



ST. MARY THE VIRGIN

Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem

Templar Wealth in England

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First Edition
2022
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INTRODUCTION



Templar Wealth in England

The Knight Templars (1119 – 1312) were the most enterprising of religious institutions profiting from a wide spectrum of services that involved early forms of banking and transporting goods as well as people at a time when travelling, particularly from the West to the East was fraught with many dangers. The Order's growing reputation as astute financiers was part and parcel of a lucrative business in facilitating and enabling trade for sovereigns, foreign merchants and pilgrims that lasted until the Order was dissolved.

This publication explores the assessed wealth of the Templars in England around 1308 and is based on an article by Clarence Perkins, PhD in *The American Historical Review*, Jan. 1910, VOL 15, No.2.

Estimated Value

The wealth of the Templars, which was the immediate cause of the attack on them by Philip IV, has been variously computed but always in large and indefinite figures, owing partly to the difficulty in getting reliable statistics. Fortunately the archives of England contain materials which enable us to make reasonably accurate conclusions as to the location, management, and annual proceeds of the English Templars' landed property. When they were arrested in January, 1308, the sheriffs were required to take a detailed inventory of all movables on each Temple manor and summon juries from the neighborhood to estimate the normal annual value of each piece of property. A second inquest was ordered March 4, 1309. Better than all this fragmentary material are three great schedules of the Pipe Rolls which contain the detailed accounts rendered by the royal keepers of Temple lands, evidently copied from the original accounts, many of which are still extant in the collection of "Ministers' Accounts, General Series", in the Public Record Office. In various other manuscript sources the assessed value of certain manors is named in connection with the appointment of a keeper for them. Unfortunately, no one class of this material gives complete data for all the Templars' possessions in England, either for any one year or for the whole period during which the king held the lands; but, by putting together the contents of the various sources, a fairly accurate compilation can be made to show the name and approximate annual value of each estate.

The table to the left gives the average annual value by counties, the results in the first column being obtained by computing the average annual net income received by the king, exclusive of the amounts realized by the sale of such movables as silver or brass dishes, etc., which the Templars would not have sold, and those in the second by adding the annual values of the property as appraised by local juries according to royal order. The table also illustrates the expanse of Templar holdings in England when they were dissolved as an order.

County	£	s	d	£	s	d
Bedford	65	11	3	90	0	7
Berkshire	7	3	4	96	13	6
Buckingham	29	9	2	34	2	10
Cambridge	130	11	7	121	19	7
Cornwall	2	12	7			
Devon	11	18				
Essex	218	8		173	8	6
Gloucester	216	3	8	78	12	0
Hampshire				7	13	6
Hereford	16	4	10	108		
Hertford	156	2		158	1	9
Huntingdon	26		5	18	12	3
Kent	20	16	9	43	1	2
Leicester	246	16				
Lincoln	934	9	8	132	15	6
London & Middlesex	22	4	3	60		10
Norfolk & Suffolk	13	19	8	27		11
Northampton	11	16	8			
Northumberland	46	18	8	45	12	
Nottingham (including Derby)				54	12	
Oxford	268		10	203	7	4
Shropshire & Stafford	126	0	6	25	8	11
Somerset & Dorset	116	8		71	7	4
Surrey	32	18	4	33		2
Sussex	72			101	7	
Wales	2	18	3			
Warwick	238	7	7	130	8	6
Westmoreland	7	6				
Wiltshire	20	19		17	7	10
Worcester	21		6	21		6
York	130	18	11	587	4	9
TOTALS	3200	273	137	2432	168	135
Today's value		\$4,068,670			\$3,092,189	

pound

after the Norman Conquest in 1066, the pound (£) was divided into twenty shillings (s) or 240 pennies (d). It remained so until decimalization in 1971, when the pound was divided up as it is still done today.

Balanrodok

Historically the Parish of Temple was divided into three portions, the ancient parish of Clerkington, and the chapelries of Moorfoot and Balanrodok, (also spelled Balanrodach, and Balanrodoch) Clerkington was a parsonage held by the monks of Newbattle Abbey, Moorfoot was a chapelry founded by monks from the same institution. Balanrodach on the other hand, was a chapelry of the Knights Templar.

