THE NORTHERN REBELLIONS
IN THE LATER YEARS OF RICHARD II

By J. G. BELLAMY, M.A.

The two insurrections which broke out in the north of England in the last decade of the fourteenth century have never been the subject of a proper examination. Historians who have made much of the supposed involvement of the earl of Arundel and the bad blood which existed at that time between the earl and John of Gaunt have not felt disposed to investigate the nature of either rebellion any further. Perhaps the fascination of agrarian discontent and Lollard sedition has caused us to forget the opinion of Professor Tout that the matter was "well worth detailed examination". Thus a veil of obscurity has continued to enshroud the events in question. To Principal Steel one insurrection was "the mysterious Cheshire rising which took place in 1393" and the other which he suggested was connected with it was the "still more mysterious rising on Gaunt's estates in Yorkshire". Professor McKisack, writing more recently, found the Cheshire trouble to be an insurrection whose causes "are still obscure" which "broke out on the northern estates of Gloucester during the early summer of 1393". Miss McKisack adds that there was "also trouble in Yorkshire, where Sir William Beckwith, one of Lancaster's officials, was ahead, engaged in a private war". The two revolts had their climax mid-way between the decisive years of 1388 and 1397. They came at a time when the authorities of the king and the lords of council were finely balanced and the parties viewed each other with visible mistrust. Professor Galbraith has aptly described it as a period of "intensiﬁed suspicions and hardly suppressed incompatibilities" with a veneer of calm that might be shattered at any moment.

1 T. F. Tout, Chapters in the Administrative History of Medieval England (Manchester, 1920-33), iii. 483 n.
2 A. Steel, Richard II (Cambridge, 1941), pp. 200, 201.
examination of the restiveness in the north will reveal not merely the causes and the supporters of each rebellion but also throw some light on the larger issue of where the ultimate power lay within the kingdom. It might also help us discover if in fact the king already aspired towards despotism, for it was at the time of the Cheshire revolt that Richard felt compelled to deny he was involved in any attempt to destroy the magnates of the realm.¹

The Yorkshire revolt was no sudden upheaval but rather a festering sore. The troubles centred round the fortunes of the Beckwith family of Beckwith and Clynt in the West Riding. The author of the Annales Ricardi Secundi calls William Beckwith, the leader, an esquire, but no such rank is ever given him in either the plea rolls or the chancery rolls.² He was in fact William Beckwith son of John Atkynson of Beckwith and thus sometimes referred to as William Jackson. None of the various Beckwths of Beckwith was assessed at more than fourpence in the poll tax of 1379, though a relative Adam Beckwith of Clynt was asked to pay two shillings.³ In 1372 a John Beckwith, son of Adam Beckwith of unknown rank, and Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Thomas Malbis, had been made bailiff of Bilton park in Knaresborough chase under the duchy of Lancaster. Other members of the Beckwith family had held similar positions in nearby Ockeden chase but had lost them by 1374.⁴ The Monk of Westminster tells us that it was William Beckwith’s failure to succeed to an office once held by an ancestor which precipitated the insurrection. Apparently he found the appointment of an outsider particularly galling.⁵ By Michaelmas 1387 Beckwith, no doubt out of resentment, had begun to wage private war against the local Lancastrian officials; as a result he was forced to take refuge for five days in the house of John Marshall of Thirsk. With him were a score of kinsfolk and men from the

¹ Foedera, ed. T. Rymer (original edn.), vii. 746.
⁴ John of Gaunt’s Register, 1372-1376, ed. S. Armitage Smith (Camden Soc., 1911), i. 527, 626; ii. 1093.
⁵ Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden, ed. J. R. Lumby (R.S., 1886), ix. 239.
Knaresborough region. For twelve months the band lay low while its members canvassed for support and planned for the future. On 4 October 1388 Beckwith felt strong enough to shoot at Knaresborough castle, apparently in the hope that his men would wing Sir Robert de Rokeley, the steward and constable who was his arch-enemy. However, the dissidents succeeded only in maiming Edmund, the son of Robert Doufbygging. Five weeks later the band went in armed array to another of Gaunt's fortresses, to Haverah, and besieged it, intending to kill the elder Doufbygging, who had shut himself up there to save his life. Doufbygging was a forester in the forest and chase of Knaresborough and was at that time supplying the place of Rokeley as master forester. It seems that in appointing Doufbygging, who originated in Lancashire, Sir Robert had frustrated the hopes of the Beckwiths. The pardon which was granted to one of the Beckwith gang in 1395 states quite categorically that Rokeley would not allow Adam de Beckwith and Richard Bernnand (rectius Brennand) and others conspiring with them "to do such wrongs and effect such unlawful appointments and alliances as they had ordained amongst themselves at their parliament called 'Dodelowe'". This remarkable assembly had been held on several occasions "in subversion of the law, oppression of the people, disinherison of the duke [Gaunt] and the loss of his ministers lives". The Beckwith supporters would thus seem to have been both numerous and well organized. This is borne out by the Annales Ricardi whose author states that the county was divided in its sympathies into two halves.

