griev-

32. David Hume, loc.cit., II, p.151, claims that it was greedily received by the multitude.

33. G. M. Trevelyan, loc.cit., p.197.

ance. The social and economic are by far the most important factors in the revolt. They are, however, so closely intertwined that it is difficult to separate them. Regardless of their improved condition, the peasants were continually being aggravated by more or less pronounced survivals of serfdom. These feudal remnants were just as irksome whether they consisted of service, labor, dues, fines, financial exactions, or merely such obligations as having their grain ground only at the mill of the Manorial lord. Then, when Parliament began to pass laws to curb the social progression of the peasant class, the strain on the chain of toleration and endurance increased. And when the poll-tax threatened a relapse into feudal poverty, the chain broke. The result was the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.

III

Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450

The uprising of the lower classes in England in the year 1450 is, it seems, another proof of the theory that rebellions are not usually the result of prolonged oppression to the point that the oppressed have never experienced better days. Revolt is much more liable to raise its ugly head when the underprivileged classes have tasted the pleasantness of economic, social, and political improvement and are aggravated either by the slowness of the process or by conditions which threaten the loss of some of their newly-gained advantages.

We know that the condition of the English peasant and workingman had been steadily improving through the years of the fourteenth century. The unfortunate result of the Peasants' Revolt in 1381--unfortunate, of course, from the peasants' point of view--temporarily halted this march toward complete economic, social, and political freedom. However, the voice of the serf, the laborer, the workingman, the lower classes in general, was not to be silenced for long. In the fifteenth century we hear his renewed complaints against the iniquity of his treatment, and in 1450 he reinforces his complaints with the force of arms. But before we enter into a study of the revolt itself, we must look at the conditions and affairs which led up to the rebellion.

Henry VI succeeded his father to the throne of England on August

31, 1422. He was only nine months old. Immediately there began a struggle for control of the throne during Henry's minority. This struggle centered around the personalities of two men, Duke Humphrey of Gloucester and Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester. (1) The first struggle between these two contenders for governmental control ended in a triumph for the Bishop of Winchester. This triumph resulted from Parliament's refusal on November 6, 1422, to grant Duke Humphrey's demand that he be authorized to rule the land. Then, in order to make him politically innocuous, the Parliament gave the Duke a position of mock authority with the title "Protector and Defensor." (2)

For a time the rivalry between Beaufort and Gloucester lay dormant. The next struggle, however, proved more successful for the Duke. In 1425 he championed a popular cause of the people of London, and his resultant popularity together with the pressure of the people gained for him temporary control of the council. (3) But when Duke Henry of Bedford, Humphrey's brother, returned to his homeland in an attempt to gain support for his expeditionary forces on French soil, the feud between the two contenders was outwardly settled, to give the appearance of a united front, and the two duel-

1. They are described as equally overbearing and unscrupulous, but Beaufort is usually ceded a superiority in administrative talents and political sagacity. K. B. McFarlane, *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol.VIII, p.388.

2. Parliament made this position powerless by appointing a council with control over all official appointments and all royal patronage, and establishing a quorum for the transaction of business. *Ibid.*, VIII, p.389.

3. In April, 1425, the populace of London took issue with the king's council over the wisdom of according protection to foreign merchants. When the council insisted on the wisdom of this measure, Gloucester took sides with the Londoners. *Ibid.*, VIII, p.390.

ists even shook hands in front of Parliament.(4)

The amicable relations between the Bishop and the Duke, however, did not last much longer than Duke Henry's visit in England. After Henry's return to France the struggle waxed and waned in intermittent spurts. When the Bishop was appointed Cardinal at Calais in March, 1427, Gloucester supposed that he would now have the run of the government. (5) But he was disappointed in his premature conjecture by a decision of the council to forestall any such event by passing measures which would maintain the "status quo."

With Beaufort on the continent and Duke Humphrey languishing in a state of powerless authority in England, the spotlight is turned on a different scene of English affairs. The Duke of Bedford's hold on the conquered French territory was loosening. To bolster the morale of the soldiers, the boy king, now eight years old, was crowned and sent with a large retinue to France. (6) The crowning of Henry VI had an immediate result on the position of the Duke of Gloucester. It gave the council their opportunity to remove him from office. This they did, only waiting a short time before inviting Cardinal Beaufort to resume his seat on the council.

The strife between the former antagonists flared up anew. The

4. Duke Henry's success in bringing about this reconciliation is an example of the high esteem in which he was held by his countrymen. He is described as being the only man "whose character commanded universal respect." K. B. McFarlane, *loc.cit.*, VIII, p.397.

5. Beaufort's one ambition which superceded his political desires was to obtain a high ecclesiastical position in Rome. With this in mind he gladly took the Cardinalship in 1427. But he soon after fell out of pleasure with Pope Eugenius IV and then reentered English politics. *Ibid.*, VIII, p.391 and 394.

6. Henry VI had been crowned at Westminster on November 6, 1429. *Ibid.*, VIII, p.393.

struggle was finally brought to a head in November, 1431, while Beaufort was travelling toward Rome. (7) Gloucester had persuaded the council to indict the Cardinal for breach of the Statute of Praemunire. Beaufort returned to London to defend himself and was able to clear himself of the charges only by loaning the government a large sum of money and by making some kind of a promise not to reenter papal service without the government's consent.