Hugues de Payens was granted the chapelrie and manor of Balanrodach by David I of Scotland when they met in 1128. The Preceptory of Balanrodoch was the principal house of the Order of the Temple in Scotland. It was eleven miles south of Edinburgh on the wooded banks of the river South Esk. The original church had a round nave, like so many Templar churches in imitation of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. There would also once have been a full range of domestic and administrative buildings, none of which have survived.



Figure 1—church ruins at Balanrodok

The total values are not easy to compute accurately because for some manors the king received almost nothing as compared to the appraisal of the jurors. In such cases the appraised value has been added instead of the previous insignificant amount. The results thus computed for all England show that the total annual value based on receipts was about: £4720 (\$6,001,288 in today's value) and the total appraised value (of those appraised) was £2445 (\$3,108,718 today) 16s. 7d.

The total annual value of the Temple lands in Ireland as appraised by local juries was: £41 11s. 2d, but the records of receipts show a very much smaller amount actually taken in at the exchequer. For Scotland, details regarding the Temple lands are difficult to obtain. Only three regular establishments appear in the records: Balanrodok, Culthur, and Templiston, and some lands in Berwick-on-Tweed, and no estimate of their value is given. We have no means of computing the income of the Hospitallers in England for exactly this date; but in 1338, after their finances had been in great disorder for many years, they received an average annual revenue of £1385 6s. 6d. from their own estates and £1441 18s from those formerly belonging to the Templars. Thus it would appear that the Temple lands in England were only slightly more valuable than those of the Hospitallers, though some allowance must be made for Temple manors which the Hospitallers had deeded away.

The value of the Templars' movable property was much less than one might expect. The inventories taken when they were arrested give a very precise account of all household goods, agricultural implements, stock, food, ecclesiastical goods, clothing, books, and all other articles, with the appraised value of each. There is a marked absence of rich armor, vestments, and expensive trappings, showing that the Templars were living simple lives and cared little for luxury. Even the inventory of goods found at the New Temple, London, the headquarters of the order in England, shows few articles of value outside the Church, no cash, and no weapons except three swords and two ballisters (ballista) (one of which was broken). The cash found in the chests of the preceptors throughout England amounted to only £36 12s. 2d. The royal officials seem to have believed that much property had been concealed and several unsuccessful efforts were made to trace it. It has been suggested that many Templars must therefore have escaped with their movable goods, but considering that the inquisitors' rigorous search resulted in the capture of only nine fugitives, other explanations seem more probable.

The Last Grand Master of England

William de la More was master in England from 1298 to 1307. In December, Edward II ordered the arrest of the Templars in Britain and Ireland, those in England were seized on 9th to 11th of January 1308. The captured Templars were initially held at local royal castles throughout the country. Those arrested in Kent, for example, were held at Canterbury Castle. On November 27, 1308, Edward ordered the sheriffs of London and Middlesex to have all Templars in their jurisdiction transferred to the Tower. The Templars were not put on trial until October 1309, and some had evaded arrest. On September 14, 1309, Edward II ordered his sheriffs to seize any remaining Templars, with those found in southern England to be brought to the Tower of London. He also wrote to the Constable of the Tower ordering him to hold the Templars safely and securely. Forty-eight Templars were eventually put on trial in London, including William de la More, grand commander of the Templars in England, and Himbert Blanc, grand commander of Auvergne in France, who may have been in England to promote a new crusade.

In 1312, the Council of Vienne ruled that the order had to be dissolved. William de la More, who refused to make a confession, was still held at the Tower. He died there on December 20, 1312.

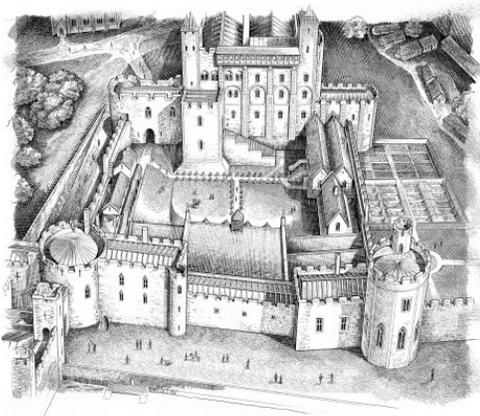


Figure 2 —the inner ward of the Tower of London as it may have looked in 1294

The grand master of England and several other prominent Templars were arrested in Kent and while imprisoned at Canterbury were allowed to keep their clothing, armor, and silver utensils worth £18. Throughout England the Templars were in very lax confinement in each county till September, 1309, and it is possible that some of them kept their armor and other valuables. A careful scrutiny of every available record shows that there were only one hundred and forty-four Templars in the British Isles and among these there were not more than twenty knights and sixteen priests. The great body of them were serving brothers or sergeants, common men remaining on the estates and busied with agricultural administration and labor. The estates as a rule were provided only with the equipment needed for suitably maintaining the common manorial household and carrying on agriculture with the greatest profit.