Robert Doufbygging continued to be the quarry of the Beckwiths in the following year. On Palm Sunday 1389 they ambushed the forester on his way to divine service at Fewston. Although Doufbygging himself escaped without injury, two of his servants were pursued to Timble and slain. Early in July William Beckwith himself was responsible for the murder of an adherent of Rokeley's called William Rute, at Killinghall. Later

---

3 Ibid. p. 273.
the same month he and his friends ransacked Doufbygging's house at Redshaw, breaking open his chests and coffers and slaying his cattle on the common pasture there.\(^1\) In August another raid on Haverah castle resulted in the breaking down of its doors and the kidnapping of one of Sir Robert de Rokeley's servants. In October in the house of William Snaue, a royal archer, the gang slew the same Edmund Doufbygging it had maimed the previous year. Though the riots had by this time been continuing for more than two years none of the Beckwith faction had as yet been outlawed nor indeed had legal process been started against them. The absence in Spain of John of Gaunt, the lord of the honour of Knaresborough, may have been the reason for the failure to appoint an oyer and terminer commission to investigate the feuding. Such a commission was eventually appointed to enquire into the treasons, homicides, insurrections and murders in the lordship and liberty of Knaresborough on 10 March 1390, and in its court William Beckwith and his supporters seem to have been indicted for the first time.\(^2\) According to the unsupported word of the Monk of Westminster Gaunt obtained from the king at the end of July 1390 the power to exercise a "trailbaston" commission in Yorkshire and "in provinciis circumadjectentibus". Apparently Gaunt used his powers against Beckwith's receivers and maintainers and the gang leader was forced to flee to the forest; we are told that many men who possessed little went with him.\(^3\) The appointment of an oyer and terminer commission on 5 December 1391 to arrest Beckwith and his friends and put them in York goal suggests that the duke accomplished little. That something went amiss in the period between the two commissions is indicated by the original justices having to testify orally in chancery that the indictments had in fact been made. They gave the additional information that the gang was by then wandering up and down the countryside, bent on the murder of those who had indicted its members.\(^4\) It was during this period that the insurgents


\(^2\) For the killings at Fewston and Timble see P.R.O. Assize Roll 1147, m. 8.; Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1388-1392, p. 269.

\(^3\) Higden, op. cit.

\(^4\) Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1391-1396, p. 76.
again attacked both the house of Robert Doufbygging (1 June 1390) and the castle of Haverah (20 June 1390). It appears that on 2 February 1390 Beckwith himself laid in wait at Thornton with the intention of murdering Sir Thomas Colvill and that at some unnamed date the band had pillaged the house of William de Nessfield, the Yorkshire escheator, at Barrowby. \(^1\) Nessfield was the son of the esquire of the same name who had formerly been the chief steward of the duchy and chief baron of the Lancaster Exchequer. The second commission of oyer and terminer probably forced the rioters to look after their own skins and there are no references to any further depredations. It is stated by the Monk of Westminster that it was at this time that Beckwith fled to the densest part of the forest with 500 supporters, all of whom had been indicted in court. \(^2\)

It is the same chronicler who supplies us with our only information concerning Beckwith's death. The leader of the insurrection was killed at Barnard Castle between 22 December 1391 and 25 February 1392 by Thomas Blande. We are told that the murderer was paid 500 marks to betray Beckwith, but the actual circumstances of the deed are withheld. \(^3\) Blande, who does not seem to have been a member of the Rokeley faction, was probably a man with a personal vendetta against one of Beckwith's closer associates; he came from the North Riding and was possibly a tenant of the bishop of Durham. In July 1393 Beckwith's kinsmen arranged a meeting with Blande and asked him for part of the blood money towards prayers for their relative's soul. Blande agreed, but was treacherously struck down by one of his victim's family, who in turn was shot dead by a servant on the other side. The death of Beckwith settled little; indeed we are told that men all over the county became restive. \(^4\) There was an insurrection in the duke of York's lordship of Hatfield whence on 27 January 1392 a group of 300 men, who were armed in the manner of war, marched to Doncaster. The jury which indicted them said that they were in rebellion against their allegiance to the king in the manner of a traitorous

\(^2\) *Higden, ix.* 240.
\(^3\) Ibid. *ix.* 281.
army. On their arrival they made a proclamation in the market place that they would permit no townsman to exact toll or custom from the tenants of the dukes of Lancaster and York or monopolize the pannage; they spoke, so they said, on behalf of the two dukes and of the king. Almost simultaneously with the Hatfield outbreak came a rising in the villages of Cottingham, Buttercrambe and Hessle in the East Riding. On 31 January 1392 what was referred to as an immense confederation of malefactors led by the men from those villages descended on the town of Benningholme against their allegiance to the king and in the manner of an army of traitors. Their objective was the house of Robert Whithose, who appears to have been an unpopular official. Later the same year there was more trouble on the manor of Cottingham where Simon Stevenson Malynson and others were indicted for their "sworn conspiracies, assemblies, taking of fines and ransoms, liveries of hood and uniform and assaults" on William Holme, a former escheator of Yorkshire.