In the meantime Henry VI had returned to London. Gloucester found that the time was ripe to reassert himself. He removed the former officials and replaced them with his own choices. He had again gained control of the council.

Again Duke Henry of Bedford reappears on the scene to nullify his brother's gains. He returned to England in July, 1433, to report a dangerous military outlook in France. His greatest worry was finances. So a complete review of the English financial condition was made. It showed a discouragingly hopeless picture. The debt had amounted to Lb.168,000. The royal credit was poor. The yield of taxation had decreased in proportion to the decline of national prosperity. But Bedford's greatest disappointment came with the refusal of Commons to cooperate in any large-scale financial adventures. Bitter, he returned to France in July, 1434, and died a year later at Rouen.

After the death of Duke Henry the foreign situation went from bad to worse. In September, 1435, Burgundy broke off friendly relations with England. A year later the recent allies were at war

7. The new pope, Martin V, had sent Beaufort a letter of recall to Rome, and the Cardinal, in hopes of having his dream fulfilled, had hastened to obey. K. B. McFarlane, loc.cit., VIII, p.394.

with each other.

Duke Humphrey's star, meanwhile, had already begun to wane noticeably when Duke Bedford came to London in 1433. By 1436 his star had gone out. Beaufort had regained control of the council, and now he kept this control until his retirement in 1443. During these years the king's ill-health was an important factor in assisting Beaufort to fulfill his political ambitions, and the Cardinal did not hesitate to make full use of the situation. (8) He obtained the cooperation of the king's household. This accomplished, he could permit or deny access to the king according to his pleasure. With the king under his control Cardinal Beaufort was permanently established in his position of power and authority.

Another personality now steps forward on the historical stage. It is William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk. When Beaufort retired from public life in 1443, Suffolk stepped into his shoes. (9) He continued the system which his predecessor had used to such advantage. Gradually the council was stripped of its powers. Just as gradually Suffolk was assuming more and more authority. His increasing authority, however, brought with it also a heavier burden of problems. The national treasury was falling dangerously close to bankruptcy. In spite of repeated attempts to make peace with France the war raged on, and the financial condition of the nation continued to totter dangerously. (10)

8. King Henry VI, a nervous invalid at the age of fifteen, resided outside of London for his health's sake. K. B. McFarlane, loc.cit., VIII, p.399.

9. Suffolk had cooperated with Beaufort as Steward of the king's household. Ibid., VIII, p.399.

10. In 1439 Beaufort had met with the Duchess of Burgundy at Calais with the purpose of peace in mind. The negotiations failed mainly because Charles VII, king of France, wanted the king of England to do homage for his continental lands. K. B. McFarlane, loc.cit., VIII, p.401.

The failure of Somerset's expedition in 1443 showed the need for drastic action. Suffolk was persuaded to become the ambassador of peace, and in February, 1444, he headed an embassy to the French court. When he returned with a two year truce, he was hailed as a popular leader, though the terms of the peace were extremely indefinite. Concerning these terms Suffolk himself reported to the Parliament of 1445 that

he neither uttered ne communed of the specialty of the matters concerning in any wise the said treaty of peace, nor of what manner of thing the same treaty should be. (11)

In addition to the truce of peace Suffolk had made one other positive gain for English foreign relations when he obtained the hand of Margaret of Anjou for Henry VI. It seemed to be one of the most promising features of the truce, but it backfired on the person who expected to gain most from it, namely, Suffolk.

On December 22, 1445, Henry VI, acting apparently under the influence of the new queen, wrote to the Duke of Anjou and agreed to the surrender of Maine. The responsibility for this letter was placed by the populace on the Earl of Suffolk, and all his recent popularity could not save him. The cheers turned to jeers. When Maine was finally captured by the French in March, 1448, the Earl had been stamped in the eyes of most Englishmen as a traitor. (12) Now other charges of maladministration began to be rumored against Suffolk. His vast amount of English land-holdings was attacked, as well as the unusual number of official offices he held. His

11. K. B. McFarlane, loc.cit., VIII, p.402.

12. Though Henry VI had agreed to the surrender of Maine, the military leaders on the continent refused to follow his instructions, and the French had to take Maine by force. There is no evidence that Suffolk had a hand in the surrender of Maine. K. B. McFarlane, loc.cit., VIII, p.403.

unscrupulosity and selfish dealings had long been the bitter complaint of the lower classes in East Anglia, where his ancestral estates were. In short, Suffolk's unpopularity was increasing so swiftly that it is difficult to understand how he staved off the impeachment proceedings as long as he did. (13)

During this period of Suffolk's decline his loudest opponents were Duke Humphrey of Gloucester and the Duke of York. (14) Suffolk was able, however, to silence both of them, but with little effect on his own declining position. By February, 1447, the Earl of Suffolk had engineered the execution of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester. He next silenced the opposition of York by placing him into virtual exile with his appointment as the king's lieutenant in Ireland.

Regardless of efforts to the contrary, the opposition grew, and all attempts to regain the respect and cooperation of the people were fruitless. Lawlessness increased throughout England. Anarchy was threatening and, in some districts, in control. The time for revolution would soon be ripe.