The English branch of the Order was valuable chiefly for the capital it produced, and the brethren appear to have been shrewd business men engaged extensively in that special industry which suited the locality: for example, the inventories of Bruer, Aslakeby, Eyde, and Wylughton (Lincolnshire) show that the Templars had thirty-eight sacks sixteen stone of wool stored away there. In other sections they paid most attention to the grain crop, and in other parts to stock-raising as well. They derived a considerable income from the churches which they owned.

Several of these were worth from £30 to £40 each, and one, Rothele Church (Leicester), brought an average net income of £76 1s. 1d. per year between 1308 and 1313. They sometimes engaged in such enterprises as farming the revenues of other churches on the chance of profit, and, when there was a favorable opportunity, they even let out small outlying manors of their own. Since a desire to replenish the royal treasury from the Templars' property was an important motive for their arrest even in England, it will be interesting to learn how the king succeeded. Notwithstanding his denial of the pope's charge that he was misappropriating the Temple lands, it is certain that he began early to use them as his fancy or need dictated. Within a month after their sequestration, he ordered all the wool which could be secured from them to be delivered to the Ballardis, merchants of Lucca, and the next year he likewise had a quantity of wool turned over to Henry Nasard in part payment of the royal indebtedness. In 1308, he used the grain from the Temple estates in England and Ireland to supply his forces in Scotland. The Templars had provided their preceptories with a good supply of meat and fish and from this the king drew to supply provisions for his coronation feast at Westminster. The pious king also drew on the keepers of the sequestered lands to pay arrears of salary due to his clerks, to give alms to religious houses, and to provide for Scotch refugees. In 1312, he increased his income by cutting and selling considerable amounts of timber from the estates.

Lords Ordainers

Ordainer, in full Lord Ordainer, one of a committee of 21 nobles and prelates who opposed Edward II and framed a body of "Ordinances" intended to regulate his household and power.

Conflict began soon after Edward II's accession in 1307. The King was tactless; and, after July 1309, when Thomas, earl of Lancaster, became chief leader of the opposition, a serious crisis was clearly impending. By February 1310 he, together with the earls of Warwick, Hereford, and Pembroke, had decided on drastic action; and they openly accused Edward of wasting his inheritance and of ruining the kingdom. The King then had to agree to the appointment of a committee of eight earls, seven bishops, and six barons, who, before Michaelmas 1312, were to prepare ordinances for reforming the government of the realm. This body was known as the Lords Ordainers. Weakened by yet another failure in Scotland, Edward met the Ordainers at Westminster in August 1311, where about 40 Ordinances were presented.

The Ordinances were well-meaning and strictly traditional in tone. The Ordainers looked back to the precedents of Henry III's time, and they had "the righteous earl," Simon de Montfort, as their model. The King must rid himself of his evil advisers and get some better ones, and the Ordainers were in no doubt where these could be found. Edward must look to his "natural counsellors," the baronage, and especially to the whole body of them in Parliament, where policy ought to be decided and all important appointments in the royal service made.

The King accepted the ordinances because he had no alternative, but he seems to have had no real intention of observing them. Fighting broke out; and, Gaveston, returned from exile, was captured and executed by the reformers. Peace was eventually reestablished, but Edward's disastrous defeat by the Scots at the Battle of Bannockburn (June 24, 1314) put him at the mercy of Lancaster and the extreme Ordainers, who thereafter ruled England until their own overthrow by Edward's new favorites, the Despencers, in 1322.