It is impossible to tell if any of William Beckwith's lieutenants perished at the same time as their captain. If they escaped death on that occasion their reprieve was only one of a matter of months, for on 8 February 1393 a pardon was granted at Gaunt's supplication to Sir Robert de Rokeley and thirteen of his followers for their part in the killing of seven of Beckwith's closest henchmen. Included was Robert Doufbygging, whose appointment had provoked all the bloodshed; Thomas Blande was given a separate pardon three months later. Despite the deaths of the leading trouble-makers there is some indication that the force of the insurrection was not yet totally spent. The Yorkshire Sheriff was under instruction to exact 250 insurgents from the West Riding to appear in the King's Bench in Easter term 1394.

1 P.R.O. Ancient Indictments (K.B.9), 144, m. 12.
2 Ibid.
5 Robert Doufbygging, who in 1374 had been responsible for the murder of the king's bailiff of Dent (see P.R.O. C47/86/89/753), apparently received and maintained felons on many occasions from 1377 onwards (see P.R.O. K.B. 27/534, Rex m. 6). His arrest and appearance before the Yorkshire assize court was commanded on 28 June 1397 (K.B./27/543, Rex m. 11) for further felonies following
and if we attribute this to the usual delays in legal process we have still to explain the testimony of the *Annales Ricardi*. This author states that the pertinacity of the rival groups in Yorkshire gave encouragement to the men of Cheshire and we know that the latter broke into revolt no earlier than January 1393 and quite possibly not until the spring.\(^1\) Furthermore, when the duke of Lancaster returned in May 1393 from another set of peace talks with the French he thought it necessary to visit Yorkshire before dealing with the rebels in Lancashire and Cheshire.\(^2\) The commission issued to Gaunt's son, the earl of Derby, on 21 March 1394 even suggests that the subsequent insurrection over the Pennines may have re-ignited the strife in Yorkshire.\(^3\) The instructions to the justices of Assize who had been appointed to enquire into the treasons and unlawful assemblies in the North and West Ridings to adjourn their sessions on 13 July 1394 probably provide us with the true terminal limit of the Beckwith episode.\(^4\)

The particular interest of the Beckwith riots lies mainly in the fact that they were caused, in the first place at least, neither by Lollardy nor by agrarian discontent. There seems no reason to doubt the view expressed by the Monk of Westminster that the troubles were precipitated by the desire to succeed to an office which hitherto had always been held by the members of a single family. The drawn-out nature of the disturbances was probably the result of the landlord class taking one side and the tenantry the other, and the final stages of the trouble may have set off peasant insurrections in other parts of the county. The inclusion of Sir Robert de Rokeley on one of the investigating commissions and Gaunt's intercession on behalf of those who had killed Beckwith's henchmen suggests that authority had few doubts that it

1 *Annales Ricardi Secundi*, op. cit.  
2 Ibid. p. 160.  
4 *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1392-1396*, p. 305.
was the Rokeley side that was in the right. An examination of the individual members of William Beckwith’s gang and their sympathizers reveals little which is extraordinary. Before they became involved in the insurrection none of them possessed what we would call a criminal record; nor did those who eventually survived offend again. The gang membership was drawn almost entirely from the lower classes of society, menials, tradesmen, land holders of the poorer type with a leavening of clergy and a single manorial official. Nearly all came from the villages surrounding Knaresborough and there is no suggestion of an influx of outlaws, “travelling men”, or of support being given by any gentleman with a penchant for robbery under arms. Nor is there any hint of assistance being afforded by the men of York, who had had their own private insurrection in 1381, or of the restiveness being used to settle old scores either there or in Beverley or Scarborough. Primarily the Beckwith episode was a feud of the old sort which was allowed to persist in the absence of the duke of Lancaster by officials who were either disinclined or unable to compose it on their own account.

The Cheshire rebellion of Sir Thomas Talbot, which so often has been connected with the riots of Beckwith and his friends, probably broke out in the first months of 1393. The only evidence which suggests a definite date is the reference in a royal command in the parliament of January 1394 that Talbot’s lands, chattels, goods and such as others had to his use at the beginning of Hilary term 1393 should be forfeit to the king if he did not surrender. All the sources agree that Talbot was the prime mover of the rebellion; indeed the names of most of his

---

2 On the other hand Sir Robert de Rokeley had amongst his supporters several men who were persistently at odds with the law; for example Christopher Forster and his kinfolk (see K.B. 27/536, Rex m. 1) and Robert Doufbygging.
3 K.B. 27/533, Rex m. 7. There were ten clerics in all excluding John Foxholes, schoolmaster of Thirsk.
4 To the chroniclers the episode seemed extraordinary on account of its origins and its wide extent. Its relative longevity is ignored. No writer intimates that Gaunt’s absence gave rise to any lack of effective government, though the duke’s activities when he returned indicate that there were several restive areas within his dominions; for example Pickering forest (see Cal. Close Rolls, 1392-1396, p. 227).
5 K.B. 27/532, Rex m. 16.
confederates are unknown to us. Sir Thomas, as the son of Edmund Talbot, inherited the manors of Boshall (Yorkshire) and Rushton (Lancashire). In later life he acquired Marbury (Cheshire) and Davington (Kent). He had succeeded his father by 1372, though at that date he was still under age and in ward to Sir Thomas Banaster. Before turning to treason Sir Thomas had made a name for himself soldiering in the marches of Scotland and France, and there exists the possibility that he served in Ireland as well. With Sir Richard Tempest he was appointed joint keeper of Berwick on Tweed on 18 April 1386, the commission lasting until at least the spring of 1388. It was during his service in the north that Talbot was made one of the four packers of the petty customs at the port of London. Before 15 June 1388 he had been entrusted with the keepership of the castle of Guisnes in the Calais march and it was with this rank, says Froissart, that he jousted in the tournament at St. Ingleveret. He had, however, lost the post by 17 February 1391 and we know nothing more of his career until 20 September 1392 when he was retained to stay with the king for life at the fairly modest annuity of forty marks. It may have been through his service in France that Talbot struck up an acquaintance with a knight who is mentioned by Walsingham as playing a considerable part in the same revolt. This was Sir Nicholas Clifton, another veteran in martial experience, the son of Sir Willam Clifton, lord of the manors of Clifton, Westby and Goosnargh (Lancashire), and Margaret, the daughter of Sir Robert Sherbourne of Stonyhurst.