The financial crisis which had been threatening England for so long finally enveloped the country in 1449 when France invaded Normandy, and another expeditionary force became necessary. (15) Under the strain of such dire financial conditions the national treasurer and the chancellor resigned from office on November 6, 1449. They were at once replaced by Cardinal Kemp, who accepted

13. Suffolk was formally impeached on February 7, 1450. K. B. McFarlane, loc.cit., VIII, p.406.

14. The Duke of York had been the king's lieutenant in Normandy since Duke Henry's death. Ibid., VIII, p.405.

15. From 1433 to 1449 the national debt had risen from Lb.168,000 to Lb.372,000. Ibid., VIII, p.405.

the chancellorship, and Lord Say, who became treasurer. But no measures were sufficient to save Suffolk's political existence.

On January 9, 1450, one of Suffolk's council members was assassinated at Portsmouth by a mob of angry seamen. But before he died, the assassins had forced him to implicate the Earl of Suffolk in the surrender of Maine. With this as a basis, the Commons demanded Suffolk's indictment, charging, in the main, that he had sold England to Charles VII, king of France. Suffolk was subsequently imprisoned, and on February 7, 1450, he was formally impeached. (16) King Henry VI's action on the impeachment followed on the seventeenth of March. He sentenced the Earl into exile for five years. But on his way to Calais, Suffolk's ship was stopped, and he was assassinated by the mutinous sailors of one of His Majesty's ships.

Suffolk's political decline and death were the signal for riots and rebellions to begin. The district of Kent experienced the first of these insurrections, very likely because it had suffered so severely under the tyrannies and extortions of Treasurer Lord Say and Sheriff William Crowmer. (17) Agitators had already been at work for some time when the execution of one of them quieted the disturbances for a few months. (18)

In June, 1450, another agitator arose as the champion of the popular cause. His name was John (Jack) Cade, but he assumed the name of John Mortimer in order to gain a more favorable hearing ,

16. The charges on the basis of which Suffolk was impeached amounted to little more than a repetition of the current gossip. K. B. McFarlane, loc.cit., VIII, p.406.

17. David Hume, The History of England, vol.II, p.290.

18. These agitators had worked under pseudonyms such as "Queen of the Fair" and "Captain Bluebeard." K. B. McFarlane, loc.cit., VIII, p.407.

from the common people. (19) Jack Cade led his army of peasants and laborers toward London. Camping on Blackheath, he sent a list of grievances to the king. These grievances included 1) the re-enactment of the Statute of Laborers in 1446, 2) the unemployment which had been caused in the weaving industry by interruption of the overseas trade, (20) 3) the unfair practises of the court system, and 4) the guilt of the king's counsellors in all these matters. Affirmatively the rebels asked for the reform of all these abuses.

A small army was sent against the insurrectionists. A battle took place near Sevenoke. But the royalist commander, Sir Humphrey Stafford, was killed, and his army was forced to retreat. (21)

One of the unusual features of the rebellion was the well-controlled discipline which Jack Cade exercised over his followers. Plundering was forbidden, and severe punishment was meted out to anyone who disobeyed this order. When the reasonable attitude of the rebel leader was observed by the Londoners, the city opened its gates to Cade and his followers. (22) Once inside the gates of London, the difficulty of discipline increased. In order to appease the demands of the rebels, Cade took Lord Say and William Crowmer into custody, and after a quick trial, he had them executed on July

19. Sir John Mortimer had been executed by Parliament in the beginning of Henry VI's reign "without any trial or evidence, merely upon an indictment of high treason given against him." David Hume, *The History of England*, vol.II, p.289.

20. The suspension of the Statute of Truces and Safeconducts in 1435 had led to excessive piracy. Irksome "Hosting" regulations were imposed five years later. Together they brought chaos to shipping and a virtual standstill of legitimate international trade. K. B. McFarlane, *loc.cit*, VIII, p.400.

21. David Hume, *loc.cit.*, II, p.290.

22. This is the opinion of David Hume, *loc.cit*, II, p.290. The charge of treachery from within is made by K. B. McFarlane, *loc.cit.*, VIII, p.409.

4, 1450. Rather than effecting a quieting influence on the mob, these executions increased its restlessness. Cade was no longer master of their riotous dispositions. Riot and plunder broke out in various parts of London. London was in danger of experiencing a reenactment of the massacre which took place in the days of Wat Tyler. To forestall any such event, Lord Scales, the governor of the Tower, sent out a detachment of soldiers who were able to frighten the rebels into a readiness for negotiation. Receiving full pardons for all they had done, they left London on the eighth of July and dispersed homeward.

Cade, however, was not satisfied with the accomplishments of the insurrection. With a group of his followers he attacked Queenborough Castle in Sheppey, after which the king's council pronounced him a traitor. On July 12th he was captured in Sussex by Iden, the new sherriff of Kent, and without further ado was put to death.(23)

Two subsequent attempts at insurrection were suppressed, and in February, 1451, came "the so-called 'Harvest of Heads', that bloody assize by which the last traces of the popular movement in Kent were extinguished." (24)

Since the day of Henry VI's accession to the throne of England until the rebellion in 1450, the government had been in a constant state of turmoil. The prolonged struggle between Gloucester and Beaufort was an all-important factor in this political upheaval. The juggling of power by these ambitious politicians was, at least, detrimental to the best interests of the people who were being governed. The king's subjects naturally resented such bad government.

