

French Peasant Revolt

Jean Froissart, Chronicler of the Kingdom of France, on the Jacquerie (Peasant Revolt), 1358

Thus they gathered together without any other counsel, and without any armor saving with staves and knives, and so went to the house of a knight dwelling thereby, and broke up his house and slew the knight and the lady and all his children great and small and brent (burned) his house. And they then went to another castle, and took the knight thereof and bound him fast to a stake, and then violated his wife and his daughter before his face and then slew the lady and his daughter and all his other children, and then slew the knight by great torment and burnt and beat down the castle. And so they did to other castles and good houses; and they multiplied so that they were a six thousand, and ever as they went forward they increased, for such like as they were fell ever to them, so that every gentleman fled from them and took their wives and children with them, and fled ten or twenty leagues off to be in surety, and left their house void and their goods therein. These mischievous people thus assembled without captain or armor robbed, brent and slew all gentlemen that they could lay hands on, and forced and ravished ladies and damsels, and did such shameful deeds that no human creature ought to think on any such, and he that did most mischief was most praised with them and greatest master. I dare not write the horrible deeds that they did to ladies and damsels; among other they slew a knight and after did put him on a broach and roasted him at the fire in the sight of the lady his wife and his children; and after the lady had been enforced and ravished with a ten or twelve, they made her perforce to eat of her husband and after made her to die an evil death and all her children. They made among them a king, one of Clermont in Beauvoisin: they chose him that was the most ungracious of all other and they called him king Jaques Goodman, and so thereby they were called companions of the jaquery (revolt). They destroyed and brent in the country of Beauvoisin about Corbie, and Amiens and Montdidier more than threescore good houses and strong castles. In like manner these unhappy people were in Brie and Artois, so that all the ladies, knights and squires of that country were fain to fly away to Meaux in Brie, as well the duchess of Normandy and the duchess of Orleans as divers other ladies and damsels, or else they had been violated and after murdered. Also there were a certain of the same ungracious people between Paris and Noyon and between Paris and Soissons, and all about in the land of Coucy, in the country of Valois, in the bishopric of Laon, Nyon and Soissons. There were brent and destroyed more than a hundred castles and good houses of knights and squires in that country.

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