1 Sir Nicholas Clifton (see above) also led an insurrection in Cheshire at the same time as Talbot but no chronicler or other source actually cites the two names together. Of the rebels' activities the plea rolls tell us very little.

2 Visitation of Lancashire, 1533, ed. W. Langton, Chetham Society, xcvi (1896), 38; F. R. Raines, Notitia Cestriensis, Chetham Society, i (1845), 231.


4 Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland, iv. 360. The garrison was drawn from south Yorkshire. Sir Thomas Talbot was granted an annuity by the crown for the first time on 12 August 1387; a second followed on 18 November 1389 (see Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1413-1416, pp. 58, 152).


He married Margaret West, the daughter of another professional soldier, Sir Thomas West of Smitherfield (Warwickshire) and Rughcombe (Wiltshire). In November 1389 Clifton was referred to as the lieutenant of John Holand, earl of Huntingdon, then admiral of the west, but he had lost the post by 30 May 1392. Early in 1393 his behaviour was arousing suspicion and two sergeants at arms were commanded on 28 February to bring him before the king and council in chancery as he had disregarded a previous summons.

The writer of the *Annales Ricardi* was convinced that the rebellion was caused by a belief among the men of Cheshire that the dukes of Lancaster and Gloucester and the earl of Derby were bent on giving away King Richard’s claim to the French throne. He adds that they were further incensed by what they took to be a deliberate plan to infringe on, or even to do away with entirely, the liberties of the palatinate. These suspicions of the magnates they put into written form and affixed to the doors of parish churches. Moreover they explained their fears to the men of the neighbouring counties and asked for assistance to meet a common danger. As a result, says the chronicler, an army totalling more than 20,000 men in archers and men-at-arms was collected at various rallying points. The rebels proclaimed their
intention of killing not only Gaunt, Gloucester and Derby but also certain kinsmen of the king who lived in the midland shires and whom they suspected of harbouring treacherous designs. To the author of the *Annales Ricardi* the insurrection seemed best explained by what he called the fickleness of the Cheshire people, who were wont to live lawless lives and who had supplied a great many men for service in foreign wars; apparently matters were made worse by some men seeking to profit from the commotion to settle old scores. Thus, we are told, men all over England were sure another general insurrection was at hand, for the events of 1381 had been forgotten by no one.1

Fears concerning the making of a definite peace with France were very real since in April 1393 the dukes of Lancaster and Gloucester met the French plenipotentiaries at Lelighem for that very purpose. Before he set out, Gloucester, whose name Froissart associates with a group which favoured the continuation of the war, had had to make recognizances into chancery for 10,000 marks. However, his conduct during the negotiations seems to have been exemplary.2 The *Annales Ricardi* state that although the king and his council had been kept informed of the situation in Cheshire the taking of action was delayed since they did not wish to interrupt the making of peace; the suggestion is offered that the king intended first of all to warn his friends and that it was during this hiatus that the revolt became known to the dukes at Lelighem. Apparently the French representatives were quite happy to adjourn the discussions so that Gaunt and Gloucester could return home to demonstrate their innocence.3 They did more than that; they set about putting down the rebellion themselves. On 6 May 1393 writs were issued to Gloucester, as justice of Chester, to Gaunt, whose palatinate of Lancaster was obviously affected, and to the Sheriffs of Shropshire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Warwickshire commanding action against the insurgents. The one