23. David Hume, loc.cit, II, p.290.

24. K. B. McFarlane, loc.cit., VIII, p.411.

There were, however, other factors which contributed to the righteous indignation of, especially, the lower classes of people. One was the lack of just court procedures in outlying districts of England which had come about through improper supervision by the national authorities in London. Another was the unscrupulous and oppressive ways of such land-mongers as the Earl of Suffolk and his ilk. (25)

However, it seems that here again, as in the previously-discussed revolts, the most determinative factor of the revolt was the economic setbacks which the peasants and laborers were forced to endure. (26) A good indication of this was shown by the violent hatred of the insurrectionists against Treasurer Lord Say and Sheriff William Crowmer who had been practising merciless tyrannies and extortions in the district of Kent. Two of the four main demands which the rebels brought before the king are another indication of the importance which the rebels attached to their economic grievances. They first asked for a repeal of the Statute of Laborers and secondly for a solution to the unemployment problem which had plagued the working class since the interruption of overseas trade. Added to these, the ever-present grievance against

25. It is said that Suffolk and his business partners made use of royal licenses to circumvent the regulations of the Staple and to forestall their competitors in the Flemish wool market. K. B. McFarlane, loc.cit., VIII, p.403.

26. The Historian, Kriehn, does not agree with this viewpoint. He believes the rising was mainly political. The New Larned History, vol.IV, p.2715, takes its quotation from Kriehn, Rising in 1450, ch.4, sec.7.

overtaxation should also be mentioned here. (27)

If the fact which was brought out in the first paragraph of this chapter is kept in mind, we believe that much of the difficulty in diagnosing the foremost causes of this revolt can be removed. The Rising of 1450, like that of 1381, was a protest against governmental conditions which increased the economic and social burdens of the lower classes of people in England.

27. For J. Gairdner's evaluation of the causes of the Revolt of 1450 as given in Houses of Lancaster and York, ch.7, sect.6, see The New Larned History, vol, IV, p.2715.

IV

The Development of the "Bundschuh" during the Fifteenth Century and up to 1524

We have seen that the social and economic conditions of the English peasantry improved during the fourteenth and first half of the fifteenth centuries. In Germany the process of improvement began much later and proceeded much more slowly. Perhaps the best explanation one can give for this difference is the corresponding difference in general national development. Germany was far behind England and France in respect to nationalization and centralization of government. (1) When the peasant classes of England and France were beginning to see a ray of hope shine through the feudal darkness, were even experiencing the warmth of improving conditions, the German serf was still in the throes of an almost completely feudal government system. At the opening of the fifteenth century the German peasants were confronted not only with a secular feudal system but also with an equally oppressive ecclesiastical feudal system. (2) The vast land-holdings of the Roman hierarchy plus its system of multiplex religious obligations were just as aggravating to the lower classes as the parallel services, dues, and obligations to the secular lords. Yet, in spite of these facts, it will be interesting to note that in Germany, as in England, the popular movement against feudal tyranny and oppression finds its most forcible expression among those peasants and laborers who had seen the light of better days rather than among the serfs whose generation knew nothing but the thralldom of slavery.

1. F. Seebohm, The Era of the Protestant Revolution, p.58.
2. Ibid., p.59.

In order to trace completely the development of the "Bundschuh" it is necessary to begin at the earliest known attempts of German peasants at throwing off the feudal yoke.

The earliest evidences of unrest among the German peasants date back to the second and third decades of the fifteenth century. (3) The actual story seems to begin with the appearance of a formidable peasant army before the gates of the city of Worms on the twentieth of December, 1439. (4) The rising was a protest against the oppressive financial ways of the Jews, mainly in respect to usury. When the city government attempted to bring about peace through negotiation, it was successful only in holding the peasants at bay for another two years. But then the revolt broke out again, and the peasants refused to be appeased without the promise of bettered conditions. The only terms which could induce the angry insurrectionists to withdraw and disperse included the stipulation that the time for payment of debts be prolonged and that all excess interest on these debts be cancelled. That these were the real causes of the disturbances, not only in the territory of the Rhine but in other sections of Germany also, is indicated by the fact that, after the town governments had agreed to support the peasants in their financial struggle against the Jews, the risings ceased for the next thirty years. (5)

The next uprising of any importance took place in 1468 in Alsace, which is located in the Southwestern part of Germany. This section of Germany was being scourged by innumerable feudal wars. Both lords

3. F. Seebohm, loc.cit., p.61.

4. Wilhelm Vogt, Die Vorgeschichte des Bauernkrieges, p.84.

5. Ibid., p. 87, reports that in 1432 the Jews were driven out of Saxony, in 1435 out of Zurich and Speyer, in 1438 out of Mainz, in 1439 out of Augsburg, in 1450 out of Bayern, in 1453 out of Wurzburg, in 1454 out of Brunn and Olmutz, in 1457 out of Erfurt, and in 1468 out of Neisse.

and town governments were calling on the peasants to support their respective causes. Finally Lord Anselm of Masmuenster rallied two thousand peasants to his cause by raising a banner which used a picture of the peasant's shoe as its symbol. (6) An unusual oath--to consider the whole world their enemies--was taken by all the peasants who marched under this banner during this uprising. (7) Although there is only a small amount of extant material on this revolt, it is noteworthy for two reasons: (a) The banner proved to be an emotional stimulus to the peasants because it depicted their common plight. (b) This was the first use of the "Bundschuh" banner, and it now became the standard symbol of the oppressed classes. (8)

In 1478 the peasants of Kaernthner rose up against Emperor Frederick as a protest against increased taxation. A league was immediately formed at Villach with a peasant, Peter Wunderlich, and a blacksmith, Matthias Hensel, as its leaders. Articles were drawn up which demanded drastically the removal of all feudal rulers and the appointment of a council of four peasants for each county.

