

WAT TYLER (A.D. 1381).

1. One day, in the little town of **Dartford** in **Kent**, an officer was going from house to house to gather the taxes, when he stopped at the cottage of a tyler named **Wat**. **Wat** was at his work close by, laying tiles on the roof of a house, and only his wife and daughter were at home. **Wat** the tyler, or **Wat Tyler**, as we call him now, saw the man go into his cottage, and, soon after, heard a loud scream. In an instant, he jumped down from the roof, ran into his house, and seeing the officer rude to his daughter, struck him on the head with his hammer and killed him.

2. Now I must tell you that in those days—when **Richard the Second** was king—the poor were badly treated by the rich. Some of the poorest people were slaves. They were made to work on the same farm all their lives, and could be sold by their masters, like pigs or horses. Even those who were free, and lived in towns, had to work hard for low wages; and they were kept down by the rich, and made to pay heavy taxes, when they could barely earn money enough to keep themselves alive.

3. So when **Wat Tyler** killed the brutal officer, all the poor people, in the villages round about, took his part. They agreed to go to London, to lay their complaints before the king, and, if need be, to fight for what they thought to be their rights.

4. Before many days had passed, thousands of poor, rough, wild-looking men, some with bows,