---

1 *Annales Ricardi Secundi*, p. 160. In the statute passed against the restiveness in Cheshire and Lancashire in the parliament of 1394 the law of 1381 against villein insurrections was rehearsed by way of a preface: see Statutes of the Realm (Record Commission), ii. 89.
addressed to Gloucester asked for it to be proclaimed in full county court that the insurrections and the unlawful assemblies were contrary to the wishes of the king. The use of the “posse comitatus” was enjoined and the names of those arrested were to be communicated instantly to Richard himself.\(^1\) Mention was made of the fact that the king had recently heard, perhaps untruly, that at the instigation of a cunning enemy an attempt was being made to destroy the magnates of the realm “quorum nobilitate dignitatis nostrae diadema maxime fulcitur et honoratur”. According to the *Annales* the measures to restore order depended most of all on Gaunt. Rather remarkably it is stated that he went first of all into Yorkshire where, as Chief Justice with a band of royal justices in his entourage, he set about the task of finally concluding the troubles started by Beckwith. It was only after he had visited Yorkshire that he turned into Lancashire and Cheshire. In both counties he was able to suppress the rebellion by largely peaceful means, only on a single occasion having to resort to force.\(^2\) It seems that the duke of Lancaster managed to convince the rebels by means of the knights in his retinue that their suspicions of his conduct at the peace talks were utterly without foundation. Several of the more important rebels were pardoned on the spot and admitted to familiar terms; others, it is said, he saved from summary justice so as to be kept for the justice of the king. A considerable number of rebels who came from the lowest classes of society Gaunt himself pardoned and then recruited into his own forces for service in Gascony. This pacification on the part of the royal uncles, for Gloucester had stood by to assist his elder brother if need be, must have occupied most of the summer. However, some of the insurgents were possibly still in arms in September. Walsingham tells us that in the middle of that month the earl of Arundel took up his position with an armed contingent in the castle of Holt-on-Dee when the county was in arms against him.\(^3\) The men of Cheshire had certainly

\(^1\) *Foedera*, ed. T. Rymer (original edn.), vii. 746. Richard must have suspected the involvement either of someone of great importance or of someone close to himself.

\(^2\) *Annales Ricardi Secundi*, pp. 160-1.

\(^3\) *Historia Anglica*, ed. H. T. Riley (R.S., 1863), ii. 214.
quarrelled with the earl on more than one occasion and it might be expected that he would take the measures necessary to defend his lordship of Bromfield and Yale in such disturbed times. His studious inactivity, however, when once within the fort allowed men to question his designs. The *Annales Ricardi* state that he was awaiting the opportunity either to aid the royal uncles or to crush the rebels more directly; but then the chronicler continues "delatus tamen erga dictos dominos de eorum proditione extitit"¹ and we know that the earl was in fact taxed by Gaunt with disloyalty in the parliament of January 1394. To the chronicler any suggestion of treason seemed incredible, yet on 30 April 1394 Arundel took out a pardon for all the treasons or insurrections he had been involved in with the commons "or others" as well as for similar crimes committed by other persons at his instigation.²

On 12 October 1393 a group of eleven Cheshire gentlemen were instructed to effect the arrest of Sir Thomas Talbot and Sir John Massy of Tatton, and deliver them to Chester castle. The order came when the rebellion had been in process for at least six months and possibly as many as nine. Perhaps the pride of the duke of Lancaster forbade his asking for express royal sanction against the ringleaders; perhaps the king was reluctant to order the arrest of a knight with whom he had a close connection. There is also the possibility that the names of the ringleaders had only recently been discovered. Whatever the reason, once the command was given Talbot was soon taken and persuaded to admit to his guilt. In the parliament which assembled in January 1394 Gaunt and Gloucester showed that in the presence of the earl of Derby and John, Lord Lovell, Talbot had confessed in great part to making a conspiracy to kill the dukes and the great men of the realm. Soon after making his confession Talbot escaped from custody, probably fleeing to Derbyshire or

¹ *Annales Ricardi Secundi*, p. 162. If P.R.O. Ancient Petition (S.C. 8), 4388 dates from this time it is possible that Arundel from his lordship of Bromfield and Yale interfered to crush the rebellion in the palatinate or had gone raiding therein for his own profit. The document shows that Richard was most annoyed at the earl's infringement on the franchise of the county of Chester. Arundel's territorial possessions in that region are listed in *Statutes of the Realm*, ii. 100.

Yorkshire.\(^1\) It was in the same parliament that the dukes of Lancaster and Gloucester brought forward a "bill" which asked for the king and lords in parliament to pronounce on the nature of Talbot's offence and furthermore to give judgement on it. The decision was that the matter was manifest high treason because it was "notorious" and known throughout the kingdom. Hence on 28 February 1394 it was commanded that Talbot should be called on to surrender into the King's Bench. If he did not do so he would be held convicted and attainted of treason by award of parliament. So would all those who sheltered him. As Professor Rezneck has pointed out, the case exemplifies the declaration of treason by parliament as envisaged in the statute of 1352.\(^2\) Probably because they felt that in Talbot's case the normal processes of outlawry were insufficient, the two dukes were taking an extreme course to meet novel circumstances. They may have suspected that since Talbot had been so recently retained by the king he could rely on a royal sympathy that was denied them in their task of suppression.