The membership in this peasant league increased so rapidly that the Emperor finally sent out a public proclamation ordering the dissolution of the league. But the only apparent result was that those who had not belonged to the league before the proclamation now joined.

It is said that many of the peasants were deceived into joining

6. Wilhelm Vogt, loc.cit1, p.89, narrates this event, while F. Seebohm, The Era of the Protestant Revolution, p.63, places the first appearance of the "Bundschuh" banner in the year 1492.

7. Ibid., p.89: "Sie wollten aller Welt Feind sein."

8. The significance of this symbol exists, of course, in the contrast between the miserable footwear of the peasant class and the expensive shoes of the nobility.

the rebellious organization by being assured that its purpose was the defense of the country against the Turks. (9) Ironically, the Turks actually did invade on St. Jacob's Day, and the peasants were the only group well enough organized to meet them. But in the ensuing battle, the peasants were mercilessly slaughtered, and the organization was temporarily dissolved.

The foregoing events are especially significant because they show a heavy preponderance of economic causes behind each rebellious disturbance. However, we shall now observe the entrance of new grievances and the development of a more complex movement on the part of the lower class. In addition to its economic grievances the peasantry begins to demand release also from the social oppression which it has been forced to endure.

In 1476 a leader of the masses comes forward in Franconia who for the first time instigates a nation-wide movement with a distinct and general purpose. His name was Hans Boheim, and his occupation was sheep-herding. (10) Boheim aroused the peasants with a new ideology on social, political, economic, and religious revolution. A talented rabble-rouser, a self-styled savior of the people, he harangued his listeners with utopian ideas of a theocratic government based on brotherly love. He prophesied that the yoke of bondage to both spiritual and temporal lords was coming to an end, that taxes and tributes would be eliminated, and that forests and fisheries would be free to all men. With this "gospel" he soon obtained an immense following.

On March 24, 1476, he began his preaching in front of the church

9. Wilhelm Vogt, loc.cit., p.90.

10. F. Seebohm, loc.cit., p.62, calls him "the John the Baptist" of the peasant movement. Alternate spelling for Boheim is Boehm.

at Niklashausen, claiming direct visions from God as the basis for all his teachings. (11) He berated the wide chasm which separated the poor from the rich. He demanded absolute equality for all and condemned private ownership. He originated catchy phrases and appealing slogans which were soon heard on the lips of every commoner.

In June the Bishop of Wurzburg took action against this popular preacher. At a meeting of the surrounding spiritual lords, it was decided to obtain evidence against Boheim, then capture and imprison him. Either the revolutionary leader was informed of this plan, or he had a sudden premonition of danger. The fact is that on July 7th he ordered his male listeners to come to the next meeting armed and without their families. But his precautions were to no avail.

On July 12th, Bishop Rudolph of Wurzburg sent a band of warriors to Niklashausen, had Boheim seized while asleep and returned to Wurzburg where he was imprisoned. (12) When the armed peasants came to the prearranged meeting place the next morning, they found their leader gone. Not to be that easily overcome, the peasants at once set out for Wurzburg to liberate their leader. But their courage left them when they arrived at the gate of the city. A few rounds of heavy artillery fired from within the city disorganized the peasants, and they returned to their homes. On July 19, 1476, Hans Boheim was burned at the stake. The rising had been effectively quelled.

Although Boheim was dead, the movement which he had begun

11. Wilhelm Vogt, loc.cit., p.97.

12. Wilhelm Vogt, loc.cit., p.97.

lived on into the future. This was perhaps the greatest accomplishment of the preacher from Niklashausen. From the day that he began to expound his radical theories until the beginning of the Peasants' War of 1524, the rumbling of the peasant voices did not cease. It grew ever louder, ever more determined. This is the period of the "Bundschuh."

One of the complaints which Boheim had aired so determinedly was the grievance against the usurpation of the peasants' former rights in respect to woods, lakes, and pastures. (13) Formerly they had been permitted to hunt freely in the forests and woods. Formerly they had been permitted to obtain their fire-wood free of charge from these same woods. In past days they had been able to fish on their landlord's waters free of charge. But these rights had been removed. Only by paying a regulated tribute could they enjoy these former privileges. All these exactions added to the burdens of the oppressed lower classes. Up until the days of Boheim the peasants had remained comparatively silent about their grievances. But the rising of 1476 was a definite turning point in the German peasant movement. From now on the peasants are led on by a definite purpose and an irrepressible will.

The next episode in this movement happened in 1486. (14) Only a small amount of historical material covering this insurrection is extant. It is known that the uprising was agitated in Bayern near the Lech River. The emotions of the peasants were first

13. The reason why the peasants had been deprived of the rights is the following: The income of the landlords was based upon the fixed dues and obligations of the peasants, which could not be changed. Their income, therefore, remained stationary when the huge rise in prices came. So, to increase their income, the land owners taxed the peasants for all those things which formerly had been free.

14. Wilhelm Vogt, loc.cit., p.110.

aroused by one Matheis Korsang, a teacher at Augsburg. His grievance was the excessive taxation of both temporal and spiritual lords. He demanded that peasants be permitted to elect their own rulers from their own class of people. When these demands remained unanswered, a peasant named Heinz von Stein organized a rebellion. But, according to the vague reports, the insurrection was immediately suppressed.

