

THE MAYOR OF BRISTOL

The Story of John le Taverner

A fact/fiction account of the riots of 1312 and 1313 in the town of Bristol.

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BRISTOL

Ref: Oxford History of England 14thC

- 1307 Edward I died age 68
Circle of younger barons, linked to royal house by birth and marriage.
Earl of Gloucester, nephew of young king, was age 16
Prince Edward, age 24, was unruly+ extravagant, sportsman, liked drama, minstrels, etc. Emotionally unstable. On accession reversed many of his father's decisions.
Had a favourite named Piers Gaveston, who was married to the sister of the Earl of Gloucester. Reputed to love Gaveston more than his wife.
Flamboyant coronation.
English magnates closed ranks against Gaveston; only Gloucester and Warwick remained neutral. Pembroke was on opposing side.
- 1308 In April the barons forced Edward to promise to banish Gaveston. Edward's promises meant very little.
Gaveston went to Ireland. Edward accompanied him to Bristol, and watched him embark.
- April 1309 Gaveston was recalled. Lincoln and Pembroke hoped Edward and Gaveston had learned their lesson. Edward appeared in parliament with Gaveston by his side.
- 1310 It was necessary for Edward to, propose the arrest of scandal-mongers. Five Earls refused to attend the council of York 'because of Peter.' (Presumably Piers)
To secure the loyalty of the Earl of Gloucester, Edward bestowed upon him money and lands.
Gloucester and Richmond were responsible for seeing that none appeared armed in parliaments.
When Edward went north he ordered the earls to follow him; only Gloucester and Warwick obeyed.
Gaveston was a series of scapegoats who stood between the king and his own folly, and who were blamed for Edward's extravagance and lack of judgment.
Clauses in the Ordinances reveal the desire of the barons to establish control of the royal finances. No gifts of land etc were to be made until the king's debts had been paid. In future no prises of corn, merchandise or other goods , whether under colour of purveyance or otherwise, against the owner and without due payment.
Only by his access to wealth of native merchants could dependence on foreign creditors be reduced.
The king was denied the right to issue charters of protection or to give pardon to open malefactors, though he may exercise the ancient prerogative of showing mercy.
The aim of the barons' ordinances was to reduce the power of a weak king held in thralldom by a greedy and foolish favourite.
Gaveston went north, was given custody of lands, castles, forests south of the Trent, and Scarborough Castle. His return was to the barons tantamount to a declaration of war.
When Warwick formed a confederacy for the defence of the Ordinances, Gloucester offered to help. Gloucester was to hold London and the South.
Gaveston was caught in Warwick rectory and taken barefoot to the castle dungeon.
Pembroke sought Earl of Gloucester and begged him for help in saving his name from dishonour and his property from forfeiture.
Gaveston was executed by two Welshmen. Pembroke and Warwick went over to the King's side.

1312 Death of Gaveston was mitigated by the birth of Edward's son.
Scotland took advantage of England's weakness. One by one castles
in the north of England were recovered.

1314 Gloucester and Pembroke were among the magnates who followed the
king.

23. June. Bannockburn.

Gloucester supported veterans who advised a day's delay before
taking up the challenge. Edward turned on his nephew with charges
of treachery. Gloucester boldly plunged his cavalry against Bruce's
hedge of pikes. Gloucester fell early in the fight. After Gloucester's
death at Bannockburn Pembroke's influence was much diminished,

1315 Torrential rains ruined the harvests of Europe and famine spread.

There was misery 'such as our age has never seen.'

Men murdered for food; in towns people died of hunger.

When the king visited St. Albans in 1316 he had trouble buying bread.

Wheat rose to 7 or 8 times normal price; sold at Leicester market for
44s. Peas, beans, oats, malt + barley rose in price; salt cost as much
as wheat. Government attempts at price control proved futile. Only
effect was to cause dealers to withdraw goods from markets.

Social unrest developed in many parts of the country.

* In Bristol the mass of the burgesses rose against the governing
oligarchy and drove them out of the town. The government had to bring
up siege engines to compel their surrender.

Among Pembroke's lay associates the most conspicuous was
Badlesmere, a baron of the second rank whose principal affiliations
had been with Gloucester.

Husbands of Gloucester's heiresses were Hugh Despenser, Roger
Damory, and Hugh Audley, who rallied to support Pembroke.

Pembroke and Badlesmere would go to any lengths to attain their aims.

Note: For the benefit of the reader, modern language has been used
throughout the story, although the characters would be more likely to use
'thee' and 'thou' as opposed to 'you'.

Names have been simplified, and the prefixed 'le' and 'de' omitted from the
names of prominent characters, including the following:

John le Taverner;	Henry le Spycer;	John du Celer
Laurence de Carey;	John de Horncastle;	John de Button
Richard de Abyngdon;	William de Kerdyf;	William de Clif;
Alexander de Vilers;	Aylmer de Valence;	John le Hunt;
Thomas de Berkeley;	John de Wellyngton	John de Kerdyf;
William de Axe;	John de Buller;	
Bartholomew de Badlesmere.		

Bristol 1312 A.D.

"Mark my words, there'll be trouble before long in this town, if Laurence Carey is allowed to collect the tolls due to the town council."

Richard Legat, wool merchant and bailiff of the Bristol spoke for all of the gentlemen who had gathered together in John Taverner's hostelry. They were holding an unofficial meeting to discuss what they considered to be an unauthorized act on the part of one of the other powerful members of their community. All of the men present were respected citizens, many of them burgesses, guild members and merchants.

John Taverner, their host on this occasion, was a former mayor of the town. He kept the hostelry at the corner of Corn Street and Wine Street, and owned the messuage of land on which it stood, together with other messuages and cottages outside the city walls. His inn had originally been used to give shelter to important personages travelling through the town on longer journeys, and accompanied by their retinues of servants, but it was cleaner and quieter than the homes of some of the prosperous men now gathered there. Even the better homes in the town were overcrowded with the owner's family, servants and apprentices, and the ground floor was used as a workroom and shop, opening directly onto the street.

Such a house was no place in which to discuss anything private, or important. Now it was eight o'clock on a winter's night, the tavern's, guests had retired to rest before resuming their journey early the next morning, and this was a good place talk without being interrupted or overheard. This matter needed to be discussed privately, and before the full assembly of burgesses met in the Guildhall the following day.

In 1284 King Edward I had granted to the town of Bristol a charter, giving the members of the town council the responsibility for collecting taxes, which were then to be used to repair Bristol's walls and streets. The citizens now gathered together feared that the terms of King Edward's Charter were about to be broken, since without the consent of the full council, Laurence Carey and other members of the Merchant Company had already started to take over the collection and management of the town's taxes, and there was no certainty that the money was being used for the purposes for which it was intended.

Henry Spycer agreed, "Carey's overstepping his authority. Seneschal of this community he may be, but he should have called a meeting of Guild members to decide what the amount of the toll should be, and how it should best be used for the good of the town. I have a feeling that the tolls they've already collected will not be used for the general good, but for their own use, and it's our duty to stop that happening."

Richard Legat went on to explain, "What worries me most is that he may have done this with the authority of the king. I think Constable Badlesmere at the castle may have given his consent for what they have done."

"It's not for King Edward or for the Constable to decide," John Celer argued. "The right to collect the tallages was granted to the burgesses of Bristol, not to the king or the constable, and we shouldn't stand back and let them take that right away from us. If we don't stand firm on this, where is it going to end?"

"That's true," John Horncastle agreed. "It's our right to have an equal say in this. "It's a right that was given to all of us, in the charter granted by the old King Edward, but I'm afraid this new king doesn't care about his people the way his father did. What do you think, John?" he added, turning towards the landlord of the inn.

John Taverner knew that the men respected his opinions, and had confidence in his judgment. He replied, "Like you, I'm worried that some of our members will turn against the people, and would like to take the government of this town into their own hands. I hear they've also elected among themselves their own mayor and bailiffs."

"That won't do them much good if the townsfolk refuse to obey them," said Simon Beauflour, one of the more senior burgesses. "There was a skirmish yesterday morning down on the docks, when they went to collect the tallages. Some bales of wool ended up in the water....and one of the men who were unloading them. The folk of this town will not pay more than is due to the king."

"That's something we've got to remember," John reminded them. "We can't go against King Edward, but in my reckoning if the barons turned against the king, there must be about twenty of our Guild members, along with Laurence Cary, who would support the barons against the people of this town, and against the king. I think we should first appeal to His Majesty himself, and ask him to confirm the rights granted by his father to the citizens of Bristol."

"Will King Edward listen?" asked John Hasard. "I hear the king doesn't listen to anybody but Piers Gaveston. Even the barons are afraid of Gaveston's power."

"That's not true. It's common knowledge that king takes advice from the Earl of Gloucester, his nephew," William Hore said.

"Aye, but it's all in the same family," John Hasard replied. "Gloucester is the cousin of the king, and Gaveston is married to Gloucester's sister."

"That could be in our favour," John Taverner suggested.

"I hear the other barons resent our new king's favourites. If Laurence Cary and his followers have the support of the barons, it may be that King Edward will be more ready to listen to our pleas and to join our cause against them. I think that before we take matters into our own hands, to be safe, we ought to appeal to the king."

Henry Spycer agreed, "I agree with our friend John. So far it would seem that the taxes collected by Laurence Cary and his men do not benefit the people of Bristol, nor do they reach the king's coffers. It is possible that the king will hear us and grant our request. I would readily volunteer to deliver a petition to King Edward in London, if that is what all of you gathered here tonight think we should do."

"If we are to send an envoy, then I would like to go along with you," said Simon Beauflower. "I too am of the same mind."

Thomas Taverner, barely sixteen years of age, but already mature in body and mind, quietly asked, "If you do go to London, may I go too? Will you let me go with them, Father?"

Proudly John le Taverner looked at his son and replied, "Aye, if that's what you want to do. And if you do go, you had better take with you two of the men who work on the farm. We've heard plenty of tales about thieves and vagabonds who lie in wait to rob travellers on the highways. I think there may be times on the road when a greater number will be needed to make sure this mission reaches the king safely. All will be lost if the letter should fall into the wrong hands before it can be delivered to King Edward."

When John's wife Elizabeth heard of her son's request to go to London, she was not at all enthusiastic about the suggestion. She protested, "No, Thomas. Fully grown you may be, but you're not yet a man in years, to undertake such a journey."

Thomas argued, "If it's true there are vagabonds and robbers on the way, then youth and strength may be of more use than age and wisdom, Mother. I may be young, but I am as strong as any man, and well able to defend myself. What do you say, Father?"

"There's nobody I'd rather trust with this mission," John Taverner replied. "I would go myself, but I have a feeling that I shall be needed here. I think the skirmish at the docks may be just the start of trouble ahead, and if that's so, the people of this town may need a leader who has some authority to speak for them in the Guildhall. If that happens, I should be here. Go with them, son, and you may be sure my heart will go with you."

Another volunteer to join the deputation was William Gylemyn, who had studied law as an apprentice of the King's Bench in London, but had fled to Bristol after being involved in an apprentices' revolt there. The burgesses lost no time in drawing up the petition, in the form of a parchment scroll, and asking as many burgesses, artisans, tradesmen and townsfolk as could read and write to sign it. Two days later Henry Spycer, Simon Beauflower, Thomas Taverner, five servants, and two of the men from the Taverner farm set out on the road to London, carrying with them a day's supply of food, stout cudgels, and the precious scroll.

As John Taverner had feared, Laurence Cary and William Randolph, who had been four times mayor of Bristol, with the help of Constable Badlesmere's servants, continued to collect the tolls. In spite of their positions of authority, the townspeople did not trust the collectors, and suspected that these tolls might be unfair. There were brawls in the streets, in the warehouses, and on the docksides. During the disturbances property was damaged; both men and women were injured.

John Taverner was disturbed by what he heard, and went to the Guildhall, where he approached Laurence Cary and William Randolph, and asked that the collection of tolls

should cease at once. He was informed that the Constable of Bristol Castle, Bartholomew Badlesmere, had granted his permission, which was what Richard Legat had suspected. John would have gone to the Castle to see Badlesmere, but that worthy baron had left Bristol to return to his own property in Kent, so there was nothing to be done but to wait for the deputation to come back from London. Meanwhile the daily disturbances continued. and the mood of the townspeople was verging on rebellion.

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The party of burgesses and their servants arrived in the town of Bathe, where they stabled their horses and spent the night in a hostelry owned by Henry Welles. At daybreak the next morning, having replenished their supplies of food, they set off again, riding overland until they reached the River Thames, and from there they followed the lower road along the valley until they reached the town of Garford. On the third day, they were again able to follow the course of the Thames for a while, before being forced to turn into a road through hilly, forested countryside, which would eventually lead them to Hondor.

It was here that the two older burgesses were thankful for the company of young Thomas, and knew they had been wise to take along with them some of their servants. Had they been regular travellers, or better acquainted with that particular road, they might have been prepared for the danger which lay in wait for them, and they would have continued to ride further along the way, to seek for a more open space before pausing to rest their horses and to partake of the food they had purchased in Garford that morning.

The morning air was fresh, the sky clear, and the sun shone brightly, in all it was a pleasant day to be on the road, so that it was a cheerful party which entered the path through shaded woodland. The sound of their horses' hoofs echoed in the stillness, betraying their approach to a small band of half-a dozen vagabonds who habitually lurked among the bushes, hoping to prey upon any unwary travellers whose journeys forced them to travel that way.

In a low tone the leader of the ruffians asked "What do you think, Hal?"

"Too many," Hal Wilkes replied. "If we wait in the road they'll ride us down."

Watt Woods suggested, "It is'nt noon yet. Others may come this way before long. Let these go."

Quietly they watched as the group of horsemen passed by.

Peter Swinnerd remarked, "Two of them are old men, and another only a youth. They will be easy enough to overcome. That do leave seven against six, servants, I should say, and I doubt they be often called upon to fight. If they had stopped, we would have been a match for them."

The other would-be robbers agreed there was truth in what he said, and so it was that they could not believe their good fortune when, a little further along the road, the unsuspecting riders dismounted, tethered their horses to the nearest trees where they could graze, and sat down nearby to eat their mid-day meal.

Among the experienced band of robbers words were not necessary. Silently they crept through the undergrowth to where the men of Bristol sat in a small cluster, opening up their bundles of bread and cheese. Suddenly, without warning, the six swarthy vagabonds sprang out from the shelter of the bushes.