Notwithstanding his failure to find much gold and treasure at the New Temple or other preceptories, Edward II derived a good income from such movables as were found. Horses and stock, kitchen utensils, dishes, tools, and even ecclesiastical goods were disposed of in large quantities, especially just after the arrest. Moreover, when the king formally ordered his keepers to give up the Temple lands to the Hospitallers, he had all the larger animals and the movables delivered to various royal appointees, who sold them for what they would bring or gave them away at the king's order. As a rule the estates were stripped bare of all stock, tools, and movable property which could be sold at any price. Occasionally a millstone or some large and rather unsalable article was left, but even in such cases the keeper seems to have felt bound to give special explanation for his remissness in leaving anything movable on the estate except the church ornaments and the grain already sown for the next crop. Cash found in the chests of the Preceptors at the various manors amounted to £36 12s. 2d., as far as the accounts show. Payment of all debts due to the Templars was exacted from all debtors, great and small.

It is very difficult to compute what the king received from the Temple lands in any one year, because of delays in rendering accounts to the exchequer. The sheriffs who arrested the Templars had charge of the lands at first, but in most counties special keepers were soon appointed. Some of these were required to render full account for the proceeds, while others owed to the exchequer only the total annual value as appraised by local juries. Thus only in theory did the income from the Temple lands go entire into the royal treasury. Throughout the reign of Edward II, and even under Edward III, the exchequer memoranda rolls contain numerous orders to oblige the keepers or their heirs to settle their accounts. The profits of most of the manors do not appear on the rolls for more than half the period of royal control and some never were accounted for. Edward II himself released some keepers from payments due to the exchequer, and royal favorites exploited many of the estates to such an extent that the lords ordainers in 1311 required the resumption of Temple lands granted to them. The payments recorded show that the king received a net income of: £8840 0s. 5d. from the English Temple lands from January, 1308, till November, 1313. The only recorded receipts from the Scottish and Irish lands were: £25 2s. and: £390 19s. 8d. Thus the net income of the king from all the Temple lands was: £9256 2s. (\$11,385,909 today), or an average of: £1542 3s. per year for the six years. Edward II was in such straits for money that this income must have given him valuable help, but it could not have played a large part in the normal revenue of the crown. Temple lands did not reach more than about four per cent of the normal annual revenue of the crown.

Despensers

The Despenser family, unpopular favorites of England's King Edward II, who were executed by Edward's opponents, Queen Isabella and Roger Mortimer.

Hugh Le Despenser (in full Hugh Le Despenser, earl of Winchester; b. 1262—d. Oct. 27, 1326, Bristol, Gloucestershire, Eng.), also known as Hugh the Elder, was summoned to Parliament as a baron in 1295. He fought in France and Scotland for Edward I and was sent by him on several embassies, including two to the pope. He was one of the few supporters, in 1308, of Piers Gaveston, Edward II's favorite; after Gaveston's death in 1312 he became the king's chief adviser until Thomas, earl of Lancaster, leader of the baronial opposition, procured his dismissal from court and council in February 1315. He then worked to further the interests of his son, Hugh Le Despenser (Hugh the Younger; d. Nov. 24, 1326, Hereford, Herefordshire, Eng.), who had been in the king's household when he was prince of Wales. The younger Hugh was appointed the king's chamberlain in 1318, but both father and son were attacked in Parliament by the magnates in 1321; the intense hatred with which the barons regarded the Despensers was due to the enormous wealth that had passed into their hands and to the arrogance and rapacity of the younger Hugh. At last the king was forced to agree to their disinheritance and exile. The elder Hugh went abroad but the younger remained in the Cinque Ports and engaged in piracy.

After the collapse of the opposition at the Battle of Boroughbridge (March 1322), the Despensers returned to power, and the elder Hugh was created earl of Winchester. Hugh the Younger worked to enhance the importance of the chamberlain's office: he diverted to it from the Exchequer the revenue from certain lands, developed it as a department equipped with its own seal and provided private income for the king. But his administration aroused discontent. He had married (1306) Eleanor, coheiress of Gilbert de Clare, earl of Gloucester (d. 1314). Hugh's attempt to acquire the sole inheritance had been foiled by a division of Clare's estates in 1317; but even so he received lands in Glamorgan and Wales. At the rebellion of Queen Isabella and Roger Mortimer (1326), both Despensers fled westward with the king. The elder, sent to defend Bristol, surrendered it to Isabella on October 26 and, after summary trial, was hanged the next day. The younger Despenser was captured with the king and tried and hanged a month later.