A rebellion broke out in Swabia in 1492. This rising is especially significant because here for the first time since 1468 the banner of the "Bundschuh" is again raised.(15) The insurrection took place in the territory over which the Abbot of Kempten had control. During the eighth decade of the fifteenth century the peasants of this district were forced to endure oppressive taxation. It is said that the peasants expected respite from this oppression when Abbot John became their landlord. (16) Whether this is true or not, the improvements they expected did not appear. Instead, both feudal dues and taxes were raised. When the famines of 1489 to 1491 followed on the heels of crop failures, the tribute of taxes became unbearable. Following is a list of grievances as reported by a contemporary chronicler:

Item die nachgeschriben clagstuck und artikel hand des gotzhus Kempten armlut zu irem g.h. von Kempten zu clagen und zu sprechen, darumb sy sich dann zusamen versammelt haben gehabt.

Des ersten vermainten wir uns beschwert ze sin der stur und des raiszgelts halben.....

2.der fryen zinzer halb, die ie und allwegen irn freyen zug gehapt haben und noch hinfur haben sollen nach lut irer fryhait. By solicher irer fryhait will sy ir g.h. der abt von Kempten nit beliben lassen und tut sy fahen, turnen, stoken und blöcken und sy zu unbillichen beschreibungen nöten, zwingen und tringen, das sy sich verschriben müssen, von dem gotzhus nit ze weichen und ze stellen, auch kainen andern schirmherren an sich ze nemen.....

15. F. Seehohm, loc.cit., p.63, claims that this was the first time the banner of the "Bundschuh" was raised.

16. Wilhelm Vogt, loc.cit., p.111.

3. der aigenen lüt halben vermainen sy sich beschwert ze sin...

4. so erclagen sy sich und vermainen sich beschart ze sin ab dem, das vor nie gewesen und erhart worden ist, wann ain fryer zinzer ain aigne tochter oder ain frye tochter ain aigen mann zu der ee nimpt, das er oder sy sich dem aigen nach auch zu aigen ergeben müssen, auch kain straf darouf nie gesetzt noch gestanden ist.

5. so tut er sinen aigen, auch den fryen zinzern verbieten, das sy ire aigne guter, die sy hand, aus der herrschaft nit verkaufen.....

6. so verbut er sinen aigen luten und auch den zinzern, das ir kainer vich an kain gemaind oder alb annem noch zu im stellen sol ausserhalb der herrschaft. (17)

In November of 1491 the entire peasantry of Swabia assembled at Luibas. Their leader was George von Unterarsried, a military man. At his advice appeals for help were sent first to the Swabian League and then to the Emperor himself. The result was a meeting between the leaders of the Swabian League and 252 representatives of the peasants. The final agreement was, however, decidedly favorable to the Abbot. None of the fundamental burdens were removed, and no guarantee against future oppression was given. Though the insurrectionists were temporarily silenced, the foundation for future rebellions had been laid.

The next rising happened in Alsace, in 1493. (18) A widespread organization, whose purpose it was to enroll all the peasants of the Alsace territory, was formed. Again the "Bundschuh" was their banner. Ironically, the first meeting of the peasant league was held on Hungerberg (Hungerhill). Its program included almost all the demands of previous risings and a number of new ones too. Among their demands were the following: destruction of the Jews, cancellation of debts, free elections, peasant control over taxation,

17. Guenther Franz, Der Deutsche Bauernkrieg, vol. II, p. 21, quotes from Muenchen HStA, Stift Kempten Litt, fol. 151 - 53 und fol. 154 - 55.
18. F. Seebohm, loc. cit., p. 63 and Wilhelm Vogt, loc. cit., p. 114.

freedom from all oppressive statutes, freedom from ecclesiastical oppression, the dissolution of monasteries, and the abolition of oral confession. Their plan of action was to seize the city of Schlettstadt and then carry on their work from there in safety. But the dream was never realized. The league was betrayed, and many of its members were put to death.

A year earlier, in 1492, had occurred a revolt which was entirely economic. It was a protest against the excessive taxation of Emperor Maximilian I. (19) The taxes had been increased to help support the emperor's army in the Netherlands. Those who rebelled were the Westfriesen, Kennemern, and Waterlaender peasants. They gathered in Alkmaar. But before any actual fighting took place, Albert of Saxony arrived with his army, and the peasants surrendered. The conspirators were severely punished, and an additional tax was levied to make the burden heavier than before the rising.

Then, in 1502, in Alsace, peasants in the region about Speyer and the Neckar organized and took a secret oath. (20) They raised the banner of the "Bundschuh." The membership grew until the league numbered an enrollment of approximately seven thousand. Everything was prepared in utmost secrecy. Their blue-white banner pictured the "Bundschuh" on one side and a peasant kneeling under the inscription, "Only what is just before God," on the other. Their demands were freedom from serfdom and freedom from the payment of duties, tributes, and taxes. To accomplish this, they purposed to seize the town of Bruchsal and there set up their headquarters. The next step

19. Wilhelm Vogt, loc.cit., p.116. This rebellion was called the "Kaese und Brotvolkkrieg."

20. F. Seebohm, loc.cit., p.63, and Wilhelm Vogt, loc.cit., p.118.

was to seize all lords, both temporal and ecclesiastical, and burn the monasteries. Thus they intended to rid themselves of all feudal obligations and to free the woods, lakes, and meadows for the use of all. Their last object was to seize the city of Speyer itself.