Thomas Taverner, youngest and most alert of the travellers, was the first to hear them, and shouted to the servants, "Save the elders!"

Seeing the danger, the seven servants hastily dropped their food, grasped their stout cudgels, and leapt to their feet. The robbers were expecting some opposition, for in those days few travellers set out unprepared for such an attack, but they had hoped that the element of surprise would be in their favour. However, they had reckoned without young Thomas, who was acutely aware of how important the scroll Henry Spycer was carrying was to the people of Bristol. He knew that if Henry was be robbed, then their mission had failed. There was too much at stake to allow the two older men to be harmed or searched.

So he, his father's labourers, and the servants formed a protective ring around the two older men, lashing out fiercely as the robbers approached them, until five of the assailants, realized they had underestimated their victims and that there must be easier prey. They turned on their heels and fled into the woods.

Five fled. Peter Swinnerd, who had suggested the attack, lay on the ground, motionless, with blood trickling past his temple and down his cheek. Simon Beauflower went to kneel by the side of the injured man, listening to hear whether he could be still alive. He thought he detected breathing, but it was very faint.

Straightening, he said, "I'm afraid this man seems to be past any help we can give. Perhaps a skilled physician could do more."

Thomas Taverner, who had inflicted the blow while protecting Simon Beauflower, asked, "What shall we do with him? Shall we mount him on a horse, and take him back to the town?" He began to fear that if they left the man to die the sheriff's men might hear of this, and that he himself would be arrested for murder.

"Leave him here," Henry Spycer decided. "His fellow cut-throats will come back to search for him once we've gone, and they will do whatever needs to be done. But if we stay to help him we shall do nothing but place ourselves in more danger. They must look after their own. Our mission is to travel in safety to London, and to gain an audience with King Edward, and we have no time to lose."

Quietly they remounted their horses. Now Thomas realized why his mother had been reluctant to let him make the journey. He had been prepared for adventure, but had not expected it to include killing a stranger.

Henry Spycer, understanding how the younger man must be feeling, told him, "Don't let it trouble your conscience, Thomas. It's a thing that can't be helped, and the man may live if his friends come back in time to get help for him. Vagabonds who attack peaceful travellers must expect to be

punished, and if the punishment is death, it is no more than they deserve. If they had been so foolish as to attack a baron or a prior, who would be accompanied by skilled warriors, he would have died by the sword, or perhaps taken back to town to be hanged. It's a fate that awaits all who break the commandments."

"And I too have broken a commandment. The commandments do say thou shalt not kill," Thomas said sadly.

Simon Beauflower also sought to console his young defender, saying, "Think of the soldiers who must kill in battle men they do not know. If the man does die today, that is only what you have done, Thomas. The men who attacked us were our enemies, not our friends, and if they had they succeeded in robbing us of the scroll, they would have been the enemies of the people of Bristol too. We must not forget the purpose of our journey, and we must have no mercy for those who would stand in our way."

"That's true," said the other burgess. "If we let these men rob us of our purpose, we might as well have stayed in Bristol, and let Laurence Cary and his friends rob all of us of our rights as free citizens. The horses are now rested, and the town of Windsor can't be far away. Let us ride there with all speed."

The little group arrived safely in Windsor without further mishap, and after a brief rest pressed on to spend the night in Staines, eager to be far away from the place they wished to put out of their thoughts. Now only one more day of the journey remained before they would reach their destination. Rising early, they proceeded to Felsham, to follow the course of the River Thames to London.

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Affairs of the realm were not going well for King Edward. He was well aware that he was not popular among the barons, and he was not inclined to do anything that would further antagonize them. When the burgesses presented to him the petition from the people of Bristol he examined it carefully, and turned to ask the advice of his nephew the Earl of Gloucester.

"Do you know anything about these affairs in Bristol, my friend Gloucester?"

"Only that the Constable there is Bartholomew Badlestone, Sire," the young earl replied.

The king thought for a moment, then asked, "Tell me, burgesses of Bristol, is it the Constable of Bristol who is collecting these tolls from the citizens?"

Henry Spycer was equally cautious. Although they suspected that Constable Badlesmere approved of the actions of Laurence Cary and William Randolph, they had no proof, and it would be foolhardy to unjustly accuse a baron of any misdemeanour. He replied, "Nay, Your Majesty. It is the work of the servants of Laurence Cary, senestor of Bristol, and those of the bailiffs, all burgesses of the town like ourselves, yet it was not done with the knowledge of we other burgesses. The Constable rarely visits Bristol, and it may be that he knows little of what is happening in the town while he is away."

"And you say these market tolls, and the lever cocket, are contrary to the charter my father granted to the people of Bristol?"

Simon Beauflower answered, "That is so, Your Majesty. No meeting has been called to discuss with the burgesses how the money thus collected may be used, and none of it has yet been used to strengthen the bridges or to repair the walls. We fear the men may have used it for some purpose of which we have no knowledge, and which has no benefit to the people of Bristol. That may be the reason why some of the townsfolk have refused to pay more. Several times there has been trouble in the town, when the toll collectors went to make their demands."

The king looked again at the list of names. "I do see here the names of burgesses, Guild members, and craftsman," he said.

"That is so, Your Majesty," Simon Beauflower replied. "For the most part the burgesses are loyal to Your Majesty, and to the people of Bristol, and will always act in good faith. They who did sign this petition fear there will be unrest in the town if these collections of tolls do not cease."

In King Edward's opinion there was quite enough unrest in England; he decided, "It would seem that, in the absence of my constable, the seneschal and bailiffs have abused their positions of authority, and that the citizens of Bristol have good cause for complaint. I shall reward their loyalty in sending this petition to inform me of their unjust treatment. You may return to Bristol, and tell my loyal subjects that I shall instruct the Constable to attend to this matter, and that no tolls may be collected save with his own authority. Go back home, and may God speed your journey."

"We thank Your Majesty," the two burgesses replied in unison.

Although eager to give to the people of Bristol the good news that their mission had been successfully accomplished, they chose to make their way homeward by using the riverside pathways, which although they made the journey longer in mileage, were safer and often easier for travelling.

It seemed that the mission had been a great success, and that King Edward meant to honour his promise, which, to be fair to the monarch at the time when he gave it, had been his sincere intention. Unfortunately, he was sadly in need of money for his own campaign against the Scots, who were taking advantage of the king's disputes with the barons by attacking the castles in the north of England. Before insisting that the tax collections must cease, the king first imposed a tallage of one fifteenth of movables and a tenth of rents for his own use. Then Edward did send letters to the Constable of Bristol and to the Mayor, in which he ordered them to be on guard against any persons collecting tolls without authority.

When news of the king's promised support spread among the people, there was at first rejoicing in Bristol town, but it soon became evident that Bartholomew Badlesmere and the burgesses known as 'The Fourteen', who were his close accomplices, had their own ways of interpreting the king's commands. They considered that their first duty was not to

the people of Bristol, or to King Edward, but to themselves.

Although the tolls were collected on the authority of the constable, the money was not used for improving the defence and facilities of the town. In the month of May, Bartholomew Badlesmere, assisted by William Randolph, the retiring mayor, personally supervised the collection of tolls, and when John Taverner and his friends protested against this, the Constable threatened them with physical harm, and also with confiscation of their goods.

Once again the loyal burgesses of Bristol appealed to King Edward for help, and once again the King listened with favour to their request. Two months later, in July he granted the protection of the crown for twenty-one burgesses of Bristol, including John Taverner, stating that they should not be injured in any way, and should be allowed to enjoy the liberties of the town without hindrance, and that this protection should last for one year..

By this time King Edward was finding himself in severe and urgent financial difficulties. Bristol was not the only town where there was unrest. Ignoring the terms of the charter, which had been renewed in 1285, King Edward took the government of the town into his own hands, and appointed a custos to take the administration away from the burgesses. William Hoare, the new mayor, together with bailiffs John Beauflower, Thomas Spycer, and John Celer refused to obey, saying that they would keep the town for the king's use, and would not allow the custos to enter.

The king replied by sending a writ to the mayor and bailiffs of Bristol, informing them that the Constable of the Castle was authorized to collect all rents. William Hoare, feeling that he lacked the strength to oppose the constable and the king, resigned from office, so that it became necessary for the people to elect a new mayor.

It is not surprising that they looked around for a man who would be their champion in the fight to keep the rights and privileges granted in the charter, and also to maintain their freedom. Once again trouble was ready to flare within the walls of Bristol town.

Chapter 2 Troublesome Times.

Fourteenth century England was the age of the freeman. The Crusades, and border wars at home had severely drained the coffers of the noblemen and of the king himself, with the result that they had no objections to selling messuages, small dwellings with a little land, to the thrifty and industrious workers who had managed to save enough money to buy. After two centuries of the feudal system, a man's freedom to control his own life was a highly valued prize, not only among the country folk, but among the citizens of the thriving towns, and not least among the people of Bristol.

When William Hoare decided to resign from the office of mayor, the notable citizens and burgesses of Bristol assembled in the Guildhall to elect his successor, with the exception of a group of the wealthy wine-merchants, known as 'The Fourteen' who had decided to join forces with Constable Badlestone. Among the burgesses who were of equal social status to 'The Fourteen', but whose consciences had prevented them from joining the select group, was John Taverner.

Bailiff John Beauflower, brother of Simon, spoke for all when he said, "In my mind there is no doubt as to who should be the man to lead us through these times of trouble. I nominate John Taverner. Constable Badlestone and Laurence Carey are resolved to take the governing of this town into their own hands, and we are going to have a long hard fight to hold on to our liberties and rights. What we need now is a fearless champion, and I think John Taverner is that man."

"I second that," said his brother. "Twice John gave us good advice, when he said we should first ask King Edward to hear our grievances and to restore our rights. And if his son Thomas not been with us when we did take the petition to London, it would never have reached the king, nor would I be alive this day to tell the tale. John Taverner thinks carefully about what should be done, but once he has decided on the right course of action, he will help us to see it through."

The retiring mayor William Hoare added his support. "I too believe John Taverner should take my place as mayor of this town. He has the courage I admit I myself lack. I know of no other man who could successfully stand against Laurence Carey, and I thank God that John did choose to join our cause, and not to become one of our opponents, as so many of the other burgesses have done."

Cries of "Aye," were heard from all parts of the room, and so John Taverner was duly elected to be the new Mayor of Bristol, with John Horncastle and Richard Legat as his bailiffs. His first decision was that they should keep the correct procedure by notifying the Constable of these appointments, but this was not possible because Constable Badlesmere had returned to his own estates in Kent.

Once again John decided, "Then we must send notification direct to King Edward, to assure him that nothing is being done contrary to our civil laws." On October 17th 1312 a scroll notifying King Edward of the appointments was sent to Windsor, where it was received by the Earl of Pembroke.

Laurence Cary and The Fourteen, knowing that John Taverner would prove to be a more formidable opponent than William Hoare had been, were not willing to accept the choice of the townsfolk. William Randolf suggested, "There's no reason why we should accept the men they chose without consulting us. If they can do that, so can we. We will elect two bailiffs of our own choice. Constable Badlesmere is sure to give his consent when he returns from Kent."

They chose Laurence Cary, and Richard White.

Hearing of this, once again the citizens of Bristol sent messengers to appeal to the king for justice, and as before, Edward seemed to have understood their request. He remarked to the Earls of Gloucester and Lancaster, who were the most loyal of his barons, "It would seem that we need impartial judges in this dispute between the townspeople of Bristol and the Guild members. Who do you think we should send to Bristol?"

The Earl of Lancaster suggested, "Thomas Berkeley has some knowledge of Bristol, and so does John de Buller."

"I recommend John Wyllyngton," the Earl of Gloucester said. "He is lord of a Gloucestershire manor, but not a citizen of Bristol. That should make him a fair judge."

"And I think we should have a priest. Both sides should honour the opinion of a priest," Edward decided. "What do you think about sending Richard Abington with them? With Thomas Berkeley as their leader."

Bristol was too far from London for the King to have any first-hand knowledge of the situation there, and the advice he was given, although appearing to be impartial, was not good. He was certainly misguided in the nominations of mediators, all of whom had reason to be biased in their judgment.

The leader of the king's chosen committee, Thomas Berkeley, had already been in dispute with the Bristol Guild members, when he had been fined heavily and his estates confiscated by the town council, for being guilty of lâches, that is, breaking the town's recognized laws of fair trading, whilst Wyllyngton, Buller, and the priest were not acquainted with the causes of the dispute. It was not surprising that the burgesses and craftsmen of Bristol strongly objected to the appointment of these committee members sent by the King. Wishing to discuss the new developments privately, they again met again in Taverner's hostelry.

"I can't believe King Edward himself chose these men," William Axe said. "Do you think he could have gone to Constable Badlesmere for advice? Every one of them has a reason to take the side of The Fourteen against us."

"They're all foreigners, every one of them," John Kerdyf agreed. "And what do such men know of Bristol affairs?"

"That's what I'd like to know too," agreed Adam Wysman. "Why should these men be allowed to know anything at all about the affairs of our town? This should be a matter for Bristol men to decide, and none other. These men know nothing about our town laws, nor is it right that they should."

Richard Sampson asked, "But if this is what the king himself has ordered, what can we now do to defend our rights?"

John Taverner decided, "I think Laurence Cary may be at the root of our troubles. Tomorrow morning I shall inform all Guild members of a meeting to be held in the Guildhall tomorrow night, and I shall send word to the committee chosen by the king to invite them to be there also. Then, together, we shall ask them to explain what they mean to do, and we shall tell them what we think should be done."

News of the meeting spread quickly through the town, so that when the members of the two opposing sides in the dispute arrived at the Guildhall, nearly all of the townsfolk of Bristol had already gathered in the streets outside, eager to hear immediately of any decisions which would directly affect their own livelihoods. Loud voices were heard, each expressing his or her own opinion.

"We need tolls, we all know that. Else 'ow may we keep strong our town buildings and walls, and our harbour? How else should we pay the men that do the work on them?"

"Aye, but there be tolls, and tolls. We pay tolls to King Edward and 'ow often does 'e come 'ere?"

*Aye, and what good do they do us?"

"It's said the king needs his tolls to pay our army to fight against the Scots."

"Them be miles away. Scots never come to Bristol. It's not to keep out Scots we need our town walls mending."

"And our walls haven't been mended for a long time. Tolls have been paid, but where was our money spent? Not 'ere in Bristol."

