

he took much else, including grain, farmyard animals and a useful hawk worth £2, to be shared with John Pecche.⁴¹

This whole inglorious episode naturally reinforced widespread cynicism, and official corruption was to figure as a major theme a few years later in the contemporary poem already quoted. The king's damage-limitation exercise, however, was swift: following a mass plea by the guilty, a large collective fine of 800 marks was imposed, to be paid in instalments. These were carefully recorded by Justice John Stonor and revealed, in the inclusion of many obscure names missing from other sources, something of the true scale of the corruption practised in Warwickshire and Leicestershire alone. A happier epilogue was provided some years later by the diplomatic action of Edward III, in October 1331, in absolving the guilty of further payments of debt once the bulk of the original fine had been paid, citing specifically as extenuating circumstances the damage and grievances suffered by the community in the recent rebellion.⁴²

The disasters of 1321-22 and their sorry sequel were far removed from the high ideals of Edward's coronation oath and the promise of his accession. But did they amount to a rebellion? The protracted misery of the famine, Guy of Warwick's death and Thomas of Lancaster's ineptitude deprived the growing undercurrents of discontent of any positive focus, and the return of the Despensers postponed any chance of constitutional or social reform. The barons themselves wasted their undoubted strength and never mobilized their resources effectively; short-term personal gain dominated thinking, not political reform. Although Dugdale blamed the Despensers for 'stirring up the giddy Multitude...to appear in Arms for any Design which savoured of Reformation', Marlowe's peasants' revolt never materialized, because

⁴¹ Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes*, pp. 170, 219-22; McKisack, *Fourteenth Century*, pp. 203-7; N. Saul, *Knights and Gentry: the Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century*, Oxford 1981, pp. 182-3. PRO, JUST1/1389. mm 20-23 (writ of 15 December 1323, part transcribed in *The Lay Subsidy Roll for Warwickshire of 6 Edward III*, 1332, ed. W.F. Carter, Dugdale Society, vi, 1926, App. D, pp. 96-9); for similar cases in Worcestershire, PRO JUST1/1036-8, passim; and Gloucestershire, Waugh, 'Profits of violence', pp. 864-6. The very detailed orders from the king enumerating the multiplicity of offences are given in *CFR 1319-1327*, pp. 224-6, 246-8 (July and November 1323). The cases cited are PRO, JUST1/1389, mm. 20-23.

⁴² *CMR 1326-1327*, p. 370 gives an interim report for 1327, when 680 marks out of the original fine of 800 had been paid; *CCR 1330-1333*, p. 268.