Before the plot could be carried into execution, the peasants were betrayed by one of their own men, whose conscience had driven him to reveal the whole plan to the Bishop of Speyer. In a fierce rage, the emperor ordered the confiscation of all their property, the banishment of their wives and children, and the imprisonment and death by quartering of the rebels themselves. (21)

In the years 1512 and 1513 a remarkable man appears to lead the German peasants into another rebellion. Joss Fritz was a man with a remarkable power of persuasion and a shrewd and clever talent of organization. Going from house to house, he aroused the peasants against their unfair burdens. Then he got himself appointed forester under a lord near Freiburg. Secret meetings were arranged in the forests, and Joss Fritz enumerated the grievances they had against their lords. (22) He next obtained the aid of a group of licensed beggars, who agreed to act as his spies. They were helpful both in gathering and in dispensing valuable information. Joss Fritz established his headquarters at Lehen near Freiburg, and from there he sent representatives into all parts of Germany to enlist peasants in his cause. After much difficulty he found a painter who was willing to paint the dangerous sign of the "Bundschuh" upon a banner. But now the secret leaked out. By this time the move-

21. Wilhelm Vogt, loc.cit., p.121, assures us that this order was not carried out literally.

22. F. Seebohm, loc.cit., p.65. The grievances against which Joss Fritz spoke were a practical repetition of the demands made in the revolt of 1502.

ment had spread far and wide along both sides of the Rhine, in the Black Forest, and through the districts of Württemberg. Now, although the government of Freiburg took measures to punish the leaders of the movement, Joss Fritz again escaped (23) and continued to carry his message hither and yon throughout the land.

In 1514 popular opinion of peasants and laborers against the despotic ways, the oppressive taxation, the expensive warring, and the luxurious living of Duke Ulrich of Württemberg resolved itself into an open rebellion. (24) Following is a contemporary account of some of the lesser grievances:

E. F. G. hofmeister hat uns von E. F. G. verkündet, dasz wir in diesem Aufruhr sein, dasz aber E. F. G. uns in unserem Beschwerden in Gnaden bedenken wolle. Wir teilen darouf mit.

1. Auf Herzog Eberhards Befehl haben wir unseren Flecken mit gebw, torhäuser, bollwerk, and graben in den letzten Jahren versehen und sind dafür von dem Baugeld nach Vaihingen freigeblieben. Seit vergangenem Jahr wird auch dieses von uns gefordert. Bleibt dies in Kraft, müssen wir verderben und unser blecken zu ainer egart werden.

2. 70 om wins, die wir E. G. im Herbst zu geben haben, hatten wir bisher nur nach Horheim zu liefern, müssen sie jetzt nach Vaihingen fahren. Der Wein wird auch erst dort gemessen, was uns vermehrte Kosten bringt.

3. Horheim, Hohenhaslach und Enszingen haben seit alters one allen intrag amptlute oder jemand's ain gemaine weinrechnung gemacht. Jetzt befiehlt der Amtmann uns by Vgyhinger rechnung zy bliben. Wir bitten, uns byaltem herkommen lassen bliben.

4. mieszen wir grossen ubertrang und beschwerd liden von dem wilpret gross und klain, von wilden schweinen uns die gotter mit den fruchten in wingarten und uf wissen das unsre verwiesten, umzugraben, das wir grossen schaden nemen, dazu so werden wir von E.F.G. forstmaister hert gehalten, wan ob schon ain hund oder zwenim flecken weren, die das wilpret mochten ain wenig erschen, daran kain schaden bescheh, so gebwt der forstmaister den hunden all lang tremel anzuhengen by 3U 5 sz. Darzu die vogel uszuheben, ist auch verbotten by hoher straff. Das nimpt er unnachleslich herin.

5. Eine lange Zeit hat allweg der Meszner für uns Gerichts und Kaufauch Gültbriefe geschrieben. Jetzt wird befohlen, diese vom Stadtschreiber geschrieben zu lassen. Der nimmt 1 fl. wo wir bisher

23. Joss Fritz had been one of those who escaped after the insurrection of 1502 had been discovered.

24. Wilhelm Vogt, loc.cit., p.130 - 134.

nur 10 sz. gezahlt haben. Wir bitten, es beim alten Herkommen zu lassen. (25)

On April 15, 1514, a man named Gaispeter called the people of Beutelsbach together and proposed that the right of a new tax be put to the test of water. The tax had been levied on meat, flour and wine. But the tax was not to be collected by increasing the cost of each article. Instead, weights and measures were to be decreased. So the populace agreed to the test of water. This was the test. A pair of scales was to be thrown into the water. If it sank, the tax was an unjust one. Naturally the tax was thus proven unfair and the peasants immediately marched toward the town of Schorndorf. They were temporarily pacified by a cancellation of the new tax. But the spirit of rebellion persisted. A "Bundschuh" was organized, and Schorndorf was made the headquarters of the movement. Meanwhile Duke Ulrich was trying, by various means, to satisfy and pacify the peasants. When peaceful means failed, he sent his army to seize their city and to capture their leader, Volmar von Beutelsbach. By August, 1514, the insurrection had been suppressed, and its leaders had been executed.