"That's true. And when we're all asked to pay more tolls, farmers make it an excuse to charge more for hens, and eggs, and peas, and we all get less to eat."

"Send the King's men back to where they live!"

"Aye. They 'ave no right to come 'ere and try to change our laws! This is naught to do with the King. Let King Edward mind his own affairs."

While the townspeople of Bristol resented the coming of the four judges, it was clear from the start that no form of agreement would be reached between the judges and The Fourteen on one side of the dispute, and the mayor, bailiffs, craftsmen and tradesmen on the other side. Soon the noise from the mob outside, all becoming impatient for news, made it impossible for any sensible discussion to be continued inside the Guildhall.

Thomas Berkeley said, "King Edward put me in charge of these talks, so I will go outside and speak to the people, and I will tell them about the new rules which, with the authority of King Edward, we are about to impose upon this town."

Thomas Taverner did not trust the king's representative. Knowing his father would need to stay in the meeting, the young man quietly followed Berkeley outside, where he meant to mingle with the crowd, to hear exactly what the townsfolk were told, and to witness their reactions to what the leader of the king's committee had to say to them. He stood in the shelter of a nearby house, where he could hear all that was said without being in the midst of the throng.

In fairness to Berkeley, considering the false information he had been given by the Constable and The Fourteen, the changes which he and his fellow jurors were about to recommend would have been most acceptable if seen from the point of view of the wealthier and more avaricious burgesses of the town. From the point of view of the ordinary craftsmen and traders of Bristol, the section of the community that the committee of four had no way of knowing or understanding, these changes would result in the severe loss of civil rights. That was something which the people of Bristol would never accept.

Thomas Berkeley had barely finished speaking when one of the more militant craftsmen jumped up beside him on the Guildhall steps, and proclaimed to the crowd, "This man is going to take all our rights away from us! If these men have their way, we shall be freemen no longer, but serfs!"

From the crowd came loud cries of, "Aye," and, "That's the truth!"

Sensing danger in the angry words of his listeners, Berkeley began to edge back towards the Guildhall doors, while the craftsman, encouraged by the support he had received, continued to urge the mob to action, shouting, "Let's force our way into this meeting, and tell them what the men of Bristol think of their plans for our town! Are you ready to follow me into the Guildhall?"

While the craftsman held the attention of the crowd, Thomas Berkeley had reached the Guildhall doors; stealthily, he slipped inside.

"Aye! We'll go to this meeting, and tell them all what we think!" The crowd began to surge forward, only to find the doors barred against them.

"See, the coward has fled away from us!"

"He knows right is on our side, not his!"

There was a moment's pause, then another voice from the crowd called, "We know these cowards that hide away from us! If they will not let us in, we will go to them! We'll show them we're ready to fight for our rights! Let's storm their houses!"

Mob rule knows no laws, and has no mercy. The call to action was the breath of wind needed to rouse into flames the fire of anger already smouldering in the hearts of the townsmen of Bristol, to send them surging through the streets, seeking out the homes of The Fourteen. So fierce was their intrusion that some inside, who had been watching from their windows, began to fear for their lives, and started to jump down into the street; within minutes several who had tried to leap to safety lay on the ground with broken limbs, unheeded by the throng which continued to seethe around them.

A terrified scream drew the attention of Thomas Taverner to the window above where he stood, and he looked up to see a girl standing there; he estimated her age at thirteen or fourteen. She had a pleasing figure, fair hair, and would have been pretty, if she had not been so afraid. Then he noticed behind her the figure of a burly man reaching out to seize her.

"Jump!" he shouted.

The girl obeyed his command as instinctively as he had given it, without waiting to think of consequences. Thomas rushed forward to break her fall, and grasping her tightly around the waist, he shouted, "This way!" Elbowing his way through the crowd, he dragged her to safety.

Inside the Guildhall his father, the new mayor, was becoming concerned about the noise outside and the persistent banging on the outer doors. He asked Thomas Berkeley, "Whatever does all that noise mean?"

"It seems that the men waiting out in the street have no liking for what I said. They mean to come in here to show us what they think, and I fear they mean to do us harm." The jury leader quaked as he answered.

"That I can well understand." John Taverner's tone was harsh, and his face stern. "Wait here, all of you, and unbar that door!"

Fearlessly he went out onto the steps of the Guildhall, and called in a loud voice, "Men of Bristol, stop that noise and listen to me! You chose me as mayor of this town, and now I ask you to listen to what I have to say!" Gradually the noise began to recede, until his words could be heard by everyone in the street.

He continued, "Men of Bristol, you have always trusted me in the past. I beg you to trust me now. Don't do anything that may bring trouble to yourselves. With all of you on our side, my bailiffs and myself will defend the rights of this town to the death if so be it, but we shall gain nothing at all if by so doing we make King Edward angry. I pray you, allow the men sent by the King to be taken to a place where we shall hold them in custody, and all of you go back to your own homes. Tomorrow morning we shall all meet here, outside this Guildhall, to decide together what shall be done."

The militant craftsman who had led the riot came forward. He said, "We know we are a man we can trust, John Taverner. We will do as you say."

"Will you allow the men sent by the king to be taken away in peace?" John asked.

"Aye. We'll do that."

"There are four of them, so I'm going to ask you to choose seven more men, and come with me. You and the men you have chosen shall have the task of escorting the judges to a safe place till this affair is over. Choose your men, and come with me. The rest of you, men of Bristol, go back to your homes now, and we shall meet here tomorrow morning."

Satisfied now that the king's men had been given into their own hands, albeit for safe keeping, the people in the crowd gradually drifted back to their homes, while the eight chosen bodyguards accompanied John Taverner inside the Guildhall. When the King's deputies emerged, each with a craftsman on either side, those still loitering in the streets stood aside, and allowed the little procession to go without hindrance to the church, where the judges could claim the right of sanctuary. There the untrusting guards, fearing there could be some attempt to escape, arranged a rota to keep watch over them.

Meanwhile Thomas Taverner had taken his damsel in distress back to his father's inn.

"You will be safe here for a while, Mistress.....?"
He waited for her to tell him her name.

"White. My name is Joan White, daughter of Richard White," she answered.

"The bailiff?" Thomas asked.

"Aye."

"Then it is not hard to understand why you were in danger from the craftsmen," Thomas told her. "You should wait here awhile till the men who were about to do you harm have gone back to their homes."

"But this the hostelry is the home of the Taverner family. I should not be here," she said. "I should go at once."

"Don't be so hasty. Wasn't it I, Thomas Taverner, who saved you from harm? No harm will come to you here, not from me, nor from my father. It's true my father and yours are not on the same side in this dispute, but I tell you, Mistress Joan, my father will always be on the side of any man, or woman, who may be in danger of being molested, and he would not send you out into the streets till your hour of danger is well past. Stay here, Mistress Joan, and when it is safe, I shall take you back to your home."

"I would rather go instead to the house of my parents," she told him. Thomas understood what she meant. Like most children, even those of well-to-do fathers, she had been sent as an apprentice seamstress into the house of another family, in this case to the home of John Snow, who like her own father was a member of The Fourteen. It was believed that children would learn to be well-mannered more easily living in a household other than that of their parents, where the master of the house was a respected gentleman, and where they would not be over-indulged as they might be in their own homes. That would explain why the servants of the house had not come to help her. They would protect the master's family, but not necessarily the honour of an apprentice, to whom they had no sworn loyalty.

He said, "Then when the streets are clear, I shall take you back to the house of your parents."

John Taverner remained at the Guildhall for a long time after the judges had been taken to sanctuary, and the daughter of one of his adversaries had been taken to safety in his own home. He was hoping that peace may be restored in the town, but The Fourteen refused to be moved.

"You've not heard the end of this!" Laurence Cary threatened. "Wait till the constable is told of what has happened here this evening, and is told of how you have imprisoned the judges sent by King Edward."

"They aren't imprisoned," Taverner replied. "They've been taken to a place where they will be safe. Didn't you see how angry the people of this town are now? I was afraid that if the men sent by the king remained here, real harm would have come to them. When it's safe for them to leave the town, they will be allowed to go."

At that time he was unaware that nearly twenty men had died during the riot, but he had seen some lying in the street who had obviously been severely wounded, and he feared that the injuries inflicted upon the king's committee by the craftsmen would be equally painful.

"The king is going to hear about this!" Cary replied.
"Then you will have to answer to His Majesty for what has been done today."

As soon as it was safe, the members of The Fourteen stormed angrily out of the Guildhall, determined to bring punishment upon the unruly craftsmen; more slowly John Taverner and the other burgesses who had supported the townspeople made their way back to the inn.

Thomas was already walking with Joan to her home.

"How can I ever thank you, Master Thomas?" she asked.

"By being my friend," he replied. "This dispute is not of our making."

She smiled. "That shall be so," she replied. "I shall always remember that when I really needed a friend, it was you who came. Not my father, nor any of our other friends, but you. That will stay for ever in my thoughts, and I shall always be thankful to you."

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Laurence Cary and The Fourteen lost no time in sending their own version of what had taken place to the Constable of the Castle, who immediately sent a report to the king. It could not be denied that many had died, and many more had been injured that night. The mayor and burgesses were also accused of having imprisoned the judges against their will.

King Edward had no reason to doubt the truth of the complaints, and gravely regarded the document which had been presented to him.

"We must punish those responsible for this," he decided.

"Inform the sheriffs that they must arrest John Taverner, wherever he may be found, and must imprison him in the castle."

Accompanied by his friends Henry Spycer and Simon Beauflower, Thomas Taverner went to confront the sheriffs.

"My father should not be accused of this crime," Thomas insisted. "When the riot began, he was inside the Guildhall, with the very men who are making these accusations against him. Every one of them knows full well where he was when the trouble began. If he may be accused of being guilty, then so may they. It was Thomas Berkely who went outside and spoke the words that caused the men to be angry."

Simon Beauflower confirmed, "That is so. Every citizen of Bristol will tell you this is true."

"And they will tell you that it was John Taverner who brought the riot to an end, when he went out alone to confront the crowd and to tell the craftsmen to go home. Had he not done so, worse would have befallen the burgesses of our town," Henry Spycer agreed. "If you will not believe our words, you should ask the men who are his accusers."

One of the sheriffs turned to William Randolph, and asked, "Where was John Taverner when the riot began?"

Unable to lie convincingly when faced by his fellow burgesses, Randolph admitted, "Why, inside the Guildhall. It was he who had summoned us all to the meeting there."

"Then he could not have started the riot outside," said the sheriff. "Even the mayor cannot be in two places at the same time." Turning to one of the servants he said, "Bring here the prisoner, John Taverner. The time has come for his release."

The release of the only man capable of leading the people against him did not please the Constable, but in the face of the evidence given that day there was nothing he could do but let John Taverner return home, while he himself once again complained to the king that the real culprits were not being punished.

Edward decided, "If the man you arrested was innocent, then we must question all who did take part in this disobedience. Order the Constable to draw up a list of all who were implicated in the rebellion."

The members of The Fourteen obliged by making a list of their opponents; it was a long list, consisting of some eighty persons, all of whom were ordered to appear before the King's justices in the town of Gloucester. The main body of burgesses sympathised with the men who had risked their own safety to defend the civil liberties of the town, and more than one asked the question, "Now what must be done? The folk who do go to Gloucester will surely be imprisoned, and their goods confiscated. All they did was to fight for the freedom of Bristol, and of all who dwell here. Are we to stand by and to allow them to be so punished, for what we all believe to be right and just?"

As before, they turned to their mayor for guidance.

"They must not go to Gloucester," John Taverner advised. "We shall fight for justice here, in Bristol town. If King Edward cannot or will not protect us from those who would take away our liberty, then we must protect ourselves. If the men do not go to Gloucester, I have no doubt that the king will send his servants here to fetch them, and the constable will readily see that the orders of the king are obeyed."

"Then we have no hope. If the constable and the king are against us, what can we do?" John Kerdyf asked. "No-one can defy the king."

"To save our freedom, that is what we must do," the mayor replied. "We must prepare the town to withstand attacks from the castle, and refuse entry to those who would take from here any of the men who were brave enough to defend our rights. And I don't think we should waste any time in doing this, because the king will waste no time in sending his men to seek out those he believes to be the cause of the riot."

So it was that the people of Bristol began to build barriers at the gates, and to defend the parts of the town walls nearest to the castle. William Randolph, who had four times previously been elected mayor of the town, but had lost the support of the burgesses when he assisted Benjamin Badlesmere in collecting the illegal tolls, began to fear for his life. He was aware of the fate that might befall himself and his family if he should have the misfortune to become trapped in the town once the gates were closed. In the secrecy of night, Randolph and his closest associates, together with their wives, children, vassals and tenants

escaped to the castle fortress, to seek the protection of Constable Badlesmere, and others of The Fourteen who were not so deeply involved, followed Randolph's example, to seek shelter outside the town walls.

During recent years, when one of the nobles needing money, had allowed worthy citizens to purchase cottages, known as messuages, in the villages outside the town, John Taverner had purchased such a dwelling, and so had Richard White, one of the bailiffs who had been chosen by The Fourteen, and father of the girl Thomas Taverner had rescued on the night of the riot. Richard decided it was time for his family to leave Bristol too, and fearing for his daughter's safety, he allowed Joan to go with them instead of remaining in Snow's town house with the other apprentices and servants.

The people of Bristol had now taken the management of the town into their own hands. As had been expected, King Edward outlawed all of those who had refused to appear before the justices at Gloucester, and sent a mandate to insist that Randolph, his family and supporters, should be readmitted into the town, and should be treated with the respect and honour due to burgesses and their dependents. The townsfolk, however, would not forget the time when Randolph had helped Badlesmere to collect the illegal tallages, and saw the opportunity to even the score.

On receiving the mandate, William Randolph sent two of his servants ahead to prepare for his home-coming, but they returned more quickly than he had expected. His steward explained, "I fear, Master Randolph, it will not be safe for my master and mistress to go back to Bristol. Much damage has been done to the house, and I fear there may be more to come."

"Damage? What damage?" Randolph's voice was sharp, as if the steward himself was to blame.

In apologetic tones the steward replied, "Master Randolph, many valuable items that should be there are nowhere to be found in the house, and a large quantity of wine has gone from the cellars. And some of the furniture is broken."

"And what were the servants doing when this was done?" Randolph wanted to know.

"Master Randolph, Will Cook said there were too many to be stopped. The men beat the servants, and drove them out of the house. And there's worse. They opened bags of salt and scattered it all around the house. The servants have cleaned as best they can, but some of the furniture is ruined."