To the duke of Gloucester in particular the situation must have seemed fraught with danger. He had made recognizances into chancery before going with Gaunt to Lelighem and it can only be assumed his behaviour there was to be watched by the king with some concern. The delay before the dukes were notified of an insurrection which was explicitly mounted against themselves as potential traitors must have seemed an evil portent. The implication of a retinue knight and other experienced war veterans who had the closest ties with the crown was not likely to be counterbalanced by the king's protestation of his innocence of any conspiracy against the magnates of the realm. To the suspicious baronial mind an unholy alliance of king and gentry may have appeared a distinct possibility at a time when the crown was retaining more and more knights and squires on an exclusive royal contract. The worries of the two dukes cannot have been dispelled by the relatively mild statute passed in the parliament

\(^1\) The Palatinate of Chester, Recognizance Rolls, i. 240 (on the shelves of the P.R.O. Literary Search Room); P.R.O. K.B. 27/532, Rex m. 16.

of 1394 against those who made assemblies, riots or rumours against the peace. Such men were to be arrested and put in goal and the sheriffs and king's ministers were to be assisted in their task by the magnates. If the statute came before the ducal "bill" then the latter may be seen as a hurried manoeuvre to secure stronger legal sanction against Talbot and his supporters. The conviction and attainer of the rebels would also preclude any appeal of treason on their part against the two dukes. By this time Gloucester must have begun to feel sure that the king intended making him pay for his conduct in 1388. Sir Thomas Talbot escaped being captured in arms and on 16 May 1394 surrendered himself to the king, who accepted his surrender. He was committed to the Tower where he remained until 28 September 1394, when he was removed to Windsor castle. In March 1394, between the time of the parliamentary declaration and the day by which Talbot was asked to surrender, the duke of Gloucester was removed from his post as justice of Chester and Thomas Mowbray, earl of Nottingham, appointed in his place. More significantly still, on 20 May, Sir William Bagot, who was referred to as King Richard's "dear companion", was made Mowbray's lieutenant, with full power to hold all pleas and sessions. If this was a precaution by the king to protect Talbot and his followers from over-severe justice it was to be unnecessary, since the rebel leader was never put on trial and escaped from captivity during the time of Richard's first expedition to Ireland. His fellow rebel commander, Sir Nicholas Clifton, was allowed to make his peace almost as soon as the revolt had been suppressed, whilst Sir John Massy of Tatton, whose arrest had been ordered at the same time as Talbot's, was freed from the Tower on 7 July 1394. Two other rebels who

1 17 Richard II, c. 8. 2 Cal. Close Rolls, 1392-1396, p. 316. 3 P.R.O. Chester 29/27, m. 24. 4 Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1391-1396, p. 560. A Sir Thomas Talbot served the king as his Irish interpreter on the 1394 expedition. It is possible that he was the Lancashire knight and was put back in the Tower of London before Richard came home. See E. Curtis, Richard II in Ireland (Oxford, 1927), pp. 60, 71, 88, 144, 150, 161, 176, 222. 5 Sir Nicholas Clifton seems to have made his peace before 5 May 1394 (Cal. Close Rolls, 1392-1396, p. 284). On 19 January 1396 he was retained to stay with
were released at a later date were Edmund Thornbar of Yorkshire, who had been imprisoned in the city of London prison "under suspicion of Thomas Talbot's mischief", and Roger (or Richard) Crosby, a vagabond Sempringham canon. The cleric was an obvious ne'er-do-well who had been imprisoned in Newgate in September 1382 charged with counterfeiting the Pope's seal; eight years later he had been forced to give pledges not to sue in the papal curia.\footnote{Cai Close Rolls, 1392-1396, p. 334; 1381-1385, p. 213; 1389-1392, p. 151.} Of the other insurgents there is nothing to be gleaned. They may all have been dealt with in a summary manner, but the Annales Ricardi state that some were kept for the justice of the king. There is no record of any such trials in the normal courts and it can only be suggested that it was necessary to try Talbot first, which never happened.\footnote{Annales Ricardi Secundi, p. 161.}

The most mystifying aspect of the Cheshire rebellion is the part played by the earl of Arundel. Before Talbot surrendered he had asked for and obtained a pardon for the treasons and insurrections which he had committed with the commons and for those which others had committed at his instigation. In 1397, when the earl was on trial for his life, he claimed the benefit of this\footnote{Eulogium Historiarum ed. F. S. Haydon (R.S., 1863), iii. 375, shows that Arundel initially sought the protection of a general pardon but then pleaded "adhuc habeo indulgentiam quam mihi Rex sponte obtulit . . . et mihi misit non rogatus quinque annis elapsis". His claim was refused "par cause qe la dite Chartre feust grantee et issez hautement en prejudice du Roy, sa Regalie et sa Corone, le Roy nient appris ne enfourmez au temps du Grante de mesme la Chartre ne qe les matiers comprisez deins ycelles feurent sy horribles et sy haynouses encontre sa dignitee Roiale et en ceo nostre Sr. le Roy desceu soit repelled et de tout ad nulle" (Rotuli Parliamentorum (Record Commission), iii. 351a).} pardon but was told that it had been recalled as it was to the king's prejudice. When asked by Gaunt why he had sought a pardon at all if he was as innocent as he claimed, Arundel replied "ad obturandum lingues emulorum meorum, quorum tu es unus". The earl pointed out that he knew no more of "that" treason than did Gaunt, who had been abroad at the time.\footnote{Chronicon Adae de Usk, ed. E. M. Thompson (London, 1904), p. 13.} It does indeed appear that the king felt he had been tricked or the king for life and given the keepership of the castle and lordship of Bolsover (Derbyshire) (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1391-1396, p. 662). For Massy see Cal. Close Rolls, 1392-1396, p. 305.
constrained to allow the pardon, and it may have been in part his annoyance at this which led to the scene at Queen Anne’s funeral on 3 August 1394. That same day Arundel was committed to the Tower where he was kept for a week, only securing his freedom by going before the king at the archbishop of Canterbury’s manor of Lambeth. He was called on not to apologize for his tardy arrival at Westminster Abbey but to swear he would make no riots or unlawful assemblies in the future. His mainpennors under the very large sum of £40,000 were his brother the archbishop of York, the earls of March, Warwick, Nottingham and Oxford, Sir Thomas Percy, Sir Hugh Burnell, John, Lord Lovell, Sir Reynold de Grey of Ruthin and Sir William Beauchamp.  