After Dissolution

Immediately after the dissolution of the Temple Order at the Council of Vienne, Clement V ordered Edward II to deliver the Temple property to the Knights Hospitallers at once. For over a year, however, Edward refused to obey and not till November 28, 1313, did he order his keepers to give up the lands. This by no means proves that the Hospitallers obtained immediate possession, for the removal of the royal keepers seems to have been the signal for a scramble in which the lords of the fees and the king were in a better position to succeed than the small number of Hospitallers. The Templars had accumulated their extensive properties gradually and held them under various tenures of many different lords. This made it far from easy for the Hospitallers to gain possession of their gift from the pope, especially without the use of the Templars' deeds, charters, and rolls, which they had not secured by August 30, 1324. They early secured some few of the estates, but most were seized by neighboring lords, among whom Thomas of Lancaster, Robert de Roland, John de Moubray, Guy de Beauchamp, and Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, figure prominently. In fact a royal order of 1336 states that all the Temple lands came as escheats into the hands of the king and other lords of whom these lands were held. The king himself kept some of them as his escheats or on various other pretexts, and later acquired the large holdings forfeited by Thomas of Lancaster and his friends. Even when the lands of Thomas's party were restored in 1327, many Temple estates were restored to the lords and special definite orders were needed to cause the sheriff's to deliver them to the Hospitallers.

During all these years after 1312, the Hospitallers were making every effort to secure the Temple lands, and the popes did not fail to order the king, nobles, and clergy to assist them. Edward II, however, protested that he had done all he could by giving up possession himself and could not oust the lords. The clergy do not appear to have been at all zealous to help the Hospitallers, in spite of papal bulls and the vigorous measures of Archbishop Reynolds. John XXII even required the bishops to defy the royal prohibition and unite in Parliament in order to expel lay occupiers of Temple lands, and instructed his legates in England to use ecclesiastical censures to enforce the restitution of such lands.

These efforts proving of no avail, the Hospitallers turned to the more effective method of bribery. As early as 1313 they had granted to Hugh le Despenser the manor of Wyshangre in Gloucestershire, and in 1324 Prior Thomas Larcher granted to Hugh the Younger the manors of Penkern in Wenthelok in Wales, Bustlesham, Temple Gutying, Bollestrode, and Carleton-by-Basingham, all formerly the property of the Templars and worth over £251 per year net. This grant was made immediately after they received them as the result of the statute of 1324, probably by previous agreement.



Sheriff

The modern word "Sheriff", which means keeper or chief of the County, is derived from the Anglo-Saxon words "Shire-Reeve". More than twelve hundred years ago, Anglo-Saxons lived in rural communities called tuns (source of the word 'town'). Around 700, each tun was divided into groups of ten families, called tithings. The elected leader of each tithing was

called a tithingman. Each group of ten tithings (or a hundred families) elected its own chief. The Anglo-Saxon word for chief was gerefa, which later became shortened to reeve. During the next two centuries, a number of changes occurred in this system of tithings and hundreds. A new unit of government, the shire, was formed when groups of hundreds banded together. The shire was the forerunner of the modern county. Just as each hundred was led by a reeve (chief), each shire had a reeve as well. To distinguish the leader of a shire from the leader of a mere hundred, the more powerful official became known as a shire-reeve. The word shire-reeve eventually became

On August 19, 1324, Prior Larcher also deeded to the king in fee simple the manors of Templehirst, Templenewsam, Flaxflete, Deneve, and Strode, all Temple property and worth over £432 per year net. Besides these gifts, the purpose of which is evident, a number of influential persons about the court were kept favorable to the Hospitallers by various means shown in the report of Prior Philip de Thame in 1338. Sir Robert de Silkeston, for example, who in 1322 was one of two auditors of the accounts for the lands of Earl Thomas and others who held Temple lands, was in 1338 receiving from the Hospitallers about £142 per year in pensions, lands, or churches. Grants of various sorts were made to a large number of persons who had enough influence to help or hinder them. Pensions were paid to many royal officials for maintaining the lands and liberties of the Hospitallers and for help in securing those of the Templars. There was also a distribution of robes to one hundred and forty officials, and an expenditure of some two hundred marks a year in gifts to the king's judges and other magnates to have favor, for pleas to be defended, and for the expenses of parliaments. Indeed the long continued litigation necessary to get their rights required the Hospitallers to have many friends at court.