"How much would be the cost of the damage that has been done, do you think?" Randolph asked.

"Master, I would say at least two thousand pounds, if the missing items are not recovered," was the reply...

William Randolph decided it would be safer for him to stay in the castle, under the protection of the constable, and another complaint was sent to the king.

Laurence Cary and Geoffrey Justice were incensed when they heard of what had happened to Randolph's home. Cary said, "I will not be kept away from what is mine!" He sought the help of Constable Badlesmere.

When the two burgesses ventured into the town to examine the condition of their homes they were accompanied by an armed escort. They reached the fortified gates to find that the constable's men were heavily outnumbered. Cary, Justice, and the constable's men were all imprisoned in the Guildhall cellars for several weeks, before being driven out of the town amid loud boos and jeers from the people in the streets.

Other servants sent by the king met with a similar fate: some were imprisoned, and all were prevented from collecting any money. Among the inhabitants of Bristol it was the general opinion that they themselves could put to better use any money available for taxes.

As had happened before, it seemed that the king was either misinformed of the exact details of the complaints, or he misunderstood, or perhaps he was wiser than was believed. His response was another attempt to bring the dispute to an end by persuading the two opposing sides to live together in peace.

Whatever his reason, on November 8th 1313 King Edward II issued an order whereby some fifty eminent citizens of Bristol, together with their households and servants, must be protected under forfeiture of life, limb and property, and that they must be allowed to remain in the town without fear of injury, loss of liberty, or hindrance when practising their trades. What is most surprising is that the names on the list comprised those of The Fourteen, including Laurence Cary, and also their opponents, John Taverner and the other burgesses who had supported the craftsmen during the riot. By this order of the king, all members of the Guild, the burgesses, and the craftsmen and traders, would be required to live peaceably together, and to allow one another to carry on their trades, and there would be no further disturbances in the streets of Bristol. Now all that was needed was that the inhabitants of Bristol should obey the order of their king, but that was something they were not inclined to do.

It was fortunate for the rebels that King Edward had other more personal troubles to occupy his mind. Earlier that year the barons, who were now in open rebellion against their king, had captured the monarch's favourite courtier, Piers Gaveston; they had first imprisoned Gaveston, and then had executed him. Edward's nephew, the Earl of Gloucester was now the only loyal nobleman upon whom the king could rely.

During that year both summer and winter were exceptionally wet, so that famine and pestilence began to trouble the land. In this respect the people of Bristol had an advantage, in the imports which were brought there not only from Ireland and France, but also from Italy, as a result of a new but rapidly growing trade in spices, sweet wine, dyes, precious cloths such as silk, and other luxury goods. In other parts of the country people starved; cattle died, and the brewing of beer from grain ceased; prices of foods which were available soared; many who had been rich were reduced to poverty, while the poor died, and plunderers and scavengers roamed the land.

Having so many important matters on his mind, Edward's first reaction to further complaints from The Fourteen was

another attempt at reconciliation. He sent to the mayor and bailiffs of Bristol commands which he hoped would bring about peace, but his orders were ignored. The people of Bristol were determined to have their rights re-established as they had been laid down in the charter, and to have no taxes which had not been approved by the whole community. They were not inclined to accept any form of compromise.

The king retaliated by ordering the sheriffs of Gloucester, Somerset, and Wiltshire to raise an army of two thousand men, who would march on Bristol and instil obedience.

It was a delighted Constable Badlesmere who greeted the Earl of Gloucester and his newly-formed army, and there were cheers from the occupants of the castle as the soldiers marched towards the town, but their approach had not gone unnoticed. Ever vigilant for visits from the Constable and his would-be tallage-collectors, the rebels had arranged a rota for look-out duty at the town gates. At the first sighting of the advancing force John Taverner was sent for immediately.

"Close the gates, and let no man enter," was his command. 'And spread the news that we are about to be attacked."

When the Earl of Gloucester reached the gates he found them firmly closed, and the streets blocked by citizens who appeared to be in a far better condition for fighting than were his own undisciplined men. An attempt to force open the gates did not succeed, and it seemed that the only course of action was to lay siege to the town; but sieges, even with a well-trained army, could be costly, time-consuming, and would have devastating effects upon the health and condition of the men.

Gloucester decided that it would be far better to save his new recruits to fight against the Scots. Tactfully he withdrew, and led his army away from the town.

The men of Bristol had won their first real battle.

Chapter 3 Open War.

Considering the advice he had been given, it is possible that King Edward really believed that all of the burgesses and prominent Guild members of Bristol, and their homes, were in need of protection against attacks from the more humble craftsmen, and that this was a simple case of workers showing how much they resented the wealth of the merchants. If he was aware of the true situation, and was trying to be fair to both sides, his attempts to restore order in the town proved to be a complete failure. Neither side showed any sign of seeking a peaceful settlement.

It was Will Thatcher, one of the craftsmen, who suggested, "We must keep the men sent by Constable Badlesmere out of our town. We should make stout walls at the gates between us and the castle. That way the men that come to collect tolls will not find their way in to trouble us so easily."

Adam Wright reminded him, "To build stout walls needs money."

"We use the tallage we would have paid to the constable," was the opinion of Benjamin Wood. "The tolls we pay should be used for the good of the people of Bristol. It will be for the good of all of us if the men sent by Constable Badlesmere are kept out of this town."

A group of the craftsmen and their older apprentices were drinking together in one of the ale-houses, and it was not surprising that their conversation should have turned to what was on every man's mind at that time. The town depended upon its foreign trade, and the income of every family was affected by the tolls.

Adam Wright suggested, "Our mayor will know best what should be done."

"Aye, he'll know, but first we'd better ask our fellow-workers, else we shall be as bad as The Fourteen," Will Thatcher cautioned. "Whatever has to be done, we've all got to do it together."

When consulted, the other artisans, apprentices, and tradesmen all agreed that John Taverner should be asked for his opinion of the plan. Open resistance to the taxes was something that John had expected when he was asked to stand as mayor, and their deputation came as no surprise to him.

Benjamin Wood explained, "And the walls have to be good and strong, with spaces to shoot arrows at the enemy, like there are on top of yonder castle."

"Aye, and all have agreed to pay a toll to buy wood and stone, so it may be done," Adam Wright told the mayor and the bailiffs. "If you'll collect, there's none that won't pay you."

So the tallages refused to the constable were duly paid to the mayor and bailiffs, and a few days later work began on a stone and lime wall across the entrance to Wynchestrete. It was a stout construction, with crenellations through which arrows and quarrels could be fired up at the castle. Gradually other barricades were erected at suitable locations on the side of the town nearest to Bristol Castle. Constable Badlesmere was angry when he saw what was being done.

His wrath was further increased when a band of the more militant craftsmen sneaked out of the town during the hours of darkness, and attacked the king's mills near to the castle, rendering the buildings completely useless.

"Is there anything else we can do to show them we're ready to fight back?" asked one of the wool merchants.

John Taverner replied. "When the walls are finished, we shall be able to cut off supplies to the castle. No food will be able to pass through the gates to reach the constable and those who have gone to take shelter with him, nor will there be any way they can get supplies to strengthen their defence against us. They will be shut off from all the things they most need."

"Then the walls must be finished with no more delay!" came the reply.

Realizing that he was now powerless, and that the control of Bristol town was slipping from his own grasp and into the hands of the elected mayor and bailiffs, Constable Badlesmere did not waste time sending any more messages. He himself rode to Westminster to complain to King Edward.

"Shutting off the castle from all supplies is not all they've done," he told the king in a voice as angry as he dared use in the presence of the monarch. "Your Majesty's own mill is now completely useless."

"My own mill?" It is not surprising that the king was really angered by this piece of news.

"Aye. Some of the men sneaked out of the town in the night, destroyed the mill, and took away all the corn that was stored there."

"Then they must be punished. To steal from the king is little less than treason! I shall put a stop to this at once." Edward summoned one of the servants, and said, "Send word to Thomas Berkeley that I wish to speak to him, and tell him to hasten here."

To Thomas Berkeley he gave the instruction, "Go at once to Bristol, and assess a tallage for my own use. Then make a thorough investigation into the true situation in that town. In the past years I have heard disturbing reports from both Constable Badlesmere and the burgesses, and it is a situation I will not allow to continue any longer. Take with you John Wellingham, Richard Abyngdon and John Button. I fear the task I have set for you to do will need the work of more than one man."

Having tasted victory, the men of Bristol were not to be intimidated by another of King Edward's committees. The four men were allowed to enter the town, but wherever they went they met with obstruction. Groups of armed men prevented any form of assessment from being made, and the final indignity came when the king's four agents were imprisoned in the Guildhall.

When the news of this further act of defiance reached the ears of the king, he saw that it was useless either to reason with the townspeople or to threaten them, and he openly enlisted the aid of The Fourteen. Believing that William Axe, whom they had chosen in opposition to John Taverner, was the elected mayor of Bristol, Edward sent to Axe further commands, with the instructions that in his capacity of mayor

he should be responsible for delivering them to the inhabitants of the town.

As on the previous occasions, Edward had received only the information given by Constable Badlesmere, and so he was not to know that the people of Bristol would refuse to acknowledge the authority of a man they themselves had not elected. They ignored the commands which Axe issued to them; whereupon Axe and Badlesmere promptly informed the king that the burgesses and people of Bristol were in open rebellion against the constable and his deputies.

Some of the constable's accusations were justified. It was true that the townsfolk had built stone walls, had erected barricades, had shot arrows and quarrels at the castle and its defenders, had hindered the passage of food and other items through the town to the castle, had impeded the constable's tallage collections, had beaten and wounded his deputies, and had ignored the king's messengers. The other allegations, that the mayor and bailiffs had exploited the citizens and had converted the profits from the tolls to their own use were complete falsehoods.

However, there was sufficient truth in what the constable had said to persuade King Edward that the time had come for he himself to take control of the town. He sent orders that henceforth the people of Bristol must answer to the Constable of the Castle, Bartholomew Badlesmere, on all issues.

The people of Bristol had no faith whatever in the constable, and therefore they completely ignored the king's commands. John Taverner, William Clyf, and Gilbert Pockerel, in their capacity of elected mayor and bailiffs, assumed the duty of administering the affairs of the town, so that it had now become a small isolated and independent state.

Once again the king asked for enquiries to be made, and urged reconciliation, but by this time the bitterness in the hearts of the people of Bristol had become too strong.

"It is clear King Edward does not mean to honour the charter granted to us by his father," said Gilbert Pockerel.

"Aye, the laws he has made deprive us of our rights as free men," said Simon Beauflower. "I thought the king understood why we must do this. It would seem he has forgotten what he dsaid to us when we first went to London."

"And it would seem we may be driven to use force." The last remark came from Robert Martyn, normally one of the more patient of the burgesses.

King Edward was unaware that any loyalty or respect which they had formally felt for himself and his constable had been completely worn away by the events of the past two years. Now that their town was sealed against any outside authority, the militant craftsmen felt confident enough to take revenge on the burgesses of The Fourteen, who, they believed, had betrayed them.

During the month of December four of the constable's supporters, William Randolf, William Kerdyf, Robert Celer, and John London all complained that John Taverner and others had broken into their houses, carried away their goods, and assaulted and imprisoned their servants, so that it was no longer possible for the burgesses and their households to remain in the town.

Whether or not the mayor or bailiffs had actually taken part in these raids is not certain, but it was clear that they had not made any attempt to prevent the damage and assaults from taking place. Constable Badlesmere, who rightly considered John Taverner to be his most formidable opponent in the fight, and the natural leader of the rebels, was determined that the mayor elected by the people should shoulder the blame for all that had happened. Once again he urged King Edward to intervene, and once again the King appointed justices to examine the matter. When, in the months which followed similar attacks were made upon the homes of John Snow, Laurence Cary, and Peter Fraunceys, they too lodged complaints, this time not against the anonymous perpetrators of the damage, but against the mayor, John Taverner.

Perhaps the king would have acted more promptly if his mind had not been troubled by weightier matters than the liberties of a few burgesses in a town far distant from London. The disturbances in Bristol were happening at a time when the whole of England had been devastated by famine and pestilence, and when the king had lost the support of his barons. The Scots had been quick to take advantage of the English monarch's weakness. Systematically they attacked in turn the castles on their own borders, and took possession of them, then advanced into the north of England, to seize the castles there also.

Edward had no option but to raise an army, and to lead it northward to make war on the Scots. The problems in Bristol must wait.

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King Edward was feeling disappointed and angry. He had sent out messages to each of the barons, demanding that men, money and supplies should be sent, to form an army that would drive the Scots out of England and regain the castles they had already taken. However, as yet there had been little response. Only a few noblemen, including the most loyal Earls of Gloucester and Pembroke, were willing to march with him.

"Then we must go without them," he declared.

"Should we not wait? Some may yet be persuaded," the Earl of Pembroke suggested.

"If we do wait, the Scots will strengthen their hold on the castles they have taken, and may take more," the king replied.

"We must march at once with what men we have."

So the English army marched north to engage in war with their Scottish neighbours. On 23rd June, 1314, the two opposing armies met at Bannockburn, and it was here that King Edward and the Earl of Gloucester, the nephew who had been his most loyal supporter, quarrelled.

On arrival at Bannockburn, several of the veteran soldiers who formed the backbone of Edward's army approached the Earl of Gloucester. One experienced warrior advised, "Our men have marched a long way. They are weary, and new to army life.

They need to rest awhile before they do battle with the Scots. Our enemy are rested, and they have had time to make themselves ready for battle."

Another reasoned, "That's true. We have marched many miles, and on the way here we have not had enough food. The men are tired, and hungry. It would be best to give them time to rest, and food to eat, to make them fit and strong when the battle begins."

To the young Earl of Gloucester this made sense. He could see that the men were tired and under-nourished, and knew that for many this would be their first taste of battle. He passed on the advice of the veterans to the king, but Edward was in no mood to listen to reason.

He replied, "Nay, we will fight at once, else we lose the advantage of surprise."

The Earl of Gloucester reminded him, "The veteran soldiers are more familiar with the strategies and outcomes of battles than either you or I, and we would do well to listen to what they say. They say we should delay the combat for a day, so that the men may rest, and then they will go into battle refreshed, and will have a better chance of defeating the Scots once and for all. To me this seems to be good reasoning. A lot of our men are new recruits, and tired men do not make good fighters."