It is possible that in May, June or July 1394 the king received information that led him to believe Arundel had indeed been involved in the Cheshire insurrection and regretted the earl’s earlier pardon.

Though Arundel remarked that Lancaster was innocent of any implication in the 1393 rebellion the king seems nonetheless to have entertained certain suspicions concerning his uncle’s loyalty soon after. In August 1394 the duke found it necessary to write to his royal nephew and among other things to deny the rumours then circulating in the king’s household that he was plotting treason. The point is of some importance since his next enterprise was to sail in the autumn for Bordeaux, in theory to take formal possession of Aquitaine but also taking with him a considerable number of the Cheshire rebels. Whether the king made use of his Irish expedition to remove other insurgents is problematical. The evidence suggests that it gave him an opportunity to resolve not one but several pressing problems. To Froissart the venture afforded an outlet for the young “bloods” now deprived of the excitement of a French war, but Richard must have been aware of the need to re-establish effective government in Ireland. There is no hint in any chronicle that

1 Cal. Close Rolls, 1392-1396, p. 368.
2 As pointed out by Professor Galbraith in History, op. cit. p. 232, quoting M. D. Legge. Miss Legge however dates the letter August 1397 (see Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions (Oxford, 1941), p. 75).
3 Froissart, op. cit. xv. 134-5.
the king gave the northern insurgents a chance to redeem themselves by effective military service as his grandfather had done with the Folvilles and Coterels sixty years previously. It seems likely that the expedition was primarily intended as occupational therapy for the settling of those baronial nerves which had been badly jarred during the previous year by the unprecedented events and frenetical accusations. By visiting Ireland the king himself was relieved of the necessity of putting Talbot on trial and he may have hoped that Gaunt and Gloucester would have forgotten their quarry when they returned to England. As it turned out, Talbot managed to escape from the Tower sometime before 14 April 1395, when the earl of Kent and his lieutenant were pardoned for their negligence. On Gaunt's return from Gascony at Christmas 1395 his relations with the king were at first none too cordial, though it has been suggested that in the years 1395-6 the duke's "natural loyalty was . . . reinforced by his enthusiasm for the French alliance and by his care for the interests of his third wife and her children". Whatever the state of the personal relationship between the king and his uncle there can be no denying that Lancaster attempted to reopen the matter of Sir Thomas Talbot and his crimes in the parliament of January 1397. On the second day of that session (Tuesday, 24 January) the duke, no doubt as a preliminary sortie, asked for justice to be done on the knight. Two days later the king in answer, avoiding reference to Talbot himself, said that the originator of the riots, whether he was a great man or small, and as long as there was proof of his guilt, would be punished according to the law "coment q'il soit de son sanc ou non". On the face of it Gaunt was seeking to persuade a reluctant king to put on trial a knight of his retinue but there is some intimation that


2 The two dukes drew apart after the Cheshire rebellion. Gloucester was probably jealous of his elder brother's wealth and his pretensions in regard to the royal succession.

3 By Professor McKisack in The Fourteenth Century, 1307-1399, p. 473.

4 Rot. Parl., iii. 338a, 338b.
in fact the duke was trying to cause trouble for his brother Gloucester, who had been intriguing against him during his stay in Aquitaine.\(^1\) Since Lancaster was the petitioner, the king’s tart reply can only have been directed at Gloucester, the constant advocate of war. Indeed the prime cause of the antagonism between the two royal uncles was very probably the extended truce with France which Gaunt had always worked for and Gloucester always hated. Froissart tells us that at this time the latter was busy stirring up discontent against the king’s recent marriage. He says he was informed by John Lakenheath, a close henchman of the duke and his deputy in the court of chivalry, that Gloucester had sworn to effect the renewal of the war within two years, being encouraged in his design by the fact that the populace was already beginning to speak against the king.\(^2\) Apparently the duke had ridiculed the idea that the unemployed archers and men-at-arms could be kept loyal by the king proposing another expedition to Ireland; no country so poor could be attractive to men trained in France. An event which assisted Gloucester’s machinations was the visit to England late in 1396 of the count of St. Pol, whose mission, so rumour had it, was to persuade Richard to give up Calais. Particularly receptive to Gloucester’s propaganda were the merchants of London, who at the duke’s prompting sought from the king the end of those taxes which had paid for the war.\(^3\) They were only quieted, says Froissart, by the earl of Salisbury pointing out that any rebellion against the king in defeating the forces of law and order could cause a disaster to their city like the one of 1381; surely a line of argument that smacks of desperation. So serious had matters become that the king’s household servants told their master they felt their lives were in danger.\(^4\) Froissart is not the only source to intimate that the truce with France and the royal marriage were the prime cause of the final quarrel between the king and his youngest uncle. The *Chronique de la*

