

85. **Some results of the French wars and the Black Death.**—During the crusades, as has been said, the lords would often allow their tenants, or villeins, as they were called, to pay their dues in money instead of in work. Even then some that might have been free remained on the manor, because, if they went away, there was no work by which they could support themselves, since all the other manors had men enough. People had learned, during the crusades, that a man who was born a villein need not always remain a villein; and since so many had died of the Black Death, there were now always manors that needed workmen. Moreover, Queen Philippa, who was a Fleming, had brought men from Flanders to teach the English how to weave fine woollen cloth; now, if a villein ran away, he could work on a manor for money, or go to a city and learn to weave; moreover, there was an old law by which if he could manage to stay away from the manor for a year and a day, he was free, and could not be obliged to return.

There was so much work to be done and there were so few to do it on the manors to which they belonged, that wages became very high. When Parliament saw how difficult it was to get the labourers to work, a law was passed, called the Statute of Labourers, which provided that men and women under sixty years of age and having no land or means of their own must serve the first employer who offered them work, and that they must take the same wages as before the plague. But as labourers were so scarce, some landlords were willing to pay a little more than the old rate, and then the labourers would often go from parish to parish in search of better wages. Parliament then passed another statute by which a labourer was not allowed to go outside of his own parish, and any that were found roving were to be arrested and branded on the forehead with the letter F, meaning "falsity." Although the law was so severe, it did not prevent many from running away. Some of these fugitives became robbers; many more became beggars. The result of all these measures was to increase the hatred of the peasantry for the landowners.