King Edward was impatient to have the Scots defeated so that he could return to England. Angrily he accused his nephew, "What treachery is this? Do you want us to let these Scots have time to prepare for battle while we waste time resting? I say we should fight at once. If you refuse to lead thy men into battle, then I shall know you are no longer loyal to myself, or to England."

The Earl of Gloucester knew it was useless to argue when the King was angry, and reluctantly he agreed, "If that is what Your Majesty expects us to do, that is what must be done."

So, loyal to the end, the young Earl of Gloucester led his cavalry against the hedge of pikes which Bruce's men had formed as the first line of the Scots' defence. The outcome of his attempt to break through the enemy lines was a major disaster. The unprotected horses were so severely injured by the spikes that they fell to the ground, and their unseated riders were soon killed, either by the fall, or by the enemy. Among those who died was the Earl himself. When the cavalry realized they had no leader they fell into disarray, and were unable to support the main body of infantry. King Edward II had lost the battle of Bannockburn, and also the nephew who had been his most loyal supporter.

The defeated army returned to England, having achieved nothing, but having lost a good leader and a large number of men, only to find that conditions there were growing rapidly worse. The harvests throughout the whole of Europe, including Britain, had been damaged by torrential rains; famine and hunger were causing the weaker folk to die of starvation, while the stronger men, determined to survive at all costs, had resorted to murder, thus ensuring there were not so many to share what little food there was.. In 1316 when King Edward visited St. Albans, even the reigning monarch was unable to buy enough bread to feed his servants. What food was available cost eight times the normal price, and when the government tried to enforce price controls,

those foods simply disappeared from the markets altogether. Bristol was not the only town in England where there was social unrest, and it was not until the spring of 1316 that King Edward once again able to turn his attention to the problem of the rebellion there.

While the King Edward was busy in the north of England The Fourteen had been driven out of town, and the inhabitants, under the leadership of their elected mayor, had established their own form of government and taxation. Apart from the fact that no allegiance was shown to the monarch or to his representatives, Bristol was reasonably peaceful and law-abiding, but Edward was not prepared to leave well alone.

He decided, "The time has come to make an example of the people of Bristol, lest any other commonalities should try to take the administration of their towns into their own hands."

This decision was strengthened when he received further complaints from Constable Badlesmere and Hugh Despencer, stating that the mayor and burgesses had again ignored an order to appear at Gloucester to account for their actions. The reason they had given for this was that the command was contrary to their privileges.

Again the king sought to bring the two sides together. He ordered that the commonalty of Bristol should send to him six discreet citizens who had not been outlawed on any previous occasion, who would give him the true facts of what had occurred, and who would pass on his orders. The six who attended were Nicholas Roughborow, John Hunt, John Veys, Roger Thornhill, Robert Hampton, and Vincent Gower.

When, at Westminster, the six impartial witnesses were confronted by three judges, they honestly denied or justified the accusations made to them. Their honest replies prompted King Edward to make further investigations. He ordered the Sheriff of Gloucester to bring to Westminster a jury of twenty-four persons, who would be further questioned concerning these accusations.

It was unfortunate that The King allowed the sheriff himself to choose this jury, with the result that all of the men selected were biased towards The Fourteen and the constable. The commonalty of Bristol was found guilty of rebellion because the people had protected the eighty men who had taken part in the original riot, and the judges decided that the six honest men who had first been questioned were also guilty as associates and abettors.

On June 20th King Edward appointed Aylmer Valence, the Earl of Pembroke, to lead a deputation of men, all well versed in affairs of state and in the laws of the land, who would go to Bristol to investigate the disturbances which had taken place over the previous years. He also sent a writ to the Sheriff of Gloucester, informing him that in order to vouchsafe the liberty of the town of Bristol he must arrest and imprison the outlaws John Taverner, Richard Kolpek, William Clif, Robert Martyn, William Snowe, and John Simenel, whether they were apprehended inside the town walls or outside in the county; the order applied also to the bailiff Robert Wyldermershe, and any others in the commonality who had at any time hindered the constable in the collection of

tallages and maintaining order. These outlaws were to be kept in custody until the time appointed for them to appear before the Octave of Holy Trinity, when they would receive appropriate punishments from the Council. In addition to inciting riots, the men named were accused of being responsible for the death of Alexander Vilers, in the town of Bristol. With such serious accusations made against them, it was most likely that if the outlawed men were arrested they would be escorted to London for imprisonment, and might even face execution, but they had no way of knowing of the fate that lay in store for them, or of the need to escape from Bristol as quickly as they could.

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In the early days of the dispute Richard White and his family, fearing further attacks upon their home, had fled from the town to take up residence on a messuage near the village of Stableton, but Richard, in his capacity as Badlesmere's bailiff, along with the other members of The Fourteen, was in the habit of spending part of the day at Bristol Castle.

It was his wife who had suggested that their daughter Joan, at that time nearing the end of her apprenticeship in the house of John Snow, should be allowed to go with them. Since the riot Joan had not been able to put from her mind the sight of the burly craftsman bursting into the room, intent upon molesting anyone he found inside; she added her own pleas to those of her mother, reminding her father that if Master Snow intended to leave Bristol also, there would be no point in her staying in his house in the town. So her father and John Snow had agreed that under the exceptional circumstances the apprenticeship should be terminated.

Joan was quietly sitting by the window when her father returned one evening in very high spirits. The minute he entered the house he informed his wife Agnes, "At last it seems as if King Edward has found the time to rid us of that accursed John Taverner!"

Joan, pretending not to be at all interested, continued gazing through the window, but the name brought back the memory of a night when another one of the Taverner family had rescued her from the fearsome workman who had never been far from her thoughts. She had been sure he had meant to beat her, then rape her. She had often thought about Thomas Taverner, and the way she had promised that whatever happened, he and she would always be friends.

Agnes remained unimpressed. She remarked, "The king isn't to be relied upon. How often before has he vowed to do something, and his promises and commands have come to nothing?"

Three years of promises, and still we are afraid to go back to our own home in the town. When we do see it again we shall find it in ruins, like our friends did. who fled from the town and left their servants to care for their houses."

"Nay, it will be different this time," Richard assured her.

"This time the king has sent men who will not be disobeyed. The Earl of Pembroke, Aylmer Valencia, is coming, and the Sheriff of Gloucester has been ordered to arrest Taverner,

and the others, and to put them in prison, no matter where they may be hiding. There is no place in the whole of Gloucestershire where they will be safe. The king is so angry about the damage done to his mill, he has vowed to punish the Sheriff if he fails. This time Taverner will not escape. It will not be long now before he's taken off to London, and executed for daring to defy the king's orders."

"No more than he deserves," Agnes agreed. "Bristol town will be well rid of him. If the king is able to keep his promise this time, perhaps we may soon be able to go back home and live in peace again."

"Aye, and carry on trading again," her husband said. "This dispute has cost us dear."

Joan was quietly thinking of that night when she had been taken to Taverner's hostelry, had stayed there until the riot was over, and how Thomas had made sure that she reached her home in safety. She had not seen John Taverner himself, but everyone else had been kind to her. She wondered whether her mother would have been so kind, if a girl of the Taverner family had been brought to their house for safety, or whether her mother would have sent her out into the streets to be molested, saying that whatever happened, it would be no more than she deserved.

For a long time Joan lay awake thinking. Finally she pushed aside family loyalties and gave way to her conscience.

Whether right or wrong in his defiance of the king, John Taverner did not deserve to die. He should be given the chance to flee to safety before the Sheriff and his men came to find him.

Early the following morning she picked up a basket, put on her hooded cape, and set off to walk to Bristol town, entering not by the gate nearest the castle, but by the one which lay to the north of the town, near to Silver Street. The men whose turn it was to keep watch by the gates were not particularly interested in the teenage girl who came carrying a basket, as if she lived in one of the villages and was on her way to the shops. They were more concerned with men approaching from the direction of the castle, particularly any who travelled on horseback.

Joan smiled innocently at them, and said in a cheerful voice, "Good morrow, sirs." They opened the gate for her to pass through. If challenged, she would have said that she was going to the market, but the well-rehearsed excuse was not necessary, and she arrived at the hostelry without hindrance. There she asked to see Master Thomas Taverner.

Three years had passed since they had met, three years in which she had grown from a girl into a young woman, and at first he looked at her without showing any sign of recognition.

"Don't you remember me, Master Thomas? It is three years since we met, and then only once, but it was on a night that will never leave my memory. That night I swore that I would always be your friend, and that is why I have come to see you now."

"Why, can it truly be Mistress Joan?" he asked.

"Aye, the one you saved from a beating...or worse," she replied. "I vowed then to be your friend, and the time

has come for me to honour that vow. I have come to warn you that your father's life, and perhaps yours also, is in great danger. Is there a place where we may talk without being heard?"

Thomas led her to one of the unoccupied guest rooms, and closed the door. Briefly she told him of what she had heard.

"Your father must flee from Bristol at once, while there is still time," she warned. "And you too, Master Thomas." She smiled up at him as she added, "I would not wish to lose so good a friend."

"You need have no fears about that," he told her. "My father is a match for any sheriff. But what will you do? Will you stay here now? Will you be punished for coming here?"

"I don't think so. Nobody knows I have come here, or why. If anyone asks, I came to town to see a friend," and again she smiled up at him.

"And a true friend. Let us hope one day, when this is all over, we may be able to show the whole town that we are friends," Thomas answered. "But now, I had better find my father, or your errand will have been in vain. Come, we will leave by the back door, and go our separate ways. Farewell, Mistress Joan. There are no words that can thank you enough for what you have done this day."

"No more than you did for me. Farewell, Master Thomas. And take care. I hope we may meet again."

Again she passed through the gates without question, and made her way home, pausing from time to time to look for mushrooms, and to gather wild flowers growing in the sheltered spots by the trees, so that her explanation of having gone for a morning walk aroused no real interest.

Meanwhile Thomas had gone to the Guildhall, where he knew his father would be at that time of the day. When told that the warning had come from Richard White's daughter, John was at first suspicious. He asked, "Could this be a trap? Do you think the maid can be trusted?"

Seriously Thomas replied, "I would trust her with my life, and yours. She took a great risk to come here, if she had been recognized by the men who guard the gates. There is no time to be lost, Father. We must warn the others, and all of us must get away from here before the Sheriff and his men come."

"I will not go yet," John insisted. "While I stay here, the men are united, but I fear that if I go, they may be forced to surrender, and then our cause will be lost. Send word to our friends, and to the other burgesses, to meet me here as soon as they can, so that we may decide what shall be done."

The mayor and burgesses were still in the town when Aylmer Valence and the other men appointed by King Edward presented themselves at the gates, and demanded an audience with the elected officials and more important burgesses. When they came to the gate to meet him, Valence told them. "His Majesty King Edward is convinced of your guilt, and commands every person here to submit to the law. Give up these murderers, and this town may then abide in peace. If you will do this, I solemnly swear that our Lord the King will have mercy upon all who live here."

Simon Beauflower answered on behalf of the burgesses: "My Lord Earl, it was once my privilege to meet with King Edward, and I know him to be a monarch who is just, and fair. For this reason I tell you that we are not the authors of this trouble, nor have we committed any offence against our Lord the King. Certain persons did try to deprive us of our rights, which we defended, as it was our duty to do. If our Lord will put aside these impositions laid upon us, if he will grant us life and limb, rent and lands, then we will obey him as our Lord, and will readily do whatever he asks of us. Otherwise we will defend our liberties, even unto death." His words aroused a cheer of support from the other burgesses. Aylmer Valence knew he could do nothing more than take their reply back to King Edward.

Later that day the Sheriff and his men arrived at the gates, and ordered the entire commonality to assemble at the Guildhall. This they did, and confident that their combined force could withstand that of the Sheriff's posse, the king's representative was allowed to enter the town. As they had expected, he demanded that John Taverner, Robert Martyn, and the other men whom the king had declared to be outlaws should be handed over to him, and placed in his custody until it was time for the trial to begin.

Will Thatcher, the craftsman who had first suggested fortifying the town, and one of the more militant members of the community, was not afraid to stand up for what he thought to be right. He spoke for all when he said, "We, the townsfolk of Bristol, will not allow you to take our mayor, John Taverner, or any other man away from this town."

Recognizing him as one of the men who had prevented them from entering when they first approached the town, the sheriff's men tried to grab him, but he managed to wriggle free and sprinted off towards the gates, with the posse close behind in hot pursuit; once the Sheriff and his men were outside, the gates were smartly closed behind them. In the minute when they all heard the sound of the gates closing, turned in consternation, then tried to go back inside, Will Thatcher had disappeared from view; not long after he was readmitted by the guards at the north gate.

Realizing they had been duped, the Sheriff of Gloucester led his men back to the castle, where he retired to rethink his plans for arresting the outlaws. The men of Bristol knew the time had come to strengthen their defences.

Simon Porter suggested, "There are men among us who are skilful sailors. Let us go across the river to Wales to ask for help. There are men there who have good reasons not to like King Edward."

"And there are men closer at hand who have cause to disobey the king," agreed Martin Tyler. "The greater our number, the better will be our chance of victory. I shall ride to the villages and to the woods, to find any who would rebel against the king and his sheriffs, and ask them to join our cause."

"Go then, and may God be with you," John Taverner said.

"And while you are gone, we shall make this town yet stronger to withstand our foes."

In the days that followed the men of the commonality drained the castle moat, destroyed the castle mill, and in front of the castle gate they made a deep and wide dyke, with a fortified tower to guard it. There, and in other parts of the town, they constructed springalds that could be used to attack the castle, and raised standards to signify their rebellion.

When all was ready, Simon Beauflower advised, "John, and you, Robert Martyn, and Robert Wyldermershe, it would be best if the three of you went to the church, to seek sanctuary there. I'm guessing it will not be long before the Sheriff comes back. and if he succeeds in entering these gates, the first thing he will do is find you and put you in prison."

It was well that John and Richard took their friend's advice. Fearing the King's anger and certain punishment if he failed in his task, the sheriff first sent a mandate to the good men of Bristol, bidding them to keep a diligent watch on John Taverner and Robert Martyn, so they would not escape judgement by fleeing from the town.

John realized that as long as he remained in the town he would be putting in jeopardy the lives of all who befriended and shielded him. He told the other burgesses, "Now the town is well protected, it is time for me to go. As long as I am here, the sheriff will search for me. Once I've gone, the gates may be opened to them, and when he and his men have searched, and have failed to find me, perhaps he will leave this town in peace. Shall you come with me Thomas, and you too, Robert? I think you should. The King's order did say that all others who had hindered the constable should be arrested, and I don't doubt he would count you among that number."