In the same year similar risings took place in the valleys of the Austrian Alps, in Carinthia, Styria and Crain, (26) but all of them were suppressed by the nobles and heavy punishments were meted out upon the offenders.

The history of the "Bundschuh" is a remarkable example of the persistent efforts of a peasant class to throw off the yoke of feudal

25. Guenther Franz, *Der Deutsche Bauernkrieg*, vol.II, p.2h, refers to Ebd. Landschaft B.lb Nr. 9 Or. Siegel.

26. F. Seebohm, *loc.cit.*, p.66, and Wilhelm Vogt, *loc.cit.*, p.139.

serfdom. But the development of this movement is just as interesting when approached from the geographical viewpoint. One might be inclined to look for a preponderance of rebellious thought and action in the regions which were still completely enshrouded by the blackest night of bondage and serfdom. The facts, however, show that the rebellious spirit was found most frequently and most persistently in those regions, e.g. the mountain regions, where the feudal system had never completely conquered the freedom-loving spirit of the lower classes, and in those regions which were next to the countries where rebellions had been attempted and successfully carried out. (27) To the peasants who had experienced, either directly or indirectly, the pleantries of more freedom and more rights, the attempts of the nobility to enforce stricter measures, heavier taxation, and the withdrawal of former rights were entirely incongruous with the peasant's attitude concerning fairness and justice. For that reason the complaints of the lower classes so often contained the wishful appeal to return to "the good old days." (28)

Since the development of the "Bundschuh" extends over such a long period of time and includes a number of separate, individualistic insurrections in various parts of Germany, it is impossible to mention any one cause as the prime moving factor of each individual uprising throughout the entire movement. It is true, one can say that the introductory rebellions were based predominantly on economic grievances. One can also claim that from the days of Hans Boheim to the time of Joss Fritz the social element became so intertwined with the economic aspect of the peasant movement that the two to-

27. F. Seebohm, loc.cit., p.60, relates that the Swiss peasants of the Forest Cantons had successfully rebelled against their Austrian feudal lords as early as the 14th century. The Swiss had fought a victorious battle against their lords at Morgaten in 1315.

28. See the quotations from Guenther Franz referred to in this chapter notes no. 17 and 25.

gether became the most important factors in this period of peasant history. In addition to these verities we should also be cognizant of the fact that very frequently a religious angle entered the picture of these revolts insofar as the spiritual lords and ecclesiastical land owners were attacked and condemned just as severely as the lay nobility. But it is not difficult to understand this when we realize that the Roman Church was the greatest of all feudal lords, that it had vast possessions, and that its feudal tyrannies and oppressive exactions were often far more irksome and burdensome than those of the lay lords. (29)

Perhaps it is best to say that the general characteristics of the peasant movement in Germany are predominantly economic and social, and that of these two the economic factor outweighs the social as the prime instigator of unrest and dissatisfaction. But in spite of this, it must be remembered that so many different people, motivated by so many different objects and representing so many different conditions in so many sections of the country, were implicated in the risings which took place over such a long period of time that it is impossible to make any general statement which would describe accurately the detailed causes and conditions of each revolt in the long movement of the "Bundschuh."

29. F. Seebohm, loc.cit., p.60, records the words of a contemporary writer on the subject of ecclesiastical oppression: "I see that we can scarcely get anything from Christ's ministers but for money; at baptism money; at bishoping money; at marriage money; for confession money - no, not extreme unction without money. They will ring no bells without money; so that it seemeth that Paradise is shut up from them that have no money."

Conclusion

In reviewing the major peasant insurrections which took place between the years 1358 and 1524, one is impressed by especially two things. On the one hand, there are the different conditions and circumstances which characterize each individual revolt. On the other hand, one recognizes a definite harmony of thought and purpose in all of the uprisings which, when viewed through the telescope of time, are blended into one long, coherent movement - a movement which gradually but determinedly moves forward toward a definite goal, the emancipation of the feudal serf.

This peasant movement was, as is so often the case, punctuated with violent disturbances and subsequent suppressions, prominent victories and crushing defeats. But the goal for which the peasants strove could not be rooted from their hearts.

The unique feature of the peasant movement is the reoccurrence of corresponding complaints in each major disturbance. Over and over again is heard the protest against economic oppression. It was like a dreadful shadow which hovered menacingly over the peasantry until they were compelled to cry out against this unwelcome specter which hindered their progress toward better living. But almost as frequently does one hear the grievances against social injustices. The burden which became more oppressive with each passing year - not only because of increased indignities on the part of the lords, but also as the result of an enlivened insight into the unfairness of their condition - was the obligation of services and duties which

the feudal system imposed upon the villein and the serf. The combination of these two complaints, when thrown together into the cauldron of peasant emotions, agitated the feelings of the lower classes to such a degree that they repeatedly overflowed in open rebellion and revolt.

The history of peasant revolts from 1358 - 1524 is the story, not so much of men, as of a movement. When this movement is segmented according to national lines, it is seen that each section of the movement sooner or later reaches a definite climax. In France the peak of peasant unrest was reached in the Revolt of the Jacquerie in 1358. England experienced a twofold crest of popular dissatisfaction, in 1381 and in 1450. In Germany the spirit of revolution and rebellion finds its outlet in the repeated insurrections of the "Bundschuh", but the true climax of the peasant movement is not reached until the appearance of a revolt which is not discussed in this monograph, the Peasants' War of 1524.

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