---

\(^1\) Froissart, op. cit. xv. 165-6.  
\(^2\) Ibid. xvi. 2, 5. The promise extracted by the English negotiators of the marriage that the French king, his uncles and brothers, should aid and sustain Richard against any of his subjects (*Foedera*, vii. 811) could easily have been directed against Gloucester.  
\(^3\) Ibid. pp. 15-17.  
Traison et le Mort de Richard II states quite categorically that the "divisions" between the duke of Gloucester, his ally Arundel and the king began when Brest was being evacuated.\(^1\) Though the English were in honour bound to surrender both Brest and Cherbourg the popular dismay that this move occasioned was long-lasting and in fact made use of by Henry of Lancaster to rally men to his standard after landing at Ravenspur.\(^2\) In June or July 1397 some of the Brest garrison were invited to a royal feast at Westminster where Gloucester was also present. When the meal had ended the duke first drew Richard’s attention to the penury of his soldier-guests and then called him a coward for yielding so easily a fortress won by the swords of his ancestors. The king was most angry and although tempers were soon controlled and politeness restored there was every indication that the time of reckoning was close at hand. This proved to be the case for the king rode to arrest his uncle in person on 10 July.\(^3\)

Thus the Cheshire revolt of 1393 was probably an expression of dissatisfaction at the proposed peace on the part of a number of veterans of the French wars and those others who hoped for lucrative service abroad. The duke of Gloucester, who behaved himself so well at Lelighem, was the man who stood to gain most from Talbot’s insurrection, but the fact that it was directed against “the magnates of the realm” argues against any theory that he actually instigated the trouble. We may imagine that Gloucester and his ally Arundel were pleased but also puzzled at the course of events; this would account for the earl’s ambivalent attitude. From Talbot’s later career \(^4\) we can see that he

\(^1\) Chronique de la Traison et Mort de Richard II roy d'Angleterre, ed. Benjamin Williams (Eng. Hist. Soc., 1846), p. 117. Lettenhove says that John Lakenheath, Froissart’s informant, had been “un des capitaines du chateau de Brest” (Froissart, xvi. 247).

\(^2\) As noted by Principal Steel in Richard II, p. 264.

\(^3\) Annales Ricardi Secundi, p. 203. Possibly as the aftermath of the St. Alban’s “plot”.

\(^4\) On 11 November 1397 Talbot was given 100 marks a year on Cockerham priory and retained by the king for life (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1396-1399, p. 252). He was made steward of Slaidburn and keeper of Bowland forest on 16 March 1399 (ibid. p. 495) and apparently sailed with Richard to Ireland in May of the same year (ibid. p. 550). He was able to secure the confirmation of his annuities early in the new reign: the one of 40 marks on 10 September 1400 and that of 100 marks on 6 May 1401 (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1399-1401, pp. 343, 486). On 2 January 1403
was a man of stature with an independent turn of mind who might, particularly if he were already connected with Lollardy in 1393, have entertained some very radical political ideas. He must have believed that Richard was still, in 1393, not his own master; he probably felt that the peace talks with France were against the true royal interest and none of the king's doing. In time, when peace with France had become the actual order of the day, responsibility for the revolt became a handy weapon for the king to use against Gloucester, the warmonger, and later on it seems to have been the war issue which actually precipitated the time of reckoning between the king and his youngest uncle. If this was so, why did Richard in the parliament of September 1397 fail to reproach the duke with treason in 1393-4 and conspiracy in 1396-7? Probably the king was fully aware that to introduce the war issue was to guarantee popular support for his intended victims. Thus, although he initially announced that Gloucester, Arundel and Warwick had been arrested not for their old crimes but for new, the trio were in fact condemned for their deeds of 1388.¹

Talbot was made keeper of Montgomery castle which post he held until the subsequent 20 April (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1401-1405, p. 184; Cal. Close Rolls, 1402-1405, p. 88). His arrest was commanded on 29 January 1404 so he could be brought before the king (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1401-1405, p. 420) but he must have cleared himself since he was keeper of Montgomery castle again on 7 August 1405 (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1405-1408, p. 3). On 12 July 1406 he was given letters of protection as staying in Ireland with the king's second son Thomas (ibid. p. 36). In July 1413 letters patent which had been issued to Talbot on 12 August 1387, 18 November 1389 and 11 August 1411 were confirmed and he was still to be retained by the crown (Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1413-1416, pp. 58, 152); nonetheless he assisted Oldcastle in the Lollard insurrection of 1414 (see K. B. McFarlane, John Wycliffe and the beginning of English Nonconformity (London, 1952), pp. 170, 172). As Mrs. Aston has pointed out, the rebels of 1414 were taken with the most revolutionary of schemes, wanting to do away with the kingship, the king, his brothers, the prelates and the other magnates of the realm. She suggests that Sir Roger Acton and Talbot were to be rulers of some sort under Oldcastle the regent (M. E. Aston, Past and Present, xvii (1960), 19-20).

¹ Foedera, viii. 6-7.