"Where will you go, Father?" Thomas asked.

"Across the water to France. We shall all be safe there," John replied.

"And what of my mother?" Thomas was concerned for her safety, if her husband and son were no longer there to protect her..

"Her health is not so good that she may make a long journey over the sea in comfort," John replied. "We shall take our leave of her, and I will ask one of our servants take her to stay with her sister and brother-in-law. in the village of Clyfton She will be safe there till we return. It would not be safe for her to stay in this town."

"If she is too weak to go with us, surely the constable and the sheriff would not harm a sick woman?" Thomas asked.

"Everybody knows they are greedy, but surely they would not harm an ailing woman?"

"Nay. Their quarrel is not with your mother, but with me. Yet once they hear we are gone, they will send their servants to take possession of our home, and in doing so she could be harmed. Servants do not always take notice of their commands.

It is better she should do as I say."

So, beneath the cover of darkness, John's servants escorted Elizabeth Taverner out of the town to the village of Clyfton, while her husband and son, having said their fond farewells to her, were smuggled aboard 'La Mouette', a French ship bound for Bordeaux.

It did not take long for the news that the outlaws had left Bristol to reach the ears of Bartholomew Badlesmere. Hoping to spare the sheriff some of the king's anger, the constable sent a messenger to Edward with the news that John Taverner, along with his son and friends had fled from the town. Meanwhile Aylmer Valence had returned to London to give the disturbing report that he too had failed to persuade the burgesses and craftsmen of Bristol to be reasonable. They were determined to fight to the end for what they considered to be their rights.

Angrily Edward replied, " So they mean to fight, do they? Then they must be subdued by force. Send for Maurice Berkeley. He is the man who will teach them not to disobey me."

His first command to Berkeley was, "Close the sea way into the town, so that no ship may either enter or leave." It was fortunate that John and Thomas Taverner were already on their way to France.

Now the people of the town were to experience the same punishment which they had earlier inflicted upon Constable Badlesmere and those who had gone to the castle for safety. All essential supplies were withheld. No-one could escape by sea, nor could ship-loads of food, arms, or sympathetic allies from Ireland and Wales be brought in that way.

Next Maurice Berkeley and his men, with the aid of The Fourteen, the Sheriff, and Constable Badlesmere, laid siege to the town, bringing from the castle bulwarks for mounting the walls, chattes to undermine them, and battering -rams to force open the gates. For several days the people of Bristol resisted. They had hitherto been the victors, and they believed that, with good fortune on their side, the besiegers would tire, and would go away. However, when first the walls and then their own homes began to shake under the force of bombardment, they saw that defence was no longer possible, and reluctantly the town surrendered.

After speaking with Aylmer Valence and giving his instructions to Maurice Berkeley, King Edward had departed for the Midlands, and he was in Nottingham when he received first the constable's message that Taverner had left Bristol, then, a few days later, the news that the town had surrendered. It occurred to him that this might be a good time to bring about a peaceful settlement.

He declared that fines would be imposed upon the town, but that the whole commonalty, with the exceptions of John Taverner, his son Thomas, and Robert Martyn, should be pardoned of all crimes, contempts, and disobediencies, and for receiving outlaws and indicted persons. The king placed Maurice Berkeley in charge of the town as custos, with Sir Simon Warde as his deputy.

As John Taverner had expected, the constable's servants were sent to confiscate all of his lands and properties, which were to be placed in the king's hands as an escheat, on account of the crimes he and his son had committed.

In Plymouth harbour John and Thomas Taverner stood side by-side on the deck of 'La Mouette', watching the dock labourers carrying off the freight and loading further supplies of food for the voyage.

It was a cold, breezy, late December day; far into the distance, touching the grey-clouded sky, there stretched before them the equally sombre-grey waters of the English Channel, where froth-topped waves lashed mercilessly against the harbour walls. For the past two weeks the vessel had hugged the Cornish coasts, calling into safe havens when storms threatened, but now it must make the journey to France across the open sea, where there would be no respite from rough seas or storms.

Eyeing the scene that lay before them with more than a little apprehension, Thomas remarked, "Father, I think we could have chosen a better day to start our great voyage."

For the whole of their lives the two men had been familiar with the waters of the estuary, and with the ships that sailed into the harbour, but this would be the first time they themselves had ventured so far from land.

"Aye, but it was a choice we had to make, whether to risk our lives on the ocean, or in the hands of King Edward and Constable Badlesmere," his father replied. "I believe we shall fare better if we place ourselves at the mercy of the ocean waves. This sea will be a fairer judge than either Badlesmere or the King. The sea listens to no man, and treats all men as equal. Our chance of survival will be as good as that of any other man who dares to sail across it."

Thomas was still worrying about his mother, and whether the king would punish her instead of her husband and her son. He would have felt happier if Elizabeth had been going to France with them. He asked, "Father, do you think my mother will be safe? I wish she could have come with us."

"She'll be safer in Clyfton than she would be here. She hasn't got the strength for a voyage like this may be if the sea turns rough." John had no doubts that she would not be molested, now that he and Thomas had left Bristol. Elizabeth was no trouble-maker, nor were her sister and brother-in-law at Clyfton, and he knew they could be trusted to take good care of her. "We don't know what dangers we may be forced to face, and it will be best if we need only to look after ourselves."

The ship began to move. Thomas shuddered, partly as a result of the cold wind, and partly at the thought of the hours which lay ahead. With carefully measured steps, bodies taut in the effort to withstand the rocking movement of the ship, they made their way to where Robert Martyn was waiting in the shelter of the forecastle. He turned to greet them, asking, "Do you think we shall ever see our own land again, John?"

"Aye, one day. When King Edward learns the truth, and sees Badlesmere and The Fourteen for the bullies and thieves they would like to be," John replied. "I believe the king to be a man who tries to do what is best for all of his people, but he is too weak to stand against men such as Badlesmere, and too ready to be swayed by the lies they tell him."

Robert said, "Whatever happens now, we are not the ones who will take the blame for it, but the friends we have left in Bristol."

"That's so," John agreed. "If Constable Badlesmere and The Fourteen have their way, we won't be the only ones to see stormy times ahead. The King and Constable will make Bristol pay dearly for all that has happened."

In this belief John Taverner was not mistaken. The battles fought against the Scots in the North of England had left King Edward's coffers sadly depleted, and here was a perfect answer to his problem. While he would hesitate to imprison so many of the rebels, or to order that they should be physically chastised, he saw no reason why he should not make them pay for their disobedience in a more practical way.

The king's first imposition upon the citizens of Bristol was a fine of 4,000 marks (over £2,000) half of which was to be paid on appointed dates, and the other half to be held in abeyance as a surety for the future good behaviour of all who lived in the town. Any act of disobedience would result in the full amount being paid immediately.

On this understanding, with the exception of the outlaws he had named, the franchises and liberties of the burgesses were promptly restored, but so was the much-hated fish-tax, or cocket. The lands and messuages in Bristol belonging to John Taverner were granted in turn to John Weston, Constable Badlesmere, and William Arthur, but that was of little consequence to John and Thomas. England was now far behind them, and there were other more pressing matters to occupy their minds.

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After the stormy crossing of the Channel, when Robert Martyn had been sea-sick, making Thomas understand why his father had decided to leave Elizabeth at home, the three exiles had arrived safely in the port of Brest. There the ship had stayed long enough to unload some of its cargo and to take on provisions; before following the French coastline, with another short call in Nantes.

At last it came to rest in Bordeaux, where the cargo of nails and steel goods from the new workshops in the Midlands counties would be exchanged for casks of red wine. It was good to know this was the end of their journey, that tonight they could sleep soundly without being disturbed by the rocking of the boat.

John Taverner stepped from the gangplank, surveyed the scene, and liked what he saw. Immediately before him stout gates opened wide to admit entrance to the town. The strong walls reminded him of home.

Bordeaux was a prosperous town which had grown in importance as the wine-growing areas it served had continued to flourish. In the immediate hinterland several villages had become thriving towns, and at this point in history between ninety and a hundred thousand tons of wine, the equivalent of twenty million gallons, was exported annually through Bordeaux. One of the largest importers was Britain, where the port of Bristol received the wine intended for the markets of western England.

The main entrance to the town was on the harbour-side; together the three outlaws joined the busy stream of merchants and market-traders making their way under the wide stone archways. The streets were wider than John had expected, and where two or more met there would be open spaces with trees, and here the farmers from surrounding rural districts could offer up their wares. The outer-limit walls were high, with houses built inside them, and, at intervals, steps from ground-level led to roof-top walkways with crenellated battlements.

Near to the church of St. Emilion they came across the hostelry called simply, 'L'auberge'; John led the way inside. Perhaps it was mere chance that had led his steps in that particular direction; John Taverner would never know. What he did know was that destiny had brought him face-to-face with the most beautiful woman he had ever seen.

Helène, widowed sister of the innkeeper Albert, had the natural charm of a confident, mature Frenchwoman. She greeted them with a ready smile, and when asked if the inn could afford accommodation for three weary travellers, she personally led them up to a room large enough for the three to share, and promised a meal when they should be ready to come downstairs.

John smiled at her as they talked, using the simple words he had learned over the years from the French traders at the docks, and from the superior travellers who had frequented his own inn, hoping she would understand. "Later, Madame," he said, "a simple meal of bread and wine will suffice, but first we wish nothing more than to rest awhile on dry land."

Robert and Thomas had already stretched out on the beds.

"This is truly a pleasant place," Robert remarked. "I think I shall be content to stay here till it is safe to go back to Bristol."

Thomas agreed, "There should be work we can do, in the town or at the harbour."

John had already decided that was where he would stay, but was not willing to share his reasons with his son, or with his friend. One look at Hélène had been enough for him to fall in love with her. It was not that he meant to be disloyal to Elizabeth. Living in a time when most marriages were arranged, that of John and Elizabeth had been the sensible thing to do at the time. John's father was an inn-keeper: Elizabeth's father was a wine merchant. It had been a most successful union. They had shared a good, and happy life together, and he had no regrets, but what he now felt for Helène was something entirely different. This was instinctive attraction; the beginning of mutual admiration; the instant awareness of true love.

That night, as the guests and host became better acquainted,

John and Albert had much to talk about concerning the wine trade, and the running of a busy hostelry. Not many days had passed before John was helping in the tavern, while Robert and Thomas found there was always labouring work to be had at the docks, unloading in-coming cargoes, and reloading the vessels with casks of wine. Thomas enjoyed the work, because it meant that he could talk to the sailors, and learn

what was happening in England. Perhaps it was not the type of work they would have done at home in Bristol, but this was France, and they were free from the clutches of Constable Badlesmere and the Sheriff of Gloucester.

As the weeks passed by it was inevitable that John and Helène should become first friends, then admirers, and finally lovers, and they made no secret of the way they cared for each another. If Thomas disapproved he knew it was not for him to question his father's decisions, and he prudently held his tongue. What his mother did not know about would not worry her.

John and Thomas Taverner had been living in Bordeaux for almost three years when a ship plying cargoes of wine to and from Portsmouth brought the news that civil war had begun in England, news that once again would change the course of their lives.

When the flight of the Taverners and Robert Martyn was first discovered, King Edward was content to place the responsibility of arresting and punishing those who had helped them to escape in the hands of Bartholomew Badlesmere and the Sheriff of Gloucester, the two men he considered to be the most loyal amongst his few remaining faithful supporters. Badlesmere and the Sheriff were also allowed to decide what punishments would be appropriate. It was a time when the monarch was sorely in need of friends, and so he did not suspect that the loyalty of the two men to himself was prompted more by ambition than by a liking for their king.

While Scottish wars and affairs in France were occupying much of Edward's time, the other English barons and officials soon became aware of his instability, and of his readiness to act upon the unwise counselling given by his favourite courtiers. The noblemen of England were no longer willing to let Edward act on the advice of friends who urged him to make decisions reflecting their own interests, instead of offering carefully considered opinions which would be beneficial to the people of England.

In 1318 the barons and church dignitaries decided something must be done to improve the situation, and they formed an alliance against the king. Together they called a meeting at Leake, in Nottinghamshire, and confronted King Edward with a series of complaints about the way he was governing England. As a result of this meeting an indenture was sealed by which ordinances were to be maintained, and the King was forbidden to perform any acts of sovereignty without the consent of a parliament.

After this meeting there was a complete overhaul of the occupants of important government positions, some at the insistence of the barons, and others decided by the king, who saw the need to protect himself against the powerful noblemen. Sheriffs were promptly dismissed and replaced.

One man whose fortunes were improved by the changes was Bartholomew Badlesmere, who, as one of Edward's most trusted supporters, was promoted by the king first to the position of steward of the king's household, and later to be Constable of Dover Castle, and Warden of the Cinque Ports. This meant that he would no longer be Constable of Bristol Castle, nor would he be in control of the town.

It was the opportunity for which John Taverner's friends had been waiting. Badlesmere's promotions meant that the two real enemies of the people of Bristol, Badlesmere and the Sheriff of Gloucester, had both lost their control of the town, leaving Maurice Berkeley, the king's custos, as Edward's sole representative there. Apart from having a tendency to use his power to gain possession of small messuages and plots of land that had been forfeited to the crown by some misdemeanour of the owner, and to take these lands as his own property, Berkeley was generally considered to be a reasonable man, and as he had not been personally involved in the original dispute he was less biased towards the people than Badlesmere had been.

Simon Beauflower, Henry Spycer, and other loyal friends of the Taverners lost no time in preparing a document which would prove beyond doubt that the three outlawed men living in France were innocent of the crimes of which Badlesmere had accused them. Meanwhile opposition to King Edward was growing stronger, and he was being driven to take desperate measures.

First he forbade the barons of the Welsh marches to hold any assemblies of men, including tournaments, an order which the barons ignored. In England groups of noblemen were starting to unite against the King. Several earls who owned land in the counties of Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, including Furnival of Sheffield, Deyncourt, Fauconberg and Percy, took an oath to defend their lands and those of one another, should any of them be attacked. In Northumbria the Percies, Mowbrays and Cliffords showed signs of forming an alliance with the Scots. The final desertion from Edward's supporters came when Badlesmere, always striving to further his own career, tried to gain favour with the other barons. However, they were not prepared to trust him, and the former Constable of Bristol was forced to return to King Edward and ask for pardon.

