

Wat Tyler

Fairport Convention

And on the field at Blackheath
Us commons covered the earth
More men than ever I did see
Poor honest men from birth

The men were up from Kent, and out of Essex too
Though naught but the Thames divides us and unites us onwards
Through all the villages of England and on to London town
Where we poor men would meet our king and lay our grievance down
Wat Tyler led us men from Kent, rough hands were shaken there
King Richard and the commons our bold resolve and prayer

We knew our king would hear us, our loyalty was clear
T'was the bloody lawyers' poll tax that had brought us labourers here
And yet he wouldn't see us, so to London we did roar
And the poor there and the Essex men burst down the prison door
What happened at the Tower was justice, rough in part
The murders of the Flemish boys sat uneasy in my heart
"And now the king must see us" said Tyler to his men
And the very next day young Richard came and met us at Mile End

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Kent and Essex, Bedford, Sussex received King Richard's word
No harm nor blame would come to them if home they would return
And Lincoln, Cambridge, Stafford too received our young king's favour
And thirty thousand left us there, believing it was over
But Tyler, he was not convinced and told us to remain
"I want to hear his words again, for nothing much has changed"
So Tyler, he approached the king and took Richard by the arm
And his rough but friendly gesture caused Richard's knights alarm

"Ah my lord" said Tyler, "companions we shall be"
"I shall trust in you my lord, if you will trust in me"
And so he called for water, and then he called for ale
And his manner shocked young Richard's knights and I watched the Lord Mayor
pale
"I know this man" a voice accused, "Wat Tyler is a thief"
The Lord Mayor feared he'd harm the king, that was his true belief
And there at Smithfield drew his sword, and cut our captain down
And the heart went out of all of us with his blood upon the ground

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Young Richard, he was merciful and he pardoned one and all
But home to Kent like beaten dogs, still serfs we had to crawl
But how precious was our liberty and the hope that filled us all
That left poor Tyler's severed head upon a bloody pole