

The state of political feeling in Wales after the death of Llywelyn the last Prince, and then the defeat of his brother David in 1283, is illustrated by the fact that towards the end of the first decade of the new administration Edward I was confronted with rebellion on a large scale. It was only to be expected that national pride should manifest itself in this way for during these early years of the new regime there must have been throughout the country a deep consciousness of the loss of long cherished independence which had been jealously guarded in the past. In many quarters, no doubt, a smouldering resentment and a sense of shame helped to spread the leaven of unrest and dissatisfaction among the native population. The introduction of new legal forms and procedures after the promulgation of the Statute of Rhuddlan in 1284, the presence of new officials modelled on the English pattern, and more especially in the north, the recently founded boroughs like Conway and Caernarvon with their massive castles in course of erection, symbolised subjection and only served to aggravate national feelings more than ever before. Welshmen probably gathered together in remote and secluded places in the mountains to brood over their misfortunes and to consider the chances of repelling the English invader should a favourable opportunity present itself. There must have been many courageous, tough, and resolute patriots, experienced in battle, who felt that they would rather regain their old freedom or perish in a gallant attempt to restore their former independent status.

It is interesting to note that the risings in Wales during 1294-5 in the north, south, and west, were all well-timed and the fact that they broke out almost simultaneously can hardly be attributed to mere coincidence. Plans must have been carefully prearranged, secret meetings held, and messengers dispatched to the different areas of operations to inform all those who were ready to fight for the national cause. One imprudent patriot might well have given the alarm as far as the rebels in the north were concerned, but this was not to be despite his careless talk during Whit week, 1294, in the court held at Llanerch in Denbighshire. This impulsive Welshman, Iorwerth ap Keneuic ap Ririt, is reported in the enrolled court proceedings as 'cursing of his evil will' and swearing 'by the body of Christ that before the middle of the month the constable and other English will hear such rumours that they will not wish to come again to Wales.'<sup>1</sup> Such an untimely outburst does not appear to have aroused suspicion in official circles, but it serves to indicate that preparations were in hand and the signal for action eagerly awaited. The signal, however, did not come until the following September.

The country was ready for revolt. Natural resentment to English domination in Wales was aggravated by the fiscal and administrative pressures of the new regime, and made even worse by

1.—*Cymm. Records Series*, No. 2, p. 2.

the attitude of some of the newly-appointed officials under the Edwardian administration, many of whom seem to have abused the authority entrusted to them. In Flintshire, for example, their manner did much to alienate the natives because they attempted to administer districts which were in the main Welsh as if they were simply outlying parts of Cheshire.<sup>2</sup> In Anglesey the sheriff, Roger de Pulesdon, likewise incurred hatred by making false extents according to the testimony of some tenants.<sup>3</sup> Feelings were further incensed and injustice felt by the fact that the burgesses of the English boroughs in Wales were granted rights and privileges by charter which the Welsh regarded as an infringement of what was justly theirs, namely freedom to buy and sell at fairs and markets without any restrictions being imposed upon them. The cumulative effect of all this, after nearly ten years of English rule, was probably the underlying cause of the disaffection.

But it was Edward I himself who helped to bring matters to a head. His expeditions to France cost money and the extension of a tax of a fifteenth on moveables to include Wales as well as England aroused immediate opposition.<sup>4</sup> In vain did the king promise that this should not be looked upon as a precedent. Furthermore the Welsh took strong exception to the use of forced levies for service on the continent and this form of compulsory enlistment of troops may perhaps be taken as the immediate cause for the outbreak of hostilities. Even in England Edward's popularity, owing to taxation to finance his French policy, was not high, and so it is not surprising that the Welsh considered themselves aggrieved and harshly treated. The long awaited opportunity now presented itself; their chance had come and they grasped it eagerly hoping thereby to right the wrongs to which they were subjected by the English government. The time was opportune.

In Michaelmas, 1294, Edward I was waiting at Portsmouth for a favourable wind in order to embark for France when he received news of the insurrection in Wales.<sup>5</sup> This new and unexpected turn of events at home forced him to abandon his ideas of a continental campaign and give his thoughts to matters of more serious moment within his own realm. He quickly and rightly appreciated the gravity of the situation and probably realised that his personal intervention was called for if the Welsh outbreak was to be crushed effectively; and so with his usual promptness and energetic thoroughness Edward set his mind to the difficult problem of directing a campaign in the Snowdonian region in the middle of winter.

Though there were actually several risings in Wales at this time, attention will be confined here to the North Wales rebellion

2.—*Flints. Hist. Soc.*, 1911, p. 16.

3.—*Rec. of Carn.*, pp. 216-7; also Waters, W.H., *The Edwardian Settlement of North Wales*, p. 27.

4.—Morris, J. E., *The Welsh Wars of Edward I*, pp. 242-3.

5.—*Ut supra*, p. 241.