When the time came for Simon Beauflower and Henry Spycer to present their petition to the monarch, asking that the three outlawed men should be pardoned, and that their properties should be returned, Edward was no longer ready to favour Badlesmere, but he could see the advantages of having the citizens of Bristol as supporters, not enemies. He was now willing to grant the request.

On 28th November, 1321, Edward issued official pardons to John Taverner, to his son Thomas, and to Robert Martyn, for any disobediences against the king during the years 1312 to 1316, and for not appearing to account for trespasses against Bartholomew Badlesmere and others. They were exonerated from guilt concerning the death of Alexander Villers, and the King ordered that all lands and tenements which had been confiscated should be returned. Now all that was necessary was for the three men to return home, and to reclaim what was rightfully theirs.

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"What news is there from England?" Thomas asked the seamen who had just arrived in Bordeaux.

"England is in a sorry state," one of the sailors replied. "King Edward has lost all power to rule, and it's rumoured there'll be civil war 'ere long, that's if he's able to find any of the barons to go and fight with him, and not against him."

"England needs a stronger king, whoever it might be," said another. "We nearly lost all our cargo in the Channel, to the the pirate ships that sail out of the Cinque ports. It would seem that King Edward doesn't know his own men are going out to raid honest merchant ships."

Another sailor contradicted, "Some say the king does know, and doesn't care. Badlesmere may do whatever he likes, and King Edward will say nothing against him."

"Badlesmere?" Thomas asked.

"Aye. Earl Bartholomew Badlesmere, the man who is now Constable of Dover Castle, and keeper of the Cinque Ports. When the pirates sail forth to raid our cargoes, he's the one who's sent them. We all know that. But there's nothing anybody can do about it."

"Is Badlesmere not in Bristol then?"

"Nay, not for some years now."

Thomas said, "I have come up against Badlesmere, some years past, and I know what you say is true. He's greedy, and unjust, and King Edward listens too much to what Badlesmere has to say. When your ship goes back to England I'd like to go with you, if I can. I think there are some matters of great urgency awaiting me there."

Thomas hastened back to the inn to inform his father, "I shall return to Bristol as soon as I may." Briefly he recounted what the seamen had told him, and concluded, "When the ship sails again for Bristol, I want to be aboard it."

"Don't too hasty, my son. The seamen could be wrong. It may be that you'd be going back to great danger, even death," his father warned. "Don't forget not that we are now outlaws."

"It's five years since we were last seen in England. If nobody expects to see me, I should be able to pass without being noticed," Thomas replied. "The sheriff and his men will have long ago given up their search, and if you recall, Father, I was not considered to be a full-grown man when we came here. With the growth of a manly beard, I believe I may embark at Portsmouth, and travel overland to Bristol in safety. I would dearly love to see my mother again, so she may know all is well with us."

John, listening and thinking, remembered his wife, and the other responsibilities he had left behind. He said, "Perhaps I should go with you."

"Or I?" Robert Martyn suggested.

"Nay." Thomas was determined to go alone. "One may pass easily, where three of us would arouse suspicion, and neither of you has changed in appearance so much as I have since we left our homes." He smiled. "Working on the dock has given me strong muscles, and a healthy skin. It's best I should go alone, and if, as I suspect, it may now be safe for us to see our homes again, I will send word to you, or come back myself to fetch you."

Robert Martyn was eager to see his home and his family again, and he would have gone with Thomas when the ship set sail, but he could see the wisdom in the young man's argument. John Taverner also longed to see his home town, his friends, and Elizabeth again. But to be with Elizabeth would mean leaving Helène, and that would be very hard to bear. Perhaps it was better that Thomas should return alone. Perhaps his son would come back to Bordeaux with the news that there was still danger for them all in Bristol, and that it would be better to remain where they were. That way he would not be faced with that very difficult decision.

Thomas himself could not wait to go back to England. All the years they had been parted, he had been anxious about his mother's safety, and he needed to put her mind at rest concerning their own situation. Five years without news was a long time to wait and hope. Five years was a long time to have been separated from someone else who had been constantly in his thoughts... young Mistress Joan White. Joan, who had risked her own safety to warn them of their danger. Five years was a very long time. More likely than not Richard White had by now found a husband for his daughter, the son of another one of The Fourteen, who would be an acceptable addition to the White family. If he did not go back to Bristol, he would never know, but wed or not, he would like to see his friend Joan once more.

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On arrival in Portsmouth, Thomas Taverner started to take the first steps on his overland journey, but he knew he must walk with care. He recalled the time when he had gone with the two burgesses and their servants to take that important petition to King Edward, and of the robbers who had attacked them on the way. In addition to carrying enough provisions to see him through each day's journey, he took care to avoid woodland paths whenever possible, using only the well-frequented roads between towns, and at all times he carried a stout cudgel. This time he was travelling alone, but he had the confidence of knowing that he was still young and strong, probably far stronger than any ruffian who might seek to waylay and rob him on this journey, unless there should be a large number of them. He took great care in choosing places where it would be safe to rest, and always found shelter in an inn long before darkness fell.

In the taverns where he slept at night he heard talk of what was happening in England, and knew that the seamen had brought to France a true report. In some ways it was comforting to know that King Edward's sheriffs had more important duties to keep them occupied than searching for a few outlaws. Eventually he circled north of Bristol Castle and the town, and arrived at his uncle's house in Clyfton.

Not recognizing him at first, his uncle regarded Thomas with suspicion, but a mother's love is not easily deceived by outward appearances, and Elizabeth rushed forward to welcome him home.

"Thomas! How I have longed to see you again!" After clasping him in her arms she asked, "Is your father with you?"

"Nay. We were afraid it would not yet be safe for him." Thomas went on to explain how it was that he had come home alone.

"Then you have not yet heard the news? Don't you know that the King has pardoned your father, yourself, and Robert Martyn, and has promised to give back to your father the hostelry, and all other things that were taken from him? It was all the doing of Simon Beauflower, and Henry Spycer. They said they would not rest content till your good names and all you owned had been restored."

"They always were good friends to us," Thomas said. "When I have rested I should go and speak with them both."

His uncle advised, "Aye, after rest, and food, then will be time enough. There's no great haste, and in the morning, when the gates are open to travellers, it will be easier to pass into the town without question. Safe it may be, but I think it would be best to see Master Beauflower before the word gets spread around the town that you are here."

He was right, of course. There was no need for haste, and so much that mother and son had to say to one another, so many questions to ask, and to answer. Thomas was able to assure his mother that his father was well, and if not happy, then free from worries. He talked about 'L'auberge', and Albert, and about the town of Bordeaux, but he did not mention Helène.

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"So it's safe now for all of us to come back to Bristol?" Thomas asked his friends Simon Beauflower and Henry Spycer.

"Not only safe, but Bristol needs John Taverner again," Simon answered. "The people of this town are again in need of a good strong mayor, who will bind them together, and will safeguard the interests of us all. We know of no other man who will serve this town as well as your father has done. The craftsmen have always listened to his advice; and there is no-one else who has been so well respected by them. They respect your father, and they will follow where he leads."

Henry Spycer added, "That is so. Send word to him, Thomas, and tell him this town needs a good mayor, and we pray that he will come back to be our leader in time of peace, as he did in times of trouble."

"I will do that." Thomas Taverner smiled at his two friends. "I thank you, both of you, for what you have done to clear our names, and I know my father will also thank you when he sees you again. I shall go by the next ship to bring him back, and Master Martyn also."

"Then go soon, and may fair winds take you there and back," Simon Beauflower said.

Young Thomas was about to leave, but he had yet one more question to ask. "Tell me, my friends, does Richard White live in the town now?" he asked.

"Aye, near to the Guildhall," was Henry Spycer's reply. "The town is now much as it was before the trouble started, except that your father has not yet returned, and Constable Badlesmere has gone."

"And Mistress Joan White, his daughter?"

"Aye, she lives there also," he was assured.

"Has she found a husband?"

Now it was the time for the two older men to exchange smiles. "Not yet, though it's said there's more than one who has asked her to be wed, and men her father would accept," Simon Beauflower told him.

It was all that Thomas Taverner needed to know.

Having taken leave of his friends, his steps led him in the direction of All Saints Street, to the house where Richard White lived. It was a cold, wintry morning, and the sun's rays had not yet dispelled the clouds, but true love has yet to be deterred by a little discomfort. Knowing it would be neither wise nor safe to call at Richard White's house, or to show too much interest in the wares displayed outside on the pavement-counter of his shop, Thomas stood by the lych gate outside the church, and waited.....

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In the second floor room above the shop Joan White was trying to decide whether to venture out into the streets. There was nothing she needed to buy, and it was too cloudy to risk walking far outside the town gates, unless it was for a stroll around the castle parks. She could visit her friend Alice, who had married William Randolph's son and was already the mother of two little girls. Alice would welcome her help in keeping the children amused, and when they talked together the time always passed more quickly. Her father was always telling Joan it was time she too had a husband, but she had yet to meet a man she could care for, and who cared for her, except.....

While trying to make up her mind, she glanced again through the window, hoping there could be signs of the morning becoming brighter, and her attention was arrested by a young man who was now standing outside the gateway to the church, as if he could be impatiently waiting for someone, for he occasionally stamped his feet, and blew warm breath onto clasped hands to keep out the cold. It was not anyone she knew, yet something about him was strangely familiar...

It was instinct rather than recognition which made her think of Thomas Taverner, or it could be because the memory of him was seldom far from her thoughts. She reminded herself that it could not be he. Thomas was far away, over the sea, in France. On closer inspection she could see that this man was more robust than Thomas...not overweight, but strong, and muscular...and he had a beard and moustache.

Yet there was something about the way he stood...about the way he moved, that reminded her so much of Thomas. He glanced upwards again, and a long-suppressed yearning took control of her senses. Since they had parted five years ago, she had waited, hoping and praying that one day he would come back to Bristol. There was no reason why he should not come home now that the king had pardoned him, but so far away, he would have no way of knowing that. He was the reason why she had refused all of the other young men who had asked to marry

her. Not one of them had shown her the care and sympathy that Thomas le Tavener had given on that night when he had rescued her. He could have caught her when she jumped, and then left her out in the street to fend for herself, but he had done more than that. He had taken her to safety, and had taken the trouble to see her home, even though her father and his were enemies. Since then he had been her hero. When she had last seen him they had promised everlasting friendship, and she had hoped that one day, perhaps they could be more than friends. Five years was a long time. Was it possible that in those years her memory of him could have become blurred? Commonsense told her she was about to be disappointed, but she had to be sure. Reaching for her hooded cloak with its long liripipe she hurried downstairs, and out into the street.

As soon as she set foot outside her home, Thomas left his surveillance point and strode across to take her arm by the elbow, falling into step beside her, and guided her towards the narrower streets lining the outer wall of the town.

"Come, Mistress Joan. Let us find some place where we may talk without being overheard," he whispered. The minute he spoke she knew there was no mistake, and she was overwhelmed with happiness.

"Thomas! How do you come to be here? I thought you were far away. And you are so much changed, I did not know it was you. My eyes told me I must be mistaken, yet in my heart I hoped it was you. I have so much longed to see you again."

Slowly they walked together along the outer perimeter of the town, in the direction which would take them towards the bridge, and to the gateway which served the Clyfton road.

Thomas told her, "I may not stay long, for I must go back to France to fetch my father, but I had a great desire to see my friend Joan before I leave."

"Your father is not with you?"

"Nay. I came alone. When I set sail we did not know that the King had granted pardon to us, or that it would be safe to come back to Bristol. Some French seamen told me that Constable Badlesmere had left the castle to go to Dover, and so I came back alone to see if it was true. Now I must fetch my father and Robert Martyn, so we may claim again all the property that rightfully belongs to us."

They were now approaching the gate. Joan said, "I am so pleased that you have come to see me. I have often thought about you in these past years, Thomas Taverner."

"And I have thought about you, Mistress Joan. It is not easy to forget a friend. And when I return, I do hope we may be more than friends."

She looked up and smiled at him, and repeated the farewell given by his older friends. "May fair winds attend you, and bring you safely back to us Thomas Taverner."

He returned her smile. "If the winds should fail, then I must find some other way, because nothing will keep me away from you. Fear not, Mistress Joan, this parting will not be as long as the last has been. I promise I shall come back to you soon."

When Thomas Taverner returned to 'L'auberge' with the news of their pardon, and the messages sent by Simon Beauflower and Henry Spycer, John knew he must return to Bristol at once.

Although it was something he had expected, it did not make the parting from Helène any easier. Sadly he explained to her the reasons why he must go.

"Ma chère Helène. it breaks my heart to be parted from you, but there's no other way," he said. "If I did not go my conscience would trouble me for the rest of my days, and with that weight upon my mind there is no way you and I could be happy together. My heart is here, but my duty lies with the good friends who have risked punishment to defend my honour. If they had not sent the petition to King Edward asking for Thomas and myself to be pardoned, the king would never have thought of excusing what I have done. It is to them that I owe the return of my honour, and all of the property I own in England, that I should one day be able to pass on to Thomas. For his sake also I must go back, to put everything in order. Many good friends have risked their lives to buy my freedom. Now they send word to say they need my help, and it is a debt I must repay."

"And your wife, Elizabeth?" Helène asked. "Could it be for her sake also that you wish to go back?"

"I'm sure Elizabeth is one person who does not need me," John replied. "Thomas has assured me that his mother is safe with her sister at Clyfton."

"Does she know about me?"

"Thomas tells me he decided not to tell her. He said no good could come of it, and I think he made a wise decision. It is not Elizabeth who calls me back, but my loyal friends among the burgesses and craftsmen of Bristol. By speaking up for me they have shown the King that they do not regret the things we have done, and that they are ready to go on with the fight for their liberties if King Edward decides to go back on his word, as he has done many times already. No matter how many of them are ready to fight, an army is of no use at all unless every one of them is willing to follow their leader, and it would seem there is no man in Bristol able to take my place. Left to themselves, I fear that the more headstrong of the craftsmen would soon lead the whole of the town into more trouble. And there is the other reason why I must go back so soon. King Edward had pardoned my disobedience and has restored to me my hostelry and cottages, but unless I go back to claim them, so that Thomas may inherit them all, they will stay in the hands of whoever now holds them. That battle is not yet over. If I fail to go back and reclaim what has been confiscated, others will keep it until it becomes theirs by virtue of my own neglect. To reclaim what is rightfully mine is something I must do for my son."