With the aid of the king and the Despencers, the Hospitallers secured the enactment of a statute stating that no lord had any title or right to the Temple lands by escheat or otherwise, and granting them to the Hospitallers. Accordingly, on May 16, 1324, the sheriffs were ordered to take possession of the lands and carry out the statute. Even then the king willed that all movables on the lands should be returned to their owners and that the Hospitallers pay for the crops already sown. Finally, on July 1, 1324, the royal keepers in various counties were ordered to permit the sheriffs to deliver the Temple lands to the Hospitallers and only then was the previous order executed. Notwithstanding this, there is considerable evidence that there were further delays in getting possession of much of the property. The prior of the English Hospitallers wrote to the grand master on July 20, 1328, that in the preceding year he had received only £458 10d. from the Temple lands. In 1338 his total income from them was £1441 18s (\$2,565,042 today). Hence a considerable portion was not yet in their possession or they could not restock them sufficiently to obtain their normal profits. In some counties the lords defied the statute and continued to hold the lands. On September 9, 1332, the sheriff of Somerset was ordered to sequester all such lands in the county, and on December 15, 1332, was directed to deliver them to the Hospitallers. The sheriff of Devon received similar directions regarding the manor and church of Cleyhangre.

About the author...

Clarence Perkins, PhD, was Professor of European History at the University of North Dakota. Trained at Harvard, he had taught in the Department of History at Ohio State University from 1909-1920 when he was wooed to the University of North Dakota by President Thomas Kane. Perkins had studied at an undergraduate at Syracuse University and received his Ph.D. at Harvard in 1908. His thesis was a *The History of the Knights Templar in England* and he taught medieval and modern English History. Early in his career he produced a series of prominent articles on the Knights Templar in both the *American Historical Review* (1910) and in the *English Historical Review* (1909, 1910, 1930) but like scholars of an earlier era he was qualified to teach in almost any European field from Ancient to current affairs. During the 1920s, he demonstrated his wide ranging competence in writing a well-regarded high school textbook, *The History of European Peoples* published by Rand, McNally, and Company in Chicago and stretching to nearly 1000 pages, as well as several study guides for the Ohio State Bookstore in Columbus. Throughout the 1930s he continued to write popular texts like *Man's Advancing Civilization* (1934 and 1937) and *Ancient History* (1936). In 1940 he published *Development of European Civilization* with two former colleagues at UND. Perkins died in 1946.

The difficulties of the Hospitallers were aggravated by great delay in securing the Temple archives, without which they often could not prove their claims to property, and especially by the great disorder of their finances. The whole order and its various branches were almost overwhelmed by a burden of debt, incurred mainly for their expedition to conquer and hold the island of Rhodes but partly perhaps by the large payments needed to secure the Temple property. There seems to have been a general inclination among the royal officials and magnates to extort as much as possible from them and keep back their property. The prior was summoned by the exchequer again and again to pay certain debts which it was claimed that the Templars owed to the king. Orders were secured from the king postponing the collection of these, but not till November 24, 1336, were the exactions definitely forbidden, after the Hospitallers had suffered much from distrains levied on this pretext. It was only by continually importuning the king and securing frequent royal letters of protection, confirmations of charters, and other royal letters from 1324 to 1340, that the Hospitallers were able to make progress against the obstructions placed in their way. By 1338 their efforts had been rewarded with considerable success and they had obtained at least nominal possession of most of the Temple estates except those deeded to the Despencers and the king. Thus the lands of the Templars were ultimately gathered together in the hands of their rivals, not to be scattered till the suppression of the monasteries by Henry VIII to whom the events of 1307-1312 might have furnished an interesting precedent had he wished for one.

The difficulties of the English Hospitallers were duplicated on the Continent, for every one in any position of power made the most of his opportunities to secure a share of the plunder and exact large payments before giving it up. In Portugal, Aragon, and Castile, the Hospitallers got none of the estates; in France, Germany, and Italy they secured part of their legacy after long delays. In fact the immediate result of the dissolution of the Temple Order was a wild orgy of plunder which quickly passed beyond papal control and gave the lie to Clement's plea that to delay the order's dissolution would cause dilapidation of its property to the damage of the Holy Land.

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