He could see she was troubled by what he had said, and taking her in his arms he tried to console her, saying, "Do not be distressed, ma chérie. When I have put everything in order, I shall come back to you, I promise. As soon as

Bristol is safe from tyranny I shall instruct the lawyers to draw up a document for me to sign, giving all of my lands to my son. Then Thomas will take my place in the hostelry, and I shall be free to live here with you. I do promise you, ma chère Helène, there is nothing on this earth that will have the power to keep me away from you."

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Crowds lined the streets to give a rousing welcome to the returning exiles. After Thomas Taverner's visit a constant vigil had been kept at the docks, so that as soon as they were sighted on the decks of 'L'Alouette' while it was preparing to disembark, the word was quickly relayed through the town; craftsmen and apprentices left their work to greet their heroes.

In the next elections John Taverner was elected mayor with a very large majority, the only dissenters being the members of The Fourteen and their dependents. Within days John's hostelry and messuages had been given back to their rightful owner, Elizabeth had come home from Clyfton, and life had resumed the peaceful routine of the days before Constable Badlesmere had come to the town.

Thomas Taverner and Joan White were walking together by the docks, watching the labourers unloading the wine from Bordeaux, when Thomas remarked, "The time I was in France was too long for us to be parted, Mistress Joan. I do not wish to be parted from you again. If your father will give his consent, will you be willing to be my wife?"

"Gladly, Master Thomas," she replied.

"Do you think your father will accept me as a son-in-law? Or will his disagreement with my father make him try to keep us apart for ever? If he does refuse to let us be wed, I think I shall carry you on board this ship, and sail with you to a place where nobody will ever find us, and where we can be together always."

"And I would come with you." Joan paused for a moment before adding, "Yet that would greatly sadden both my mother and yours. I think first we should ask my father. Let me speak with him first. Perhaps he will be more reasonable if not taken by surprise."

As the young couple had expected, Richard White did not take kindly to the idea of his daughter marrying the son of his enemy. For almost ten years he and John Taverner had been on opposite sides in the dispute.

"Thomas Taverner!" he bellowed. "Why, the man is nothing but an outlaw! He has been away these past six years. When he left this town you were little more than a child. How can you have come to know him well enough to want to be his wife? Surely, my daughter, you cannot be serious?"

It was what Joan had expected, and she was well prepared for his outburst. Quietly but firmly she replied, "Yes, Father, I am very serious. I know full well what I am asking you to do. But have you never wondered why I refused all of the other young men who came to ask for your consent? If I cannot marry Thomas Taverner, I shall not be wed to anyone else."

"Then you will remain unwed for the rest of your life!" her Father told her angrily. "Pardoned or not, you shall not wed a Taverner!"

Joan had no intention of losing her temper, or of losing the argument. In a controlled voice she informed her parents,

"Then, Father, and Mother, there are certain things you must know. First, I have loved Thomas Taverner since I was, as you say, a young girl, in your eyes no more than a child."

"Love? You are too young to know anything about love," her father interrupted.

Joan insisted, "Young or not, I have loved Thomas Taverner since the night of the riot. Perhaps you don't know about everything that happened that night, Father. You were shut up in the Guildhall, arguing with the other men. And you, Mother, had gone to sit with Grandmother, at their house on Wine Street. And I was an apprentice seamstress in the house of Master Snow, in the house nearest to the Guildhall."

"That's true," Agnes White agreed. "We knew the menfolk would be a long time at the Guildhall, and what they did there was no concern of ours. The men always do as they please, and pay no heed to what we womenfolk think."

Joan continued, "And so, Mother, neither of you was there when the riot started in the street, and the workmen and apprentices rushed into the houses, looking for some ways to show their anger. But I was there, in the house of Master Snow, standing by the window, listening to what the king's man had to say. The men forced open the door of Master Snow's house, and two of them rushed into the room where I was. I heard one of them say, 'Grab her. Let's have some fun,' and I knew they were going to harm me. I screamed for help, and I heard somebody outside shout, 'Jump!' It's a word that keeps ringing in my ears at night, whenever I feel afraid. Well, I didn't know who was shouting, and I didn't stop to think, I just jumped from the window, like a lot of others did that night. Some of them broke their legs falling to the ground, but I was lucky. Somebody caught me. Thomas Taverner. But that wasn't all he did for me. He could have put me safely on my feet and left me there, in the middle of the crowd, but instead he took me to where I would be safe."

Agnes said, "How is it we didn't know anything about this?"

"If I'd talked about it, would anybody have listened to me?" Joan reminded her mother. "But you know, Mother, and so do you, Father, what happened to some of the women that night. You know what happened to Maria Frauncey. Her father was one of Constable Badlesmere's men, like you, Father, and like Master Snow. If it had not been for Thomas Taverner, the same thing could have happened to me."

Richard and Agnes White exchanged glances; there was no need for words. They knew what their daughter had said was true. Maria Frauncey, daughter of one of the Fourteen, had been raped and beaten by a group of craftsmen and apprentices who had invaded the Frauncey home, and her mother also had been molested. Agnes asked, "Where did he take you, daughter?"

To Taverner's hostelry, and I stayed there till the danger was past, then he brought me home. Not to the house of

Master Snow. Here. I thought I would be safer here. If you remember, Mother, I was here when you came home from Grandmother's."

Richard asked, "Did he know who you are?"

"Not at first. He thought I must be Master Snow's daughter, but it didn't make any difference. I told him my name. He knew who I was, and so did Mistress Taverner, but they didn't turn me away. Thomas said that because his father was speaking up for the craftsmen who started the riot, after the church the hostelry would be the safest place in the town, and the one place where I would be safe. And he was right." Before going on she looked at her parents in turn, a long, searching gaze, then added, "Thomas Taverner was my Crusader, my knight in armour, who came to rescue me when I was in danger, and I love him because of it. Nobody else came to rescue me. There were others in the street that night who knew me well, and some of Master Snow's servants might have helped me if they had cared, but none of them would risk his own life to help me. Only Thomas. And I know he is the one I can trust to take care of me for the rest of my life."

Seriously her father answered, "This is all very well for you, Daughter, to see him as a hero, like a Knight Templar or a Crusader, but does this Thomas Taverner know how you feel about him? I doubt whether he has remembered what happened that night."

"He does remember, and he loves me. We met again when he came home some months ago, before he went back to fetch his father. He has asked me to be his wife, and that is what I mean to be. He would have come to see you first, but we knew what you would say."

"And is this the reason why you refused to wed Simon Randolf, and Peter Charlton, when they came to see your father?" Agnes asked.

"Aye, and why I shall refuse any other man who might ask. I warn you, Father, and you, Mother, if you refuse to let me wed Thomas Taverner and live with him here in Bristol town, then you must tie me up and place a guard on me day and night, or else I shall run away to be with him, and that is the last you will ever see of me. I don't care what you think of Master John Taverner, but I will tell you this, Father. He is a man of honour. Otherwise why should his family help the daughter of an enemy? Would you have done the same for his daughter? It is easy to see why the people of this town listen to him, and not to the Constable. They see him as a man they can trust. and so do I."

The unexpected outburst took Richard White by surprise, and he could see that he was fighting a losing battle. He began to wonder what other matters had been taking place in his household while he had been attending to the Constable's affairs. Perhaps now that neither Constable Badlesmere nor the Sheriff of Gloucester was near at hand, and the King's custos did not seem to require his assistance, it might be a good time to form an alliance with the new mayor. If he faced criticism from his own friends he could always lay the blame on his wilful daughter, who had certainly not learned to be obedient while serving her apprenticeship with Master Show.

He replied, "Tell Master Thomas Taverner he may come to see me, and I shall give my consent."

So Richard White, one of The Fourteen, accepted Thomas Taverner as his son-in-law, the couple were duly united in All Saints' church, and Joan went to live in the hostelry.

* * *

Edward II's habit of relying too much upon the advice of his court favourites, who were interested only in themselves and not in what was best for the people of England, had made him an unpopular king. It was not surprising that some of his particular favourites came to imagine that they were more powerful than the King himself, but they had never thought that one day the barons and the clergy might join forces against the monarch.

The first of Edward's long-time friends to realize that the King's power was not as strong as it should be was the Earl of Lancaster; he decided to make his own position more secure by approaching the barons, and offering to transfer his allegiance to them. The barons did not trust him, and promptly rejected the offer. Edward naturally resented the Earl's act of betrayal, and ordered that Lancaster should be sent to the Tower of London and executed.

Six weeks later Edward summoned a Parliament to meet at York; it was a meeting the size and importance of which had never before been known in England. Its members included knights, magnates, burgesses, clerical protectors, representatives from the Cinque Ports, and twenty-four discreet men empowered to act for the principalities of Wales.

The purpose of the parliament was to repeal all previous Ordinances, and to restore to King Edward II the full dignity of sovereignty, but the final text of the statute later proved to have an ambiguous interpretation.

One of the members of this great parliament was John Taverner, Mayor of Bristol. From that time onward his civic duties absorbed much of John Taverner's life, while his son Thomas, with the help of Elizabeth and Joan, attended to the hostelry and the messuage which lay just outside the town walls.

The following year, to the delight of all of his grandparents, Joan gave birth to a little boy, to be named Gilbert. Elizabeth Taverner was pleased to see her only son happily settled in Bristol, while John had the satisfaction of knowing there would be a third generation to carry on the work of the Taverners in the town which had played such an important part in his life. Now that John Taverner was the undisputed mayor, Richard and Agnes White could see many advantages in being so closely connected to the family that had once been their enemies.

The affairs and administration of Bristol town claimed most of John's conscious thoughts, yet there were times, when he was riding alone to keep an appointment with a sheriff or one of the earls, that he had time to think of other things. Those were the times when his thoughts would return to Bordeaux, and Helène.

He replied, "Tell Master Thomas Taverner he may come to see me, and I shall give my consent."

So Richard White, one of The Fourteen, accepted Thomas Taverner as his son-in-law, and the couple were duly united in All Saints' church, and Joan went to live in the hostelry.

Neither Elizabeth nor Joan was aware of the existence of Helène, and Thomas had almost forgotten about her, but she was never far from John Taverner's thoughts.

* * *

The merchant ships which unloaded luxury cargoes and exotic foods from Europe and the lands around the Mediterranean Sea frequently brought to English ports something neither valuable nor welcome, in the form of disease. Although they came in various forms, for want of medical knowledge, whatever their symptoms, these ailments were all referred to as 'the fever' or 'the plague'. Their arrival was unpredictable and persistent. Some years there would be an epidemic in which many lives were lost; other attacks would be of short-lived duration, and would be fatal to only the most vulnerable...the very young, the elderly, and those already not in the best of health. It was one of these 'plagues' which caused the death of Elizabeth Taverner.

During their prolonged absence in exile she had spent many years worrying about her husband and her son, and in more recent times the anxiety had returned whenever John rode off alone to attend a parliament or some other civic affair. She had lost the habits of eating well, and sleeping well, and her general health had steadily deteriorated. When it became apparent that she had caught the latest 'fever', Elizabeth was confined to one of the more remote rooms in the hostelry where Joan and one of the servants could care for her without her coming into contact with either the customers or Baby Gilbert.

During her last bout of consciousness Elizabeth confided in Joan, "If one good thing did come of the riots, it was Thomas bringing you here to us. I could not have had a better daughter, nor a better nurse than you are to me, Joan. If I do not recover from this plague, I shall die content, knowing you are here to care for Thomas, and for my grandson, and for John when he comes home."

Joan laughed and said, "I think you'd better get well again, Mistress Taverner. To care for three men alone is rather a tall order."

John Taverner arrived home too late to say goodbye to his wife, and with deep regret he saw her body being laid to rest in the burial ground at All Saints church. Thomas tried to console his father.

"There was nothing you could have done, Father," he said.

"I could have been here."

"Mother understood why you had to go away so often, and we had no way of knowing she would not get well again, or we would have sent for you. For all that happened she was happy and contented when she died. She said as much to my wife Joan, when she was ill."

"Do you think she ever forgave me for what happened in France? Did she forgive me for Helène?"

"She didn't know, unless you told her, Father," Thomas replied. "I didn't tell her, and Robert Martyn is not a man who would discuss the private affairs of his friends with others. If she had been told it would have done no good, only harm, to both my mother and to you. I have told no-one. Mother deserved to be happy while she lived, and to die happy."

"I thank you for that, my son," John said.

"It was done more for her than for you," Thomas replied. "Now she will never know. It is all over now, for her."

Yes, for Elizabeth it was all over. Shortly after her death, as he had promised to Helène, John asked a lawyer to draw up a document he could sign, which would transfer all of his property to his son Thomas, who was now virtually in control of the inn and the messuage, while John occupied his time with the affairs of the town.

With the departure of Constable Badlesmere, The Fourteen had lost their power, the conflict had ceased, and John was beginning to feel that his work in Bristol was finished. Since the Parliament at York the combined power of barons, burgesses and clergy had grown stronger while that of the monarch had declined, and stability was returning to the country. In 1327, after months of imprisonment, Edward II was persuaded to abdicate in favour of his son, who, although only fourteen years of age, was crowned Edward III. The barons and Parliament appointed Henry of Lancaster to act as chief of a council of regency.

There was now no reason why John Taverner should remain in Bristol, or in England. Elizabeth was gone; Thomas was happily married and owner of the hostelry; Bristol town and its citizens were at peace. He had done all he had hoped to achieve. He had done his duty to his wife and son, to his friends, and to all of the townspeople who had placed their trust in him.

When the time came for re-election of the Mayor of Bristol, John told the other burgesses, "The time has come for you to choose a new mayor. I shall never forget, and I shall always be indebted to you, the people of Bristol, for your loyalty, and for the way you risked your lives to redeem my honour. I am proud and grateful to have you all as my friends. But I have done all I had to do, and Bristol town no longer has need of me. A new king rules this land, and a fair parliament will make his laws. The time has come for me to rest."

To his son Thomas he said, "The hostelry, the messuages, and everything I own here in Bristol is yours, as they would be at my death, though I hope that will not be for some time yet."

Thomas asked, "But what will you do, Father, if you are no longer mayor, and if you no longer need the hostelry or the cottages? I know you said the time had come for you to rest, but I cannot imagine you being idle."

He should have known what the answer would be.

His father smiled as he said, "I shall not be idle, Thomas. I shall go back to France"

To France. To Bordeaux. To L'auberge. To Helène.